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The bust generation: A cohort analysis

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THE BUST GENERATION: A COHORT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a cohort analysis of the roughly 50 million Americans born between the early 1960s and the mid-1970s. I consider this generation’s attributes as they might unfold within a set of "larger" alternative scenarios. These larger scenarios are most principally composed of varying and popular depictions of the US as it could appear upon moving into the third millennium. My original contribution to the field of political science lies in assessing how the evolving attributes of the subject-generation might serve to either facilitate or confound the US futures I describe.
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PREFACE

This dissertation is a "cohort analysis" of the US bust-generation. Forecasts are made concerning the futures-implications of this cohort's maturation over the next several years within an alternative scenarios context. Among these scenarios are varying depictions of America at the turn of the century which range from "global leadership" to "global has-been."

Organizing this dissertation are a total of five chapters. The focus of chapter 1 is an introduction to the subject-cohort: Discussions center upon this generation's most salient aspect--postponed adulthood--and it's concomitant question-mark quality. Chapter 2 features "cohort analysis" as a social sciences methodology for futures-forecasting. Chapters 3, 4, and 5, feature the aforementioned portrayals of the US as it might look upon moving into the third millennium. Each scenario is concluded with a specific detailing of how the generation I am looking at may or may not play a role vis-a-vis their specific attributes.

a The term "cohort" derives from the Latin word for an ordered rank of soldiers. It is presently used by many demographers to refer to any group of individuals born in a single year. As such, a generation is properly construed as a collection of consecutive cohorts which form a "cohorts-group." In the interest of simplicity (or perhaps as a result of confusion!) many social scientists use the terms generation, cohort, and cohorts-group interchangeably. I too shall use these terms as synonyms.
My topic-justification flows most principally from linking the subject-generation to the larger milieus in which this cohort might find itself. My hope is that this will serve to make explicit a number of role-opportunities. Of course, a comprehensive catalogue of future opportunities is clearly impossible; nonetheless, there are roles which now appear at least conceivable, and, some might say, even probable. What makes this so important is the net impact of describing multiple choices and their attendant consequences. More specifically, confidence and conviction can result from surveying a field of possible options that were either formerly obscure and/or presented as singular prescriptions. When viewed from this perspective, fatalism becomes less likely while understanding takes its place.

As a concluding note to the introduction of this dissertation, I ask that the reader keep three points in mind which bear upon this project’s overall construction. First, do not presume from the sampling of data concerning the subject generation in chapter 1 that this is the end-all of my survey! The bulk of my generational analyses appear as components of chapters 3, 4, and 5. The material there ranges from detailing their diversity to speculating upon their politics.

Second, a word or two must also be mentioned regarding the alternative scenarios of the US as it moves into the new century. In perusing some of the relevant literature, one
is rather quickly reminded of the proverbial three types of lies: lies, damn lies, and deceptively used statistics! I have tried to avoid this particular pitfall in my own scenario-renditions by honestly attempting to construct portrayals with only the best points made by the many writers from whom I borrow.

Third, and finally, I must also inform the reader that my own preferences regarding a desireable US future are not described until the concluding sections of this dissertation. I mention this insofar as I do not wish for the reader to construe my writing within any one of the US scenarios as a personal endorsement of it. Again, I am rather attempting to construct my US macro-depictions as per the best arguments of their principal proponents.
Chapter 1: Meet the Busters

a. preamble

Within this chapter I wish to accomplish two macro-objectives. First, to give the reader a sense of how disparate are the speculations concerning the nature of this generation. Second, to focus upon one widely held and empirically verified attribute of this generation--postponed adulthood.

b. naming faces

In the most general of terms, the generation that I wish to focus upon can be uncomfortably identified as the 48 million young Americans between the ages of 19 and 32 in 1993.¹ I say "uncomfortably identified" inasmuch as precise age markers (i.e., born between 1961 and 1974) imply both an exactitude as well as a consensus about such things which simply do not exist (explanations in a moment). Somewhat more comfortable than dates and ages is to claim that the generation which concerns me lies between the much larger boom generation which precedes it, and the ongoing "boomlet" or children of the boomers which follows. This latter means of identification--marking the boundaries of one generation with the emergence or conclusion of two other
generations—is helpful inasmuch as it buys a bit of a "fudge-factor." How so? Well, the boom generation concluded in either 1964, 1961, or 1957 depending upon whom you talk to! That sounds sloppy, nonetheless, justifications exist: Many demographers have long held that the front, the middle, and the end of the boom generation are roughly distinguishable from one another: Much of the "end-of-the-end" of the boomers looks less like "the-middle-of-the-end" of the boomers, and more like the collection of folks altogether behind the boomers. As such, some shifting of generational boundaries has occurred while cohort-trackers come to terms with younger U.S. citizens. What exactly might be fueling this disarray?

The boom’s appellation derives in a literal sense from the nation’s explosion of 78 million births from 1946 to 1964. In absolute terms, this total constitutes the largest single increase in US population figures over so short a time. More specifically, in 1954, annual births surpassed four million for the first time in US history, and the total remained above this four million marker for the next 10 years. So why then all of the controversy? Call the boom concluded in 1964 and be done with it! Despite the tidiness of such an approach, it falters for a number of reasons. Many object on the grounds that it just encompasses too many people spread over too many years of rapid change. We would be speaking, for example, of individuals who spent some of
their teen-age years in the 1950s and other individuals who spent some of their teen-age years in the 1980s (more on this later).

A second rationale for "removing" the 1960s-boomer-tail is ultimately grounded upon dynamics having to do with sibling-birth-orders. This particular argument requires first acknowledging that many of those born in 1946 were first born children. This resulted insofar as marriages and child-rearing had been postponed by numerous individuals throughout the 1930s and the early 1940s because of the depression and the war respectively. However, come 1946, 2.2 million couples got married--twice as many as in any year prior to the war. As these couples began entirely new families, it translated into a disproportionate number of first borns being birthed in the 1940s. Then, as the boom continued, these same couples had additional children which made later-borns the norm. To wit, almost one in two babies born in 1947 was a first born, whereas that total had shrunk to just over one in four by 1962. I will have more to say of birth-order dynamics in a later chapter; my point now, however, is a simpler one: Many of the choices made by people born in the early-'60s look less like bona-fide boomer choices and more like the selections of those born in the mid-'60s and beyond.

All of this confusion leads quite naturally to some fundamental and warranted questions. Why is it possible to
speak of generations at all? Can there ever be a clean enough break within the constant flow of births such that those on one side are type-X whereas those on the other are type-Y? And if so, what is the nature of such rift-creating phenomena? These particular inquiries are large enough to merit an extensive consideration. And, as described earlier, I shall do just that by investigating "cohort analyses as a conceptual tool" in chapter 2.

Having loosely located the subject-generation (i.e., born between 1961 and 1974 thereby making them ages 19 to 32 in 1993), a shift can be made to a more targeted exploration of these individuals. This task is helpfully begun by asking how this generation might be referred to? Of the available alternatives (and there are many of them), I have opted to employ the term "bust generation." This phraseology is useful inasmuch as it highlights a feature of this generation that is both important and immutable: these individuals were born at a time when US fertility rates were declining to an all-time-low of 1.7 in 1973.\(^5\) The result was (and remains) a bust of individuals which is all the more pronounced given the boom of individuals they follow.

c. a cacophony of buster-noises

The sensical shift at this point would seemingly be to launch an enumeration of the bust’s aggregated attributes.
And, yes, an attempt along these lines will be made. But first, I would like the reader to gain an appreciation of the fact that laundry-listing buster-attributes is a difficult task. This is partially attributable to a general lack of bust literature. This lack is particularly true when it comes to texts wherein the busters are central. Much more typical are boomer-texts and demography-texts wherein the busters are featured in either a chapter (maybe) or a few pages (more likely). Limited in a somewhat different way are several texts which take as their subject some single slice of this generation. Themes along these lines range from "clinically troubled young folks" to "extremely wealthy young folks." Fortunately, the selection of buster-literature improves somewhat upon entering the realm of periodical and newspaper articles. Indeed, I have collected several score of these pieces which take the bust generation as their primary focus. And while much of this material is truly helpful, so too do these articles often leave a good deal to be desired. Many of these typically slender pieces are begun with caveats as to just how little is known about the busters.

Attempts to explain this dearth of bust literature take a variety of forms. One explanation is that the demography-establishment is now laden with boomers who seem far more interested in writing of themselves than of those who follow. This particular lament has been rather colorfully
set forth by three Los Angeles busters. Tired of being raised on a wealth of "classic rock stations," twenty-year-old TV reruns, and retro-boomer nostalgia like "The Wonder Years," these Los Angeleans have formed for themselves a group entitled the National Association for the Advancement of Time!

Less cynical is a second explanation as to why the busters get so little print and broadcast attention. Here the spotlight is trained upon the still enigmatic nature of this generation as a totality. In other words, the lack of buster attention is not-so-much attributable to demographer-laziness, but is instead the result of busters remaining a question-mark. Typical along these lines are the remarks of Martha Farnsworth Riche, editor of American Demographics: "They are finally out there saying 'Pay attention to us,' but I've never heard them think of a single thing that defines them." 6

This absence of clearly defining characteristics has led to a small but noteworthy panoply, or, perhaps, cacophony, of inconsistent buster generation depictions. Looking over these disparate depictions leads quite easily to a number of inquiries: Is there simply no generational homogeneity among this group of young Americans? Are busters possessed of a split-personality? Are busters pre-adult spirits in adult bodies? Have the busters reconciled idealized desires with the circumstances of life in late-
twentieth century US? Can the busters be understood by boomers and even themselves? Is a little bit of all-the-above possible? Will any unresolved questions remain forever unresolved?

My response to each of these questions will be made clear in subsequent chapters. However, I now desire to convince the reader of just how wide open is the present speculation concerning busters as a generation and even as individuals. Therefore, I’ve assembled below a smattering of the material that has so occupied my attention. Notice how wildly varying are the tones and topics. Notice too the sometimes contradictory conclusions:

* * *

Shoun, who finds himself relatively unscathed by any baby bust downside, suggests his generation possesses distinct advantages. Prime among them is knowing, in advance, the pitfalls of such boomer experiments as yuppiehood.

"I see a lot of young people not going so much with material things as with quality of life," Shoun reports. "They want to live someplace where it’s quiet, instead of someplace that has marble floors. They want a shorter commute, and they want to breath clean air on the weekends."

Indeed, in Shoun’s opinion, perhaps the richest legacy of the baby boomers will be the results of their ill-fated test-runs...."No group (even the boomers) is completely worthless. They can always serve as a bad example." 7

* * *

Whether or not you find yourself laughing at "The Kids in the Hall," the Canadian-made half-hour comedy show with a cult following, stay with them awhile. Their medium contains messages from the twentysomething generation worth reading and perhaps heeding.... The first skit of the new season of "The Kids in the Hall," is fairly typical....It goes like this:

Facing the camera, an ordinary looking man (Scott Thompson) is standing in the woods welcoming the upcoming
spring. The sights, aromas, and sounds of the season excite him, and he says so. He likes "to listen to the song of the birds who’ve returned from their long sojourn south," he says, "and to bury the people I’ve killed during the winter." The camera moves back to reveal a few bodies and piles of dirt.

So deadpan is the skit, so matter of fact in delivery and inert as a piece of videotape, that it's not really shocking. Neither is it funny. Not at least to this fortysomething viewer (and I thought eclectic lover of comedy). Much of the Kids humor is like that in its casual, almost yawning approach to horror. It's not the unpleasantness—of failure and meanness and pain—their humor addresses that makes it generally unfunny to me. Rather it's the tolerance of these things, amounting to a kind of fatalism that turns me off and that, I imagine, leaves a lot of people my age cold or at least bemused.]

* * *

Apparently we are the Peter Pan generation because we’re not racing for an increasingly slim piece of the American Dream Pie. But perhaps we aren’t in any big hurry for the big house in the suburbs with two cars, not merely because we know we have less chance of getting it in a post-crash economy, but because many of us believe that this life-style has made a mess of the environment. Perhaps our attitude towards commitment and marriage means ours will be the lowest divorce rate ever and ours the happiest children.

So I agree with Time magazine’s ultimate conclusion. We are slow, steady, and cynical. That’s why my generation will come out ahead: we won’t make our lives a race.

* * *

When this group enrolled as freshman in 1981, the unemployment rate was 7.5% and rising. Many had older friends and siblings who graduated in 1983—the year the unemployment hit 10.3 percent—and faced what college placement directors say was the worst job market for college graduates since World War II. The sight of those unfortunates pounding the pavement only to go to work selling shoes, made a lasting impression. In addition, parents and relatives lost jobs, were laid off, or gave back wages and benefits..."It can’t help but make you wonder what lies ahead."
Still some busters...say that some of their older co-workers resent members of their generation....A stock analyst at a Wall Street firm, who asked not to be identified,...says there is a different attitude among the newer recruits. "The people in their thirties all had to scrub some floors to get where they are today," she says. "With the younger set, I get the feeling that they don’t think anyone scrub floors." 

* * *

Demographics aren’t the only reason for the baby busters’ assertiveness. To understand this difference, baby boomers have to understand that these people have gone through a different family socialization process....They’ve been brought up in families where the mother and father both work and authority is shared....They learn early that parents and authority figures will not always be there to take care of them. They learn that you’ve got to look out for yourself and keep your options open. 

* * *

Almost any dorm or student lounge provides the first clue that college life is different. Clue is euphemism. Quadrophonic pop rock music blares out deafeningly over a powerful public address system, cheerfully and homogeneously assuming that everyone likes Lionel Richie and that no one wants to talk, or think, or read. A bulletin board announces "ACTIVITES," and it is not the last misspelled word. Punctuation is used at random. If it is early in the afternoon, there will be clusters of students gathered around the television set watching soap operas. They have arranged their schedules around it. At other times, they are watching sports or sitcoms. If there are books other than textbooks around, they are science fantasy or romance. This isn’t a description of a party school. This is what it’s like at selective schools where students come from the top 10 percent of their high school class.

These students aren’t slumming or putting on an act. They are genuinely intellectually underdeveloped....Dormitory counselors report that freshman most frequently come to them because of academic problems. "They’re not well-prepared enough," said one junior who worked as a resident assistant on a freshman floor. "They don’t know what to take or how to study." 

* * *

It’s hard to tell how many rich kids there are with the half-million-dollar inheritances it takes to generate what I think of as enough money to live on without working....
However,...there could be as many as few hundred thousand rich kids tucked away around the country. A rough estimate to be sure, but because of the very covertness of wealth in America and of the strange limbo that rich kids exist in, it is the best that I, or anyone, can do. 14

* * *

Move out, move in. Start school, stop school. Get a job, quit a job. Get married, get divorced. Young adults go back and forth like boomerangs. It's because young adults face increasingly complex choices; they must investigate more options before they can settle into adult life....

They will learn later. When facing so many choices, the best decision may be no decision--at least for a while. Boomeranging is a rational response to changes in our society and economy. It's here to stay. 15

* * *

Most of all, young people want constant feedback from supervisors. In contrast with the baby boomers who disdained evaluations as somehow undemocratic, people in their twenties crave grades, performance evaluations, and reviews. They want a quantification of their achievement. After all, these were the children who prepped diligently for college aptitude exams and learned how to master Rubik's Cube and Space Invaders. They are consummate game players and grade grubbers. "Unlike yuppies, younger people are not driven from within, they need reinforcement," says Penny Erikson, 40, a senior vice at the Young and Rubicam ad agency, which has hired many recent college graduates. "They prefer short-term tasks with observable results." 16

* * *

(The bust generation)...is "less anchored in bedrock ethical values than any other," according to a study by the Josephson Institute for the Advancement of Ethics. "An unprecedented proportion of today's youth lack commitment to core moral values like honesty, personal responsibility, respect for others, and civic duty," concludes the report....17

* * *

Only 30% of Americans under 35 said they had "read a newspaper yesterday." That compares with 67% of young people who answered the question affirmatively in a 1965 Gallup poll. More surprisingly, TV has not filled the gap:
only 41% of young people said they had watched a TV newscast the day before, down from 52% in 1965. . . .

The generation gap has widened drastically in recent years. Surveys conducted in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s showed that young people were just as interested as their elders in major stories like the McCarthy hearings and the Vietnam War. But since the mid-'70s, the under 30 group has been tuning out. The result is a generation that votes less and is less critical of government and business. They are thus an 'easy target of opportunity for those seeking to manipulate public opinion,' the study warns. 18

* * *

Call it the boomer backlash. The busters look around the office and observe the 40-ish crowd, bleary eyed managers who neglect their families and avocations for...what? By the time the boomers have made it, they've had it. This scares the young folk no end....

So the newly enlightened busters begin to make choices. Breaking with a long tradition, these business people seem uncommonly capable of finding ego fulfillment outside of the office.... 19

* * *

Don't invest in real estate partnerships that build small town houses, garden apartments or any other kind of starter housing. There is going to be a glut on the market. That's bad for price, bad for investors, bad for the middle-income, middle-aged who plan to sell their first homes and trade-up.... For baby busters, on the other hand, the news is good: it should gradually get easier to buy a home.... But you won't find weakness everywhere. Strong local economies can produce sharply rising house prices regardless of demographics. 20

* * *

Since the highest involvement in crime occurs among young men from the ages of 15 - 18, urbanologists like Alfred Blumstein of Pittsburgh's Carnegie-Mellon University expected the crime rate to decline along with the number of teenagers. The tail end of the baby boom reached 16 in 1977, and Blumstein predicted that the crime rate would top out a few years later, followed by a peak in the prison population as the younger hoods got enough convictions to land in jail. Sure enough, after 1980 the crime rate began to declining on schedule....

That trend though seems to have reversed itself.... Blumstein offers this explanation: while there are fewer young males generally, there has been a disproportionate
increase of males in the underclass. This group, with all its attendant ills of poverty, alienation, and broken homes is particularly prone to criminal behavior. "What we're seeing," says Blumstein, "is a changing social class composition, and crime correlates with social class."

* * *

Nevertheless, the new generation has in its court the novel desire to synthesize pragmatism and idealism. It's just possible that the busters will figure out how to balance success and personal happiness, how to attack injustice without donning the martyr's mantle, and how to persuade corporate America to support women's rights and the needs of families. Should they pull it off, everyone will benefit from the changes. At the very least, if busters can hang on to their confidence, they'll have a good time trying. "I could always bitch and complain," says Maria Matelios, 26, who works with an organization that helps homeless families get government benefits and find housing. "But really, why should I? I love my work, I earn a living, I live in a decent apartment. Sometimes I think I've got this dirty little secret. I've figured out how to be happy."

* * *

The point of all these quotations is not to confuse the reader. Again, what I wish to impart is a sense of how buster material runs in many directions. Simply put, there is a "messiness" involved in the work I'm concentrating on. As alluded to earlier, the entire notion of a generation is a slippery one, and the available buster literature most certainly reflects that. Finally, the quotations above are intended to highlight how buster data issues from three sources as well as commentary upon them. These three sources are a) detailed writings and interviews of buster individuals, b) empirical studies of buster habits and actions, and c) polling data of buster-aggregates which
attempt to catalogue phenomena that can range from ambitions to nightmares.

d. postponing adulthood

It was mentioned above that a variety of appellations have been employed with which to refer to the bust generation. Despite the typically ephemeral relevance of these alternative titles, many of them are useful in that they bespeak contemporary attributes of busters. One may consider, for example, names such as Twentysomethings, the Boomerang Generation, the Singular Generation, the Tuned-Out Generation, Yiffies, Generation X, Slackers, the MTV Generation, Grunge Kids, the Lost Generation, 13ers, and the Postponed Generation.

The latter in this series--Littwin's "postponed generation"--is the title of her buster-focused text. This "postponed generation" moniker derives rather cleverly from the principal argument that she strives to make. Namely, that it takes this generation ten years longer to reach "adulthood" than was the case for those within the generations preceding it! I'd like to feature this particular theme for a moment so as to provide a few examples of what many would say are salient attributes of the bust generation.
To begin at the end of this tale, among the "evidence" which would seem to bespeak the busters having postponed adulthood is a variety of data describing them. "Boomeranging," for example, is Martha Riche's way of referring to how busters will occasionally sojourn into adult-landia only to bounce back later on:

- On housing: More young adults are living with their parents than at any time since the Depression: for those aged 19-25, the total is over two-thirds. Of those who do move out, about 40 percent return to their parent's home at least once.36

- On education: Four years after high school graduation, only 7 percent of the members of the class of 1982 had a bachelor's degree, versus 15 percent of 1972 high school graduates. The average college graduate now spends slightly more than five years earning a BA degree, up from 4.5 years in 1972. Students are also taking longer to decide on a major: only a third of recent graduates majored in what they planned on as freshman.37

- On working: In 1972, the average male high school dropout got a full-time job by age 22. Now he doesn't find a full-time job until he's 26.38

Add to the above some additional data such as the fluff busters prefer in the print and broadcast media, and you begin to get a sense of why "postponed adulthood" recurs as a theme within the literature. Now granted, the above data is a suspicious assembly with which to argue anything--much less something like postponed adulthood. And indeed, there are compelling reasons as to why this outwardly lackluster showing by the busters is attributable to forces beyond their control. Nonetheless, my point here is to simply display that the busters have delayed traditional notions as
to what folks their age ought to be doing. The critical
inquiry, of course, is "why?"

Littwin's answer issues from an interesting combination
of a) the busters' great expectations, and b) the busters' 
sobering interpretation of the world they're up against.
Understanding the interplay between these two factors as 
well as how they translate into postponed adulthood is an
intricate affair. Moreover, the understanding is predicated 
upon first appreciating both of the a & b factors unto
themselves. This latter objective begins the segment below.
Keep in mind that the macro-theme I'll return to is
postponed adulthood.

e. great expectations, a scary world, and historical
mommets

As regards the busters' great expectations, one may
aptly broach the subject by searching out some "evidence" of
these expectation's existence. Towards this initial end,
consider the following synthesis of buster-polling data as
reported by American Demographics writer Cheryl Russell in
April of 1990:

Also at record levels are the proportions of
students who want to influence social values (41
percent) or the political structure (20 percent). The
share who want to get involved in programs to clean up
the environment (26 percent) is rising after bottoming
out in 1987. The share who want to participate in
community action programs (23 percent) is also growing
as is the share who want to promote racial
understanding (35 percent). Both reached record lows in 1983.

But like the youngest baby boomers, this new generation is out for itself. The share of today’s freshman whose goal is to be very well off financially remains in the stratosphere at 75 percent (up from a low of 39 percent in 1970). The share who say they are in college to make more money is also in the clouds, at 72 percent (up from a low of 50 percent in 1971).39

Some ambitious items here--racial harmony, a clean environment, big paychecks....Questions nonetheless present themselves. For example, aren’t high expectations and wild optimism the prerogative of youth over many instances of both time and space? Indeed, Landon Jones wrote a popular 1980 text on the boom generation and entitled it Great Expectations! Nonetheless, the busters may well have surpassed their boomer predecessors in this regard. As buster-observer John Brown notes, "It’s kind of humorous. The busters have beaten the boomers at their own game. They’ve been out-chutzpahed." 40 Indeed, it’s the opinion of many that we are speaking here of a generation that is after, among other things, a full and happy family-life; all the material trimmings of high living standard; employment that is high-paying/prestigious/important/self-actualizing; independence; and leisure time. 41 Moreover, some have argued that many busters don’t seem too interested in working all that hard to obtain it! In the words of boomer Marion Salzman, editor of the collegiate magazine CV, "The difference between then and now was that we had a higher threshold for unhappiness. I always expected that a job
would be 80% misery and 20% glory, but this generation refuses to pay its dues." 42 Echoing such sentiments is this bit of commentary from Fortune staff writer, Angela Azzaretti, "The busters insist on getting satisfaction from their jobs but refuse to make personal sacrifices for the sake of the corporation.... There's a real clash of values in the workplace right now." 43

The rub of all this descriptive prelude is, of course, to discern from whence these great expectations came. And here is where the saga gets particularly interesting. One explanation reaches back to the '60s and '70s so as to consider the child-rearing practices with which the busters were raised. Susan Littwin explains:

Freedom was everywhere, and there always seemed to be choices. The roles and rules no longer worked and that applied to our relationships with our children as well. If the parents were experimenting with drugs and open marriage, it seemed hypocritical and inappropriate to raise children in the old authoritarian way. We had lots of choices and we offered them lots of choices...."

What we have in this passage is Littwin featuring the first of a few dicta within '60s/'70s child-rearing modus operandi which together add up to encouraging great expectations. Of primary importance here was allowing kids to "do their own thing." Littwin speaks above of adult freedom and the search for an existence unfettered by confining phenomena. Parents had begun to live their lives this way, and it seemed only fitting that their children should as well: Too much rigid structuring could possibly
stifle the creativity, imagination, and natural initiative of young busters. Then what might happen if mom and dad are not around to, let’s say, order the cleaning of one’s room? Better to let the busters do so when they are good and ready for a clean room! At that point, a cultivation of their natural goodness was hoped to proceed.

The importance of allowing busters to "do their own thing" was equally embraced by educators who accented the importance of individualized experiences and actions. "Schools without walls," were among the buzzwords, and it was at these locations where one might embellish a song in lieu of writing a term paper. 45 Either choice--paper or song--was celebrated inasmuch as the key here was "doing your own thing." And how could one fail in this regard?

A second dictum within the '60s/'70s child rearing modus operandi is seen by Littwin as similarly facilitative of great expectations. She colorfully introduces this second phenomenon as follows:

We tend to blame Dr. Spock and the child care establishment for the 'permissive' rearing that came into vogue in the sixties, but they may be taking a bad rap....

What the child care experts did do, at least indirectly, was to create the idea of the professional parent. With all of this available on television talk shows and in magazines and paperback books, raising children could no longer be something that you did by tradition or whim or common sense. There was a right way and a wrong way to put a child to bed, to leave him with a baby-sitter, to get him started at school, to have a friend over. Being a parent was a career, and the harder you worked, the more you gained. From that theorem came the corollary that you couldn’t do enough for your children. So we found activities for them and
drove them there and picked them up. We made spectacular birthday parties and planned elaborate outings. We took enough interest in their schoolwork to learn new math, to find original sources for their reports, and to type them neatly. It was nice if you had an artist friend to do the cover....

This professional parent notion with its concomitant belief that one could never do too much for a child can be seen to link in rather immediately with great expectations. The lavishing of goods and services upon these buster children instilled in many of them a sense of being at the center of things. At its worst, this attitude grew into a grandiose feeling of entitlement. Good things are coming your way, and no big effort is necessary to obtain them.

But wait just a minute....

Something ugly has slithered into the garden! And this, of course, is the aforementioned point made by many that the US has up and become a scarier place relative to when the busters' parents matured. Indeed, one recent poll showed fully 70 percent of busters believe this to be true. And why not? Take your pick of the following debacle-perceptions that many busters dwell upon: older folks have all the money; the job market is mercurial for the lucky and overwhelming, low-paying, or stagnate for the rest; the government is far too burdened by debt to ever help-out the busters; the social security system is going to soak them for years and payback nothing; there's tremendous economic competition from foreign players who are newly emergent; and on and on this goes!
Now stand back a moment, and consider what happens when you situate a perception of "great expectations" next to a perception of "the world as a scarier place." The two phenomena are inconsistent; nonetheless, both attributes would seem to be characteristic of many busters. Perhaps, as Littwin argues, the difficulty in reconciling great expectations with a scary planet explains much of why busters have seemingly "postponed growth." It's painful to stare down the tougher circumstances of life in late twentieth century US, and it's equally difficult to revamp the great expectations instilled at childhood. From this vantage point, deferring adulthood almost makes perfect sense!

Of final importance to understanding this postponement thesis is a rationale largely missed by Littwin, but recurrent in the writings of several others. What we find here is postponed adulthood resulting from this generation having made it well into the 1990s without ever having experienced a significant identity defining moment. Understanding this absence of a common touchstone—and its importance concerning postponed adulthood—can be seen by first acknowledging the galvanizing effect that the late-'60s and early-'70s had upon the boom. Consider, for

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Some might disagree with me here and argue that the Persian Gulf war, fought overwhelmingly by busters, was their equivalent of a defining moment. I am unprepared to believe this for three reasons: US casualties were minimal, the war was brief, and there was no conscription.
example, the sentiments of one early-born buster speaking to his younger brother in a fictional exploration of the bust entitled *Generation X*. We join the two characters while they’re on a family visit to the Vietnam Memorial:

Tyler (the buster’s younger brother) displays a modicum of respect on this visit, that is to say, he doesn’t break out into spontaneous fits of song and dance as he might were we to be at the Clackamus County Mall....‘Andy, I don’t get it. I mean this is a cool enough place and all, but why should you be interested in Vietnam? It was over before you even reached puberty.’

‘I’m hardly an expert on the subject, Tyler, but I do remember a bit of it. Faint stuff; black and white stuff. Growing up, Vietnam was a background color in life, like red, or blue, or gold--it tinted everything. And then suddenly one day it just disappeared. Imagine that one morning you woke up and suddenly the color green had vanished. I come here to see a color that I can’t anywhere else anymore.’

‘Well I can’t remember any of it.’

‘You wouldn’t want to. They were ugly times--.’ I exit Tyler’s questioning.

Okay, yes, I think to myself, they were ugly times. But they were also the only times I’ll ever get--genuine capital H history times, before history was turned into a press release, a marketing strategy, and a cynical campaign tool. And hey, it’s not as if I get to see much history either--I arrived to see a concert in history’s arena just as the final set was finishing. But I saw enough, and today, in the bizarre absence of all time cues, I need a connection to the past of some importance, however wane the connection (emphasis added).

As indicated here, there is a feeling among many busters of having missed the boat in terms of volitionally impacting US society. Vietnam was a defining moment for many people older than these now twentysomethings. Busters themselves have no equally significant experiences, bad or good, upon which to discern their signature. This leaves them, as described above, "in the bizarre absence of all
time cues." How then is it that this might relate to postponed adulthood?

Herbert Rapoport, in a new text on the psychological implications of time, describes the importance of what he refers to as "elan vital." This interpretation of forward moving "energy" is seen as issuing from a "temporal integration" of one's past, present, and future. The past is particularly important insofar as "the essence of one’s ego identity ought to be an accumulation of one’s life's experiences, which serves as a navigational system for a future one projects into." Unfortunately, the busters are largely devoid of any widely shared touchstones by which to register a group consciousness and thereby catalyze collective movement. Unless and until that happens, these newly minted adults will appear to many of themselves and others as stalled, or, as Littwin calls them, postponed. What is it that could possibly happen to turn around this particular aspect of postponement? Will "larger events" force the busters' hand? Alternatively, will the busters themselves create their own "larger events?"

f. summing up

Within this chapter I've attempted to accomplish two macro-objectives. First, to give the reader a sense of how disparate are the speculations concerning the nature of this
generation. Second, to focus upon one empirically verified and widely held attribute that seems to characterize many in this generation--postponed adulthood. My reason for concentrating upon these two objectives is to impart a firm sense of this cohort's question-mark quality.

Having established some of the murkiness I'm working with, let me hasten to add that all is not lost! I have used the alternative scenario chapters of my dissertation to become much more specific in cataloging a) speculation concerning the tentatively perceived attributes of the bust, and b) speculation concerning the possible future impacts of this generation. All of this follows the next chapter on cohort analysis as a social sciences methodology.

ENDNOTES


24. Farnsworth, p.57.

26. Zoglin, p.64.
27. Deutschman, p.44.
30. Liu, p.17.
31. Liu, p.17.
32. Liu, p.17.
34. Littwin, p.245.
35. Littwin, p.245.
36. Farnsworth, p.25.
37. Farnsworth, p.27.
38. Farnsworth, p.30.
41. Littwin, p.16.
42. Cray et al, p.60.
44. Littwin, p.20.

49. Coupland, p.151.

a. the power of generational analyses

I begin this chapter on "cohort analysis as a forecasting methodology" by elaborating upon why anyone should pay attention to this whole business in the first place. In the simplest of terms, my initial response derives from noting that in a constitutional democracy like that of the US, people will--to some extent--get what they ask for. As such, any changes within the make up of our citizenry (read inputs) is of fundamental importance to forecasting whatever might issue from our politics as mediated by formal institutions (read outputs). Granted, there are many analysts who might take issue with me here and point instead to the importance of the "formal institutions" themselves. And I can see their argument. So too can I see the argument of those who would like to place the accent upon the international milieu, or technological changes, or charismatic leaders, or wildcard events, or the boomers, or...! My response to each is to simply claim that I am not trying to deny that a wealth of phenomena move and shake this planet in mercurial ways over time and space. Neither am I trying to establish a rigorous primacy or hierarchy among the panoply of change-inducers and their crisscrossing feedback loops. My attempt is a much more
modest exploration of a simple theme: Stated in question-
format this theme is, "What might distinguish busters, and
what might be their macro-influences?" I find the inquiries
important because I believe they have some measure (however
elusive) of forecasting and explanatory power.

Implicit in this claim is, of course, the idea that
different generations are in some ways unique. And much of
what I hope came across in my last chapter is an
appreciation of how the busters are not simply younger
copies of those who have preceded them. What I wish to do
now, however, is to mix a few cohort-specific discussions
(the busters included), with larger analyses of the generic
phenomena that act to differentiate generations. In doing
so, my hope is that the reader will gain a deeper
appreciation of how generations-as-a-notion constitutes a
powerful unit of conception and analysis.

* * *

The work of futurist Jim Dator can be helpfully used to
launch an investigation of "generations generally" by
describing "generationally demarcating influences." More
specifically, Dator speaks of alternatives "...in diet,
child-rearing practices, (and) significant commonly-shared
social events,..." Examples in the latter of this array
can be seen to include events such as war, medical
discoveries, economic fluctuations, technological changes,
epidemics, educational emphases, rousing leaders (and maybe

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their assassination), etc. Admittedly, any of these phenomena can affect a number of different generations simultaneously, but (and importantly!), impacts are often variously assimilated as per the age of a given cohort. Consider, for example, how technological changes in the work-place mandating a greater accent on team abilities might be more easily adopted by new entrants into the work-force than would be the case for older workers long habituated to a less interactive role. Likewise, Dator’s mention of child-rearing practices is a particularly poignant phenomenon with which to see how singular changes can entail a variety of age-specific impacts. Sociologist Anthony Esler elaborates:

Students of the authoritarian personality allegedly prevalent in modern totalitarian states have pointed not only to such structural factors as rigid patriarchalism in German families, but also to the swaddling of Russian children or to the toilet-training practices of the Japanese as partial explanations for the exaggerated need of these peoples for authority in later life. And child-rearing techniques also change over time, with consequent differentiation between generations. Changes in emphasis from discipline to permissiveness, for instance, from such maxims as ‘spare the rod and spoil the child’ to watchwords like ‘togetherness’ or ‘be a pal to your son’ bring radical differences in the nature and effects of this first shaping matrix in the life of any generation. ²

In further substantiating the import of Dator’s "changes in diet, child rearing practices, and significant commonly shared social experiences," one can helpfully take a look at generations’ lesser importance historically. In other words, an appreciation of generations as an organizing
concept can be convincingly substantiated by looking to the concept’s particular significance in contemporary times.

Annie Kriegal, Professor of Political Sociology at the University of Paris explains:

In traditional societies, whose movement is so slow that they seem in retrospect almost immobile, what purpose could a division into generations serve? Reproducing themselves identically, with the same replacing the same, these societies seemed to follow a cyclical pattern—the yearly cycle of the seasons, and the timeless cycle of the gods. When such societies had to conceptualize discontinuity, a possible rupture of the cycle, they had no way to imagine middle solutions: thought turned at once to Apocalypse. And even when the pace of change increased somewhat, when mankind in its entirety truly entered history, these societies encountered innovation only from time to time; instances of realized potentialities for change were too few and far between. One generation was much too short a time. More substantial units had to be employed; hence, the era (Christian), the epoch (modern, defined in contrast to the ten centuries of the Middle Ages), the century of Louis the XIV. 3

As might be imagined, Kriegal continues her ever-shortening sequence of "eras to epochs to centuries" with the final emergence of generational identities. The kicker to all of this is, of course, the quickening pace of change that characterizes so much of Western society in particular. These changes can be political, economic, technological, philosophical, medical, and on and on. The totality of these changes serves as an imprinting factor upon people within a scale of time that has presently shrunk to substantially less than that of an average human’s life-span. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the manifestations of imprinting moments will be relative to the age and
accumulated experience of any given individual. Consider, for example, the light of these theoretical bones when plied to the following bit of history as interpreted by Esler:

In the minds of greying makers of American foreign policy in the 1960s, the appeasement policy of the thirties, climaxing in the betrayal of Czechoslovakia to Hitler at Munich in 1938, was a living reality, vividly remembered from their own youth. The disastrous failure of that policy to avert a world war had burned a lesson into the very souls of their generation: Appeasement of aggressors leads not to 'peace in our time'—but to more aggression and a wider war. These men thought they saw a parallel, a clear and vivid analogy between Nazism and Communism, between Hitler's nibbling away at German border areas in the 1930s and the foreign sponsored guerilla conflict in Southeast Asia in the 1960s. Their solution was to stand firm, and fight if need be, rather than appease an enemy.

To the young militants of the American Peace Movement of the 1960s, of course, all this was ancient history. An 'analogy' with the medieval crusades or the Pelopponesian War would have carried just as much weight. 4

The point here is not to say that generations are necessarily antagonistic. Rather, the upshot is that the predilections, tone, and "common sense" of any given cohort is linked to its age within time's historical and ongoing procession. As Kriegal puts it, "The distance between age groups then is no longer simply a passage of time, filled by nothing except the passage of life itself and its ability in turn to produce new life, but a sum of changes which impose singularity on a generation....A generation is now defined as the generation of electricity, of television, or of blue jeans." 5
This much of the story I wish to emphasize before moving along: Generations have emerged in many parts of the world as a result of increases in a broadly defined rate of change which substantively impacts different age-groups variously. That, in a nutshell, is this subsection's forest for the trees. It is the priority point that I now wish to further substantiate with a few "lesser items." In the process I will hopefully further the intent of this subsection's title--the power of generational analyses!

Among these "lesser items" serving to solidify generational identities are a number of interrelated phenomena including the many ways in which industrialized societies have regimented themselves on an age-basis. One may consider, for example, the early-life dominance of institutions including education and defense--large institutions serving a large society. At life's other end, one may consider the popularity of senior-housing and senior-activities after an often mandatory retirement. All of this rather obviously bears upon the buttressing of generational identities insofar as we naturally tend to bond with those we interact with. And what of mid-life years spent in the work-force? Responsibilities here are frequently the result of tenure and/or ability. Tenure is obviously age-based, but so too can the accumulation of ability tether itself to generational identities: Borrowing a third and final passage from the aforecited Kriegal, she
explains that "...since the dynamic sector of the new society not only was supposed to, but, in fact, did rest on selection by a certain type of merit--by ability as one used to say--what could be easier than to evaluate one’s personal trajectory, one’s career, by comparing it to that of one’s friends who started at the same time?"  

A final point serving to solidify generational identities is the historical expansion in life expectancy due to improvements in nutrition, sanitation, and medicine. It is not unreasonable to believe that you and many of your childhood friends will make it to some semblance of old age. Why not, therefore, form links with one’s peers that reflect the depth of such a cherished prospect? 

* * *

Having sung the praises of generations as roughly identifiable and important, it’s equally critical to note that a number of factors most certainly confound and limit the task. Indeed, the increasing rate of change may well be proceeding at such a clip that it could translate into a future wherein US cohort analyses become out-and-out impossibilities. But this gets ahead of the story a little too quickly. I’d like to first describe a few less grave, but still noteworthy matters which possibly complicate even contemporary cohort analyses.
b. life-stages versus cohort-specificity

Much of what I wish to depict in this segment can be helpfully introduced with the thoughtful words of microbiologist Rene Dubos. The following is from his Pulitzer Prize winning text of 1969, *So Human an Animal*:

The social role of the rebel is symbolized by Honore' Daumier's picture *L'Emeute* (The Uprising) in the Phillips Memorial Gallery in Washington D.C. The painting presents a revolutionary outbreak in nineteenth century Paris. A handsome young man, with outstretched arms and clenched fists, is leading a crowd which appears hypnotized by his charismatic determination. His expression is intense, yet his dreamer's eyes are not focused on any particular object, person, or goal. He contemplates a distant future so indistinct that he probably could not describe the precise cause for which he and his followers are risking their lives. 8

Dubos' discussion of this young man angles quite close to what a number of social theorists call a "life-stage." 1 Life-stages are intended to denote time periods within lifetimes that come complete with a) personality characteristics and b) issues to be negotiated. Importantly, life-stage issues and life-stage characteristics are typically depicted as constant over extended periods of time and space. To take a simple set of examples, consider the following sequence of age-related

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1 Note that the phraseology here varies from theorist to theorist, but the concept is similar. See, for example, the work of Erik Erikson, Daniel Levinson, Thomas Blank, Gene Bocknek, John Scanlon, and Marlis Buchmann.
issues and the behavioral manifestations they often
effectuate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>Possible Result:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>understand surroundings</td>
<td>&quot;Why is sky blue?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ages 0-10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peer conformity</td>
<td>&quot;What clothes are cool?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ages 10-20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>security</td>
<td>get married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ages 20-30)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>become successful</td>
<td>60 hour work week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ages 30-40)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mid-life crisis</td>
<td>buy sportscar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ages 40-45)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tranquility/integrity</td>
<td>walk in the park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ages 65-)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This abbreviated enumeration has been bandied about to
such an extent that each facet is now a part of our social
stereotyping. And while that may be either good or bad, the
point being made here is that a cohort analysis of any given
generation has to separate out the life-stage constants from
that which is cohort-specific. It’s obvious to say that the
task is a difficult one. It’s less obvious to say that the
task may also be the mistaken mandate of cohort-centrism....

What?! Matilda White Riley, Professor of Political
Economy and Sociology at Bowdoin College, argues that there
is very little to this claim of universal life-stages
culminating in some inexorable form of pre-ordained "life-
course." That which leads people into believing at all otherwise is the trap of cohort-centrism. Stated simply, the problem here is one of over-generalizing from studies of a single cohort's maturation over time. The point becomes clear with a few illustrations. Particularly compelling in this regard are the ruminations of Cheryl Merser.

Merser's late-'80s text entitled Grown-Ups begins with a critique of Gail Sheehy's enormously popular mid-'70s book entitled Passages. Passages, purports to be a "road-map" to the "predictable and inevitable" ups and downs of adult growth. Merser explains:

According to Sheehy's staircase, you'll break away from your parents at about age eighteen. If you're a man, you'll choose a career in your twenties and, usually, a partner, and then reassess your partner and career as thirty approaches. If you're a woman, the easy way out after breaking from your parents is 'to turn to your uterus,' to become a mother first thing, though you might try working for a while before settling down. In their early thirties, couples will be buying houses, men working purposefully at their careers, women raising the family; at that age, Sheehy writes, 'Men in particular concern themselves with making it.' The 'deadline decade,' ages thirty-five to forty-five, is life's half-time, a time, Sheehy says, 'of danger and opportunity,' your last chance to get the life you want together. After a successful all-out mid-life crisis, 'at fifty, there is a new warmth and mellowing.'

The only problem with all of this, explains Merser, is that she was unable to find herself in any of Passages' pages:

How, in other words, can you have a career crisis if you haven't yet found the right career or even a job? How can you feel trapped by a mortgage if you can't afford a house? How can you have a seven year marital itch if you're still single by the time you're
thirty? How can you have an all-out mid-life crisis at thirty-five if you’re attending your first Lamaze class? How can you suffer the empty nest syndrome if you’re childless and approaching forty? How can you deal with the predictable ups and downs of a marriage if both of you are working all the time and never see each other?  

The dilemma being depicted here is a vivid example of cohort-centrism in action. More specifically, Passages describes a typical life-course as experienced by the now fifty- and sixty-something generation. The characteristics and issues attending their life-stages do not match with those of succeeding and preceding generations. Similar instances of cohort-centrism abound:

Consider this example. Cumming and Henry concluded from the cohort they were studying that old people "naturally" disengage (withdraw) from society. But when we examined another cohort, the cohort of young men who were unemployed during the Great Depression, we found that these young men also tended to disengage. Thus the cohort comparison indicated that not necessarily age at all, but exclusion from the labor force was the major precursor of disengagement.

Other analysts of the Great Depression’s cohort-impacts include Angus Campbell et al. Writing in their 1960 text, The American Voter, the authors noted that "...the evidence seems to justify our conclusion that the Great Depression swung a heavy proportion of the young electors toward the Democratic Party and gave that party a hold on that generation, which it has never fully relinquished." In other words, contrary to the cohort-centric notion of people naturally becoming more conservative with age, these now
very senior citizens have remained among the most
democratic-leaning of all age-bracketed voting groups. 13

Finally, the aforementioned Matilda White Riley—author
of the term "cohort-centrism"—provides a concluding
illustration of this fallacy in action which some would
argue is of particular relevance to the busters:

...as the Vietnam War has given way to such new
critical issues as inflation and unemployment, today’s
cohorts of college students are more job-oriented, less
dedicated to ‘causes’ than the activists cohorts of the
1960s. Or, with reports of mounting crime and violence
in the society, today’s cohorts of young Americans are
more likely to urge capital punishment than were their
more humanitarian counterparts just a few years ago. 14

Riley argues that what causes so many social theorists
to lapse into the trap of cohort-centrism is their not
perceiving the continuing interplay between two dynamics.
On the one hand you have social change, and, on the other,
you have the psychology of aging. The kicker to
appreciating how these phenomena feedback upon one another
lies in acknowledging that they change at different tempos--
and neither of these tempos remains constant. In the
writer’s words, "Whatever the nature of the process of
social change and stability—whether they are short-term or
long-term, disintegrative or reconstitutive—societal
processes are certainly not synchronized with the lifetimes
of the people progressing through the social structure in
endless succession." 15

Riley’s fixation upon the absurdity of attempting to
build a reified and rigorous model of aging seems

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additionally justified with her noting that even physiological attributes such as life expectancy and age of menarche are not irrevocably ordained. Moreover, any bodily changes concerning such phenomena engender enormous psychological consequences. And what of any related medical advances or lack thereof in contemporary times? The AIDS epidemic, to take just one example, has brought an entirely new dimension to the psychology of sexual decision-making.

The overall upshot here is that one generation's understanding of what it ought to be doing at any given age may no longer make sense to a later generation. Indeed, Riley goes so far as to claim that the only universal within the aging enterprise is that life-course patterns are continually subject to change. \(^{16}\)

I like a great deal of this author's dismissal of life-stage theories that are either overly reified or overly rigorous. My reasons are two-fold, with the first being pointed-out by Riley herself:

> Just consider the consequences if a mother must assume abnormality in a baby that does not discover its own hand by age six weeks, if a man must expect a midlife crisis between age forty and forty-five, if a mathematician must assume at age thirty that he or she is necessarily past the peak, or if a worker at age sixty-five must be regarded as necessarily unable to earn a living!

Cohort-centric theories can produce such stereotypes....Becoming self-fulfilling prophecies, they have consequences for social change. \(^ {17}\)

Second, my embrace of Riley's sentiments is also tied to a faith that the busters have inaugurated a widespread "pre-
adult, post-adolescent phase" within their collective life-course. This phase receives far too little treatment in the work of long-standing, life-stage theorists. And while that may change, its contemporary absence casts a great deal of suspicion to my mind's eye upon the whole enterprise of enumerating highly specific issues and manifestations that are universal in some kind of a tightly age-bracketed manner. My scenario-discussions of the busters reflect this suspicion in that all borrowing and application of life-stage material vis-a-vis what we can expect from this generation in future years will be either a) quite general as opposed to specific and/or b) explicitly qualified.

c. the possible death of US cohort analyses

It was mentioned earlier that too much change, whether good or bad, can confound an ability to say a whole lot about large aggregations of people. Granted, it does not have to be that way: Sign up for a personal change such as time at rapid weight loss camp, Harvard's School of Law, or military training and see just how quickly you become like a good deal of other folks! But to speak here of generational entities, we are necessarily forced into macro-realm considerations. This entails characterizing the dynamic impacts of micro-realm options as a totality. And these micro-realm options have multiplied not only in a
quantitative sense, but as well in the qualitative distances constituting the spectrum (more on this later). Add to this confusion the fact that many US citizens now begin each day from wildly disparate go-points. Add as well the total impact of changes in what were formerly "international constants." -- Suddenly, you begin to get a sense of the difficulty involved in speaking of generational-attributes should the rate of change continue to go thundering forward.

Much of what is being abstractly described above can be a bit more firmly appreciated by way of a few examples. Therefore, I shall feature a few illustrations in a subsection below entitled, "the melting pot versus the salad bowl." Keep in mind that within this segment I am not trying to portray good and bad. My point is to instead depict the difficulty which attends formulating contemporary US cohort analyses. Again, this difficulty is ultimately due to aspects of the rate of change becoming too frequent an imprinting factor. On the heels of this melting pot discussion is an additional subsection entitled "technology as a two-edged sword, twice over" This too might initially appear as an additional attempt to further qualify the shrinking efficacy of cohort-analyses. But it's not that easy. And the reasons why are important enough to make explicit.
d. the melting pot versus the salad bowl

The conditions of growing up in late-twentieth century USA stand in tremendous contrast to the conditions of growing up in mid-century USA. That is an understatement. Among the altered circumstances of growing up today are "...a very wide spectrum of socialization experiences, socioeconomic backgrounds, and adult and peer role models...." Consider, for example, the following passage by demographers Stephen Mintz and Susan Kellogg in their 1988 text entitled Domestic Revolutions:

A generation ago Ozzie, Harriet, David, and Ricky Nelson epitomized the American family. Over 70 percent of all American households in 1960 were like the Nelsons: made up of Dad the breadwinner, mom the homemaker, and their children. Today, 'traditional' families consisting of a breadwinner father, a housewife mother, and one or more dependent children account for less than 15 percent of the nation's households. As American families have changed, the image of the family portrayed on television has changed accordingly. Today's television families vary enormously, running the gamut from traditional families like "The Waltons" to two-career families like the Huxtables on "The Cosby Show" or the Keatons on "Family Ties"; "blended" families like "The Brady Bunch," with children from previous marriages; two single mothers and their children on "Kate and Allie"; a homosexual who serves as a surrogate father on "Love Sidney"; an unmarried couple who cohabit in the same house on "Who's the Boss?": and a circle of friends who think of themselves as a family, congregating at a Boston bar on "Cheers." Simultaneous changes also attend the increasingly diverse racial and ethnic make-up of US citizens. As regards ethnicity, this attribute can be seen to work its diversity-inducing magic in a number of ways. First is the
simple arithmetic of in-migration and fertility: On one hand are the descendants of longstanding US families having less and less children. On the other hand are increasing levels of diverse, new in-migrants who are often possessed of high fertility.

Second, and equally important to the aforementioned magic of ethnicity as a diversity-inducer, is a movement among minority communities towards embracing a more individualized assimilation-model. Ramsey Pederson of the Hawaii Community College System refers to this model as "cultural pluralism." In the passages below he both describes this emergent model and maps out the terrain in which it can be seen as situated:

- Anglo Conformity: This model assumes the centrality of the English language and culture as the standard for American society. This entails the acculturation of the immigrant to WASP values and behaviors, substituting new behaviors for those of one's ethnic subculture. Traditional behaviors and personality structures are replaced. The immigrant sees himself as the member of a group whose culture is inferior to that of the dominant society, and strives to minimize his ethnic differences. This strategy is obviously easier for Caucasian immigrants....

- The Melting Pot: This model is more egalitarian (than the above), calling for the intermixing of people. The role of America as a haven of the "huddled masses" of Europe at the turn of the Twentieth Century gave rise to the model. Assimilation is viewed in a different light: new immigrants would amalgamate and produce a new interethnic composite. The success of the image in America was limited along racial and religious lines....Some race relations specialists believe it takes at least six generations for the assimilation of a nonwhite group into the mainstream of American society, and some, like Blacks will always face high degrees of prejudice and discrimination.
- Cultural Pluralism: The third major model of assimilation utilizes a strategy of voluntary ethnic communality. Ethnic ties, language, culture, kin and friendship patterns are considered to be of extreme importance, central to the individual's identity. There is little desire here to give up one's basic identity and conform to a homogenized standard of behavior. Pluralism tests both tolerance and cooperative spirit between groups. It entails the acceptance of the right to be different, yet still allow the individual equal access to the resources of the community. Basic access to social, economic, educational, and political resources must be maintained, or the minority group seeking to assert its individuality will be marginalized.

Pederson's enumeration forms a wonderful springboard into an array of important questions— not the least of which is one alluded to by his concluding statements: To wit, what will happen to any minority group seeking to assert its cultural uniqueness should that uniqueness lack the acquisitive and assertive side of a WASP orientation? Would such a group be able to secure for itself any access to the social, economic, educational, and political resources necessary to prosper? Moreover, can the relationship between all of society's diverse elements be such that we enjoy and even "profit" from the rapport as a national entity within an international system?

These and other considerations will be featured within the alternative scenario segments of my later chapters. However, for the moment, please recall that my point here is simply to describe the increasing difficulty of conducting cohort analyses. Again, this tendency is grounded within
the individualizing and diversity-creating aspects of elements constituting today's rate of change.

e. technology as a two-edged sword, twice over

At their worst, debates about technology are cast between a combination of unfettered enthusiasts and equally unfettered doomsayers. The latter argue that technologies will continue to dehumanize and overwhelm us, whereas the former claim that technologies will continue to liberate and fulfill our longings. It seems to me that a middling diagnosis is warranted. The aforecited Jim Dator offers one interpretation:

In addition it is doubtful whether certain types of technology are superior to others, per se. Small (or large) may or may not be beautiful. Scale is not the only criterion. It certainly does not seem likely that agricultural technologies--which wrought such incredible changes in human life thousands of years ago--are naturally superior to industrial ones. Is it more human to get up with the chickens than to get up with an alarm clock or a factory whistle? What is the inherent nobility in milking a cow twice a day every day of one's life, rather than tightening a screw on an assembly line forty hours a week? Why is a sabretooth tiger less dehumanizing than an automobile? And those questions are not made in defence of the moral superiority factory whistles, assembly lines, or automobiles, necessarily. Rather all technologies both restrain and liberate us, and we should evaluate them in terms of whether they help us live the way we wish to live or not, and whether we are so reactionary that we prefer the certainties of past technological arrangements to the uncertainties and possibilities of new ones.

When viewed from this perspective, technology becomes something of a two-edged sword which can be equally plied to
either good or evil. But there is a bit more at work here. Technologies feedback to their human creators and may actually alter the subsequent way in which perceptions and judgements are made. As Dator convincingly puts it:

For good or ill (and it may be ill), humans become humans and change the meaning of what it is to be human (i.e., change 'human nature') in large measure by interacting with themselves and their environment through their technologies. The technological-human relationship is thus symbiotic and not parasitical. We may think that the interrelationship is trivial, but in fact humans have been, are, and will be further changed by the interaction. We may think the interaction is demonic (probably because many of the changes which occur are unanticipated), but who we are now is largely a consequence of changes which occurred through past interactions, and it is dubious whether we should attempt to make the present immutable when its own characteristics are in part only the result of past interactions with technology which altered earlier human conditions. 23

The concept takes a while to get used to. Some of its trickiness abates after plugging in an example or two. I'd like to do this now, borrowing from futurist Christopher Dede, and then explain how all of this discussion bears upon the construction of cohort analyses.

- A word processor with spelling checker, thesaurus, typing tutor, and graphics tool is the beginning of an empowering environment for writing. Even the early versions of this type of cognition enhancer have an interesting property: their usage by a person unconsciously alters the style of task performance!

  For example, as a result of using a word processor, I no longer can write well with a pencil and paper. I used to compose a sentence by thinking for a couple of minutes and setting down a final version that was about 90% of optimal; I 'took my one best shot' because making changes later would involve massive physical cutting and pasting. Now I write by thinking for half a minute and typing in a sentence that is perhaps 40% of optimal, think for another 15 seconds and make a change (now 50%), another change a few
seconds later (65%), and so on. The same amount of time is required to get to the 90% level, but my psychological momentum is behind revision and polishing rather than producing a single 'finished' product, and no cognitive dissonance bars the sentence from eventually evolving to optimal.

However, when I try to write with a pencil using this new, superior strategy--disaster! Most people who use word processors (music tools, databases, spreadsheets) experience the same unconscious shift in style. In a world of intelligent empowering environments, the ways we accomplish tasks may alter.

My reason for including both the quotation and earlier discussion above is to make explicit two points. First, with the notable exception of Dator's second set of comments, there is a temptation to unequivocally cast technology as a diversifying and ergo further impediment to cohort analyses (i.e., one may even consider the active pursuit of individualizing technologies including everything from walkmans and cable TV to the evermore common use of virtual realities). However, to portray technological changes as entirely diversity-inducing (and hence confounding cohort analyses) would be a mistake. Technology is more aptly construed as a two-edged sword, twice over: Not only can it be plied to purposes that are either good or evil, so too can technology be wielded as a force that is either individualizing or homogenizing. Perhaps the most compelling example of technology as homogenizing is George Orwell's 1984. But illustrations need not be that sinister. My favorite portrayal of technology as a homogenizing influence is the shoe store of the future(!):
"Imagine if you will," walking into a pleasantly decorated and pleasingly advertised shoe store. An electronic voice greets you from a stylized interface and control panel. You describe what you want while perhaps being prompted by a video-disc of 54,000 demo models. After selecting what looks close, you're then given the opportunity to enter in any alterations you might desire. This completed, it's time to place your foot in a light sensitive device so as to be measured for a truly tailored fit. The voice returns to inform you of a ten minute wait while the shoes are being made. You're immediate options are to play one of the ample video games, or, perhaps, to watch your new shoes being put together. And it's robots of course who perform this latter task. They cut the leather from a single roll, press it to the proper width, dye and etch it, etc., right on through to the packaging and delivery of your purchase!

Such technological advances may well lead us into a "superindustrial model" of society that has faced down the threat of international competition by dramatically reducing labor costs. Consider, for example, how in the above shoe store there are no clerks, there are no shoe factory workers, there are no inventory personnel. The shoe store is a workplace of intelligent objects--inexpensive chips for the most part. And it's not just shoe stores to which such notions are relevant. "AutoShoe" applies to any type of
semi-standard production needs. Of critical importance here are certain of superindustrialism's side-effects. A world of smart machines requires only stupid people to operate them. Granted, you have society's top three percent running around creating all of this interesting stuff, but mid-level, and many low-level positions have been eliminated. The resulting situation is not stable.

My summary point here is simply to re-emphasize that technology's impact upon cohort analyses is both elusive and mercurial. AutoShoe depicts a homogenizing effect via making everyone unemployed and dependent, whereas a home satellite dish tends to foster diversity by abetting uniquely individual identities. Technology's dual sidedness will be featured "between the lines" in the alternative scenarios which follow.

f. generation-focused theories of long-term change

The reader will recall that I have entitled this dissertation-chapter "On Generations Generally." In keeping with this overall topic, I would like shift gears for a moment and describe a few of what are fairly called generation-focused theories of long-term change.

To situate this particular discussion within a larger context, allow me to explain that my own tendency is to categorize generation-theorists into three groups. Type 1
theorists are those who target—wittingly or unwittingly—a single generation, and then write of it. When interpreted broadly, this group is the largest of the three. It includes a number of books quoted earlier such as Sheehy’s *Passages*, (1976); Jones’ *Great Expectations*, (1980); and Coupland’s *Generation X*, (1991). Other installments in this category—again, when interpreted broadly—encompass what is arguably some of this country’s truly influential writing. Twentieth century highlights include Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, (1963); Riesman’s *The Lonely Crowd*, (1950); Hemenway’s *A Farewell to Arms*, (1929); Fitzgerald’s *This Side of Paradise*, (1920); and Adams’ *The Education of Henry Adams* (1906).

A second, smaller grouping of generation-theorists include the bulk of writers featured earlier in this chapter: Type 2 theorists such as Riley, Kriegal, Dator, and Esler who write of generations as a generic concept. The concept itself is typically deemed to have a wide applicability, but an applicability that can and has changed over time. Type 2 theorists are people who concern themselves with questions such as "What are the methodological strengths and weaknesses of using a generations-filter in attempting to understand the past, present, and future?" Type 2 theorists are also people who see the generational dynamic as more of a theme to be explored, rather than a theory to be propounded. 26
The third, and smallest group of generation-theorists are those who construct what are fairly called generation-focused theories of long-term change. In other words, Type 3 theorists discern a repeating and durable generational dynamic which a) explains much of history and b) forecasts much of the future. Type 3 theorists differ only in the extent to which they provide substantive details regarding their combination of forecasted futures and historical alignments. A small sampling of this work appears in the pages to follow along with my critique.

As a final bit of preamble, allow me to mention that I have a number of reasons for wishing to feature these speculations and forecasts. First of all, they may be right! (I'll argue, however, that demography is not the long-term, deterministic destiny that these authors wish to champion.) Moreover, to the obvious credit of these theorists, their work is quite colorful as well as useful in gaining a comfortable sense as to how the generational dynamic can be plied. Finally, taking a look at the work of these writers provides an opportunity to at least touch upon a few of this country's earlier generations.

I begin with an easy one. David Schuman, Professor of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst provides the following narrative:

Several years ago while eating dinner, my oldest daughter and I had a talk. She was telling me about the wonders of disco, how it was the greatest thing ever, and how it would never die. I made a very big
bet with her that she was wrong. (I was right, but have yet to collect.)

When my second daughter was in the second grade, a few years ago, she decided that punk was the only thing to be. I offered to have her hair dyed purple. She refused, but assured me that someday everyone would be punk and have purple hair.

Had my daughters been right, then this generation would now be at a disco. They would have purple hair and be wearing chains. I do not see that at all.

My oldest daughter is now studying for her college boards. She is trying to figure out which college she wants to go to. My other daughter has very pretty brown hair and wears things that go with her pretty blue eyes. She was on the honor roll her first year in high school.

That, I believe, has a lot to do with what this generation is. In many ways, it is like one of the generations I grew up in. I grew up once in the 1950s and once in the 1960s. (I guess I was a slow learner.) This generation is much like the fifties, only with computers and birth control pills.

I am convinced that for every clean and quiet generation, there seems to be a dirty and rowdy one. If you are uneasy with what you are expected to do and be, know that your turn will come.

Put differently, if you really believe that you have found the answer to traditional American questions, the next generation will tell you that you are wrong. Today’s disco is tomorrow’s hoola-hoop; today’s president is tomorrow’s Richard Nixon.

Put differently still, the underlying issues--like individualism, friendship, and bureaucracy--remain virtually unchanged. Each generation simply puts on a different mask to face them. 27

As individuals mature, many develop an anomalous sense of a generational dynamic at work. Schuman’s work is a quaint and cozy reflection of that. But his ruminations are hardly the summation of what can be done here. Indeed, Schuman’s work is nearly devoid of any detail to substantively describe the future he alludes to. Enter here a contrast: William Strauss and Neil Howe!
In their 1991 text entitled *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to 2069*, Strauss and Howe ambitiously posit the historical and/or contemporary existence of 18 successive generations which have occurred since this country’s colonial days. These 18 generations are deemed to exist within five generational cycles of which four are complete. Each cycle runs very close to an average of 88 years insofar as cycles proceed according to a certain pattern. The key to understanding this pattern is the generational entity itself.

Individual generations are judged to accumulate at roughly 22 year intervals. This is so inasmuch as what transpires at these 22 year markers is the repeating occurrence of either a) a spiritual awakening, b) a secular crisis, or c) the mid-way point between "a" and "b" when the ossification of living with the last "a" or "b" begins to take shape. 28 (Since a "c" separates each "a" and "b," and since we are speaking here of 22-year markers, the reader will note that approximately 44 years separates each spiritual awakening and secular crisis.) Catalyzing these boundary-creating culminations is the raw material of generations themselves--the people. Understanding why this is so involves first acknowledging the authors’ claim that it takes any given individual roughly 22 years to complete dealing with a single and overriding, age-bracketed social role. There are four of these social roles which include:
dependence for youths (ages 1-21), activity for young adults (ages 22-43), leadership for midlifers (ages 44-65), and, finally, stewardship for elders (ages 66-87). Assuming, for the moment, that the generational cycle is already in play, these phase-of-life social roles grow increasingly cumbersome over time for those at helm of any given generation to whom they have been bequeathed. It is this helm of any 22 year generational cohort who agitate in such a way as to insure that the aforementioned and ordered a, b, or c actually transpires. Moreover, once the a, b, or c phenomenon begins to take shape, so too will it serve to catalyze changes in people above and beyond the generational helm who initiated the a, b, or c in the first place. In other words, change-inducement as depicted by this equation works two ways: people change boundaries, and boundaries change people. In still other words, social roles change over time and thereby catalyze societal shifts which then reinforce changes in one’s social role.

The culminating upshot here is this: first, there are four distinguishable generations in existence at any given moment; and, second, generations with similar characteristics recur in a repeating order within the aforementioned generational cycles of 88 years. Skeletal descriptions of these four generational archetypes are given by Strauss and Howe as follows:

1. A dominant, inner fixated IDEALIST GENERATION grows up as increasingly indulged youths after a secular crisis;
comes of age inspiring a spiritual awakening; fragments into narcissistic rising adults; cultivates principle as moralistic midlifers; and emerges as visionary elders guiding the next secular crisis.

2. A recessive REACTIVE GENERATION grows up as underprotected and criticized youths during a spiritual awakening; matures into risk-taking, alienated rising adults; mellows into pragmatic midlife leaders during a secular crisis; and maintains respect (but less influence) as reclusive elders.

3. A dominant, outer fixated CIVIC GENERATION grows up as increasingly protected youths after a spiritual awakening; comes of age overcoming a secular crisis; unites into a heroic and achieving cadre of rising adults; sustains that image while building institutions as powerful midlifers; and emerges as busy elders attacked by the next spiritual awakening.

4. A recessive ADAPTIVE GENERATION grows up overprotected and suffocated youths during a secular crisis; matures into risk-averse, conformist rising adults; produces indecisive midlife arbitrator-leaders during a spiritual awakening; and maintains influence (but less respect) as sensitive elders. 31

When the authors refer to two of these generational archetypes as "dominant" and two as "recessive," they precisely operationalize the use of these terms. Specifically, the first and third types are dominant insofar as Idealists redefine the inner world of values and culture; whereas Civics rebuild the outer world of technology and institutions. The other two types are deemed recessive by virtue of acting to check the excesses of their more powerful neighbors: Reactives perform this role as pragmatists while Adaptives do so as ameliorators. 31

As alluded to in all of this, issues may change from cycle to cycle for any time-specific manifestation of one generational archetype, but the players’ behavioral
predispositions are seen as largely identical as per the four generational categories. It is this intriguing aspect of Strauss and Howe’s work which allows them to print the following on their book’s cover:

Senior Citizen G.I.s, for example, bring to mind the Jeffersonian nation-builders, can-do veterans of national triumph; mid-life Silent, the Wilsonian Progressives, expert advocates of process and pluralism; thirtysomething Boomers, the moralizing peers of Susan B. Anthony and Henry David Thoreau, who ultimately presided over the Civil War; and coming of age 13ers, the alienated Lost Generation described by F. Scott Fitzgerald as a ‘new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success.’

And if that doesn’t impress you, these authors can even push their generational cycles well into the next century and speak quite specifically about how the unborn will impact these United States! Needless to say, all of this is in striking contrast to professor Schuman’s earlier narrative depicting his perception of the generational dynamic in action.

For better or worse, my own opinion of Strauss and Howe’s work is that generations are something far less than the deterministic destiny these two theorists assert. A critique is certainly in order. But first; like it or not, one has to applaud the sheer size and ambitious intricacy of this clicking and chattering cycle that Strauss and Howe have articulated. Their spiraling edifice is just about as elaborate as anything I have ever struggled to understand. Indeed, the book comes complete with its own glossary of
newly minted terms to explain what is going on here. But, alas, understanding the theory of these authors need not be akin to understanding the causative dynamics of our past, present and future. Where might problems exist?

One of two linchpins preserving the cyclical (and, I suspect, book-selling!) aspect of their theory lies in closely adhering to a lot happening at 22 year markers: secular crises, spiritual awakenings, sliding reversals, generations begun, generations concluded, etc. Why are both the a) occurrence of, and b) nature of these 22-year markers so very important? Because without them you lose entirely this beautifully regularized Merry-Go-Round that Strauss and Howe purport to have discovered. In other words, the authors’ theory is no longer a clockwork cycle of four generational archetypes only, but would become instead a patch-work collection of generational entities and generational chapters. The resultant pattern, while perhaps not chaotic, is neither the elusive and powerful key to revealing all that Strauss and Howe profess to explain. Likewise, the second linchpin substantiating the authors’ theory is being able to link analogous behavioral predispositions to vast groups of people separated in time by 80 to 120 years. Substantiating both linchpins—four repeating behavioral predispositions, and a lot happening at 22-year markers—involves at least conducting historical
surveys of the "matches" these authors make (other critiques beyond "historical match" will follow).

I begin by noting here, somewhat cynically, that it's obviously nice for Strauss and Howe to have all of history with which to select (or not select) "evidence." And often much of what they choose to include is skimpy while much of what they ignore is significant. The author's cyclical theory, for example, mandates that a new golden and coddled bunch of babies is being birthed in this country as of 1982 and will continue to be birthed in this country until early in the next century. The "evidence" Strauss and Howe offer in this regard are a rash of benign baby portrayals in Hollywood films, and George Bush's role in the UN's "Year of the Child." All of that may be so, but what of other unmentioned data which would seem to more importantly detail the status of this country's children--1 in 4 lives in poverty; 11 percent are born with an illicit drug in their system; 30 percent are entering kindergarten emotionally unprepared to learn. Unfortunately, this type of selectively using historical data is recurrent in Strauss and Howe's work. If data fits their cycle, OK; if not, don't look for it in Generations.

Historian reviewers of this text have made more than a few criticisms of Strauss and Howe's reporting upon our past. Jim Kobak, for example, of Kirkus Book Reviews has noted that "The often dubious characterizations of
individual generations depend on spotty, sometimes silly evidence: they quote one-of-a-kind Emily Dickenson, for instance, to support the generalization that her generation (born 1822-1842) suffered from 'low collective self-esteem.' Kobak could have easily enumerated other "silly and spotty evidence" used to characterize entire generations such as snippets of a college commencement speech or snippets of testimony given to a Senate Subcommittee. As with Kobak, Jonathan Alter of Newsweek is equally ill-enamored of Strauss and Howe's historical alignments:

Norman Rockwell in the 'Lost' generation? Jesse Jackson in the 'Silent' generation? Harry Truman in the same 'reactive' boat with Tom Cruise? In real life, their is plenty of selfishness among the supposedly 'civic' G.I. group, and plenty of cynicism among the supposedly 'idealist' baby boomers.

Writing in the New York Times Book Review, Jay Dolan takes the history-based criticism of Kobak and Alter one step further upon noting that:

When history does not fit into their scheme, they make things up, as they have done for the Civil War epoch. According to their formula, the Civil War cycle stretched from the 1820s to the 1880s, but only three generations emerged in this cycle rather than the four that their theory requires. Why? Because the Civil War happened too soon according to their calculations, and for their version of history to come out right in the 20th century, the authors are forced to argue that no generation of Civic minded people appeared in this era.

Leaving now the suspicious way Strauss and Howe select historical "evidence," it is important as well that a number of other criticisms seem warranted. Principal among these
criticisms is the argument that too much causation-related theory regarding macro-changes lies outside of the author's cyclical embrace. Interestingly, some of theory they choose to ignore is specific to generations! For example, much of what has made the-boom-the-boom and the-bust-the-bust are their respective sizes. Indeed, demographer and boom-chronicler Landon Jones has gone so far as to argue that the size of a generation is among its most very crucial characteristics:

The size of the cohort is the force that shapes its life....We know, for instance, that revolutionary movements have erupted after dramatic increases in the proportion of youth in a population. During the French Revolution, 40 percent of the population were between the ages of 20 and 40 and only 20 percent were over 40. Both the Protestant Reformation and the American Revolution were predominantly youthful. Totalitarian movements have been traditionally built on the backs of committed youth. In Mussolini's Italy, 'Giovinezza! Giovinezza!' celebrated youth as the official Fascist hymn. What's more, the imbalance can work both ways. The failure of the Weimer Republic in Germany was due to the onslaught of Hitler youth as well as the weakness of the older generation which had been diminished both in numbers and in will by the Great War. 37

Unfortunately, the size-issue is almost entirely bypassed by Strauss and Howe. Why? Again, my feeling is that it would muck-up the regularized Merry-Go-Round they claim to have discovered insofar as size cannot be explained cyclically--it's exogenous to their model. The omission here is critical. There are very good reasons as to why the boom, for example, is often portrayed as pig in a python. The boom's relative enormity has society-directing
consequences which range from what Madison Avenue and Hollywood concentrate on, to how much will be needed from buster paychecks to support the boomers as senior citizens. Look as well to the generation which preceded the boom. Here we have a number of the folks who truly catalyzed many of the 1960s and 1970s most memorable moments. Consider, for example, the work of Michael Harrington, Tom Hayden, Martin Luther King, Ralph Nader, Eugene McCarthy, Charles Reich, Barry Gordy, and Bob Dylan. Among their accomplishments was to foment movements leading to the Great Society, the Voting Rights Act, consumer protection guidelines, the anti-war movement, and the counter-culture. But the boom is typically referred to as the sole reason for each of these phenomena. Why? Because of the boom’s tremendous size which on this basis alone serves to amplify anything they either do or don’t do.

Other criticisms of Strauss and Howe include their ignoring any notions concerning the possible death of US generational analyses via the now sliding reduction of years into which a contemporary generation aptly fits. This despite the fact that Strauss and Howe carefully catalogue the historical emergence of generational boundaries as the speed of change began to increase. Well, what about the other end--the US combination of too much speedy change and new assimilation models culminating in the shortening of generational boundaries? You can’t have any acknowledgement
of that and still leave intact the authors' deterministic projection model. So Strauss and Howe have to insist that the busters (to take just one example) were birthed over a 20-year period ending in 1981. This leaves them in the untenable position of asking their readers to believe that being a teenager in the '70s is the same as being a teenager in the '90s.

Let me take a moment here to catalogue an overview of this critique. Strauss and Howe have thus far been objected to on the basis of three principal grounds. First, too much mismatching of historical data with theoretical premises. Second, no attention given to the effects of generational size as a causative, change-dynamic unto itself. Third, no attention given to the inwardly collapsing boundaries of what may constitute contemporary and future generations. To this enumeration, I'd like to add two final considerations: a) the risks of deeming some generations as inevitably destined for a compromised existence, and b) a reminder as to how technologies and events can fundamentally and unexpectedly change people for a long, long, time.

As regards the latter of these two issues, there are a couple of interrelated points that must be made explicit. To begin with, Strauss and Howe often write as though "macro-events" happen only when we are generationally ready for them to happen. One might consider, for example, economic fluctuations, the development of technological
clusters, geographic expansion from 13 colonies, etc. As Strauss and Howe explain it:

It is the response that determines the social moment. Compare, for example, the American response to World War I and World War II. Both wars were preceded by aggressive foreign acts (the sinking of the Lusitania, the air attack on Pearl Harbor). In one case, Congress waited two years before declaring war; in the other case, it declared war the next day. In one case, the war helped propel divisive movements like Prohibition; in the other, the nation mobilized as a single organism. Both wars ended in total victory— but in one case, soldiers came home to moral nagging and vice squads; in the other, they came home to ticker-tape parades. Both wars strengthened America’s influence overseas— but in one case, that influence was quickly squandered; in the other it was consolidated over the next two decades. 38

The author’s point here is at least debatable. What they wish to argue is the importance of our response to stimuli that they imply are both ubiquitous and rather generic. The choice to either pass or play is ours at any moment, and we make our collective decisions based upon where we are at generationally. I don’t know that I am at all prepared to fully embrace this. There are some phenomena wherein a pass or play option is simply not available. Things sometimes just seem to happen (!), and no one can predict when or why—HIV, terrorism, international interdependence, Mikhail Gorbachev, California falls in the ocean, E.T. lands....

Lurking just below the surface of Strauss and Howe’s ballyhooing of "our generationally repeating-responses" is a second implication that merits attention. The authors subtly assert that events and/or technological changes
entail nothing more than a surface variation upon the cyclical manifestations of any single generational archetype as it recurs in time. But is it not true, to some extent, that certain of the changes we make in our larger milieu can often change us? One might start by noting how technological improvements in so-called household devices have tremendously contributed to freeing up nearly half the US population from a traditionally limited and STAY-AT-HOME role. This has redefined not only what many are doing, but also thinking, feeling, and perceiving.

My final complaint concerning Generations is that the authors have very little which is positive to say about the busters. This is true of their culture, their intelligence, their history and their future. It all makes sense vis-a-vis the macro-theory Strauss and Howe wish to champion, but even if the theory was of greater veracity, I'd still object to their portrayal of busters by virtue of how such prophecies can fulfill. There is an enormous ethical consideration involved here. Strauss and Howe could conceivably convince folks that the reason they are, let's say, having trouble with a difficult task, is not because it requires a lot of individual time and thought, but because they are innately incapable of accomplishing it. Confidence is already a fragile enough commodity in our society, and this becomes doubly so when a given failure serves to merely confirm any lurking suspicions of one's ingrained, and
compromised mettle: Best, therefore, to run from opportunities rather than risk so very much in a pursuit. Indeed, it is this terrible line of thinking which has hampered the historical experiences of many racial minorities, ethnic minorities, females, gays and others in this country—with a wealth of the damage continuing still.

I close here my discussion of Strauss and Howe, by returning to an earlier more positive note. To wit, I do indeed applaud what they have put together in terms of its ambitious breadth. As an intellectual construct, their cycle is really something. So too do I applaud Strauss and Howe for selected critiques of generational analyses prior to their own. Strauss and Howe's colorful prose (and obvious knack for structuring material) makes lively much of the dryer material concerning cohort analysis. I myself do eagerly admit to having quoted from many of their informative pages. For all these reasons, Generations is an invaluable resource for anyone undertaking cohort investigations.

Lying between the polar extremes of Strauss and Howe on the one hand, and Schuman on the other, are the long-term, generation-focused theories of Arthur Schlesinger Sr. and his son, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. What I mean by that is to say that the intricacy of what they propose, and the claims they make as to its usefulness, are of a middling quality relative to the long-term theorists already explored. The
Schlesinger formulation was first set forth by Schlesinger Sr. in a 1924 lecture. His arguments subsequently evolved in essays published through 1949. Schlesinger Jr. has made much of the theory his own both by updating and refining it, most recently in a Spring '90 essay appearing in The American Prospect. The essence of their theory is as follows:

History shows a fairly regular alternation in American politics between private gain and public good as the dominating motives of national policy. From this perspective, the Reaganite private-interest 1980s were a reenactment of the Eisenhower 1950s, as the 1950s were a reenactment of the Harding-Coolidge-Hoover 1920s. As each conservative phase runs its course, the republic turns at 30-year intervals to public action—Theodore Roosevelt ushering in the Progressive era in 1901, Franklin Roosevelt the New Deal in 1933, John Kennedy the New Frontier in 1961—until each liberal phase runs its course too.

What we have here is a thirty year cycle, or "alternation," between what is variously referred to as democracy and capitalism, or, more frequently, "public purpose/action and private interest/gain." Each of these phases is seen as leading ultimately to its own demise. The heroics of sustained public action, for example, are deemed to become tiresome after a while. This is particularly so if and when it becomes apparent that the originally lofty goals may well be only partially achievable. At that point, "public action, passion, idealism and reform recede. Public problems are turned over to the invisible hand of the market." This, of course, inaugurates a new period of "private gain." Times of private gain allow folks to
assimilate many of the changes racked up in prior years, but so too do the times of private gain come with built-in limitations of their own:

Such periods are characterized by undercurrents of dissatisfaction, criticism, ferment, protest. Segments of the population fall behind in the acquisitive race. Intellectuals are estranged. Problems neglected become acute, threaten to become unmanageable, and demand remedy. People grow bored with selfish motives and vistas, weary of materialism as the ultimate goal....People begin to seek meaning in their lives beyond themselves....They are ready for a trumpet to sound, a detonating issue--some problem growing in magnitude and menace and beyond the market’s invisible hand to solve--at last leads to a breakthrough in a new political epoch. 

All of this constitutes at least a surface look at the Schlesingers’ cycle. What then can be said of the cycle’s presumably enduring and deepest catalysts? Three explanations are offered. First, "The roots of this cyclical self-sufficiency doubtless lie deep in the natural life of humanity. There is a cyclical pattern in organic nature--in the tides, in the seasons, in night and day, in the systole and diastole of the human heart." Second, "There is also a cyclical basis in the very psychology of modernity. With the acceleration in the rate of social change, humans become creatures characterized by inextinguishable discontent." Third, and a little less "reachy," is the generational dynamic. This third and final explanation of the cycle’s internal propulsion is deemed to be the all-important "mainspring." As Schlesinger Jr. explains:
There is nothing mystical about the thirty year cycle. Thirty years is the span of a generation. People tend to be formed politically by the ideals dominant in the years when they first came to political consciousness. Young people who grew up when Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were setting the nation's sights--Franklin Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, Harry Truman--reaffirmed the goals of their youth thirty years after in the New Deal and the Fair Deal. Young people who grew up when FDR was inspiring the country--John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, Robert Kennedy--brought the New Deal up to date thirty years after in the New Frontier and the Great Society. In the same manner, John Kennedy touched and formed a political generation in the 1960s. If the rhythm holds, that generation's time will arrive in the 1990s.

All of this calls for some closer scrutiny, but it must be remarked that, at least outwardly, the last sentence in the quotation above is a rather prescient bit of commentary to have been made in 1990 when former President Bush was at the height of his popularity! What then of this theory?

My critique begins by noting that the Schlesingers make at least two assumptions regarding the generational focus that are of primary importance. First, people begin to become politically aware at around age 15. Second, whatever is the politically reigning *modus operandi* at the tender age of sudden political consciousness becomes internalized as optimal. Clearly there is room to object on either account, and, at times, the Schlesingers seem their own best critics. That is to say, the broad shifts they describe from private to public epochs (and vice versa) are often portrayed as society-wide insofar as the impacts of too much time in any given phase are also society-wide. Take the busters, for
example: According to the Schlesinger formulation, the majority of this cohort became politically cognizant during the conservative Reagan years thereby making this cohort highly conservative. Nonetheless, only 34 percent of voters aged 18-29 voted for George Bush in '92--the lowest percentage of any 10-year, age bracketed group. 46

So too can the Schlesingers be reined in on many of the charges levied upon Strauss and Howe. What, for example, of the many variables (domestic and international) that are exogenous to their model? Moreover, what of noting that the authors comment upon the "formative" ages of 15-plus, but omit the earlier years when children are being reared? There are also problems in matching the Schlesingers’ theoretical claims with the entirety of history: Nixon as the second half of a public good era? Carter as the first half of a private interest era? Shouldn’t these two presidents have occurred in a reverse order? The best that Schlesinger Jr. can come up with are semi-strained discussions of Nixon as a liberal and Carter as a conservative. The same dilemma and response attends Schlesinger Sr.’s checkered review of the 19th century.

Despite these formidable strikes against them, I confess a fondness for the work of both theorists. No doubt this has much to do with their eminent ability--generations notwithstanding--to communicate history’s importance. 47 So too do I enjoy their generations-oriented work insofar as
they are constantly careful to place upon it both qualifiers and caveats concerning the nondeterministic nature of what they propose. In the words of Schlesinger Jr., "These are cycles of opportunity, not cycles of necessity. They do not dictate the future." Departures here can include, for example, long periods of private gain following particularly tumultuous periods of public good. One such era is seen to have lasted for thirty years following the Civil War. Departures from the authors' cycles can also be entirely beyond the theory. That is to say, the movement here is not simply an alteration in the duration of an epoch, but a qualitatively new epoch that is neither one of "private interest" or "public purpose." This could conceivably transpire "When (and if) the counterrevolution only deepens national troubles; people will see a 'double failure' of both welfare state and free market alternatives." 

Qualifiers like these lend a modesty to what the Schlesingers offer. This constraint makes their work less in the way of distracting and more in the way of helpful. The authors provide a flashlight, so to speak, which serves to illuminate some of both history and the world to come. As detailed above, the Schlesingers also acknowledge that other theoretical flashlights are out there which can be equally illuminating.
The generation is a dynamic compromise between mass and individual, and it is the most important conception in history.

JOSE ORTEGA Y GASSET, 1923

The problem of generations is important enough to merit serious consideration. It is one of the indispensable guides to an understanding of the structure of social and intellectual movements.

KARL MANNHEIM, 1929

The history of generational thought goes back to Hellenic and even biblical times. In shorthand format, it is possible to speak of this history in three phases: from antiquity to WWI, from WWI to the 1970s, and from the 1970s to the present. Brief characterizations of these time-periods and a few of their "highlights" are featured below as a conclusion to this dissertation-chapter.

In his 1967 text, Generations, the Ortegan Philosopher Julian Marias offers, in my opinion, the most comprehensive summary of pre-1970s generational thought. At the outset of his text, Marias has this to say of his undertaking:

As a theme arising out of human experience at a rather elementary level, the idea of generations is one of the oldest concepts; as a scientific theme, as a problem of historiology, it is one of the newest....As such, it presents several odd characteristics, of which one of the oddest, surely, is the rather small number of thinkers to study it seriously and profoundly. Moreover, these few writers seem generally to have been quite unaware of each other's interest in the theme.... The isolated nature of the early efforts to arrive at a theory of generations and a general lack of knowledge about these efforts combine to make a history of the theme quite difficult.  

71
My use of three "phases" concerning generational thought is an attempt to impose some organization upon this history of isolated contributions. Additional order can be grafted upon these phases by way of noting that each has addressed one or more of the loosely sequential and semi-overlapping questions below:

- What is a generation?
- How long is a generation?
- Why do generations arise?
- From whence specific attributes?
- What of methodological dos and don’ts?

Within phase 1--antiquity to WWI--the central bugaboo confounding many generational theorists was the distinction between "family generations" and "cohort generations." Properly defined, family generations refer to genealogy and/or lineage. The tempo, or time, encompassing family generations can vary tremendously. One family’s "next generation" may be birthed over twenty-plus years, whereas another family’s "next generation" may arrive in all of one year only. Compound this disparity with a few more "next generations" of varying years, and you can see how impossible it becomes to speak of one social pulse deriving from such a variety of family generations. Cohort generations, by way of contrast, are defined as being
birthed within a package of consecutive calendar years. All members of a cohort generation thereby share an age-related assimilation of macro-history. Cohort generations often include multiple members of a single family generation, but so too can multiple members of a single family generation be spread out over more than one cohort generation.

All of this is not intended to argue that family generations are any better than cohort generations, or vice versa. The point, however, is that the terms serve different purposes; they are not interchangeable. Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, theorists in much of phase 1 all-too-often lapse into making this error. To confuse this just a bit further, even for theorists who did speak of cohort generations, they employed the term in such a way as to be at least tainted by genealogy. Two variations were recurrent. The first variation was to speak of "the generation of King X." The second variation was to speak of time increments that corresponded to the mean number of years separating the average parent and child. The most immediate consequence of all this failure to fully answer the question "What is a generation?" is that the reader of phase 1 material is left unsure of what is being described.

Julian Marias, the aforementioned chronicler of phase 1 and 2 theorists, argues that Auguste Comte (1798-1857) was the first to semi-clear the air. That is to say, Comte
perceived and described generations as social phenomena which entirely transcend genealogy. Marias argues that Comte’s success in this regard is attributable to a) his keen sensitivity to increases in the rate of change, and b) humankind’s improved awareness of a long and sometimes varied historical past. Other phase 1 theorists who also reached Comte’s conclusion and/or expanded upon Comte’s work include John Stuart Mill, Justin Dromel, Antoine Cournot, Giuseppe Ferrari, and Wilhelm Dilthey.

The years of phase 2—from WWI up and into the 1970s—were launched with a cluster of what are exclusively European theorists. Indeed, the Ortega and Mannheim quotations which began this chapter sub-section are of phase 2 theorists from Spain and Germany respectively. It should come as no surprise that both of these widely acknowledged pioneers of “modern” generational thought wrote at a time of wrenching changes for Europe in particular. (Recall that stepped up rates of change facilitate generational imprints.) Given the historical and contemporary importance of Ortega and, even more so, Mannheim, I would like to briefly focus upon a few of their contributions.

Mannheim has simple and eloquent definition of a social generation which is the most quoted interpretation I have encountered: "The social phenomenon of ‘generations’ represents nothing more than a particular kind of identity
of location, embracing related 'age-groups' embedded in a historical-social process."

Mannheim also took on the questions posed by noting that significantly different factions can exist within any given generation. More specifically, the variety of this differentiation served for many critics as an objection to the entire business of generational theory. Mannheim responds by acknowledging the existence of "antagonistic sub-units" within all generations, but claims that "Together they (the factions) constitute an 'actual' generation precisely because they are oriented toward each other, even though only in the sense of fighting one another." In other words, Mannheim sees it as relatively unimportant that people will argue from either side of, let's say, a period of economic growth or decline. The important matter is instead having lived through the similarity-breeding expansion or depression itself. Mannheim's work is also helpful insofar as he argues that there is nothing particularly deterministic about the generational dynamic. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Mannheim places the following caveat upon his speculations:

The most important point we have to notice is the following: not every generation location--not even every generation age-group--creates new collective impulses and formative principles original to itself and adequate to its particular situation. Where this does happen, we shall speak of a realization of potentialities inherent in the location, and it appears probable that the frequency of such realizations is closely connected with the tempo of social change...
speak in such cases of the formation of a new generation style.... 56

As mentioned above, such qualifiers are atypical of Mannheim’s contemporaries. Indeed, one of the big bugaboos regarding phase 2 theorists is languishing upon the second in my question series listed earlier: "How long is a generation?" Mannheim not only avoided the phase 2 search for a precise and constant length of all generations, but he appears as well to be the first generational theorist to describe the possible death of cohort formation/analysis.

In the words of this esteemed thinker:

The quicker the tempo of cultural and social change is, then, the greater are the chances that particular generation location groups will react to changed situations by producing their own entelechy (read style). On the other hand, it is conceivable that too greatly accelerated a tempo might lead to mutual destruction of the embryo entelechies....Such generations, frustrated in the production of an individual entelechy, tend to attach themselves, where possible, to an earlier generation which may have received a satisfactory form, or to a younger generation which is capable of evolving a newer form....In this way the impulses and trends peculiar to a generation may remain concealed because of the existence of the clear-cut form of another generation to which they have become attached. 57

Although I find Mannheim’s conclusion arguable (i.e., periods of rootless anomie might also breed a generational state-of-mind), he nonetheless seems on target in describing how change writ-large can confound a generation’s formation.

To conclude this cursory look at Karl Mannheim, I shall quote a final passage of truly frightful poignancy:

Here we must make a fundamental distinction between appropriated memories and personally acquired
memories....It makes a great deal of difference whether I acquire memories for myself in the process of personal development, or whether I simply take them over from someone else. I really only possess those memories which I have created for myself, only that knowledge I have personally gained in real situations. That is the only sort of knowledge which really sticks, and it alone has real binding power. 58

If correct, Mannheim describes here another two-edged sword, this time as regards the ultimate passing of elderly generations. On the one hand, animosities and other harmful ways of relating can die-off, but so too may the often hard-won lessons concerning phenomena such as the tragedy of war or the risks of a nonproductive, finance economy. The first-hand relearning of such ills is a crude and costly means of educating generations.

Moving now from Mannheim to the wide-ranging Spanish scholar, Jose Ortega Y Gasset, one can list another broad expanse of significant contributions. Ortega describes, for example, societal generations as a "functional and dynamic synthesis" between a minority of movers/shakers and the less historical multitudes:

The changes of vital sensibility which are decisive in history, appear under the form of the generation. A generation is not a handful of outstanding men, nor simply a mass of men; it resembles a new integration of the social body, with its select minority and its gross multitude, launched upon the orbit of existence....The generation is a dynamic compromise between mass and individual, and is the most important conception in history. It is, so to speak, the pivot responsible for the movements of historical evolution. 59
Ortega is also credited with a unique interpretation as to what can catalyze "agitation" between generations. In the author’s words:

Life for each generation is a task in two dimensions, one of which consists in the reception, through the agency of the previous generation, of what life has had already, e.g., ideas, values, institutions and so on, while the other is the liberation of the creative genius inherent in the generation concerned. What has been done by others, that is, executed and perfected in the sense of being completed, reaches us with a peculiar unction attached to it: it seems consecrated, and in view of the fact that we ourselves have not assisted in its construction, we tend to believe that it is the work of no one in particular, even that it is reality itself.  

Ortega continues by noting that a generation must then decide for itself between two options: Should it give shape to its own inclinations, or should it more passively accept an offered inheritance? As might be imagined, the answer is largely contingent on the match, or lack thereof, between the two. Note here that "passively" accepting a status quo is not the same as having created what is bequeathed—generational distinctions remain a part of the equation. The point may seem trifling, but it’s important for Ortega insofar as he is among those wishing to answer the aforementioned phase 2 obsession: "How long is a generation?"

In Ortega’s macro-scheme of things, five generations exist at any given time and each runs very close to 15 years in length. Those in childhood range up through age 15; those in the process of emerging upon active participation
in history range up through age 30; those within active 
adulthood lie in two generations and range up through age 
60. The latter of these two generations (i.e., ages 45 - 
60) are deemed to be the truly controlling generation 
insofar as they are most firmly in command of society’s 
power variables. After 60, this command is seen to diminish 
precipitously.

Unfortunately, the most immediate problem in this 
scheme of five generations of 15 years each is an overly 
reified life-course. Ortega attempts to substantiate it 
with a minimal discussion of biology-based constants, but 
the effort is lackluster. Too often his claims are simply 
asserted as if self-evident. Indeed, the closest he comes 
to aligning some of history with his generational boundaries 
is to a) isolate a "new world" historical figure such as 
Decartes, b) find out the year he turned 30, and c) mark off 
a succession of 15-year increments in either direction! 
Ortega doesn’t spend much time actually looking at the 
events of these 15 year markers, and for very good reason 
claim his critics! 61

Phase 3—the 1970s to the present—inaugurates a 
widely participation of US theorists within the 
generational debate. As with Europe and phase 2, this 
participation came in the aftermath-cum-continuation of 
wrenching US changes. And many of these changes appeared 
intimately bound up in age-bracketed activity.
Although late to the party, US theorists have entered the generational arena completely. The 1960s were an obvious springboard, but so too were reasons offered as to why even retrospective analyses of US history are well suited to generational evaluations. One may consider, for example, the 1973 commentary of Harvard Government Professor and then-Editor of *Foreign Policy*, Samuel Huntington:

> In the United States, classes are less sharply differentiated and generations more sharply differentiated than they are in Europe. This is true both in terms of the leading elements of particular age groups—those who articulate and express its elements in literature, art, politics—and even, in a different way, for the mass of the public as a whole.  

Generally speaking, it is within phase 3 that an emphasis is placed upon finessing what can be made of cohort analysis as a social sciences methodology. Indeed, the following passage (in this case of historian Alan Spitzer) is typical of the preamble which opens many phase 3 publications:

> The parallel development by sociologists, political scientists, and demographers of a literature devoted to a systematic analysis of contemporary generations provides a methodological resource for historians, although the social scientists also fall into the tendency, characteristic of generational studies, of a slippery, ambiguous usage that blurs distinctions which should be clarified.

Many of the methodological "dos and don’ts" which come to light in phase 3 have already been featured in earlier components of this chapter: Of particular prominence is the "cohort centrism" of Rutger’s Matilda White Riley. Other contributions—less widely cited—abound. Huntington, for
example, continues in the essay I have quoted above by distinguishing between theories that are interactive (i.e., the outlook of a later generation is a reaction to the outlook of its predecessor), and theories that are experiential (i.e., the outlook of any generation is determined by the age-related way in which societal changes are assimilated). Huntington notes that the theories are not mutually exclusive of one another and can be concurrently operative as regards a single generation. Likewise, Spitzer continues in the essay I have cited above by arguing:

It will be my contention that clarity can be preserved and useful explanations developed if instead of asking how long a generation really is, or how many generations usually coexist, or what points in the individual's life-cycle are decisive, or whether aging has more profound political consequences than early socialization, we ask whether, and in what respects, age-related differences mattered in a given historical situation.

Spitzer is here effectively taking to task the phase 2 theorists so concerned with answering the question "How long is a generation?" Others, including Anthony Esler, are even more direct:

A good deal of time and energy has been expended over the years in attempting to establish the precise length of a generation in history. By this is usually meant the span of years encompassing the birthdays of all those who are considered as part of a single generation. Are we to include in a single generation people born fifteen years apart, as Ortega would have it? Ten years--five years--or even three years, as some computer studies of recent years have done? It is a tickle point for theoretically inclined generational theorists, rather like the number of angels who can dance on the point of a pin. Like the latter fine
point in theology, however, the question of the exact duration of a social generation is really not of such paramount importance. The real problem, again, is a methodological one. It is the question of how to go about delimiting chronologically a particular generation in history which is of practical concern to the working generational historian. 86

How, specifically, to go about this? Should one, for example, key into pivotal figures in history as generational centers which extend outward in either direction? Alternatively, should one simply ask the members of successive birth years if they believe themselves to be a generation? Or, why not wait until these same folks volitionally take on some level of collective action? Anthony Esler continues his quoted passage above and provides what strikes me as the consensus response of phase 3 theorists:

A more convincing set of demarcation lines may be established by assembling and collating increasing amounts of data about the particular age group with which one is concerned. Following this general approach, historians have duly noted changes in social background or in the life style of the generation in question. They have pinpointed major influencing events or trends, new organizations, causes taken up or abandoned, significant events in the history of the age group itself, and other likely shaping factors or expressions of changing generational outlook. This workmanlike procedure soon establishes rough limits of successive social generations. And rough limits, in generational analysis as in studies of other subdivisions of society, are really all one can or should expect. 87

In addition to a) admonishing their predecessors, and b) finessing methodological dos and don’ts, phase 3 theorists have also left their ongoing mark in a few other capacities of which I shall mention two. First, the
The importance of young adulthood in generation-formation has been particularly accented. The 1960s no doubt played a role in this emphasis among US theorists. Points made along these lines include the full-blown emergence of an extended "adolescence" in which like-age peers spend more and more hours in the company of each other. So too has the big-time emergence of media--television in particular--served to galvanize generational identities among TV-watching young people.

Second, phase 3 writers have also distinguished themselves by restating-cum-elaborating upon the work of earlier theorists. In other words, the "field" of generational research is far less a series of individual ruminations mapped-out in isolation of one another. Earlier arguments have been polished, improved upon, and consolidated. Consider, for example, Strauss and Howe's lucid '91 summary of a few longstanding observations:

Like most other social categories--religion, political party, income, occupation, race--generations can be imprecise at the boundaries. We define generational boundaries...by calendar year--and, of course, some people born just on one side may really belong on the other. But a little ambiguity does not keep us from distinguishing Catholics from Protestants,

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b The reader will please be reminded that "youth-explanations" of the 1960s' turbulence must also be complemented with, among other concerns, "size-explanations." I have heard it rather colorfully explained, for example, that much of the '60s energy dissipated not-so-much because Janis and Jimi died, but rather because an inordinate bulge of 18-year old firstborns suddenly found themselves older.
Democrats from Republicans, or the middle class from the poor. Nor should it.

Then again, even small amounts of time can be decisive in binding—and separating—generations. In today’s era of age-gradations, a one minute delay in birth (most often at the stroke of New Year) can mean the difference between kindergarten and first grade six years later. That decision, in turn, can mean the difference between wartime draft and schoolroom comfort twelve or thirteen years farther down the road. (A Ph.D. candidate born December 31, 1942, had an excellent chance of gliding through graduate school on student deferments; one born the next day found it much harder to avoid Vietnam.) In this respect, a generational boundary is like the federal definition of poverty. A family whose income is $1 below the income limit for child support will think, behave, be perceived, and be treated differently from another family whose income is $1 above the limit. As the years pass, the $1-under and the $1-over families will probably grow less alike, thanks to what was at first an arbitrary distinction. Likewise with generations.

By quoting Strauss and Howe, I do not mean to say that they are without possible problems (see chapter-section f), nor do I mean to say that all phase 3 analysts write with such a friendly style. Rather, my point is simply that much of the prose and synthesis have improved within phase 3. The field continues to grow and mature.

h. summing up

I conclude this chapter with a brief comment as to how my own use of the generational dynamic measures up in all of this. As alluded to in earlier segments of this project, I have a rather modest assessment as to how much light the generational dynamic can shed. I start, for example, with
the premise that generations are in fact unique and do not specifically recur in any kind of rigorously identifiable manner. In my next three chapters, I am attempting to look at one generation's possible unfolding over the course of roughly a decade. Long-term theorists such as Strauss, Howe, Schuman, and the Schlesingers can fairly jump on this and accuse me of lacking their ambition. I fully accept that, but so too does my "weakness" leave less in the way of possibly mistaken causation-linkages: I've narrowed down the field wherein errors can multiply via the projection of so many years. Moreover, in the ambition-department, I do at least surpass Mr. Schuman's shorthand version of the generational dynamic. More specifically, I am not merely arguing that busters will contrast with their predecessors; I am seriously speculating upon the nature of these differences.

Finally, my work is characterized by one attribute that none of the other theorists I've mentioned can boast of: I am couching much of what I have to say in terms of alternative scenarios. Granted, one of these scenarios will be deemed the probable, but in situating it next to others, I believe that an important service is provided. To wit, inaction concerning a pro-active response becomes less and less likely: My reasoning here is two-fold. First, readers will be able to see how closely the proverbial good news and bad news are to one another. It might not take much to tip
the balance either way. We can make a varying impact depending upon what we choose to do and not do. Second, the reader will be able to see how varying actions might entail specific consequences. Question-marks concerning unspoken possibilities become less and less of an issue. At that point, confidence and conviction may entail volitionally pursuing a future that has suddenly become more "real."

The next chapter is begun with the first of my macro-scenarios for the US as it may appear upon moving into the next century. The reader is reminded that this depiction is composed of the arguments (and even the terms) as used by the portrayal's principal proponents.

ENDNOTES


4. Esler, pp.89-90.

5. Esler, p.25.


17. Strauss et al, p.46.


20. Dede, p.4.


23. Dator, p.29.


25. Christopher Dede, lecture series at the University of Houston--Clear Lake, Fall 1985.


29. Strauss et al, p.76.
30. Strauss et al, p.76.
31. Strauss et al, p.35.
32. Strauss et al, book-jacket
38. Strauss et al, p.77.
43. Schlesinger, 1986, p.27.
44. Schlesinger, 1986, p.27.


51. Marias, p.5.

52. Marias, p.8.

53. Marias, p 66.


56. Mannheim, p.309.

57. Mannheim, p.310.

58. Mannheim, p.296.


60. Ortega, pp.16-17.

61. Spitzer, p.1358.


63. Spitzer, p.1354.

64. Huntington, p.23.

65. Spitzer, p.1354.

66. Esler, p.52.

67. Esler, p.53.

Chapter 3: The Busters and US Preeminence

Part 1: the Macro-Scenario

a. success in the ‘90s

Question: What ingredients are necessary for a country (any country) to make a success of itself as we emerge upon the third millennium? How about each of these four factors:
- an entrepreneurial culture
- a diverse and growing population
- an abundance of resource-rich land
- free markets both nationally and abroad

Of course it’s possible to list other lesser factors that can play a role in any one nation’s triumph. So too is it possible to haggle over the complete explanations of these four keys to success. All of this will follow.

However, I wish now to launch this essay-segment by noting that one nation in particular can be said to fully accord with the above attributes: the United States of America. This enviable stature is remarked upon below by Ben Watteberg, author and senior fellow at the conservative American Enterprise Institute:

The word ‘super-power’ is no good anymore. It came about when there were two, and there aren’t two now. We need a word with no plural connotations and one that describes a nation one notch up from a super-power. I wrote a column announcing a contest to come up with the elusive word. Among the best answers that surfaced
were: hyper-power, magna-power, maxi-power, mega-power, multi-power, omni-power, semper-power, solo-power, ultra-power, and uni-power.¹

The appellation finally selected by Wattenberg is also the title of his '91 text, The First Universal Nation. His meaning, explains Wattenberg, is "'first' as in the first one, 'first' as in 'number one,' and 'universal' (as) within our borders and globally."²

An exploration of this unfettered enthusiasm necessarily involves returning to this chapter's opening menu of overlapping, success ingredients: an entrepreneurial culture, a growing population, abundant land/resources, and free markets. Therefore, each of these phenomena (and the US ability to measure-up) are considered within subsections below. But first, it is both interesting and helpful to note that there does exist one term which encapsulates much that is contained within the four success-factors. That term is "sokojikara." It’s Japanese and is variously translated by writer and Pepperdine professor Joel Kotkin in his late-'80s text The Third Century.³

Sokojikara a la the US is broadly described by Kotkin as our "latent" and "reserve" power. Culturally, this power appears as a "can-do" attitude with roots extending deep into the American tradition of optimistic individualism. Structurally, the impact of sokojikara can be seen as manifest in our relatively "open" system of bracing free enterprise. It is here that individuals are at liberty to
depend upon their own devices and proceed just as far as they care to. Among the net effects of this tremendous freedom are the beneficial emergence of money moguls and our national attraction for immigrants the world over. Indeed, this latter magnetism, almost unto itself, constitutes a near guarantee of our global supremacy; it's among our strongest suits.

Conceptually, sokojikara suffers from a bit of what can be called "the kitchen sink problem." It is nonetheless helpful at the outset of this chapter for an encompassing glimpse at some of the terrain more fully described below. Once again, that terrain is organized by way of the four success factors enumerated at this chapter's outset. Concluding the chapter are buster-discussions vis-a-vis this interpretation of the US as a global champion.

b. ingredient #1: an entrepreneurial culture

It is simple enough to argue that a strong economy is critical to the future of US supremacy. It is a bit trickier to say that a strong US economy is predicated upon the free rein of its entrepreneurial creators and financiers. Understanding both the nature and importance of an entrepreneurial culture is best broached by first explaining a bit of what it is not. To wit, the more centrally controlled systems of economic management
presently utilized by several countries, most notably in
Europe and Asia. Staffing the disparate controlling
entities of these nations are individuals representing
government, academia, business, and, occasionally, labor.
Their tentacles often extend so far as to become full-blown,
national bureaucracies. The exemplar in all of this is, of
course, Japan’s MITI.

In theory, MITI is intended to impose upon Japanese
business the mandates which accord with a communitarian
vision. More specifically, MITI’s primary role is to insure
that Japan—as a national whole—maximizes the country’s
total profits on the goods and services selected for
production. Towards this end, Japanese businesses in their
initial years are left to fiercely compete with one another
without any of MITI’s care and attention whatsoever. The
operative faith here is that only the strongest and most
vital of Japan’s small businesses will survive. For those
who demonstrate the requisite “right stuff,” MITI may then
assist the subject-firm with phenomena including cheap
capital, shared technological expertise, and a limit on
domestic competition. The quid pro quo is faithful adherence
to MITI’s neo-mercantilist philosophy of an export-oriented
capture of international market shares in what are deemed to
be the critical sectors.

Unfortunately for Japan, MITI’s modus operandi is now
under fire. The cracks in this brand of economic
orchestration can be seen by first of all cataloguing the "losers." Two sets of losers exist within domestic Japan itself. First is the typical member of Japan's citizenry who is often placed in a situation whereby she or he must purchase Japanese goods and services at prices far higher than what the same Japanese goods sell for abroad. This after working what are often arduously demanding jobs in exchange for the stability of employment within a MITI-protected firm. The second class of Japan's domestic losers are the aforementioned small, medium, and new firms which must compete without any coddling from MITI whatsoever. Add to this the fact that MITI has surely not acted without error in its bureaucratic selection of winners and losers. One may consider, for example, the twin tales of Akio Morita and Soichiro Honda:

When Sony applied in 1951 for a $25,000 licensing fee for transistors from Bell Laboratories, MITI demurred. 'The bureaucrats,' Morita later recalled, 'could not see the use for such a device....MITI thought that such a small company could not undertake the enormous task of dealing with brand new technologies.' It took six months to get an approval which, over time, gave the first boost to Sony's, and later Japan's dominance of the consumer-electronics business.

But perhaps no entrepreneur has been more at war with the bureaucracy than Soichiro Honda. Throughout his remarkable career, Honda was forced to battle MITI at virtually every turn. In the 1950s, for instance, MITI tried to block access to capital for expansion of motorcycle production which the bureaucrats thought 'bordered on insanity.' Later, MITI also tried to block Honda's earliest forays into the automobile business, claiming that Japan needed fewer, not more, automakers.

'Probably I would have been even more successful had we not had MITI,' says Honda, who was forced to
wage a bitter struggle against the agency in order to
launch his car division. 7

So much for Japan's domestic losers. The international
losers regarding Japan's industrial policies include many of
the country's trading partners. On the export end of
Japan's ledger, the dumping of myriad products in an attempt
to capture market shares has all but wiped out sectors of
foreign competition. In the case of some product lines--
such as color TVs, transistor radios, videocassette
recorders, and robotic innovations--the technologies
originated in the US. 8 On the import end of Japan's
ledger, a broad array of tariff and nontariff barriers are
erected for reasons that are often comical in their attempt
to pass as non-protectionist. Japanese trade officials have
even argued that the intestines of their citizenry are too
long for US beef, while the throats of their citizenry are
too small for German pills. 9 Also compelling: Did you
know that French skis are ill-suited to "the uniqueness of
Japanese snow?" 10

Complementing Japan's abrasive import/export practices
is an equal lack of reciprocity in terms of the type of
foreign investment Japan allows within its borders compared
with the type of investment Japan itself makes elsewhere.
Consider, for example, the following laments concerning
certain of Japan's doings in China:

Part of the problem with Japanese trade, Chinese
officials claim, is that, unlike American or European
firms, Japanese companies have traditionally been
reluctant to share technology. Instead they sell completed products or set up assembly plants with 'black box' technology. The Chinese assemble parts made in Japan with technology they never learn to master. 'The goal seems to be to keep us backward and buying,' notes Xiao Ming, manager-engineer at Beijing's Chang Feng Industry Corporation. 'There isn't a lot of thought about mutual benefit.'

Adding all of this together, it is not far-fetched to imagine the emergence of domestic and international "Associations of Japan Injured People and Countries" with a retaliatory agenda of their own. Indeed, as early as 1986, Korea established an "Import Diversification Program" with the explicitly stated purpose of substituting Japanese imports with American goods and services. The Taiwanese have likewise initiated a similar program. Call it crack #1 in Japan's neomercantilist nationalism: too many losers.

Crack #2 is the resurgence of free enterprise a la the US wherein firms compete without being influenced by the distorting and stultifying hand of a centralized and controlling elite. There are a number of threads which constitute the bulk of this argument. First is the rather mundane, but still critical lessons that have been learned by US economic players. As explained within the pages of The Kiplinger Washington Letter:

The 1970s and early '80s were a painful period of adjustment for America. But over the last few years American business has risen phoenixlike from the ashes of countless conflagrations: shut-downs, restructurings, modernizations, cost cutting. It is this self-renewing power of American capitalism—a kind of creative destruction—that, if allowed to operate with minimal governmental influence, enables the US to adapt to new challenges.
The veracity of Kiplinger's assessment is clear: Over the past decade, approximately one-half of major US corporations have reported considerable downsizing-cum-sharpening of their firms; and exports have climbed in approximate tandem with this new era of "lean and mean." Summing up his sentiments, Kiplinger offers the following bit of commentary:

In the final analysis, the US will place its bets not on centralization of the technology commitment, but on the opposite: diversity. US high tech businesses will benefit from flexibility, openness and a traditionally American freewheeling style. As John Welch, chairman of General Electric, told the Wall Street Journal, 'I can make a deal to put a plant in Spain without asking my government, my banker, or even my shareholders. A Japanese company must consult its government. A German company consults its bank. I act.'

Of additional importance to the resurgence of US free enterprise is how the nature of markets and corporate entities are changing in ways which further embolden the wherewithal of myriad US entrepreneurs. As far as markets go, the high value demands are more and more for uniquely tailored goods and services. As far as corporate entities are concerned, the high earning, job-creating firms are increasingly composed of small and medium sized firms. Both developments (i.e., changes in markets, changes in corporate size) press US entrepreneurs further to the fore by maximizing outlets for what they do best. The bias, in other words, favors America's strongest suit: entrepreneurial skills.
All of this is not to say that the days of US corporate giants are numbered. The point is that other opportunities have also become available. Nonetheless, realize that between 1980 and 1991, the Fortune 500 types shed an estimated 4 million jobs nationwide, while small and medium sized firms have created nearly 20 million new jobs. Small and medium sized firms have even recovered work in industries which had nearly left US-shores entirely. To mention just two examples, the US now competes globally in the demanding arenas of both steel and textiles. Trim US firms in each of these industries now use highly automated plants to construct "niche products" as per the tight and multiple specifications of their clientele.

The risks of grafting a MITI-type orchestration upon all of this are obvious. The tendency would be to "tilt policy towards corporate stability and big business rather than encourage the economic turbulence that fosters new, emerging companies." Moreover, if it’s difficult enough to keep atop the dynamics of national corporate biggies; it’s outright impossible to accurately assess all nascent start-ups worthy of help. This is mentioned insofar as there are dangerous pressures emanating from points within the Clinton administration for not-so-much an exclusively MITI-type industrial organization, but instead one that attempts to "pick or bypass" then "help or hurt" among small and medium scale entrepreneurial undertakings. This is
a dangerous avenue down which the US must not stray! It is the same old selection of winners and losers (i.e., Who gets cheap capital? Who gets into "Consortium X?" Who gets protection from others? Who wins the nod to do what research?), and brings with it the same old concomitant distortions (i.e., taxes to pay for it, bypassed dreams, socialized failures of interminable duration, lazy firms, higher prices for consumer goods/services, retaliatory trade barriers, insider fraud, and bank failures tied ultimately to distorted investment-payoffs.) Cooler heads must prevail. Provide entrepreneurs an unfettered playing field, allow them to keep the fruits of their labor, and viola’, the US economy is back on top in no time!

c. ingredient #2: a diverse and growing population

Another of America’s trump cards exists within the realm of demography. To appreciate this particular strength, one must first acknowledge that the success of any developed country in the ‘90s (and beyond) is predicated upon a population that is expanding. The importance of this generic claim is easy enough to perceive: More people very simply translates into a larger call for everything from homes and toys (read goods) to education and entertainment (read services). It’s the demand-end of an economy which must be healthy in order to stimulate its supply-
counterpart. Each is necessary for a robust financial status.

By way of contrast, nations with a declining population, or even a stable population, forgo the demand-stimulus of increasing population levels. Moreover, populations that have ceased to grow will tend to age as fewer children replace their descendants: This additional attribute is grave insofar as the tendency of seniors, generally speaking, is to consume already accumulated assets and/or the income derived from them. The end-result is that average per capita demand will diminish as well.

Turning from this abstract discussion to concrete measurements of population growth, please refer now to the assemblies of UN data which appear in Appendix A of this chapter. As can be seen in Table #1, the populations of Japan and Western Europe show declining totals over the next three-plus decades. If these projections are accurate, Japan and Western Europe can fully expect their economies to stagnate as a result. The US, however, shows a population total which is steadily increasing by 85 million over 35 years. Suffice to say, the US will have a tremendous economic jump on its competition should these Table #1 projections come to pass.

What exactly might make these projections believable? Why, for example, should the US growth rate maintain itself while that of other nations and blocs within the First World
decline? Are the population-projections of Table #1 cast in
stone? Here is where the story gets interesting. Here also
is where the specific nature of America’s demographic
strengths come into focus. Broaching this more sophisticated
analysis can be accomplished by first noting that there are
only two ways for any country to increase its population­
base: bump-up fertility, and/or keep immigration totals
above emigration totals. An exploration of these means is
begun with elaborations on the latter of these phenomena:
immigration topping emigration.

With roughly 800,000 new immigrant-arrivals annually
(650,000 legal, 150,000 illegal), the US takes in more
immigrants than any other nation on earth. US
emigration presently consists of mostly older, former
immigrants returning to their homelands (often armed with
social security and pension income). This latter total now
runs at approximately 200,000 people annually. The
surplus of immigrants over emigrants is, therefore, about
600,000 each year. The most immediate population-impact of
all these people is, of course, that the immigrants
themselves are newly counted as additions to the total
population. On an annual basis, this type of accretion
accounts for approximately 25% of the increase in US
population totals since 1980.

The second aforementioned means by which a country (any
country) can enlarge its population base is by increasing
fertility rates. Unfortunately, low fertility is an all-too-typical concomitant of economic success within the First World. The reasons for this are multiple. For example, parents in developed countries often and aptly perceive children as long-term and expensive dependents. Furthermore, opportunities for women within the First World extend far beyond the exclusive role of child-bearing. Both of these conditions translate into less and less children being birthed over time. Ample evidence of this can be found in a perusal of the data appearing in Appendix B, Table #2.

Table #2 tracks the increases and decreases in "Total Fertility Rates" (TFR) for women in the US and other selected countries and blocs since 1950. In the simplest of terms, the TFR measurement is the total number of children that women of child-bearing age can be expected to have over the course of their lifetimes if they maintain the fertility patterns demonstrated by individual age-brackets in a single year. A TFR of 2.1 is a benchmark insofar as that is the rate at which women must reproduce in order to replace themselves, fathers, and account for infant mortality.

As Table #2 displays, the US entered the second half of this century with TFRs well above the replacement level of 2.1. However, for most of the past 25 years, US women have reproduced at significantly below 2.1 (just like women within a majority of other countries constituting the First
World), UNTIL RECENTLY. Knowing this calls forth an important question: If fertility is so very important to economic stimulation, what then is the magic that has caused the US TFR to recently rise and once again reach 2.1?

The "missing links" here are two-fold: the contemporary boomer-bulge of women passing through their child-bearing ages, and the effects of immigration on national fertility patterns. Of these two reasons for the recent up-tick in US fertility, the larger explanation has to do with the now-aging bulge of boomers. The formerly low rate of births among this cohort is what so dramatically reduced the TFR throughout the '70s and the early- to mid-'80s. However, the helm of this cohort has heard its biological clock sounding a last call opportunity for birthing children. And many have responded. The "fertility rate" (i.e, births per 1000 women aged X over time X) of women aged 30 to 34 years old increased from 60.0 in 1980, to 80.4 in 1990. Likewise, the fertility rate of women aged 35 to 39 years old rose from 26.9 in 1980, to 37.3 in 1990. In short, a lot of aging thirtysomethings have decided that now is the time to have one or more kiddysomethings of their own!

Also bearing upon this same 75% of US population-increases which now come exclusively from births, is the second form of population-increasing immigrant-impacts. More specifically, the majority of newly arrived US immigrants are possessed of a higher fertility than is the
The US Census Bureau catalogues the overall fertility rate of foreign-born immigrants in 1988 as 96 per 1,000 women of childbearing age, as compared to a rate of 67.2 per 1,000 native-born women of childbearing age during that same year. This becomes a bit more meaningful upon more simply noting that 10% of all US annual births are presently the children of foreign-born immigrants. Insofar as we are speaking here of 16.1 million total foreign-born immigrants in 1988, that 10% of all births is coming from less than 7% of the US population. Plying these percentages to the almost four million births of 1988, one can see that this 12 month-total would have been roughly 120,000 less births if the fertility of foreign-born immigrant females was identical to that of native-born women.

Standing back a moment, the ultimate point of this statistical parade is to ballyhoo the US embrace of newly arrived, diverse immigrants. They allow the population to grow by entering US borders (impact #1), and by later increasing the national fertility (impact #2). As mentioned earlier, this growth leads to economic stimulus which then abets the rise of US preeminence. And the good news does not stop there: Diversity brings other benefits as well.

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The reader will note that Census Bureau data on foreign-born, immigrant fertility is highly aggregated. Age-based TFRs, for example, are not available for many of the communities within this population.
Among these benefits are global connections which lead to increased commerce for US players. Consider, for example, all that is implied by the following vignette:

An American and a German corporation engages in an extensive search for an executive who speaks German and Korean and knows both cultures. It is a long search and, at its end, not entirely successful. As the American firm engages in a similar search, looking for someone who speaks Korean and the corporate home office language, a young man walks in seeking a job. He has graduated from a prestigious American university with top grades, has shown himself to be a diligent worker, loves golf, speaks perfect English, can tell you why the Redskins are really the best team in the NFL, has Korean parents, and speaks perfect Korean. Demographics influence commerce. 34

Stories such as these are not unusual. Foreign nationals now receive a quarter of the natural science Ph.D.s and more than half of the engineering Ph.D.s awarded in the US. 35 In addition to keeping college enrollments high, one-fifth of these people temporarily participate in the US labor force either during or after completing their educations. 36 Thanks to the Immigration Act of 1990, many of these people are also becoming US citizens. Harvard professor of government, Joseph Nye, refers to this as America's collective "brain gain." 37 More specifically, the 1990 legislation tripled, from 54,000 to 140,000, the number of individuals who are annually eligible for citizenship on the basis of their skills. 38 Typical of these individuals is a commitment to hard-work, self-reliance, and family.
Immigrants can also teach US natives a few novel lessons which might surprise everyone. As physicist William Ellis explains:

We need to understand other cultures so that we can understand and reform our own culture. We need to re-think our concepts of health, resource conservation, ownership, family, clan, universe, person, etc., from a non-Western viewpoint.

We need to use intercultural understanding to provide us with a platform from which we can see ourselves. There is much in other cultures that fits well with our current attempts to design a better future for ourselves. There are 'new future' concepts already conceived and still practiced by various peoples around the world that we need to understand, adapt, and adopt.  

Push this just a bit farther and one can speak of a dynamic gestalt that is greater than the sum of its parts. In the words of syndicated columnist Jay Walljasper, "Multicultural societies have their own set of strengths, including a vibrant energy sparked by numerous traditions that mingle and bounce off each other." 

Of course, it almost goes without saying that the US ability to accommodate and make the most of diversity is not something that can be found just anywhere. Take, for example, the well-known xenophobia of America’s nearest competitors: Japan and Western Europe. The experience of Koreans in Japan, Indians in Britain, Turks in Germany, and North Africans in France, speak volumes in this regard. Having effectively forgone the meliorative possibilities of immigration, these countries are left to depend upon increases in fertility to expand their population bases. As
described earlier, this means big trouble for the US competition: Many of their fertility rates are presently among the lowest in all of recorded history.\footnote{41} The economies of these rapidly aging nations will soon start to creak and groan under soaring expenditures in health-care and pension-payments. By way of contrast, the US can merely "immigrant-away" such problems by keeping a high ratio of workers-to-retirees.

In summation, I return to the heading of this chapter’s subsection, which is also ingredient \#2 for success in the '90s: "a diverse and growing population." As has been shown, each of these two components has its advantages. Moreover, each of the two components overlaps and feeds into the other whereby diversity begets growth, and growth begets diversity. An upwards and benign spiral is underway in these United States. It brings with it a compelling demographic rationale for believing in America’s rise to global championship.

d. ingredient \#3: an abundance of resource rich land

Further propelling the US in its trajectory to \#1, is the continued availability of empty and generous lands with which to expand. Indeed, even the country’s most densely populated states strike many foreign travelers to the US as empty. There are untold areas in the US that can be easily
transformed into living areas, industrial parks, tourist attractions, and academic centers. Compare this situation with, for example, the island nations of Japan, Taiwan, or Singapore, wherein no stones have been left unturned. The situation for other equally small, yet contiguous nations is often worse: many are entirely landlocked. Little wonder that on this basis alone, Americans are often enviously viewed by others as spoiled.

What of the resources harvested from the land itself? These can be helpfully catalogued into three rubrics: agricultural goods, energy sources (i.e., oil, coal, natural gas, uranium, etc.), and nonenergy raw materials (i.e., copper, iron ore, zinc, chromium, molybdenum, cobalt, etc). As regards agricultural goods, US water supplies and fertile soils have enabled the country to long exist as a food exporter. There is no compelling reason to believe this might change. As regards both energy and nonenergy raw materials, the situation, at first blush, appears a bit more mixed. But that assessment is akin to forecasting via the rear view mirror of history. It is rather the case that Americans can expect an oversupply of everything which comes out of the ground for a time extending just as far as the eye can see. Ample support of this anti-limits projection have been assembled by authors John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene in the pages of their 1990 text,
Megatrends 2000. Take, for example, the following commentary:

We need fewer raw materials, as we have been moving away from material-intensive products for decades—for example, the widespread substitution of plastics for steel. Miniaturization is another factor lessening demand for materials. In recent years the prices of raw materials have been the lowest in recorded history, in relation to manufactured goods and services, and in general, they will continue to fall.

A prototypical example of the shift away from the material-intensive is fiber optic cable. Just seventy pounds of fiber optic cable can transmit as many messages as one ton of copper wire. Equally important, those seventy pounds of fiber-optic cable require less than 5 percent of the energy needed to produce one ton of copper wire. 43

And if resource substitution doesn’t appear grand enough, then consider the impacts of greater efficiency rates at the use-end, greater recovery techniques at the search-end, new suppliers responding to market signals, and conservation-impacts!

Indeed, rather than continue reactively writing in response to the doomsayers, why not point to a more relevant selection of US resource strengths? Begin here with much of what has been built on America’s plentiful land resources. Phenomena included here are the aforementioned living quarters, industrial parks, educational centers, and tourist meccas. These are the vibrant resources from which US happiness and productivity are truly mined. Try to find a country with more top flight universities, high tech centers, or world renowned vacation areas—no other nation comes close. And if that’s not enough, the US has a final
resource trump card which nearly guarantees its leadership status: the English language.

Equally large segments of humankind are conversationally fluent in either Mandarin Chinese, or English—about a billion speakers of each. English, however, is the unequivocal, global language of planet Earth. The reason is that 610 million of those one billion English speakers, have learned English as a second language. This means, of course, that English speakers span the globe whereas those in command of Mandarin exist largely within a few national boundaries. Moreover, the United Nations estimates that three of every four language-learning, secondary students, globally, is studying English. In fact, among the Chinese themselves, 250 million—a total roughly equal to the US population—are studying English.

Given numbers such as these, it is no surprise to find that English has insinuated itself as the exchange-conduit of numerous international arenas. English is the official language of the UN, NATO, UNESCO, Save the Children, the Olympics, the Miss Universe Pageant, and the World Council of Churches. Equally compelling: over 80% of all technical and scientific papers are published first in English; the fields included here range from medicine to space exploration. Now think about all of that for just a moment. Without much effort and/or translation-delays,
the US citizenry can understand diplomatic doings and 80% of all scientific-cum-technical publications. Moreover, Americans pay absolutely nothing for this gargantuan edge.

In addition to understanding-so-much-so-easily, this language resource can be aptly credited with other powers and advantages. The aforecited "megatrenders" John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene are clearly on to something big in their following commentary:

Language is a great agent of homogenization; it is the frequency upon which culture is transmitted. If English is gaining a lock on global language, the implications are clear: The cultures of English speaking countries will dominate. 49

Language, in other words, is not some neutral vessel for conveying reality; it’s instead akin to a mold which actually imposes certain biases upon the speaker. In the case of English, many of those biases will reflect the modus operandi of US natives. b

e. free markets both nationally and abroad

b It's interesting to ask exactly WHY so many people are opting to learn English as a second language. The obvious explanation is America's (deserved or undeserved) beacon-on-the-hill image. Other less idealistic explanations can also be found. The post-WWII take-off in English popularity coincided with a time that Americans were creating much and naming their inventions part by part. As syndicated columnist Richard Reeves explains it, "Americans named the parts for the world." Learning English simply became the commercially practical thing to do. Even less glamorous is the oft-heard explanation that English is popular because the language can be spoken badly and still remain understandable (Reeves, p.A14).
The fourth and final of the four overlapping ingredients necessary for US-success in the '90s and beyond is that of free markets both nationally and abroad. To some extent, the importance of domestic free markets has been described in an earlier chapter-segment focusing on an entrepreneurial culture. Nonetheless, an understanding of domestic free markets—when combined with free markets abroad—serves to further refine an appreciation of the US climb to championship.

Economist Myron Ross provides an introductory overview of this terrain in his 1989 text entitled, A Gale of Creative Destruction: The Coming Economic Boom of 1992-2020:

What happens in the United States often has a profound effect elsewhere. And in this rapidly changing universe, events elsewhere have an impact on the United States. The entity called 'the US economy,' or for that matter 'the French economy,' is slowly (emphasis added) but inevitably passing from the scene and the world economy is emerging.

In the emerging world economy, free trade will be applied more extensively. Free trade, as we will show, will produce significant gains because of a better allocation of international resources and because of improvements associated with the international transfer of technology. The history of the past century dramatically illustrates that international events transcend political boundaries. If there is growth, this leaves room for profound optimism. 50

Two points are made here. First, free trade is becoming more and more characteristic of nations the world over. Second, this development brings with it economic benefits for everyone--the US included.

Elaborations on point #1—free trade increasing internationally—is the easy half. Lying at the root of
this development are the multiple democratic revolutions in the continents of South America, Africa, and Eastern Europe. According to the private foundation, Freedom House, 1990 was a watershed insofar as that marked the first year in which more countries were rated "free" as opposed to "not free." More specifically, 61 were deemed "free", 47 were deemed "partly free" and 59 were deemed "not free." In people-terms, 38.8% percent of the world’s populace now live in freedom. (Significantly, that percentage would increase by 50% percent if China were to suddenly switch from a "not free" to a "free" designation.)

Fueling these democratic revolutions are, of course, a number of overtly political desires including an escape from censored information and a respect of civil rights. But so too is their an economic component at work. Specifically, the people of these countries are equally desirous of improved standards of living. Indeed, many of the world’s newest democracies may well fail should the material trappings of a good life elude them. Given this potentiality, the great majority of these recently minted democracies have embraced not only democratic institutions, but the market mechanism as well. The reasons why are simple enough: To take just the international outlook (ignoring for the moment domestic advantages), the one-two punch of foreign trade and investment serves as no less than an engine of economic growth. The gains here derive
ultimately from the principle of comparative advantage, and they are gains which accrue to everyone. Indeed, the US and other countries attempting to assist these fledgling democracies have even predicated their financial aid on progress in implementing market reforms. Among these reforms are privatizing the means of production and distribution; creating stock markets; decentralizing; allowing bankruptcies; letting markets set prices; and deregulating. Realize as well that the embrace of these reforms is not limited to the Freedom House favorites; many of the "not free" countries are experimenting with these same market reforms.

So much for part one of Ross's quoted sentiments above: we have every reason to believe that free markets will continue to expand the world over. What of his second contention: that the continuation and spread of free markets will work to the advantage of the US? Coming to terms with this argument is a bit tricky and best approached by backing up a bit.

Myron H. Ross is one of this country's ample economists who identifies himself as a Schumpeterian. Therefore, when speaking of developed market economies, the organizing principle is long waves or cycles of 50 years wherein 25 years of economic growth alternate with 25 years of economic decline. Underlying this alternation is, most principally,
the varied rate of technological invention, innovation, and diffusion. As Ross explains:

(Schumpeter) emphasized that at the heart of the long cycle was the development and diffusion of major innovations such as the steam engine, the building of railroads, electricity and the automobile. Schumpeter underscored that the innovations in technology tend to cluster in time, acting as a major source of the long cycle, with emphasis being on the disequilibrium of economic forces. 54

Using a combination of theoretical and empirical support, Ross argues that the world now stands on the brink of an "unimagined" economic upturn that will dwarf anything we have seen to date. 55 Central to this accumulating "gale of creative destruction," are technologies pertaining to information (i.e., the use of filters for overload areas, the use of probes for obscure areas, the use of telecommunications for dissemination of information, etc). What makes this central technology so powerful is its near generic applicability to other dynamic sectors including bioengineering, synthetic materials, energy, space, nanotechnologies, smart drugs, consumer electronics, and fifth generation (light-based) computers. 56

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54 Invention, innovation, and diffusion are all technical terms in the Schumpeterian argot. Invention is the know-how involved in putting together a new product or process. As such, one can speak of "product inventions" and "process inventions." Innovation is the initial commercialization and application of product and process inventions respectively. Diffusion is the tail-end of innovation whereby the product or process comes into common use (Ross, p.60.).
Given these initial premises, consider what happens when you situate increased markets at the global level alongside of information technologies plied to myriad emerging sectors. A benign spiral of positive feedback ensues whereby the growth of one phenomenon begets growth in the other. Begin, for example, with an increase in the speed of information sloshing around the global communications network concerning the production and improvement of product X. This speeds up the rate of innovation which might then speed the rate at which new capital is invested in productive capacity. This, in turn, decreases the average age of capital stock, and would presumably augment productivity. Who wins in all of this? Consumers, for starters, by way of cheaper goods and services. Newly developing countries are also winners insofar as their industrial bases can be built with only the latest technologies: The investment-possibilities here range from a sophisticated subterranean infrastructure to the tippy-top of exclusively "smart" buildings. Call it a Smart City....

As mentioned earlier, the US is arguably positioned to benefit at least as much as anyone else from the global expansion of trade and markets. Two points merit mentioning. First, the US remains in possession of many very large firms of still great importance. Among their strengths is an ability to mass produce with inexpensive
unit-costs as per economies of scale. Any expansion of the
global customer base is, therefore, to the definite
advantage of these players. Why? Because many of these
nascent foreign customers have only recently signed on with
the consumer society: As such, their needs include items--
ranging from refrigerators to shelving--which are well
suited to the mass production strengths of large firms.
Realize finally, that none of this comes at the expense of
smaller firms producing specialized and/or niche goods and
services. Indeed, the internationalization of markets also
entails a greater variability of niche-demand for phenomena
ranging from robotic software to music.

A second explanation as to why additional free markets
will work to the advantage of the US concerns what Ross
aptly refers to as a "diminishment in the amplitude of the
business cycle." How this transpires can be seen by first
appreciating the extent to which the service sector of the
US economy has grown. As Ross describes it:

The service-producing sector is composed mainly of
outputs from transportation, public utilities,
wholesale and retail trade, finance, insurance and real
estate, and government. Between 1929 and 1987, the
service-producing sector grew at 3.2 percent, while the
goods-producing sector grew at 2.9 percent. Put
another way, in 1929 the service-producing sector was
94 percent of the goods-producing sector; by 1986 the
service-producing sector was 108 percent of the goods-
producing sector. If these growth rates continue over
the next 25 years to the year 2011, the service
producing sector will be 115 percent of the goods-
producing sector. 57
Such projected growth in the service sector seems quite likely given the central position of information within the newborn Schumpeterian long wave. Furthermore, if the US plies its service sector prowess to expanding global markets, then we as a nation are less and less dependent upon the production of physical goods. While that entails a variety of pros and cons, one clear advantage is a consequential diminishment of inventory problems. This, in turn, bears upon the aforementioned decrease in the business cycle’s amplitude insofar as inventory-fluctuations have always been this cycle’s principal catalyst. More specifically, what has happened historically is one firm racing to supply a new goods-demand is then joined by a surplus of other new-comer firms with the same idea. Inventories swell and capital is effectively locked away in unsold goods—a form of disinvestment. Services, by way of contrast, have no significant inventory-problems to contend with. Service consumption is too immediate for surpluses to mount; most service arrangements are even formalized via advance contract agreements. Again, all of this will serve to smooth-out the economy, and, in the process, make loans/investments a less risky prospect to lenders/borrowers.

In fairness, a conclusion to this subject of how free markets globally will contribute to US hegemony must acknowledge the principal cost involved. Certain US
workers, and even entire US industries will be hurt--over the short-term--as we more fully partake of free trade. However, the adjustment is a transitional cost on the path to greater good for everyone. Many players within now-coddled countries and business sectors of the Third World will likewise face a similar transitional pain over the short term. Fortunately this transitional pain--among poorer nations in particular--may be remarkably less than what many are expecting. Consider, for example, a final argument excerpted from *A Gale of Creative Destruction*:

The learning process benefits those nations that start late on the growth path. Because the lagging nation has more to learn from the leading nation than vice versa,...the lagging nation has more opportunities and can catch up with the 'crowd'.... As late starters, these countries (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong) have experienced high growth rates--a pattern that is expected to continue in the future because of their links to the industrialized world. And as other nations such as Chile, Brazil, the Philippines, and Malaysia get on the industrialized bandwagon, they too can take advantage of their 'relative backwardness.'

Part 2: Focus on the Busters

f. preamble

The following is the first of three scenario-related, buster-specific sections within this dissertation. While putting them together, I experienced some tension between a)
wishing to offer colorful and novel speculation, and b) also wishing to fully substantiate all that I say with some measure of "hard data." These goals were possible while earlier writing of both "cohort-analysis as a methodology" and the "larger-context scenarios" which appear in this and subsequent chapters. It’s not so easy, however, with generational commentary pertaining to the bust.

The problem is an understandable one. As regards my methodology-discussion and the larger scenarios, there is both a long history of literature and a wealth of monied and sizeable entities (i.e., the government and private think tanks) who make it their business to assemble the relevant "hard data." The pool of buster-data, by way of contrast, is a much skinnier selection of a) buster writings and interviews, b) empirical studies, c) polling data, and d) commentary on each of a, b, and c. What can be done about this dearth?

On the one hand, a writer could just limit all statements to those which can be rigorously verified. The problem, however, is that you’ll be left with only a few not-so-stunning and cautious statements. On the other hand, a writer could take some license with what is available, and offer tentative judgements or inferences about it. The problem here, however, is that the writer can then stand accused of being a little too "fast and loose" with what is known.
I have chosen to handle this tension in two ways. First is to be clear on what can be supported with good justification and some measure of hard data. Second is to cue the reader as to when I’ll be taking a semi-departure from the rigorously verifiable. The indication as to these latter moments will take the form of a leading statement which somewhere mentions "thinking creatively."

- busters are amply and successfully diverse

Diversity ranks highly among the buster attributes relevant to the champion-scenario as outlined above. As shall be shown, for many within this generation, their ample diversity is not only accepted, but welcomed and even celebrated. In the paragraphs that follow, I will look at

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- The reader will please recall from chapter #1 that the bust is comprised of approximately 50 million Americans who follow the boom of approximately 75 million (boomer cohorts averaged 4 million births annually, whereas buster cohorts averaged only 3.5 million and ran for a shorter number of years). Busters now range in age from their very late teens to their very early thirties. Most buster analysts mark the generation’s beginning at about 1961. The reasons why regularly include the front-end busters’ experience of the 1970s as pre-adolescents. Likewise, buster analysts generally conclude the generation at some point in the early- to mid-1970s. Specific choices here include 1973 (i.e., America’s fertility low-point which translated into a cohort of a mere 3.1 million), or 1974 (i.e., boomers replace the generation preceding them as the majority of that year’s new parents), or 1976 (i.e., fertility begins to climb after three years of hovering just above the 1973 low). Analysts who select any one of these years will typically include the parenthetical explanation above and some discussion of how being born much later would have meant little or no experience of the 1970s as a young person.

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some of the buster's diversity—and it's generational embrace—concerning four of society's "isms" which pertain to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

It's indicative of just how diverse this generation is to note that the bust has grown through immigration by over three million since 1976. 61 Moreover, their ranks will likely peak in numbers by an additional 3 million before mortality begins to take it's toll sometime early in the next century: Prior to reaching that point, the bust will have established itself as the most immigrant-heavy of any generations born in the twentieth century. 62 To breakdown the bust generation on a racial basis what you have in 1993 are: non-hispanic whites at 69% vs. 74% for the US overall; blacks at 14% vs. 12% for the US overall; Asians at 4% vs. 3% for the US overall; and hispanics at 13% vs. 10% for the US overall. 63 Stated more simply, in 1993, 31% of busters are racial minorities compared to 26% of the nation as a whole. These figures easily make the bust the most multiracial of any US generation to have gone before them. 64

Given this much of the picture—the bust as multiracial and multiethnic—one can helpfully move from there to gauge just how accepting they are of individual attributes. Agencies ranging from the Times Mirror Center to MTV have polled randomized groups (some big, some small) and their results consistently show the bust as far more comfortable
than their elders on issues including interracial dating, multiracial neighbors, citizenship for the children of illegal aliens, and residency status for political refugees.

Indeed, while commenting upon one '92 survey of 3,500 adult Americans, Susan Mitchell of American Demographics notes that "...49% of people aged 18 to 24 approve of giving preferential treatment to minorities to improve their situation, compared with about only one in three boomers."

The rather unspectacular (but still important!) explanations for these encouraging surveys may well have much to do with the simple fact that busters were raised at a time when it became far less socially acceptable to be either a racist or an ethnic bigot. Moreover, the size and number of minority-collections within US society have grown to such an extent that it would be difficult for anyone to lack some first-hand experience with people of a different race or ethnicity. As such, a human face has often taken the place of what were formerly stereotypes only. Finally, bouts of forced integration, the multiculturalism-movement’s impact upon school/college/university curricula, and changes in the output of both Hollywood and Madison Avenue have undoubtedly made their own contributions as regards issues concerning race and ethnicity.

What then of grappling with a few of society’s other diversity-based "isms"? How about sexism? In organizing an
apt buster-focused assessment to this pernicious and longstanding dilemma, two generational snapshots are necessary: the sentiments/actions of buster-women and the sentiments/actions of buster-men. As shall be shown, from either end of this equation, busters constitute an unequivocal march from the sexist notions of (stated extremely!) women as blushing violet doormats, and men as dominating chauvinist pigs. Take, for example, the words of Neil Howe and Bill Strauss whose commentary below is excerpted from their '93 buster-text entitled 13th Gen:

Just as surveys show 13ers to be less racist, so too do they show them to be considerably less sexist than any elder age group. Take a look at today’s young men. Ask them if they mind working for a female employer; if women should get equal opportunity in employment; if it’s OK when both husband and wife have full-time jobs; if women do as well at most jobs as men.... On all such survey questions, 13er men are more likely to respond affirmatively than their elder male counterparts. Without complaint, they routinely encounter women in situations that would make older men squirm with wounded dignity—running errands for female professionals, doing sit-ups for female sergeants, depositing girlfriends’ paychecks, working to put wives through grad school....

Even more emphatically, take a look at today’s young women. They probably represent the largest one-generation advance in de facto sexual equality in American history. The 13th is the first generation of women to exceed men in average educational attainment. They’re the first to pursue competitive athletics in significant numbers. They’re the first to attend military academies, the first to enter the legal, medical, and business professions in double-digit percentages, and the first to approach male salaries in a wide variety of occupations.... For all full-time US workers, the median earnings of women may linger at only 70 percent of the median for men, but that ratio varies from a low of roughly 60 percent among the fiftyish Silent to a high of over 80% among the twentyish 13ers.
Advertisers have also found abundant confirmations of these attitudinal changes. Consider, for example, the following vignette pulled from the pages of a recent *Business Week*:

And while they respond to sexy advertising, they're repelled by anything that smacks of sexism. When August A. Busch IV became brand manager for Budweiser in July of 1991, the then 27-year-old told Anheuser-Busch Cos. wholesalers that research showed the typical bouncing-bimbo-filled beer ad ‘just doesn’t cut through’ to the 21-to-27-year-old drinkers he wanted to reach. Busch launched a campaign that displayed the kind of non sexist irreverence that appeals to many Xers. One ad shows a granny teaching a rocker how to play his guitar better. Another series has busters receiving a slightly tongue-in-cheek lesson about the glorious tradition of Bud from older bar mates. Busch’s father, CEO August A. Busch III, was skeptical. ‘But he’s looking through younger eyes,’ the father admitted. ‘He was right, and I was wrong.’ Through September, Anheuser-Busch posted a 1.3% gain in barrel shipments; the industry showed a 0.3% gain.

It may well be that the younger Busch’s research included a view of *Time* magazine’s Fall ‘90 survey of 505 busters which purports to show that 86% of young men are looking for a spouse who is both ambitious and hardworking. 69 Equally important, notes *Time* reporter Ann Blackman, "is an astonishing 48% (of buster males who) expressed an interest in staying home with their children." 70 Among buster women, less than one-quarter planned to be stay-at-home housewives—a total which has declined from two-thirds among like-aged women a mere 25 years ago. 71 And topping it all off, *Time* found that 51% of their survey respondents (both men and women) put having a long and happy marriage
and raising well-adjusted children ahead of career success at 29%. 72

Some important questions fall out of all this data—not the least of which is how the busters plan to simultaneously have time with the kids, a stimulating career, and a happy marriage. These are arguably "secrets" that have eluded many-an-elder who has suffered either the guilt of divorce, or the drudgery and exhaustion of attempting both a go-go career while also existing as a large presence in their children’s lives. 73 Just how these issues might unfold is topic to be commented upon in later sections and scenarios. Nonetheless, what I wish to unearth is the aforementioned thesis of this particular subsection: that busters are arguably more comfortable with diversity than the generations preceding them. The argument is a cheerful one, it’s relevant to the champion scenario, and, importantly, it’s characteristic of busters-as-a-generation to a greater extent than those who have gone before.

There remains a final topic to be looked at as regards busters’ heartening take on gender relations overall. Interestingly, the subject at first appears contrary to the general thrust of their diversity-embrace. Specifically, a number of polls have shown that only one in five busters consider themselves to be "feminists." 74 Does this mean that busters oppose a loosely identifiable "feminist" agenda of abortion rights, anti-harassment legislation, parental
leave, and comparable pay for people in fields still
dominated by women? Buster-author Paula Kamen offers-up one
assessment (which recurs in much of the bust-literature) in
her '91 text entitled Feminist Fetale: Voices From the
Twentysomething Generation Explore the Future of the Women's
Movement. Making use of 236 interviews, polling data, and
her own experience, Kamen comments:

Let's be frank about the 'F' word. I'm not
talking about the four-letter variety, but the term
'feminist,' which likewise can pack a mean punch.

Proof of its power to insult is the widespread
conflict I have noticed among members of my
twentysomething generation. They consistently fail to
identify their beliefs as feminist. For example, most
would reply 'yes' if questioned whether they support
equal pay for equal work, or the idea that a women's
proper place is wherever she chooses it to be. But if
then asked if they were feminists, 'no' would be the
most common reply (with perhaps a smattering of 'no,
buts' and 'yes, buts').

Many are avoiding the ugly radical feminist
stigma. Just the word conjures up the collectively
deep-rooted image of angry, bra-burning, men-lynchers.

Other analysts have argued additional explanations as
to the wealth of busters who support a feminist agenda yet
shun a feminist label. First is a lack of buster
"ownership" or "nearness" as regards the heated and
pioneering battles won by their predecessors in the '60s and
'70s fight for gender-equality. Second, is a package of
explanations described by buster Laurie Ouelette in On the
Issues magazine as to why so few busters have attached
themselves to the formal feminist movement and/or adopted
its appellation. Certain of her '92 comments cluster around
a theme familiar to many busters in a variety of contexts: living in the shadow of the boom. (Oulette is also useful in pointing to a number of less-than-generational attitudes among the disaffected as well as some of the problems-cum-possibilities.) Her comments:

Ironically, it is due to the modest success of feminism that many young women like myself were raised with an illusion of equality.... Still, watching my mother struggle emotionally and financially as a single parent made the concept of gender injustice painfully clear, teaching me a lesson that would follow me always.

There's nothing unusual or unique about what happened to me, so why do many young women today steer clear of the women's movement?...

Certainly the conservative political climate and the stereotype of feminists as hairy-legged man haters have played a part in distancing young women from feminism. But these are not the only reasons. The failure of the major feminist organizations, such as NOW, Ms. magazine, and Fund For Feminist Majority, to reach out to a wider spectrum of women, must be acknowledged.

Yet another reason young women are turned away from feminism may lie within the history of feminism itself. If the young women who have gained the most from feminism—that is, white, middle class women like myself who took advantage of increased accessibility to higher education and professional employment—have shunned feminism, it is hardly surprising that the most economically disadvantaged women and women of color have not been eager to embrace feminism either. More than a few young feminists—many educated by the likes of Audre Lorde and bell hooks—feel that feminism must go further to acknowledge issues of race and class and reach out to those women who have been overlooked in the past.

As a final exploration of this generation's diversity and their relatively high ability to accept and even celebrate the bulk of it, I'd like to now to focus upon a) the two to five million gays, lesbians, and bisexuals who populate this generation, and b) the responses of their
heterosexual, buster-counterparts. Among the latter of these collections, one survey-taker reports that, "More than four out of every ten busters (44%) said that gay couples should be allowed to get married. Nearly as many (38%) felt that they should also be allowed to adopt and raise children." 78 If that sounds at all high, realize that it is pulled from 1,500 randomized US adults as polled by the conservative Barna Research Group who list among their clientele the Reverend Billy Graham. 79 Among college freshman (as polled by the Roper Organization) "anti-gay bias" ranked third among the respondent's 1992 enumeration of "major problems on campus" (alcohol abuse was first at 46%, date rape was second at 29%, anti-gay bias was third at 27%, anti-black bias was fourth at 23%, and violent crime was fifth at 22%). 80 Further attestation to this general buster acceptance of gay/lesbian/bi people and issues can be gleaned from a look at the media that are attractive to- and even dominated by busters: Among the print media there's Details, Spin, Esquire, and Entertainment Weekly; among the broadcast media there's MTV, The Comedy Channel, and the Fox Network. 81 Gay issues, gay characters, and gay culture are regularly featured within each of these media preferences.

To question what exactly might be fueling this aspect of the buster's diversity (and its embrace) is a bit trickier than that of issues pertaining to gender, race and ethnicity. More specifically, gay/lesbian/bi rights were
not a hugely prominent, pre-existing factor within the social landscape bequeathed to them in the 1970s and early-'80s. As such, two alternative phenomena may well be energizing the greater acceptance of gay/lesbian/bi people and issues among the twentysomethings. First would be the actions of buster gays, lesbians, and bisexuals themselves. Boomer author Betty Berzon explains in a passage pulled from an updated version of her text Positively Gay:

In the gay and lesbian world of 1992 there is a new generation of activists. They show us how good it feels to get the anger out, and up in the faces of the people who have turned a deaf ear to us before. But this makes many of the older activists nervous. Don’t be so outrageous. Tone it down. Keep it cool. Play it safe. There is a tension between the activist generations. Imagine how far we’ve come. Two generations of gay and lesbian activists now working on distinctly different fronts to push our agenda. The family grows.

Surely some of what has created these "new activists" is the way in which the AIDS epidemic has variously impacted each of the existing generations. Among older gays (males in particular) many are themselves infected and/or know of someone who has died or become ill as a result of HIV infection. Among the younger generation of gays, fewer have had to grapple with the death of same aged peers--despite a wealth of so far "silent" infections among their ranks. What this could mean is that AIDS, for older gays, may be less of a political issue and more of an immediately emotional issue; likewise, for many younger gays, AIDS may be more of a political issue and less of an immediately
emotional trauma.\textsuperscript{84} That’s a broad generalization certainly, but recall that we’re speaking here of some broadly different generational behaviors:

The younger gays are more apt to be publicly outspoken about their sexuality and militant about social issues. They provide the bulk of the manpower for Act-Up and Queer Nation, the two largest militant groups, and they are the gays most likely to endorse such extreme tactics as ‘outing’--exposing the secret homosexuality of individuals who are judged to have hurt the movement, or sometimes, simply to have failed to do enough to help it. Older gay men are more apt to be somewhat closeted, to emphasize working within the system rather than confrontation, and to be more interested in private socializing than in activism.\textsuperscript{85}

Returning this discussion of gays to where it began, much of the argument here is that "part 1" of why so many busters at-large are accepting of gay/lesbian/bi people and issues, most certainly has to do with the actions of buster gay/lesbian/bis themselves. The activists have been highlighted above because of both their relative novelty and the increased space they’ve created for more "middle of the road" people and organizations (bust or otherwise) to accomplish their equally important work. In addition to this "part 1" explanation, it seems as well that there is a second, "part 2" explanation as to why busters-as-whole more willingly embrace this particular aspect of diversity. This latter explanation involves a combination of a) the value that busters overall place on honesty, and b) the dim view that busters take of rigid dogma that doesn’t square with reality as they perceive it. Both tenets are highlighted
below in a passage borrowed from George Barna of the aforecited Barna Research Group:

To the typical Buster, there is no such thing as absolute truth. Statistically, 70% claim that absolute truth does not exist, that all truth is relative and personal. This view is supported by their belief that everything in life is negotiable. In this way of viewing the world, since there are no absolutes, all decisions and realities can be debated until an accommodation is reached between the parties involved.

This type of experiential, negotiated reality is made possible by the notion that you cannot trust anything of which you do not personally have a first-hand knowledge or experience. Two-thirds of the buster generation concede that ‘nothing can be known for certain except the things that you experience in your own life.’ Burned by people and organizations in the past (emphasis added), and trained by their parents to be wary of a deceitful world, Busters have matured into world class skeptics and generally do not take claims about reality at face value. Busters believe what they can feel, taste, see, hear, and touch—-and very little else. 

Barna gets at some important material here that I later intend to more fully consider in a subsequent scenario. For the time being, he’s included as one rationale as to why speaking frankly about one’s sexual orientation (if indeed sexual orientation is the subject at-hand!) is a bit of honesty that will likely earn you more in the way of trust than disdain among a good many busters.

h. busters and creative destruction both here and abroad

Moving now to a discussion of the busters and creative destruction, I wish first to make a speedy overhead comment: The reader must not confuse my use of "creative destruction"
with the phrase "thinking creatively." Please recall that the latter expression is a signal of my leaping to speculation that cannot be substantiated with a wealth of hard data. By way of contrast, "creative destruction" refers to the rough and tumble brand of free enterprise featured in this chapter's larger scenario of America over these next ten years. Recall that it is a private sector capitalism which is allowed to function with little governmental regulation and taxation. It is an environment that favors savvy entrepreneurs and flexible/adaptable workers. Having said that, why then would creative destruction be of importance to the bust generation?

There are several themes all of which bode well in terms of the busters sliding into the creative destruction framework to a greater extent than was the case for their predecessor generations. Among these themes are 1) many busters demonstrated capacity for risk-taking 2) the updated education and "computerease" of many buster individuals, 3) corporate restructuring coupled with many busters' anti-hierarchy bent, 4) materialism as a strong success-motivator among a high percentage of busters in the private sector, and 5) buster-migrations to the cities--both here and abroad--which particularly favor creative destruction. Each of these THEMES is serially considered below. (I will use the capitalized designation "THEMES" in referring to these arguments to help maintain the organization.) Keep in mind
that the macro-picture here is that busters—as generational aggregate—may contain a relatively high number of people within their ranks who are well-suited to ride the dynamics of creative destruction.

As regards THEME #1—many busters demonstrated capacity for risk taking—this is clearly an attribute of importance to creative destruction. To look at this via first thinking creatively, it’s perhaps not too silly to notice that busters are the ones involved with such risky forms of fun as bungee-cord jumping, pool-side skateboarding, and bicycle aerials. True, such risky forms of fun have always been typical of youth; however, there may be more to it with busters: In a survey of high school seniors conducted by the University of Michigan from the mid-'70s to the late-'80s, the proportion of high school seniors who said they "get a kick out of doing dangerous things" rose from 30% to 38%. Likewise, the proportion saying they "like to test myself every now and then by doing something a little risky" rose from 38% to 48%. These "No Fear" youths may include some likely candidates to enter into the chancy arena of starting their own businesses. Indeed, a 1991 Roper College Track survey found that 38% of the college students they polled viewed owning their own business as an excellent way to become successful (this despite the fact that over half of all new businesses fail in less than 2 years). UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute conducted a similar
survey and found that 42% of fall 1991 college freshman said that succeeding in their own business was essential or very important. 89

In looking at THEME #2--the busters educational prowess--several attributes are of importance; and each of these attributes relate to the high tech, high education aspects of creative destruction as outlined in part 1 of this chapter. First, busters have a lot of the requisite training. Indeed, busters may yet topple the boomers as the nation's most educated generation ever. 90 In 1991, a record-breaking 62% of all high school graduates enrolled the following fall for college courses. 91 (Racially, 73% of Asian high school graduates went on for further education, followed by whites at 61%, Hispanics at 53%, and blacks at 48%. 92)

A related buster attribute which also bears upon the busters' education-oriented prowess within a creative destruction milieu, is their relative comfort with computer technologies. William Dunn, gives this matter a full airing in his '93 text, The Baby Bust: A Generation Comes of Age:

Despite the remaining gaps and challenges, the use of computers is rising, typically in inverse proportion to age. A Census Bureau study found that by 1989, 36 percent of those aged 18 to 34 used computers, compared with 28 percent of all persons older than age 18. The proportion was 47 percent for those aged 15 to 17 and over 60 percent for those aged 9 to 13. 93

Dunn uses the term "computerease" to describe many busters' connection with this central technology. It's a
connection, Dunn maintains, that is characterized by benign intrigue and enthusiasm. Dunn speculates that this happy rapport may have begun when young busters were introduced to computers in their homes and schools as a technology with which to play games. And, as Katherine Bishop of the New York Times reports, fun-with-computers doesn’t necessarily stop just because you get older. Here’s her ‘92 report on the latest out of San Francisco coffeehouses:

Electronic bulletin boards abound, of course, but the idea of combining them with traditional coffeehouse culture was the brainchild of Wayne Gregori, a 35-year-old San Francisco computer consultant. Mr. Gregori designed the network, known as SF Net and installed computer screens horizontally into the tops of low coffeehouse tables setting the keyboards into recesses just below the screens.

By inserting two quarters, users can purchase 20 minutes of time to chat or argue with people they otherwise might not know who are similarly whiling away a foggy afternoon at more than a dozen other cafes. Using handles they have concocted themselves, not their real names, they often talk to each other electronically for hours or months before deciding whether to surrender their anonymity and actually meet.

THEME #3 is that of corporate restructuring and the buster’s often seen anti-hierarchy bent. The latter component of this equation is a recurrent lament among older supervisors and employers of many buster individuals. Lawrence Bradford agrees. Bradford is the author of a widely cited text entitled Twentysomething: Managing and Motivating Today’s New Workforce. In it, he notes: "Younger workers will not respect you because you’re the boss. They
want to know why they’re being asked to do things. They question authority, and have a disregard of hierarchies." 97
(Explanations as to the genesis of this behavior include both a cynicism which derives from the way that corporations treated their employees in the ‘80s; and the independence that 50% of busters developed as latchkey children. 98) To frame this anti-hierarchy depiction more positively, it can, and has, been viewed as a desire on the part of busters to be treated as more than just a company-cog: Corporate busters will often expect to be told of the big picture and how they fit into it. 99

Being anti-hierarchy bears upon creative destruction when you move to link it with contemporary forms of corporate restructuring. Katherine Ann Samon, business writer on the staff of Working Woman explains:

In many ways, the busters attitudes are perfectly aligned with the overwhelming management trend of the ‘90s: the flattening of the managerial pyramid. As companies streamline to guard against takeovers, increase profits, and toughen for global competition, they’re peeling away middle management layers, encouraging the flow of ideas, and opening lines of communication to the top. Traditional assumptions about the boss-employee relationship are being turned inside out—in ways that come naturally to the new generation. 100

THEME #4 is that materialism will (and does!) serve as a strong motivator for many busters to excel in the private sector. As was seen in chapter 1 of this dissertation, busters have some great expectations—and the trappings of a high living standard are definitely a part of that. Here,
for example, is Cheryl Russell’s commentary pulled from a recent issue of *American Demographics* magazine: "The share of today’s freshman whose goal is to be very well off financially remains in the stratosphere at 75% (up from a low of 39 percent in 1970). The share who say they are in college to make more money is also in the clouds, at 72 percent (up from a low of 50 percent in 1971)." Where does this emphasis upon materialism come from? Is it the result of passing through the "greed-is-good-1980s" while still in their formative years? Is it the material ethic so constantly preached to them on television? Does it have to do with how the majority of busters are children of America’s richest generation ever (i.e., the now fifty- and sixtysomethings)? This latter interpretation is favored by Steven Gibb in his "self-help guide for twentysomethings." He elaborates as follows:

> We were coddled in homes that boasted one of the highest standards of living in American (if not all of) history....And yet when we leave home, we find ourselves having to stretch just to pay basic bills. The loss of status inherent in being off the Yuppie track is difficult for some of us. Economic pressures have been a part of our coming-of-age years, and we’re not taking economic opportunity so much for granted anymore.

Regardless of whether Gibb is right or wrong, the point remains that a desire for wealth, will serve as a strong incentive to make a splash in the marketplace of creative destruction.
THEME #5 is the last of the buster linkages to success within a creative destruction environment. This final THEME is to note that many busters have chosen to migrate to cities and counties that seem particularly demonstrative of creative destruction in action. As the productive team of Neil Howe and Bill Strauss point out in their aforecited 13th Gen, these contemporary buster-migrations are a contrast to the behavior of their still-living predecessors:

For 13ers, the hot youth spots are teeming immigrant cities--places with style and frenzy, offering the most jobs and the best fun. These days, youth trends don't spring from Berkeley, Boston, or other tony places where Boomers are busy cruising around with that PC air. No, for 13ers, the gotta-be-there urban zones are the cityscapes stretched across America, the deal-making bazaars of Manhattan, Miami, L.A., Minneapolis, and Seattle ('the new Liverpool'), with platinum bands and hot club scenes; the mirrored air conditioned towers of Atlanta, Dallas, and Charlotte, where low-wage kids help hot new businesses rocket past the competition;....Industrial towns? Forget it, unless you like bagging fries for blue collars. Small towns? Boring, boomer-infested. Rural isolation? Only if friends are along, the weather's good, and there's plenty of vertical or white water nearby.

Like members of other twentieth century American generations, young 13ers are drawn overseas--but not to the same places others went when young, and certainly not for the same reasons. The GIs liberated and fell in love with England, France, and Italy. The Silent went to Ethiopia, Peru, or the Philippines to swear a (temporary) oath of poverty and do a little Peace Corp good. Boomers went anywhere they could export their draft-dodging, drugged-out blue jeans scene. But 13ers? Their preferences are shaped by the economics and politics of the New World Order. Western Europe? Why--to pay $5 per cappuccino waiting for some Eurocrat to process a work permit? The Third World? What for--to get sick, shot at, or taken hostage? No, a 13er would rather journey off to Taipei to make money teaching English, to Japan to help the locals buy US assets, to Santiago to start a shoe franchise, or to Prague to build a venture capital company. 108
It's at least arguable that what many of these buster-preferred destinations share is a pronounced accent upon creative destruction. Indeed, many buster-essayists mirror this romancing of creative destruction in their stories of the locations described above. Here, for example, is buster Meredith Stiehm's opinion of Los Angeles: "The rules are there are no rules. Anyone from anywhere--and of my age--can come to town and make it for themselves, and make it big." Stiehm also targets Hollywood as doubly indicative of "no rules."

The power of Hollywood is, after all, enormous. Last year, then-Vice President Quayle took on the 'elite' here and lost. On the other hand, Bill Clinton seemed to understand the power of Hollywood and coveted it. The Man From Hope unabashedly courted the Hollywood community during his campaign, asking actors, producers, and studio heads to support him publicly and financially--and they came out full throttle for him.

The documentary of his life that was played at the Democratic Convention was produced by a top television producing team, who expertly used image, voice-overs, and slick editing to show us the should behind the man who would be president....

Young people understand that power too--and they want a piece of it. A college friend of mine, 26 years-old, has made a name for himself by being the youngest executive ever at a major studio. He is cultivating his industry clout not to pave his way to being a movie mogul—but to feed his political ambitions. He used his industry muscle to raise money for democratic candidates and causes, and is currently working on forming a lobby for young people in Washington.

He finagled his way into meeting President Clinton twice by dropping the name of the studio executive he works for. He is dead serious about politics, and sees his role in the film industry as the most expedient route to where he really wants to be--the White House.
With an increase in creative destruction abroad, busters (the nation's most well-traveled youths ever) may have yet another ace to play. Take a look, for example, at busters in Prague—one of the foreign preferences mentioned earlier by Strauss and Howe. Buster Zach Messitte reports in the spring of 1993 that, "the number of under-35 Americans living in Prague may reach 40,000 by year’s end, over ten times the number in 1990." Among their many activities are "creating cafes and pizza joints, newspapers (three in English), literary magazines, theaters, a small film industry, and publishing houses." To return this discussion to where it began, there are a total of five THEMES which should privilege the busters—relative to their older counterparts—within a creative destruction milieu. Once again, those THEMES are a demonstrated capacity for risk-taking; the updated education and "computerease" of many busters; corporate restructuring coupled with the busters’ anti-hierarchy bent; materialism as a strong success-motivator for busters within the private sector; and, buster migration to cities (both here and abroad) which doubly favor creative destruction.

i. on buster homeowners

It’s unfortunate, particularly from a global champion perspective, to admit that there are so few buster-
homeowners in America. For busters under the age of 25, a mere 15% own their homes; down from 23% in 1973. For busters aged 25 through 29, only 34% are homeowners; down from 44% in 1973. Taken as whole, just over one-quarter of all busters can lay claim to this piece of "the American dream." The situation looks even grimmer upon noting just how many busters are still living with their parents--some estimates put the figure as high as one-half. Many of these latter busters are boomerangers: Among busters who leave home with a high school degree or better, fully 40% will boomerang back at least once.

The unsurprising culprit in these lackluster rates of home ownership is money. As shall be fully catalogued in chapter 4, the busters are into some very troubling economic straits, no question. However, there is some good news on the horizon that should rather immediately lighten some of the load vis-a-vis home ownership. The punchline here is that boomer homeowners are leaving their starter-dwellings for trade-ups. That's great for the bust insofar as their size means that there is no pyramidal-bulge of people behind the boom clamoring for its collection of starter homes.

Two phenomena could conceivably complicate this rosy picture. First, boomers could hold onto their start-ups and turn them into improved-upon castles. Second, there are still plenty of boomers out there who did not board the
home-ownership-train at an earlier date and may wish to buy in now. Nonetheless, neither phenomenon seems to have changed the overall rosy picture concerning start-ups:

Consider, for example, the following commentary of author and syndicated columnist Jane Bryant Quinn:

> Young people who rent have never before seen such a welcoming housing market. Relative to earnings, a starter home costs the same today as it did in the 1970s. And that’s if you take a fixed rate mortgage. With a 5% adjustable mortgage, you can time-travel (for a year) all the way back to the 1950s.

Again, this is exciting news for busters, but it’s important to note, as Quinn does, that the "averages" she describes remain ensconced within a larger truth about home prices: regional and even local differences can vary tremendously. James Hughes and George Sternlieb look at the shape of some of these differences and what might come of them in the following passage excerpted from American Demographics:

> The regions that suffer the most from an oversupply of housing, however, may attract migrants from other regions. Today, the South is hurt the most by the housing glut, which has depressed prices there. But this glut could benefit the South in the long run by attracting young people who can’t afford housing in the Northeast (or elsewhere).

If Hughes and Sternlieb are correct, the busters may well take a look at their pinched economic situation, and base a home-buying decision on bottom-line, price-tag-terms. Should that happen, the South may well gain some of the busters’ diversity and creative-­destruction-­penchant at the expense of its coastal and northern counterparts.
Until that time, the at-home busters might find some solace (or interest) in a passage I have chosen to use as a wind-up to this chapter. It's excerpted from an essay by Katherine Boo which appeared in a '92 edition of the conservative Washington Monthly:

Today, thanks largely to high rents and low wages, more than 18 million single adults aged 18 - 34 live with their parents—a phenomenon that has the psychologists apoplectic. 'Failed adults,' they term these young people: a generation of budding Norman Bateses spoiled by affluent parents. They dump their own kids on grandma, their problems on dad, and their crap on the living room floor. It's a pandemic so ominous that 'doubling up'—relatives sharing space—has even earned a label from social statisticians: 'borderline homeless'....

If the economic reasons for the phenomenon are not exclusive to America, the distress associated with it surely is. What makes us so unhappy at this new necessity is a peculiarly national notion of success, one predicated on separation. Long before the cult of codependence, America's concept of mental and material normalcy included a break from our families. (In 1776, after all, we declared independence from the 'motherland'.)

Ironically, the side effects of the despised coming-home phenomenon might be the very ones we ought to covet in an era of fragmented families. Just as the Depression held kids and parents together...this recession could strengthen our strained bonds and yield significant public benefit. A renewed commitment to familial support might keep a few people off the dole, or off the ledge; it might make us a little less selfish and a little more willing to share. It might even make us happier, another notion Americans value pretty highly. 121

Whether Boo is right or wrong is an interesting debate; however, it should not obscure the larger point of this chapter subsection: Start-up housing has recently become much cheaper. Couple this with the aforementioned buster-diversity and its embrace (i.e., chapter subsection b), in
addition to the buster penchant for creative destruction (i.e., chapter subsection c); and you have one picture of the busters' strongest suits vis-a-vis the global champion scenario.

ENDNOTES


15. Wattenberg, p.23.


27. Zoph, p.95.

28. Wattenberg, p.172


32. CPR, No 176, p.i.

33. CPR, No 176, p.19.

34. Wattenberg, p.386.
35. Nye, p.216.
37. Nye, p.216.

38. Richard Lacayo, "Give Me Your Rich, Your Lucky...," 

39. William and Margaret Ellis, "Cultures in Transition," 
*The Futurist*, March-April '89, p.23.


41. Wattenberg, p.178.


46. Naisbitt and Aburdene, pp.142-143.

47. Naisbitt and Aburdene, p.142-143.


49. Naisbitt and Aburdene, p.140.


51. Wattenberg, p.278.

52. Naisbitt and Aburdene, p.89.

53. Naisbitt and Aburdene, p.89.


56. Ross, p.63.

57. Ross, p.84.
58. Ross, p.84.
60. Ross, p.122.
63. Dunn, pp.128-129.
66. Susan Mitchell, "How to Talk to Young Adults," American Demographics, April 1993, p.52.
68. Laura Zinn et al, "Move Over, Boomers: The Busters Are Here and They're Angry," Business Week, 12/14/92, pp.81-82
76. Howe et al, p.152
77. Laurie Ouelette, "Our Turn Now," Utne Reader, July/August 1992, pp.119-120.

79. Barna, p.146.


85. Henry, p.36.

86. Barna, p.81.

87. Howe et al, p.81.

88. Dunn, p.83.

89. Dunn, p.83.

90. Dunn, p.64.

91. Dunn, p.62.

92. Dunn, p.62.

93. Dunn, p.51.

94. Dunn, p.44.


98. Samon, p.69.
99. Samon, p.69.

100. Samon, p.69.


108. Shapiro, p.54.


110. Messitte, p.18.

111. Howe et al, p.95.

112. Jane Bryant Quinn, "Under Your Own Roof," Newsweek, 4/19/93, p.44.

113. Donaton, p.16.


117. Hughes et al, p.35.

118. Quinn, p.44.

120. Hughes et al, p.73.

121. Boo, p.32.
APPENDIX A

Table #1:
Population Projections (in millions of people)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation/Region</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2025</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Europe</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Europe</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unified Europe</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>5,321</td>
<td>6,259</td>
<td>8,491</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: All figures originate with the UN Population Reference Bureau and/or the US Bureau of the Census. They are arranged in the above format in Ben Wattenberg’s *The First Universal Nation*, (New York: The Free Press, 1990), p.159
### APPENDIX B

Table #2:

Total Fertility Rates (TFR) Since 1950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years: 50-55</th>
<th>55-60</th>
<th>60-65</th>
<th>65-70</th>
<th>70-75</th>
<th>75-80</th>
<th>80-85</th>
<th>1990</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.Ger.</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.Eur.</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.Eur.</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: All figures originate with the UN Population Reference Bureau and/or the US Bureau of the Census. They are arranged in the above format in Ben Wattenberg’s *The First Universal Nation*, (New York: The Free Press, 1990), p.159
Chapter 4: The Busters and US Decline

Part 1: the Macro-Scenario

a. overall terrain

Enter the "global has-been," otherwise known as the United States of America, circa 2000.

Sounds familiar, right? It ought to. You don't even have to be that imaginative to picture and/or explain this scenario. Much of the writing is already on the wall. Two problems in particular are fueling this rapid demise: the US economy, and multiculturalism. Extrapolate events unfolding within each of these arenas, and behold the great beyond!

As shall be shown, this future looks remarkably like the contemporary status of nations which now cluster at the bottom of our global pecking order.

b. failures of the US economy

The injuries to our national economy are multiple. Atop the heap of these injuries is the ever-expanding national debt. This roughly $4.5 trillion dollar monster plays a primary role in several intimately related afflictions. Among these afflictions are the continuation of deficit-financing and the broadening gap between the rich
and poor of US society. When viewed more generally, the debt can be blamed for having tied our hands, stolen our financial independence, and billed us with opportunity costs. If these indictments sound overstated, realize that they will become painfully apparent should there be any significant jostling of the nation’s economic apple-cart. Moreover, there is every reason to believe that the requisite jostling is inevitable. Many analysts argue that its already begun. As a prelude to these alarming forecasts, a thumbnail sketch of the status quo is in order.

The debt-addition track records of the last six US administrations are as follows: Lyndon Johnson--$44.8 billion; Richard Nixon--$67.0 billion; Gerald Ford--$126.9 billion; Jimmy Carter--$226.9 billion; Ronald Reagan--$1.34 trillion; and George Bush--$1.04 trillion. ¹ The aforementioned $4.5 trillion debt-total emerges after supplementing these administration-subtotals with a few extra items. Add first, the $187 billion of debt accumulated prior to the Johnson years. Add second, a variety of off-budget items such as monies sunk into the S&L bailout and the Persian Gulf War of 1991. Add finally, the roughly $1 trillion dollars borrowed as of 1993 from governmental trust funds ($500 billion from Social Security alone). ²

This current debt-total of $4.5 trillion now equals 70% of our national GDP as of 1993. ³ Moreover, that debt-to-
GDP proportion is a figure which has increased from 36% at the end of 1982, and 35% at the end of 1974. It's true that, historically, 70% is not a record figure: US debt totaled 128% of GDP in the aftermath of WWII. However, and importantly, what distinguishes our recent history is that debt since 1982 has increased three times faster than the size of our economy. 4 The disparity in these two growth rates relates directly to the purchases-cum-investments that we as a nation have made over the last decade and a half. More specifically, many of these purchases-cum-investments are not of the goods and services necessary to grow our economy’s size in tandem with that of the debt. To take just one example, consider the Reagan-Bush "purchase" of selected tax cuts for both the wealthy and corporate entities. Too often these tax cuts were used to fund activities ranging from conspicuous consumption to unproductive forms of merger-mania: 5 Meanwhile, nongovernmental investment in new plants and equipment (the ostensible intent of the ‘80s tax cuts) declined from 12.1% of GDP in 1981 to 9.8% of GDP in 1991. 6

Interest payments are among the most damaging legacies of US debt having so outstripped economic growth. At $292.3 billion in fiscal year (FY) 1992, the annual interest payments on our national debt consumed approximately 20% of the federal budget. 7 Stated alternatively, $0.20 cents of every dollar the government spent in FY 1992 (including the
borrowed ones) bought us nothing other than richer bondholders both at home and abroad (more on these bondholders later). It's a lot like a hidden tax--only this time on the government itself--in the form of transfer payments to the wealthy. Keep in mind that these interest-fees will continue (as they do right now) even if our annual deficits are eliminated entirely. Also keep in mind that these interest-charges are more than the federal government spends on education, the environment, infrastructure, and foreign aid combined. Indeed, FY 1992 marked the very first year wherein interest on the public debt became our largest single spending category followed by the military at $286.6 billion; Social Security at $281.4 billion; and Medicare/Medicaid at $258 billion.

In addition to these interest payments, the debt entails as well a now secondary impact. The focus here is upon the interest rates that players within both the public and private sectors are charged for borrowed monies at any given point in time. This particular impact is referred to as "now secondary" insofar as interest rates have remained below the highs of the late-'70s and early-'80s despite the tremendous orgy of governmental borrowing over this same period. Unfortunately, the reasons for these relatively low interest rates include the aforementioned a) raiding of governmental trust funds, and b) friendly foreigners pumping a good deal of money into our national coffers. Both
palliatives have artificially increased the pool of funds from which our government has borrowed thereby meliorating the impact on interest rates overall. Both palliatives are also transitory; they come with built-in limitations. Insofar as higher interest rates lie at the end of their ephemeral magic, a deeper look at each is in order.

Of the two phenomena--foreign investors and trust funds--the latter are easiest to follow. These funds include the retirement monies set aside for postal workers and military personnel; Medicare surpluses; highway and airport trust funds; and, of course, Social Security payments for the boomers and beyond. Thus far we haven't seen a lot of highly visible complaints about the fact that the government has looted each of these funds: This is partially so because our government officials don't advertise the fact. Indeed, for budgetary purposes, the over $1 trillion dollars collected in the name of these funds are counted as general "revenues" thereby reducing an accurate tabulation of our annual deficits! But sooner or later, the entities who have been promised these monies will go to open the cookie jar, and find nothing but a lot of IOUs. At that point, apologies will not suffice; those who are owed these promised monies will demand their due. A reckoning of accounts will be called for. If this enormous task is not adequately dealt with, a taxpayer revolt may be the likeliest result.
As far as foreign investors are concerned, this second explanation as to why interest rates are low is a bit more complicated than raided trust funds. The simplest component here is the purchase by foreigners of governmental securities. These interest-paying IOUs (i.e., Treasury notes, bills, and bonds) sold to foreigners have increased from a cumulative total of $130 billion in 1981, to a whopping $450 billion in 1992. 12 Foreigners have also served to keep our interest rates low by way of an additional, more subtle means: the purchase of US assets including real estate and entire corporations. Among the latter are Standard Oil, Rockefeller Center, Burger King, Allied Stores, Carnation, Doubleday, Chesebrough-Ponds, the Dunes Hotel, Holiday Inn, and Columbia Pictures. 13 In price-tag terms, foreigners now own an astonishing $2.2 trillion in US assets—a total which has more than quadrupled since 1980. 14

Sales such as these are linked to lower interest rates insofar as the Americans who sell these assets will presumably place at least some of their profits into US banks. The pool of available capital is thereby increased, and interest rates remain low. Of course, something else has also happened: Control over these assets is passed from US hands. With this transfer of ownership goes the stream of profits that might otherwise have been bequeathed to our descendants. Trades like these are a national tragedy. We
are effectively selling the family jewels in exchange for temporarily lowered interest rates. 15

For better or worse, the US reliance upon foreigners to keep feeding us cash is as limited in time as is the government's ability to raid trust funds. More specifically, foreigners do a two-step calculation prior to investing in America's assets and/or securities. The first query is whether or not they can remain confident that any given US asset and/or security will pay off in the future. The second query is whether or not their money can achieve a higher return if invested elsewhere. Increasingly, the US looks worse as per each of these calculi. A few examples make a convincing case.

As regards confidence (query #1), begin with a look at the attractiveness of our securities. The FY 1992 deficit of $290.2 billion is the largest single deficit ever recorded by any country on earth. 16 Will sums like these be paid back? If the history of the world means anything at all, the clear and emphatic answer is a resounding, "No." 17 The hilarity of believing that $4.5 trillion in real dollars will be paid back is inversely proportional to the number of lifetimes over which the payments are scheduled to stretch. Realize also that no one in the Clinton administration speaks of reducing the debt. Rather, all that is aimed for is reducing the rate at which our national indebtedness increases. The Congressional Budget Office has forecasted
an FY 1993 deficit total of $368 billion come November; Clinton’s big-time goal is to gradually halve that by the conclusion of his first term.  

As regards foreigners earning higher returns on their money elsewhere (query #2), many of our competitor-country governments now offer their own securities which yield payments comparable to those of the US. This parity was achieved in Japan in 1990 when their government spent heavily to address a slowdown in the country’s economy. Not surprisingly, 1990 was also the very first year that Japan became a net seller of US securities to the tune of $10 billion. A similar disinvestment of Japanese holdings in both real estate and corporate assets was observed as well. The attractiveness of Japanese securities surely fueled some of this latter exodus, but so too was it often motivated by fluctuating exchange rates, and the controversy of being a foreign owner of tangible US assets.

Standing back a moment, where does all of this leave us in 1993? We still have the debt, we still pay the interest, we still run deficits, and we still have the specter of higher interest rates just ahead. Projecting forward, our national demise can come to pass in one of several ways. I wish to comment on a few of these scenarios after a word or two about something else which characterizes 1993: the brand new Clinton administration!
The good news is that the Clinton-crew has not played all of the denial-game so typical of the republican helms before them. Indeed, much of the Clinton campaign was a spotlighting of the very economic dilemmas described above. Unfortunately, their efforts are destined to be too little too late--the die are already cast. This is best seen by first noting that Clinton et al. have two principal means by which to move us beyond our economic ailments: reduce the debt directly, and/or grow the economy such that the debt shrinks as a percentage of GDP. In pursuit of these means, a menu of options present themselves: create new programs; manipulate taxing and spending selections; sell government-owned assets; eliminate waste; and print more money.

Among the heftiest in this options-menu are manipulations of taxing and spending decisions. Campaigner-Clinton told us that his take on each was to raise taxes on corporations and the wealthiest Americans so as to pay for both deficit reduction and new programs. As regards these new programs they were to stimulate growth in the economy with a concomitant increase in the tax base of the newly employed and the newly productive. It all sounded great. Who can forget the campaign-images of massive worker-retrainings, a thoroughly revamped infrastructure, a myriad of child services, commercial R&D programs, and college loans for anyone willing to pay them back with community service. Unfortunately, the follow-up on all that heady
rhetoric has been lackluster, at best. A look at some of the fine print is in order.

Clinton’s investment agenda was first revealed in February of ’93 as part and parcel of his larger budgetary aims. The hoped-for outlays are to total a mere $160 billion spread over the next four years (i.e., $100 billion in spending increases and $60 billion in targeted tax breaks). Moreover, among these "investments" are $9 billion to expand the food stamp program, $2.4 billion to extend unemployment benefits, $246 million to plant trees on public property, and $716 million in rent vouchers for the poor. If any of these and similar items strike the reader as less than "investments," realize that you have company. Barry Bosworth, a former White House economist in the Carter administration has noted, "There’s a lot in here that you would have difficulty calling investments. I would say that about one-half to two-thirds of the spending programs are real investments. But there is at least one-third that you’ve got to say: ‘Come on now, that isn’t an investment.’"

Finally, it’s important to note that much of Clinton’s vaunted investment agenda has been scheduled for the later years of his first term. Towards that end, Budget Director Leon Panetta in late-June of 1993 sent out instructions to all of the fed’s cabinet and agency heads directing them to propose ways to slash spending "in all discretionary programs that have not been given a high priority by the
Minus some success here, much of Clinton's investment agenda is in great jeopardy.

Why such a muted showing? One of the likely keys here is the impact of this country's anti-spending Mountebank, H. Ross Perot: the choice of one in five Americans for President in '92. Within the singular world of Perot and his cohorts, "investments" are far less important than a crash diet of deficit reduction. A number of mainstream democrats have even jumped on the bandwagon; as early as March of 1993, the democrat-dominated House Budget Committee voted to cut spending over the next five years by $63 billion more than Clinton had proposed just one month earlier. It's not that Perot et al. are opposed to investment per se, but rather that investment-spending should only follow upon the heels of financial balance. In other words, it is not good enough to simply argue "spend more now and we'll reap the rewards later." Clinton must, therefore, explicitly horse-trade "something somewhere" to pay for any significant bout of true investment spending. So what about higher taxes?

Unfortunately, if increased tax revenues are to precede economy-growing investment-programs, then there enters another squeeze: the truly poisoned anti-tax legacy left by 12 years of republican leadership. Try doubling taxes on top income earners. Try doubling taxes on corporate America. Try taxing accumulated wealth by even 1%. Any of these measures will buy you some substantial investment
revenues--right along with four years of gridlock and a ticket out of power in '96.

What then remains? Clinton could shift spending from one arena to another, but this too has its limitations. The FY 1992 budget of $1.52 trillion broke down as follows: 51.9% on entitlements, 22.1% on the military, 19.9% on debt-interest, and a mere 7% on all other governmental programs. The debt-interest is non-negotiable, and for all practical purposes, so too are many of the military and entitlement expenditures. Sure, Clinton is going to skim-off some of these monies, but not much. Try taking away the Social Security checks of wealthy seniors. Try halving the military budget. As with the tax increases described earlier, these measures will buy you some substantial investment revenues--right along with four years of governmental gridlock and a ticket out of power in '96. Clinton, in other words, is constrained by an electorate (and their district-guarding congressional representatives) who are going to get what they desire in our democracy, be it ultimately good or bad.

What’s next? Clinton’s ballyhooed reduction of administrative costs? Clinton himself has stated that they will save US taxpayers $9 billion over the next four years. This is something certainly, but it is a far cry from his campaign-promises of $30 billion in administrative savings over the same time-period. 

Realize as well that $9
billion is equal to only slightly more than one-tenth of 1% of the $6.5 trillion the government intends to spend these next four years. Why then all the tremendous news coverage which attended the announcement of this relatively insignificant savings? Because in the world of canceled spending, $9 billion of anything is one of the bigger fish to be had. The wiggle-room for cutting is just too scant, and Clinton is left to fiddle while Rome burns.

Or is he? There remains one menu-option yet to be explored: print the money needed to pay for our deficits and/or debt. This move is one that we have not seen on any grand scale in the US since the Johnson-days. The very good reason why is the inflationary impact of printed dollars for which no tangible goods/services are produced/performed: More money chasing the same basket of purchasables simply bids up the price of each. And the damage need not stop there. In fact, inflation run-rampant is the first of three disaster scenarios that I'd like to further comment upon in looking from 1993 into the next century. These scenarios can be called, a) hyperinflation, b) investor-revolt, and c) two Americas.

The first two of these scenarios--hyperinflation and investor revolt--are the subject of Harry Figgie’s best-selling ‘92 text entitled Bankruptcy 1995. Both scenarios proceed from the same set of initial conditions. More specifically, investors (foreign and domestic) markedly
diminish in their enthusiasm for the auctions of evermore US
securities. The aforementioned queries #1 and #2 are
increasingly answered in the negative: Confidence ebbs as
the debtor-US looks more and more like another dying
superpower. Someone argues that our fading empire-mystique
is all that has saved us from a turn to the IMF and its
basket of austerity measures. Likewise, would-be investors
discern superior opportunities to be had outside of US
borders. In some cases the money-magnets are boom economies
with promising investment possibilities in their private
sectors. In other cases, the money-magnets exist within
countries who may have troubled, but fundamentally sound
economies. The governments of these latter entities can
believably sell high interest securities insofar as they are
not working from an already staggering debt-load. In either
case, the net impact of these alternative money-magnets is
the same: the US Treasury has difficulty selling its
securities despite offers of escalating interest payments
and shortening lengths of maturity.

At some point in this alarming lull, the subject of
turning to the printing press arises within the White House.
The near irresistible attractions here are that the interest
rate on printed money is zero and the supply is potentially
unlimited. The pass or play decision is formerly hashed-out
between the President’s Treasury Department and semi-
autonomous officials at the Federal Reserve. Much of the
decision will likely hinge upon an assessment of the most immediate risk: the potential for few security-purchasers at ever greater payment-terms, or the impact of inflation should the needed cash be printed. Let’s say the decision is made to print.

To understand what transpires here, it must first be mentioned that in the world of "creative regulatory accounting principles" (also known by its acronym CRAP), it is something of a misnomer to claim that the US government prints the money it wishes to create. The more accurate term is a decision to "monetize" a given obligation. The process takes place when the Fed issues a check to the Treasury in exchange for a no-interest IOU. The check, or checks, are then cashed by the Treasury at any number of the country’s larger commercial banks. The effect of this simple transaction is identical to printing money insofar as money is created without any addition to the collective pool of either goods or services.

The financial community--money lenders in particular--keep a keen eye on the amount of checks issued by the Fed to the Treasury. Why? Because if those checks are large (i.e., large enough to cover, say, one-half of our annual deficit), then it spells a certain bout of inflation, and the value of a dollar goes down. Bankers prepare to meet this currency devaluation by jacking-up the interest rates they charge to any and all borrowers. This, of course,
slows down activity in the private sector as borrowing for phenomena such as housing becomes more expensive. An element of uncertainty is also imposed upon the decisions of both consumers and producers. Why lock into any kind of payments—for production or consumption—at interest rates that seem so suddenly high? Many adopt a wait and see attitude which ultimately serves to further shrink the GDP.

In the midst of these developments, other phenomena are also happening. With high interest rates suddenly paid to even bank-account savers, those who hold older government-bonds paying the lower interest of an earlier day, begin to get edgy. That is an understatement. The market for older securities is flooded, but, unfortunately, there are very few takers. Meanwhile, if the government is still competing for private-sector monies in addition to its monetizing activity, you can bet that interest akin to sky-high junk bonds must be offered by this now shaky giant. Some purchasers may rise to take the bait, but even this is hardly an unequivocal bit of good news. Commercial banks will simply compete for those same funds with higher interest rates of their own, further winding down economic activity overall. That’s provided, of course, these commercial lenders haven’t themselves gone under as a result of sitting upon too large an older portfolio of now low interest loans made to businesses, homeowners, or Uncle Sam. Realize as well that the government’s total interest-payment
burden will be mushrooming throughout all of this, right along with the binding terms of whatever new and high yield securities are sold.

The spiral is obviously a downward one. Confidence is further frayed, and bank-runs become commonplace. Loans are called in, and businesses destroyed in the process. Unemployment skyrockets. Despite ruinous collections, a majority of banks come-up insolvent. Trillions in private savings are lost. The FDIC/FSLIC default to the government's helm for direct action. Monies like these can only be had by an exclusive and now literal reliance upon the printing press. The explosive inflation which this reliance entails then obliterates whatever lingering confidence remains in the currency. The US citizenry race to purchase anything tangible, and the market is FLOODED with available dollars that no one wants. A black market of barter-exchanges becomes ubiquitous, but the distribution is strained. Hoarding, hunger, riots, and violence are the final stage of this hyperinflation scenario.

It is not a pretty picture to say the least! Unfortunately, the reader can expect little of anything better to come from scenario #2: investor revolt. Developments here lead to much the same end-state as that of scenario #1--hoarding, hunger, riots, and violence--but with a twist.
Hyperinflation and investor-revolt part company insofar as within scenario #2, the temptation to print money is forgone. Why? A number of explanations are possible. The Fed, whose principal role is to regulate the money supply vis-a-vis concerns regarding interest rates and inflation, can veto any given plan to monetize obligations. Likewise, officials at the Treasury (acting in accord with White House dicta) are not duty-bound to even consider, much less propose the printing press. For both entities—the Fed and the White House—a simple fear of hyperinflation may be sufficient to keep the attraction of easy money at bay. As shall be shown later, other, more subtle reasons for shunning the printing press are also possible.

Minus the option to monetize, the investor-revolt scenario returns us to the troubled bond market. Again the terms of new security-issues make a joke of those sold earlier. Again the commercial banks compete with sky-high interest rates of their own. Now, however, the escalation is not slowed by the printing of funds to cover those not borrowed. The only weighty alternative is additional rounds of superior securities payment-terms (and, of course, the ballooning deficit to cover them). The talk of investors is no longer of whether the terms are good; but rather of how much farther they will climb, and for how much longer they will be sustained. Foreign investors (and their domestic counterparts with activities abroad), will also be paying
careful attention to exchange rates. If the dollar drops, and drops dramatically, then their big earnings of regal payment terms will be wiped out by loses via currency devaluations which kick-in when the monies are later exchanged for other currencies such as marks or yen.

Again there are runs on commercial banks....Again there are massive layoffs as factories are a) crowded out of the capital market, or b) hunkered down in inactivity, or c) ruined by called-in bank loans....Again the federal government is looked to for greater, greater, and greater expenditures to meet the country's augmenting unmet needs....Again the terms of security payments spiral to dizzying new heights, right along with interest payments, and right along with annual deficits....Then it happens.

Harry Figgie explains:

On a particularly miserable afternoon, with sleet falling outside, the respected banker of a European government--it could be France or Germany or England--gives an interview to a major newspaper. The reporter isn't buying the usual eyewash.

'Isn't it true,' he finally demands of the banker, 'that in reality, the United States of America is insolvent?'

'Well,' begins the banker.

'Sir,' interrupts the reporter, 'couldn't you manage a one-word answer to my question? Is the United States government insolvent?'

The banker looks blankly at the reporter for a minute. When he finally begins to speak, his throat is dry, and he has to swallow. In a low voice he says, 'Yes.'

The banker has finally spoken the truth that no central banker has dared to say plainly and publicly before.... Having said the word, however, the banker feels no further need to hold back.... He says that all those billions of dollars in American IOUs that
investors and governments around the world hold will probably never be paid back dollar for dollar.  

The next day, many financial markets are forced to close under the crush of orders to sell US securities be they new or old. Their value plunges by the hour: at 9:00 NYST, it’s $.85 cents to the dollar; at noon, $.50 cents. Enter phase #2 of the investor-revolt scenario:

European and Japanese finance ministers call an emergency meeting. They’ll impose strict limits on spending by the American federal government in exchange for an agreement to hold another series of meetings restructuring American debt. They are insistent that the United States not be allowed simply to walk away from its obligations.

Within the week, the government announces plans to cut the armed services in half. The other half will be kept on, at half pay, to quell the uprisings that have begun in cities and suburbs alike. Riots become commonplace throughout the country. Congress passes emergency legislation eliminating Social Security benefits for anyone earning more than $10,000 a year and cutting benefits to remaining qualifiers by 75% percent....

Many stores close, since consumers have no cash because by now most banks have failed. No one honors credit cards, but some entrepreneurs set up barter exchanges. People trade their new stereo televisions for a week’s worth of groceries....

Grim stuff. As described above, much of this investor-revolt scenario winds down to an end-state as depressing as hyperinflation’s. But it is not exactly identical. Scenario #2 depicts a deflationary crash whereas the crash of Scenario #1 is just the opposite. Importantly, a deflationary end-state leaves some semblance of a currency in place—it’s just that there’s not much currency around. Still, a basis exists with which to begin rebuilding. For this reason, it seems at least arguable that an
approximation of scenario #2 ought to be our crash of choice. But there's a price that's paid for this luxury: the "indignity" of having to take orders from our once junior partners on the global scene. This is the quid pro quo for maintaining an economic pulse when things get out of hand--and it may be too steep. Given the demeanor of many Americans and the machismo of many elected officials, there will be at least a call to let the presses roll. Adding fuel to the fire will be the fact that a devalued dollar suddenly makes US tangible assets a bargain for foreign purchasers. If the devaluation is deep enough, companies can be bought and simply kept as an inactive supply of spare parts and some real estate. Many foreigners will likely see this as a fitting retribution for their lost billions. Needless to say, much of the US populace will not be altogether smitten.

More hopeful--but still gloomy--is a third and final scenario to be depicted: two Americas. This scenario (descriptions in a moment) is offered as a skeptical salute to President Clinton's fiscal promises. Principal among these promises, as mentioned earlier, is a 50% reduction in the annual level of deficit spending (i.e., down to $200 billion for FY 1997). For the sake of argument, let's say that this target translates into additive reductions of $50 billion over each of the next 4 years. Let's further say that Clinton is reelected for a second term. He maintains
annual deficit reductions of $50 billion, and thereby eliminates all deficit-financing by FY 2001. Let’s finally say that Clinton keeps the overall federal budget at FY 1992 levels of $1.5 trillion annually, and that interest rates remain low with he as president. Where will all of these accomplishments place us?

Our total debt at the turn of the century will be roughly $5.4 trillion. Interest on this staggering total will reach approximately $450 billion annually, or roughly 30% of the entire federal budget. You might think of that in terms of forgone opportunities such as direct support for worker-retrainings. Alternatively, you might think of these interest outlays as cheapening the value of every dollar the government spends on other than interest payments. Insofar as many of the government’s collections are made in the name of social programs for the needy, it becomes the low-income, would-be recipients of these benefits who are cheated.

The upshot here is that Clinton’s lofty ambitions entail a continued growth in many of the fiscal ailments that have plagued both the government and US society for well over a decade now. The only difference is a slowdown in the rate at which our economy denigrates. The good news in terms of scenario #3 is that utter breakdown is avoided. But trouble remains. As shall be shown, two-Americas results from a writ-large continuation of the growing rift between this country’s rich and poor. It is the furtherance
of a middle class squeeze wherein most are pushed to a lower standard of living. The lion’s share of this historical movement has thus far occurred since the ‘80s Reagan-revolution, although the squeeze has been building since the mid- to late-‘60s. Again, what makes two-Americas more hopeful than the earlier scenarios is that US society remains recognizable—but with a dire shift: Specifically, a class of increasingly rich "haves" uncomfortably resides some distance from a class of increasingly poor "have-nots." The US becomes a sectarian, anxious, and guarded place in which to live.

Before delving into the specifics of this rich/poor rift, an overhead comment is in order. It must be noted that the genesis of scenario #3 is a little more complicated than the catalysts of scenarios 1 and 2. That is to say, the emergence of two-Americas is not as overtly and singularly tied to the failure of US economic policies. The timeline is longer which allows other phenomena—such as corporate and consumer debt—to play larger roles in the unfolding of this scenario. In other words, a hobbled (but not broken) economy sustains a semi-functioning arena within which multiple developments become more fully manifest. A qualitative assessment of these additional phenomena will follow. First, a cataloguing and initial commentary on the distribution of wealth and income.
Given studies released by the Congressional Budget Office and corroborated by the Federal Reserve Board, it is rather easy to summarize the movement of wealth in this country. As reported by author and syndicated columnist, Kevin Phillips, in his '93 text entitled, Boiling Point, part of the story is as follows:

Between 1962 and 1983 the share of total private net worth held by the top 1 percent had barely budged. From 1983 to 1989, it surged from 31 percent to 37 percent, reaching heights unseen since 1929! Economist Paul Krugman noted 'a big unprecedented jump in inequality to Great Gatsby levels,' while Harvard economic historian Claudia Goldin found 'inequality at its highest since the great leveling of...wealth during the New Deal and World War II.'

What about the wealth of everyone else? During the '70s and '80s real new wealth per family expanded at an average annual rate of 0.4%. While this low figure would seem to be bad enough news, the story gets worse. Realize that "average" annual increases per family include an accounting of those at the top. Far more revealing of overall wealth dynamics are measurements of- and movement in the "median net worth" of families. Here, depending upon the source and time period, the trends are a combination of stagnation and decline. Among Phillips' examples is the following: "For the 1984 - 1988 period alone, the Census Bureau reported that the median net worth of all households--assets minus debts--declined by 4 percent." This striking statistic bespeaks the tremendous indebtedness of many middling households:
According to the Federal Reserve Board, American households as a whole increased their combined home mortgage and consumer debt almost threefold during the 1980s—from 1.3 trillion in late 1980 to just under $3.4 trillion at the end of 1990. This was about 50 percent faster than the rate at which consumer income grew. In 1991, the average household owed $35,000, and paid interest of about $3,500 per year, almost 18 percent of its disposable income.

Just as grim as the inequities of wealth are those concerning the distribution of income. The 1993 status of income-measurements is pithily described within the following commentary by Guy Molineux, president of the late Michael Harrington’s Next America Foundation:

The numbers are astonishing: The top 20% percent of families have as much income as the remaining 80%. Within that fortunate one-fifth, the top 5% percent makes as much as the lower 15% percent. In that top 5% percent, the pie is again evenly divided between the top one-fifth (that is, 1% percent of Americans) and the remaining 4%. It’s like opening one of those Russian dolls—no matter how small the piece, inside you find still more inequality.

Importantly, income-distribution has not always been so distorted:

Because the rich...were steadily boosting their income and assets, official tabulations revealed an extraordinary trend: the collective income of the elite top 1 percent of Americans was overtaking the combined income of the entire middle 20 percent of the population! In 1977, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the top 1 percent had enjoyed 8.3 percent of national pretax family income versus 16.3 percent for the entire middle quintile. Then by 1980, the top 1 percent commanded 9.2 percent and the middle quintile 16.0 percent. In 1985, the two figures were 11.6 percent and 15.1 percent, and by 1989, the split was 13.0 percent and 14.7 percent. Other tabulations emphasizing capital gains put the share of the top 1 percent in the 14 percent range. For these shares nearly to converge was striking.
Additional CBO studies have shown that in 1959, the top 4% of earners made as much in after-tax income as the bottom 35%; by 1970, the top 4% made as much as the bottom 38%; and, by 1989, the top 4% took in the income equivalent of that made by the bottom 51%.

The point of this statistical parade concerning both income and wealth is simply to note that there has lately occurred a significant and downward squeeze on what can be loosely referred to as the US middle class. Phillips goes so far as to argue that this class has declined from 55% of the population in the '50s and '60s, to as low as 40% by the early '90s. Of course, such exactitude is problematic (i.e., you can variously define a middle class existence). But again, an awareness of the overall contours is enough insofar as it points to the inquiries of futures-importance: First, what explains the emergent rift between the rich and poor of US society? Second, are there reasons to believe that this growth will continue?

Looking for the catalysts of middle class decline unearths several likely factors. As shall be shown, many of these factors appear destined to continue in their assault. I begin this discussion with two semi-overlapping phenomena: the direct and indirect consequences of governmental policies. Additional factors catalyzing a further rich/poor split will be lumped together in an aggregated look at US corporations becoming "leaner and meaner." The chapter-
segment is then concluded with a further consideration of two-Americas' end-state.

The direct effect of government policies *vis-a-vis* the growing split between rich and poor has principally occurred by way of changes in the tax code. The recent history of median federal taxes on families (i.e., mostly income and FICA) has been an incremental rise from 5.3% in 1948 to 24.63% in 1990. 43 By way of contrast, the recent history of median federal taxes on the top 1% (i.e., FICA, income, and lesser tax rates on dividends, interest, rent-earnings, and capital gains) has been an incremental decline from 76.9% in 1948, to 26.7% in 1990. 44

State/local taxes, unfortunately, have been equally injurious to the middle sectors. Although patterns vary, state/local taxes (i.e., state excise taxes, local property taxes, user fees, etc) are generally more regressive than their federal counterparts. Moreover, the impact of these levies has multiplied over the past decade-plus insofar as state/local entities have struggled to replace a 12% drop in their federal aid from 1978 to 1989. 45 Compilations from 1990 show that state/local taxes took an average of 7.6% from top earners, 10% from middle earners, and 14.8% of the annual income of the poor. 46

In addition to shifting tax codes, it's possible to laundry list other governmental policies that have directly contributed to the declining middle class. One may
consider, for example, the gutting of selected services that had formerly been of such benefit to the middle class: public transportation, local libraries, adequate police protection, health clinics, and support of community colleges. 47

Given all of this, is it possible to quantify the total direct impact of all governmental tax/service manipulations on the middle class? The short answer is, no. For example, much of the "hit" concerning state and local taxes/services varied greatly depending upon the place and year. However, some analysts have attempted to put together a few estimates. The aforecited Kevin Phillips, for example, feels that governmental actions these past two decades are directly responsible for between 30% and 50% of the increased wealth and income at the top. 48

More important than Phillips' precision, is to question whether the government's policies will continue to work as they have. It would seem that as regards the government's direct impact, the answer (I'll be charitable) is, no. Clinton has made it clear that he wishes to reintroduce progressivity back into the tax code (i.e., proposed hikes in income taxes start with those making over $110,000 annually). 49 Granted, he's not close to proposing the tax-progressivity of even the recent '70s, but give him some time. It's still year #1 of his nascent tenure. Likewise, it seems fair to believe that Clinton--a former Governor--
will be more sympathetic to reversing the drain of federal aid to states and cities.

Unfortunately, the situation regarding the indirect impacts of governmental policies is not quite as rosy as their direct counterparts. First an enumeration of the indirect impacts themselves. As shown earlier, the rich have already gotten much richer these past two decades whereas the folks below them have typically either stagnated or declined. And like it or not, Clinton et al have been rather tepid in attempting to take a frontal—tax and spend-assault on this disparity. Meanwhile, the opulent have, either consciously or unconsciously, built for themselves the foundations of a stranglehold on privilege. Take, for example, a further look at the wealthiest 1% (recall that tiny group with 37% all net worth). Among their possessions are about one-half of the individually owned corporate stock, two-thirds of the federal bonds, an even higher percentage of municipal bonds, and roughly 45% of the nonresidential real estate!  

With assets such as these, the upper echelon can further prosper by way of what is known as "unearned income:" rents, interest, dividends, and capital gains. Indeed, the percentage of national income categorized as unearned has increased from 14% in the mid-'70s, to 20% in the late-'80s. The futures-oriented damage vis-a-vis the middle class is twofold: First unearned income is just
that--unearned; it entails no addition to the collective pool of goods and services. Second, unearned income is often self-sustaining, and right in keeping with the old adage, "them who have, gets." Both of these twofold attributes are easiest to see in the case of rent collections and interest earnings. The case is less airtight when speaking of dividends and capital gains, but these forms of unearned income come with an added set of costs that could prove even more disastrous to the future of this country's middle class.

Dividends and capital gains, are frequently part and parcel of a larger game that economist Ravi Batra variously refers to as manias and/or speculative bubbles. In the words of this best-selling author:

As a person becomes wealthy, his aversion to risk declines. As wealth inequality grows, the overall riskiness of investments made by the rich also grows. It essentially reflects the human urge to make a quick profit. It means margin or installment buying of assets and goods only for resale and not for productive purposes.... Risky investments pay off in a healthy economy, and gradually people in increasing numbers are lured into the game. Eventually, even those normally too cautious for such ventures are tempted by 'easy' profits. However, the speculative fever cannot begin in the absence of wealth disparity, for only the rich can afford to squander money on investments with a high but relatively illusive return. In other words, wealth inequality is a prerequisite for manias and bubbles. The greater the inequity, the bigger the bubble and the more painful its eventual bursting. 92

Of course, the ample participants within the so-called finance economy don't like to speak in terms of manias and bubbles. The operative terms are instead: mergers!
acquisitions! block trading! commodity futures! arbitraging!
divestitures! convertible debentures! leveraged-financing!
going private! going public! going bankrupt! In 1978, the first two on this list--mergers and acquisitions--accounted for less than 5% of the profits made by Wall Street Brokerage Houses; by the late-'80s, mergers and acquisitions accounted for more than 50% of their annual profits. Welcome to the world of the paper-entrepreneur.

As Batra points out, fast "returns" are possible within the finance economy, even though little in the way of anything valuable results in terms of substantive goods and services. Fortunes are partially built of portfolio items like bid-up real estate deeds, junk bonds, and over-priced stock. The game is demand-based, and it "works" while confidence is buoyant. However, the edifice is a shaky one insofar as confidence can tumble for reasons ranging from a set of defaulting borrowers to a decline in consumer-purchases. When confidence ebbs, a sudden and collective retrenchment is possible wherein currency and not portfolio items is sought. Fortunes are lost overnight as the latter become worthless. Runs on banks and businesses entail closings which cause the economy to crash. The last time this happened was 1929. At that point--Batra reminds us--the wealthiest 1% of society owned 36.3% of net national worth.
Standing back a moment, it has been argued that the direct and indirect impacts of government policies have both contributed to a middle class squeeze: The role of direct impacts now appears destined to become increasingly historical, whereas the role of indirect impacts now appears destined to play a larger role in the future. The reader will also recall an earlier caveat wherein it was mentioned that the widening rift which separates the US rich and poor is attributable to more than the direct and indirect impacts of governmental economic policies. These other factors, it was described, can be helpfully lumped together within a discussion of US corporations becoming "leaner and meaner." It is to this subject that the discussion now turns.

Roger Swardson can speak with some authority to the new look that corporations are striving for. Roger works for a company called "Wireless." Wireless takes orders from consumers across the country for five mail-order catalogue-firms. Many of the orders are for items like T-shirts which read, "Compost Happens." Roger’s official job title is "Telephone Service Representative" (TSR). He works with many other TSRs in a honeycomb of cubicles housed in a large building of a St. Paul office complex. Roger wears a listener’s headset, talks into a foam ball, and calls up any desired consumer-items on a computer screen. These screens are connected to other screens which tell the TSR-supervisors what the TSRs are doing, and for how many
seconds they have been doing it. This is important for
Roger, as filling sale- and call-quotas will partially
determine his earnings. Roger also introduces himself as
one of America’s 14 million working poor. This is due to a
combination of less available hours than he’d like to work,
and lousy pay for the hours he does work. The first
sentence of his employee handbook informs him that the
company "believes in employment at will, which means that
the employment is terminable, by either the employee or the
company, at any time, for any reason." 56 Here’s what Roger
thinks about the situation of he and his cohorts:

For years the working poor in this country have
felt they had a pact with the powerful. Work hard and
you’ll be OK. Do your job well, and you’ll have the
basics and a chance to move up. The rich and powerful,
because they run the system, have been the stewards of
that promise. It means when the chips are down, the
preservation of opportunity is supposed to come before
the cultivation of privilege.

On the bus and in the break room today there is a
great deal of frustration. The promise has been broken
and people don’t really know what they can do about it.
Another system has taken the place of the old pact.
Those who have found a secure place in the suburbs, in
government, in the corporations, in wealth, have
redefined the country under a different set of rules.
It is a smug new club. And those riding in the bus and
sitting in the break room need not apply. 57

Roger poignantly depicts how harsh are the "different
set of rules" he refers to above. Here he looks more
closely at a few of them:

Say a company is ‘downsizing’ or ‘delayering’ or
whatever other term describes job cuts. Through a
combination of early retirement, attrition, and
layoffs, they manage to take 200 current semi-skilled
employees off the payroll over the course of a year.
Say those employees were paid an average of $12.00 an

187
hour with full benefits. The company then hires a temporary agency to fill openings as they occur. The agency may even have an office in the company’s building. Job qualifications are determined, and the agency finds the people and trains them if necessary. The jobs will pay from $5.00 to $7.00 an hour. Even with the agency’s commission, the company has just saved around $2 million annually in wages and benefits.

What makes Roger particularly bitter is that all of this is characterized by certain governmental officials and political pundits as "recovery." He explains in a final passage that I have borrowed from this powerful writer:

'Recovery' is a wishful term. It is also a word that means something understandable. Most of us can tell whether we are recovering. Thirty-eight million people below the poverty line is not a persuasive definition of an economic 'recovery.'

Leading economic indicators are used by economists to describe conditions as they may be six to nine months in the future. How, if the present constantly worsens, can the future remain perpetually bright? Even schoolchildren can see that that’s denial.

How else can 'downsizing' be heralded for improving corporate profits and aiding the 'recovery'? Fewer livelihoods means 'recovery'? For whom?

The same with 'diminished expectations' or lesser livelihoods. That must mean those economic refugees from companies that let $12-an-hour people go and replaced them with $6 temporaries. These resettled workers are a statistical nonphenomenon. They are employed. But because millions of dollars have been hacked out of their paychecks, they no longer qualify for mortgages, car loans, or credit cards no matter what the interest rate. Who will spend us into the 'recovery'?

Surely, the term ‘recovery’ has made a mockery of the way millions of Americans now live.

Roger's comments concerning corporations becoming lean and mean are doubly helpful as they resituate the analysis within the larger context of scenario #3, two Americas. Two Americas is more than just a passive realignment of
statistics. Granted, it’s not the hoarding, hunger, riots, and violence which concluded scenarios 1 and 2. But people are also get banged up in two Americas. It’s happening now, and there’s every reason to believe that the intensity will increase. More on that later.

As mentioned above, the tale of lean and mean has much to do with both lower median wages/benefits and greater unemployment-cum-underemployment. Time correspondent Janice Castro reports that such tactics will be used by US employers to cut the nation’s $2.6 billion in payroll costs alone (i.e., remuneration-administration) by as much as $800 million in 1993. Importantly, this saga is forced by a backdrop of overall difficult times for US corporations. Two explanations predominate. The first is a full industrial flowering of other global players that had been shattered by WWII. Gone are years like 1950 wherein the US share of world production ballooned to a high of 44.7%. Second, US corporations, like consumers and the federal government, have been on a borrowing binge of their own. Most estimates—but not all—peg the corporate debt load at slightly above the government’s $4.5 trillion onus. The good news is that the rate of corporate borrowing has slowed in the ‘90s; the bad news is that the accumulated debt continues to take its toll. Explanations and implications are offered by Pulitzer Prize winning authors Donald Barlett
and James Steele in their '92 bestseller, America What Went Wrong?:

One major reason for the declining fortunes of workers: American companies went on a borrowing binge through the 1980s, issuing corporate IOUs at the rate of $1 million every four minutes, twenty-four hours a day, year after year. By the decade's end, companies had piled up $1.3 trillion in new debt--much of it to buy and merge companies, leading to the closing of factories and the elimination of jobs.

That debt required companies to divert massive sums of cash into interest payments, which in turn meant less money was available for new plants and equipment, less money for research and development. During the 1950s, when manufacturing jobs were created at a record pace, companies invested $3 billion in new manufacturing plants and equipment for every $1 billion paid out in interest. By the 1980s, that pattern had been reversed: Corporations paid out $1.6 billion in interest for every $1 billion invested in manufacturing plants and equipment.

Similarly, during the 1950s, for every $1 billion that corporations paid out in interest on borrowed money, they allocated $710 million for research and development. By the 1980s, corporations spent only $220 million on research and development for every $1 billion in interest payments. 63

As with the federal government, for many corporations to be dragging around so huge a debt-load is like trying to maneuver with an anchor in your pocket. When coupled with the rise of other contemporary industrial players mentioned earlier, the situation becomes depressing twice-over. The days of US exceptionalism have ended; in the process, trade surpluses and our creditor-standing have vanished almost overnight. Simply put, the 30-year, post-WWII boom that was enjoyed by US corporate entities has unequivocally ended. The phenomenon of lean and mean--with its lower
wages/benefits and less employment—is a response to all of this devastation.

A surgical look at lean and mean reveals that the response itself is largely happening along three axes: a) corporate operations are being sent abroad, b) automation is replacing both workers and some of low- to mid-level management, and c) there is what can be called the "temping" of America. The latter in this series is the newest wrinkle of lean and mean, and the one to be focused upon below.

Flexible workers, contingent workers, part-timers, per­ diem workers, leased employees, supplementals, contractors, temps, flexible workers, assignment workers, disposable workers, throw-away workers—whatever they might be called, are making headlines in early '93. The reason: 90% of the 380,000 new jobs created in February were part-time and/or temporary positions. So high a percentage is probably a fluke, according to Labor Secretary Robert Reich; nonetheless, roughly 30% of the US work-force is now composed of part-time and/or temporary employees. Indeed, the largest private employer in the US with 560,000 workers is a temp agency, Manpower. Another 1 million employees work for other, sometimes quite specialized, temp firms. Finally, thirty-four million more workers obtain circumscribed work-weeks which they locate themselves. When viewed all together, many of these "nontraditional" folks can be characterized as part-time by choice. Many of these
same individuals also enjoy the historic array of health-care and assorted benefits. Data are sketchy, but these contented people are likely just a very small minority of the part-time and/or temp work-force. 65

In addition to the aforementioned estimate of $800 million in payroll savings for '93 alone, it's possible to dig a bit deeper and see how the shift to temps and part-timers serves to widen the rich/poor gap even further. The first of these additional machinations has to do with an increase in the amount of overtime being turned in by full-time employees. Indeed, Americans are working more overtime now than at any other point since the BLS began keeping such records in 1950. 66 And this at a time when 9 million other Americans can find no work at all! The irony here is doubly poignant, according to economist Juliet Schor, author of the '92 text, The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure, insofar as "Majorities of working Americans say they would prefer more free time at the expense of their paycheck." 67 So what gives? Why not just hire more full-time workers? The easy response is, of course, that it saves paying the benefits that might otherwise be extended to additional full-timers. Take a look at a few of the numbers involved: A typical benefits-package for one full-time employee now amounts to 28% of a worker's wage, up from 20% in 1970. 68 Squeezing overtime from full-timers is therefore more cost-effective for an
employer despite the typical time-and-a-half premium. End result: nearly $900 million a week is now spent on overtime pay. This total could otherwise provide roughly 1.3 million new employees with a wage of more than $11 an hour plus benefits. It would actually reduce our national unemployment rate by one full percentage point. 69

Importantly, overtime does more to augment the rich-poor gap than via simply limiting the pool of new hires. To wit, overtime hours are generally worked by an employer’s most skilled and productive people. 70 This saves on having to spend much in the way of time and money on training part-timers and temps. Why bother to invest in them when you only capitalize on their efforts for an abbreviated bit of time? The end result is a deskilling of individuals who might otherwise be trained as full-timers and thereby possess for themselves some form of expertise.

Digging deeper again, there is yet a final way in which recent labor trends serve to increase the disparity between the rich and poor of US society. Specifically, part-time stints and temp agencies happen to work quite well for a minority who command the sought-after skills and knowledge needed to perform certain types of specialized “spot-work” which often arise in places of employ. Managers today can hire virtually any kind of a temp they want from somewhere in the country, be it a biochemist whose specialty is X, or a CEO with a long track record of problem solving. 71 This
is not-so-much a case of the poor getting poorer, but rather the rich getting richer. These fortunate folks—perhaps a few hundred-thousand—are repeatedly put in touch with the big-wallet employers who need them most. 72

Taken as a whole, it's important now to ask if all of these changes in labor dynamics will worsen in the future vis-a-vis their tendency to make the rich richer and the poor poorer? The answer looks like, yes. A cynic might point first to the greed of many employers who'll do anything to save a buck. But there's more to it. Speed and flexibility are required for American firms to participate in a brutally competitive world of transnational production and niche-demand. As a result, the "just-in-time" manufacturer is becoming the "just-in-time" employer. 73 The buzz phrase at many companies is "accordion management." Translation: the ability to expand or contract one's work force at will to suit business conditions. 74 Temps and part-timers, skilled and unskilled, are here for the foreseeable future. So too is the conversion's effect of further separating the rich and poor.

To return this discussion to an overall consideration of two-Americas, some final comments remain in order about the scenario's end-state. Some of the attributes are easy enough to spot. Concerning the poor we'll have more crime, more poverty, more infant mortality, more unemployment, more food stamps, more jails, more homelessness, etc. Concerning
the rich we’ll have more CEO pay, more luxury items, more private education, more private security, more members-only clubs, more segregation into wealthy enclaves, etc. Many of these indicators are already at post-WWII- and even historic highs. 

Again, we can expect each of these measurements to worsen inasmuch as they attend the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer. It’s not enough, however, to simply say that these measurements will worsen. More specifically, as the overall situation denigrates, the responses to this decline will fundamentally change in character: It’s one thing to be uneducated, and another to be illiterate; it’s one thing to take a pay-cut, and another to become suddenly jobless; it’s one thing to be hungry, and another to be starving. Thresholds are crossed. As this happens, the collective reactions will likely be transformative as opposed to incrementally linear in some singular direction. The possible outcomes here can be understood as per the desires and tools available to each of the rich and poor in the furtherance and/or rectification of their situation. Start first with the rich.

With economic polarization comes the dawning recognition that the rich can fare best by taking care of their own. Why? Because the larger community has less and less to offer the aggregated whole unless the rich themselves pay for all of it. The rumblings of this discovery can already be found. Consider, for example, the
dramatic changes in US security arrangements. The
aforecited Secretary of Labor, Robert Reich, elaborates:

By 1990, private security guards comprised fully 2.6
percent of the nation’s work force, double the
percentage in 1970, and outnumbering public police
officers in the United States. Taking note of this
striking growth, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has
accorded the occupation the honor of a separate job
category all its own. With revenues of the ten largest
guard companies rising 62 percent in the 1980s, in real
terms, private security was one the fastest-growing
industries in the United States. 76

And privatization does not stop with security concerns.
It ranges from the high of learning centers to the low of
trash collection and street cleaning. Push this out just a
wee bit further, and it’s plain that we are speaking here of
a rich and poor decoupling. Adding fuel to this fire are
contemporary circumstances which make the wealthy far less
dependent upon on the rest of society. Why, for example,
kow-tow to the demands of routine workers when the mundane
end of value-addition, such as production, can be either
automated and/or sent to a foreign hub of the global
business network? 77 Let them eat cake!

No doubt the rich folk’s decoupling--and consequent
removal of society’s largesse--will be resented by those
less fortunate. What might the latter do at that point?
The L.A. riots of ‘92 offer-up one indication. For wealthy
onlookers, some level of such agitation can be tolerated so
long as it occurs amongst the riff-raff themselves.
Containment is the issue. Most of the well-to-do never went
into South-Central anyway, and the riots simply confirmed
how appropriate it is to self-segregate. But, oh, don’t let that bedlam leak onto the properties whereupon only angels dare to tread! Should that occur, it’s time for the garrison-state. Here the aforementioned private security forces are expanded and turned into boundary-guarding, private armies. Any type of a siege can then be met with either fire-power, or another of the legal system’s capital punishment parties. In the alarming words of conservative writer Charles Murray, "The left has been complaining for years that the rich have too much power. They ain’t seen nothing yet." 78

So much for the desires and tools and of the wealthy; that’s their best hope should net worth and income continue to accumulate in fewer and fewer hands at the top. What about the desires and tools of the poor? One thing they’ve got in their favor is increasing numbers. This could conceivably put them in control of electoral politics. The argument becomes all the more likely should there arise some semblance of class consciousness. Granted, Americans are notorious for their denial of domestic class dynamics, but that may be changing. Why? Because much of what has kept alive the notion of classlessness thus far are a) periods of actual middle class prosperity and b) the mythology of Horatio Alger. 79 As regards middle class prosperity, the entire premise of two-Americas is that it’s on the wane. As regards the mythology of Horatio Alger, the fundamental
notion here is that through applying oneself, anyone can make it. But as Roger Swardson pointed out, the rules of the game are changing. Millions of Americans are being evicted and/or denied the type of world which had formerly provided a reasonable measure of security—even after retirement—in exchange for hard work, obedience, and loyalty. That social contract has been frayed through the rise of disposable temps, gutted pension plans, paycuts, operations sent abroad, automation, unexpected bankruptcies, etc. With this contract-abrogation, the blind commitment to hard work, obedience, and loyalty is being replaced by feelings of betrayal, insecurity, and fear. Such sentiments may be just what it takes to catalyze a class consciousness among the poor in this country. As an identifiable block, they will be spoken to as such, which bears finally upon electoral politics. What type of a candidate might appeal to these disaffected masses?

In speculating upon this, realize first that the subsequent worsening of rich and poor in this country will be taking place on Clinton's ticket. And in the popular perception of most Americans, Clinton is seen as one of two mainstream choices in this country: the democrats and the republicans. Therefore, Clinton's failure will be widely viewed as more than just the inadequacy of a bubba president who was dealt a bad hand of cards: Clinton's failure will instead be construed as that of the Big-D-democrats. What
might make this a national crisis is the still fresh republican defeat of '92. More specifically, that resounding repudiation is just too recent for this second of our mainstream choices to seriously claim that they now have the requisite counterrevolution for our dire straits. 81

Enter some third species of a candidate who'll likely be making noises other than traditional-sounding salutes to the welfare state and/or free markets. One brand of substitute politics is unfair scapegoating (i.e., too many Mexicans are crossing the border; the Japanese have stolen all of our technologies; gays are coming out of the closet, etc). This stuff has always played well when times get tough. Kevin Phillips calls it "the politics of demonology." And where does it lead? Phillips describes a nationalist, "right-wing-populist," authoritarianism operating an activist and repressive state. 82

To summarize, it looks as though the low point of scenario #3, two Americas, can shape itself into either the "friendly fascism" described above, or the garrison-state described earlier. Neither alternative is the mayhem which characterized the nadir of scenarios 1 and 2,...but that's hardly much of a compliment!

Multiculturalism is next on the chapter-agenda. The reader will recall that multiculturalism is presented as the second of two macro-explanations regarding why the US is heading down the tubes so quickly. Multiculturalism has
been placed on the heels of this first macro-explanation—the failures of the US economy—for a reason. Specifically, economic problems tend to worsen individual and collective abilities to optimally cope with other problems. Multiculturalism is no exception.

c. the disintegrative powers of multiculturalism

The scenario entitled "two Americas" depicted a US society split into two camps, one rich, one poor. Unfortunately, the contemporary brand of US-movement towards multiculturalism is walking us straight away into an even more complicated situation wherein those two camps are further fissioning into dozens of battling factions. The attributes which outwardly define these factions are variously racial, ethnic, religious, ageist, sexist, and sexuality-based.

In making such a sweeping charge (explanations in a moment), I do not wish to deny that the proponents of multiculturalism have often acted with benign intentions. Neither do I wish to deny that multiculturalism is a condition which can entail a wealth of benefits for all. However, as shall be shown, things can be overdone! There is a downside to multiculturalism when taken too far. Importantly, the ill-effects of this downside are already
dwarfing whatever good has come of multiculturalism’s national takeover.

Catalyzing the downside of multiculturalism are two principal and overlapping phenomena. CATALYST #1 consists of selected changes within the evolution of US immigration policy. CATALYST #2 is the shift from a focus upon individual rights to a focus upon group rights. Both topics are serially considered below. (I have capitalized their numeric designations insofar as each explanation is a bit lengthy, and I do not wish for the reader to lose the forest for the trees.) As a preamble to each of these discussions, some time must first be spent in looking at the question, "What exactly is multiculturalism?"

The short answer is, "It depends upon who you talk to!" That may sound flip, but it’s also apt. Multiculturalism is not a singular status. For some folks, multiculturalism is a US wherein one can find French restaurants, Italian clothing, and Chinese movies (with subtitles, of course). For other folks, multiculturalism is a US wherein voluntary self-segregation is commonplace, and the dominant language varies depending upon location. The tension which separates these polar perspectives are differing measures of homogeneity and heterogeneity within the nation itself.

As might be imagined, the extreme maximizing of either variable can lead to problems: Too much homogeneity entails both a stifling conformism, and an inability to understand
other people beyond the national boundaries. Likewise, too much heterogeneity entails both a radical separatism, and an inability to understand other people within the national boundaries. A bit of the good news here is that the national attainment of either pure homogeneity or pure heterogeneity is just as impossible as a national attainment of either pure capitalism or pure socialism. Inevitably, some sort of a loosely definable balance is struck. More specifically, the issue concerning diversity is not a simple matter of answering "yes or no," but rather of looking at "how much of what types." New York Governor Mario Cuomo is among the many to have commented upon this task. Consider, for example, his thoughts pulled from a '91 address on multicultural education:

Most Americans can understand both the need to recognize and encourage an enriched diversity as well as the need to ensure that such a broadened multicultural perspective leads to unity and an enriched sense of what being an American is, and not to a destructive factionalism that would tear us apart. 

Stated alternatively, there must be some type of a shared basis among a nation’s people for cohesion and concerted action. That bedrock within the US must at least include an understanding and respect of democratic government, individual freedoms, and equality of opportunity. Each of these ingredients runs deep within our history and cultural ethos. Take away our best attempts to subscribe to this credo, and America is no longer America. Thankfully, we have not yet reached that point. But we’re
on our way. The extent to which that is so will become apparent by way of discussing the two aforementioned CATALYSTS of multiculturalism's downside.

CATALYST #1—the evolution of US immigration policy—is arguably the least important of the two generative causes of multiculturalism's ill-effects. (Nonetheless, its significance becomes explosive when interacting with the soon-to-be described CATALYST #2—group rights over individual rights.) An envelope-sketch of this country's immigration policy reveals three dates that are of particular importance: 1990, 1965, and a package of legislation passed from 1921-1924. Prior to these reforms, immigration restrictions were scant. Indeed, for the first 100 years after independence, almost anyone who came to these shores was allowed entry.  

Piecemeal restrictions were subsequently implemented from time-to-time, such as the notorious Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, but it was not until the 1920s that immigration regulations began to look like anything resembling a systematic policy-edifice (more on this in a moment).

Also from an opening, "bird's eye view," it's helpful to speak in terms of three waves of immigrants to this country. Wave #1 arrived prior to and following our birth as a nation; these people were largely Western and Northern European. Wave #2 arrived following the Civil War and prior to World War I; these people were largely Southern and
Eastern European. Wave #3 began in the mid-'60s and continues to this day; these people are largely Latin and Asian. Indeed, since 1965, 80% of all legal immigrants have been either Latin or Asian. Prior to 1965, that same 80% figure was comprised of Europeans. In absolute terms, each of these three immigrant-waves is approximately equal, but as a proportion of the population-at-large, immigrant-numbers have dwindled. The foreign-born population of today is about 6-7% of the legal citizenry, down from nearly a third at the turn of this century.

One of the most immediate questions in all of this is why immigration had not been the subject of rigorous legislation prior to the third wave? The answers are that, first, we needed all population increases to fuel both settlement of the west and industrialization of the cities. Second, and importantly, the then new-immigrants were relatively akin to each other in a cultural sense and/or willing to do all that was necessary to become one of the "new race" of Americans. Wave #1 mapped out the initial terrain as explained by historian Arthur Schlesinger in his '92 text entitled, The Disuniting of America:

The American creed had its antecedents, and these antecedents lay primarily in a British inheritance as recast by a century and a half of colonial experience....

Having cleared most of North America of their French, Spanish, and Dutch rivals, the British were free to set the mold. The language of the new nation, it's laws, its institutions, its political ideas, its literature, its customs, its precepts, its prayers derived primarily from Britain....
The smelting pot thus had, unmistakably and inescapably, an Anglocentric flavor. For better or worse, the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant tradition was for two centuries—and in crucial respects still is—the dominant influence on American culture and society. This tradition provided the standard to which other immigrant nationalities were expected to conform, the matrix into which they would be assimilated. 88

And assimilate they did. Of course, that is not to say there were no problems among these initial, wave #1, Western and Northern Europeans, but simply that many of their differences were surmountable (i.e., Germans are too clannish, Irish are too drunken, Scandinavians are too pious, etc). 89 However, with the coming of wave #2, the tension-level which existed between the new and later arrivals was bumped-up a few notches. As Southern and Eastern Europeans, these post-Civil War entrants demonstrated cultural differences that were often a significant departure from the habits of their more longstanding counterparts. They even looked a little bit different. The center nonetheless held. This despite phenomena such as the emergence of nativist political parties including the "Know Nothings." Much of why this second wave was both accepted and successful is attributable to what was a widespread and earnest desire on their part to become assimilated Americans. Indeed, many of their lives appeared to be lifted right out of Israel Zangwill's play of 1908, The Melting Pot. 90 As Schlesinger puts it:

Those intrepid Europeans who had torn up their roots to brave the wild Atlantic wanted to forget a horrid past and embrace a hopeful future. They expected to become
Americans. Their goals were escape, deliverance, assimilation. They saw America as a transforming nation, banishing dismal memories, and developing a unique national character based on common political ideals and shared experiences. The point of America was not to preserve old cultures, but to forge a new American culture. 91

As the twentieth century proceeded, changes bearing upon immigration mounted once again. World War I served to run a stake through the heart of America's collective "tolerance" for all things foreign. Included here were immigrants—particularly immigrants who were not white. The aforementioned legislative package completed in 1924 served to clamp down on immigration in two ways: the laws placed a cap of 156,987 on total annual entrants, and the laws placed restrictive criteria upon whom was eligible for consideration. 92 More specifically, a "national origins" system was implemented. Within this system, immigrant-quotas were set for different countries based upon the number of people within the US who could trace their national origins to the country being considered. (The year 1920 was selected as a base for drumming-up the finalized allotments.) The net effect of these mandates was to radically diminish and even eliminate immigration from many non-European countries. In other words, the growing tide of non-European immigrants was effectively stopped by grounding the quotas upon a cumulative 1920 population profile which ill-reflected the non-Europeans who were only then seeking entry to the US in greater and greater numbers.
These legislated changes were not without controversy. While the term "national origins" may sound harmless enough, the specter of racism was lurking just below its surface. Asians, for example, were categorically denied entry—despite having had a percentage-stake in the 1920 Census.¹

It was not until 1965 that the tattered "national origins" formulation was finally, and fully abolished. Former President Kennedy was among those who lobbied hardest for its demise. Writing in 1963 Kennedy noted:

The famous words of Emma Lazarus on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty read: 'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free.' Until 1921 this was an accurate picture of our society. Under present law it would be appropriate to add: 'as long as they come from Northern Europe, are not too tired, or poor, or slightly ill, never stole a loaf of bread, never joined any questionable organization, and can document their activities for the last two years.' ³

The '65 Immigration Reform Act codified and implemented a new preference system based largely on "family unification" considerations. Within this new hierarchy of entrant-preferences, "unmarried children of citizens come first, spouses of resident aliens second, and exceptional and talented immigrants third. Other relatives of citizens and resident aliens come fourth and fifth, while workers with needed skills come sixth." ⁴

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¹ In 1952, the outright ban on Asians was minimally compromised through allowing a token 100 immigrants each year from selected Asian countries.
Suffice to say, these changes in preferences have dramatically altered the makeup of our contemporary foreign-born community. As mentioned earlier, we have annually admitted well over half a million immigrants since 1965, and 80% of them are of non-European stock. Critically, the cultural baggage brought by many of these immigrants is generally so far removed from waves 1 and 2, that myriad of these individuals may never assimilate within US society at all! As put by Allan Bloom, author of the best-selling The Closing of the American Mind, "There are natural fears that today’s immigrants may be too much of cultural stretch for a nation based on Western values." Bloom’s point finds a not-so-PC substantiation within the following commentary of sociologist Robert Hopkins, writing here for a recent edition of the Conservative Review:

There are optimists who still believe that the melting pot process will lead to the assimilation of today’s immigrants into the ‘Old American’ way of life—with all that means in respect of liberty, justice, democracy, and cultural tradition....(But,) major anomalies can be expected as the United States becomes host country to truly massive numbers of Third World immigrants.

Asia has an enduring heritage of not simply feudalism, but of that Oriental despotism, masterfully analyzed in Karl Wittfogel’s thus named book.... Japan, supposedly a parliamentary democracy, has given evidence...of being one of the most ethnocentric nations in the world. China remains a one-party state. The parliamentary democracy of India may not survive internecine warfare among the subcontinent’s linguistic and religious power blocs. The future of democracy in the Philippines is very uncertain. The massacres in Cambodia are indistinguishable in enormity from the depredations of Tamerlane.

Latin America, with few exceptions, reveals a history of rotating authoritarian rule with failing
democratic government. Mexico experienced a long period of what in effect has been corrupt one-party rule. The one notable exception to this pattern, Costa Rica, is virtually a European country. Democracy, is, if anything, in even more disarray in Africa. The one African nation with any history of democratic reforms, Liberia, fell to a military dictatorship several years ago which is now threatened by another military insurrection.

Alarming stuff. Unfortunately, the story gets even murkier, as shall be shown later, when CATALYST #2 enters into things. For the moment, however, it’s enough to catalogue that our latest newcomers hail from cultures very unlike our own. Realize as well that this influx of truly diverse immigrants was never the intent of those who worked so hard to get the '65 legislation passed. This particular saga is colorfully illustrated by author David Rieff in his '91 text entitled Los Angeles:

The 1965 bill would not, its supporters repeated over and over again, when pressed by colleagues who harbored the same nativist anxieties that had afflicted their predecessors in 1924, lead to any profound changes in the racial or ethnic makeup of the United States. True, the new law eliminated nation-by-nation quotas, but in passing it the American Congress was, in the words of the sociologist Nathan Glazer, 'giving itself the moral satisfaction of passing a non-discriminatory immigration act that it expected would in no substantial way change the sources or volume of American immigration.'...

To the people in Washington in those days, people who prided themselves on being players, on knowing how the world worked, the Third World was a place to which one sent missionaries, and aid, and, when necessary, the United States Marines....It (the Third World) might, at concessionary prices, export its raw materials to the United States. But its people? As a character in Mary McCarthy’s novel The Group liked to say, ‘Who’d a thunk it?'
Who'd a thunk it indeed! Well come they have. Some studies estimate that by 2080, as much as 37% of the US populace will have descended from post-'65 immigrants. A few changes have been implemented to stem the tide--but not by very much. The 1990 Immigration Reform Act brought with it three promising modifications, or preferences, which are to rank above "family unification" considerations. First, is a tripling to 140,000 of the slots awarded skilled workers. Second, is the establishment of 10,000 investor slots for individuals willing to sink $1 million or more into an American business. Third, is an allotment of 120,000 slots, dispensed over three years, for the nationals of countries who had formerly lost so much ground (read Europeans) under the immigration preferences established in '65. Each of these alterations is certainly helpful in maintaining an American identity (much the way the French maintain their identity, the Koreans maintain their identity, etc.); however, these alterations are likely a case of too little too late.

As alluded to earlier, what makes CATALYST #1 (i.e., changes in immigration policy) troubling twice over is the compounding influence of CATALYST #2 (i.e., the ballyhooing of group rights over individual rights). More specifically, there is a movement afoot in this country for "diverse" enclaves of people--defined culturally or otherwise--to self-segregate. After doing so, the point then is for
group-participants to interpret both themselves and their role in society vis-a-vis the tribal identity to which they subscribe.

Shockingly, this second half of multiculturalism's downside is taking much of its cue from the ample assembly of liberals operating out of our nation's schools, colleges, and universities. It is on our nation's campuses that blacks, for example, will often have their own student unions, fraternities, sororities, academic societies/clubs, and even yearbooks. In the name of racial justice, the desegregation won in the case of Brown v. Topeka has been turned on its head; we've come full circle in a scant 45 years! In addition to race, other separatist enclaves are put together in the names of ethnicity, gender, age, immigrant-status, religion, and sexual orientation. Oftentimes, even these breakdowns are not enough: Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Unions at many campuses are regularly split, or "crossed hatched" on the basis of gender, race, and age. Likewise, within immigrant-circles, distinctions are made as to individuals who hail from a wealthy background as opposed to those from more impoverished circumstances. Throughout all of this, oppression has become the great status symbol. The more strikes against you, the better. Each "compromising" group-attribute is an additional badge to be worn with honor. The curricula from grades 1 to grad are
both a reflection of- and further inducement to deepen this new campus modus operandi. Take, for example, this telling tale:

When a student sent a memorandum to the ‘diversity education committee’ at the University of Pennsylvania mentioning her ‘deep regard for the individual,’ a college administrator returned the paper with the word individual underlined: ‘This is a red flag phrase today, which is considered by many to be racist. Arguments that champion the individual over the group ultimately privileges (sic) the individuals belonging to the largest or dominant group.’

With just this much of a multiculturalism-analysis, a minimum of two questions present themselves. The first is "Why?". The second is "Towards what ultimate outcome?". As regards why we’re confronted with these recent changes, the simplest explanation is that some huddling together can make a supportive difference amongst the ranks of any given enclave. Mutual concerns can be regularly focused upon and are easily understood by those ensconced within similar circumstances. This is doubly so given the impact of CATALYST #1 whereby we are often speaking here of people who are truly "strangers in a strange land." But self-ghettoization can be overdone. Enter question #2, "Towards what ultimate outcome?".

If the radical separatists have their way, the ills of society will not be described with "universal" or generic terms such as poverty, civil rights, jobs, education, harassment, representation, acknowledgement, etc. Instead, the ills of society will be couched in terms of which groups
are deemed most in need of targeted attention. The result will be a multiplying of group-oriented, affirmative action rewards. These rewards can be either formal (i.e., exclusive hiring of only the under-represented), or informal (i.e., pitch Plato and assign Fanon). The stakes involved are high enough such that group-members now cling tighter and tighter to an evermore embellished group identity. Over time, it will become impossible for us to even speak with one another given the panoply of "privileged knowledges" which attend either this or that "special standing."

Extrapolate the trajectories a wee bit farther, and you can take your pick of three scenarios: a safely neutered society of diverse consumers (i.e., Switzerland); a warring bloodbath of hateful enemies (i.e., Yugoslavia); or a fascist imposition of the majority’s "Americanization" upon all others (i.e., WWII Germany). 107

That may strike the reader as apocalyptic, but allow me to leave this subject with two final points in support of such alarm. The first is speculation concerning future forms of multiculturalism’s contemporary backlash, starting with white guilt. 108 Ethnicity aside, our society is becoming increasingly multiracial. And it’s part and parcel of much group-rights-rhetoric that whites, even the progressives, are presumptively racist. Think about it: we are all the product of everything that has come before us. While you as a white person may not have acted as an overt
racist, you are nonetheless the product of a racist history whereby you have profited from phenomena including restrictive laws (formal racism) to having had all the role models (informal racism). Expect to be reminded of this more and more as group-rights-proponents increasingly assume the center stage. Expect also to be reminded of this more and more as whites shrink from three-fourths of our present population to one-half by the mid-point of next century. Do not, however, project the status quo too far ahead: Guilt itself is a rather tricky emotion. Most who suffer from it want only to be released. If no relief is in the offering, white guilt may transform itself into an anger, or a lashing out, at those who have championed their stigmatization.

A final consideration which equally bodes an apocalyptic end-state issues from a confluence of factors including the geographic concentration of new immigrants in selected large cities, the ways in which their children now rapidly develop higher expectations of their lot in life, and economic troubles which so confound a materialistic version of the American dream. To appreciate these factors, realize first that the unsung foundations of many large cities like Los Angeles, Houston, Miami, New York, and Chicago, are typically supported by new-immigrants. These are often the folks who bus the tables, park the cars, do the laundry, feed the children, water the plants, mop the
hospital floors, manufacture the textiles, work in the paint factories, empty the CEO-wastebaskets, etc. And, of course, it's the six to eight million illegals in this country who typically get the worst of it. As explained by the aforecited David Rieff:

After all, who else but an illegal alien would be willing to work for a pittance in a plastics factory, or hunker down on shop floors where the decibel level was so high that an eight hour shift resembled nothing so much as sitting right up against the speaker bank at a rap music concert? And for all that, who else but an illegal immigrant would think such conditions not only an improvement on life back home, but a stepping stone to a better life in the future.

There was a time when jobs such as these were in fact stepping stones. Should they prove to be again, and prove that quickly, all of us are partially out of the woods. Again, the movement must, however, be rapid. These high fertility immigrants, legal and illegal, are having children who come with zero understanding of the extreme poverty from which their parents fled. Quite the contrary. Importantly, one can safely assume that these children will therefore be far less "stoic" in accepting a fate within this land-of-plenty that looks like the lives their parents are enduring.

Indeed, significantly higher expectations are now actively encouraged by US TV, the presence of wild opulence right across the proverbial tracks, and the strength-in-numbers which attends rapidly growing, high density, immigrant-neighborhoods. For Rieff and others, cities such as Los Angeles are no less than demographic time bombs.
Within Los Angeles, to take just one example, Hispanics account for 35% of the population as a whole; their children, however, comprise 50% of the enrollment in the L.A. Unified School District. 114

Part 2: Focus on the Busters

d. overview

The overview of topics to be covered in this buster-focused half of chapter 4 include a) their financial status, b) some feelings of generational isolation, c) a selective view to buster ethics, violence, knowledge, time-orientation, and d) a look as to whether or not busters are possessed of an authoritarian personality.

The reader is reminded that the majority of available buster data derives from a) buster writings and interviews, b) poll responses, c) empirical studies, and d) commentary on each of a, b, and c. I have attempted to be inclusive of buster voices wherever possible in this particular chapter-half.

e. the financial doldrums

In assessing the financial difficulties which confront so many busters, two problematic STATEMENTS are helpful in
organizing the data ("problematic" will be explained in a moment). STATEMENT #1 is that 20% of the entire bust generation now lives below the official poverty line (i.e., this total is seven to eight percentage points greater than the national average in the early 1990s). 115 Problematic STATEMENT #2 is that the overall unemployment rate for busters is now approximately 8% (i.e., this total is one to two percentage points greater than the national average in the early 1990s): 116 In 1991, to take a more specific example, the US jobless rate stood at 6.7% while the unemployment rate for busters aged 20–24 was 11% and the unemployment rate for young Americans aged 25–34 was 7.1%. 117

As troubling as these two macro-STATEMENTS are, what makes them "problematic" is that they do not do justice to just how serious are the economic straits in which many busters find themselves. It is in qualifying each STATEMENT that a sharper image of these dire straits emerges.

Take first a further look to STATEMENT #1—the busters overall poverty rate of 20%. What so confounds this statement is that it does not account for either a) a massive parental subsidy to busters claimed as dependents by their parents (i.e., they are counted as members of a solvent family by the US Census Bureau); and neither does this 20% poverty rate account for the fact that b) many buster students (including the one-half who now work while
in school) receive college loans of monies which will have

to be paid back. 118 The magnitude of these joint subsidies
is best appreciated by noting that busters spend a total of
$125 billion dollars annually, but earn a mere $60 billion
from the jobs at which they work. 119 As such, $65 billion
of buster-expenditures are coming from some combination of
parental and governmental assistance. Of the two, the
parental subsidy (often from the wealthy generation of now
fifty- and sixtysomethings) is especially noteworthy insofar
as it regularly includes noncash support such as no-rent
living accommodations extended to boomeranging busters.

Just how helpful either of these subsidies--parental
and governmental--will ultimately be, is a matter of some
debate. Milling around mom and dad’s place may just be
suitable enough for many busters to get hooked upon.
Likewise, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that
20% of people who graduated from college between 1984 and
1990 (with governmental loans or otherwise) are now working
at jobs which do not require a college education. 120

Moving to STATEMENT #2--the busters’ overall and
official unemployment of roughly 8%--is equally problematic
in that it too masks just how difficult are the busters’
employment-status and employment-future. Among the problems
here are a non-accounting of so-called discouraged workers,
a non-accounting of the underemployed (i.e., those working
part-time who would like to work full-time), and, finally,
the argument that many busters are stuck in what buster-novelist Douglas Coupland calls "McJobs"—dead-end, low paying, employment in the service sector. This latter phenomenon of McJobs is commented upon below in a passage excerpted from '91 cover story on young Americans published in the pages of Business Week:

The shakeout in manufacturing has dealt one of the biggest blows. From 1973 to 1989, the proportion of 30- to 62-year-old men in the work force who toiled in factories fell to 25% from 30%. Because the last hired are usually the first fired, the share of men under 30 dropped twice as fast, to 19% from 28%. And pay has fallen for the few factory jobs that open up. Union concessions played a part, starting a decade ago. For instance, the rapid spread of two tier wage scales, which pay new employees at a lower rate for the same job, has hurt young workers most. Beyond that, as companies such as AT&T and the Big Three auto companies have cut hundreds of thousands of hourly jobs, much of the remaining work has migrated toward smaller, nonunion shops that pay less and subcontract for the large companies. Overall, young men in manufacturing today earn 8% less in real terms than their counterparts did in 1973.

Faced with less opportunity in factories, the Troy Marshalls of the country have moved into industries that traditionally hired women: services and retail sales. But these jobs pay 15% to 33% less than men under 30 make in the factories. And they pay even less than they used to when adjusted for inflation.

This also reflects subcontracting and two tier pay scales. But another factor is a rapid increase in the number of part time and temporary jobs in retail trade and services. These pay 40% less per hour, on average, than full-time work. And the number of them has jumped nearly 20% since 1973 to a healthy—or unhealthy depending on your view—25% of the total....

The people who end up in these 'McJobs,' as Coupland calls them, also wait longer to land full-time positions. In 1973, a majority of high school dropouts had found steady work by age 22, according to Census Bureau data. Today it takes until about age 26. While they're looking, young men go through longer unemployment spells than their counterparts 20 years ago. In any given year, 1 in 10 males aged 18–29
earns nothing—up 40% since 1973. Many are thus stuck at home until well into their twenties. 122

Combining STATEMENTS #1 AND #2 (i.e., their poverty rates and their unemployment/employment dilemmas) culminates in a disparate collection of pictures which can be variously indexed in terms of singles, families, race, gender, and educational attainment. The tales these snapshots tell look as follows: If you are single and college educated, you've just about held your own since 1973; if you are a DINK family (i.e., double income no kids), you’ve also held your own and even improved slightly from 1973 if both workers are college educated; 123 if you are a family headed by a high school graduate, your real earnings have fallen by 16%; and if you are a family headed by a high school dropout, your earnings have declined by fully one-third in inflation-adjusted dollars since 1973. 124 Taken as a whole, the median income of families headed by someone under 30 is now 13% lower than such families earned in 1973. 125

Unfortunately, race and gender color each of the above categories as well: "Among all under 30 households, blacks earn only 51% of what whites earn—significantly less than the 58% figure for all over-30 households." 126 For US women of all ages, they continue to make a stubborn 65% to 75% of that earned by their male counterparts. 127 This means a double whammy for black buster households insofar single women head an incredible 58% of all black buster families. 128
Not to be lost in this discussion of averages is, of course, the fact that certainly some among the buster ranks are doing quite well and even prospering. Yuppies are said to constitute, at best, 5% of the boom, and it seems reasonable to believe that a like percentage of busters are their generation’s version of the same thing. Nonetheless, these averages must be further qualified with some additional information that is not quite as "encouraging" as the evidence of buster Yuppies. The themes here are two-fold: First, the gap between the rich and poor of the buster ranks is wider than that which separates the rich and poor of older generations. Second, and importantly, the lion’s share of what constituted hard-times within the Bush years (and prior) was imposed upon- and suffered by the bust generation to a greater extent than was the case for older Americans. The prolific team of Strauss and Howe comment upon each of these devastating occurrences:

Over the last twenty years, the poverty rate among under-30 households has more than doubled. Your generation, in fact, has a weaker middle class than any born in this century--which means that the distance is widening between those of you who are beating the average, and those who are sinking beneath it.... Consider the following core indicators of economic well-being: worker pay, total household income, household wealth, home ownership, and the likelihood of poverty. From the late 1930s to the early 1970s, all these indicators improved briskly for every age group. Since then, they have diverged markedly across different age brackets. For households headed by persons over 65, these indicators have continued to improve as though nothing had gone wrong. For age 35 to 65, most of them have just held steady. But, for households headed by persons under age 35...every one
of these indicators has gotten worse. Some have fallen off a cliff....

During the Bush years, most of today’s 40 million 13ers living on their own hit their first recession. And behold: This was the only cyclical downturn ever recorded in which all of the net job loss landed on the under-30 age bracket. Not on Boomer-post-Yuppies, not on Silent, certainly not on GI retirees. Subtract 13ers from the employment tally, and presto: No recession! 130

What explains all of this? Again, it’s much that has been enumerated above: McJobs, two-tier wage scales, last-hired first fired practices, a recession. Add to that some other popular explanations such as the mis-match between education and labor force needs, regressive taxation such as FICA (more on this later), hacked up government support of programs important to youth so as to pay interest on the debt, college tuition hikes, the stigmatizing of busters as incompetent (more on this later)--and you get an idea of why this generation has been hit so hard financially. 131 Will any of this change? Not if the larger scenarios as outlined in the first half of this dissertation-chapter come to pass.

Given the importance of the two arguments laid out by Strauss and Howe in the passage above, I’d like to conclude this subsection with a couple of examples: Recall that their arguments are a) the rich to poor split is greater within buster ranks than those of older generations, and b) the recent economic tough-times seem to have walloped the bust to a greater than average extent. As regards the rich to poor split, some of this class bias can be seen to exist within the way that state and federal college assistance is
handled. Take for, example, the following commentary of Laurie Ouellette:

(Enrollment) of poverty-level students at four year schools across the United States has been cut in half since the mid-'80s--to the point where poor students now make up less than 10 percent of the college population....

These figures seem particularly class biased when you consider that income from part-time jobs may disqualify working-class students from receiving federal grants. Lynn, a contributor to Stories of Struggle presents a typical example: 'When I left home at 18 I was unemployed. I went through a succession of jobs that paid poorly, had few or no benefits. College seemed the only way for me to get around being someone else's secretary. I marched into the financial aid office ready to start a new life--only to find out that since I had made $8,300 the previous year, I was ineligible for any assistance.'

The dangers which fall from this are obvious, and can be heard in many quarters. Here, for example, is the commentary of Irving and Glenn Tecker pulled from an essay which recently appeared in Association Management magazine:

Perhaps the greatest challenge for all generations is the baby bust generation's divergence into polar segments. This generation is emerging with no middle ground. Have and have-nots are divided by extraordinary differences in the quality of their education. The haves develop the critical thinking that will enable them to make decisions and approach any number of tasks. The have-nots are unable to read on a functional level, to add or subtract numbers. They don't know where to get information when they need it, let alone what to do with it.

The second thesis argued by Strauss and Howe above is equally worthy of further treatment. That thesis, you'll recall, was that the sliding economic indicators of the Bush years (and earlier) hit hardest within the bust generation. Strauss and Howe further maintain that this is true insofar
as "the system" is "rigged" such that it favors America's elderly over and above America's youth. Two such areas are Bill Clinton's package of healthcare reforms, and, importantly, the Social Security system.

The discriminatory nature of Clinton's health care system is easiest to see. Simply put, any package of reforms that entails a standard fee for families and/or individuals will favor those who use health care the most, and burden those who use health care the least. Granted, the fees being proposed by Clinton are low relative to what Americans pay for health insurance right now, but take it just a step further. If employers are going to pick up the increased and singular costs of any employee's health care, then they may well employ fewer people overall by virtue of needing to pay more in health premiums regardless of whether or not the prospective employee uses this coverage. Likewise, if the government is to pay more of the health care costs not picked up by businesses and individual/family fees, then the additional monies are simply taken from the general fund of tax revenues and expended upon those who use health care most frequently. To state this alternatively, health is one of the clear advantages that youth have going for them; however, if they are forced to pay a standard per capita charge to help cover our collective health care bill (either directly or indirectly), then they have lost the ability to trade upon one of their stronger suits.
Add to health care reform, the most striking transfer of cash from young to old—the contemporary Social Security system. Since its early days, the Social Security system has always functioned as something of a Ponzi scheme: More specifically, it's predicated upon a pyramidal population profile wherein ever greater numbers of upcoming young people supplant and support the lesser number of those who retire. The very first of Social Security's beneficiaries was Ida Fuller. Fuller had paid a total of $22 dollars in FICA taxes which was matched by taxes upon the Vermont law firm for which she clerked until 1940. Ida Fuller lived long enough to collect $20,000 in Social Security benefits. At the time of Ida's initial retirement, 42 workers were employed (and taxed) for every one retiree.

Jump ahead to 2030 when most boomers will likely have left their jobs. At that point, the ratio of workers to retirees will have plummeted to 2.4 to 1, placing a near unimaginable weight upon the employed and their employers. Nominally, our government has taken care of this eventuality by way of increasing current FICA taxes to pay out the massive amounts which will be needed later on. This, however, is not the case! Lee Smith, staff writer for Fortune magazine explains:

Social Security's pension expenses will be manageable for a while longer. The combined employee and employer contribution of 11.2% of payroll (which is in addition to the 2.9% for Medicare) should generate some $290 billion this year. That's more than enough to pay out checks...(to 25 million people), pay for a
3.7% annual cost of living increase, and still generate a surplus of $60 billion in 1992 alone. In turn, the Social Security Trust Fund will loan this excess to the federal government to cover everything from interest payments on the national debt to crop supports and AIDS research. In exchange, the Treasury gives the Social Security IOUs, which some commentators continue to confuse with cash that tomorrow's old can live on. In reality, these are merely more debts accruing interest at 8% or more a year, which future taxpayers will have to make good on.\textsuperscript{140}

A remarkable number of busters are aware of these machinations, or have at least a sense of them: One recent US News & World Report survey found that less than 30% of busters believe that they will ever live to draw from Social Security all that they have paid into it.\textsuperscript{141}

That depressing buster sentiment leads me to the next topic to be looked at: a feeling of resentment that many busters harbor as regards their elders--boomers in particular.

f. generational estrangement

A 1992 Fortune magazine survey of 1000 employed busters asked if they would "like to be like" boomers. Four out of five said "no."\textsuperscript{142} Indeed, many busters feel what can charitably be called some anger about their elders. As mentioned above, the majority of this anger seems most typically trained upon the boom. (This may have something to do with the fact that the bulk of buster-parents are so-called silents and not the younger boom generation.)

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The upward flow of negative opinions from busters to boomers also runs in the opposite direction: That is to say, a lot of boomers-and-beyond take a rather dim view of busters, albeit with less intensity. I find all of this important in terms of this chapter's larger scenario insofar as it could entail the kind of group-balkanization which can so contribute to the US as a global has-been. I'd like, therefore, to take a deeper look at some of this mutual dislike.

To get an opening sense of what specifically motivates the tension in either direction, I've listed below two categories of titles from articles and essays which have appeared in a variety of magazines, journals, television broadcasts, and newspapers from around the country. Category #1 can be loosely referred to as "what busters think of boomers." Category #2 can be loosely referred to as "what boomers think of busters." I've centered the titles below to help the reader in imagining how they might appear when prominently positioned by page editors:

**Category #1: what busters think of boomers**

- Take This McJob and Shove It
- First, Kill All the Boomers
- Unfair Play in the Generation Wars
- The Crock of Ages
- For GenX, the Angst is On-Line
What I propose to do in the following pages of this subsection is to take a further look at category #1—the busters' opinions of boomers. What emerges are three themes that recur as sources of anger. These themes center around versions of a) the boomers ignore busters, b) the boomers intimidate busters, and c) the boomers have a left a mess for busters to contend with. As regards category #2—the boomers opinion of busters--this will be a topic returned in a later subsection of this chapter. Suffice for the moment to say that much of this disdain derives from studies which
variously purport to show the busters as unethical, violent, uninvolved, and unknowledgeable.

Here now is a sampling of buster-complaints as told in their own words:

America had a party in the 1980s, and we--the 'twentysomething generation' were not invited. While high-flying robber barons were making millions with other people's money, while men of bad conscience were constructing investment houses of paper, we were making our way through college and graduate school, taking out loans to finance our educations. Odd then, that now that the party's over, we should get stuck with the bill....

The fair solution, it seems to me, is simple: Let those who had the party pay for it! I would never expect uninvited neighbors to pay for my party. And I don't think I should have to pay for theirs. Let's have taxes that will affect those who benefitted most in the '80s. 

* * *

This is an open letter to the baby boomers from the next generation....

We are the stupidest generation in American history, we 20-year-olds. You already know that. We really do get lower SAT scores than our parents. Our knowledge of geography is pathetic, as is our ability with foreign languages and even basic math. We don't read books like you did. We care only about image. We love fads. Talk to college professors and they'll tell you they don't get intelligent responses to questions like they used to when you were in school. We're perfectly mush-headed....

I really don't think we can do this dance much longer. Not a single industrialized country has survived since 1945 without a major re-evaluation of its identity except ours. That's what you thought you were doing in the '60s, but soon you gave way to chasing the dreams of the Donald Trump and Michael Milkin get-rich-quick ethos--and all you had left for us was a bankrupt economy. The latchkey lifestyle you gave us in the name of your own 'freedom' has made us a generation with missing parents and broken homes. And what about the gays and blacks and Hispanics and Asians and women you pretended to care so much about and then forgot? It's not that I'm angry at you for selling out to the system. It's that there won't be a system for
me to sell out to. The money isn’t there anymore because you spent it all. 162

* * *

The recent spate of articles in the mainstream press about the so-called twentysomething generation is a con job. The articles themselves are basically thoughtless and obnoxious, but the phenomenon of this sudden amazing ‘discovery’ of 46 million Americans (you clever kids, where were you hiding!) is contemptible, an attempt at a massive cultural hijacking and a sweeping cover-up of crimes committed against the future by the fortysomething generation.

That the media should trip over themselves in a frothy ‘rush’ to discover the youngest strata of adults in this country is not surprising....Their reports generally are anthropological: the mating habits of the species, its strange costumes and grooming rituals. They discourse on the primitive music and its imagined meanings. Aspirations, fears, ideologies, and discontents are charted in colored boxes. Some young people themselves are actually quoted!

The negative labels--the Blank Generation/Generation X, the Busters, twentysomethings/twentynothings, and so on--are not-so-subtle propaganda. They imply that young people regard themselves as hopeless, a doomed/lost/societally orphaned slab of history marking time (if bothering to do that much) at McJobs. What right-thinking hard-working, over-30 person would want to hire them? This helps to preserve what limited opportunities are left for people over 30, who want to maintain the same luxuries of choice and career they enjoyed in the heady '80s. 163

* * *

You seem to think we have no voice. Maybe we don’t. You know who we are but not what we are. To you, we are the odd characters who have invaded the office wearing Walkman at the Xerox machine; women in hornrims and men in earrings talking about music you don’t listen to and the movies you never got around to seeing.

There’s our ‘attitude,’ a coolness, a detachment. There’s the way we dress--‘mock’ turtlenecks, way-too-big suits. And the way we speak: ironic, flip, uncommitted, a question mark at the end of every other sentence. But this is merely what you can see and hear. To understand us, you have to know where we are coming from.
You may think you had it easy. Yes, all the privileges you fought for, all the boundaries you broke down; they’re givens now. We’ve never seen a war. The only outrage some of us felt at Vietnam was the cancellation of the Scooby Doo cartoon show so the signing of the peace papers could be televised.

But we had our own problems. Divorce and TV invaded our innocence and shortened our childhood. Drugs and sex were part of your high school years. We embraced our careers while still in college. Grown up yet still children; seeking experience without responsibility. Maybe we’ve had more than a generation could want or should have: We have more choices than we can make. 164

* * *

As a twenty-nine year old, I don’t know many boomers, I only know of them. Because they don’t go out. They used to go out--from what I hear and read--first to sock hops, then to be-ins, then discos and, in the eighties, to 4-star restaurants. But now they stay inside, at home watching these cooking and gardening and home-improvement programs that I assume are aimed at them, since few people my age can afford a home. No, my chief relationship to baby boomers consists of having to live with the consequences of their thirty-year social reign. On the benign side, this means tolerating ‘classic’ rock stations, Nickelodeon reruns of ‘My Three Sons,’ Oliver Stone movies, and New Age religion. On the scary side, I have to deal every day with rampant sexually transmitted diseases, stupendous consumer and government debt, the drug war and New Age religion. To me, a baby boomer is someone who took all the drugs, had all the sex, spent all the money, worshipped all the gods and now sits on a couch watching ‘The Frugal Gourmet’ and fretting about the country’s loss of direction. 165

* * *

Once again, the themes which are variously addressed in these passages involve a buster-to-elder anger which orbit around a) the boomers ignore busters, b) the boomers intimidate busters, and c) the boomers have left a mess for busters to contend with. Also as mentioned earlier, all of this is important to the larger scenario of the US as a
global has-been insofar as it contributes to the kind of balkanization which may entail national decline.

Before concluding this subsection, I would like to address a concern which may have struck the reader while moving through some of the above. Specifically, five or six articles does not necessarily represent a cross-sampling of an entire generation. To this, I have three responses. First is the aforecited Fortune survey showing how few busters polled would "like to be like" boomers. Second, is the boomer-bashing so popular among busters who communicate on electronic bulletin boards (more on this in a moment). Third is the popularity and contents of Douglas Coupland’s widely acclaimed buster-novel entitled Generation X. Both of these latter two subjects are serially considered below.

In April of 1993, the Los Angeles Times ran a front page article entitled "For GenX, the Angst is On-Line." In it, staff writer Amy Harmon details the following:

Their favorite topics include ‘Home Sweet Shoe Box,’ ‘The Revolting Yuppies Excess I Witnessed Today,’ and that perennial favorite, ‘Wage Slave, Slacker, or What?’

For nearly a year now, they’ve been ragging on baby boomers and commiserating over their own putative impoverishment. They come from all over the country, most have never met.

Welcome to the Generation X forum on the Well, an electronic bulletin board founded by aging hippies and now home to a rotating brigade of twentysomethings.... Lamorte is a regular on the GenX board, which takes its name from the title of Douglas Coupland’s 1991 book on the new generation. Among the most popular of the Well’s 200 discussion groups, the board offers an unguarded look at how these children of television, divorce, and downward mobility see themselves....
The chorus of Xers whose voices bounce around the Well isn’t a perfect proxy for the entire generation, but it is in many ways typical. The GenX conferees are underpaid, cynical, and computer literate, and unlike many computer forums, this one has about as many women as men....
On the GenX board, the occasional over-35 browsers have been known to offer the electronic equivalent of a pat on the head and variations of the hated 'you’ll grow out of it' dictum....
Other elders dropping in on the Xers sound less secure. ‘I think this is my first experience of being a contemptible old person,’ said David Gans, host of the Well’s Grateful Dead conference.
‘Acknowledging the problem is the first step David,’ came the response. 167

The final aforementioned rationale I have for arguing that buster-disaffection and boomer-directed anger are widespread, lies in pointing to Douglas Coupland’s Generation X. The text has sold an impressive 200,000 copies as of late-'92 since its release in mid-'91. 168
The physical construction of the text is likely something that many could point to as indicative of the busters’ originality: The book is square with a plastic cover that is neither hard nor soft. The neon colors in which the cover is printed vary from copy to copy. Pages come with wide margins within which are comics and terms as described from a buster-perspective. Coupland himself, born 1962, has been referred to by Maclean’s magazine as "the unofficial spokesman of people born between the early 1960s and early 1970s." 169

The novel itself centers around the doings—some fun, some serious, some outrageous—of several busters who live in Southern California and travel often. I would argue that
The chorus of Xers whose voices bounce around the Well isn't a perfect proxy for the entire generation, but it is in many ways typical. The GenX conferees are underpaid, cynical, and computer literate, and unlike many computer forums, this one has about as many women as men....

On the GenX board, the occasional over-35 browsers have been known to offer the electronic equivalent of a pat on the head and variations of the hated 'you'll grow out of it' dictum....

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the book's most insightful glimpse into the pessimism and estrangement of many busters lies in the aforementioned terms that are colorfully defined by Coupland in the book's ample margin space. The following are illustrative:

- **McJob:** A low-pay, low-prestige, low-dignity low-benefit, no future job in the service sector. Frequently considered a satisfying career choice by people who have never held one. \(^{170}\)

- **Poverty Jet Set:** A group of people given to chronic traveling at the expense of long-term job stability or permanent residence. Tend to have doomed and extremely expensive phone call relationships with people named Serge or Ilyana. Tend to discuss frequent-flyer programs at parties. \(^{171}\)

- **Decade Blending:** In clothing, the indiscriminate combination of two or more items from various decades to create a personal mood. \(^{172}\)

- **Sick Building Migration:** The tendency of younger workers to leave or avoid jobs in unhealthy office environments or workplaces affected by the Sick Building Syndrome. \(^{173}\)

- **Architectural Indigestion:** The almost obsessive need to live in a 'cool' architectural environment. Frequently related objects of fetish include framed black and white photography, simplistic pine furniture, matte black high-tech items such as TVs, stereos, and telephones; low wattage ambient lighting, a lamp, a chair, or table that alludes to the 1950s, cut flowers with complex names. \(^{174}\)

- **Japanese Minimalism:** The most frequently offered interior design aesthetic used by rootless career-hopping young people. \(^{175}\)

- **Squirming:** Discomfort inflicted upon young people by old people who see no irony in their gestures. Karen died a thousand deaths as her father made a big show of tasting a recently manufactured bottle of wine before allowing it to be poured as the family sat in Steak Hut. \(^{176}\)

- **Occupational Slumming:** Taking a job well beneath one's skill or education level as a means of retreat from adult responsibilities and/or avoiding possible failure in one's true occupation. \(^{177}\)
Within this chapter subsection the focus is upon troubling studies which purport to describe the busters' aggregated attributes pertaining to ethics, knowledge-levels, a short-term time orientation, and violence. The years in which the majority of these alarming studies were conducted generally cluster around the late-'80s and very early-'90s. I state that at the outset insofar as there have been some recent rumblings of change as to how busters measure up vis-a-vis these characteristics. Those rumblings will be fully explored in the final chapter of this dissertation. Nonetheless, the studies and speculation below are of too recent vintage to be dismissed. Moreover, all of them play right into the dynamics of this chapter's larger scenario concerning the US as a global has-been.

Among the reports that are most critical of buster ethics is one completed in November of 1990 by the Josephson Institute for the Advancement of Ethics. The ingredients which went into the institute's final statement included published and unpublished polls, published and unpublished surveys, articles deemed to be of relevance, and original interview data. In his summary of these materials, Michael Josephson (president and founder of the institute located in Marina del Ray, CA) concluded that a
large number of young people are what he calls "I Deserve Its," or "IDIs" for short. He elaborates as follows:

Their 'IDI-ology' is exceptionally and dangerously self-centered, preoccupied with personal needs, wants, don't wants and rights. The IDI world view results in a greater willingness to abandon traditional ethical restraints in the pursuit of success, comfort, or personal goals. Thus, IDIs are more likely to lie, cheat and engage in irresponsible behavior when it suits their purposes. IDIs act as if they need whatever they want and deserve whatever they need--as if winning is a basic right.

The more specific findings which Josephson cited to support his claims encompass a) data on a sampling of late-'80s college freshman wherein a majority admitted to cheating while in high school, and b) material garnered from resume-checking-agencies who estimated that 10 to 25 percent of all professional resumes contain falsified credentials.

To move from Josephson's condemnation of buster-ethics to condemnations of buster knowledge-levels is less clean cut: That is to say, what the Josephson people did to paint buster-ethics in one large release, has been done to buster knowledge-levels on a more ad hoc basis of sometimes single-strand pronouncements from varying quarters. I'll bypass a full enumeration of this statistical parade, and suffice to say that these proverbial "thousand cuts and scrapes" include data pertaining to finding country X on a map, professor opinions of student performance, the number of books read annually, the type of books preferred, the hours of television watched daily, the type of television
preferred, literacy, a grasp of current of events, a grasp of historical events, and performance on national exams such as the SAT. 185

Add to these criticisms of buster knowledge levels and buster ethics, a third whipping post—the charge that busters are possessed of a short-term time orientation. The arguments here derive most principally from interpretations of observed buster behaviors. Among the specifics looked at are buster-behaviors within the workplace, buster purchasing habits, and even busters’ attentiveness to their bodies. 186

As George Barna of the aforecited Barna Research Group puts it, "Encounters in life are, to busters, simple trade offs in real time. There are no sacrifices made today for possible gain in the future. Buster life is a real time, zero-sum game." 187 Echoing such sentiments pertaining to the busters’ short-term orientation is the following lament of career counselor David Cannon:

Ambiguity, the world of multiple answers, delights most boomers, but confounds many an X. When you don’t come right out and tell an X which book to read, which exercise to do, which assessment to take, or which sentence to include in the cover letter, the X will stare back at you with a ‘Does this person really know what he’s doing?’ expression. Generation Xs expect the right answers, the facts, the crystal clear procedures. They want to know ‘how to,’ and they want to know it right now....

Xs are not crazy about libraries—not like boomers, who love to hang around libraries and bookstores, sometimes losing themselves and making ‘discoveries.’ The young people that visit our Career Library are not looking for a library at all; they are looking for an Information Service. They don’t want to go on a time-consuming journey of discovery; they want to be told where things are. They don’t want to hear
that there are various ways to find out information; they want to be given that information in a neat, concise, laser-printed handout that they can take home right now. 188

If the above assessments of buster ethics, knowledge-levels, and time orientation are correct, then what can be made of these attribute’s origins? Moreover, is the nature of these origins such that they can become successfully overcome?

At the risk of being redundant, it must first be acknowledged that much of the riddle has likely to do with a reiteration and elaboration upon theses that were covered in chapter #1 of this dissertation. The reader will recall that principal among those suppositions was postponed adulthood (as defined in mid-century terms): More specifically, the arguments are that the combination of a) "great expectations" which many busters have of their own personal destiny, when coupled with b) a now "scary world" of less opportunity, has culminated in a deferment of "adult activities" which include a prompt education, job commitment, marital commitment, child-rearing, community involvement, and economic independence.

As regards the "scary world" component of this equation, the entire premise of this chapter’s larger scenario (and of this chapter’s subsection b) is that it is simply no longer quite so easy to make it financially. Take, for example, the following lament of buster author Steven Gibb:

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Things are shifting in the career marketplace. A lawyer reported only somewhat sarcastically that when he was in college (in the late-Fifties) things were different. ‘My frat brothers never studied, maybe got a 2.2 grade point average, and spent every night at the bar. They didn’t know anything about anything, but come senior year they would tramp down to the placement office and get a job with US Steel or General Motors. And I tell you I know because I was there: we got those jobs not knowing how to do much more besides hold a cigarette and a drink in the same hand.’ How times have changed. Getting some career moves down is becoming an increasingly difficult step to master. 189

As regards the second equation-component above--great expectations--recall that we are speaking here of manifestations which include a sense of entitlement among many young busters. This phenomenon of "great expectations" was further linked in chapter #1 to two of that decade’s reigning parenting credos: First, was the "professional parent notion" which argued that you could never do too much for your children. Second, was the importance of allowing your child "the freedom to do his or her own thing." Not surprisingly, many young busters therefore chose to "excel" at something other than the grindy-grindy business of english, math, science, social studies, etc. which so often help in landing jobs later in life. Other problems which can be seen to attend this second parental credo include an "options explosion," or what the aforecited Coupland refers to as "options paralysis." 190 Take, for example, all that’s described within the following passage by buster Aaron Berger who is here writing about her youth, for a recent edition of the Los Angeles Weekly:

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If being any one thing can be just as important as being another--Jewish or Hindu, straight or gay, Asian or Anglo, a Midwesterner or a Texan--it can also be just as worthless. I dumped identities as soon as they lost their charm, as I dumped figure skating, ballet, piano lessons, science classes, and French. Choosing a religion or ethnicity was like deciding between a summer course in tap dance or the one called 'Hands-On-Animals!'

If cobbling together an 'identity' for my generation out of all of this is tricky, defining it is impossible. Furthermore, if you ask anyone born around 1965 for straight answers, they'll tell you it's plain pointless; don't look to 25-year-olds for a common set of references. Space Food Sticks anyone? 'Jackie Blue'? In high school, a new girlfriend and I sought common ground and found it in remembering old Hai Karate cologne commercials. 191

My macro-point in this re-run of themes featured in chapter #1, is to argue that much of it contributes to understanding the dire reporting upon buster ethics, knowledge-levels, and time-orientation. More specifically, Littwin's equation of a) the world as a scary place and b) great expectations, can also translate into more than just postponed adulthood. It can translate as well into some of the bitterness, short-term timelines, and unethical behavior described at the outset of this subsection. This seems doubly so when you note that time is moving right along: That is to say, it's semi-easy to postpone adulthood in your early twenties; it get's harder, however, as you move on into your early 30s. And, of course, this is just the point in time at which leading edge busters now find themselves.

Is there anything else that can be said concerning why busters have often fared poorly in terms of studies concerning ethics, knowledge levels, and time-orientation?
One arena which has likely contributed to the dismay, is the busters' widespread experience of their parents divorcing: Indeed, a conservatively estimated 40% of all busters were born to parents who later divorced. \(^{192}\) (An even greater percentage of busters were so-called latchkey children reflecting not only divorce, but also two earner parents, and mothers who never married to begin with. \(^{193}\) Strauss and Howe offer one interpretation as to how the prevalence of divorced parents has impacted their buster children:

(Parents) like to stress the 'positive' side of divorce, (but) children were left staring at the dark side. According to one major survey of 1970s-era marital disruptions, only one-fifth of the children of divorce professed being happier afterward--versus four-fifths of the divorced parents. Half the kids of divorce recall having felt unwelcome in their new pieced together families. At best, divorce brought kids complicated new relationships with moms, dads, and unfamiliar adults--and new time consuming hassles shuttling back and forth between parents trying to schedule a little 'quality time' under awkward circumstances. At worst, divorce meant violent quarrels, split loyalties, estrangement from one parent (usually the father), maybe even a move away from one's house and friends. And, for most 13er kids, divorce had brutal side effects: moms gone all day, less money, homes sold. As divorces became more frequent, a child's chance of receiving child support payments from the noncustodial parent declined, with only one in three getting the full amounts set by an agreement or ordered by a court. \(^{194}\)

To stand back a moment, what I've attempted to show thus far within this subsection are some of the gloomier studies as to the busters' ethics, knowledge-levels, and time horizon. It has been further argued that much of this can likely be linked to the impacts of divorce, the "premature affluence" of youth, the grim prospects of making it

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in the future, and "options paralysis." Add to this the busters’ experience with the "greed-is-good-1980s" while still young, and you have a fairly complete picture as to what may have played a role in the rash of bad-news studies and statistics pertaining to buster attributes.

There remains one additional subject to be touched upon which concerns the studies, statistics, and reports that paint much of the bust in such negative terms—the relatively high level of violence emanating from buster ranks. I have separated this discussion from their ethics, knowledge-level, and time-orientation insofar as the seriousness of this violence aspect seems a step beyond that of the others. Nonetheless, all that may have contributed to a decline in ethical standards, knowledge levels, and time orientation has surely contributed as well to this particularly negative result—violent behavior.

What then of the statistics on violence? Start with this one: on a per capita basis, the bust generation is far and away the most incarcerated generation in American history. Many of these youths are truly frightening indeed. They include, for example, the majority of members within groups such as the Confederate Hammer Skins, the Nationalist Skinhead Knights, and the Fourth Reich Skinheads. These collections are now believed to serve as the youthful "shock troops" for more longstanding supremacist organizations such as the White Aryan
Resistance, and Church of the Creator. 196 According to Danny Welch, director of the Klanwatch Project in Montgomery, AL, "What makes skinheads noteworthy right now is their random violence. They have been responsible for a majority of the violence committed by organized racists. They get out and just beat the heck out of anybody that's a minority or anybody that doesn't agree with them." 197 In numbers alone, it's some "comfort" to note that they aren't yet overwhelming: The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith estimates the total in late-'93 to be 3,500 nationwide. 198 However, they are only the apex of a pyramid which includes many lesser, but still violent busters. Strauss and Howe borrow from the 1992 film New Jack City, and argue that 5% of buster-aged individuals can be said to live a "New Jack" existence:

New Jack 13ers perceive an outside world that does not like them, does not want them, does not trust them, and (as they see it) has nothing to offer them. Glancing across at the financial towers and suburban affluence that few of them will ever touch, New Jackers shed even the most basic social conventions that mark a civilized society. Hear them rap a melodyless cant of sexism, racism, and soulless mayhem, celebrating the very nihilism that older generations blame them for. Watch them swagger around in symbolic uniforms—backwards caps, shades, leather jackets, combat fatigues, pump-sneakers or jackboots—that conjure up the soul-dead violence of robots. Avoid them as their thug-armies rampage for random victims. Hand them the keys—quickly—when they carjack you. Fear them as they commit 'opportunity crimes' against random passerby, or 'hate crimes' against each other. Shoot them down, ship them out, lock them up. If you can catch them. And you'll never catch all of them. 199
As was featured in *New Jack City*, many of the people we are speaking of here are black. It’s a testimony to US racism (historical and contemporary) that a 1990 report by the Washington-based Sentencing Project showed that very nearly one of every four black buster males between the ages of 20 and 29 are either in prison, on probation, or on parole.200 (Like figures for whites are 1 in 16, and, for Hispanics, 1 in 10.201) Indeed, a variety of pundits believe that we are speaking here of losing an entire generation of young black males: *Time* magazine, for example, recently ran a cover-story which was headlined, "Young Black Males: America’s Fastest Growing Endangered Species." The cover-photo was of a black buster male, bare chested, arms and legs spread, fists clinched, screaming.

The more specific reasons as to why so many black busters are in such trouble, may have much to do with the sentiments of Washington *Post* writer Nathan McCall. His comments below are taken from a ’91 essay entitled "Black Tragedy: Dispatches From a Dying Generation:"

What is not so easy for outsiders to grasp is why we did not follow our parents’ lead and try to seize what we could with what we had. For us, somehow growing up in the ’70s, it was different. Our parents tried to insulate us from the full brunt of racism, but they could not counteract the flood of racial messages, subtle and blatant, filtering into our psyches: the look in the white storekeeper’s eyes when you enter; the ‘click’ of door locks when you walk past whites sitting in their cars.

Our parents, we believed, had learned to swallow pride for survival’s sake. But my more militant generation seemed less inclined to make that compromise. In a curious way, we saw anything that
brought us into the mainstream as a copout. We came to regard the establishment as the ubiquitous, all-powerful 'white man' who controlled our parents lives, and, we believed, determined our fates as well.

I think once we resigned ourselves to that notion, we became a lost and angry lot. 202

From the depths of this commentary, I'd like now to move into an equally grim prospect pertaining to the bust generation overall. Stated in question format: Are busters individuals who may be possessed of what T.W. Adorno et al. call an authoritarian personality? An exploration of this possibility forms the body of the next and final subsection of this chapter.

h. busters and the authoritarian personality

There is a modesty about this final segment which must be made explicit. That modesty derives from the scope of how I shall assess linking busters with the possibility of an authoritarian disposition. More specifically, my comments concerning the authoritarian disposition are tightly linked to the analyses of T.W. Adorno et al. (henceforth Adorno), in his 1950 text entitled The Authoritarian Personality. 203 The initial tasks, therefore, are a) to make explicit what he means by the authoritarian personality and b) define just exactly what Adorno is looking at in deciding upon whether or not an authoritarian disposition exists.
Adorno defines the authoritarian individual as "the potentially fascistic individual, one whose structure is such as to render him particularly susceptible to anti-democratic propaganda." When Adorno uses the term "structure," as in the sentence above, he is referring to "something (within the individual) which is capable of self-initiated action upon the social environment and of selection with respect to varied impinging stimuli, something which though always modifiable is frequently resistent to change." To oversimplify, the vernacular for what Adorno calls "structure" is closely akin to "personality traits." Combining both of the quotations above, what you have is Adorno's interpretation of the authoritarian make-up as one in which an individual's personality traits are such that the individual is amenable to anti-democratic tendencies (more on this later).

Of equal importance to understanding the breadth of Adorno's work is knowing of the phenomena that he is not going to overly concern himself with in this 1950 text. In other words, by concentrating upon personality traits, Adorno will be giving a lighter treatment to certain of the overlapping macro-conditions within which many people find themselves. His reasoning for this selectivity is as follows: "Situational factors, chiefly economic condition and social group membership have been studied intensively in recent research on opinion and attitude, while the more
inward, more individualistic factors have not received the attention they deserve."

In other words, you the reader may find the US financial situation fraught with implications as regards a slide into fascism; but that is not the explicit focus of The Authoritarian Personality. Likewise, you the reader might find certain technological developments to be fraught with implications as regards a slide into fascism; but neither is that the focus of The Authoritarian Personality. It is rather the case that what Adorno wishes to concentrate on in this particular text, is the aforementioned "inner structure" that might make any given individual amenable to anti-democratic behaviors and leaders.

Given that preamble, I have one final qualification to place upon my own use of Adorno. His 1950 text of a thousand pages includes numerous claims and explanations that are often finely nuanced. Any attempt to capture all that he has to offer in a brief synopsis is sure to fail. That is an understatement! Nonetheless, I find myself encouraged by many of Adorno’s speculations insofar as they often leave busters looking better than the authoritarian archetype as he describes it. I have therefore limited myself to just a few comments below concerning Adorno’s consideration of TOPICS including interpretative-openness, religious orientation, political orientation, and parent-child dynamics. My brief elaboration on each (a la Adorno)
will be complemented with an equally brief discussion of how
the busters measure-up to the TOPICS explored.

The first of the TOPICS enumerated above is
"interpretative openness" which can more specifically be
described as the ability to see and understand alternative
perspectives as well as the genesis and nature of your own.
If you’ve got this, claims Adorno, then you are not likely
much of an authoritarian personality. Take, for example,
the following passage in which Adorno critiques aspects of
an interviewee named Larry. (Larry is returned to time and
again throughout Adorno’s text as one model of anti-
authoritarianism):

Larry is aware that his views reflect things
within himself as well as external reality, and that
consequently they are tentative, approximate, and
possibly self-contradictory. He feels it necessary to
explain the origins of his views, he can admit some
inner conflict, and consider the possibility that he
may not have acquired his views in the most intelligent
way. While these features may prevent the subject from
being very militant about anything, they would seem to
insure him against reactionism. 2

Busters-on-the-whole may also be capable of this
admirable stance as was well-alluded to in chapter #3 via
their embrace and even celebration of the diversity which
characterize their ranks. The reader is also reminded of
the aforecited George Barna who in chapter #3 had this to
to say: "To the typical buster, there is no such thing as
absolute truth. Statistically, 70% claim that absolute
truth does not exist, that all truth is relative and
personal." 208 That’s a big statement certainly, but it
comes from a national and randomized polling of 1,500 people--a fairly respectable total in the polling-world. 209

What is it that might be fueling the "relativism" of so many busters? Several of the reasons are phenomena that have already been looked at and/or will be further detailed in chapter #5: They include a) the shifting sands of the 1970s in which little seemed permanent, b) the buster-perception that many people, organizations, and institutions have failed them, and c) the buster-sense that even the "tried and true" avenues to "success" (to take just one example) need not work at all (i.e., recall the earlier reported statistic that fully one in five 1980s college graduates is presently working at a job which does not require a college education). 210

Second on the list of TOPICS to be looked at is Adorno's discussion of religious orientation. Among his comments are the following:

The vast majority of our subjects do identify themselves with some religious group, and the variability with respect to ethnocentrism among these subjects is almost as great as it is in our sample as a whole....Among the largest denominations no difference of any significance appear; but Unitarians who seem to be distinguished by their liberalism, and a group of minor Protestant groups, in the case of which their might be some spirit of nonconformity or some lack of identification with the status quo, score lower (on ethnocentrism) than the others. Frequency of church attendance is also not particularly revealing; however, the finding that those who never attend obtain lower scores (on ethnocentrism) than those who do attend is added evidence that people who reject organized religion are less prejudiced than those who accept it. 211
As I read this and other passages, it seems to me, that the attributes of "nonconformist" and "liberal" lie at the heart of getting to the non-authoritarian, religious component of society. If that is true, how then might the busters compare?

For help, I turn again to the aforecited George Barna. Barna, as was mentioned in chapter #3, heads up the Barna Research Group whose clients include the Reverend Billy Graham. Barna’s detailing of the busters and their relation to religion is the most complete I have seen, and it is to the credit of Barna—a more "traditional" Christian enthusiast—that he has catalogued a less than flattering (in his opinion) relationship between the bust and organized Christianity.

Barna begins his discussion by noting that only one half of busters consider themselves "religious"—a percentage far below that of their elders. Moreover, only 25% of busters consider themselves to be "born again Christians" in comparison to 40% of those older than they. When questioned as to "national and international issues of most significance," a mere 1% of busters listed "absence of religion." When asked of "issues that are very or somewhat important in the selection of a President," a full 84% of busters listed the "separation of church and state." Barna goes on to note:

(The) traditional understanding of God—i.e. one all-powerful God who created the world and rules it today—
is believed by less than two-thirds of the Buster generation (64%). Eastern views and "new age" philosophies have made their strongest in-roads among the Busters. For example, 12% believe that God is the full realization of human potential; 8% claim that God is simply a state of higher consciousness; 4% believe that every human being is his or her own God.

While Christian churches have spent decades teaching and warning people about the evil power and influence of the devil, one-third of the Busters firmly deny the existence of such an evil spirit.

It is a minority of busters who strongly affirm in the inerrancy of the Bible (44%), who strongly feel they have a duty to tell people who believe differently about the content of their religious beliefs (36%), and who firmly believe that the Christian faith has all the answers leading to a successful life (23%). Although just 9% strongly agree that sin is an outdated concept, less than half (45%) strongly disagree with that notion. Even the venerable Ten Commandments get limited respect from this generation: just 54% strongly disagree that the law given to Moses is not relevant for people living today. And while many busters read the Bible regularly, a large portion would argue that those who are relying on the book for guidance are fooling themselves.

Barna's final conclusion, given somewhat grudgingly, is that religion is likely construed by many busters as providing "part of the answer" to their concerns, but it stops there. In the author's words, "Their expectation is that it is possible to intertwine aspects of religious insight with the perceptual filter (or in some case philosophy of life) which they possess." This, it seems to me, is just exactly the type of "nonconformism" and "liberalism" that Adorno earlier equated with the non-authoritarian religious component of our society.

TOPIC #3 of importance to Adorno's understanding of the authoritarian personality is political orientation. He broaches the subject by arguing, "There appears to be an
affinity between conservativism and ethnocentrism, liberalism
and anti-ethnocentrism....It is proposed, in further
studies, to break down the right-left dimension into
numerous ideological patterns. One of these--perhaps the
most significant in terms of antidemocracy--is the
pseudoconservative." 218 Here Adorno expertly explains how
he defines the "pseudoconservative" and compares it to the
"genuine conservative:"

We should like to use the term 'genuine
conservative'....He is 'genuine' because, whatever the
merits of his political views, he is seriously
concerned with fostering what is most vital in the
American democratic tradition. He believes, for
example, in the crucial importance of the profit motive
and in the necessity of economic insecurity; but wants
the best man to win no matter what his social
background. He is resistant to social change, but he
can be seriously critical of the national and political
ingroups and--what is more important--he is relatively
free of the rigidity and deep-lying hostility
characteristic of ethnocentrism.

The ethnocentric conservative is the
pseudoconservative, for he betrays in his ethnocentrism
a tendency antithetical to democratic values and
tradition.... They emphasize economic mobility and the
'Horatio Alger' myth, yet they support numerous forms
of discrimination that put severe limitations on the
mobility of large segments of the population. They may
also believe in extending the economic functions of
government, not for humanitarian reasons but as a means
of limiting the power of labor and other groups. 219

Pseudoconservatives, in other words, are very
"untraditional" in their violation of tenets including a
small government with limited functions, an emphasis upon
the individual, rights to privacy, the separation of church
and state, and a tolerance of the diversity which attends
mandates such as religious freedom. The doctrine of
pseudoconservatives is more aptly deemed a kind of anti-conservatism which can consume the very democracy that pseudoconservatives so often purport to be defending. And of course we have no shortage of these fraudulent "conservatives" in our midst today. But what about their representation within the bust?

My response to this question is premised upon first noting my belief that there was a goodly amount of pseudoconservatism in the Republican Party Platform of 1992. With that in mind, it’s noteworthy that a mere 34% of the bust voted for the Republican Bush in our last presidential election: 220 Importantly, this was the lowest percentage of any age-bracketed set of voters. 221 Moreover, that 34% figure represents a veritable flight from the busters’ earlier and healthy embrace of the Republican ticket. (A full exploration of both this early embrace and subsequent flight is given in chapter #5 of this dissertation.)

Unfortunately, it’s difficult to more precisely gauge how much pseudoconservatism there is within the bust generation—be they Bush-supporters or otherwise. Certainly pseudoconservative voices can be heard in campus publications such as The Dartmouth Review, and Diversity and Division; as well as national publications such as Bill Buckley’s National Review. But to quantify their number is more difficult—they exist, for example, upon a continuum of extreme to mild. I will, however, make two arguments as to
why I believe their numbers to be less than overwhelming within the bust. The first concerns my perusal of the three publications mentioned above. What often strikes me (and others to be mentioned in a moment) is not-so-much the bombast of a narrowly defined and intrusive "morality" (although that typifies some selections), but rather just how often these essays look to be a combination of welfare-state-bashing and libertarian remedies. Martin Wooster makes this very point in his recent review of a piece by buster Amy Lumet whose essay appeared in a '92-edition of the National Review. Here’s an excerpt from Lumet’s work entitled "A Call To Arms:"

Only one polling group has been able to find a significant trend in the under-thirty set. It gave us little credit for not being morons and tracked us politically instead of socially. That group was the Republican National Committee under Lee Atwater. You must admit, Clinton’s sax doesn’t hold a candle to Atwater’s axe. (‘axe’ is slang for guitar.) Atwater noticed that there is a third generation of conservatives. Since intellectuals like everything nice neat and named, call us Baby Cons.... And what they see makes them mad. You’ll hear it over and over: big intrusive government, big moral government, big parental government. One Baby Con put the problem very well: ‘The creeping socialism manifest in the expansion of government threatens the only valuable right in the Constitution—the Fifth Amendment right to property.’ I love this statement. Every jackass in town forgets that this is the Fifth Amendment. Ask the libs about the Fifth and they’ll make some crack about Iran/Contra hearings. May an interstate go through their homes. 223

Finally, I am persuaded by a series of studies conducted in the summer of ‘93 which found that conservatives (presumably including the pseudoconservatives)
were over-represented within the media of radio talk shows both as hosts and callers. These talk shows are surprisingly popular, and have undoubtedly contributed to the perception that conservatives—of all types and ages—loom larger than their numbers merit.

TOPIC #4 of importance to the authoritarian personality a la Adorno is the nature of a person’s parent-child relationships. Adorno summarizes a few of the critical distinctions in this commentary below:

When we consider the childhood situation of the most prejudiced subjects, we find reports of a tendency toward rigid discipline on the part of the parents, with affection that is conditional rather than unconditional, i.e., dependent upon approved behavior on the part of the child. Related to this is a tendency apparent in families of prejudiced subjects to base interrelationships on rather clearly defined roles of dominance and submission, in contradistinction to equalitarian policies. Faithful execution of prescribed roles and the exchange of duties and obligations is, in the families of the prejudiced, often given preference over the exchange of free-flowing affection.

To elaborate on some of what is being said in this passage, it should be made clear that when Adorno speaks of "rigid discipline on the part of parents," he provides examples which leave no doubt that he is speaking of truly rigid discipline. Moreover, the "yardstick" used by disciplinarian parents when measuring good and bad behaviors is typically any deviation from what the society at-large considers right and wrong. Unfortunately, the adult values which gird these society-based distinctions are not immediately apparent to young people. The matter is further
confusing to a child if the disciplinarian-parent explains the child’s punishment in terms of violated "rules" as opposed to violated "principles." When "rules" are violated, the ensuing discipline "lays the foundation for judging people according to external criteria, and for the authoritarian condemnation of what is considered socially inferior." 227

In addition to elaborating upon "rigid discipline," it's also critical to accent the dominance/submission and clearly defined family roles that Adorno mentions in his quoted paragraph above. He offers some further detail in the passage below:

If the conceptions of our subjects can be taken to represent reality--and to a certain extent they probably can--there appears to be a tendency toward father-domination, or just 'domination,' in the families of the high scoring (i.e., on ethnocentrism)....This finding, if substantiated and found crucial in a larger sample, would have far reaching sociological and psychological implications. It would then be more understandable why the German family, with its long history of authoritarian, threatening father figures, could become susceptible to a fascist ideology. The son of such a father figure can apparently never quite establish his personal and masculine identity; he thus has to look for it in a collective system where there is opportunity both for submission to the powerful and for retaliation upon the powerless. 228

How does the bust measure up as per these activities and attributes of rigid discipline, dominance/submission, and tightly defined family roles? I feel safe in saying, that busters don’t look too bad vis-a-vis these ingredients that Adorno argues can so contribute to an authoritarian

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personality. Take, for example, the attribute of tightly defined family roles. Parent/child relationships of the 1970s seem much less hierarchical and much more egalitarian (or, as Adorno says, "equalitarian") than was the case for any US generations before or since. Consider, for example, the following stories of buster Adriene Jenik:

I remember wallpapering my younger brother's room with Playboy centerfolds and having my parents leave them up for two weeks until my Aunt Leatha heard....
I remember bongs and pipes and art and music among my parents' greatest artifacts and my mother's vibrator and reading my father's Penthouse Forums, after school in my parent's bedroom on their too-big bed on the floor. By 11 or 12 I was taking a whole stack to bed with me, re-reading my favorites until I knew exactly what to do from those letters and that free love was good and birth control necessary and abortion possible though undesirable and I remember wondering at 13 what free love was. Thinking it was when my boyfriend stayed over at my house and sneaking downstairs to fuck on the green velour couch and having my father find us in the morning.

Granted, this is an extreme version of growing up in the '70s, however, my point is that the so-called counter-culture movement had become variously but widely embraced, and one part of this MO was a goodly accent upon treating children as equals. This situation--while it came with problems of its own--was at least other than Adorno's description of what likely goes into the authoritarian personality. It's also true that what may be the buster's most collectively traumatic component of their child/parent rapport--that of divorce--registers only minimally on Adorno's assembly of authoritarian personality-ingredients. He claims that, "The proportion of divorces of parents are
very similar for men and women, high scorers (on ethnocentrism) and low scorers (on ethnocentrism)." 230

Having spent some time looking at TOPICS 1 - 4, what I hasten to add is that I’ve unquestionably skipped lightly over each of them. That is in addition to a wealth of further TOPICS that I have not even mentioned. Importantly, some of these unmentioned TOPICS may not leave the bust looking so anti-authoritarian after all. NONETHELESS, my reading of Adorno is such that I believe the thrust of his arguments leave the bust generation in good standing as per his discussion of authoritarian and anti-authoritarian personality traits. My final comment concerning Adorno’s analysis is to remind the reader that Adorno’s work is circumscribed (or so he claims) such that the author is focused upon personality traits as opposed to the overlapping macro-circumstances in which people find themselves. Again, these macro-circumstances can overwhelm the anti-authoritarian "structure" of even the strongest—a point that Adorno mentions often.

That reminder returns me to what is the larger summary of this second chapter-half keyed into the buster’s role within the US as a global has-been. The reader will recall that these phenomena include the busters’ financial doldrums (i.e., subsection b); the busters’ generational estrangement (i.e., subsection c); and selected evidence of shoddy buster ethics, knowledge levels, short-term time orientation, and
penschant for violent behavior (i.e., subsection d). Add these up, and you have a packed plate of possibilities as to how the busters could facilitate the full blown emergence of US decline.

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12. Figgie et al, p.94.
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45. Phillips, p.117.

46. Phillips, p.46.


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57. Swardson, p.93.

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Chapter 5: The Busters and a US With Company at the Top

Part 1: the Macro-Scenario

a. overview

Two scenarios of a US newly embarking upon the 21st century have thus far been depicted. Within chapter #3, the US was portrayed as a reinvigorated, global champion. Within chapter #4, the US was portrayed as a deflated, global has-been. My intent in this chapter is to portray the US as a competent, "global player." Stated alternatively, the US here becomes one of several influential nation-states which occupy the upper realm of a loosely identifiable international hierarchy. Each of the upper-most countries within this hierarchy is roughly equivalent in terms of power, and they all exist free of any clearly defined superpower. This is partly attributable to the way in which power will have become both increasingly diverse while also tending to diffuse away from the nation-state proper. One may consider, for example, the growth of circumstances which either demand and/or are well-suited to an increase in the transnational doings of entities including business-interests and political organizations. As shall be shown, this newly doubled complexity of power's nature will at the same time increase a nation's choice of
means by which to achieve its goals, but ultimately limit any one country's ability to become singularly powerful. ¹

Within the body of this chapter are two distinct scenarios that have been tailored to fit this chapter's "global player" emphasis. Distinguishing factors are GLOBALIZATION, on the one hand, and the rigorous pursuit of an INDUSTRIAL POLICY on the other. As regards the globalization portrayal, phenomena such as the formal buying and selling of US corporate assets become a non-issue: The accent is trained instead upon the skills of US workers regardless of what country formally owns the company. When we bump-up the abilities of US labor, then the national debt, to take just one problem-area, becomes "a mere piffle" relative to the financial capital which will be sent to cross our borders from abroad. ² Also here, is a deepening of interdependence which brings with it an increased stress upon the necessary wielding of "soft power" that we in the US have so very much of (i.e., liberalism as the international framework within which many problems are defined). Why play hardball when you'll only hurt something or someone upon which your success is predicated? "They've got a lot over here, and we've got a lot over there!"

The second scenario within the global player rubric features, as mentioned above, the pursuit of a rigorous and formal industrial policy. Forget interdependence and other such "globalloney;" to a large extent it's still us against
them. And the keys to success are new governmental manipulations of the formal economic sector. Why? Because the formal economy is too important to be left entirely to private interests. The foci of this new governmental attention are a) critical industries and b) critical corporations—these are the key variables. Take care of them and we can broach a partial rewinding of the clock to this country’s economic glory-days. We won’t even have to worry about such things as reducing the gap between the US rich and poor because so much of it will be taken care of via the trickle-down of a newly expanding pie. And this is just what we need because you certainly don’t want to overly tax or regulate private sector entities, particularly when they are already contending with relatively high labor costs. As for the specific governmental interventions themselves, we are speaking here of alternatives including the provision of low-cost capital, the strategic use of access to domestic markets, relief from antitrust laws on a case-by-case basis, and a plethora of tax incentives. As regards foreign trade, the buzzwords here are managed trade, fair trade, and reciprocity. Critics and proponents alike wrap up the whole strategy and call it "Fortress America," or "USA Inc."

Standing each of these two global player scenarios next to each other, I suppose that the reader might be wont to ask one of either two countervailing questions. First, "Why
not allocate each scenario into a chapter of its own?" Or, peddling in the opposite direction, "Why not meld these scenarios into a single macro-depiction?"

The latter query--melding both scenarios into one--is the tougher of the two. Granted the imperatives of both scenarios are not entirely inconsistent: On the one hand we are speaking here of generally cultivating worker skills and productivity via placing resources into health, education, infrastructure, and quickly closing the gap between rich and poor through progressive taxation, transfer payments and social welfare outlays. On the other hand we are speaking here of doing "what's best" for the Fortune 500 and promising upstarts by placing resources (i.e., money, attention, etc.) in their immediate service. Some measure of both strategies undertaken simultaneously is indeed possible. BUT, so too is it a matter of accent and emphases. How so? Four reasons are arguable: First, there is no denying that certain of these strategy-elements do not sit easily aside each other: progressive taxation, for example, is hardly the best inducement to entice a largely private business sector into governmental oversight. Second, our collective resources, while not zero-sum, are not infinite. Choices must be made, and unless it's a 50-50 split of resources overall, then I have to ask of preferences. Third, and related to point #2, there is a time element involved which would seem to preclude the
pursuit of a 50-50 option: Those who foresee a) the US as one of several towards the top, and b) wield the sentiments of either side of the global player dichotomy, are quick to argue that dramatic measures are necessary if we are to maintain an upper-class position come the year 2000. No time to mess with combo-strategies that attempt too much at one time. Carter did this, Reagan did just the opposite, and the latter is widely credited for his singleminded clarity of vision. Politicians know this. Politicians also know (and this will sound terrible) that it’s easier to convince the voting public of the veracity attending "just one thing" than is the case for a larger can of worms. Fourth and finally, the country’s new-found (and perhaps temporary) focus upon deficit-reduction may well limit the choice of options to be pursued. A "do something" president with no money to spend could be forced into defaulting to the cruder forms of protectionism (i.e., one flavor of industrial policy).

What then of the aforementioned query #2: "Why not afford each scenario a chapter of its own?" Several brief responses deserve mentioning. To begin, the shared attributes of these scenarios are too significant to ignore. For example, unlike the scenarios of chapters 3 and 4, we are speaking here of a much more activist government role, or partnership, in the nation’s economic well-being. Equally fundamental to situating both global player
scenarios next to one another is noting that both are portrayed as leaving the US in the same upper-class position within the international family of nation-states. This, in turn, bears upon both scenarios’ relevance to my dissertation-focus: the bust generation. Granted, the impacts of either scenario are not precisely identical in every instance, however, I am comfortable enough with the similarities to explore any differences while situating them along side of each other.

These ample caveats notwithstanding (!), I would like to use the final leg of this overview segment to feature one of many debates which beautifully displays a few of the typical arguments that often separate globalization theorists and their industrial policy counterparts. The time and place are Cambridge, late-1991. Mitsubishi Electric Corporation, the $20 billion Japanese industrial giant, has just announced plans to open a "basic research laboratory" a few blocks from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The staff is slated to number 100, with 90% of the personnel being American.

In commenting upon this particular means of pursuing general research, Richard J. Samuels, MIT professor of political science argues that, "The Japanese are going after Mitsubishi is in no way the first Japanese firm to open a general research facility in the US. Others include NEC in Princeton, Matsushta in San Francisco, and Hitachi in New York City.
the last frontier of their own weakness." More specifically, those debating the pros and cons of Mitsubishi's proposed investment are battling as to whether or not the new facility would ultimately serve US interests or instead constitute a usurping of US brainpower for exclusively Japanese betterment. The following excerpt from a piece by Ronald Rosenberg and Mary Sit is one of many relevant and closely akin articles which appeared at this time in the pages of the eminent Boston Globe:

'Mitsubishi's actions should be celebrated--not condemned,' said Robert Reich, a prominent political economist and lecturer at the Harvard University School of Government. Reich and others believe the Japanese pursuit of fundamental research is long overdue and conducting it in the US greatly benefits US scholars, engineers, and graduate students. They argue that unlike applied or product research, fundamental scientific and engineering studies benefit everyone. Moreover, having a new funding source means more opportunities and jobs when federal government spending on research is tight. Research universities and national laboratories now receive more than $60 billion a year in federal research funds.

Not everyone agrees.

'In the long term, the laboratories are going to make it more difficult for US firms to compete,' says former US trade negotiator Clyde Prestowitz Jr., now president of the Economic Strategy Institute in Washington. Japan is just buying what it needs, critics say, opening lavish laboratories staffed with some of the best US minds whose expertise will ultimately lead to innovations that will translate into Japanese products that could further outdistance those of American competitors.

'Laboratories like the one Mitsubishi is building will enable Japanese companies to tap into new technologies at the earliest stages. They also have patient capital compared to our short-term requirements and can put more resources into commercialization,' said Prestowitz. 'So the chances are that the new
technology that comes out of the lab will benefit the Japanese first.'

Adds Charles Ferguson, an analyst at MIT, 'The ideology that basic research is inherently open, free, and that information has no border is crap.'

Enter now a fuller explanation of this great debate!

*b. globalization*

Globalization as a full-blown scenario is quite intriguing. That should come as good news because globalization is also complex, relatively new, and, in some ways, still incomplete. This is particularly so for that flavor of globalization which I intend to concentrate upon. To wit, the groundbreaking analyses of Robert B. Reich as they appear in his seminal '91 text, The Work of Nations. b

The starting point for globalization theorists AND their industrial policy cousins is actually quite similar. Typically they begin from many of the concluding points made by the set of writers who embrace the "two Americas" scenario featured in Chapter #4. Of special importance to those on either side of the global player dichotomy are the decoupling of rich and poor, and selected changes within both labor and business practices. Critical among these changes are the temping of America, automation, and the

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b Reich, as mentioned earlier, is a professor of political economy--now on leave--at the Harvard School of Government. He presently serves as US Secretary of Labor within the Clinton administration.
transplant of jobs to foreign countries. Each of these phenomena have a bearing upon employment levels and the nature of what it is we produce domestically. The reader will also recall that for many of the two Americas theorists, there was a sort of fatalistic resignation about such things. Granted, this resignation is complimented with a great deal of arm-flapping about how awful the situation is, but their response remains resignation nonetheless. As might be imagined, the global player camp--both globalization and industrial policy proponents--do not share this resignation. In other words, phenomena that are largely "conclusions" for the doomsayers, become mere launching pads for this next set of writers. Global players are also alike in that each camp favors a larger, activist role for government to perform in ascertaining our collective economic well-being. Then, however, the similarities begin to ebb. More specifically, the point at which global players themselves part company is to be found in their differing prescriptions concerning what government ought to be doing. Understanding these prescriptions first involves distinguishing what can be called the "formal economy" and "foundational supports."

Foundational supports include our overall educational system, health-care, and infrastructure. The formal economy includes the principal foci of any beginning economics text: banks, tax codes, individual companies, industry consortia,
labor unions, trade regulations, etc. Of course, the boundary between these two sectors—the formal economy and foundational supports—is a fuzzy one, and I shall later put some of this fuzz under a microscope. For the moment, however, what I wish to point out is that industrial policy supporters concentrate upon tinkering with the formal economy, whereas globalization proponents are keyed into working upon foundational supports.

It is fair to say that understanding why each camp chooses the work-arena it does, goes far in pointing towards the specific governmental tasks that each camp sees as paramount. I’d like, therefore, to plunge headlong into what Reich deems to be anachronistic or "vestigial" thinking about the economy. Not surprisingly, much of this vestigial thinking attends the aforementioned formal economy so admired by the industrial policy advocates. Reich’s debunking of these perceived myths will then be followed with an explicit enumeration of the corrective measures they imply.

Vestigial thinking a la Reich includes all of the following conceptions: big companies & little companies; national economies & foreign economies, the service sector & the goods sector; and, finally, US companies & foreign companies. Much of the hold these mistaken understandings have upon the imaginations of US citizens is semi-justifiable insofar as they were at one point sufficient.
Adding to the tenacity of these conceptions is the fact that they were sufficient at a time when the US economy was humming—the post-WWII aftermath. And as with any fond memories, the notions are doubly difficult to jettison no matter how significant time’s transmutations. As Reich explains it:

The American economy of the 1950s was the engine of mass production. It’s defining characteristics are still solidly fixed in America’s collective memory, and although the image bears almost no relation to how the economy is organized today, it continues to condition the thinking of many Americans at century’s end.

At its core stood about 500 major corporations which, by midcentury, produced about half of the nation’s industrial output (about a quarter of the industrial output of the free world), accounted for about 40 percent of the nation’s corporate profits, and employed more than one out of eight of the nation’s nonfarm workers. The largest of these corporations were very large indeed: The top twenty-eight accounted for about 10 percent of all manufacturing employment. General Motors, the biggest manufacturing company on earth, was singlehandedly responsible for 3½ percent of America’s gross national product in 1955, equivalent to almost the entire GNP of Italy....

Because of their size and central role in the economy, America’s core corporations came to identify themselves and be identified by Americans and others around the world with the American economy as a whole. They were the champions of the American economy. Their successes were its successes. They were the American economy. 6

Time’s most obvious wrinkle in all of this is that the US is no longer King of the Mount. That much is easy to spot. Most analysts explain the changes as resulting from some combination of how "the US has screwed up," and/or "foreign players are beating us through stealth or effort." Indeed, opening-up either of these response-categories is akin to lowering a floodgate. The specifics spew forth and
are variously prioritized depending upon the individual analyst. What is so troubling for Reich and his ilk is that too many of these floodgate-responses preserve the themes of big & small, foreign & national, and goods & services.

Globalization theorists argue that something more subtle is going on. Forming the centerpiece of these discontinuous changes is how corporations everywhere are qualitatively remaking themselves in both their structure and output. Take a look at the contemporary status of what were formerly a few of this country’s core corporations:

By the start of the 1990s... Chrysler cars contained the highest percentage of foreign-made parts of any of the Big Three—including the most complex components, like engines and transaxles. In addition, Chrysler owned 12 percent of Mitsubishi Motors and, through Mitsubishi, a part of South Korea’s Hyundai Motors—both of which supplied Chrysler customers with Dodge Colts, Chrysler Conquests, Dodge Vistas, Eagle Summits, and other exhilaratingly named vehicles. It was even rumored that the firm, finding itself once again in financial difficulty, would merge with Mitsubishi or possibly, Fiat.

Other ‘American’ automakers were similarly disengaging from America. By 1990, Ford owned 25 percent of Mazda, and both companies owned shares of South Korea’s Kia Motors; Mazda and Kia supplied Ford with small cars and parts. Ford also bought parts from Japan’s Yamaha Motor Company. (Ford television commercials boasting of the ‘hot engine’ in the Ford Taurus failed to mention its Japanese pedigree.) Ford had increased its capital spending in Europe by 37 percent since the start of the 1980s, while reducing its spending in the United States by 17 percent. Along the way, it bought the very symbol of high-brow British elegance—the Jaguar. Ford’s plan is to design, engineer, and assemble small cars in Europe for export around the world. Not to be outdone, General Motors bought more than 40 percent of Japan’s Isuzu, which has supplied GM with over 300,000 small cars annually; it bought half of South Korea’s Daewoo Motors which has supplied another 80,000 cars; and it bought 50 percent of Sweden’s Saab. GM also joined with Japan’s Fanuc to
make robots. And by the start of the 1990s GM was investing in European factories at a furious pace, even as it, too, closed many of its American plants.  

Changes such as these are happening in company after company and in industry after industry. The flow depicted above is also converse in that formally foreign corporations are now operating partially and/or entirely out of the United States. It is estimated, for example, that by 1995, foreign investment will account for roughly 15% percent of the US economy—a total which will leave foreign-owned assets in the United States approximately equal to American-owned assets abroad. \(^8\) Does this foreign investment in either direction do damage to US interests? Not necessarily, Reich argues. Understanding why is critical to fully appreciating the significance of a globalization perspective.

Much of why Reich is little concerned with investment-balances has to do with the fact that companies acting multinationally are not multinational in the sense that you have a headquarters-parent firm sending out tightly defined marching orders to a set of mindless subsidiaries. There is instead a far greater autonomy which attends the various entities that play a role in the production of many marketables. Products often go through significant and unanticipated twists and turns \emph{vis-a-vis} the expertise and skills which attracted the loosely defined project-segment to a certain locale in the first place. Phenomena such as
pay arrangements and R&D are a reflection of this. Throughout the 1980s, for example, formally foreign-owned corporations spent more money on product-R&D per worker within the United States than did their US-owned counterparts. Or take pay-arrangements:

The West German engineers who designed the Pontiac Le Mans may be on GM's payroll; or they may be on the payroll of West German-owned Siemens AG, within a joint venture between Siemens and GM; or Siemens may simply license GM to use automotive designs developed by its engineers. Regardless of the precise legal form it takes, the economics are similar: West German design engineers have added value to a global web, for which they are compensated. The exact amount of compensation may vary, but the reward is likely to approximate whatever value these West German engineers added to this global enterprise web.

Notice that Reich concludes this discussion by mentioning what he refers to as a global enterprise web. Nodes within these webs are what many of our corporations have become. Work, or, more properly, value, is produced at whatever locale can offer the best in terms relevant skills, insights, tools, and costs. It is at such locales that workers and their employers make their money, further invest in their prowess, and become more adept at what they do. There is a crazy quilt quality to these global webs that is both intricate and mercurial. It is also a quality that is inclusive of firms which may employ a mere handful of individuals. So what then has become of the big firm & small firm distinction? If global webs are the touchstone, it's entirely apt to say that roles can vary from web to web—a former core corporation may be a mere bit player in
the web of one marketable whereas a new upstart may contribute much more.

Again, the fundamental point here is that it does not matter who formally owns the company: That is to say, shopping as per what corporate logo is attached to any given marketable is not going to tell you much about how you as a shopper are impacting trade balances. In fact, depending upon the model number, a consumer intent improving the US trade-balance would at times do this country best by purchasing a Honda as opposed to a Chrysler. Or consider this twist: Many foreign owned companies within the United States have become vigorous US exporters:

In all, by 1990, more than a quarter of American exports bore the labels of foreign-owned companies; Japanese-owned companies alone accounted for over 10 percent of America’s total exports. (Note that this figure, of course, does not reveal how much these exported products comprise work that originated outside of the United States.)

The converse here is also true:

A related conclusion is that much of America’s stubborn trade imbalance during the 1980s was due not to the predations of foreign nations and corporations, insistent on selling more to us than we sold to them, but to American firms making things abroad (or, more precisely, contracting with foreigners to provide them with particular goods and services, which the firm then sold in the United States). This cosmopolitan practice accounted, for example, for more than one-third of Taiwan’s notorious trade surplus with the United States during the 1980s, and more than 20 percent of trade imbalances with Mexico, Singapore, South Korea, and even Japan.

The mind begins to buckle in trying to keep a hold of all the new ingredients and their interrelationships. What,
for example, is best: a foreign-firm here that exports abroad, or a US-firm abroad that exports back home? Answer: it depends upon how much of the marketable’s final value was added by American hands for which they received a market-determined remuneration which approximates that value addition. Or how about this conundrum: What’s the difference between Japan’s outright purchase of Firestone, and GM’s import of Japanese management to staff one of its plants in Fremont, California? Answer: no big difference at all! In both instances, projects were infused with Japanese management for which they were remunerated as per the largely market determined value of their addition. That Americans find the Firestone-deal less palatable than the GM-deal is merely a reflection of vestigial thinking about the importance attending who owns the company. But what of the wherewithal to control which peoples and nations get the profits? Is this a cause for concern?

For Reich and others, it’s important to establish that these foreign investors are not here to impound notes, enslave workers, disassemble plants, etc. As the happy legacy of both Fremont and Firestone attest, these foreigners are here to make profits via increasing the productivity of the available workers and tools. If these foreigners were to draw too great a remuneration for their contribution to value-addition, then other players on the enormous world scene would simply step-up as a challenger
web to take their place—and their profits. Think about it: Global workers are not chained to any particular employer. Likewise, neither is the worker’s ultimate value locked up in any set of temporarily valuable binders and files. This is doubly so for dynamic fields wherein the breaking waves can change overnight. True value lies instead within the evolving skills, insights, and knowledge of employees within a sophisticated workplace. These are what entice work (and paychecks) to any given locale.

How far along are we in the United States as regards adapting to the global web modus operandi? Hard to say. Reich argues that, "in 1990 more than half of America’s exports and imports, by value, were simply the transfers of goods and related services within global corporations." 15 However, he qualifies such estimations:

This sort of trade is hard to pin down. When, as now, traders deal repeatedly with one another across borders—exchanging services that are priced not in an open market but among divisions of the same global corporation, or within complex employment contracts, profit-sharing agreements, and long term supply arrangements—determinations about what it is that one ‘nation’ has paid out to another ‘nation’ can be no better than fair approximations. Thus trade statistics are notoriously imprecise, subject to wide swings and seemingly inexplicable corrections. The truth is that no one knows exactly, at any given time, whether America’s (or any nation’s) international trade is in balance or out of balance, by how much it is out of balance, or what the significance of such an imbalance might be. 16

Notwithstanding all of this confusion, it does appear a sure bet to say that the intricacy and number of global webs will continue to proliferate. Indeed, the ongoing
revolutions in communication, transportation, and miniaturization ensure at least some measure of growth in global webs. Given such tidings, they point rather nicely to what is, effectively, the central question: Is globalization good for America?

The short answer is that it depends upon whether or not we properly ride this wave. To understand the possibilities here requires first acknowledging that in a globalized economy, any type of value addition that can be produced in a routinized, standardized, or lock-step fashion will likely find its happiest home at some locale wherein labor costs are less than in the US. More specifically, equipment and instructions are just too easily transferable to ignore the cost of labor. The politically incorrect image here is of personal computers and cars from South Korea and Taiwan; monitors and stereos from the Philippines and Thailand; and, shoes and data-entry from Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

But wait! From a US-centric perspective the good news is that we can still compete for the truly high end of value-addition. Three types of this critical work predominate: problem-solving (i.e., research, product design, and fabrication); problem-identifying (marketing, advertising, customer consulting); and strategic-brokering (financing, searching, and contracting). In shorthand format, work that is not routinized and generally involves
the manipulation of symbols—data, words, oral and visual representations. Reich even goes so far as to call these workers "symbolic analysts." He elaborates as follows:

Included in this category are the problem-solving, problem-identifying, and strategic brokering of many people who call themselves research scientists, design engineers, software engineers, civil engineers, biotechnology engineers, sound engineers, public relations executives, investment bankers, lawyers, real estate developers, and even a few accountants. Also included is much of the work done by management consultants, financial consultants, tax consultants, energy consultants, agricultural consultants, armament consultants, management information specialists, organization development specialists, strategic planners, corporate headhunters, and systems analysts. Also: advertising executives and marketing strategists, art directors, architects, cinematographers, film editors, journalists, musicians, television and film producers, and even university professors.

Symbolic analysts...simplify reality into abstract images that can be rearranged, juggled, experimented with, communicated to other specialists, and then, eventually, transformed back into reality. The manipulations are done with analytic tools, and sharpened by experience. The tools may be mathematical algorithms, legal arguments, financial gimmicks, scientific principals, psychological insights about how to persuade or amuse, systems of induction or deduction, or any other set of techniques for doing conceptual puzzles.

And continuing with the good news: it is Reich's contention that the US is unsurpassed in its historical and contemporary ability to produce symbolic analysts. Two reasons predominate:

First, no nation educates its most fortunate and talented children—its future symbolic analysts—as well as does America. Second, no nation possesses the same agglomerations of symbolic analysts already in place and able to learn continuously and informally from one another. While these two advantages may not last forever, American symbolic analysts will
continuously enjoy a head start for the foreseeable future. 21

What might the education of a symbolic analyst look like? Reich, himself an educator, is not short on words to describe the requisite training. That is an understatement. The following passage is typical:

The education of the symbolic analyst emphasizes systems thinking. Rather than teach students how to solve a problem that is presented to them, they are taught to examine why the problem arises and how it is connected to other problems. Learning how to travel from one place to another by following a prescribed route is one thing; learning the entire terrain so that you can find shortcuts to wherever you want to go is quite another. Instead of assuming that problems and solutions are generated by others (as they were under high volume, standardized production), students are taught that problems can usually be redefined according to where you look in a broad system of forces, variables, and outcomes, and that unexpected relationships and potential solutions can be discovered by examining this larger terrain. 22

Add to this brand of education a caring parent or two, health-care when needed, maybe a few music lessons, museum trips, some foreign travel, a house full of high-tech learning aids, and voilà, you’ve likely minted a new symbolic analyst!

Of final importance to the good-news-end of globalization, again from a US-centric perspective, Reich argues that there is no reason why the overwhelming majority of Americans cannot become symbolic analysts. 23 In other words, the globally available symbolic-analyst-workload is ample enough to employ all of the US workforce. (Minus, of course, some necessary modicum of routine workers such as
custodians and the like). That, at least, is the ideal. But alas, contemporary impediments exist which keep us from achieving so optimal an end-state. The bulk of these impediments orbit around the decoupling of rich and poor in US society. Two flavors of this decoupling predominate.

The more subtle, and less damaging, of these two exists within the ranks of the symbolic analysts themselves. More specifically, the aforementioned strategic-brokers are often faring better than are the aforementioned problem-identifiers and problem-solvers. Strategic brokers are those folks who typically add their value from atop the clouds via orchestrating contracts of forwarding, receiving, and finance. In the days when US corporations were truly US corporations, these individuals guided between 15% and 20% of world exports. They have maintained that share, but much of it now consists of exports from US-owned corporate nodes that are exporting from countries other than the US. Stated alternatively, the top-ranking CEOs of US-owned corporations have done quite well for themselves, it’s just that in the process they have often chosen to leave behind certain of their fellow symbolic analysts and certainly the more mundane of US workers. (As mentioned earlier, this particular diminishment in export activity has been somewhat offset via the export activity of foreign-owned, US-based firms.)
Much more damaging than a few bypassed symbolic analysts is the second form of decoupling: the segregation of symbolic analysts as an aggregate from the rest of society. Almost all of these symbolic analysts (and their dependents) occupy some rung within the top fifth of US wealth-holders and income-earners. As such, much of the decoupling here has already been told by the theorists featured in chapter #4 of this dissertation (i.e., the swapping of widely available public services for an incomplete patchwork of superior private services, etc). Unfortunately, globalization only deepens the likelihood of decoupling. Consider, for example, what all is implied by the diminished significance of national boundaries and the increased significance of communication techs, transportation techs, and the miniaturization of value down to what can even include electronic ether! Each of these changes push us towards a situation wherein the top need not depend at all upon the bottom to serve either as workers or as customers. Those towards the bottom have very simply lost their leverage as global interdependence replaces what was earlier a national interdependence.

Are stalemate and decline inevitable? Of course not! Recall that globalization, when properly understood, can be successfully harnessed for the benefit of all US citizens. Granted, the top might not gain quite as grandly as it would if the bottom were left to flounder— at least over the short
term--however, the specter of disaffected masses will presumably merit some type of top-down concessions: This seems particularly so when the options presented to the fortunate few are superior to the seemingly zero-sum, redistributive "solutions" of the chapter #4 doomsayers (more on this later).

What then are the ways in which to fruitfully ride the wave of globalization? It all gets back to the need for greater governmental orchestration and support of foundational supports: education, healthcare, and infrastructure (i.e., the latter ranging from mass transit and international airports to information highways linking all manner of telecommunication devices). It's just that easy. These measures will serve to raise the national crop of symbolic analysts, who, in turn, will serve as a magnet for both foreign capital and the high-end work of global value-addition. Should we fall short of actually turning "all" US citizens into symbolic analysts, we can at least increase the total of these analysts to such extent that our tax base will increase and thereby provide the revenues necessary to sustain those less fortunate. Realize as well that simply attempting to mint additional symbolic analysts will employ millions involved in phenomena ranging from worker re-trainings to the construction of public swimming pools.
Where will the initial seed money for such projects come from? Controlling health costs can help. \(^{25}\) The peace dividend can help. \(^{26}\) Campaign reform can help. \(^{27}\) Tax progressivity can also help: Reintroducing the progressivity of even the 1970s would effectively raise an additional $1 trillion in tax revenues over the next ten years. \(^{28}\) If this latter talk of "new taxes" sounds like the same old plea of the chapter #4 doomsayers, it’s important to point out that we are speaking here of funding new, nonvestigial, win-win, proposals. And why is this important? To begin with, it has a very direct bearing upon the anti-tax, anti-spend, anti-government-in-general sentiments which characterize much of the US populace in 1993. Will these attitudes last? Not according to Darry Sragow, democratic party strategist and public opinion pollster. Based upon his survey data and a judgmental assessment of selected political careers (state Governors for the most part), Sragow argues that most US citizens are not immutably committed to lower taxes per se, but rather that the citizenry simply feel the government is not providing them with their money’s worth. \(^{29}\) What then are some of the lessons here? First, show that you are committed to reducing unnecessary spending (i.e., Clinton cuts White House staff). Second, explain precisely what you are going to do with any raised revenues, and be absolutely certain that the money goes there (i.e., Clinton places new
tax funds in a "trust fund" dedicated solely to deficit reduction). Third, be clear and convincing in articulating that what you propose to spend new moneys on is worth the expenditure (i.e., globalization imperatives are at least new, and other than the sputtering policies pursued from 1980 through 1992). Finally, show that you are honest by delivering upon each and every promise you make.

The overarching point here is that anti-government sentiments are more of a simple attitude than some inherent component of our psyche. Furthermore, these sentiments seem intimately bound up in a distrust of government's ability to perform. Restore the trust, and you ought to restore at least some of the public's willingness to contribute tax dollars. 30 It is also heartening to realize here that US taxes as a percentage of GNP are far and away the lowest of all OECD countries. 31 Furthermore, in a worst case scenario, it's not that much of a problem if we take on more debt, provided, of course, we spend the money properly. As Reich explains it:

...(Contrary) to the assumptions of so many in government and the public, there is nothing terribly wrong with being indebted...so long as the borrowings are invested in factories, schools, roads, and other means of enhancing future production. In fact, taking on debt for these purposes is preferable to maintaining a balanced budget by deferring or cutting back on such investments. Debt is only a problem if the money is squandered on consumption. Any competent businessman understands the soundness of this principle: If necessary, you borrow in order to invest in the greater future productivity of your enterprise. Once achieved, the new levels of productivity enable you to pay back the debt and enjoy higher returns thereafter. 32
It's possible to travel further in this plausibility-assessment as to whether or not the US can ultimately achieve an optimal end-state as per these globalization theorists. Unfortunately, no such wrap-up would be worth much without mentioning two final impediments. The easier to understand is that globalization imperatives have a long fuse on them. The payoff, in other words, is a long-time coming. Just like Rome, it takes more than a day to build an army of symbolic analysts. This, of course, implies that a great deal of collective patience is required over a time-period in which the public neither tires, nor succumbs to another approach. Which brings up a final barrier.

The globalization thesis and the policy-mandates which fall from it are complex. That's another understatement! Vestigial thinking doesn't help matters much and neither do unscrupulous profiteers who would gladly subvert government's proper role for more selfish ends. Typically these proposals take the form of subsidies, tax loopholes, and sundry tariff/nontariff trade barriers. Unfortunately, these protectionist machinations put the brakes on free trade globally (i.e., the planet becomes poorer) while also negatively impacting the US as a whole. Girding most protectionism, as mentioned earlier, is a lot of vestigial thinking that has recently turned such efforts into a veritable comedy of errors. Consider, for example, each of the following episodes:
ITEM: In 1987,...the Hyster Company, an American-owned manufacturer of forklift trucks...headquartered in Portland Oregon, accused several Japanese-owned firms of pricing their forklifts sold in America below what they charged in Japan, prompting the Commerce Department to impose special duties on the forklift imports. In response, the Japanese firms began to make forklifts in the United States. Hyster cried foul arguing that the competing forklifts were still 'Japanese,' since many of their parts came from Japan. What Hyster carefully did not reveal, however, was that its own 'American' forklifts contained even more foreign parts than those they were accusing of being 'Japanese.'

- ITEM: In 1984 Goodyear Tire and Rubber joined with its unionized workers to demand that the US government mercilessly penalize several South Korean firms for 'dumping' their tires in America at below cost. Five years later, however, Goodyear had become more cosmopolitan in its outlook. When the Bush administration threatened to retaliate against South Korea for allegedly barring American imports, Goodyear's executives were among the first to urge a more conciliatory approach. The change in attitude was not the result of more thoughtful reflection by the firm's top managers about the benefits to the nation of unencumbered international trade. It was, rather, the consequence of a profound change in corporate strategy. In 1989, Goodyear's strategic brokers were in the process of acquiring a large tract of land in South Korea on which they planned to construct a $110 million tire factory—a plant large enough to fabricate 10,000 tires a day. Any move by the Bush administration that might limit the sales of such tires to the United States, or otherwise antagonize the South Korean government, would reduce the value of this significant investment.

Juxtaposing these two examples presents a double whammy for those who would have you believe that the cure to our ills is industry-wide protections on a nation-to-nation basis. On the one hand, it hurts domestically based, US-owned firms that depend upon imported ingredients (read Hyster). On the other hand, it hurts US-owned, foreign-based firms that depend upon exporting to the US (read...
Goodyear). What to do about this? Well, the CEO-captains (read strategic brokers) of formally US corporations propose a second antidote: protect US-owned, company-specific players. This may have made some sense 30-40 years when US companies were truly US companies, but no longer: At that earlier date, a portion of the increased profits of any protected firm could be presumed to "trickle down" within the US exclusively. As shown, however, this is no longer the case: profits will just as often "trickle out" via catalyzing value-addition abroad (again see Goodyear). Sure, a small collection of strategic brokers (the most fortunate flavor of symbolic analysts) will temporarily profit to a greater extent (at least until the inevitable foreign retaliation kicks-in), but these brokers are just about the last folks we ought to be singling out for additional help. Enter finally, the popular politician with a third ploy--the value added tax (VAT). Slap a big one of these on foreign goods (and/or web-ingredients), place a lesser VAT on US goods (and/or web-ingredients), and tah-dah, more work (read value-addition) gets done here.

Unlike industry-wide protections and company-specific protections, VATs are a little less vestigial in that they tacitly acknowledge the role of web-ingredients. However, VATs remain imbued with vestigial presumptions that are ultimately harmful to US and other interests. Take, for example, the preponderance of US citizens who own shares in
foreign-owned companies operating abroad. In 1989, Americans were investing about 10% percent of their portfolios in foreign securities, and the percentage was rising precipitously. Many of these investors are the proverbial little person who has surrendered such decisions to the managers of mutual, pension, and insurance funds. All of these mini-owners of foreign companies that operate elsewhere would be hurt by VATs. However, what's even more striking about VATS is that they are guilty of much "pre­vestigial," but still flawed thinking: We're talking here about setting aside lessons which should have been fully learned back in the 1930s! VATS, are largely regressive, place the brakes upon global growth (i.e., our planet becomes poorer), entail retaliation, raise consumer prices, and give birth to a brand new Bureaucracy-Galactica. As regards this latter consequence, it surely takes no great imagination to foresee the protracted legal debates as to what constitutes "value addition." Equally ominous, corporations are already adept at dawning whatever national robes suit their immediate purpose--think of how skilled they'd become once the stakes are higher. The lawyers, of course, would love it: a brand new whirling dervish of ubiquitous and monied litigation.

The upshot in all of this is to reaffirm that "they've got a lot over here, and we've got a lot over there." Why then attack something upon which our welfare is predicated?
Protectionists advocate as much, often without even knowing it. Their inane rhetoric aside, protectionist-prescriptions do not constitute a shortcut route with which to make our nation Number One. We must instead earn our position at the international table in a more old fashioned manner—by working hard to ensure that the skills and tools of our people are of a caliber that is sufficient to attract investment capital, and the high-end of earth’s value-addition.

c. industrial policy

In shifting from globalization to industrial policy, it becomes quickly apparent that a greater variety of writers populate this latter camp. So as to pull the reader from the world-according-to-Robert-Reich, I’ll briefly act as one of industrial policy’s more heated proponents, and welcome you from the realm of Harvard’s academic esoterica! Reich is correct in arguing that we need a more activist government as regards our economic well-being, but he flounders in diagnosing the precise problem, and this marches him directly into equally mistaken policy prescriptions.

Of course his greatest sin lies in so cavalierly bidding farewell to any type of production that is either routinized or standardized. My goodness! That Reich is so
willing to acquiesce in the departure these myriad livelihoods seems particularly odd given his own admission that standardized work (largely but not exclusively in manufacturing) formed the backbone of our 1950s middle class. 36 And what does Reich mandate to supplant all of this more traditional employment? Growing the skinny ranks of symbol-manipulators! Moreover, Reich is ill-prepared to take a frontal approach to addressing even their needs: His principal prescription for what ails us is the funding of indirect, possibly pork-laden "foundational supports." Enough already! What we need instead is a superior understanding of our economic straits, and an enumeration of the proper governmental role they call for. This latter discussion will follow shortly. First, a critique of why Reich misses the mark on some very weighty matters.

It's important to realize that one of the keys to a sound economy lies in maintaining a variety of qualitatively different activities. In the words of the aforecited Clyde Prestowitz, founder and President of the Economic Strategy Institute, "composition counts." 37 More specifically, it is vital for the economy of any nation-state to maintain some semblance of a primary sector (i.e., raw materials extraction); a secondary sector (i.e., goods production); and a tertiary sector (i.e., information-oriented services). The most obvious reason for a modicum of balance here has to do with national security. Notwithstanding a bow at the
alter of interdependence, nation-states still have their own particular set of interests, ergo the common occurrence of wars. In other words, the nation-state is not yet obsolete, and when pitted against any number of others, the subject-entity may well need to depend largely upon its own devices. Under such circumstances, it will be a small solace that a country's workforce comprises the global headquarters of symbol manipulation. You cannot eat, fire, fuel, transport, house, or clothe yourself in symbols. On this basis alone, we should be wary of singular economic endeavors. Unfortunately, there exists a second, even more compelling reason for maintaining a balanced economy.

The primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors of any economy must never be considered as existing within tightly self-contained realms. In other words, improvement in the national prowess attending one sector, entails an improvement in our command of all the others. Conversely, a diminishment in the national prowess attending one sector, entails a diminishment in our command of all the others. Consider, for example, the careful words of University of California at Berkeley professors, Stephen Cohen and John Zysman, pulled from an essay entitled, Manufacturing Matters:

There is absolutely no way we can lose control and mastery of manufacturing and expect to hold onto the high-wage service jobs that we are constantly told will replace manufacturing. At the heart of our argument is a notion we call 'direct linkage': a substantial core of service employment is tightly tied to manufacturing.
It is a complement and not, as the dominant view would have it, a substitute for manufacturing. Lose manufacturing and you will lose—not develop—those high-wage service jobs....For example, by abandoning the production of televisions, the US electronics industry quickly lost the know-how to design, develop, refine, and competitively produce the next generation of that product, the VCR. As a result, we make no VCRs in this country, and we are likely to lose whatever positions we still maintain in research and development of products that derive from mastery of that product and production technology. High tech gravitates toward the state-of-the-art-producers. 38

In other words, R&D, or symbol manipulation, or tertiary activities, or whatever you wish to call such endeavors are only part of an ongoing, dynamic process of innovation which is intimately bound to the actual production of some real world tangible be it a mag-lev train or superior access to a digital library. Rather than existing unto itself, production has an evolutionary or catalytic quality about it which facilitates the development of sophisticated spinoff products and/or techniques. Cohen and Zysman speak above of VCRs; but the spinoffs need not be so dramatic. Spinoffs may also lie in smaller incremental improvements upon otherwise identical marketables. Take a look at cameras and their successive finessing: automatic film loading, light sensitive flash devices, size/weight reduction, automatic focus, digital recording of images, computer-compatibility for the easy editing of digital images, etc.

To summarize: bidding adieu to production within our secondary sector implies at least two consequences:

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diminished prowess in all other economic sectors, and increased vulnerability via dependence upon other countries to provide us with much of what we need to sustain ourselves. Are there any other problems with exporting the remainder of our "routine production"? YES! Keep in mind that manufacturing jobs are still the livelihood of roughly 20% percent of the US labor force. That is certainly less than the 50% percent figure of mid-century, but realize that a number of things are happening here: Some—not all, but some—of this decline in manufacturing employment is attributable to the increased productivity of those employees who remain: It simply takes less and less people to do more and more. Stated alternatively, a typical 1990s production-worker accomplishes a greater amount of X in one hour, than does her 1950s counterpart. And as with any newly productive worker, her robust output will generally be rewarded with a relatively robust paycheck. The upshot here is two-fold: if we say "goodbye" to manufacturing within these United States, we are not only losing 20% percent of all US jobs, we are also losing a significant percentage of America's high paying jobs. Clearly, any talk of dispensing with manufacturing is not a matter that one ought to recommend casually. A question, however, still remains: "Why would someone as erudite as Mr. Reich seem to care so little about any of the above?" By looking at the answer to
this riddle, it should become easier to see what our economy—and our country—are in dire need of right now.

The reader will recall that Reich’s policy prescriptions are for us to pursue sweeping improvements in education, health-care, and infrastructure. By doing so it is believed that we will become a magnet for both foreign capital and the high-end work of value addition, symbolic analysis. The response here is not-so-much that energies expended upon foundational supports are wasted or harmful. Quite the contrary. HOWEVER, there are more immediate ways to work upon our collective economic well-being by plying a greater measure of the government’s efforts upon critical industries and critical firms within those industries. These are the high leverage variables of which more will be said in a moment. But first, there remains the matter of Mr. Reich whom you can almost imagine tossing-out red flags at this point.

Reich objects to specific industry-cum-company assistance/protection insofar as "we are often not just we," and "they are often not just they." For Reich, it’s a world of interdependence writ-large: Try to help yourself, and you’re likely just going to help them; by the same token, try to impede them, and you’re likely just going to impede yourself. In sing-song format, "they’ve got a lot over here, and we’ve got a lot over there." Well, if all of that’s a) true, and b) irreversible, then Reich is entirely
apt in calling for an arm's length, once removed, program of national betterment. To wit, get to work upon foundational supports. But are our hands quite this tied?

A portion of the answer to this linchpin query concerning interdependence does, unfortunately, devolve to an examination of statistical data that is both incomplete and often unreliable. This statistical vacuum is partially attributable to the wondrous legacy of Ronald Reagan and George Bush. (Reagan alone shrunk the operating budget of the federal government’s nine agencies responsible for economic statistics to $498 million—a reduction of 12% percent over 8 years in constant dollars. 40) So too does the statistical dearth result from the fact that we are speaking here of very recent changes in both corporate structure and international trade. Given these limitations, what can still be made of interdependence a la Robert Reich?

During the 1980s foreign capital flowing into the US increased from a cumulative total of roughly $500 billion to a cumulative total of just over $2 trillion by the decade’s end. 41 Most economists, such as those who staff the federal Bureau of Economic Analysis, break this total into two components: portfolio investment and direct investment. 42 Portfolio investment includes US governmental securities (i.e., bills, bonds, and notes), and stock market shares which comprise less than 10% percent of any private asset. These latter purchases are lumped together with governmental
securities insofar as they are generally felt to have little influence on the day-to-day workings of US business operations and management. The aforementioned direct investment, by way of contrast, is comprised of purchases that are greater than a 10% percent share of privately offered US-based assets. What's important to see here, is that of the earlier $2 trillion figure cited, only about $500 billion of that money was composed of direct investment. 43 To slice that down even further, the totality of all US-based firms that are entirely owned by foreigners, now generate a mere 4%-5% percent of US gross domestic product. 44

The point here is simply to say that we are not quite as interdependent as Mr. Reich would have you believe. Much of why he is able to leave you feeling otherwise is attributable to the fact that a good deal of foreign direct investment into the US is concentrated in a few highly visible industries: chemical assets, refining capacity, banking assets, semiconductors, biotechnology, and automobiles. 45 Nonetheless, 4% percent is 4% percent. The total is a tiny one, at least so far. Moreover, Mr. Reich apparently hasn't heard that we can, if we want to, put the brakes on foreign direct investment, just as we can put the brakes on any converse exodus of domestic capital. The rather obvious means here are called tax codes. More specifically, rewrite the taxation "rule book," and we can
insure that US firms remain US firms. This will then allow us to focus governmental efforts on national industries-cum-companies (more on how and why in a moment) without inadvertently helping a whole lot of foreigners.

Some might object and argue that even this much of an industrial policy (i.e., clamp down on transnational investments) incurs upon the robust brand of free trade that the US has championed since the 1940s. And to some extent, that’s true. However, it’s important to realize, as shall be returned to later, that a) unadorned free trade no longer works to US benefit, and b) our competitors have never been real big free traders themselves! But this jumps ahead a bit too quickly. What needs to be shown now is that we are essentially dealing with a situation wherein there is a choice between two evils: We can either buy into Reich’s big-time interdependence and its tacit free trade corollary, OR we can maintain some sovereignty over our economy’s shape and doings at the partial expense of free trade on the international scene. It is the contention of industrial proponents that the latter option is the lesser of these two evils. To substantiate this claim, Reich has been "taken to court" for ignoring the composition of our economy, ignoring employment levels, and ignoring national security issues. As we have seen, Reich is equally guilty of having overblown the extent to which interdependence characterizes the status quo. While all of this might be enough to dismiss his
analysis, there remains a final bit of naivete he must be charged with. The problem here is Reich’s reasoning as to why foreigners are, as he puts it, "investing" in US assets. In the words of Reich himself:

Why, then, do foreigners come here? If ownership and control are less and less potent, why do they nevertheless purchase American assets? Because they think they can make better use of American assets—including American workers—than can American firms. 46

As we have already seen, Reich goes on to explain how these foreign owners then remunerate themselves in accord with whatever contribution they make to total value-addition via improved management or whatever. The check on all of this is that if they repatriate too high a profit margin, then another player, or set of players, will step-up to knock off their business via superior prices for the same goods, and/or superior salaries to lure away their exploited workers. Hmm.

This reasoning may have made sense in the Smithian world of two centuries ago when low start-up costs made for increased competition overall. Now, however, the thesis is confounded by the often prohibitive costs of cobbling together an enterprise capable of producing today’s high tech goods at competitive prices. Reich’s thesis is equally confounded by just how monied are many of the monopoly-players out there: Often they can quickly squash a keen upstart by selling at prices which undercut anything the competition has to offer. Granted, this type of behavior is
not limited to US-based, foreign entities, but there remains the matter of where the profits go. With US monopoly players, there is at least a greater chance that those monies will stay "somewhere" within our national confines.

Other problems with Reich's rose-colored assessment of foreign-investment also present themselves. Item: Reich ignores that foreign interests might ever take over a US firm so as to secure technological know-how to be used elsewhere. 47 Item: Reich ignores that foreign interests might ever take over a US firm so as to skirt the few trade barriers which we as a nation do have in place. 48 Item: Reich chooses the takeovers he ballyhoos with great care. He spends, for example, little time talking about the takeovers of suburban real estate, hotels, casinos, office buildings, ranches, golf courses, and the like. Why? Because there is not much more value-addition to heap atop these purchases. They are instead akin to cash-cows whereby you simply need a staff to collect up user-fees for year after year after year. Item: Reich often doesn't cut the data deep enough. We know something, for example, about the aggregate value of goods and services as they issue from Japanese-owned, US-based firms, but not enough. In the words of Doug Woodward, an economist at the University of South Carolina, "the integrated industrial structure of Japanese operations in the United States remains an
unexplored dimension of foreign investment." Woodward continues:

New research is called for to understand new forms of firm integration and to explore the relationship among distribution and manufacturing assembly and component operations within integrated Japanese companies operating in the United States. This study should focus on determining whether the Japanese keiretsu groups and their affiliated companies in the United States create a closed loop that could injure domestic US-owned competitors. 49

It bears repeating that the data here are sketchy. Nonetheless, the limited, circumscribed reports of relevant data are not encouraging. In a worst case scenario, foreign-owned, US-based firms become mere "sourcing regalia" for marketables that actually have little to do with US energies. Should enough of these firms vertically integrate with one another, entire industries could slip from the influence of any US hands whatsoever. Take a look, for example, at this speedy assessment put together by Robert Kearns, another fellow at the Economic Strategy Institute:

When the Toyota Motor Corp built a vast new production facility near Georgetown, KY, five years ago and called it 'Our New Old Kentucky Home,' they weren't kidding.

Soon, a spectrum of auto-components makers opened their doors in hopes of getting contracts from the new plant. But it wasn't a gamble, it was a sure thing: the parts makers were owned to varying degrees by Japanese corporations, including Toyota itself. They soon claimed much of the new factory's business.

Indeed, the Japanese control or own virtually every major production point that supplies Georgetown parts. The Georgetown story is a casebook study of the tightly integrated production and economic clusters that have given Japan such leverage in the US auto industry, as well as other key sectors of the nation's economy targeted for Japanese investment. 50
Each of these "items" constitute some rather scary stuff. Fortunately, the good news is that we can, right now, put into place an industrial policy and use it to seize command of our economic destiny! How to do this? The quickest way to take the bull-by-the-horns, lies in zeroing in upon a) critical industries, and b) critical companies within those industries, that together constitute the keys to our economic diversity and leadership.

Given that premise, two questions rather immediately present themselves. First, how do you know what industries/companies are critical? Second, what specifically should be done to further their interests?

The first of these questions--how to pick the subject industries/companies--is something we have already touched upon. More specifically, the reader will recall the importance of diversity vis-a-vis the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors. Surely that's one part of the story. Additional criteria regarding the selection of key industries/companies are laid out by Paul R. Krugman, a professor of economics at MIT. In the following passages the author describes what he refers to as "rent," and "external economies":

'Rent' in economic parlance means...a higher rate of profit in an industry than is earned in other industries of equivalent riskiness, or higher wages in an industry than equally skilled workers earn in other sectors....

Now the conventional wisdom is that who gets the rent is not an important issue because in a competitive economy...if profits or wages are unusually high in an
industry, capital or labor will come in and quickly eliminate the unusual returns.

If, however, the new view of trade is right, important trading sectors are also sectors in which rent may not be so easily competed away. If there are important advantages to large scale production or a steep learning curve, for example, new entry into an industry may look unprofitable even though existing firms are making exceptionally high profits, paying unusually high wages, or both.

Once we begin to believe that substantial amounts of rent are really out there, it becomes possible...for trade policy to be used to secure more rent for a country....

'External economies' present a different justification for activist trade policies. By an external economy, economists mean a benefit from some activity that accrues to other individuals or firms than those engaging in the activity. The most plausible example is the diffusion of knowledge generated in one area to other firms and other sectors. Although external economies are different conceptually from rents, they likewise provide a reason to favor particular sectors. 51

Other analysts are more ad hoc than Krugman in deciding upon what industries/companies are critical to the future health of our economy overall. To take just one example, MIT's Commission on Industrial Productivity recommends that we do all we can to help America's troubled machine-tool industry. In the words of Robert M. Solow et al:

The machine tool industry stands at the heart of the nation's manufacturing infrastructure, and it is far more important than its relatively small size might suggest. All industries depend upon machine tools to cut and shape parts. The entire industrial economy suffers if a nation's machine tools are too slow, cannot hold tight tolerances, break down often, or cost too much. If American manufacturers must turn to foreign sources for machine tools (or for other basic processing systems, such as those for fabricating semiconductors or making steel), they can hardly hope to be leaders in their industries, because overseas competitors will often get the latest advances sooner. 52
The point here is not to pit the ad hoc approach of Solow up against the more specific criteria of Klugman and thereby come up with an optimal strategy for selecting critical industries/companies. Obviously there are many different ways to accomplish this task. While some means might prove better than others, the rub at this point in the game is that any approach to ascertaining some important industries/companies is superior to the do-nothing, hands-off stance we’ve so typically embraced.

The second aforementioned query--what should be done once we have identified key industries/companies--is arguably the more important question. It is here that we get into the nuts-and-bolts of industrial policy. It may be a little bit helpful to loosely organize these nuts-and-bolts by thinking of them in terms of two different flavors: Flavor #1 are "positive" measures or supports bestowed upon US-owned economic players. Flavor #2 are "negative" measures or impediments imposed upon foreign-owned economic players. Flavor #2 is a bit more noticeable than flavor #1, but make no mistake: each of these flavors packs a punch depending upon how far out you wish to pursue them. That latter measurement (i.e., indexing escalations within each of these flavors from mild to extreme) is calibrated as per how much of a departure you wish to make from radically unfettered free trade theory. This decision, in turn, may be based upon the bilateral reciprocity of any one nation,
or uniquely home-based concerns which translate into mandates unilaterally imposed upon all other nations.

What, then, are some of the specific activities within each flavor, and how might you argue for any particular batch of them? Flavor #1 (supports for US-owned industries) can include government funding of commercial R&D undertaken by universities, firms, and industry consortia; relief from antitrust regulations so as to allow joint pooling of resources among competing firms; strategic access for selected firms to the domestic market; a revamping of banking regulations so as to encourage a greater rate of savings among the US citizenry thereby creating a pool of more and cheaper capital for business investment; keeping the dollar’s value low on international currency markets; and offering a panoply of tax incentives which make it cheaper for firms to undertake activities ranging from worker-retrainings to the provision of day-care services. 53 Flavor #2 (impediments imposed upon foreign-owned competitors) can include targeted import tariffs (i.e., varying rates on individual firms, industries, and countries); blanket tariffs on all incoming goods and services; quotas (i.e., both formal and "voluntary"); bans (i.e., selective or blanket); "product standards" (i.e., tight specifications as to what we consider marketable); and domestic content regulations (i.e., VATs). 54
How then to pick and choose among this array? That depends! If cost is a concern, something like tariffs are a better route than, say, subsidies. Indeed, tariffs are even revenue-raisers and can generate funds to then be plied towards other more expensive options. Alternatively, if the concern at hand is just one industry’s welfare, say, that of flat-screen displays, then maybe some selective tax-relief and a few "product standards" will suffice. Likewise, if the immediate issue is a national unemployment rate of 25% percent, then maybe the time has come for an outright ban on all imports!

If that last statement sounds provocative, it is intended to be so. More specifically, we wish to take head-on what is our Achilles’s heel: virtually all of these measures (some more than others) are anti-free-trade. And why is this so awful? Well, take your pick from any of the popularly proffered results: 

- they shut down trade globally  
- they inhibit specialization  
- they hurt the world’s poorest most of all  
- they entail retaliation  
- they eat at our soft power mystic  
- they reduce competition and firms get lazy  
- they increase consumer prices and decrease selection  
- they catalyze endless litigation  
- they grow the size and role of government
by God, it's un-American!

Granted, being anti-free-trade is anathema in many circles, and for reasons that are not entirely unjustified. In theory at least, it's possible to link up free markets with trouble-free distribution, employment maximization, and a dizzying dynamism that leads to ever-better people and ever-greater opulence. Not only that, free trade purportedly accomplishes all that it does "automatically." Stated alternatively, the only hands we need to operate this great big business are the invisible ones that Adam Smith wrote about!

Well sort of. It must be repeated that we are faced with a choice among evils here: free trade our way into the bowels of "two Americas" (elaborations in a moment), OR adopt something approximating a vigorous industrial policy. While the latter option is counter to pristine versions of free trade theory, it remains the lesser of these two evils. Again, much of the reasoning here hinges upon two related points: First, America's contemporary status does not facilitate our profiting from absolutely unfettered free trade. Second, our largest competitors have not ever been much in the way of free traders themselves. Both issues are serially considered below.

Issue #1--that free trade no longer works to the clear advantage of America--is the subject of Ravi Batra's '93 text entitled The Myth of Free Trade. Batra's latest
thinking is perhaps doubly poignant insofar as it constitutes an about-face turnaround in the arguments of this theorist. As the author puts it:

There is a bit of irony in this because I have been a free trader all of my life. In fact, in the early 1970s, I wrote two volumes promoting the idea of trade liberalization. But my recent analysis of the American economy has shaken my belief....

When a person changes his long-held beliefs, there must be overwhelming evidence to justify the change. Briefly my thesis is as follows:

The experience of most countries shows that prosperity lies in the expansion of manufacturing rather than agriculture and services. This is because manufacturing has much higher worker productivity than other sectors, so that its salaries tend to be 150 to 200 percent of those in other areas. When freer trade promotes manufacturing, it raises overall productivity as well as the general standard of living; but when it fosters services at the expense of manufacturing, productivity growth as well as real earnings decline.

Stated alternatively, in the-world-according-to-Ravi-Batra, free trade is good when it increases activity within a nation's manufacturing sector; likewise, free trade is bad when it decreases activity in a nation's manufacturing sector. Given these arguments, the US was right to embrace free trade in the aftermath of WWII (i.e., when our nearest competitors were largely export-markets and supply-...
deployts), just as the US ought now to jettison that same embrace of free trade which presently facilitates the exodus of so many manufacturing jobs. Just take a look at the alarming hits this sector has already endured:

In 1960, US manufacturing imports constituted barely 5 percent of local production; in 1973, they were 14 percent; and by 1990, they had jumped to over 40 percent. If nothing is done, the country will be nearly stripped of its industrial base. In 1980, 21 million people worked in manufacturing; in 1991, only 18 million remained, while the labor force climbed by 20 million. America's future is bleak if the current trends persist. 57

Batra further catalogues a net loss of 38 million high paying manufacturing jobs since this sector's US heyday, and he also argues that this loss is directly responsible for a decline in the inflation-adjusted wages of 80% percent of our population over these last 20 years. 58 His solution to all this slaughter? Bust-up domestic firms controlling more than 10% percent of marketshare in any industry (i.e., to insure domestic competition); AND increase the base tariff rate on all imports to 30% percent with additional levies and/or bans upon any marketables that threaten the vitality of our manufacturing sector. How's that for radical! He wraps up the whole package and calls it "competitive protectionism." 59

The point here is not to argue that Batra's "competitive protectionism" is the rendition of industrial policy that we in the US need. Batra's work is nonetheless described here insofar as it is particularly forward in its
attack upon the notion of free trade as sacrosanct. Free trade may have a certain tidy appeal for ivory-tower academicians, but what ought to be sacrosanct is instead the status of our economy! That status, if it is to remain a healthy one, must maintain some semblance of a manufacturing sector. Composition counts! As such, rather than intoning our unquestioning allegiance to free trade above all else, we would be better off to construe it as one option among others. Call free trade a benchmark if you like, but realize that it too comes with consequences just as do the alternatives.

This matter of other alternatives segues nicely into the aforementioned issue #2 concerning free trade--that our competitors have never been all that robusto a bunch of free traders themselves. And generally at our expense! That is to say, even if you don't buy the issue #1 argument that unfettered free trade can be less than ideal, then you are still going to run-up on the ropes of issue #2 which argues that not everyone is playing by the same rules. For some of these national entities, the free trade ruminations of Adam Smith do no more constitute their immutable "ground zero" than the collective writings of Dr Seuss. Of particular note among these newly ascendant and rather extraordinary rule-writers are Japan and its sister emulators, the so-called four tigers (add in China if you like). Chalmers Johnson, professor of political economy at the University of
California at San Diego, is among many of the analysts who describe the "special" ways in which Japan has chosen to equip itself for economic betterment. The following are a mere smattering of the competitive means that Johnson finds noteworthy:

The three institutions I have in mind are administrative guidance, industrial groups (keiretsu), and Japan's organization of research and development. Administrative guidance refers to the discretionary authority entrusted to Japan's governmental officials to find tailor-made solutions to problems or to implement policies that do not have a legal basis. Because of administrative guidance, a foreigner can never (emphasis is Johnson's) master the rules of doing business in Japan....

Keiretsu, or what before the war were called zaibatsu, are Japan's famous industrial conglomerates. They are held together by cross-shareholding (with a portion of the shares never traded...in order to prevent foreign or domestic takeovers), interlocking directorates, intragroup financial commitments, and overlapping memberships in the councils and president's clubs of each group. Keiretsu activities include...complex economic ventures at home and abroad, sharing of technology, employment of redundant personnel from member firms, and research and development. The benefits to members include preferential service from a group's bank and trading company, relative insulation from business cycles, and the ability to devote more resources to productive capacity and marketshare. The keiretsu form of industrial organization...clearly violates Western conceptions of anti-trust and makes a mockery of much of the economic theory that is predicated upon the workings of market forces....(The) problem is becoming acute as keiretsu relationships are extended to North America and Western Europe through direct investment by Japan.

My final case of the mismatch between Japan and the West is the way R&D is organized. Japan does its R&D in proprietary, company-owned research institutes, whereas the West does much of its research in universities and engineering schools that are open to all qualified students....The result is that the flow of technology still remains conspicuously in Japan's direction....These problems are exacerbated by Japan's
inadequate protection of intellectual property rights by international standards. 61

Are these "competitive means" merely the structural fruits of a casually adopted winner’s strategy? Do these structures instead link-up with profound cultural differences pertaining to the Japanese and Americans as truly unique sets of people? Does either question matter? Not really. The point is that Japan and others have equipped themselves with some superior means by which to garner an aproportional chunk of the international economic action. That leaves us with three choices. We can either attempt to remodel their system into one like ours, or we can remodel our system into one like theirs, or we can employ any number of impediments to block and/or "re-price" Japanese exports such that Japan itself bears the costs of its peculiar institutions. 62 So what’s it going to be? Unfortunately, the history of trying sell to them our system has been one tragic comedy after another. And what’s the latest wrinkle here? Dispatching abroad one Walter Mondale! Barring any major breakthroughs on that dubious front, doesn’t it make more sense for us to fight fire with fire? Shouldn’t we just counter the wealth of foreign industrial policies with an industrial policy of our own? The difference here lies in pleading with others to take certain actions, versus putting together our own plans and implementing them with vigor. In some respects, we ought to be able to beat them at their own game; in all other
respects, we should bar their ability to unilaterally engage us in any type of rapport that we don’t recognize.

d. a partial debriefing

Who is to have the final word here, the industrial policy folks or the proponents of globalization? Neither, I’m going to take it!

As might be imagined, I have my own strongly felt opinions concerning each of the scenarios that I’ve described in this and earlier chapters. If my biases have not yet betrayed themselves, then in fairness to the reader, I ought to make them explicit.

To begin, I don’t believe that any of these schools is moving us towards the workable world that I’m confident will ultimately carry the day. Suffice to say, I believe that world will necessarily be one wherein decisions concerning trade, investment, and even aid are more collectively orchestrated. Why? Well--bundling up several enormous assumptions--I do believe that we as a species are emerging upon a situation wherein less and less effort is to be spent upon building the proverbial castles that surround us, while more and more effort is to be spent upon building the proverbial castles that lie within us. There’s a problem, however--enter several more assumptions--insofar as this new mix of what is demanded, when coupled with automation-
impacts, will necessitate far fewer workers than we have right now. As a result, the demand-end of our planetary economy will suffer as low employment limits the circulation of money. Out of this unstable situation will ensue the idea of globally socialized employment. The guidelines which fall from such a mandate are quantitative (i.e., work-weeks that are shorter than 40 hours), and qualitative (i.e., enough workers in each sector—whatever those future sectors may be—such that supply and demand imbalances do not privilege one group of people while impoverishing another).

Unfortunately, not-a-one of the theorists featured in this and earlier chapters argues explicitly for movement towards a comprehensive and transnational orchestration of trade, investment, and aid. However—and in fairness to the theorists from whom I have borrowed so heavily—I need to remind the readers (and myself!) that these theorists have been selected for a number of specific reasons. First and foremost, is that my cohort analysis is most principally concerned with developments over the next decade or so. And, of course, any combination of the "push and pull" factors which might catalyze movement towards a greater transnational, global orchestration of trade/aid/investment are far too nascent to play much of a role at this time. Secondly, the near-term images of my chosen theorists also happen to be my understanding of the near-term images as entertained by most US folks in 1993. As such, these images

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become plausible twice-over insofar as what we expect to occur can often catalyze the very behaviors which effectuate its realization.

I shall return to a larger discussion of plausibility in the concluding pages of my dissertation. For the moment, however, I simply wish to further expose the biases that I have brought with me as regards both the globalization and industrial policy proponents in particular. Of the two, my greater sympathies lie with Reich and his rendition of globalization. Unlike like many voices within the industrial policy group, Reich is at least enough of an internationalist such that our world's have-not nations stand a better chance of gaining some measure of jobs and improved expertise. Granted, there may be better ways to go about this than Reich's scenario, but he extends more of a bone to these have-nots than many of the industrial policy crew. Among these latter ranks, there is often a "screw them attitude" that I find incredibly callous. Batra is the worst offender in this regard. He acknowledges that we did quite well in an earlier day by playing the global game (thank you very much), but now things have changed, so let's just take our marbles and go home. About the only question Batra sees fit to entertain is to what extent we in our autarky will prosper. That other nations (poor ones in particular) might utterly crash is not an issue. That our global soft power would entirely vanish is not an issue.
That our descendants may be denied any role on the world-scene is not an issue. Thankfully, Batra as an industrial policy proponent, is a relative loner in his complete and total absence of sympathy for the plight of so many others abroad.

Part 2: Focus on the Busters

e. overview

Organizing the second, buster-focused half of this chapter are three broad topic areas: buster electoral politics, buster participation, and a buster-boomer rapprochement. Each of these subjects is considered within a subsection of its own. A summary concludes the chapter.

f. buster electoral politics

What I wish to undertake in this particular subsection is an overview and assessment of the busters’ electoral politics vis-a-vis the presidential elections of 1984, 1988, and 1992. Task #1 is the easy part: a cataloguing of the outward behavior itself:

- In 1984, leading-edge busters voted on the order of 59% Republican and 40% Democrat. This split of nearly three to two was identical to Reagan’s victory margin as per the
popular vote overall. Indeed, there was only a slight deviation from the percentages above within any age-bracketed segment of the '84 voters. 63

- In 1988, the busters again went Republican, but with less enthusiasm. The approximate percentages here are 52% of buster-ballots cast for George Bush, and 47% of buster-ballots cast for Michael Dukakis. Age-bracketed variations among that year’s tally were of plus or minus 5% in either direction: Loosely put, busters voted more liberally than those aged 30 to 59, and more conservatively than those aged 60 and older. George Bush garnered a total of 53% of the '88 popular vote with Michael Dukakis earning a 45% share. 64

- The '92 election was fairly deemed a three-way race, making it too complicated to summarize in a few "bird’s eye" sentences. A graphic display of the age-bracketed '92 results is therefore provided below with a few comments to follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th>Perot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 to 29 yrs-old</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 44 yrs-old</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 59 yrs-old</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and older</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A look to the buster-tally shows that a mere 34% voted for George Bush--the lowest of any age-bracketed collection in
the electorate. Busters voted for Clinton in percentages higher than all but the 60-and-older crowd. Finally, busters were Perot’s strongest age-specific supporters. At 22%, Perot won half the percentage share of votes cast for Clinton by busters overall. The final percentages as per the entire electorate were Clinton with 44%, Bush with 38%, and Perot with 19% of the popular vote. 65

* * *

What can be said of buster-politics given all of this electoral data? First on the list has to be an acknowledgement of how buster-majorities have gone to the very three candidates supported by American voters as a whole. The acknowledgement here is important insofar as delving too immediately into what may or may not make buster-voters unique could easily leave one with the impression that we are speaking here of entirely novel people. Not so. To the extent that jobs and the economy were big issues for the electorate in ‘92, you can bet that they were also big issues for the busters in ‘92 (more on their issues orientation later). Nonetheless, a few noteworthy movements and/or events fall from the data above. First is the dramatic decline among busters in their support of the Republican ticket. Second is the relatively high support among busters of Ross Perot. Third is just how well Bill Clinton fared among busters; better, in fact, than he
fared among his own boomer peers. Each of these "ITEMS" is further considered below. (I will use the capitalized designation as an aid to preserving some semblance of the macro-picture.)

A full understanding of ITEM #1--the busters' flight from the Republican ranks--is particularly poignant insofar as the youth vote in America has historically been more liberal than that of their elders. Indeed, the buster-majority-voters of 1984 and 1988 made them first pro-Republican youth cohort since the 1920s. An understanding of when and how this Republican support took hold may well harken back to the days of growing up as a young buster in the 1970s. As Strauss and Howe explain it:

To understand what makes 13ers tick politically, go back and look carefully at the 1970s--that decade of cultural upheaval and institutional decline when grade-school Atari-wavers got their first glimpse of national life. To older generations, this seemed a fine time to turn inward, cast off burdens of social discipline, and put personal agendas ahead of the larger national interest. But to the opening wedge of the 13th Generation, there was nothing therapeutic in the spectacle of an entire nation letting go. To them, the 1970s unfolded like a grim and horrifying newsreel. Watergate. Oil embargo. The ‘Christmas without lights.’ Impeachment. Collapse of Vietnam. Stagflation. CIA and Lockheed scandals. Three Mile Island. A second oil embargo. Tehran Hostages. Afghanistan. Yellow ribbons. Looking up from the turmoil in their families and schools, 13ers saw a mirror-image welter of political failures and sensed that adults were simply not in control of themselves or the country.

Reagan consistently portrayed himself as the candidate who stood in opposition to all of this "malaise." Reagan’s image was one of sunny optimism (i.e., "morning in
America"), and steady purpose (i.e., "stay the course"). Those two qualities alone—happiness and stability—may have held a particular appeal for busters whose formative years were often enough characterized by the kind of chaotic upheaval that Strauss and Howe describe above.

Unfortunately, for the Republican party, these are also the very qualities upon which it suffered in 1992: Take any number of that year’s polls on a) the mood of the country, or b) opinions as to what should be done; and the results consistently showed that both busters and Americans overall were a) nervous about the future, and b) desirous of a changed approach to the years ahead: MTV, for example, surveyed 1,000 busters between the ages of 18 to 29 in late-'92, and found that by a 10 to 1 margin, these young people believed that things in the country were either "bad" or "not-so-good" as compared to either "good" or "excellent".

In that same survey, MTV found that a) 75% of respondents felt the present situation in America to be a hard time for people their age along with b) a full 87% of respondents who believed that major changes were called for to get the country back on track. The Bush campaign—with a crew unwilling to alter their brand of governance and equally unable to inspire optimism—suffered. And it arguably suffered among busters most of all (given, for example, the final election results). As Michael Barone put it in an essay written for US News and World Report, "What
the young are looking for is an optimistic vision of an orderly future in which they can live productive lives." Clinton sought to provide such an image and told Americans that, "He (Bush) has no game plan to compete and win in the world economy. I do." Of course all of this will sound particularly grand if you are among the majority of busters whose economic straits tightened to such an extreme extent in the 1980s (as is catalogued in chapter 4).

Completing the picture as to why an exodus from the Republican ranks is a pretty good idea of how the pro-gay and pro-choice busters (as are catalogued in chapter 3) must have responded to the so-called family and traditional values rhetoric of the '92 Republican principals. Borrowing again from Michael Barone, "Bush campaign attacks on Medicaid abortions and gays in the military may help Republicans gain votes among the disgruntled GI generation. But they won't help much among the young, who have grown up in an America where abortion has always been legal and gay couples attend senior proms." 75

Stability, prosperity, change, individual rights, optimism—all can help to shed some light on the busters' contemporary and historic rapport with the Republican party. Is there anything else? One point—a little less pedestrian than those above—is also relevant to this discussion and concerns the "early-end" of the buster-Republican relationship. As Susan Littwin argues, some of the busters'
initial embrace of the Republican ticket may have had a lowlier basis than one would like to believe:

In 1984, Ronald Reagan was the overwhelming preference of voters under thirty. It is a puzzling preference since other polls indicate that young adults are the age group most likely to feel financially worse off because of the Reagan Administration’s policies. They also oppose Reagan on other issues, such as nuclear proliferation, abortion, and intervention in Central America. He is in his seventies, he made his political bones by standing up to student activists, and his haircut and values are from another era. Why then is he so popular among young voters? Is he a father figure long missing in their lives? One explanation comes from a young volunteer in a presidential campaign. ‘Reagan is making money for their parents,’ he observed cynically.

Before leaving this subject of the historical and contemporary buster-Republican relationship, I’d like to think creatively for a moment, and speculate as to another of its effects. Specifically, the buster’s departure from the Republican ranks may well have contributed to what some call this generation’s larger-than-typical respect and desire for honesty. The specifics of this connection will follow on the heels of a mini-discussion of this honesty itself.

Among those who have sensed many busters’ particular sensitivity to honest words and honest deeds is Bruce Elliot. Elliot is one of the founders of the three-year-old National Association for the Advancement of Time which was briefly noted in Chapter 1. NAFTAT is what buster-analyst William Dunn calls a "mock serious" organization with a part-time core that operates out of Los Angeles. The group
publishes an infrequent newsletter called Clockwise. 77

Here is some of what Elliot has to say about his generation:

Busters are serious pragmatists, extremely realistic and blunt to the point of seeming negative. There is a serious quest to peel off the veil of illusion and just get down to the real thing. "What's the real story? Would someone please just tell me the truth?" It's that kind of questioning for raw, tangible reality that I think is the most defining trait. 78

Surely it's also a strong confirmation of buster's respect for honesty that so many have chosen to embrace diversity as outlined in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. Additional testimony to buster honesty can likewise be gleaned from any number of the market research analysts who write in the pages of publications such as Advertising Age, and Brandweek. The following synopsis is typical:

They distrust hype and 'spin' wherever they see it, from product advertising to political campaigns.... As consumers, they are astute observers of the mass media. They are sharply aware of advertising methods and knowledgeable about modern marketing strategies. In fact, for this generation, advertising and marketing are a form of popular culture.

'Don't try to con them; they'll know when you're fooling,' advised Advertising Age in 1971. The same advice applies more than 20 years later. Now more than ever, young adults are keenly attuned to media messages and images. Sharp images, music, a sense of humor, and a dose of irreverence all appeal to a generation raised on television. Young adults were not raised on the three network channels that boomers grew up with, but on multiple cable channels and remote control. As the TV audience becomes more fickle and fragmented, holding viewers attention through a commercial becomes more challenging. 'Ads that admit they are ads are effective with a generation that's been saturated with media and advertising all their lives...' 79
Echoing these sentiments concerning the importance of honesty to many busters is this similar analysis pulled from the pages of a recent *Marketing News* edition:

And get this: They're hip to when you're trying to pull that marketing stuff on them.

The wags at Calet, Hirsch & Farrell are perfectly aware of the twentysomethings vast knowledge of the ad biz and decided to use it to their advantage in a new campaign for Pepsico's Priviet vodka.

Under the title, 'Amazing Russian Vodka,' the ads gush over the liquors astounding qualities--'changes color when mixed with fruit juices!'....

'This segment can smell a marketing plan a mile away,' said Howard Marguiles, copywriter at Calet, Hirsch & Farrell. 'They are very aware that they’re a target market, and we wanted to play against that. This is anti-advertising.'

The ads 'make of fun of the bold, but empty claims' in advertising, he said. Twentysomethings can 'read the sub-text to adspeak, and if it sounds too much like formula, forget it.'

One can even find a final focus on honesty in novels that are both about busters and/or written by busters such as Bret Ellis and Tamma Janowitz. Take for example, this colorful commentary excerpted from Doug Coupland's *Generation X*:

'I firmly believe,' Dag said..., 'that everybody on earth has a deep dark secret that they’ll never tell another soul on earth as long as they live. Their wife, their husband, their lover, or their priest. Never.

'I have my secret. You have yours. Yes, you do--I can see you smiling. You’re thinking about your secret right now. Come on: spill it out (emphasis in original). What is it? Diddle your sister? Circle jerk? Eat your poo to check out the taste? Go with a stranger and you’d go with more? Betray a friend? Just tell me. You may be able to help me and not even know it.'

Just how all of this discussion on honesty ties in with the buster-Republican rapport is very simply that the latter...
is widely perceived by busters as yet another institution to have failed them with words and images: Morning In America has been anything but the dawning of a brighter day for the busters, and their flight from the Republican ticket is a likely response to this. A 1990 Time/CNN poll of 18 to 29 year-olds showed that 65% agreed it would be harder for them to live as comfortably as previous generations; 69% believed they will have more difficulty finding a job; 52% said they will have less leisure time than their predecessors; and 53% said they are worried about their future. Now granted, the government is not the only institution to earn the ire of busters--the institutions of education, the family, and the economy also come to mind--but still, the rush from Republicans may have been particularly bitter. As young people, the busters were arguably least equipped to see the possible shortcomings of Reaganism (i.e., a self-financing tax cut?). Moreover, the legacy of supply side economics has sadly left the busters unable to feel much sentimental fondness for their "first president" that they had so heartily embraced just 10 years ago. As Patrick Burns stated in a Chicago Tribune essay, "As inheritors of a federal budget sabotaged with huge debts, the baby busters will have been robbed of their ability to govern free of financial restraint...not unlike the Brazils and Mexicos of today."
Moving now to the second of the three ITEMS mentioned earlier as bearing upon buster electoral politics—the busters’ 22% embrace of Ross Perot—is a somewhat trickier matter. As we’ve seen, the busters as an age-bracketed segment were Perot’s strongest base of support. But what exactly does a buster vote for Perot imply?

Out of the election year polls of 1992, the safest conclusion to be made is that "domestic economic health" was the number one concern of both busters and Americans overall. If that is so, then discerning the differences as to Clinton and Perot’s economic prescriptions will arguably explain some of what a Perot vote might signify. Towards that end, it’s clear that what largely distinguished the domestic economic stances of Ross Perot and Bill Clinton were (and are!) alternative approaches to deficit-financing. More specifically, in the world of Ross Perot, the quickest way to economic recovery is to reduce the deficit and then the debt with all due haste. In the world of Bill Clinton, the quickest way to economic recovery is deficit reduction at a slower clip, and a concurrent remix of spending priorities at levels beyond what Perot believes we can afford right now.

Does that mean that a Perot vote translates into support for deficit/debt reduction as the number one priority among 22% of busters? Only if you believe a couple of premises. The first of these premises is that which is
mentioned above—that voters keyed into these candidate’s economic stance as opposed to all other matters of substance and style. The second premise, which will sound terrible, is that busters understand the relevant differences between the economic stances of Perot and Clinton as detailed above. If both premises are correct, as I believe they are, then it’s fair to say that busters, to a larger than typical extent, support a crash diet of deficit- and then debt-reduction.

Will this minority buster-stance remain constant, grow, or diminish? Unfortunately, there is a jumble of disparate polling noise out there that could be marshalled to argue any side of this complicated issue. However, a few comments do remain possible concerning the future growth, decline, or stabilization in the number of those who so emphasize deficit/debt reduction. Towards this end, I’d like to borrow heavily from one of the more fascinating buster-essays I have come across. It’s a discussion, or expose really, of the buster-led group Lead or Leave. The author of this piece is buster-writer Andrew Cohen whose work has appeared in the Village Voice and the London Guardian. The essay I’ll be drawing from is entitled "Me and My Zeitgeist," and it appeared in a July '93 edition of The Nation.

Lead or Leave is a political group whose founders include busters Rob Nelson and Jon Cowan. They claim a
membership of 10,000 and refer to Lead or Leave as a national campus organization. Nelson and Cowan have been featured on Nightline, Good Morning America, Op-Ed pages across the country, and in each of the big-three US newsweeklies (including the cover of a February 22, 1993 issue of US News and World Report which was headlined "The Twentysomething Rebellion"). The principal mission of Lead or Leave is deficit-reduction which Cowan calls "our generation’s Vietnam." Much of Lead or Leave’s headline-making work centers around asking candidates for national office to promise they will leave office if the deficit is not cut in half by three years hence. Over a hundred have taken "the Pledge" including Ross Perot (Bill Clinton called it a gimmick).

Among the phenomena that Cohen finds interesting about Lead or Leave is a) where exactly they get their funding—which includes paying for a posh Washington office on Connecticut Avenue, and b) where exactly they get their philosophy about deficits which appears in the group’s ample brochures and press statements.

Cohen charges that two of Lead or Leave’s principal funding resources are Ross Perot and Republican financier Pete Peterson who together have given the group approximately $80,000. Even more interesting are those who have penned some of the materials that Lead or Leave distributes--Neil Howe and Bill Strauss! As Cohen explains:
Before he thought of 13th Gen, Neil Howe wrote a book with Wall Street bond broker and Lead or Leave benefactor Pete Peterson, titled On Borrowed Time: How the Growth in Entitlement Spending Threatens America’s Future. Howe has also collaborated with Phillip Longman, founder of Americans for Generational Equality (AGE), a now-defunct granny-bashing outfit that lobbied for the last Social Security payroll tax hike. Howe later wrote a Lead or Leave pamphlet with 13th Gen co-author Bill Strauss called 'Deficits in Your Face.' There Howe and Strauss told twentysomethings that 'older Americans are waging a generational war against YOU...like Vietnam it’s going to take the youth of America to stop it.'

As might be imagined, Cohen’s first conclusion is that there may be some generational hijacking taking place here. Cohen calls Lead or Leave more of an exercise in the politics of innocence as opposed to the politics of rebellion. It’s a set-up wherein Strauss and Howe point reporters to Cowan and Nelson as examples of today’s activists (a mantle they seem quite comfortable with), while Cowan and Nelson point reporters back to Strauss and Howe for the statistical data. To Cohen’s eye, what you have in Cowan, Nelson, Strauss and Howe are respectively a couple of puppets and a couple of "Zeitgeist Monopolists." 

Perhaps most importantly, Cohen finally argues that there is nothing which makes heated deficit-busting a unique and unmitigated boon for the bust generation. What, for example, would happen to the twentysomethings if deficits were eliminated by doing away with all governmental spending on youth services and/or raising the taxes on those who can least afford them? The problem, in other words, is not-so-much "the deficit," but rather some more intricate matters...
such as who is going to get taxed by how much to pay for what purchases/investments be they deficit-reduction or otherwise? As Cohen sees it, "Cowan and Nelson call themselves liberals, but willy-nilly espouse Reaganesque economic theories....The alternative to deficit-busting cuts in social services is a drive to create better jobs, better schools, and better chances." ⁹⁰

Returning now to the initial question with which Cohen was introduced, it becomes a little easier to speculate as to whether the number of Perot-supporting-deficit-focussed busters will grow, decline or stabilize in number. The answer here would seem to hinge upon two issues. First is just how well Clinton will popularly measure-up on economic recovery via embracing his combo-approach which includes slower deficit-reduction than is called for by Perot. The second matter is whether or not people such as Perot and groups such as Lead or Leave will have further success in advertising an oversimplified linkage of lower deficits with generational welfare for busters.

ITEM #3 mentioned at the outset of this chapter segment as bearing upon buster electoral politics is next on the agenda. Specifically, taking a closer look at what might explain the 44% who opted to vote for Bill Clinton. (The reader will recall that buster’s favored Clinton to a percentage greater than that of Clinton’s boomer peers.) In prioritizing my response to this inquiry, I’ll start below
with what I believe to be the most critical explanation. As shall be shown, this explanation is also a bit mundane; to wit, the candidate’s and the busters’ often similar issues orientation. From there I’ll move to three more uniquely buster-Clinton (or Clinton-buster) themes that would seem relevant to some of Clinton’s success within this generation.

As regards their issue-orientation, it has already been shown that "the economy" consistently ranked as the issue of top importance to both busters and Americans as a whole: MTV, to take just one example, found that "the economy" was issue #1 among 84% of a thousand randomized busters in October of 1992 (followed by quality of education at 77%, and AIDS at 71%). 91

Of course, simply pointing to "the economy" is rather lacking in rigor insofar as it says little in terms of buster-sentiments pertaining to the deficit, tax codes, spending prerogatives, job creation strategies, governmental regulation, etc. Unfortunately, the available polling data as to these more micro-phenomena present an inconsistent prioritization among them. 92 The difficulties confounding this statistical data could include changes in the buster-mindset over time, and, importantly, the shortcomings of poll-taking such as sample size, directional questioning, the latest headline-making political event, respondent confusion, question-clarity, assumption-laden answer-
selections, a lack of sample randomness, and the survey medium (i.e., in-person, on the phone, in-group, one-on-one, etc.) Daniel Goleman of the New York Times offers one colorful illustration along these lines:

Should laws be passed to eliminate all possibilities of special interests giving huge sums of money to candidates?

Or do groups have the right to contribute to the candidate they support?

The first question comes from a survey by Ross Perot last March; the second is part of a more neutral rephrasing of that question as asked by an independent polling concern. When Perot put the question his way, 99 percent of those responding answered 'yes.' But in the alternate form, 40 percent favored limits on contributions. 93

Other aggregated buster-issues which have jockeyed for position behind "the economy" in rankings of buster-emphases include healthcare, crime, the environment, education, and civil rights. 94 As with some of the topics above, these too have varied in their sub-economy-ranking depending upon the time and poll. 95

Despite the ambiguity which attends this issues-orientation-assessment, two safely overhead comments come to mind as widely applicable and relevant to the larger ITEM 3 discussion of the busters and Bill Clinton. First, each of the topics described above--the economy, healthcare, education, crime, the environment, and civil rights--were regular campaign themes championed by the Clinton/Gore ticket. (Again, these were also the very issues of importance for busters with "the economy" ranking first and foremost.) Second, and equally safe to say, Clinton/Gore’s
sometimes new and novel approach to dealing with a number of these areas (more on which ones in a moment) meshes nicely with yet another set of recurrent and sufficiently aggregated polling data from buster-landia: These data are the statistical cataloguings (enumerated earlier) of '92 busters expressing alarm about the country's then-present-directions and a desire for change. 96 Indeed, several surveys purporting to capture these particular sentiments claim to speak for as many as 80% to 90% of all busters. 97

To summarize, what I've attempted to outline thus far are the safely-stated but broad priority points which contribute to understanding some of the affinity that exists within the Clinton-buster rapport: I believe these priority points include a) a widely shared emphasis on the same issues with "the economy" as number one, and b) a widely shared desire for change in the country's '92 directions. Can anything else be said that is more specific to the existence of a positive Clinton-buster rapport? Yes, but to keep "the forest for the trees," realize that I am now moving into themes pertaining to the buster-Clinton rapport that I believe are either less justifiable, and/or of slightly lesser significance to explaining Clinton's fair showing among these young Americans. There are three of these themes--some of which link-up closely with my more safely stated "priority points" as detailed above.

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First, the busters may have become somewhat "post-partisan" in their political nature. Second, and related to the first point, the contours of that post-partisan make-up OCCASIONALLY looks like Bill Clinton's portrayal of himself as a "new democrat." Third, Bill Clinton, more than any other of the '92 candidates actually spoke to-, referred to-, listened to-, and interacted with-, busters as a generation.

Post-partisan is a phrase favored by Eric Liu (born 1968), founding editor of The Next Progressive magazine begun in the summer of 1991. This publication's focus is the bust generation and/or activities being undertaken by buster-groups and individuals. It is an utterly serious magazine, and put together entirely by busters from top to bottom. The Next Progressive was judged one of the 10 best new alternative magazines by the Utne Reader in 1992, and has been favorably reviewed by entities including the Washington Post, and National Public Radio. Among those who subscribe to The Next Progressive, are individuals as diverse as Michael Kinsley and William F. Buckley. Perspectives of the magazine's contributors are variously male, female, gay, straight, rich, poor, educated, uneducated, secular, spiritual, racial majority, racial minority, immigrant, native, etc. The purpose, claims Liu, is "to carve out a new politics, free of the reflexive code words of liberal and conservative dogma." The following
commentary is typical of Liu's contributions to this quarterly publication:

Many first-time readers of this journal quickly reveal their bias when they see the title. The word 'progressive' seems to provoke one of two reactions: 'ah good, another generation of leftists'; or 'oh no, another generation of leftists.'

I am amazed by the extent to which progress, as an idea, has been appropriated by the left for the better part of this century....

The problem from a twentysomething point of view, is that we are looking at the world all wrong. Progress is not about left or right. 'Progressive' does not mean socialist. It does not even mean the Democratic Party platform of 1984 or 1988. It is about what works. Jack Kemp is as entitled to vie for the progressive label as Jesse Jackson. 100

And then there's this, excerpted from an earlier Liu essay:

Here is our challenge to Americans of all ages and all backgrounds: Think. Think about how to clean house. Think about how to contribute. Think in ways that will shake us free of left-right false choices. Think of how to become a born-again democrat, a new republican, a faithful progressive. Think about the destiny of young Americans at the end of an American century.

And then, for love of country, act. 101

Liu's characterization of his generation as often "post-partisan" is, of course, something of a cop-out: It rather immediately calls forth the question of "Just exactly how are they post-partisan?" At some stages Liu refuses to answer: "We are post-ideological, even post-modern. But we are not yet pre- anything." 102 At other stages, Liu does indeed betray a definite sense of their post-partisan nature:

Young Americans hold dear the noble aspirations of the Great Society and of the civil struggles that preceded it. We often take for granted the advances made possible by those struggles. But we are more
clear-eyed than our boomer predecessors were about effecting change and securing progress. We have seen—and felt—the backlash to the politics of self-righteousness. While we do our share of protesting, we devote the bulk of our energies to practical efforts to promote reform. And in so doing, we bring to bear the entrepreneurialism and media savvy that trickled down to us in the 1980s.

To look at Liu’s writing one might imagine that this sensitive and powerful author has grappled with a tension in making any sort of pronouncements as to the political values and inclinations of an entire generation—or even its majority. Try to slap too-exacting and punctilious a label on them, and you are going to walk straight away into trouble. As buster David Kurapka reminds us in his review of Strauss and Howe’s *13th Gen*:

Generation X consists not only of New Jack urban kids and Wayne’s World suburban kids, but also slackers and temps and ambitious law or business school grads; selfish types and those who are flooding the White House with resumes for positions in a national service program that hasn’t even gotten underway; PIBs (people in black) and hippie wannabes who follow the Grateful Dead; urban thirtysomething wannabes and the mountain bike/whitewater rafting crowd; the people who build shanties on campus to protest South Africa and the people who tear them down; and so on.

To claim that this generation is "post-partisan," and leave it at that, is a likely response to the highly diverse nature of this generation, some of which we’ve seen in earlier chapters. But, as generation-analysts—of which Liu is one—he too (at times anyway) searches for the commonalities which include political decisions that may relate to *shared* attributes of their upbringing and the *shared* challenges/rewards which come with living life as a
small generation in their twenties who are negotiating a pivotal life-stage in the US at a time of rapid domestic and international change. However, to define just exactly what type of political animal emerges in terms of an issues orientation (if indeed any animal emerges at all) is not easy. Several theorists have attempted this task, of which two are reproduced below. The first is excerpted from William Dunn’s ‘93 text entitled, The Baby Bust: A Generation Comes of Age:

Busters are more precisely a jumble, or as buster Dan Holland prefers, ‘a fusion’ of political impulses—conservative in some areas, liberal in others, and all points between and beyond. The mix is not the same across the generation either. While there may be a generational consensus on the environment, economic opportunity, and Operation Desert Storm, a diversity of opinion mirrors the nation’s on such issues as affirmative action policies, the Middle East, school vouchers, and government spending.

And then there is this next summary put together by Susan Mitchell of American Demographics. Her analysis is based upon some extensive polling data released by the Times Mirror Center in July of 1992:

Call it naive, but people under age 25 have higher opinions about the positive influence of business executives and of Congress than do other age groups according to the Times Mirror Center. And despite their difficulty finding jobs, young adults are not critical of corporations. They are more likely than their elders to believe that corporate profits are not too high and that corporations strike a fair balance between profits and the public interest.

On social issues, young adults are often more liberal than their elders, including baby boomers. They are less likely than others to believe in banning books from public school libraries or firing teachers because they are homosexuals. They are more likely to feel that the women’s movement has been a good
influence on the country. They also accept interracial dating more readily. And 49 percent of people aged 18 to 24 approve of giving preferential treatment to minorities to improve their situation, compared with only about one in three boomers. 106

My own thesis as to the specific ways in which busters are post-partisan is a shared reflection of much (but not all!) that the two authors above have to say. First and foremost is my easy concurrence with Dunn and Mitchell's notion of the busters as sometimes "liberal," sometimes "conservative," and sometimes a "fusion" of the two on selected single issues. This fusion idea is of particular importance. Take, for example, a focus on the family. Two-thirds of busters (65%) say that a home in which the dad works full-time and the mother is a homemaker is more likely to be a happy family than if both parents work (read conservative). 107 By way of contrast, about half of all buster marriages are begun with a period of cohabitation (read liberal). 108 Likewise, 75% of busters are said to believe that the decision on abortion should be between a woman and her doctor (read liberal); nonetheless, 66% favor parental notification of parents by doctors prior to performing an abortion on a female under the age of 18 (read conservative). 109

My second claim concerning the specific ways in which the bust has gone post-partisan is to argue that OCCASIONALLY it looks much like many of the "new democrat" positions of Bill Clinton. Bill Clinton, for example, takes
a reasonably hard line on issues of "law and order" (i.e., his introduction of legislation increasing the number of crimes subject to capital punishment). Busters likely welcomed this insofar as three-quarters of them are said to support capital punishment while also believing that the courts are too lenient in punishing criminals. Bill Clinton, to take a second example, maintains a reasonably hard line on welfare reform (i.e., his support of legislation limiting "unearned" welfare checks to two years). This meshes nicely with a Gallup poll of busters conducted in 1989 which asked individuals aged 18 to 29, "Why are some people poor?" Forty-five percent of Gallup's young respondents answered "lack of effort"—a full 10 percentage points higher than the 35% of all older Americans with the same opinion.

Does all of this mean that busters are natural born neo-liberals? No, after all, it was only 44% of this group who opted to pull the lever for our new President. However, I think it contributes to understanding the consensus issues-orientation and political personality of this generation as well as Bill Clinton's attraction to them. Finally, it's important to see how nicely a post-partisan flexibility can link-up with having to change the "partnership" role that government is to play in the larger globalization and/or industrial policy scenarios. Indeed, given the evolving complexity of so many issues (domestic
and international), it almost seems foolhardy to remain a dyed-in-the-wool anything!  

As Vice President Al Gore stated in the first line of the "Conclusion" to *Earth in the Balance*, "Life is always motion and change." 

Rounding out this ITEM #3 discussion of the rapport between Busters and Democrat Bill Clinton is the final theme mentioned earlier—that Clinton, more than any other of the 1992 presidential candidates fully interacted with the twentysomethings.

In chapter #4, I spent some time on the subject of what most busters think of most boomers (and why). I wish now to remind the reader that one part of this buster-resentment derives from many boomer’s ignorance of buster phenomena. For example, how many boomers (and beyond) can even briefly describe grunge fashion, or a rave, or the drug ecstasy? How many of these same people can name one song by Pearl Jam, En Vogue, Nirvana, Arrested Development, or Stone Temple Pilots? None of these bands is particularly obscure among the bust; these groups were all recipients of MTV’s ’93 Music Awards. "Unfair," you may be thinking, "the young have their music and we have ours." True, but there is a difference: the young of today know a great deal about the music that’s gone before them. Indeed, you could probably argue that boomers dominate the radio-airwaves to an even greater extent than they dominate television. This feeling of neglect—voiced by many a buster writer—is
commented upon below by Pagan Kennedy in an excerpt pulled from the *Voice Literary Supplement*.

Strange that it's so hard to find books about '70s pop culture. It makes you wonder if there's some kind of Watergate-style cover-up going on. Look through the bookstores and you'll find the '60s the most overanalyzed decade ever—every movement from civil rights to the flower children has spawned dozens of histories—but you really have to search for '70s lore. After all, we—at the tail end of the baby boom—will never carry the demographic clout of our older sisters and brothers. We stand in their shadow; they make us invisible.

So even if America does choose to re-examine the '70s, we will probably see it through the eyes of the '60s generation—as the embarrassing period of their early adulthood, a long wait in the fern bar before they settled down in the '80s.

Bill Clinton has gone—and continues to go—a long way to bridge this historic "buster-neglect." The apex of Clinton's attempts to establish a rapport with the bust generation was surely his summer '92 appearance on MTV. It has been estimated that Clinton's appearance on MTV was viewed by approximately 15 million young people.

Here's one description and response to this event as told by UCLA senior Christine Hagstrom writing in an Op-Ed segment of the Los Angeles *Times*:

Like many young Americans, I 'met' Bill Clinton on Tuesday night, sitting in my living room, on MTV,...It was the highlight of the campaign so far.

The network's trademark irreverence...was everywhere. Each segment opened with a shot of the White House with the MTV logo graffitied over it. In the background, an electric guitar screamed the 'Star Spangled Banner.' Statistics flashed against a psychedelic background. This alliance of high-tech entertainment and earnest political inquiry shows that a true democratic conscience can emerge in the most unexpected places.
Clinton is the one politician who has bothered to reach out, from donning Ray Bans and showing off his sax appeal on the ‘Arsenio Hall’ late night talk show, to dealing earnestly with America’s youth on cable. Clinton’s appearance on MTV shows he cares enough to coax disenchanted American youth back into the political process....

The power of TV in determining this country’s future is frighteningly apparent. The Republicans have been quick to learn its power and to capitalize on it to the detriment of Democrats. Witness Ronald Reagan’s adept use of the medium in mobilizing a huge bloc of loyal voters. Clinton’s move to MTV—the inner sanctum of a generation that has worshipped the tube—was a logical and necessary step for Democrats to take in trying to regain the presidency. 118

Hagstrom’s points are all of importance to understanding the Clinton-buster relationship. First, Hagstrom calls attention to the centrality of television-media for busters overall. Recall that busters to a greater extent than their predecessors were latchkey children, children of divorce, and often had few or no siblings to play with at home (i.e., roughly three of five busters have zero or one sibling, versus less than two in five boomers). 119 Television filled the companion-void for many young busters, and they know this media well. Second, Bill Clinton was the only major candidate to accept an invitation to MTV’s studios. George Bush reluctantly granted a late and brief ten minute interview (from his campaign-train) to MTV’s star reporter, 25-year-old Tabitha Soren. But even this meager gesture was only on the heels of Bush explaining to more mainstream journalists, "You’ve got to draw the line somewhere. And I am not going to be out there (on MTV) kind of being a teeny-bopper at 68." 120 Candidate Jerry Brown

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was equally clumsy in his handling of MTV's invitation. Before sitting down with MTV's cameras (also outside of MTV's studios), Soren was incensed to discover that Brown had changed into a more youthful outfit. 121

Behaviors such as these were a dramatic contrast with Clinton's command of this important generational conduit. When asked a serious question by his MTV studio-audience, he was equally serious. When asked a lighter question (i.e., "Did an aid really walk in on you and Hillary in your bedroom?")

Throughout each of his exchanges, Clinton communicated a gracious appreciation for the audience-interest, and an enthusiasm which bespoke to many how much he values bustur individuals. Moreover, Clinton has strove to maintain this connection to the media of buster-importance since the November election. At some '93 speaking events, for example, the President has had Soren ushered from the larger press corp packs to then grant her an exclusive one-on-one interview. 123 Clinton has likewise included a number of busters within the upper realms of his administration such as Dee Dee Myers, George Stephanopolus, Andrew Friendly, Heather Beckel, and David Leavy. 124

Not to be lost in this discussion of Bill Clinton reaching out to the bust generation is the considerable
effort that busters themselves have made to politicize their ranks. Soren herself is a fine example of this in her role on the buster-populated MTV-programming board. It was Soren who pushed the MTV-helm to incorporate a greater coverage of political issues and the election in particular into its broadcasting. The end result was the station’s million-dollar "Choose or Loose" package of news coverage, election specials, and public service announcements.

Other buster-efforts to politicize twentysomethings overall include "Rock the Vote’s" drive to increase voter registration among young Americans. Rock the Vote is a non-profit, non-partisan organization founded by members of the recording industry. The group’s primary emphasis is volunteer-run registration booths that are set-up at schools, music stores, nightclubs, and concert events such as the traveling collection of bands who constituted the 31-city, '92 tour of Lollapalooza. Much of Rock the Vote’s shoestring budget was sustained by sales of their T-shirts, stickers, and buttons reading "Censorship is UnAmerican."

It is a likely tribute to much of the buster-work accomplished within programs such as Choose or Loose, and organizations such as Rock the Vote, that nearly half of all registered busters voted in the 1992 election—a total that is up from roughly 40% in 1988. Stated more modestly, 37% of all eligible busters voted in the election of '92; up
from 29% of all eligible busters who voted in 1988.\footnote{130} Granted these percentages are lower than the busters' older counterparts, but this 8% improvement was the greatest of any age-bracket-change over this four year period.\footnote{131} And again, much of the credit here must surely go to both the buster-dominated Choose or Loose program and Rock the Vote.

This initial view of buster activism, leads me now from a focus on electoral politics, to a more general look at other buster-activities of political importance.

g. buster participation

It may come as a surprise to learn that \textit{Time} magazine in July of 1993 reported upon a National Public Opinion Research survey which found that "4.8\% of people ages 18 to 29 were members of a political organization, in contrast to 2.3\% of those 30 to 39, and 2.5\% of those 40 to 64."\footnote{132} Many of these buster-doings are highly future-oriented, and fully committed to the type of social projects and behaviors necessary for both versions of the global player scenario to work. I wish now to describe a few of the existing buster-dominated, political organizations (and even some individual activists); and then follow that up with some speculation as to a) why we haven't heard more of these people and groups, and b) whether or not we can reasonably expect their ranks to grow, stabilize, or diminish.
In looking at some of these groups and activists, I will quote from them often so as to be inclusive of "buster-voices" wherever possible. My own narration is a reflection of either having none of the activist’s own commentary, or wishing to save time by summarizing some of the specifics quickly. For organizational purposes, the disparate activist-entity-discussions are separated with asterisks rather than smoothly expository transitions. Take now a look at each of the following:

* * *

Lissa Butterfield, born 1970, is a member of a group called Riot Grrls (that’s girl with a growl) which is based, but not limited to, the American Northwest. Riot Grrls speak out against, "...competition and jealousy, take care of each other, and encourage women to gain strength by talking about personal abuse." Lissa further explains how:

Riot Grrls defy cultural stereotypes, blending traditionally pretty 1950s-era dresses with high-tops or clunky boots, and hacked off, jagged hair with artfully applied lipstick. Words like ‘rape,’ ‘incest,’ and ‘shame’ written on their arms with thick markers focus upon painful issues usually kept concealed. Although they participate in large public marches like the pro-choice marches in Washington D.C., Riot Grrls reject the traditional chants and instead bang pots and pans, scream, and wail to their own rhythms.... In a nation where corporations and consumerism define the way of life, the Riot Grrls form a group actively rebelling against behavior which seeks to guide their anonymous absorption into society. While analysts meticulously study our situation, attempting to clarify and provide solutions for our Lost Generation, we are busy finding ourselves. 

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Wendy Kopp, born 1968, is the founder and president of Teach for America. This vital group is a national corp of recent college graduates who have studied to become teachers. Each participant commits to two years of teaching in under-resourced urban and rural public schools. Wendy elaborates as follows:

The people who join Teach for America's staff and corps are driven by a recognition that what they understand to be the American Dream is not a reality. We are united by a conviction that it will become a reality only when every child in this nation has an equal opportunity to a quality education. Our approach is not to stand on the sidelines, criticize the system, and call for change. Our approach is to become personally involved in a movement to work toward our vision of a better America.

I am constantly asked how we 'sell' Teach for America....The fact is that we have never 'sold' Teach for America to graduating seniors. We have only described Teach for America to them. That has been enough....

Using fundraising skills I had learned previously, I applied for corporate grants and attained the seed money necessary to get started....Our immediate goals from the start, were to recruit a diverse group of 500 people in the spring of 1990, train them the following summer, and place them in teaching jobs in five or six geographic areas the following Fall in our nation's most under-resourced urban and rural public schools.

Word about Teach for America hit college campuses in January of 1990. By the end of April, 2,500 people had applied through a process that consisted of an essay application, a sample teaching session, and two interviews. Five hundred charter corps members came together on June 16, 1990 in Los Angeles, where they participated in an eight-week pre-service Institute which we designed, organized, and paid for....

During Teach for America's first three years, we have inspired 8,600 people to apply, and we have trained and placed 1,800 of them in twelve communities across the country, everywhere from South Central Los Angeles to remote areas in Texas and Louisiana to the South Bronx. Corps members have touched some 200,000...
students. We have built an organization with 16 offices and 80 staff. We have raised over $18 million.

* * *

Shannon Reeves, born 1969, is the Director of the NAACP's West Coast Regional Office—the youngest person ever to hold this post. After his 1989 graduation from Grambling State University, he ran for mayor of Grambling, LA, and lost by only 20 votes. Reeves has also served as a special assistant to Jesse Jackson:

I've learned that you can't quit. I think Jesse Jackson put it best in 1984, and this really applies to young leaders: 'You must be tough enough to fight, tender enough to cry, human enough to make mistakes, and humble enough to admit them. You must be strong enough to absorb pain and resilient enough to bounce back and keep moving.'

* * *

Fidel Vargas, born 1969, is the Mayor of Baldwin Park, CA. Baldwin Park is a city near Los Angeles with a population of 70,000. At the age of 24, Vargas is the youngest mayor in California, and the youngest Hispanic mayor in the country. Baldwin Park has a city-payroll of 200 employees, and a budget of $25 million annually. In the following passage Vargas describes how his response to Baldwin Park's problems culminated in a mayoral bid:

I considered my options. I could talk to the city council. I could write a letter to the school district. I could call the police department. I could call the recreation department to volunteer for one of the youth programs.

Then I realized that these institutions don't have a monopoly on the solutions. I had specific ideas about what could be done: about graffiti, about at-risk youth, about making my own community safer and cleaner.
I felt that the city should be providing more activities for youth. We needed a task force to bring together members of the business community, the schools, the local residents, the police department, and local elected officials.

I realized that it wasn't important whether a person 'who mattered' approved of these proposals. I had the ideas, the vision, and the power to create positive change.

In that moment, I decided that I would run for mayor. 137

* * *

Vanessa Kirsch, born 1965, is the founder and executive director of Public Allies (PA). The group is dedicated to identifying young people with a vision of America who wish to serve as public sector leaders, but "...face obstacles to entering work in public life such as financial constraints, family pressures, or lack of information." 138 PA recruits such people (ages 18 to 30) to participate in their Apprentice Program. This Apprentice Program consists of a) a basic seminar on government service, b) the provision of a one-year, full-time, paid position with either a government agency or non-profit, political organization, c) the matching of PA participants with a governmental official of some stature to serve as a mentor, and d) roundtable discussions of selected policy-topics between large groups of PA-participants, and, hopefully, their mentors. The following is a bit of how Kirsch describes what happens at PA gatherings:

The training, the mentors, and the team component really get things stirred up. There's a lot of sitting on the edge of your seat, heated discussion, amazement at how much is possible, being able to admit mistakes,
laughter, and because of the diversity of the team, cultural and political breakthroughs.

Never mind all the concrete work that is getting done. It seems to boil down to the fact that if young people are given tools and opportunities to make a difference, they will, and well.  

* * *

Michael Goff, born 1966, is the founder and editor-in-chief of OUT magazine—a publication focused upon gay/lesbian/bi people and issues. Here Goff speaks of both his life and the national publication which he launched:

I wasn't supposed to start a gay magazine. In fact I attended a college in California just to ensure I could start with an impenetrable closet and never come out. (High school classmates had pried the door off my old one, exposing the mess inside for all to see.)

But it didn't work out. I inched my way out of the closet—knowing full well where I was headed, but still a bit cautious about getting there. By the time I graduated and moved to New York, that stage of hesitancy was over. I was ready to get on with it....

A few weeks ago, my best friend in the world stopped by my apartment after work to give me some photos. A big-time photographer friend of his had done a full shoot—everything from a nice collage-boy look to body contortions in a pair of biking shorts. He told me, 'Put these away for 30 years and we'll look back and laugh.'

And then he told me about his fading T-cells and that his doctor wanted him to take AZT. I was silent. He kept talking, and then left for some social engagement....

Then I started to cry. First my eyes just watered. Then it became uncontrollable. Tears ran down my face and I just stood there and wept. Those photos were for me to remember him as the beautiful boy he is now, not the sick man he is afraid of becoming....

That's as close as I can get to why I started OUT magazine....At my most idealistic, I want to bring it all out from behind that dark glass of the bar—the support, the stimulation, the community, and the confidence. I want everyone to understand.
Helen Denham, born 1969, is the co-founder of the international organization, Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment, and Development (A SEED); Denham has also served on the national council of the Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC). She describes a bit about each of these groups in the excerpt below:

SEAC was founded in 1989 by a group of students at the University of North Carolina. It was formed to link together environmentalists on campuses across the country. SEAC defines environmentalism in the broader context of social justice. It works to reveal the connections between environmental destruction and human rights abuses, racial and gender discrimination, economic inequalities, and other social problems....

The purpose of A SEED is to coordinate global environmental action. The network is dedicated to decentralized, grassroots organizing. A SEED has now established regional offices in eight countries, and worked with networks in over 50 countries.

For people of this generation, getting the rhetoric of environmentalism down is the easy part. Now we must organize--and groups like SEAC and A SEED represent the best hope for concrete change. Young people recognize the environmental challenges before us and are more willing than ever to take practical steps to meet them. With arms linked, we are ready for action. 141

* * *

Gloria Horwitz, born 1967, is the founder of Empty the Shelters (ETS). The goal of ETS is, "to join the energy and idealism of youth with the experience of homeless and low-income communities." 142 The easily imagined difficulty of forming these "partnerships" (as well as the scope of their goal) makes it understandable that ETS has only a "modest" list of quantifiable accomplishments and participants. But listen to the learning that comes out of this crucible:
Empty the Shelters has had many peaks and valleys in its short life. Throughout it all, I have kept faith that we are doing something right, because we do not ignore the anger and frustration out there.

A wise woman named Lou from Mississippi once told me, 'When you open your eyes, it's hard not to see.' Each day is a challenge to remember the power of ordinary vision and the danger of extraordinary blindness. At ETS, we have developed the confidence, skills, and critical analysis needed to challenge the existing structures and laws that result in homelessness.

And then there is this memorable four-point list of "advice for activists:"

1. Be honest about your identity and the ways in which they influence your perspective and your actions. For me, thinking of myself as a feminist has helped to be more conscious of the fact that I think and act like a woman.

2. Remember that today's radical is tomorrow's liberal and next year's moderate. Bill Clinton taught us that you can protest military action and still run for president twenty years later.

3. Don't be afraid to take a risk. Sonia Sanchez recalls that 'Malcom X was saying out loud what African Americans had been saying all along behind closed doors.'

4. Revolutionaries come in unlikely packages. Be prepared for the most unlikely of messengers. They are elementary school teachers, poets, bartenders, nurses, engineers, high school students, reporters, and rabbis. Expect it where you least expect it. 

Mark Anderson is the founder and director of an organization named Positive Force. The group organizes punk rock benefit concerts. As Mark explains it:

Positive Force is a group of young people who work for social change through underground music. We organize punk rock benefits for grassroots organizations. We also prepare educational rallies on issues such as racial awareness, choice, health care,
and better government. We raised over $100,000 for non-profit organizations through over 150 benefit concerts featuring bands like Fugazi, the Holy Rollers, Scream, Riot Grrls, and Bikini Kill. Music is an incredible vehicle that knows no race, no class, no barriers—this is why I see Positive Force as a great mechanism for social justice work.\textsuperscript{144}

\* \* \*

In looking over these noble endeavors, the reader may be wont to ask why haven’t all of us heard more about these important buster-activists? My own feeling is that much of it gets back to the combination of themes which has been loosely called "living in the shadow of the boom."\textsuperscript{145} As detailed in Chapter \#4, all that the boom does, and has done, gets amplified tremendously by virtue of their large absolute numbers. Among the consequences: many busters may be experiencing some generational intimidation about boasting as to what they are collectively doing when so very much is perceived to have taken place before them. (The boomers big-time Vietnam, for example, has been replaced with a more abbreviated brush with Iraq; likewise, the scandal-heavy Watergate has been replaced with the more toned-down Iran/Contra debacle.\textsuperscript{146}) A related theme which may help to explain some of the buster-activist’s obscurity is the recurrent buster association of "grandstanding political noise" with the type of boomer-behaviors that are linked to a now-departed era. As the aforecited Claudia
Horwitz of ETS has put it, "Demonstration projects have replaced organized demonstrations."\textsuperscript{147} Add to these arguments yet another claim that the boomer-dominated media remains all-too-content to focus on it's own past, present, and future accomplishments.

I have a final notion as to some of this buster-activist obscurity which most definitely falls under the rubric of thinking creatively. It involves, first of all, noting that much of the activism described above is of rather recent vintage. This despite the fact that the buster-helm is now into their early 30s. Could it be that the activist part of this generation lies further toward the middle of the cohort as opposed to the front of it? I am more-than-a-little reticent to make the argument I'm about to make, but it has to do with birth order dynamics. (My hesitancy here derives from the unethical way in which broad generalizations about immutable characteristics could conceivably self-fulfill.)

As was shown in chapter 1 of this dissertation, the leading edge of the baby boom held a high percentage of first borns (i.e., in 1947 it was one in two).\textsuperscript{148} By way of contrast, the leading edge of the baby bust held only a small percentage of first borns (i.e., in 1962 it was just over one in four).\textsuperscript{149} Why might this be important?

According to aficionados of birth order impacts upon personality traits, there are some definite and recurrent
profiles which emerge. Here's one shorthand enumeration offered by Kevin Leman in his bestselling '85 text, The Birth Order Book:

- on first-borns and 'onlies': perfectionist, reliable, conscientious, list maker, well organized, critical, serious, scholarly

- on middle-borns: mediator, fewest pictures in the family photo album, avoids conflict, independent, extreme loyalty to the peer group, many friends, a maverick

- on last-borns: manipulative, charming, blames others, shows off, people person, good salesperson, precocious, engaging

Leman goes on to explain how first-borns generally populate the ranks of society's overachievers. Much of the reasoning here has to do with the claim that first borns, when very young, tend think of themselves as universal-centers by virtue of having, for a while anyway, mom and dad's exclusive attention. However, when they enter into the larger world as grade school students they come to the "rude" realization that they are not the planet's only prince or princess, but simply another face in the crowd. And they don't like it! So what many first borns will do is adopt the task of distinguishing themselves with a larger-than-average, worldly role to play. If there's a grain of truth to this, then some measure of the '60s vaunted youth activism may be attributable to a critical mass of first-born-energy turning 18 and older. Likewise, Leman's notions may explain a bit of the delay in widespread buster-activism insofar as it was not until late in the bust-birth-years.
that boomers began to replace parents of the generation before them (i.e., those now fifty- and sixtysomethings) in birthing a lot of first-born busters into brand new nuclear families.

Rounding out this dissertation sub-section is the second question asked prior to listing some of today's buster-activists: Can we expect their ranks to grow, stabilize, or decline? My own faith is that there exists some very strong reasons for believing that buster-activist-ranks will grow. Forming the centerpiece of my argument is that young Americans are once again being challenged, encouraged, and given some measure of opportunities to serve their communities while also remaining financially afloat. Most conspicuous in this regard is Clinton's September '93 signing of the National and Community Service Trust Act which established what Clinton likes referring to as "a domestic version of the Peace Corps." This "new Democrat" bill authorizes $300 million for FY 1994; $500 million for FY 1995; and $700 million for FY 1996. Fifteen-thousand people are to participate in the first year alone. Their benefits will include a living wage plus $4,725 annually to be later (or retro-actively) applied to college expenses. In assessing the implications of his program, Bill Clinton expressed the following in an essay he wrote for publication in the New York Times:

For my generation, the reality of national service was born 32 years ago tomorrow, when President John F.
Kennedy created the Peace Corps. At its peak, the Peace Corp enrolled only 16,000 volunteers yet it changed the way a generation of Americans look at themselves and the world....

In 1993, we’ll restore the spirit of service by asking our people to serve at home. We won’t refight the wars we won, but we’ll tackle the growing domestic dangers that threaten our future....

I am convinced that after 12 years of drifting apart instead of working together we are ready to meet the challenge. From a 14-year-old boy in North Dakota who sent us $1,000 to help pay off the deficit, to a 92-year-old widower in Kansas who followed his example, people are demonstrating that they want to give something back to their nation.

National service will exercise our talents and rebuild our communities. It will harness the energy of our youth and attack the problems of our time. It will bring together men and women of every age and race and lift up our nation’s spirit. And for all of us, it will rekindle the excitement of being Americans.

Two points fall out Clinton’s commentary that I would like to both reiterate and elaborate upon. The first is Clinton’s notion that by providing avenues with which young people can serve their communities, there is born a larger commitment that extends above and beyond the immediate tasks to which the contributors are plied. Can that be verified?

Thinking creatively for a moment, this writer has seen a curious confirmation of Clinton’s claim by helping to orchestrate volunteer-contributions at the University of Hawaii’s Student Educators Against AIDS organization. More specifically, however much "difficulty" went into to soliciting an initial contribution from any one volunteer, their later efforts were much more forthcoming and even actively sought. Granted, some of this delayed enthusiasm is likely attributable to getting over the first-time-
nervousness of doing a new activity, but I also believe that other considerations enter the equation. To wit, there is a bit of "investment" which attends doing something for someone or something like a cause: The contributor has suddenly become a semi-stakeholder in you and/or the cause's import insofar as anything less than ultimate success could then be construed as a reflection of either the volunteer's own contribution as lackluster and/or the volunteer having made a poor decision to cast his or her lot with you or the cause in the first place. Stated alternatively, the further success of anything (or anyone) to which one has contributed, can be subsequently construed as a reflection of both a) the volunteer's fine contribution and b) the volunteer's equally fine ability to select persons/causes that are worthy winners. Clinton's service program is a welcome entree towards catalyzing a such a positive spiral regarding both social commitment and activism.

Clinton's second and related point is that we have just come through "12 years of drifting apart as opposed to working together." The importance of this may be more than just the simple absence of an entree to the positive spiral described above. It may also imply something of a converse negative spiral regarding social commitment and activism. Indeed, this was something of a theme which worked its way into a number of MTV's "Choose or Lose" programs. The
aforecited buster and UCLA senior Christine Hagstrom explains:

The most compelling of the Choose or Lose features was its segment on voter apathy. It reminded the over-30 set that the earliest memory of today's young voters was of Watergate, not of the New Frontier. And because no President since John F. Kennedy has bothered to challenge young people by tapping into their energy and idealism, the alienation from politics has grown with each successive generation. Now too many of our young people view government with distrust and pessimism.

Some politicians say we are a part of a 'cultural erosion.' But it is our leaders who are responsible for the malaise, for the paralysis. They failed to address the issues which affect our quality of life: AIDS, crime, education, the environment, healthcare, and unemployment. 155

As a guarded optimist, I find myself in full agreement with both Clinton and Hagstrom. It seems to me that our "need to be needed" has been much demoted these past 12 years. Likewise, it seems to me that commitment given once leads more easily to commitment given twice. For both of these reasons, I am hopeful that the already considerable buster participation concerning any number of social ills will continue to grow.

h. a boomer-buster rapprochement

If you accept (as I do) that a) boomers occupy a reasonable share of society's upper realm, and b) busters congregate towards the lower end of society's multi-faceted totem pole of power, then it becomes possible to say that some bridging of the hostility which separates these
generations (as is catalogued in chapter #4) will then contribute to a more successful evolution of the long-term, private/public sector partnerships as outlined in either version of the global player scenarios. Take, for example, globalization. A boomer-buster (and vice versa) rapprochement is here called for insofar as the top (read boomers and older) have become increasingly less dependent upon the bottom (read busters and younger) to serve as either employees or consumers. Much of the bottom’s welfare, as Reich explains, is therefore predicated upon a ration of goodwill from the top. What about busters and boomers within an industrial policy milieu? Here the top is dependent upon a well-rounded and willing set of labor-force entrants capable of fitting into all of the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of society. In either instance--globalization or industrial policy--my point is that an easing of the tension between the bust and boom generations will contribute heartily to the success of both global player scenarios.

What than can be said of this rapprochement-prospect? Happily, there are several rationales which bode well in terms of a faith that the buster-boomer (or boomer-buster) hostility can be brought down a notch or two. Among these considerations is the likelihood that boomers will move beyond what busters consider a striking boomer-ignorance of buster-ranks. Take, for example, all of the rather nascent
buster-activism described in the pages above. As these and other efforts become more long-standing, so too may the boomer awareness and appreciation of them.

In a related vein, the media are also waking up to portray what Strauss and Howe have called the busters' "carnival culture." Fueling much of this notice is the $125 billion that busters spend annually as of 1993. In wishing to tap this lucrative market, advertisers (and the networks they purchase time from) are only now becoming aware of how to attract this market via becoming inclusive of buster people, buster lifestyles, and buster issues in their shows, publications, and product pitches. As Karen Ritchie, VP of Media Services at McCann-Erikson Worldwide put it in a '92 address to the Magazine Publishers Association:

Today there are 46 million adult customers out there who are 18 to 29 years old. We are kidding ourselves if we believe that these people truly care about the crisis of turning 40, or coping with teenage children, or one more reunion of one more 1960s sitcom.

If Ritchie is correct, we are all in store for some increased media attention to be expended upon buster people, buster lifestyles, and buster issues. In the process, I am confident that this too will contribute to a boomer-buster rapprochement. More specifically, busters will feel less ignored, while boomers can see and learn more about the younger generation just below them.
To their credit, some boomers have already turned an explicitly sympathetic eye to the bust despite the many studies purporting to enumerate this generation's shortcomings. Here, for example, is the commentary of syndicated columnist Ellen Goodman writing in an essay published by the Washington Post:

Here is where youth-bashing usually strikes a flat note. Kids don't raise themselves or teach themselves. When one generation faults the younger, we forget that the older are often projecting downward their own sense of failure or confusion.

The less lyrical truth is that there's an intricate relationship between the generations. The anxiety of elders may be released in periodic youth-bashing. But worrying about kid's values is worrying about the values we have passed along. Worrying about their ignorance is worrying about our teaching.

So the chorus of concern about 'Democracy's Next Generation' should be followed by another strong refrain: one of concern about democracy's present generation. 159

Another like-minded boomer is Nicolaus Mills. Mills had this to say in an essay entitled "Calling a Truce in the Generational Wars," which appeared in a June '93 edition of the Chicago Tribune:

To their critics, the young are a latchkey generation, the product of divorce and dual-career households. They dismiss the young's taste in music as a reflection of their anomie. They see their fondness for the lumberjack look in clothes as saying 'I don't care.' They equate their willingness to live at home with their parents until they land a good job as a lack of character.

To me what is especially striking about the 1990s war on the young is, however, that the harshest blows are so often delivered by my generation, the Baby Boomers of the 1960s. We Boomers have done more than forget how much easier it was to come of age in a time of prosperity and dramatic social change. We have lost sight of how we were helped, how, even when we were
being called hippies and radicals, we had an older generation ready to plead our cause.  

Of final importance to the likelihood of some boomer-buster rapprochement are joint financial concerns. No where is this more apparent than when speaking of Social Security. As to the way things stand right now, Beth Krier, staff writer for the Los Angeles Times notes, "Social Security is a very good deal for today’s retirees. It’s a bad deal for the baby boomer. And it will be an absolute financial disaster for the generation following the baby boomers." I will not here reiterate the prejudicial mechanics of our contemporary Social Security system, as this was fully catalogued in my chapter #4 discussion of the bust and their economic prospects. What I will say, however, is that the present Social Security edifice is walking us straight away into what strikes me as two alternatives. First, is movement towards an intergenerational battle between busters and boomers when the latter begin to retire en masse. Second, is for all of us, busters, boomers, silents, and GIs, to sit down, soon, and retool the social compact between our nation’s old, young, and mid-lifers. 

As a guarded optimist, I’m hopeful about this second alternative. More specifically, I believe that the Social Security debacle will translate into a greater collaboration between the generations. This seems doubly so for those with the most to gain: boomers and busters. Thankfully, there are some reasonable ideas out there about how to
accomplish this: A good place to begin is with a perusal of the suggestions offered by Lee Smith in an article published in the 1/13/92 edition of *Fortune* magazine. 

Thinking creatively, my faith in the ultimate success of alternative #2 (as described above) has also to do with the fact that the so-called silent or good-times generation is soon to be replacing those above them as our nation's elderly. My utterly anecdotal reason for feeling positive about this vis-a-vis Social Security solutions, is that the wealthy fifty- and sixtysomethings have always struck me as more willing to bend on this issue than those who are older. Perhaps this has to do with noting that today's seniors were the original architects of our Social Security program (however much it has evolved), and they may likely feel some ownership about it.

Finally, I am sanguine as to the prospects of the above alternative #2 (i.e., generational collaboration) insofar as I foresee a greater measure of "age-indexed" articles, books, lectures, and broadcasts coming up on the near horizon. My belief here derives from noting that the contemporary boomer-and-older output of lectures, as well as print and broadcast media is about to be joined by evermore busters who are only now reaching the age when many begin to teach, publish, direct, etc. I believe, therefore, that we can soon a) expect to hear more of how busters took it on the chin in the '80s, b) expect to hear more of just how
skinny is the percentage of governmental expenditures which benefit youth, and c) expect to hear much, much, more of the perils which attend today's Social Security system. In short: age-indexed analyses are about to take off.

To summarize, my point in this chapter subsection is to argue that an easing of the generational tensions which exist between busters and boomers will contribute to the ultimate success of the long-term, public/private-sector partnerships of the globalization and industrial policy scenarios. This generational rapprochement may emerge as result of inducements including Social Security, media attention to a newly discovered "target market," and, finally, the fact that busters are now aging into their thirties—a time when many people begin to truly move-and-shake society.

i. final comments on the link between busters and a US Global Player

As of this writing (late-'93), the US is approaching the end of year one with the Clinton Administration. And in the world-according-to-Bill-Clinton, it's entirely possible for us to embrace both an industrial policy and certain of globalization's prerogatives. In a recent speech, for example, at American University, Clinton said that he saw no contradiction between an aggressive trade policy and free trade. Enter, therefore, his simultaneous endorsement
of a publicly financed auto consortium right along with what he claims is a reasonably unappended NAFTA agreement. Is Clinton justified in believing that we can maintain this type of joint embrace? Maybe not. An "overdose" of one or the other will entail either foreign retaliation (i.e., protectionist car- and trade-wars), or domestic disaffection (i.e., unhappy workers and unions over the short term in particular).

Reich as a theorist is interesting in all of this: He feels that we can maintain both a top flight America and happy international allies by leaning exclusively into his version of globalization mandates. But, of course there are some problems with this such as the time delays involved in growing the requisite crop of symbolic analysts. Moreover, there is some definite hubris to much of what Reich has to say: For Reich, it's not much of a question that the global workload of so-called symbolic analysis is simply ours for the taking. That others on the international scene might give us a run for the task, doesn't seem to overly concern him. What can be made of all this?

As was mentioned in an earlier segment of this dissertation, the conflicting interests above will not be ultimately harmonized until we as a species remove our national lenses and begin to talk in terms of globally orchestrated trade/aid/investment decisions. And as was also mentioned earlier, we are many miles from that future
crossroads. Make no mistake: Bill Clinton and his administration (of which Reich is a part) were elected because of a professed commitment to keep America on top. (That I am personally so fond of Reich is attributable to his analysis of the international tissue that links us all together in a web of interdependence. This is the terrain from which the imperatives of globally orchestrated aid/trade/investment will ultimately illuminate themselves.)

How then does all of this relate to the bust? I’ll state quickly that I am not going to speculate on the bust’s reaction to the distant future-crossroads mentioned above! But what of the short-term future?

Let’s say that Clinton is able to sustain his combo-approach of simultaneously embracing industrial policy and globalization tenets. He does this by implementing soft versions of each while also alternatively tilting in his emphasis of one or the other (i.e., this latter alternation-tactic will keep the critics and losers off balance). What then are we looking at? Some measure of tinkering with the formal economy (read industrial policy) and some measure of tinkering with foundational supports (read globalization). What might be called for on the part of busters in either instance?

The simplest aspect to see is that we are speaking here of new and novel governmental partnerships with the private sector—all of which call for an ability to accept change.
This much should be no problem for many busters given their post-partisan openness to honest attempts at societal changes concerning issues of importance to them. Moreover, many of the distinguishing partnership aspects of Clinton’s governmental program should find a highly receptive audience among those young people who now seem destined to fare worst of all. One such aspect is the Clinton administration’s support of "school-to-work" programs intended to prepare non-college-bound youth for the local job markets in which they find themselves. Among the most successful of these programs (in terms of employment-results) are Boston’s ProTech with a focus upon careers in the healthcare field; and Georgetown, Delaware’s Operation Skyway with a focus upon careers in aviation. 165 These programs combine educator/employer collaboration along with in-class/on-site activities for students. Labor Secretary Reich was himself shown touring Boston’s ProTech on a July ‘93 edition of "The Brokaw Report." In it, Reich noted, "Oh after today, I’m more resolved than ever that the youth apprenticeship programs that we’re developing are moving in the right direction." 166 The Clinton administration has thus far tagged a total of $270 million for FY ‘94 to further support school-to-work programs for non-college-bound youth. 167

In addition to an openness to change, is there anything else that is called for on the part of busters vis-a-vis a US embrace of the globalization and/or industrial policy
scenarios? It seems to me that there is a second character-attribute which attends even a partial adoption of globalization's call to concentrate upon "foundational supports." The character-attribute I am referring to is an ability to defer gratification (i.e., the payoff from concentrating upon foundational supports often has a long fuse on it). Unfortunately, as was shown in chapter #4, deferred gratification may not be one of the bust generation's strongest suits. Does that mean that busters will more likely favor an emphasis upon industrial policy over and above an emphasis upon globalization? Maybe not.

The argument that I wish to make here is the final one of this chapter; but it is also a bit complicated. My overarching point is that the bust may yet prove itself quite capable of the ability to defer to gratification as is called-for by a globalization emphasis.

The rudiments of this argument involve, first of all, harkening back to data-sets that were enumerated and cited in earlier sections of this dissertation. The first data-set involves looking at all that the busters are after and expect in their lives. As we've seen this includes happy marriages, interesting careers, meaning in life, time with their children, time for their bodies, time for travel, and all the material trappings of a high living standard. The second data-set involves looking to the studies which purport to show that a healthy majority of the bust believe
that their generation is not as well positioned as was that of their parents at a like age: Roper College Track, for example, recently reported that "Three quarters of American college seniors say it will be harder for their generation to achieve the American Dream than it was for the last generation." Likewise, a 1992 Washington Post-ABC News poll of young adults found that 70% agreed with the statement that the country's best years were behind it.

That these two data-sets do not sit easily alongside each other is likely a source of smoldering anger among many busters as was seen in chapter #4. When push comes to shove, however, they come down decidedly in favor of believing that they as individuals are going to emerge triumphant. Take, for example, a 1992 Fortune magazine survey of busters aged 21 - 29 who were asked, among other questions, the following two: First, "How optimistic are you about the nation's economic prospects in the next ten years?" To this, 45% said "optimistic" while 55% said "pessimistic." Now couple that with responses to this second query: "How optimistic are you about your career and financial prospects in the next ten years?" To this, 89% of busters said "optimistic" while only 11% said "pessimistic."

How have these inconsistent images played themselves out within the bust? Littwin gave us one answer in chapter #1: postponed adulthood. And indeed, we've seen a good deal
of that: boomeranging home, delaying marriage, delaying full-time job commitments, turning 4 year college degrees into five year college degrees, etc. But, for better or worse, postponing adulthood must presumably come to an end at some point as busters age. Out of this may well come a reconciliation of their great expectations with the concrete reality of often being unable to have "everything." Part and parcel of that reconciliation may well be a commitment to balance, pragmatism, and the extended time-orientation necessary to achieve some of what they so earnestly desire.

Is the argument a believable one? Strauss and Howe offer some interesting and convincing support. In the following passage, for example, they speculate as to what might be fueling some of these polls that purport to show such buster confidence in their own personal drives to have it all:

This is also why surveys show today’s youngster to be so upbeat about his own personal future even though he’s so downbeat on everyone else his age: When you talk to the pollster, you’re also reassuring yourself that you’ve got to be the exception....The popular image of today’s young winner is of the guy who’s dead certain he’s a champ....He’s someone who’s got the end-zone taunt and the black jersey.  

If Strauss and Howe are correct in their argument above, it then becomes at least easier to believe that a massive buster reconciliation of their great expectations with a scary world may be in the works. In the best of lights, what could result are the aforementioned pragmatism,
balance, and the extended time horizon which comes with an ability to defer gratification. Of course the compromise doesn't have to turn out that way. Bitterness and a collective embrace of the martyr's mantle is also possible. But fortunately, there are busters like Steven Gibb (an author and psychologist) whose aforementioned work is a bold attempt to keep the worse from happening. Take, for example, the following passage pulled from what he calls his "self-help guide for twentysomethings" entitled Twentysomething: Floundering and Off the Yuppie Track, published in 1992:

Our ambivalence about careers and marriage means that we are not fully participating in life. We may become partial people afraid to live full speed, grow old with grace, and decay with style. We resist complexity, sex, conversation, and tailoring. We insist on maintaining a naif-like pseudo-innocence. The adult world appears perverse, selfish, disenchanted, and full of generalized greed and violence.

Most of us have perfected a stutter-step by now so we can avoid our next stage in life. With so much bizarre turbulence coming from within us and going on around us, it's harder now to reach a stable state of maturity, values, or direction, call it what you will. And it is just these things we need to propel us beyond emotional young adulthood....

This turbulence--complex, frustrating, and unpredictable as it is--in the last analysis doesn't excuse us from the responsibility we have to get on with it. I have tried to make the point that ambivalence is our natural and understandable reaction to insecure times. Ambivalence, feeling bogged down and confused, all of this is an appropriate response--for a while. But there may come a time when we become 'sick and tired of being sick and tired' when we realize that one must proceed with certainty, when we just have to cut our losses and might-have-beens and just do it. Boyfriend X, not boyfriend Y. The Southwest, not the East Coast. Computer graphics, not tax law.
Remember, you can always alter course once you start, but getting going is the most important thing. This is an exciting and pivotal transformation. We point to new attitudes and directions in our lives and say, 'By God, wouldn’t you know it, I finally grew up.'

Compromise, balance, pragmatism, an extended timeline--a pretty good graduation from postponed adulthood. Add to this the busters' post-partisan openness (i.e., chapter subsection a) and the busters' activism/participation (i.e., chapter subsection b); and you have the completed set of buster-strengths vis-a-vis the global player scenarios.

ENDNOTES


5. Rosenberg et al, p.69, col.2.


7. Reich, p.127.

8. Reich, p.128.

9. Reich, p.129.

10. Reich, p.114.

12. Reich, p.129.
15. Reich, p.114.
18. Reich, p.113.
19. Reich, p.177.
20. Reich, p.178.
22. Reich, p.231.
23. Reich, p.247.
32. Reich, p.265.
33. Reich, p.115.
34. Reich, p.284.
35. Reich, p.138.
36. Reich, p.48.


42. Woodward, p.40.


44. Woodward, p.40.


46. Reich, p.145.


49. Woodward, p.47.


55. Abshire, p.185.

56. Batra, p.3.

57. Batra, p.192.

58. Batra, pps.3, and 77.


61. Johnson, pps.9-10.


72. Dunn, p.121

73. Barone, p.40.


75. Barone, p.40.

77. Dunn, p.114.

78. Dunn, p.123.

79. Susan Mitchell, "How to Talk to Young Adults," *American Demographics*, April 1993, pp.52-53.


82. Dan Cray et al, p.52.


84. Dunn, p.120.


87. Cohen, p.98.


89. Cohen, p.100.

90. Cohen, pp.98-100.

91. Dunn, p.120.

92. Dunn, p.117.


95. Dunn, p.117.

96. Dunn, p.121.

97. Dunn, p.121.
98. Dunn, p.133.
99. Dunn, p.132.

100. Eric Liu, "The End of Progress," The Next Progressive, Spring 1993, pp.4-5.


102. Liu, "The End of Progress?," p.4.


105. Dunn, p.131.


108. Dunn, p.96.

109. Dunn, p.120.


111. Howe et al, p.164.


120. Dunn, p.132.
126. Mitchell, p.54.
130. Christopher John Farley, "Taking Shots at the Baby Boomers," Time, 7/19/93, p.31.
131. Farley, p.31.
132. Farley, p.31.
134. Butterfield, pp.5-6.
139. Kirsch, p.16.


143. Horwitz, p.29.


145. Kennedy, p.123.


147. Horwitz, p.28.


149. Jones, p.164.


156. Howe et al, p.191.


163. Smith, pp.68-72.


168. Howe et al, p.89.

169. Dunn, p.123.


Epilogue

This project looks much like what economist and author Lawrence Malkin might refer to as a "tract piece:" It's very broad in that it encompasses numerous power variables. Take, for example, the macro-scenarios of champion, has-been, and player. The critical causation-factors within each of these depictions are not only multiple, but also disparate. As such, there is no single slide-rule with which to measure and compare many of the dynamics I spend time looking at. This makes putting together a single "conclusion" something of a misplaced emphasis.

The buster-segments are likewise difficult to singularly summarize. This generation remains relatively enigmatic given a) the phenomenon of postponed adulthood, and b) the buster's striking diversity. Fortunately, the use of alternative scenarios serves as the perfect springboard for exploring this group of people. It allows me to feature, for example, the busters as policy wonks, broken losers, entrepreneurial mavericks, etc. Indeed, meting out this data as per the alternative scenarios is what I consider to be my original contribution to the field.

Given this overall framework, my final thoughts are, first, to simply note that the depictions of chapter #5 seem to be the directions in which are now headed. Take, for example, Clinton's election and buster-activism, and you have two recent developments which both bode well for a
global player future. Second, and also of relevance to the
global player scenario, is to re-emphasize that busters have
good reason to more often think of themselves as a
generation. Given both this dawning realization and the
busters' advancing ages, I expect that we shall be hearing
much more of folks within this generation cooperating on
projects of mutual concern.

Third, I believe it's safe to say that a very loose
hierarchy of causation does exist when standing the buster-
data next to the macro-scenario-data within any of the three
depictions of chapters 3, 4, and 5. More specifically, it
seems to me that the latter macro-forces are the larger, or
stronger, of these two. My feeling this way is attributable
to a) the fact that the busters are just one US generation
(and a small one at that), and b) the US is just one member
of a larger international community.

Fourth and finally, when thinking of the bust, I often
find myself returning to the summary sentiments of Ken
Dychtwald, a professor, psychologist, and author of a text
entitled Age Wave. Dychtwald forecasts that busters will
fall into three groups as they move into adulthood:

- A small group that succeeds no matter what and
  proves Social Darwinism's survival-of-the-fittest
  theory.

- A large group that settles for a lesser version of
  the American Dream, telling themselves 'I may not be
  able to buy a BMW, but a Chevy Blazer's just fine.'
  These people will emphasize recreation and self-
  satisfaction rather than career achievements.
- A significantly large underclass of disenfranchised, disillusioned busters.³

In a small way, each of Dychtwald's three categories can be seen to correspond to light versions of the depictions in chapters 3, 4, and 5. Dychtwald, in other words, might see us as muddling through the future with moderate aspects of all the scenarios acting simultaneously. However, it's a tricky argument for him to make insofar as certain of these scenario elements are inconsistent (i.e., try combining progressive taxation, no-holds creative destruction, hyperinflation, etc).

My own feeling, once again, is that we are moving into a version of the global player scenario. I am heartened by this insofar as I also find it to be the most desirable of the alternatives I've outlined. What's frightening, however, is that it might not take too much to upset the proverbial applecart. (As Kevin Phillips explained, if Clinton doesn't come through for the middle class, there could be a rapid and ugly change of course.) Busters can contribute to the success of a global player future via the set of attributes that I attempt to identify and quantify in chapter #5: their post-partisan openness; their involvement/activism; and a reconciliation of great expectations with a scary world such that the results include pragmatism, balance, and an ability to defer gratification.
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