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AN EMPIRICAL TEST OF THE
SUBCULTURE OF VIOLENCE THESIS

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Abstract

This paper proposes criteria for the empirical determination of when attitudinal differences between groups may be said to be "subcultural." These criteria are then applied in a test of Wolfgang and Ferracuti's thesis that a "subculture of violence" exists among blacks and lower-class whites. The data used include survey data on self-reported aggression and attitudes on the use of violence in peer situations, as well as data from field studies of slum communities. Given the state of available materials, much more can be said about low status groups than about the causes of violence. It is possible that frequently violent adults are members of subgroups that support or encourage aggression. However, the data examined strongly suggest that these subgroups are not coterminous with the groups "lower class" or "blacks." At this time there is no evidence that the latter groups, which have disproportionately high rates of homicide, are substantially different from middle-class whites in their rate of approval of the use of physical aggression in peer situations. These findings, along with a previous paper by the author, question whether a culture of poverty exists in United States society.

The policy implications involve a recognition of the competence of the vast majority of members of these groups and the broadening of non-paternalistic opportunity for personal development. To the extent that aggression is itself the (direct or indirect) result of structural factors such social reform will also reduce the rate of aggression.

AM EMPIRICAL TEST OF THE

SUBCULTURE OF VIOLENCE THESIS

Recently the concept of a subculture of violence has received much

attention. Although linked in some ways to the concept of the subculture

of poverty, and discussed in that and in other contexts by many scholars,

in sociology the concept of a subculture of violence is most clearly associ-

ated with the work of Wolfgang (Wolfgang, 1958; Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1967).

This paper proposes criteria for the empirical determination of when attitudinal

differences between groups may be said to be "subcultural" and then tests

Wolfgang and Ferracuti's thesis using survey data on self-reported

aggression and on attitudes toward violence. Although the data do not

permit a definitive test of the subcultural thesis, the findings suggest

that blacks and the white lower class, as groups, do not differ substan-

tially from the white middle- and upper-classes in their experiences with

violence or in their attitudes towards the use of violence in inter-

personal situations. These findings are supplemented with discussion of

observational studies of lower-class communities and of the literature on

the culture of poverty debate. An additional note explores the relevance

of the subculture of violence thesis to the explanation of the dispro-

portionately high murder rate in the South.

All major sociological analyses of acts of physical aggression

among adult peers are based on officially recorded data on homicide

and criminal assault. Sociological explanations of this distribution

can be divided into those which emphasize the latent effect of social

processes, and those which deal primarily with violence as a consciously

willed activity. In the former category may be included the classic

work of Henry and Short (1954), who saw the homicide rate as a result of
a combination of economic frustration and the type of social restraint
(internal or external) experienced by an actor. Modifications and
extensions of this work, such as those of Gold (1958), who sees the
choice between suicide and homicide as dependent on the form of punish-
ment (corporal or psychological) experienced as a child, maintain the
perspective of latent effects. In neither Gold's work, nor in the work
of Miller and Swanson (1960) whom he draws upon for his theory, is there
any indication that parents who spank their children do so because they
have an interest in having their offspring become physically aggressive.[1]

Wolfgang and Ferracuti explicitly reject the importance of latent
social processes, and instead argue that violence should be seen as
consciously motivated action. Violence is said to result from adherence
to a set of values in conflict with, but not totally in opposition to,
those of the dominant culture. Unfortunately, data on the distribution
of these values were not available to Wolfgang and Ferracuti. But they
argue that data on acts are sufficient to help the investigator learn
"something tangible, objective, and empirical about the parameters of
the subculture, its etiology, its strength and likelihood of persistence,
and how it might be cultivated, modified or eliminated" (1967:103). Since
criminal statistics indicate that the groups with the highest rates of
homicide and criminal assault are males, nonwhites, lower- and working-class
whites, and young adults, it is therefore among these groups that "we should
find in the most intense degree a subculture of violence" (1967:153).

The subcultural value system is seen as having two important
dimensions. First, the groups in question are said to have a lower
threshold of insult in everyday affairs--a "thinner skin" so to speak.

Many situations which an upper-class or older person would find trivial,
for example, a jostle or a slightly derogatory remark, are seen as
challenges to one's integrity:

> Social expectations of response in particular types of social
> interaction result in differential "definitions of the situ-
> ation." A male is usually expected to defend the name and
> honor of his mother, the virtue of womanhood...and to accept
> no derogation about his race (even from a member of his own
> race), his age, or his masculinity. (1967:153)

Second, and more fundamentally, Wolfgang and Ferracuti say the sub-
culture of violence often requires that the response to insults, either
trivial or serious, be violent: "Quick resort to physical combat as
a measure of daring, courage, or defense of status appears to be
a cultural expression, especially for lower socio-economic class males
of both races." (1967:153). Men who "defend their rep" and have
"machismo" are seen as embodying the "cultural ideal"; those who are
nonviolent risk being called "sissy" and may even be ostracized from
the subculture group.

Any empirical test for the existence of a subculture relies on
assumptions about the nature of values and on criteria for determining
whether a particular set of values exists. In many studies these are
not well thought out or are left implicit, thus helping to create the
confusion and looseness that surrounds much of the sociological study
of subcultures. This study will employ criteria derived from what has
been called the "normative theory of culture."[2] The concept of values
is a rich one, assuming that values constitute a special set of ideas

that guide human endeavors. Although the criteria may seem stringent, they do not seem inappropriate to the evaluation of Wolfgang and Ferracuti's theory, since various statements in their book imply their agreement with these standards.[3] The disagreement with these authors is primarily empirical.

Criteria for the Existence of a Subculture

1. A subcultural value system is the property of a group, not just of some individuals within the group. For an attitude to be a subcultural value, it must be both widely distributed in the subgroup, and distinct from the attitude of other subgroups. That is, a large majority of one group should hold the value, and this value should be relatively absent in other groups. The exact extent of difference necessary to suggest that a group embraces a subculture is basically a matter of the researcher's judgment. At a minimum, it seems that a strong majority (say 70 percent) of members of the subgroup should accept the value, while nonmembers who hold the value should be a distinct minority (perhaps no more than 30 percent). This does not mean that lesser differences should be rejected as uninteresting; apparent differences in values can be important without constituting a sub-culture.[4]

Wolfgang and Ferracuti seem to agree with this criterion, arguing, for example, that the nonviolent members of the subcultural groups are subject to great pressure to conform, and ultimately to ostracism. In their discussion of social policy, Wolfgang and Ferracuti also assume that the norm of violence is widely distributed in the subgroup and essentially absent in the group that makes the laws.

However, at some points in their argument, Wolfgang and Ferracuti are vague as to exactly what groups of Americans comprise the subculture. In extrapolating from rates of criminal violence directly to the existence of subcultural groups, the authors generate an array of subcultures that is, in once sense, too broad and in another, too narrow. It is too broad in that the designated groups actually comprise a majority of the United States population, and thus could not be called a subculture.[5] Alternatively, the method of extrapolating from homicide rates to subcultures is too restrictive in that it overlooks the possibility that all members of a subculture could, in fact, have the same values and yet act differently. For example, it would be reasonable to assert that in certain communities, both men and women believed it to be imperative that men be "tough" while women act "ladylike." The latter view seems to be more consistent with Wolfgang and Ferracuti's argument, so it is this notion which will be examined.

2. _Values are public_. Not only does a substantial majority of the subgroup believe in the values, but the values are embodied in a group's institutions where the efforts to transmit and enforce them are visible to all. There should, for example, be readily identifiable public leaders who articulate the values. In addition, it is always conscious commitment, not latent effects, which must be analyzed.

Wolfgang and Ferracuti are very explicit on this point, indicating that they are concerned with the value component of violence. As noted above, they see a system of sanctions—culminating in ostracism—built into the group organization.

3. _Values are ideals, representing goals which members consciously try to achieve_. For an attitude to be considered a value, there should

be relatively intense feeling associated with it, and its achievement should have a relatively high priority. Thus, majority support is a criterion which is necessary but not sufficient to give an orientation the status of a value. This also means that if one finds that all groups under study have a high rate of approval on an attitude, investigation of intensity could still reveal subcultural differences. Moreover, if support in two or more groups is high, an examination of whether the groups differ in their openness to debate on the issue may also reveal important differences.

Nonetheless, the relative absence of behavior congruent with the expressed value is not a priori evidence of lack of commitment. A form of conduct or a state of affairs may be valued without being achieved. Achievement should be seen as a variable, not as a characteristic which is either present or absent. Tension with other values, lack of resources, and the more pressing needs or tensions of day to day existence, are examples of factors which may interfere with the achievement of an ideal. If values and acts are to have distinct meaning, they must be assessed independently of one another. One way of doing this is through surveying of attitudes, but this is certainly not the only way. Another way to assess values would be through an in-depth analysis of situations in which hypothesized values are in tension; in each case the analyst could try to determine which orientation "won," and then look for a consistent ranking, taking into account situational exigencies. Analysis of behavior is thus not irrelevant to the determination of values, but mere observation of acts cannot be the major indicator. Otherwise the concept of values becomes tautological.[6]

For present purposes, the controversy surrounding the notion of the separation of values and acts is mitigated by the fact that Wolfgang and Ferracuti seem to agree with the formulation presented here. They explicitly call for the independent assessment of values and discuss many innovations in the study of values, including the contributions of the field of psycho-physics. They conclude that a ratio scale would be most appropriate as an indicator; such a scale would be derived by having the researcher pick some event as a base line and then asking respondents to rate acts of violence in relation to that base.[7] However, this type of scale has never been used in the analysis of values concerning violence, and Wolfgang and Ferracuti report no data at all on attitudes toward violence. Wolfgang and Ferracuti acknowledge that in their use of homicide rates "some circularity of thought is obvious in the effort to specify the dependent variable (homicide) and also to infer the independent variable (the subculture)" (1967:155). But they argue that "the highest rates of rape, aggravated assaults, [and] persistency in arrests for assaults among those groups with high rates of homicide are, however, empirical addenda to the postulation of a subculture of violence" (1967:155). Since the data they cite are consistent with numerous other interpretations, it seems clear that the data should be seen as indicating only the possible locus of the subculture, not as empirical evidence for its existence. In addition, it is clear that some new data on values are necessary to move the discussion forward.

4. <u>Values</u> <u>are</u> <u>handed</u> <u>down</u> <u>through</u> <u>the</u> <u>generations</u> <u>as</u> <u>part</u> <u>of</u> <u>a</u> <u>valued</u> <u>heritage</u>. Values are generally old, and are passed on as part of the defining characteristics of a group. But an ideal does not have to be old to be part of a subculture; it is the intergenerational

transmission that is important. For example, in order to determine whether there is in fact a "drug subculture," one needs to know whether its participants want their children to have the same experience. This is more important than the question of the participant's own continuance in the subculture. Older people could, for example, believe that it is important for young people to use drugs (or to have fights), but that as youth grow older, this behavior should change.

Wolfgang and Ferracuti agree with the notion of direct transmission of valued heritage. Although they do not see the sub-culture of violence as a world totally separate from the dominant culture, it is sufficiently autonomous to involve indoctrination into a set of deviant values.[8] Parents are seen as transmitting the values through both direct socialization and more indirect processes such as the examples they set in their own lives.

5. Subculture as description versus subculture as explanation. When a set of attitudes or a mode of living meets these four criteria (or some variation of them) a subculture may be said to exist descrip-tively. However, the use of the term does not necessarily imply that the explanation of attitudes or behavior lies primarily in a group's subcultural tradition. Unless the analyst discusses the presence or absence of structural circumstances explicitly (or implicitly through policy recommendations) it is often extremely difficult to distinguish between a descriptive and an explanatory intent. If the structural conditions confronting a group remain roughly constant over time, one would expect a set of adaptations to be worked out and transmitted intergenerationally. A critical issue for both explanation and policy is then whether a change in life circumstances would be likely to bring

a shift in attitude or lifestyle. In any given research, the strength
or permanence of a normative orientation will be difficult to assess.
Clearly, even a value autonomous from structure will change if a group's
life situation changes enough to make the value highly dysfunctional.
On the other hand, adaptations to structural situations will achieve a
permanence which will not immediately change. But, in most situations an
assessment of relative importance can be made.

Wolfgang and Ferracuti give little attention to the issue of
possible structural conditions underlying the origins or persistence of
attitudes towards the use of violence, stating that they "are not pre-
pared to assert how a subculture of violence arises" (1967:163).
Instead, they see the subculture as essentially a stable, concrete
entity independent of social structure, apparently concluding that what-
ever the causes may be, the subculture of violence must now be examined
on its own terms. This point of view is critical in determining their
policy recommendations which call for intervention to force disruption
of lower-class and black communities and resocialization into the values
of the white middle class:

> Before one set of values can replace another, before the sub-
> culture of violence can be substituted by the establishment
> of non-violence, the former must be disrupted, dispersed,
> and disorganized...Once the subculture is disintegrated by
> the dispersion of its members, aggressive attitudes are not
> supported by like-minded companions, and violent behavior
> is not regularly on display to encourage imitation and
> repetition. (1967:300)

The authors argue that dispersion "does not necessarily imply population shifts, although urban renewal, slum clearance, and housing projects suggest feasible methods" (1967:299).

Difficult as it may be to separate the issues of structure and culture, it is clear that some attempt is imperative if appropriate and humane policy is to follow from the analysis of the causes of violence. Unfortunately such a separation is impossible at this time, since only minimal data on noncriminal violence or on attitudes towards violence are available. Because of the importance of this issue, it may be useful to contrast Wolfgang and Ferracuti's formulation to Cloward and Ohlin's theory of "conflict subculture." Following Merton, Cloward and Ohlin consider deviance as the adaptive response to a conflict between universally held goals and a constrained structure of opportunity. In explaining the diversity of juvenile gangs, the authors contend that lower-class youth, held back by blocked opportunity, will turn to acquisitive crime if their community is organized, but if it is disorganized the youths will be driven to "seize upon the manipulation of violence as a route to status" (1960:175). Cloward and Ohlin emphasize, however, that "if new opportunity structures are opened, violence tends to be relinquished" (1960:175). Following this reasoning, they reach a conclusion on urban renewal precisely opposite that of Wolfgang and Ferracuti:

> On the basis of the theory developed in this book, we predict
> that delinquency will become increasingly aggressive and
> violent in the future as a result of the disintegration of
> slum organization...It is our view that the major effort
> of those who wish to eliminate delinquency should be directed
> to the reorganization of slum communities.[9] (1960:203, 211)

SOME NEW DATA ON VIOLENCE

Regretfully, data adequate for a rigorous test of the subculture
thesis do not exist at this time. However, data from a survey on
experiences with and attitudes toward violence can help move the empiri-
cal discussion forward. The survey was conducted for a task force of
the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence; the
actual data collection was done by Louis Harris Associates.[10] The sample
included 1,176 adults (941 whites, 195 blacks, 40 other nonwhites) over
age 18, in 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.

Self-Reported Slapping and Punching

The Wolfgang and Ferracuti model explains serious violence in terms
of what might be called everyday lifestyles. Although they acknowledge
that most behavior by blacks and lower-class whites is nonviolent, they
contend that men in these groups are much more likely to be exposed to
seemingly trivial situations which require a violent response. Clearly,
the response will not in each case be murder or assault, but will often
include less serious fighting. One would expect, then, to find that
a rather large proportion of members of these groups has frequently engaged
in relatively minor aggressions such as slapping and punching. The Violence
Commission data allow a preliminary test of this thesis through analysis of an
index of "slapping and punching in conflict situations" constructed from items
in that survey.[11] Because of ambiguities in the items used in the index (see
footnote 11), these data can only be suggestive of the patterns of relatively
minor aggression. Moreover, since the index is based on acts of violence
occurring over the respondent's entire adult life, the only meaningful

indicators of respondent's social status are education and race. Table 1

shows that for men aged 18-60, contrary to the pattern of criminal

statistics, blacks and poorly educated whites are not strikingly more

likely to have been involved in slapping and punching. The

rates for white and black males are virtually identical; there is

no systematic pattern by education, except for a break between whites who

have graduated from college and those who have some lesser level of

schooling. Moreover, even for the 80 percent of the respondents who did

not graduate from college, only about 10 percent have an estimated

frequency of five or more incidents of violence in their lifetime; for blacks

the percent is even lower.[12] In short, although the data do not refute the

thesis of a subculture, they greatly mitigate the imagery of frequent

acts of violence by a large proportion of low status men.[13] For women

18-60 the findings are more consistent with existing theories: the rate of

violence for black women is higher than for white women but lower than for men.

For both men and women, controls for age, religion, parents' social class or

region of the country had no profound or systematic effect on the

findings.

Table 2 shows a multiple classification (dummy variable regression)

analysis yielding mean scores on the index of slapping and punching for a

variety of demographic variables, controlling for all other variables in

the table. Whites and blacks of all ages are included in this analysis.

The data are presented for descriptive purposes only; many of the variables

shown cannot be assumed to be temporally prior to the aggression.

Attitudes Toward the Use of Violence in Peer Situations

Few systematic studies of class differences in values have
been reported in the literature, and some of the most often cited are
quite dated. The few studies that do exist do not specifically
deal with low-income groups; the lower class is either omitted
or combined with the working class for analysis.[14] Moreover,
insofar as the author can determine, there is no systematic study
of attitudes toward interpersonal violence; as noted above, Wolfgang
and Ferracuti found none.

In the Violence Commission survey, the respondent was asked about
his general approval of the use of physical aggression in certain peer
situations; if he gave his approval he was asked about various (previously
listed) situations. The batteries of questions which will be analyzed
here include those concerning a) a husband slapping his wife's face,
b) a man choking an adult male stranger, and c) one teenage boy
punching another.[15] The first and third general item had four follow-up
questions; the second had five (see footnote 15). For each battery an index
was formed by scoring a "yes" answer 2, "no" = 0, and "not sure" = 1. The
range of the marital and teenage indices is thus 0-10, and that of the
man choking a stranger, 0-12.

According to the first criterion set out in the previous section,
norms supporting violence should be widely held by blacks and lower-class
whites, and supported by only a minority of the white middle class. But
because of their generality, the items used here do not form a strong
indicator of cultural commitment. There are, for example, no questions
like "Ought a husband strike his wife if she has been unfaithful?";
"What would you think of a man who let his wife be unfaithful without

putting her in her place?" Thus, only a minimal test of the subcultural

thesis, can be undertaken and one can demand only that the first part of

the standard be met. Acceptance of these items does not imply membership

in a subculture of violence, but, since these items are rather easy to

support, it can be presumed that any person committed to a subculture of

violence would score high on the index. If levels of support in low

status groups are relatively low, then the thesis tends to be discon-

firmed, irrespective of any small relationships by class or race. In

addition, the generality of the wording allows an estimate of an upper

limit of approval of violence on any item.[16]

Another difficulty with the items is the way they were asked and

coded by the task-force. If a respondent answered "no" to the lead

question, then he was not queried further on that set. Thus, it is

possible that "no" responses are an index of "lack of sophistication"

rather than of complete opposition to aggression. One way to correct

for this is to combine respondents who answered "no" to the lead question

with those who said "yes" but then rejected all the specific instances.

The effect of such an adjustment has been checked for each of the indices

presented, and in each case it was inconsequential to the findings.

However, there is a more fundamental objection about which little

can be done. Some critics may feel that the adjustment just outlined

would be inadequate because some of those who answered "no" would in

fact have agreed to some of the follow-up items if they had been asked.

Since the rate of rejection of the general question was often highest

for low status groups, it would follow that some of the conclusions

drawn here may be inaccurate. There is no way to speculate about

responses to items which were not asked. On the other hand, it does

seem unlikely that persons who rejected the lead item would have shown up
as high scorers had they been asked the full battery, so conclusions
about high scorers are probably not affected. Moreover, the general
pattern is such that even substantial readjustment of the rate of
rejection of violence by low-status persons would not change the overall
thrust of the findings, which again lend no support to the subcultural
thesis.

Another objection may be that of the respondent's conscious or
unconscious lack of objectivity in reporting his attitudes. One might
argue that participants in the subculture of violence will temper their
views and give the interviewer the "correct" middle-class response. How-
ever, to the extent that the subculture is strong, positive attitudes
toward violence would be something the respondent would be proud of, and
he would be less likely to hide them. Moreover, in this survey and
others, lower-class persons have not hesitated to give "unenlightened"
responses to questions on prejudice, racial integration, or authoritarian-
ism. In fact, response bias and lack of objectivity are generally
thought to be factors which inflate the relationship between low social
status and support for positions that are unenlightened by middle-class
standards.

Marital Fighting

Marital fighting is an area in which one would certainly expect to
find the relationships postulated. Lower-class violence is often
regarded as family centered, with the high rate of police calls involving
marital disputes often being cited as evidence. The distribution of
approval for "a husband slapping his wife's face" by sex, race, and
income, for persons who are married and aged 18-60 may be found

in Table 3. This table shows that for both races there is little varia-
tion in approval by income, except for a very low rate of approval by
women of both races with very low incomes. (In both cases, however, these
percentages are based on small N's, and the differences disappear when
the follow-up items are considered.) Differences by sex are small,
especially considering the content of the item. The most noticeable
differences are by race, with black men and women both having a higher
rate of approval than their white counterparts. But even here the data
give scant support to the subcultural thesis. The difference on general
approval is only 12 points for men and eight for women,[17] and over 60
percent of the respondents in all groups report that they can imagine
no situation in which they could approve of a husband slapping his wife's
face. On a more extreme question, "Are there any situations you can
imagine in which you would approve of a husband shooting his wife?",
rates of approval not unsurprisingly show variation mainly by sex.
About 6 percent of white and 8 percent of black married men aged
18-60 answer yes or not sure, as compared to about 1 percent of white
and 2 percent of black women. There was no systematic variation by
income or in the distribution of not sure responses.

Space limitation prohibits detailed comment on other variables
of interest, many of which are included in part a of Table 4, a
multiple classification analysis (based on all blacks and whites in the
sample) showing mean scores on the index for various demographic groups,
controlling for the effects of all other variables in the table. (Note
that Table 4 uses total family income, while Table 3 uses income
of head of family.) The variables not previously discussed that are of
greatest relevance to the subculture of violence thesis are education,

parents' social class,[18] and age. Differences in approval of aggression
are generally in the direction predicted by the subcultural thesis, but
are too small to be of any consequence to the conclusion reached above.

Men Fighting with Strangers

While a substantial majority of married (or unmarried) persons aged
18-60 do not approve of marital fighting, these feelings do not reflect
a more general opposition to physical aggression in all situations. For
example, respondents were asked "Are there any situations you can imagine
in which you would approve of a man punching an adult male stranger?",
with follow-up items the same as b-1 to b-4 in footnote 15. Sixty percent
of whites aged 18-60 (62 percent of men, 58 percent of women) and 51
percent of blacks (52 percent of men, 50 percent of women), with no
systematic variation by income,[19] could imagine some instance. At the
high end of the scale, whites continue to have higher rates of approval
than blacks, as reflected in the multiple classification analysis in
part b of Table 4.

Turning to a more severe form of aggression, choking an adult male
stranger, again no support for the subcultural thesis is found. On the
lead question, Table 5 shows an unsystematic pattern by income; if any-
thing, approval is inversely related to income. Without regard to
income, there is not much difference by sex. The main effect for
race is on the rates of approval of women, but racial differences are
negligible past the seven point mark on this 12 point index. Adjusted
mean scores on this index for various demographic groups are shown in
Table 4 part c. There is no systematic pattern by education, and only a
slight relationship by parents' social class or age.

Fights among Teenage Boys

The items on approval of teenage boys punching one another are of special interest for two reasons. First, parents' attitudes about possible behavior of their children indicate something about inter-generational transmission of values. Second, the particular follow-up items are more directly concerned with manliness issues than those of the previous scales since they emphasize response to provocation. The scale gives an approximate indicator of the upper bounds of support for "machismo", but it is unclear what proportion of respondents scoring high on the index would merely approve of fighting back, and what proportion would deem it necessary or important that the boy do so.

A striking majority of whites (79 percent of men, 72 percent of women) aged 18-60 could approve of one teenage boy punching another. There is no systematic variation by income, and little difference in approval by sex. Blacks of both sexes and at high- and low-income levels have somewhat lower rates of approval than whites, sometimes markedly so. Sixty-five percent of black men, and only 49 percent of black women answered yes, or not sure, to the lead question. When parents with at least one teenage child are analyzed separately (Table 6), an even sharper difference is found. Contrary to the pattern on the other indices, the percentage point difference between races is as large (even a little larger) at the high end of the approval scale; also striking is a clear inverse relation between income and approval of violence for both races. Adjusted mean scores on this index for various demographic groups are shown in part a of Table 4). There is no systematic pattern by education or (for those under 60) by age. Parents' social class also has no effect on approval of teenage fighting.

Considering more serious aggression, about 4 percent

of respondents aged 18-60 answer yes or not sure to the item "Are there

any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a teenage

boy knifing another?". For yes responses (about 3 percent) there is

no systematic pattern by income or race, and the rate for men is slightly

higher than that for women (4 percent to 2 percent). Inclusion of

the not sure responses raises the percent approval for black men to

8 percent and for white men to 5 percent.[20] Parents of teenagers

are markedly lower in approval; 2 percent of white parents and no

blacks answer yes, while 3 percent of blacks and no whites answer

not sure.

The findings on approval of teenage aggression tend to contradict

the thesis that parents of low social status disproportionately socialize

their children to norms of violence, or that they intentionally encourage

violent behavior. The question of unintentional socialization through

latent effects of spanking[21] or of parental behavior remains open, but

the notion of conscious socialization to positive norms of violence

finds no support in these data.

Note that the data and conclusions say nothing about the extent of

fighting among lower-class or black teenagers. These rates are not of

immediate concern here since this paper analyzes only the values

and aggression of adults. It may well be that lower-class or black

teenagers are involved in a disproportionate number of fights, and the

lower rate of approval by their parents could be a result of the

frequency or seriousness of these fights. But such a situation

would only support the conclusion that lower-class parents in general,

and black parents in particular, do not especially like the idea of

their children fighting, and that teenage fighting is probably not a
product of an adult value system emphasizing violence.

Gun Ownership

The subculture of violence thesis would suggest that black and low-
income white males would be more likely than members of other groups to
own guns for possible use in interpersonal disputes and more likely to
keep the weapon loaded and handy. Unfortunately, data on this issue are
not presently available. The Violence Commission survey does, however,
have data on ownership of pistols. It seems reasonable to assume that
the pistol is the type of gun most likely to be owned for purposes other
than hunting or shooting of animal predators. Multiple classification
analysis (Table 7, part b) indicates, however, that there is no appreciable
net difference by race in the percent owning a pistol, and that persons
with high income are markedly more likely than those with low income to
own a pistol. The pattern of ownership by education is less clear, and
there is no net effect of parents' social class. The data show no marked
tendency for persons in late adolescence or young 20s to own pistols.
Analysis of the distribution of ownership of any type of gun (Table 7, part a)
somewhat mitigates the relationship by income, but indicates that blacks
are appreciably less likely than whites to own guns.

INSIGHTS FROM FIELD STUDIES

Much of the imagery of the subculture of violence seems to have
evolved from notions of juvenile gangs. These gangs are often pictured as
being tightly integrated around a divergent (or oppositional) value sys-
tem which emphasizes masculinity and daring, and also as expelling or otherwise
sanctioning aberrant members. Various observational studies can be

seen, however, as questioning both the strength and content of the delinquent subculture. Yablonsky (1962) in a study of violent gangs on the upper west side of Manhattan concludes that the gang is not a tightly integrated unity with a high degree of peer control. He argues that instead, the gang should be conceived of as a "near group" in which "members" drift in and out. Short and Strodtbeck report that in the Chicago gangs they studied, membership was not as fluid as in the New York gangs described by Yablonsky. Nonetheless, they do find a great deal of fluidity, and they report that except for leaders and core members, boys drift in and out of the gang. In these groups, the threat of separation is a sanction against the leaders, not against members (1965:196). Matza (1964) has also emphasized the loose and nonsubcultural character of gangs. With respect to aggression, Walter B. Miller et al. (1961), in a study of several gangs in the Boston area, found that the overwhelming majority of aggressive acts in the groups studied was of low intensity and limited to nonphysical forms. Acts of physical aggression were rare. In addition, a quantitative analysis of "verbal aggression" showed that only about 5 percent of such acts were related to "toughness, strength," while almost as many were directed to control of physical aggression.

These findings do not mean that there are no gangs in which fighting is rampant or the building of "rep" is of paramount importance, nor do they mean that such groups are not disproportionately located in lower-class or black communities. For example, irrespective of their fluid nature, the gangs Yablonsky studies do a lot of fighting, and various studies (e.g., Kobrin et al., 1967; Short and Strodtbeck, 1965; Yablonsky, 1962) have found status to be based at least in part on the kind of criteria outlined by Wolfgang and Ferracuti.

But even among the groups reported on in the literature there are great variations;[22] Rosenberg and Silverstein (1969) argue that such variation among objectively similar groups is in itself sufficient evidence to call the subcultural theory into serious question. Moreover, even if status were widely found to be dependent on violence, one would still need to consider possible structural antecedents. For example, it is possible that when opportunities to achieve status by conventional means are blocked, an emphasis on traditional masculine values is likely to ensue (see, e.g., Toby, 1966). Finally, the existence of violence as a criterion of status in gangs in low-income neighborhoods is insufficient to establish the existence of such norms among nongang juveniles in those neighborhoods, especially since it is generally the most extreme gangs that have been studied. When the whole juvenile population is studied, the patterns can be quite different. For example, in a study of youth in Richmond, California, Hirschi (1969) found little evidence that assault is related to class. Forty-three percent of boys whose fathers were lower class or semi-skilled reported that they had purposely beaten up or hurt someone other than a sibling, compared to 47 percent for sons of white-collar workers and 34 percent for sons of professionals. The data are based on a large systematic sample, but unfortunately the frequency of aggression was not recorded. Since the sample does not include boys who dropped out of school before the seventh grade, a potential group of violent boys is excluded--but this group would be uncharacteristic of the population of lower-class or black youth.

It is also interesting to note that many of the well-known observational studies of slum communities--such as Whyte's Street Corner

Society (1955), Liebow's Talley's Corner (1967), or Suttle's Social Order

of the Slum (1968)--make little or no mention of violence, even though

all were written by men who lived in the slums of Boston, Washington, and

Chicago, respectively, for extended periods of time. Liebow, for example,

sees a concern for masculinity and protection of dignity as the key compo-

nents of "corner life" in the Washington ghetto, but an emphasis on violence

is absent. Identity is maintained through a system of "shallow fictions,"

and failures are obscured by a normative system which prohibits asking

about personal failures: "[on the corner], where the measure of a man

is considerably smaller, and where weaknesses are somehow turned upside

down and almost magically turned into strengths, he can be, once again,

a man among men." (Liebow, 1967:136).

One observational study that does recount many violent incidents

is Oscar Lewis's biography of the Rios family in Puerto Rico and New

York (La Vida, 1966). But the Rios family is ambivalent in the value

they place on violence. Most of the family members feel hurt by the

violence and deprivation they experienced as children, and many resolve

to do better with their children. Although a degree of "machismo" is

clearly present, violence is also often criticized. Simplicio, for example,

is quick to respond to a challenge or insult, to protect his family, and

to express anger physically. However, he also regrets the extremes of

his temper. Rather than evaluating them positively, he says that he

"goes crazy" and that he hopes to change. On the theoretical level, the

place of violence in Lewis's conception of the culture of poverty is also

unclear. In an earlier discussion of povery in Mexico, Lewis (1961)

lists "frequent resort to violence" as an element of the culture, while

in La Vida he talks more generally of lack of impulse control. In
neither case does he discuss the culture as requiring acts of violence.
Moreover, in his most recent statements, Lewis has been emphatic in inter-
preting the culture of poverty as primarily an adaptation to structurally
generated deprivations. (See, for example, Lewis, 1969 and the discussion
below.)

Again, this is not to say that there are no tightly knit groups in
American society that emphasize violence, that there is no relationship
between acts and values, or that lower-class attitudes are in all respects
identical to those of the middle class.[23] The point here is simply that
there is no evidence to support the thesis that blacks or the white lower
class, as a group, embrace values which require violent acts under a
broad range of circumstances. There is no doubt that life in the white
lower class or in the black ghetto is substantially different than in the
white middle or upper class. There is a wealth of material, including
the observational studies just cited and the autobiographical works of
Claude Brown (1965) and Malcolm X (1965) which shows how fundamentally
different life in different strata is. The questions at issue here are
a) in what ways is life different, and b) what are the causes of the
differences--is there an autonomous subculture in the lower class, or
are differences primarily a product of social structure.

It is still possible that some other cultural practice indirectly has
an effect on the rate of violence. For example, Schur, citing Wolfgang's
data on the association between violence and the use of alcohol, argues
that liquor may be part of a broader social configuration which generates
situations conducive to violence; he also suggests that Claude Brown's
observation on Harlem culture may be relevant: "Saturday night in Harlem

is a time to try new things. Maybe that's why so many people in the older

generation had to lose their lives on Saturday night." (Schur, 1969:127)

The generality of such observations is doubtful in light of the data

presented above on frequency of slapping and punching. But even if correct,

the "cultural" element would be quite different from that posited by Wolfgang

and Ferracuti. A normative system which sanctions or even encourages either

drunken brawls or wild behavior on certain special occasions is not the

same thing as one which requires "quick resort to physical combat as a

measure of daring, courage, or defense of status" in everyday interaction.

After all, not long ago middle-class fraternity students drank and brawled

on socially patterned occasions such as football victories.

THE SUBCULTURE OF VIOLENCE AND THE CULTURE OF POVERTY DEBATE

Although Wolfgang and Ferracuti do not directly link their thesis

to the (sub-)culture of poverty debate, it is nonetheless quite relevant.

If the thesis of a subculture of violence is correct, it lends support

to those who hold that the attitudes and behavior of the poor are to be

understood as primarily the product of group traditions rather than as

an adaptation to the exigencies of being poor. Also, to the extent that

the notion of a culture of poverty is considered accurate, the subculture

of violence thesis becomes more plausible.

The widespread use of the term "culture of poverty" probably was

initiated by Oscar Lewis, who discusses the concept in the introduction

to several of his major ethnographies and in some separate articles

(Lewis, 1961, 1966a, 1966b). Many of his statements, such as that

in the introduction to <u>La Vida</u>, have been cited by commentators (most notably Valentine, 1968) as showing Lewis's pessimism about structural solutions to poverty. Lewis, however, has emphatically denied that he believes the culture he describes to be the fundamental cause of the plight of the poor; rather he says that reformers must realize that although structural change is basic, it will not be sufficient in itself to overcome centuries of oppression (see especially Lewis, 1969). Moreover, Lewis's works are primarily concerned with the conditions of poverty outside the United States. Lewis himself has stated that he does not think the patterns he describes for Mexico and Puerto Rico can be readily applied to this country; he has written that probably no more than 20 percent of the poor in the United States are part of the subculture of poverty.

Walter B. Miller's work is also relevant here because of his positing of "toughness" as one of the six "focal concerns" of lower-class culture (Miller, 1958). From the title of Miller's most cited article ("Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency") and from the absence of discussion of structural processes in that piece, one might conclude that he views violence as the product of an autonomous (sub-) culture of poverty. (See, Valentine, 1968.) Miller, however disassociates himself from this interpretation of his work (Miller, 1969). In general, it appears that the important scholars identified with the strict cultural position deny their adherence.[24]

A NOTE ON THE "SUBCULTURE OF VIOLENCE" IN THE SOUTH

For many decades analysts have commented on the disproportionately high rates of homicide in the Southern states.[25] 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 has stayed roughly constant in the South, but has been increasing elsewhere (Mulvihill et al., 1969: 163). Hackney (1969) has used regression analysis on homicide data from 1940 to show that the regional effect remains 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. Gastil (1971) has supplemented these findings by showing that the degree of Southern influence on a state (primarily indicated by migration from the South) is strongly correlated with that state's homicide rate, even after controls are introduced.

Both Gastil and Hackney opt for an explanation of homicide in terms of a somewhat unique patterning of values in the South--a regional "subculture of violence." Gastil develops the argument more fully, but even here several ambiguities remain. First, the exact content of the value system is ambiguous. Gastil seeks to differentiate his notion of a subculture of violence from Wolfgang and Ferracuti's by holding that it 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 in the South relative to other regions, or a lesser degree of opprobrium attached to the act of murder, could be unique to a subculture of lethal violence.) But besides the ambiguity as to the kind of violence that is condoned or encouraged, it is not clear whether it

really is violence that is being encouraged at all. 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" (1971:416). Some of the factors listed above

are presented with respect to the latter notion, and at times the values

are referred to as those of "Southern culture" rather than those of a

"subculture of violence." Since the former context is less perjorative,

it seems important that future research aim at clarifying the content and

origins of the hypothesized value system. 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, although opprobrious,

may still be rare enough to be insufficient to lessen the desire to have

a gun. Moreover, although the analyses of Hackney and Gastil make

important contributions to the empirical knowledge on homicide, theirs

and other studies are based on aggregate data, and only on homicide.

Obviously individual data on values and actions are necessary to verify

their hypotheses.

A recent study by Reed (1972) is noteworthy in its attempt to

ground the discussion of the culture of the South in attitudinal

data, primarily from surveys conducted over a number of years by the

American Institute of Public Opinion. Reed consistently finds differ-

ences of 8 to 25 percentage points between the South and nonSouth on

approval of corporal punishment (in the home and at school) and on gun

ownership and opposition to various proposed gun control laws. Reed

suggests that these findings, combined with the historical record of

duels, lynchings, bombings and of statistics on homicide indicate that Southerners "do have a 'tendency to appeal to force' to settle differences, and it may be supposed that they view such resort as more often legitimate than do non-Southerners" (1972:46).

On items comparable to those researched before, the Violence Commission survey yields findings comparable to those reported in the literature. The data show a higher rate of approval for corporal punishment and a higher rate of gun ownership in the South (see, e.g., Table 7), although differences are smaller than the largest differences found by Reed. Similarly, in these data respondents living in the South have a higher rate of reported victimization on an index of knifing, choking, or gunning in conflict situations derived from items in the Violence Commission survey. Analysis of the nonSouth by region reveals considerable variation among these areas, with the East generally being lower than the West or Midwest.

However, when the Violence Commission items on slapping and punching and on approval of physical aggression in peer situations are examined, the findings are strikingly dissimilar to those for the dimensions previously reported in the literature. On the indices analyzed earlier in this paper, the rate of experience with or approval of violence is about the same in the South as in the nonSouth,[26] whether the low or high ends of the indices are examined. Tables 2 and 4 show the adjusted mean scores on the indices; to conserve space other tables are not presented.[27] At this time there is no evidence that the comparatively high rate of gun owernship and of homicide in the South reflects a subcultural difference in the acceptability of the use of force in everyday interaction. This does not mean that the South is

exactly like the nonSouth in terms of lifestyles or attitudes on all

or even on most matters. A strong case can be made that the South has

had a different history in terms of ideals as well as in experience; one

place to locate such differences is in the statements of Southern spokes-

men. A tenable case can also be made that a more local, traditionalist

orientation remains today (Reed, 1972). Perhaps the higher rate of

approval of corporal punishment of children and of the right to bear arms

can be more profitably analyzed as part of a propensity to such tradi-

tionalism than as the product of a subculture of (lethal or nonlethal)

violence in the South.

CONCLUSION

The subculture of violence thesis has an impact both as a theory of

violence and in the assertions it makes about the characteristics of

certain social groups. For blacks and lower-class whites these assertions

have important implications for social policy.

At this time there is no evidence that any of the groups with high

homicide rates--most particularly blacks and low-income whites--are

substantially different from other groups in their rate of approval of

the use of physical aggression in peer situations. Although more precise

data are needed, it is unlikely that future research will substantiate

the thesis that these groups embrace a subculture of violence. This

finding, along with a growing empirical literature on other aspects of

the lives of poor and black (and other minority) persons in the United

States,[28] supports the point of view that the social and economic depri-

vations experienced by members of these groups are primarily the result

of social structural factors, rather than the product of group pathology.

The policy implications involve a recognition of the competence of the vast majority of members of these groups, and an emphasis on the broadening of opportunity for education, employment, and redress of grievances, rather than on analysis of problems and treatments developed by benevolent outsiders.

Because of the great paucity of data other than criminal statistics, much less can be said about the causes of violence or about the characteristics of aggressive adults. Although the data presented here strongly suggest that violence should not be viewed as a characteristic of blacks or low-income whites as groups, one cannot determine whether frequently violent adults are part of smaller peer groups that encourage or support acts of violence by their members. Although violent people are more approving of such action than nonviolent people, this finding is not directly relevant to the thesis. Data are needed on the reference group of violent persons, and on the characteristics and origins of that group. But even if violent acts were found to be the product of the norms of certain small groups, the subcultural thesis would be supported in only a very modified form, and quite possibly with sharply different policy implications.

Also crucial is the distinction between "subculture" as description and explanation. The descriptive use of the concept is by its nature more likely to be roughly accurate. The problem is, however, that such description too easily slips into explanation, or presented alone, may easily imply that the characteristics described can be explained by the cultural values of the group.[29] Both of these dangers are very real, especially when members of groups of low social status are the subject of analysis. Since the social consequences of the use of the concept

with respect to these groups is great, both in terms of perjorative

conceptions and implications for policy, it is important that commenta-

tors be specific about the locus, extent, content, and origins of any

hypothesized subculture.

The indeterminate empirical status of the subcultural thesis is

symptomatic of the field. Although more research has been carried out

on another major hypothesis, that linking physical aggression to latent

effects of childhood punishment experiences, the evidence on this theory

is mixed and most studies show only a weak relationship (Erlanger, 1972).

It seems that future research can be most profitably carried out through

exploratory, in depth interviews with persons who have been involved

often in (criminal or noncriminal) physical aggression.[30]

Table 1

INDEX OF SLAPPING OR PUNCHING IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS BY RACE, SEX, AND EDUCATION

For respondents aged 18-60 only

Percent Scoring	White							Black				
	Grade School	Some High School	High School	Some College	College	Post Graduate	Total	Grade School	Some High School	High School	Some College+	Total
MEN												
1-6	44	30	26	34	14	9	27	32	42	23	13	28
3	15	7	4	7	5	3	6	11	12	9	7	10
4+	10	9	6	18	3	0	9	0	15	4	0	6
(N)	(39)	(57)	(108)	(73)	(37)	(34)	(349)	(19)[a]	(26)	(22)	(15)[a]	(83)
WOMEN												
1-6	3	11	10	8	14	10	10	27	17	10	21	18
3	0	5	4	3	0	10	4	0	0	0	7	2
4+	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	18	4	5	0	6
(N)	(36)	(74)	(155)	(61)	(22)	(10)[a]	(358)	(11)[a]	(24)	(19)[a]	(14)[a]	(68)

[a] Percentages based on such a small number of cases are unreliable.

-33-

Table 2

ADJUSTED MEAN SCORES, INDEX OF SLAPPING OR
PUNCHING IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS[a]

By Selected Demographic Variables[b]
(Grand mean .52; N=1136)

	N	
SEX		
Male	(578)	.78
Female	(550)	.25
RACE		
White	(941)	.52
Black	(195)	.58
CHILDHOOD RESIDENCE		
"Farm"	(351)	.48
"Town"	(314)	.50
"Small City"	(164)	.59
"Big City"	(291)	.54
PARENTS' SOCIAL CLASS		
"Middle Class"	(315)	.47
"Working Class"	(768)	.53
EDUCATION		
Grade school	(243)	.62
Some high school	(233)	.67
High school	(352)	.44
Some college	(182)	.65
College	(72)	.17
Post graduate	(54)	.14
CURRENT RELIGION (1968)		
Baptist	(283)	.49
Methodist	(135)	.63
Lutheran	(69)	.30
Episcopalian	(38)	.73
Other Protestant	(213)	.64
Catholic	(279)	.38
Jew	(20)	.30
CURRENT REGION OF RESIDENCE		
Northeast	(312)	.52
South	(319)	.41
Midwest	(322)	.58
West	(183)	.61

	N	
CITY SIZE		
SMSA	(316)	.52
Suburb	(291)	.60
Town:10-50,000	(128)	.50
Town:Less than 10,000	(118)	.60
Rural	(283)	.42
CURRENT FAMILY INCOME (1967)		
$0- $2,999	(178)	.44
$3,000-$4,999	(169)	.34
$5,000-$6,999	(197)	.52
$7,000-$9,999	(298)	.56
$10,000-$14,999	(205)	.68
$15,000-$19,999	(57)	.42
$20,000 +	(32)	.64
AGE		
18-25	(154)	.47
26-35	(232)	.71
36-45	(230)	.69
46-60	(282)	.45
60 +	(238)	.30

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[a]Multiple Classification (Dummy Variable Regression)
Analysis. Range on index is 0-6. Content of index discussed
in footnote 11 to text. This table is presented for
descriptive purposes only. Not all variables included in
the model can be assumed to be prior to the agression.

[b]Blacks weighted .53, but unweighted N's are shown.
Missing data ranged from zero to almost four percent in the
variables shown; usually less than one percent was missing.
The value of the modal response was assigned when the
distribution was strongly modal. Because 'family income'
had the most responses missing (43), the mean income for the
respondent's educational level was assigned. In all other
cases, missing data were treated as a separate category
during regression but were not shown because the N was too
small.

Table 3

INDEX OF APPROVAL OF A HUSBAND SLAPPING HIS WIFE'S FACE
BY RACE, SEX, AND INCOME OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD (1967)[a]

For married respondents aged 18-60 only

Percent Scoring	White							Black		
	$0-$2,999	$3,000-$4,999	$5,000-$6,999	$7,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	$15,000+	Total	$0-$4,999	$5,000+	Total
MEN										
1-10	21	23	21	30	26	17	25	38	37	37
5+	16	11	7	15	17	4	13	19	17	18
(N)	(19)[b]	(26)	(56)	(94)	(70)	(24)	(289)	(21)	(35)	(56)
WOMEN										
1-10	9	17	21	15	28	19	19	15	38	27
5+	9	3	11	6	13	6	8	15	29	22
(N)	(11)[b]	(30)	(82)	(106)	(61)	(16)[b]	(306)	(20)	(21)	(41)

[a] It was assumed that the respondents (14%) who did not indicate income of head of household had only one wage earner in the family and family income was substituted. If family income was also missing, the respondent was assigned the mean income for his educational level.

[b] Percentages based on such a small number of cases are unreliable.

Table 4

ADJUSTED MEAN SCORES, INDICES OF APPROVAL OF PHYSICAL AGGRESSION[a]
BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES[b]

(Grand mean a = 1.06, b = 3.86, c = 1.82, d = 4.46; N=1136)

	N	a. Husband slapping wife	b. Man punching stranger	c. Man choking stranger	d. Teenage boy punching another
SEX					
Male	(578)	1.26	4.04	2.07	4.79
Female	(550)	.85	3.66	1.56	4.13
RACE					
White	(941)	1.02	3.87	1.76	4.53
Black	(195)	1.40	3.79	2.36	3.86
CHILDHOOD RESIDENCE					
"Farm"	(351)	1.07	3.84	1.62	4.28
"Town"	(314)	.88	3.90	1.81	4.41
"Small City"	(164)	1.03	3.69	2.15	4.30
"Big City"	(291)	1.27	3.95	1.84	4.77
PARENTS' SOCIAL CLASS					
"Middle Class"	(315)	.92	3.96	1.72	4.45
"Working Class"	(768)	1.11	3.84	1.84	4.47
EDUCATION					
Grade School	(243)	1.27	3.58	1.75	4.08
Some High School	(233)	1.12	3.50	1.77	3.94
High School	(352)	.88	4.00	2.04	4.91
Some College	(182)	1.17	4.29	1.73	4.78
College	(72)	.78	4.07	1.15	4.05
Post Graduate	(54)	1.02	3.79	1.97	4.72

	N	a. Husband slapping wife	b. Man punching stranger	c. Man choking stranger	d. Teenage boy punching another
CURRENT RELIGION (1968)					
Baptist	(283)	1.30	3.95	1.79	4.88
Methodist	(135)	.95	4.18	2.48	4.74
Lutheran	(69)	.77	4.92	1.99	4.04
Episcopalian	(38)	1.19	3.74	3.23	4.15
Other Protestants	(213)	1.17	3.53	1.34	4.82
Catholic	(279)	.82	3.68	1.72	4.04
Jew	(20)	.92	3.08	2.18	3.48
CURRENT REGION OF RESIDENCE					
Northeast	(312)	1.07	3.33	1.26	4.43
South	(319)	.97	4.06	2.15	4.14
Midwest	(322)	.96	4.05	1.93	4.21
West	(183)	1.36	4.07	1.99	5.47
CITY SIZE					
SMSA	(316)	1.28	3.60	1.88	4.42
Suburb	(291)	.84	3.67	1.70	4.81
Town:10-50,000	(128)	.72	3.96	2.01	3.99
Town:Less than 10,000	(118)	1.25	5.20	2.68	4.57
Rural	(283)	1.14	3.69	1.43	4.32
CURRENT FAMILY INCOME (1967)					
$0-$2,999	(178)	.56	3.39	1.53	4.05
$3,000-$4,999	(169)	.78	3.64	1.79	4.32
$5,000-$6,999	(197)	1.03	3.74	1.82	4.25
$7,000-$9,999	(298)	1.35	4.07	1.62	4.64
$10,000-14,999	(205)	1.20	4.38	2.15	4.73
$15,000-19,999	(57)	1.37	3.61	2.53	4.43
$20,000+	(32)	.94	3.03	1.70	5.19
AGE					
18-25	(154)	1.20	4.57	1.94	4.61
26-35	(232)	1.71	4.35	2.02	4.69
36-45	(230)	1.19	4.07	1.95	4.35
46-60	(282)	.76	3.30	1.72	4.60
60 +	(238)	.56	3.39	1.53	4.08

	N	a. Husband slapping wife	b. Man punching stranger	c. Man choking stranger	d. Teenage boy punching another
MARITAL STATUS					
Married	(865)	.96			
Widowed	(113)	1.31			
Separated or Divorced	(52)	2.10			
Single	(106)	1.17			
HAVE TEENAGERS 14-18					
Yes	(212)				4.33
No	(924)				4.49

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[a] Mutiple Classification (Dummy Variable Regression) Analysis. Ranges on indexes are a = 0-10, b = 0-10, c = 0-12, d = 0-10. Content of indices in discussed in notes to text.

[b] Blacks are weighted .53 but unweighted N's are shown. See also note b, Table 2.

Table 5

INDEX OF APPROVAL OF A MAN CHOKING AN ADULT MALE STRANGER
BY RACE, SEX, AND INCOME OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD (1967)[a]

For respondents aged 18-60 only

Percent Scoring	White							Black		
	$0-$2,999	$3,000-$4,999	$5,000-$6,999	$7,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	$15,000+	Total	$0-$4,999	$5,000+	Total
MEN										
1-12	29	32	34	24	41	39	33	32	42	39
7+	18	18	18	12	22	23	17	16	21	19
(N)	(28)	(34)	(67)	(107)	(81)	(31)	(348)	(31)	(52)	(83)
WOMEN										
1-12	17	35	20	21	35	16	24	20	58	38
7+	10	16	10	12	17	5	12	11	21	16
(N)	(30)	(37)	(90)	(114)	(65)	(19)	(355)	(35)	(33)	(68)

[a]It was assumed that the respondents (14%) who did not indicate income of head of household had only one wage earner in the family and family income was substituted. If family income was also missing, the respondent was assigned the mean income for his educational level.

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Table 6

INDEX OF APPROVAL OF ONE TEENAGE BOY PUNCHING ANOTHER
BY RACE AND INCOME OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD (1967)[a]

For parents of children aged 14-18 only

Percent Scoring	White						Black		
	$0-$4,999	$5,000-$6,999	$7,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	$15,000+	Total	$0-$4,999	$5,000+	Total
1-10	67	68	70	78	92	73	36	60	50
7+	28	32	38	41	54	38	7	15	12
(N)	(18)[b]	(34)	(56)	(46)	(13)[b]	(167)	(14)[b]	(20)	(34)

[a]It was assumed that the respondents (14%) who did not indicate income of head of household had only one wage earner in the family and family income was substituted. If family income was also missing, the respondent was assigned the mean income for his educational level.

[b]Percentages based on such a small number of cases are unreliable.

Table 7

ADJUSTED PERCENT OWNING ANY GUN OR OWNING PISTOL

by selected demographic variables[a]
(Adjusted mean percent owning any gun, 42; pistol, 16; N=1136)

	N	any gun	pistol
SEX			
Male	(578)	51	19
Female	(550)	32	12
RACE			
White	(941)	43	16
Black	(195)	30	14
CHILDHOOD RESIDENCE			
"Farm"	(351)	46	16
"Town"	(314)	43	20
"Small City"	(164)	36	13
"Big City"	(291)	39	13
PARENTS' SOCIAL CLASS			
"Middle Class"	(315)	41	15
"Working Class"	(768)	42	16
EDUCATION			
Grade school	(243)	44	17
Some high school	(233)	43	15
High school	(352)	41	16
Some college	(182)	41	14
College	(72)	43	22
Post graduate	(54)	34	14
CURRENT RELIGION (1968)			
Baptist	(283)	41	18
Methodist	(135)	50	18
Lutheran	(69)	40	15
Episcopalian	(38)	49	15
Other Protestant	(213)	44	16
Catholic	(279)	40	14
Jew	(20)	24	06
CURRENT REGION OF RESIDENCE			
Northeast	(312)	31	11
South	(319)	50	18
Midwest	(322)	42	16
West	(183)	46	21

	N	any gun	pistol
CITY SIZE			
SMSA	(316)	37	18
Suburb	(291)	34	12
Town:10-50,000	(128)	41	13
Town:Less than 10,000	(118)	43	18
Rural	(283)	54	18
CURRENT FAMILY INCOME (1967)			
$0-$2,999	(178)	38	08
$3,000-$4,999	(169)	31	06
$5,000-$6,999	(197)	39	15
$7,000-$9,999	(298)	46	22
$10,000-$14,999	(205)	47	21
$15,000-$19,999	(57)	50	21
$20,000 +	(32)	43	20
AGE			
18-25	(154)	41	15
26-35	(232)	52	21
36-45	(230)	43	11
46-60	(282)	40	18
Over 60	(238)	34	14

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[a]Blacks are weighted .53 but unweighted N's are shown. See also note b, Table 2.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The same is true of a summary statement by Lewis A. Coser (1963), which integrates the perspectives of Robert K. Merton, Andrew Henry and James S. Short, and Martin Gold. An empirical evaluation of the socialization thesis may be found in Erlanger (1972).

[2]On the normative theory of culture, see Philip Selznick and Gertrude Jaeger Selznick (1964). Although I independently developed a very similar scheme, this statement of the criteria for the existence of a subculture is based in part on the more systematic presentation of Ruth Kornhauser (1963).

[3]They also seem consistent with the position of protagonists on both sides of the culture of poverty debate. See, for example, Oscar Lewis (1966) or Charles A. Valentine (1968:1-18).

[4]Ruth Kornhauser (1963) suggests that relatively small variations can best be viewed as variations on a common normative system caused by position in social structure. Related is Hyman Rodman's (1963) notion of a "lower class value stretch," or, in a somewhat different vein, Gresham Sykes and David Matza's (1957) argument on "neutralization of values."

[5]This leads Marvin E. Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti to make some curious statements. For example, they are emphatic about the norm of manliness being dominant among males, and yet at another point they talk about a "culture antipathy between many folk rationalizations of... males... and the middle class legal norms under which they live" (1967:153). This leads one to wonder who made the laws.

[6]On the problem of tautology in subcultural theory, see Walter B. Miller (1971).

[7]Such a scale has been derived by Thorsten Sellen and Wolfgang (1964) for the study of juvenile delinquency.

[8]Thus, in terms of the technical debate that often flares, the authors hypothesize the existence of a subculture but not a culture.

[9]Wolfgang and Ferracuti apparently misread Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin's position, as they cite it in support of their argument for the positive effects of disorganization of slum and ghetto communities (1967:299).

[10]The survey instrument was designed under the direction of Sandra Ball Rokeach. Preliminary findings are reported in David L. Lange, Robert K. Baker, and Sandra J. Ball (1969) and in Rodney Stark and James McEvoy, III (1970). Some of the tables in the latter paper exaggerate class difference because the analysis does not control for age.

[11]Because of several ambiguities in the questionnaire, the "index of slapping and punching in conflict situations" is only a rough indicator of the use of violence. The core items used for the index were "Have you ever slapped or kicked anyone?" and "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," an "adult," or both, but this was according to his own definition. There is reason to suspect that older persons may be defining events which occurred in their early twenties (or so) as having been in their "youth." For this reason respondents over 60 are dropped from Table 1, although they are included in the multiple classification analysis of Table 2.

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, such as conflict, military, sports, play is recorded, but only for the most recent incident.

For each of the two core items, 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 most recent incident is representative of the previous ones. Experimentation with less stringent adjustments had no important effect on the distribution, except to sharply raise the rate of slapping and kicking for college educated women. A discussion of the validity of the items and copies of tables not shown will be supplied to the interested reader on request.

As an aid in presentation of the findings, the scores on the slap-kick and punch-beat indices were combined. Previous analysis of the separate indices showed no systematic variation in overall rates or in the distribution by important demographic variables for men. For white women the rate of punching was markedly lower than that of slapping; for blacks the difference was not nearly as marked. The main detriment of combining the items is the increase in the ambiguity of the frequency scores. A score of four on the combined index is taken as the best estimate of five or more times.

Although the resulting indicator is crude, it has the advantage of giving at least some idea of the extent of minor violence not serious or visible enough to be reported to the police.

[12]Use of less stringently adjusted indices did not produce dramatic changes in this finding; inclusion of incidents in fun, sports, military, etc., yields a rate in the range of 20 percent, but also raises the rate for college graduates to about 10 percent. Inclusion of the full age range lowers these percents.

[13]Data from a 1969 study of males in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and in rural sections of Nash and Edgecombe counties, North Carolina, lend some support to these findings. The questionnaire asked, "How often do you

get in angry fist fights with other men: 'never,' 'almost never,' 'sometimes,' 'often'". Although more blacks than whites reported fighting (32 percent [N=237] vs. 21 percent [237] in Milwaukee; 21 percent [236] vs. 8 percent [217] in rural North Carolina), the percent reporting that they fight with any frequency (sometimes or often) was relatively small (8 percent black, 4 percent white in Milwaukee; 2 percent black, 1.5 percent white in North Carolina). Analysis by income shows Milwaukee whites and blacks in the $4,000-$7,000 income range as most likely to fight; 52 percent of whites and 43 percent of blacks in this range report at least some fighting, but less than 10 percent report fighting with any frequency. I am grateful to Russell Middleton for permission to analyze these data from his ongoing project on self-esteem.

[14]One relevant study which combines class data in this way is Louis Schneider and Sverre Lysgaard's (1953) work on the "deferred gratification pattern." Although the findings of class differences are open to criticism (see S. M. Miller et al., 1965), note that at any rate the differences in the use of physical violence were small and were considered unimpressive by the authors.

[15]a. Are there any situations that you can imagine in which you would approve of a husband slapping his wife's face?
    1. If the husband and wife were having an argument?
    2. If the wife had insulted her husband in public?
    3. If the wife had been flirting with other men?
    4. If the wife had been unfaithful?
  b. Are there any situations that you can imagine in which you would approve of a man choking an adult male stranger?
    1. If the stranger was drunk and bumped into the man and his wife on the street?
    2. If the stranger had hit the man's child after the child accidentally damaged the stranger's car?
    3. If the stranger was beating up a woman and the man saw it?
    4. If the stranger had broken into the man's house?
    5. If the stranger had knocked the man down and was trying to rob him?
    (An additional item having to do with attacking a protestor was omitted because it deals with a political dimension not being studied here.)
  c. Are there any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a teenage boy punching another teenage boy?
    1. If he didn't like the other boy?
    2. If he had been ridiculed and picked on by the other boy?
    3. If he had been challenged by the other boy to a fist fight?
    4. If he had been hit by the other boy?

[16]Of course, this does not mean that a person's response to the general item directly indicates his attitude or action in some actual instance he may become (or have been) involved in.

[17]This gap widens for women as the follow-up items are included (see Table 3), but narrows again when the extreme upper range of the index is analyzed. For example, only about 2 percent of married respondents scored nine or 10 on the index, with virtually no variation by race or sex.

[18]Parents' social class is indicated only by response to the item "What (class) would you say your family was when you were growing up--middle class or working class?"

[19]If anything, the rates of approval for high-income respondents are higher than for those with low income.

[20]Curiously, inclusion of the not sure responses also raises the rate of approval for white women whose family earns over $15,000 to 12 percent (N=18).

Separate analysis of respondents aged 18-40 shows income and education to have opposite effects on approval for that group. There is a fairly marked positive relationship to education and negative relationship to income.

[21]Elsewhere (Howard S. Erlanger, 1972) I have suggested that the evidence on the latent effects of spanking is not as definitive as many interpretations suggest.

[22]Within the gang, there also can be great variation in rates of participation. In Walter B. Miller's study of black and white gangs in the Boston area, only about one-third of 155 males in gangs with a reputation for being the "toughest" in the city had engaged in illegal acts of assault in a two-year period. (Miller, 1966).

[23]It also does not address Wolfgang and Ferracuti's contention that a subculture of violence exists in Colombia, Sardinia, Mexico, Albania, and Albanova, Italy. The case of Sardinia is explored in more detail in Franco Ferracuti, Renato Lazzari, and Marvin E. Wolfgang (1970), which finds some evidence in support of the hypothesis but concludes that "the subculture of violence in Sardinia is limited to violent offenders" (1970:110). This suggests that although it may be that violent offenders in Sardinia receive support for their actions from a limited group, Sardinia itself cannot be characterized as embracing a subculture of violence.

[24]For example, except for E. Franklin Frazier (who, as David Matza notes, is spared the agony since he is dead), all the writers criticized by Valentine deny any perjorative implications of their work. See the review symposium in Current Anthropology (1969).

[25]These studies are reviewed by Sheldon Hackney (1969) and Raymond D. Gastil (1971).

[26]Evidence of the "militarism" of the South is mixed. John S. Reed reports that the South was higher than the nonSouth in its approval of intervention in World War II, but surveys on the Korean and Vietnam

adventures have shown Southerners to be more in favor of "dovish" positions than those in other regions. (Richard F. Hamilton, 1968.) In the Violence Commission data, the South is slightly higher than other regions in support for a militaristic foreign policy.

[27]Copies of relevant tables will be supplied to the intested reader upon request.

[28]Other than works already cited, see Leonard Goodwin (1972) or Louis Kriesberg (1970).

[29]Cf., Elliot Liebow (1971).

[30]A move in this direction is made by Hans H. Toch (1969), who conducted intensive interviews with both convicts and policemen who had frequently been engaged in assault. But even here the subcultural thesis is drawn from the literature rather than grounded in the accounts of those interviewed.

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