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Howard S. Erlanger

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## IS THERE A "SUBCULTURE OF VIOLENCE" IN THE SOUTH?

HOWARD S. ERLANGER\*

For many decades analysts have commented on the disproportionately high rates of homicide in the Southern states. In 1958, for example, the South had a homicide rate about nine per 100,000 as compared to about three per 100,000 for the rest of the country. In recent years the gap has been narrowing, as the rate of increase in the homicide rate has been higher outside the South. In 1972 the homicide rate was 12.6 per 100,000 for the South, compared to about 7.3 per 100,000 for the rest of the country.<sup>1</sup> Hackney, employing regression analysis on aggregate homicide (and suicide) data from 1940, found that the regional effect remained strong even after the effects of degree of urbanization, average level of education, average income, unemployment rate, wealth of state, and average age of inhabitants of state are controlled.<sup>2</sup> Gastil has supplemented these findings in a study relating the degree of Southern influence on a state to the state's homicide rate.<sup>3</sup>

Discussions of Southern violence generally argue or assume that the tendency to use violence is not limited to murder, but is pervasive in interpersonal affairs. Hackney, for example, says:

In various guises, the image of the violent South confronts the historian at every turn: dueling gentlemen and masters whipping slaves, flatboatmen indulging in a rough and tumble fight. . . . The image is so pervasive that it compels the attention of anyone interested in understanding the South.<sup>4</sup>

\* Department of Sociology, The University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

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<sup>1</sup>FBI, UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS 6 (1973).

<sup>2</sup>Hackney, *Southern Violence*, in HISTORY OF VIOLENCE IN AMERICA: REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE OF THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON CAUSES AND PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE 387-404 (H. Graham & T. Gurr eds. 1969).

<sup>3</sup>Gastil, *Homicide and a Regional Culture of Violence*, 36 AM. SOCIOLOGICAL REV. 412-27 (1971). See also Pettigrew & Spier, *The Ecological Structure of Negro Homicide*, 67 AM. J. SOCIOLOGY 621-29 (1962).

<sup>4</sup>Hackney, *supra* note 2, at 387.

Similarly Reed, in a study using data on gun ownership and on attitudes towards corporal punishment and gun control legislation, as well as the historical record of lynchings and bombings, concludes that in general, Southerners "do have a tendency to appeal to force to settle differences."<sup>5</sup> But this judgment is not unanimous. Gastil, for example, says that fist fighting and murder may not be related; he cites the example of the Irish, but has no data for the South on this point.

In explanations of regional differences in violence, a subcultural theme has been predominant. Hackney and Gastil argue, for example, that since "Southernness" is strongly related to homicide (or to a low suicide-homicide ratio) even after structural variables are controlled, cultural forces probably account for the violence.<sup>6</sup> Reed writes more generally of a "subcultural persistence" in the South.

Further analysis of the hypothesis that some form of a "subculture of violence" exists in the South is hampered by variations in the concept of subculture used by different writers. Wolfgang and Ferracuti, who have written extensively on the subculture of violence (although not specifically with reference to the American South), argue that the concept of subculture ultimately refers to values, and to actions people take with respect to these values.<sup>7</sup> Writers in

<sup>5</sup>J. REED, THE ENDURING SOUTH: SUBCULTURAL PERSISTENCE IN MASS SOCIETY 46 (1972).

<sup>6</sup>A recent article by Loftin and Hill has sharply criticized the methodology of both Gastil and Hackney. Loftin & Hill, *Regional Subculture and Homicide: An Examination of the Gastil-Hackney Thesis*, 39 AM. SOCIOLOGICAL REV. 714 (1974). Using different indicators of the structural variables, they arrive at different findings. The Loftin-Hill paper, like those of Gastil and Hackney, is based on ecological data. The present paper, based on individual data, lends a different perspective to the discussion.

<sup>7</sup>M. WOLFGANG & F. FERRACUTI, THE SUBCULTURE OF VIOLENCE: TOWARD AN INTEGRATED THEORY IN CRIMINOLOGY (1967). For the United States, Wolfgang and Ferracuti have used the subculture of violence thesis mainly as an explanation of the higher homicide rate of blacks and low income white adult males. For recent critiques of the argument see Ball-Rokeach, *Values and Violence* 38 AM. SOCIOLOGICAL REV. 736 (1973), and Erlanger, *The Empirical Status of the Subculture of Violence Thesis*, 22 SOCIAL PROBLEMS 280 (1974).

this tradition accept verbal statements of preferences as important indicators of subcultural preferences. It seems that Reed would fit into this general tradition, since he bases much of his argument on attitudinal data. Gastil, however, explicitly rejects Wolfgang and Ferracuti's stress on norms and values, while Hackney does not state a position.

The present paper explores five topics related to the issues of the pervasiveness and the subcultural character of violence in the South: (1) self-reported experiences with violence; (2) the effect of migration from the South on rates of fighting in the North; (3) self-reported approval of violence; (4) the association between fighting and perceived esteem by peers; and (5) the association between fighting and a feeling of well-being. All of the findings must be seen as tentative, both because of the quality of the data and because of the variety of concepts of subculture. The topics flow from a general consideration of Southern violence, the possible subcultural character of that violence, and from the types of data available; the presentation is not meant as an explicit test of the earlier works. Readers who are interested only in a subculture of lethal violence, who reject the relevance of norms, values, or peer processes to the study of subculture, or who do not agree that some types of attitudinal data are suggestive of value preferences, will not see the material here as a challenge to the hypothesis that a subculture of violence exists in the South. However, they may still find the material of interest as an addition to the relatively small fund of knowledge about Southern violence.

The discussion will rely primarily on secondary analysis of two data sets. The first is a national sample of adults taken in 1968 for the President's Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence.<sup>8</sup> To obtain comparability with the second data set, only the responses of the 451 men aged twenty-one to sixty-four will be presented. The second data set is comprised of separate samples of black and white men aged twenty-one to sixty-four living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and in the rural areas of two counties in Eastern North Carolina in 1969.<sup>9</sup> Each of the four groups has an N of about 220. Since there is a perfect correlation of regional

and urban-rural differences in the latter data set, the alternative hypothesis that the results would change if urban-rural residence were controlled cannot be ruled out. The main argument for a regional interpretation is that for officially recorded criminal violence, differences are primarily regional rather than urban-rural. Although the rate of violent crime (murder, assault, and rape) is somewhat lower in rural North Carolina than in the rest of that state (239 per 100,000 population, as compared to 309 for the whole state in 1968), it is substantially higher than the average rate of violent crime for urban and rural areas outside the South.<sup>10</sup> For example, in 1968 only about a dozen cities outside the South had a rate of violent crime higher than that of rural North Carolina,<sup>11</sup> and there is no evidence that the two counties studied are low in their rate of officially recorded crime. The Milwaukee-North Carolina data are also geographically limited and generalization to North-South differences is tentative.

Reference will also be made to the Criminal Victimization survey taken by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) for the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice in 1966.<sup>12</sup> This was a national survey of 10,000 households designed in part to check on the accuracy of the F.B.I. Uniform Crime Reports.<sup>13</sup>

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self-esteem directed by Russell Middleton (supported by the National Science Foundation). I am grateful to him for permission to analyze and report the relationships presented here.

The data for Milwaukee are based on a multi-stage disproportionate stratified area probability sample of housing units in the Milwaukee city limits in 1960. The data for rural North Carolina are based on a replicated area probability sample of housing units in Nash and Edgecomb counties, outside of towns or cities with 1,000 or more inhabitants. For both the Milwaukee and North Carolina surveys, a modified Kish sampling procedure was used, interviewers and respondents were matched by race, and several call-backs were made when necessary.

<sup>10</sup>N. C. DIV'N OF LAW AND ORDER OF THE DEP'T OF LOCAL AFFAIRS, IMPROVEMENTS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM—COMMITMENT TO ACTION, vol. III (1970) (A copy of this study is on file with the author.)

<sup>11</sup>FBI, UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS 82-97 (1970).

<sup>12</sup>P. ENNIS, CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES: REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE (1967).

<sup>13</sup>Methodological problems in the NORC survey are discussed in detail in Biederman, *Survey of Population Samples for Estimating Crime Incidence*, 374 ANNALS 16-33 (1967). Biederman does not indicate any special problem with the data from the South, but some of the problems he pinpoints may be of a different magnitude in the South.

<sup>8</sup>The data were collected by Louis Harris Associates, using a sample drawn for 100 clusters in all parts of the United States. The specific individual to be interviewed was specified in advance, but no call-backs were made. The questionnaire and preliminary findings may be found in R. BAKER & S. BALL, MASS MEDIA AND VIOLENCE: REPORT TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON CAUSES AND PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE 503-91 (1969).

<sup>9</sup>These data are from an ongoing study of correlates of

## SELF-REPORTED EXPERIENCES WITH VIOLENCE

*Criminal Violence.* Although the higher rate of criminal violence in the South is taken as well established fact, the NORC Victimization Survey did not confirm it. The President's Commission on Law Enforcement reports that the South had the highest homicide rate in 1965 to 1966,<sup>14</sup> but this finding is an artifact of the low incidence of homicide. Only one homicide was reported on the survey, and it happened to be in the South. For aggravated assault and simple assault the N's are more acceptable, and self-reported victimization rates for the South are relatively low for these crimes. For aggravated assault, the NORC estimate for the South is 173 per 100,000 population, compared to an estimate of 238 per 100,000 for the rest of the country. For simple assault, the estimate for the South is 375 per 100,000 compared to 403 per 100,000 for the rest of the country.

The findings from the Violence Commission Survey are more ambiguous, and depend on the item which is examined. If the responses of all adults are examined (in order to make the findings more comparable to the NORC and Uniform Crime Reports data), then the South tends to be higher than average, but not the highest region, on such items as "Have you (as an adult) ever been threatened with, or actually cut with, a knife?"<sup>15</sup> However, if only males aged twenty-one to sixty-five are examined, the rate for the South is somewhat higher than for other regions.

*Less Serious Violence.* Self-reports of acts of relatively minor physical aggression are an important indicator of the pervasiveness of violence. Although extensive high quality data of this type do not exist at present, some suggestive data are available.

In the Milwaukee-rural North Carolina study, respondents were asked "How often do you get in angry fist fights or the like with other men—never, almost never, sometimes, often?" The responses, shown in Table I, are a striking contrast to the homicide data. Both black and white men in rural North Carolina are, by their reports, less likely to fight. Controlling for age, occupation, income, and "social desirability bias" does not affect this finding.<sup>16</sup> The Violence Commission national survey shows a similar pattern. Items concerning acts of

punching or beating reported by the respondent can be combined into an "index of fist fighting in conflict situations," which estimates the number of times the respondent has been involved in fights during his adult lifetime.<sup>17</sup> Table II shows that men in the census South are less likely, by their reports, to have been in fights than those outside this region. Again this finding is not changed by controls for age and income.<sup>18</sup>

## THE EFFECT OF SOUTHERN MIGRATION ON NORTHERN VIOLENCE

Various papers<sup>19</sup> have dealt with the question of whether or not a sizable amount of Northern homicide can be explained by the migration of Southerners who, so to speak, "brought their violence with them." Previous studies have been based on ecological data, as individual data on homicide are apparently not available.

Data from the Milwaukee sample of blacks allows an assessment of the hypothesis at the individual level, but only for relatively minor violence. (The sample of Milwaukee whites has too few migrants to permit analysis.) Analysis indicates that Milwaukee

untrue or probably true but socially undesirable. (*E.g.*, True or False: "I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.") D. CROWNE & D. MARLOWE, *THE APPROVAL MOTIVE* (1964). Respondents scoring high on this scale are somewhat more likely to report that they do not get in fights.

<sup>17</sup>Because of several ambiguities in the questionnaire, the "index of fist fighting in conflict situations" is only a rough indicator of the use of violence. The core item used for the index is: "Have you ever punched or beaten anyone?" The ambiguities are these:

1) The respondent was asked whether the aggression occurred when he was a "child," or "adult," or both, but this was according to his own definition.

2) Although frequency of occurrence is recorded, it was asked independently of time, thus, unless a person reported that the event(s) occurred *only* during childhood or adulthood, we cannot determine the frequency as an adult. In addition, frequency was recorded in only four categories: 0 score 0; 1 = 1; 2 or 3 = 2; 4 or more = 3.

3) Type of incident, *e.g.*, conflict, military, sports, and play, is recorded only for the most recent incident.

Given these ambiguities, an adjusted index was constructed by reducing the frequency to zero if the aggression occurred only during childhood or if the last instance was not in a situation of "anger or conflict." The latter adjustment is quite stringent and assumes that the more recent incident is representative of the previous ones. Experimentation with less stringent adjustments had no important effect on the findings reported here.

<sup>18</sup>Occupation and "social desirability bias" were not included in this data set.

<sup>19</sup>See, *e.g.*, Gastil, *supra* note 3; Loftin & Hill, *supra* note 6.

<sup>14</sup>Ennis, *supra* note 12, at 27.

<sup>15</sup>Stark & McEvoy, *Middle Class Violence*, 4 *PSYCHOLOGY TODAY* 30 (1970).

<sup>16</sup>"Social desirability bias" is indicated by a five item adaptation of Crowne and Marlowe's scale, which includes items that are either socially desirable but probably

TABLE I

FIGHTING BY REGION

"How often do you get in angry fist fights with other men?"  
(Men aged 21-64 in 1969)

	Milwaukee		Rural North Carolina	
	White	Black	White	Black
Mean Score	.25	.40	.10	.22
(range 0-3)				
(N)	(222)	(235)	(218)	(236)

TABLE II

FIGHTING BY REGION

Index of Fist Fighting in Conflict Situations During Adult  
Lifetime  
(Men aged 21-64 in 1968; national sample)

	Non-South		South	
	White	Black	White	Black
Mean Score	.51	.64	.31	.08
(range 0-3)				
(N)	(282)	(44)	(87)	(38)

blacks born in the South<sup>20</sup> (64 per cent of those in the sample) are somewhat *less* likely than those born outside the South to engage in fist fighting. Controlling for income, occupation, age, and social desirability bias, the net effect (standardized regression coefficient) of Southern origin on fighting is  $-.15$  ( $p = .03$ ). Crain and Weisman report a similar finding in their analysis of a large scale national survey done by the National Opinion Research Center in 1966, concluding that "Northern born men are more likely to report being in a fight than are late migrants from the South with the same amount of education."<sup>21</sup>

SELF-REPORTED APPROVAL OF VIOLENCE

Some studies of Southern attitudes towards the use of physical aggression have shown a higher level of

support in the South.<sup>22</sup> However, these studies have not been specifically concerned with the use of physical aggression in peer situations, rather they have dealt with political violence and corporal punishment.

In the Violence Commission Survey, respondents were asked about their general approval of the use of physical aggression in different kinds of peer interactions; those who gave their general approval were then asked about four or five more specific situations. The general approval questions asked whether there were "any situations that you can imagine" in which the respondent would approve of such acts as a husband slapping his wife's face; a husband shooting his wife; a man punching (or choking) an adult male stranger; one teenage boy punching (or knifing) another. These general items and their follow-ups<sup>23</sup> were combined into indices. Table III shows the mean score on these indices for Southern and non-Southern whites and blacks. For each index, there is either essentially no difference in the scores for the South and non-South, or the South actually has a lower mean score. Extensive exploration of

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., M. BLUMENTHAL, R. KAHN, F. ANDREWS & K. HEAD, *JUSTIFYING VIOLENCE: ATTITUDES OF AMERICAN MEN* (1972); J. REED, *THE ENDURING SOUTH: SUBCULTURAL PERSISTENCE IN MASS SOCIETY* (1972).

<sup>23</sup> For each index, the lead item and its follow-ups were scored 2 for a "yes" response, 0 for "no," and 1 for "not sure." If a "no" was given for the lead item, the follow-ups were not asked. The items were these:

a) Are there any situations that you can imagine in which you would approve of a husband slapping his wife's face? If "yes" or "not sure," would you approve if the husband and wife were having an argument?; If the wife had insulted her husband in public?; if the wife had been flirting with other men?; if the wife had been unfaithful?

b) Are there any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a teenage boy punching another teenage boy? If "yes" or "not sure," would you approve if he didn't like the other boy?; if he had been challenged by the other boy to a fist fight?; if he had been hit by the other boy?; if he had been ridiculed and picked on by the other boy?

c) Are there any situations that you can imagine in which you would approve of a man punching an adult male stranger? If "yes" or "not sure," would you approve if the stranger was drunk and bumped into the man and his wife on the street?; if the stranger had hit the man's child after the child accidentally damaged the stranger's car?; if the stranger was beating up a woman and the man saw it?; if the stranger had broken into the man's house?

d) Same as c), but change "punching" to "choking" and add "if the stranger had knocked the man down and was trying to rob him?"

e) Are there any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a husband shooting his wife?

f) Are there any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of one teenage boy knifing another?

<sup>20</sup> In the study, the "South" was defined as: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

<sup>21</sup> R. CRAIN & C. WEISMAN, *DISCRIMINATION, PERSONALITY, AND ACHIEVEMENT* 14 (1972).

control variables does not change the basic conclusion of no substantial South/non-South difference.<sup>24</sup>

Since only an abstract level of approval is being tapped by these indices, the absolute level of the mean score is important as well as the regional comparison. For example, if mean scores were quite high, it could be that the indices were tapping a somewhat trivial dimension of support for violence and that tighter questions would draw out major regional differences in approval. However, the absolute level of support is too low to lend much support to such an objection. For all the indices but one (approval of one teenage boy punching another), the sample means are below the midpoint on the indices, often markedly so, even though most items seem fairly easy to support. In addition, when the frequency distributions are examined (not shown), support at the high end of the index is low for all groups on all indices, with the South again about the same or lower than the non-South.

A few of the indices warrant some additional comment. The index of approval of a boy punching another is of interest because it begins to tap intergenerational transmission of attitudes and because the follow-up items deal with such aspects of "machismo" as taking up the challenge to fight.<sup>25</sup> Yet on this index the South/non-South contrast is sharpest, with the mean score for Southern whites and blacks being 20 to 25 per cent lower than for the corresponding non-Southern samples. The last two items in Table III are important because they deal with approval of a husband shooting his wife or one teenage boy knifing another, *i.e.*, the types of extreme violence that are reflected in the official data on homicide and criminal assault. The mean scores here are low, and those for the South are quite incompatible with the thesis that there is at least a moderately high tolerance for extreme violence among peers in the South. In addition, note that again the mean scores for the South are if anything *lower* than those for the non-South.

Granted, all the items analyzed here are general, and responses do not necessarily indicate a person's likely attitude or action in some actual instance he may become (or have been) involved in. But it is just this generality which makes the items useful indications of the general level of tolerance of violence between peers. Given that the items are so easy to agree with, the relatively low mean scores, and

<sup>24</sup>A separate analysis of women shows a slight tendency for women in the South to score higher than those in the non-South on most of the indices.

<sup>25</sup>See note 23 *supra*.

TABLE III

APPROVAL OF VIOLENCE BY REGION  
Men aged 21-64 in 1968; national sample

	Non-South		South	
	White	Black	White	Black
A. Approval of a husband slapping his wife's face				
Mean (range 0-10)	1.4	3.1	1.0	1.1
B. Approval of a teenage boy punching another teenage boy				
Mean (range 0-10)	5.4	4.5	4.4	3.3
C. Approval of a man punching an adult male stranger				
Mean (range 0-10)	4.3	3.8	4.1	2.7
D. Approval of a man choking an adult male stranger				
Mean (range 0-12)	2.1	3.3	2.2	1.7
E. Approval of a man shooting his wife				
Mean (range 0-2)	.10	.14	.11	.05
F. Approval of a teenage boy knifing another				
Mean (range 0-2)	.09	.11	.05	.08
Number of cases	(282)	(44)	(87)	(38)

especially the low frequency of high scores on the indices, does seem to indicate the absence of a high level of general tolerance.

#### FIGHTING AND PERCEIVED ESTEEM BY OTHERS

Some formulations of the subculture of violence thesis imply a clear relationship between violence and the general esteem accorded to a person by others. For example, in their discussion of what they see as a subculture of violence among blacks and low income whites, Wolfgang and Ferracuti hold that violence is positively valued and non-violence negatively sanctioned. This sanctioning is, they argue, carried out through informal mechanisms of social control ranging from the "cold shoulder" to ostracism.<sup>26</sup> Under such circumstances violence is important to the subculture, and we would expect that persons who adhere to the values would be more likely than those who do not to be liked, respected, and accorded high status in the group.

Comparison of the South and non-South on violence and peer esteem is complicated by Wolfgang and Ferracuti's hypothesis that race and income subcultures exist. Thus, the relationship must be analyzed within income and race groups as well as by locale. Given Wolfgang and Ferracuti's assumption that a relatively strong system of sanctions exists, it should follow that the relationship between fighting and peer esteem will be statistically significant and

<sup>26</sup>See, *e.g.*, M. WOLFGANG & F. FERRACUTI, *supra* note 7, at 160.

positive for all race-income groups in the rural North Carolina sample. (In the North, prediction would be that the relationship will be negative for non-poor whites, positive for poor whites and non-poor blacks, and highly positive for poor blacks.) If we in addition assume that the hypothesized race, income, and regional effects are additive, then for each race-income group, the association will be more positive in the South than in the North.

These hypotheses can be examined with the Milwaukee-rural North Carolina data. Physical aggression is indicated by the item used in the earlier discussion; perceived esteem accorded by others is indicated by two items, "How do you compare with most men you know on being respected and listened to by other people?" and "How do you compare with most men you know on being well liked by other people and having lots of friends?" Each item had five possible responses, ranging from "much worse" to "much better." Standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between fighting and perceived esteem, controlled for age, occupation, and "social desirability bias," are shown in Table IV. In general, there is a slight tendency for the relationship to be positive and stronger in the rural North Carolina sample than in the Milwaukee sample, as predicted. However, out of fourteen beta coefficients, only two are significant at the .05 level, and one of these, for poor blacks in the North Carolina sample, is in the direction *opposite* to that predicted. In general, then, these data suggest that the type of subculture discussed by Wolfgang and Ferracuti does not exist in the South.

#### FIGHTING AND FEELING OF WELL-BEING

As a corollary to the argument in the immediately preceding section, we may explore the relationship between fighting and feeling of well-being. Following Wolfgang and Ferracuti, it would seem that outside the subculture men who are violent would be less likely to be happy both because they were receiving negative sanctions for their violence and because in this group it would be the more marginal persons who would be violent. By contrast, within the subculture, this formulation suggests that happiness would be positively correlated with violence, since non-violent men are hypothesized to be negatively sanctioned.

The standardized regression coefficient for the relationship between fighting and an index of happiness<sup>27</sup> was computed for each of the eight

groups in the Milwaukee-North Carolina survey. Predictions are shown on the first line of Table V. This table shows that, contrary to the predictions, there is no significant relationship between fighting and happiness—except for Milwaukee blacks, where it is *negative*.

The data in the last two sections suggest, then, that if there is a subculture of violence in the South, it is probably not such that violence is *required* as a condition of one's being accepted as a "man" by his peers. For if this were the case, then the rural North Carolina coefficients should have been strongly positive. The data further suggest that it is not simply a matter of norms in the South being less specific, in contrast to a sharp rejection of violence in the non-South. For if that were the case, the rural North Carolina coefficients would not be problematic, but the Milwaukee coefficients, particularly for non-poor whites, should have been sharply negative. Together, these findings suggest that a man's fighting is not basic to the evaluations communicated to him by his peers. Violence itself is, then, probably not a prominent part of the normative system in the South.

#### DISCUSSION

The data presented here from the Violence Commission and Milwaukee-North Carolina surveys contain much that is surprising in the light of previous writing and analysis, but the findings are not necessarily contradictory to those of the earlier work. The Violence Commission survey contains items comparable to those used in earlier research, and on these items the pattern of response is similar to that reported in the literature. For example, the South is higher than the non-South in approval of spanking, in approval of corporal punishment in the schools, and in gun ownership, although the differences tend to be somewhat less than those found by Reed in his analysis of Gallup surveys. The divergence between this and earlier studies lies in the indicators used: individual rather than ecological data on the influence of migration from the South, approval of interpersonal violence among adults rather than in adult-child relationships or in political affairs, and analysis of more commonplace fighting rather than officially recorded homicide or as-

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whole, how happy would you say you are now compared with other men you know? How often do you feel very discouraged and depressed? How often do you get the feeling that life is not worth living? Each item had four possible responses. Because of the uncertain direction of causality, the partial correlation coefficient may be preferable to the standardized regression coefficient here. However, analysis of partial *r*'s did not change the finding.

<sup>27</sup>The items in the index of happiness are these: On the whole, how happy would you say you are now? On the

TABLE IV  
FIGHTING AND PERCEIVED ESTEEM BY OTHERS  
(Men aged 21-64 in 1969)

Hypothesized Relationship	Milwaukee				Rural North Carolina			
	White		Black		White		Black	
	<\$5,000	≥ \$5,000	<\$5,000	≥ \$5,000	<\$5,000	≥ \$5,000	<\$5,000	≥ \$5,000
	positive	strong negative	strong positive	positive	strong positive	positive	very strong positive	strong positive
A. Effect of fighting on feeling "respected and listened to by others."								
Zero order r	-.15	.02	-.25	-.18*	.04	-.09	-.10	.15
Beta, net of age, occupation, and social desirability index	**	.08	.02	-.14	.11	-.08	-.08	.21
B. Effect of fighting on feeling "well liked by other people and having lots of friends."								
Zero order r	.22	-.02	-.13	-.01	-.03	.07	-.26	.17
Beta, net of age, occupation, and social desirability index	**	-.03	.16	-.04	.29	.17*	-.24*	.21
(N)	(15)	(207)	(51)	(184)	(39)	(179)	(196)	(40)

\* Indicates significance level at .05 or better.

\*\* N is too low to compute beta.

TABLE V  
FIGHTING AND HAPPINESS  
(Men aged 21-64 in 1969)

Hypothesized Relationship	Milwaukee				Rural North Carolina			
	White		Black		White		Black	
	<\$5,000	≥ \$5,000	<\$5,000	≥ \$5,000	<\$5,000	≥ \$5,000	<\$5,000	≥ \$5,000
	positive	strong negative	strong positive	positive	strong positive	positive	very strong positive	strong positive
Zero order r	-.09	-.07	-.36*	-.19*	-.01	.05	-.11	-.30
Beta, net of age, occupation and social desirability index	**	-.09	-.30*	-.18*	-.07	.10	-.07	-.28
(N)	(15)	(207)	(51)	(184)	(39)	(179)	(196)	(40)

\* Indicates significance at .05 or better.

\*\* N is too low to compute beta.

sault. Like the earlier studies, the present one can only be suggestive. Larger samples of Southern residents and of migrants are needed, and questions need to be more specifically directed to examining hypotheses about a subculture of violence.

Prior to the instigation of such studies, more work is needed in the specification of the content of the hypothesized cultural differences.<sup>28</sup> Gastil, for example, differentiates his notion of a subculture of

violence from Wolfgang and Ferracuti's by holding that his is only a subculture of lethal violence. Yet some of the processes suggested as leading to murder (for example, defense of honor, remnants of the frontier ethic, or legitimization of actions that lead to hostile relations within families or between classes), seem just as likely to lead to nonlethal violence. Other factors (such as the high rate of gun ownership relative to other regions or a lesser degree of opprobrium attached to the act of murder), could be

<sup>28</sup>Another aspect of the inquiry which needs refinement is the specification of the area to be compared to "the South." Following Reed, the analysis in this paper has not differentiated among non-southern regions. This method is justifiable in that there is a clearer regional tradition in the South, but it also obscures important variation outside the

South. On most items relating to violence, the Northeast is markedly lower than other regions in its approval and reported use of violence; it is also true, however, that this region has had less migration from the South than others.

unique to a subculture of lethal violence.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, it is not clear whether the hypothesized subculture is defined by its approach to violence itself, or whether violence is hypothesized as a by-product of a subculture centered on something other than violence. Thus, Gastil emphasizes that "a violent tradition may be one that in a wide range of situations condones lethal violence, or it may be a tradition that more indirectly raises the murder rate."<sup>30</sup> He seems to prefer the latter notion, and at times refers to the values of "Southern culture," although the title of his paper stresses the idea of a subculture of *violence*. A strong case can certainly be made that the South has had a different history in terms of ideals as well as in experience, and of the writers discussed, Reed is perhaps the clearest in seeing attitudes towards violence as a subset of a broader Southern culture. His discussion of violence is only a part of a broader argument that a distinctive Southern orientation emphasizing traditional values persists today. However, Reed does not attempt to show which parts of that Southern orientation are more central than others.

Future research should thus be directed towards clarifying the origins and precise content of such a "Southern Culture" and its relationship, if any, to the high rate of recorded homicide in the South. It is possible, for example, that there is a subcultural norm in the South supporting the possession of weapons—perhaps even loaded weapons—in the home, but that use of the weapons for other than "show" or defense against intruders is negatively sanctioned. Shootings during arguments could be opprobrious and yet still be rare enough to be insufficient to lessen the desire to have a gun.

<sup>29</sup>Recall, however, that the analysis above indicates that men in the South are if anything *lower* in approval of lethal violence.

<sup>30</sup>Gastil, *supra* note 3, at 416.

Similarly, differences in political violence and in attitudes towards physical punishment in childrearing may be best understood as by-products of other Southern values, such as traditionalism in race relations and in parent-child-relationships.<sup>31</sup> Such indirect influences of a broader Southern culture may prove to be important in the explanation of violence, but current evidence suggests that a subculture directly based on normative support for violence in interpersonal situations does not exist.

The findings here, along with the critique of Gastil and Hackney's methodology,<sup>32</sup> also suggest that more attention should be given to non-cultural explanations of Southern violence. Structural and demographic variables, for example, should be explored in greater depth than has been the case in previous research.

<sup>31</sup>If the South does in fact have a higher homicide rate than the non-South, but a lower rate of less extreme violence, it is also possible that psychological differences are important. Megargee's research suggests that there are two types of persons prone to extreme violence: the "under-controlled" type, who frequently engages in the whole range of aggressive acts, and the "overcontrolled" type, who has very rigid inhibitions against aggression, but who, if pushed over the brink" is likely to commit an extreme act. The "overcontrolled" personality could in turn, be an indirect product of a "Southern culture." Megargee, *Undercontrolled and Overcontrolled Personality Types in Extreme Antisocial Aggression*, 80 PSYCHOLOGICAL MONOGRAPHS no. 3, at 1 (1966).

The work of H. Haven suggests that the "overcontrolled" person is more likely to have grown up in a conservative, religious family with strong pressures towards conformity. H. Haven, *Descriptive and Developmental Characteristics of Chronically Overcontrolled Hostile Prisoners*, 1972 (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Florida State University). If, as some studies indicate, these family characteristics are more typical of the South, then a possible explanation of South/non-South patterns of violence is generated. An examination of this model would have to avoid the use of ecological data and instead use individual data, which are not available at this time.

<sup>32</sup>Loftin & Hill, *supra* note 6.