What writing have you done for this?

What do you want to have done by the end of the retreat?

What do you think you can have done by the end of tomorrow?

What do you think you can have done by the end of tonight?

It’s important to write in sentences, as this is a warm up exercises. i.e. do not write in bullet points or list items.

So far, I have written a short treatment, of two pages, describing the main finding I want to promote in the article, and some of the potential implications of it to thinking about the fragility of peace in Northern Ireland in the context of Brexit. Further to this, I have written more material in the form of an email to a couple of staff within the university. I know one of these staff members, and have interest from him to progress further after next week.

By the end of the retreat, I hope to have a strong draft paper, though missing many of the key references, which I can pass to Brian for consideration over the following week. I also hope to have identified, and where convenient completed, a number of specific analyses which strengthen the argument and quantify the magnitude of some of the effects identified.

By the end of tomorrow, I hope either to have moved onto a different topic – most likely fertility – or to have identified that further progress on this particular project is an effective use of the finite time available.

By the end of tonight, I hope to have completed an abstract; and to have written the high level structure of the paper, including a number of topic sentences. I am not sure at this stage whether developing the structure from the topic sentences, or developing the topic sentences from the structure, would be more effective for me in this instance, and I hope that by starting to write on this I will have a clearer idea.

[words: 285]

WRITING SESSION ON WEDNESDAY EVENING [1 HOUR]

THE AIMS OF THIS SESSION ARE TO PRODUCE AN ABSTRACT, AND ALSO TO PRODUCE A SMALL NUMBER OF TOPIC SENTENCES, AND THEN TO START TO STRUCTURE THEM BY THEME. THIS WILL BE ONE HOUR LONG, AND I’VE NOT WRITTEN FOR A WHILE, SO IT MAY FEEL TOUGH. BUT I SHOULD KEEP AT IT. I SHOULD ALSO BE SURE TO TREAT IT AS SOMETHING VERY FINITE THAT I’M KEEN TO TREAT AS PRECIOUS RATHER THAN AN EXPANSE OF TIME TO TRY TO CROSS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

ABSTRACT

Background

The ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland led to decades of death, destruction and cultural and social instability. Throughout much of the latter part of the Twentieth century, terrorism was something much more associated with Northern Irish Christian sectarianism than with Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East. Terrorism in the UK was largely ‘home grown’, an outgrowth of bitter conflict and contradiction over identity in the island of Ireland, stemming from an unresolved tension about sovereignty and national self-identity which arguably began with the establishment of both the Republic of Ireland and the State of Northern Ireland in 1928[?], and exploded into a decades-long war in 1972.

Aim and methods

This paper will show how the scale of conflict after 1972 in Northern Ireland was large enough to affect the demographic records of Northern Ireland for decades. By arranging mortality risks for males and females in Northern Ireland by both age in single years, and year, producing a demographic ‘map’ known as a Lexis surface, we show how the events of 1972 led to very rapid increases in mortality rates in young adult males in Northern Ireland. We show how this mortality rate pattern is much more characteristic of wars than of trends typically observed in peacetime, and led to male death rates in Northern Ireland to exceed those of comparable populations in Eastern Europe during the height of the conflict.

Findings

The ages most affected by the mortality effects of the Troubles were between ages XXX and XXX. If mortality rates at these ages observed in Northern Ireland observed before 1972 had continued afterwards, then we estimate around XXXX more Northern Irish males would have been alive by the age of 50 in XXXX. If the mortality rates at these ages had remained at similar levels to the rest of the UK after 1972 then XXXX more Northern Irish males would have been alive by the age of 50. For females the relative disadvantage was much smaller…

Discussion

The very sharp increase in young adult mortality risks seen in Northern Ireland after 1972 compared with in the decades before suggests that the political and military events of that year, such as Bloody Sunday, ignited a ‘febrile’ and uneasy peace which had existed previously. Young adult male mortality rates then remained sharply elevated for about a decade, then moderately elevated for around a decade longer. By the time New Labour came to power in 1997, leading to the first successful peace process since 1972 and previously unthinkable power sharing arrangements which continued until 2017, most of the excess mortality likely associated with the Troubles had dissipated, suggesting there may have been more of a mutual willingness to engage in negotiations by this period than in earlier political regimes.

If the underlying sectarian tensions which allowed the events of 1972 to ‘ignite’ the decades long conflict still exist in Northern Ireland, then the state of Northern Ireland can still be characterized as politically ‘febrile’, and so there remains a clear and concerning risk that further rounds of war-like conflict risk being ‘reignited’ by future political events, the issue of the Northern Irish border in the context of upcoming Brexit negotiations being the most obvious example of a potential future flash point.

[END OF ABSTRACT]

MANUSCRIPT STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

METHODS

A Lexis surface is a way of representing temporal population data as if it were spatial topographic data.

The dataset used was the Human Mortality Database.

The HMD presents all-cause mortality risks by age in single years and year for around 40 countries.

The availability of death rates for the same ages and years to those available in Northern Ireland mean that detailed comparisons between age-year specific mortality risks in Northern Ireland and neighbouring countries and regions can be made.

The human toll of the Troubles in terms of death rates was estimated using a lifetable approach. This involved taking the number of males and females born in Northern Ireland from XXXX to YYYY, and applying either the actual or counterfactual age-specific mortality rates to them, with the counterfactual rates being those which might have been expected if the increases in mortality rates seen after 1972 had not taken place.

‘Counterfactual’ estimates of age-specific mortality risks during the Troubles are produced based on a number of different assumptions.

Within younger adulthood, deaths through external causes, including violent death, are predominant causes.

The R statistical programming language was used, with visualisations produced using the Lattice package.

RESULTS

DISCUSSION

[WORDS 830]

THE NEXT SESSION WILL FURTHER REFINE THE MANUSCRIPT STRUCTURE IN TERMS OF SECTIONS, SUBSECTIONS AND TOPIC SENTENCES. A SERIES OF TECHNICAL TASKS SHOULD ALSO BE DEFINED IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THIS.

THIS IS THE START OF THE FIRST SESSION ON THE SECOND DAY, THE FIRST FULL DAY OF THE COURSE. I WILL HAVE 90 MINUTES TO WORK ON SOMETHING. THE AIM OF THE NEXT 90 MINUTES WILL BE TO START TO ADD MORE TOPIC SENTENCES TO THE VARIOUS MAIN SECTIONS OF THE MANUSCRIPT. AFTER PRODUCING THE TOPIC SENTENCES, THE NEXT TASK WILL BE TO REORDER THEM IN A WAY THAT REFLECTS THE UNDERLYING STRUCTURE, AND TO PRODUCE SUBSECTIONS (SUB-HEADINGS) WHICH REFLECT THIS ‘FOUND’ STRUCTURE.

WHEN I AM WORKING ON THE RESULTS, AND POSSIBLY METHODS SECTION, IT WILL BE USEFUL TO PRODUCE SEPARATELY A SERIES OF TECHNICAL TASKS THAT I WANT TO COMPLETE, BUT NOT TO ATTEMPT TO COMPLETE THESE AT THE START.

SIMILARLY, WHEN I AM WORKING THROUGH THE INTODUCTION AND DISCUSSION SECTION, IT WILL BE IMPORTANT TO IDENTIFY PARTICULAR TYPES OF LITERATURE, AND FACTS I HOPE TO FIND WITHIN THEM, THAT I WILL NEED TO LEARN MUCH MORE ABOUT THAN I CURRENTLY DO.

BEFORE CONTINUING, IT WILL BE USEFUL TO THINK A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT THE PROPOSED SIZE AND DESTINATION OF THE PAPER. TO BEGIN WITH, I AM THINKING ABOUT SOCIAL SCIENCE AND MEDICINE, AND AIMING FOR SOMETHING AROUND 4000-5000 WORDS. HOWEVER THERE ARE ALSO JOURNALS LIKE POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY WHICH REQUIRE SHORTER PAPERS.

CURRENT TASK; PRODUCE TOPIC SENTENCES FOR THE INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The XXX database shows that the number of terrorist incidents in Europe peaked in XXX at XXX. Most of these terrorist incidents were ethnonationalistic, about the contestation of political rule and sovereignty in either the Basque region of Spain, or Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland emerged as a political compromise. Previously [xxx] parties had won a majority of seats in the xxxx general election, and demanded self-government for the island of Ireland.

There have been a number of attempts to bring peace to Northern Ireland through a combination of both military and political solutions.

The negotiations which began with New Labour were considered highly successful.

For Unionists the RUC and army were seen as an occupying force to be resisted. They were seen as no a legitimate presence on Northern Irish territory.

Violence towards other groups is easier to perform when those groups are considered either a threat to one’s own group, to be somehow ‘less’ than one’s own group, or both.

It can in those groups that have a great deal in common that the perception of great and insurmountable difference can be strongest. Jonathan Swift’s satire, Gulliver’s Travels, introduced the fictional island of Lilliput, whose diminutive inhabitants had been engaged in bitter civil war for many generations, for reasons that had long since become lost to leaders on both sides. Eventually Gulliver discovered the conflict initially emerged over whether hard boiled eggs should be broken from the big or small end. The conflict had thus generated a self-perpetuating logic of its own, long after the rationale for the conflict had ceased.

The contact hypothesis argues that bringing people from different groups together, especially to work together on a common goal, can help to increase inter-group affinity.

Northern Ireland has long imposed segregation on Catholic and Protestants, both within institutions like the educational system, and physically through peace walls.

The peace walls tend to be situated in areas that are predominantly working class, such as XXX.

The effects of war on mortality risks has a distinct pattern not usually seen in peacetime. Features include: a clear start period of greatly increased mortality risk; a sharp delineation between mortality risk before and after working age; a bias towards younger over older adult ages; a rising disparity in age-specific death rates, during the conflict, between males and females.

The mortality pattern seen in males after 1972 is like that of a war, but without a clearly defined end date.

The lack of a clearly defined end-date to the Troubles, and the general pattern of two roughly decadal phases, suggests there was a kind of self-perpetuating logic to the excess mortality, but that this was attenuating over time.

Evolutionary game theory suggests that an evolved social preference towards ‘Tit-for-Tat’ behaviours between groups can act both to ensure periods of long-term cooperation (peace) between groups, as well as having the potential to perpetuate long periods of conflict. Each act of violence meted by group A on group B, by this logic, demands retaliatory counter-violence by group B to group A as revenge, and this counter violence itself demands further retaliation, leading to a cycle of internecine conflict between factions. The proposed solution was for an adaptation of Tit-for-Tat, that allowed for either forgetfulness or forgiveness. Another solution was for an external agent to manage both sides (a Hobbesian solution).

Deaths in young adulthood are much more likely to be due to external causes than those in old age.

The violent death of one person produces lasting sadness, anger, and psychological trauma in many others. These traumas can lead to worsening health outcomes and health behaviours. Each violent death therefore produces multiple victims.

The conditions that mean underlying tensions and antipathies between groups can turn suddenly into violence can be thought of a system with two states: peace and war. In an unstable system it may take only a slight input signal spike to change the steady state of the system from one state to the other. In less unstable systems the magnitude of the input may have to be much higher to produce such a change of state, and it may take less external input in the opposite direction to bring about a reversal in state.

The conditions of febrility arguably still exist in Northern Ireland.

The political and logistical issues and implications of Brexit have the potential to nudge Northern Ireland back from peace to war. For many, and Irish identity is also a European identity, and so to strip away the latter can be perceived as an attack on the former. Similarly, imposing physical barriers between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland risks upsetting the delicate balance of competing interests in Northern Ireland.

[WORDS: 782]

NEXT TASK: Produce some skeleton structure for the results section

RESULTS

Figure XXX shows how the log age-specific mortality rates in Northern Ireland changed over time for both males and females. It is clear from this that 1972 marked a very abrupt increase in the mortality rates for young adult males, but not to the same extent for females of the same age.

Figure XXX and Table XXX show how the number of deaths and death rates increased.

Table showing

Year: 1965, 1966, …., 2000

Age group: 0-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50; 51-65

Gender: male and female

Population

Deaths

Death rates /100 000

What are some of the pieces of analysis it would be good to include in the paper?

How did mortality rates at different ages change over time?

How did the population change over time?

How did the population composition change over time?! (Too vague!)

What is the estimated percentage increase in death rates observed during the conflicts?

How many extra people are estimated to have died as a result of the changes?

It is important to do some literate analysis – i.e. to produce figures and write up how they’re done and what they mean as soon as I’ve done them .

FOR SOME REASONS I’VE SORTT OF LOST TRAXK AND LOST OFCUS. I THINK THIS OULD BE INFORMATIVE ABOUT HOW MUCH I CAN USEFULLY PURSUIE THIS EXERCISE. I THINK I AM UNPREPARED FOR THIS AS A WRITING EXERCISE, IN PARTICULAR WITH REGARDS TO THE LITERATURE. HOWEVER. I COULD PROBABLY PRODUCE QUITE A LOT OF MATERIAL JUST BY DOING SOME DESCRIPTIVE STATS AND SAYING WHAT THEY MEAN. TOGETHER WITH DESCRIPTION ABOUT STATISTICAL METHODS THIS COULD EASILY OCCUPY A COUPLE OF THOUSAND WORDS, AND BE PRETTY INSIGHTFUL. I THEREFORE THINK THIS POINTS TOWARDS A CHANGE OF TACK FOR THE NEXT SESSION.

MY NEXT TASK WILL BE TO PRODUCE SOME DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS AND WRITE THEM UP. I AIM NOT TO GET BOGGED DOWN TOO MUCH IN THE ANALYSIS, BUT TO HAVE LOTS OF MATERIAL TO WRITE ABOUT. I HOPE TO GET 500-1000 WORDS WRITTEN AS WELL AS SOME FIGURES AND TABLES.

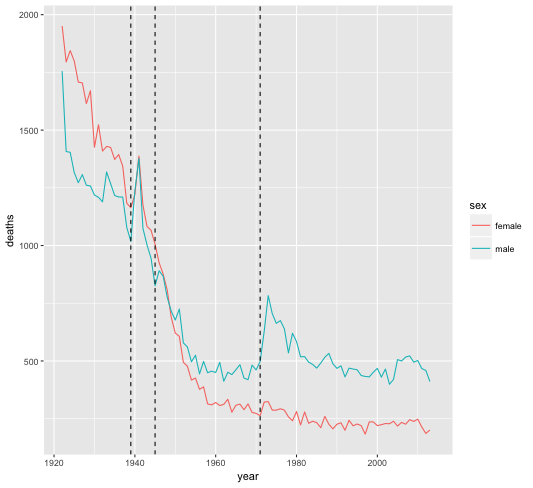
START OF SESSION 1\_2

The following figure shows the total number of deaths recorded in Northern Ireland, for males and females aged between 15 and 45 years inclusive, between its formation in 1922 and 2013 [to confirm]. Dashed lines are used to indicate the start of the Second World War, as well as for the year 1971. We can see from this that there were more annual recorded deaths for women in this age group in the 1920s and 1930s than for men, likely due to the risk of death during childbirth. The last year in which there were more recorded deaths for women in this age group than men was in 1948. Since 1948 the difference between male and female death counts in this age range has continued to grow.

A dashed line has been added for the year 1971 because there is a very clear and sharp increase in the number of male death rates after this year. Peaking at more than 750 deaths in 1972.

The average number of male deaths in this age group per year, between 1958 and 1971, was 456; for females the average over this period was 301.

By contrast, in each year from 1958 to 1971 there had been fewer than 500 male deaths reported in this age range, and fewer than 300 female deaths, suggesting the events of 1971-1972 are responsible for slightly over a third of all male deaths in this age range in 1972.



THIS IS THE END OF THIS SESSION – I’VE GONE DOWN THE RABBIT WARRAN OF STATISTIICAL ANALYSIS, BUT THINK THIS IS THE MOST USEFUL ACTIVITY FOR NOW.

RESTART OF SESSION 1\_3 – UNFORTUNATELY MY COMPUTER CRASHED AND I LOST MOST OF WHAT I’D BEEN WORKING ON IN THIS PARTICULAR SESSION.

The number of ‘excess deaths’ in this age range which occurred after 1971 can be estimated in a crude way by comparing the number of deaths after 1971 with the average number of deaths in this age group between the years of 1958 and 1971 inclusive, which for males had been roughly the same over this period.

Assuming the fall in number of excess male deaths after 1973 is exponential, the fall can be estimated to be around 15.4% per year. From this the half life, i.e. time taken for the excess to decay by half, can be calculated as around 4.5 years (calculated as 0.5 = exp(-Bh) so ln(0.5) = -Bh so h = -ln(0.5)/B)



The cumulative total ‘excess deaths’ associated with the post Troubles period, i.e for all years from 1972 to 1991 inclusive, can be estimated as 955 by 1975, 1727 by 1980, 1933 by 1985, and 2172 by 1991. Interestingly, a simple exponential decay model, beginning with a peak in the year 1973, predicts a total of 2174 excess deaths by 1991, suggesting the pattern of excess deaths largely did seem to follow one of a sharp rise followed by an exponential decay, and that the process can largely be thought of in these terms.

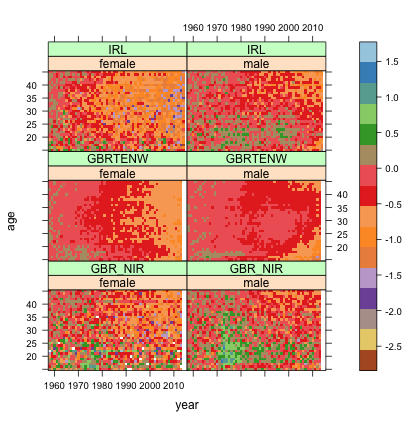
Within the next CHUNK OF TIME I WILL CONTINUE WITH THIS EXERCISE, AND TO PRODUCE A TOTAL OF 1000-1500 ADDITIONAL WORDS.

The following shows age-specific mortality rates in England/Wales, Northern Ireland, and Ireland, from 1958, indexed to the average of the age-specific values in years 1958 to 1963. Within this, brown and dark green indicates no change, whereas light green and blue indicates worsening mortality rates, and orange, purple and brown indicate varying levels of improvement in mortality trends.

We can see from this figure a number of important patterns: age-specific mortality rates tend to have improved somewhat faster for females than for males in this age range, as evidenced by more cells being coloured orange (moderate improvement) rather than red (no change) in the same regions of the female subfigures compared with equivalent sections in the male subfigures within the same country.

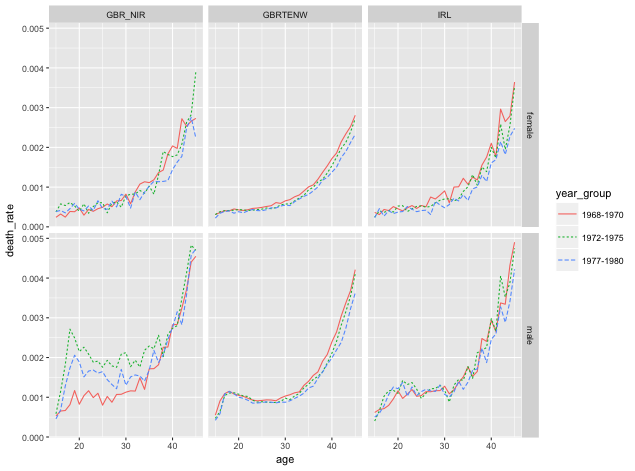
There is also some evidence of a faster rate of improvement in Ireland than in England & Wales, as would be expected if Ireland’s economy was previously less developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s than England and Wales’. With a smaller population than either England or Wales, or the Republic of Ireland, the Lexis surface for Northern Ireland has more of a ‘noisy’ and ‘speckled’ appearance, due to each individual death having a greater affect on age-year specific death rates. However, it appears that the, for females, the pattern of change over time is something of a ‘hybrid’ of the patterns of both Ireland and England/Wales, with more red visible than for Ireland (indicating slower improvements) but more orange visible than for England and Wales (indicating faster improvements). This hybrid picture is perfectly consistent with Northern Ireland having similarity of circumstance with both England and Wales, and the Republic of Ireland, including in terms of wealth and access to healthcare.

The effect of the Troubles on mortality is apparent in the bottom right tile, in the large patches of green that appear after 1971 in from around the age of 16 years of age and up, indicating a sudden and moderate worsening in mortality rates in this year. There is some indication that these effects are greatest at some of the younger adult ages, around 20 years of age, but this is not a strong pattern.



To explore further the age-distribution of excess mortality during the Troubles, the following shows this age distribution for three time periods: 1968-1970, 1972-1975, and 1977-1980. This is shown for males and females, and for Northern Ireland, England and Wales, and the Republic of Ireland, in separate boxes.

It is clear from this figure that, whereas there was little change in age-specific mortality between periods for women in any of the three countries, or for males in either Ireland or England and Wales, there was a sharp rise in mortality risk from around the age of 17-18 in Northern Ireland. This meant that, during the period 1977-1980, mortality risks were around as high at the age of 18 – likely due to death from external causes – as they are around the age of 40.



The sharp rise in death rates in the 1972-1975 period, at age 18 compared with younger ages, suggests that once males in some Northern Irish communities reached this age they were either more likely to be ‘recruited’ into paramilitary organisations to engage in violent activities, or more likely to be targeted as enemies by conflicting sides, or more likely both. As well as the peak young adult mortality rate falling from the 1972-1975 period to the 1977-1980 period, the age of peak young adult mortality has increased slightly, from around the age of 17 to 18 years.

WHERE HAVE I REACHED, BY ROUGHLY THE END OF THE FIRST FULL DAY?

I THINK I’VE REACHED A POINT WHERE I’VE REALISED THAT MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE LITERATURE IS VERY INADEQUATE TO WRITE MUCH ABOUT THE BACKGROUND, AND SO THIS WILL NEED THE SUPPORT OF SOMEONE ELSE.

I’VE ALSO STARTED TO REACH A POINT OF CLARITY ABOUT THE MAIN SEQUENCE OF ARGUMENT, AND HOW TO LINK THE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TROUBLES WITH CONTEMPORARY DEBATES ABOUT BREXIT.

THIS IS BASED ON ARGUING THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL PATTERN OF THE CONFLICT IS ONE OF CONFLICT BEING LIKE A DAMPENED SYSTEM THAT RESPONDS TO AN INPUT WITH AN PULSE OF VIOLENCE FOLLOWED BY AN EXPONENTIAL DECAY. WHILE THE PULSE IS STILL DECAYING, AND REMAINS ABOVE A LEVEL WHERE IT CAN BE DETECTED ABOVE THE NOISE OF THE POPULATION PROCESS SYSTEM AS A WHOLE, THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE OF EITHER INCREASING OR REDUCING THE RATE OF DECAY. IN PRACTICE, THIS MEANS THE INTERNAL LOGIC OF THE CONFLICT IS TO SOME EXTENT SELF-PERPETUATING.

HOWEVER, ONCE THE SYSTEM HAS SETTLED, THERE REMAINS A RISK THAT FURTHER INPUTS CAN PRODUCED HIGHLY AMPLIFIED OUTPUTS, THAT FURTHER OUTPUT PULSES ARE POSSIBLE, AND CAN BE OF A MAGNITUDE MANY TIMES GREATER THAN THE INPUT PULSE.

IN ORDER TO GET A SENSE OF THE AMPLIFICATION OF THE SYSTEM, IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO GET SOME IDEA OF THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE KILLED DIRECTLY BY THE ARMY AND POLICE, COMPARED WITH THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO THEN DIED IN THE FIRST YEAR AFTERWARDS.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO GO BACK TO THE CONCEPT OF IDEAL TYPES – A CONCEPT THAT LINKS BOTH THE ANALYSIS OF ELECTRONIC GOODS AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS (THROUGH WEBER). TO THIS END IT WOULD BE GOOD TO PRODUCE SOME ELECTRONICS-STYLE STYLISED FIGURES SHOWING HOW THIS SYSTEM MAY WORK. (NB I CAN ALSO THINK ABOUT THE SYSTEM HAVING SOME KIND OF MINIMUM THRESHOLD BELOW WHICH IT IS UNRESPONSIVE. I.E. A TIPPING POINT, AS SEEN IN NEUROLOGICAL MODELLING AND CLIMATE CHANGE – POTENTIATION, AXON HILLOC AND SO ON.)