Southern Violence

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A TENDENCY toward violence has been one of the character traits most frequently attributed to southerners.[1] In various guises, the image of the violent South confronts the historian at every turn: dueling gentlemen and masters whipping slaves, flatboatmen indulging in rough-and-tumble fights, lynching mobs, country folk at a bearbaiting or a gander pulling, romantic adventurers on Caribbean filibusters, brutal police, panic-stricken communities harshly suppressing real and imagined slave revolts, robed night riders engaged in systematic terrorism, unknown assassins, church burners, and other less physical expressions of a South whose mode of action is frequently extreme.[2] The image is so pervasive that it compels the attention of anyone interested in understanding the South.

H. C. Brearley was among the first to assemble the quantitative data to support the description of the South as "that part of the United States lying below the Smith and Wesson line."[3] He pointed out, for example, that during the five years from 1920 to 1924 the rate of homicide per 100,000 population for the southern states was a little more than two and a half times greater than for the remainder of the country. Using data from the *Uniform Crime Reports* concerning the 1930's, Stuart Lottier confirmed and elaborated Brearley's findings in 1938. For this period also he found that homicide was concentrated in the southeastern states. Of the eleven former Confed-

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[1] See, e.g., Charles O. Lerche, Jr., *The Uncertain South: Its Changing Patterns of Politics in Foreign Policy* (Chicago, 1964), 48–49. Representative comments can be found in John Richard Alden, *The South in the Revolution, 1763–1789* (Baton Rouge, La., 1957), 34–35, 41; Clement Eaton, *A History of the Old South* (2d ed., New York, 1966), 260, 395, 404, 407, 415; John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South, 1800–1861* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956); David Bertelson, *The Lazy South* (New York, 1967), 101–13, 241; H. V. Redfield, *Homicide, North and South: Being a Comparative View of Crime against the Person in Several Parts of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1880).

[2] A stimulating essay on this theme is Frank Vandiver, "The Southerner as Extremist," in *The Idea of the South*, ed. *id.* (Chicago, 1964), 43–56. A lighter treatment of the same subject is Erskine Caldwell, "The Deep South's Other Venerable Tradition," New York *Times Magazine*, July 11, 1965, 10–18.

[3] H. C. Brearley, "The Pattern of Violence," in *id., Culture in the South*, ed. W. T. Couch (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1934), 678–92; and H. C. Brearley, *Homicide in the United States* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1932).

erate states, Louisiana showed the lowest homicide rate, but it was 74 per cent greater than the national average, and no nonsouthern state had a higher rate. It is interesting that while murder and assault were oriented to the southeastern states, robbery rates were highest in the central and western states.[4] These findings were replicated in 1954 using data on crime for the years 1946–1952.[5] The pattern of high rates of serious crimes against persons and relatively lower rates of crimes against property for the South is consequently quite stable.

At the time that Brearley was setting forth the evidence for southern leadership in physical aggression against people, another statistical study primarily of American suicide rates revealed that the South was the area in which people had the least propensity to destroy themselves.[6] Austin Porterfield, in 1949, using mortality tables from *Vital Statistics of the United States,* brought the murder and the suicide indexes together and showed that there was a general inverse relationship between the two rates among the states and that the South ranked highest in homicide and lowest in suicide.[7] In 1940 the national average rate of suicide per 100,000 population was 14.4 and of homicide was 6.2, but the old and cosmopolitan city of New Orleans had a suicide rate of 11.1 and a homicide rate of 15.5. Even though some southern cities exceed some nonsouthern cities in suicide rates, the New Orleans pattern of more homicides than suicides is typical of the South but not of the nation. Porterfield comments that "suicide in every non-Southern city exceeds homicide by ratios ranging from 1.19 to 18.60, while suicide rates exceed homicide rates in only 8 of the 43 Southern and Southwestern cities, 5 of these being in the Southwest."[8]

Violence in the South has three dimensions. In relation to the North, there are high rates of homicide and assault, moderate rates of crime against property, and low rates of suicide. The relationship between homicide and suicide rates in a given group is best expressed by a suicide-homicide ratio (SHR $=$ 100 [Suicides/Suicides$+$Homicides]). The European pattern, shared by white northerners but not by Negroes or white southerners, is for suicides to far outnumber homicides so that the SHR is in excess of 80. The ratios in Table I, displayed graphically in Figure 1, measure the difference be-

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[4] Stuart Lottier, "Distribution of Criminal Offenses in Sectional Regions," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology,* XXIX (Sept.–Oct. 1938), 329–44.

[5] Lyle Shannon, "The Spatial Distribution of Criminal Offenses by States," *ibid.,* XLV (Sept.–Oct. 1954), 264–73.

[6] Louis I. Dublin and Bessie Bunzel, *To Be Or Not To Be: A Study of Suicide* (New York, 1933), 80, 413.

[7] Austin L. Porterfield, "Indices of Suicide and Homicide by States and Cities: Some Southern-Non-Southern Contrasts with Implications for Research," *American Sociological Review,* XIV (Aug. 1949), 481–90.

[8] *Ibid.,* 485.

Table I

Suicide-Homicide Ratios for Four Categories of Americans, 1920–1964[9]

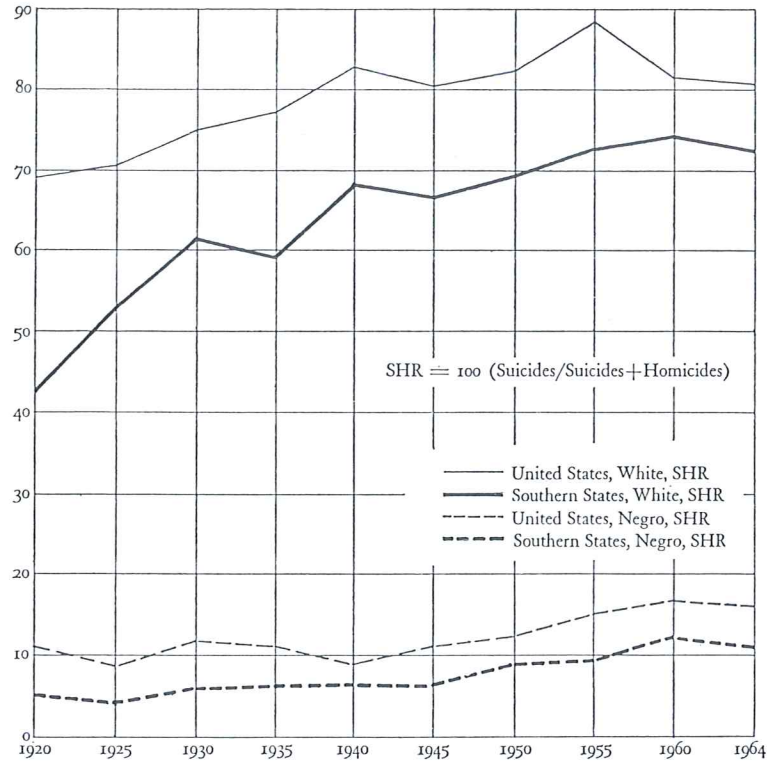| Year	United States White SHR	Southern White SHR	United States Negro SHR	Southern Negro SHR
1920	69.3	43.4*	11.2	05.6*
1925	70.9	53.5*	09.2	05.0*
1930	75.0	61.1*	11.9	06.0*
1935	76.2	59.9	11.4	06.3
1940	83.3	68.5	09.6	06.5
1945	80.3	66.4	11.1	06.8
1950	82.4	69.8	12.4	09.3
1955	88.3	73.1	15.6	09.7
1960	82.0	74.4	17.0	12.2
1964	81.1	73.2	16.7	11.1

tween southerners and other Americans with regard to violence. Because the statistics for "the United States" include the statistics for the southern states, the differences between southern and nonsouthern suicide-murder ratios are understated. Even so, the differences are significant. In the North and the South, but more so in the South, Negroes commit murder much more often than they commit suicide. Among white Americans, southerners show a relatively greater preference than do nonsoutherners for murder rather than suicide.

High murder and low suicide rates constitute a distinctly southern pattern of violence, one that must rank with the caste system and ahead of mint juleps in importance as a key to the meaning of being southern. Why this should be so is a question that has puzzled investigators for a long time, and their answers have been various. When one loyal southerner was asked by a probing Yankee why the murder rate in the South was so high, he replied that he reckoned there were just more folks in the South who needed killing.

Few apologies surpass this one in purity, but there is a more popular one that tries to explain the high homicide rates in the southern states by

[9] Suicide-Homicide Ratio=100 (Suicides/Suicides+Homicides). As the ratio approaches 100, it registers the increasing preference for suicide rather than murder among the members of a given group. The ratios were computed from figures taken from Forrest E. Linder and Robert D. Grove, *Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1900–1940* (Washington, D. C., 1943); and US, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Vital Statistics of the United States,* for the appropriate years. The asterisks in the table indicate that: in 1920 all of the former Confederate states were included in the figures except Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, and Texas; Arkansas, Georgia, and Texas were still not reporting in 1925, but by 1930 only Texas was excluded; since 1935 all southern states are included.

Figure 1

the extremely high rates of violence among Negroes who constitute a large part of the population. As Table I indicates, however, southern whites considered by themselves vary from the national norm in the same direction as Negroes, though to a much lesser extent. In addition, Porterfield points out that for the twelve southern states with the heaviest Negro population, the coefficient of correlation between serious crimes and the percentage of Negroes in the population is —.44. There is actually a tendency for states to rank lower in serious crimes as the percentage of Negroes in the population increases.[10]

A more sophisticated theory is that southern white society contains a larger proportion of lower status occupations so that the same factors that cause lower status groups in the North to become more violent than the rest of society have a proportionately greater effect on the South. The dif-

[10] Austin L. Porterfield, "A Decade of Serious Crimes in the United States," *American Sociological Review*, XIII (Feb. 1948), 44–54; see also James E. McKeown, "Poverty, Race, and Crime," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, XXXIX (Nov.–Dec. 1948), 480–83.

ference in rates would then be accounted for by the numerical bulge in the high risk group, and only the stratification of society would be peculiarly southern. Unfortunately for this theory, southern cities, in which whites show the distinctive pattern of southern violence, actually have greater percentages of the white population in higher status jobs than do northern cities.[11] It is not the class structure that causes the southern skew in the statistics.

In the same way, the agricultural nature of southern life might account for the pattern of southern violence. That the peculiar configuration exists in southern cities as well as in the countryside could possibly be accounted for by the large migration into the city of people who learned their ways of living and dying in the country. Table II shows that both homicide and

Table II

Homicide and Suicide Rates by Race and by Size of Population
Group, United States, 1940[12]

	US	Cities 100,000 and up	Cities 10,000– 100,000	Cities 2,500– 10,000	Rural
Suicide (All Ages, Both Sexes)					
All Races	14.4	16.8	15.6	15.1	12.0
White	15.5	17.8	16.4	16.0	13.3
Nonwhite	4.6	7.2	5.8	4.5	3.0
Homicide (All Ages, Both Sexes)					
All Races	6.2	7.1	5.7	7.3	5.7
White	3.1	3.2	2.5	3.7	3.3
Nonwhite	33.3	43.3	43.0	51.9	23.1

suicide rates are lower for rural districts than for urban areas. This results in an SHR for the white population of rural districts considered by themselves of 80.1, as compared with an SHR of 83.7 for the white population of the nation as a whole. The SHR of 68.8 in 1940 for southern whites, both urban and rural, is significantly lower than the national ratios and indicates

[11] Norval D. Glenn, "Occupational Benefits to Whites from the Subordination of Negroes," *American Sociological Review*, XXVIII (June 1963), 443–48, esp. Table I.
[12] The source for this table is Linder and Grove, *Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1900–1940*, Table 24.

that southern whites tended more to act out their aggressions than the white population of either the cities or the countryside in the rest of the nation.

Another way of testing the notion that the rurality of the South may be the root of its strange configuration of violence is summarized in Table III,

Table III

Suicide and Homicide Rates and Suicide-Homicide Ratios for Southern States and Eleven Most Rural Nonsouthern States, 1940[13]

Population Group	Suicide-Homicide Ratio
Southern Nonwhite	6.7
National Nonwhite	12.2
Southern White	68.8
Nonsouthern, White Rural (11 states)	79.0
National White Rural	80.1
National White	83.7

	White			White	
Southern States	Suicide Rate	Homicide Rate	Rural Nonsouthern States	Suicide Rate	Homicide Rate
Alabama	11.7	6.9	Arizona	15.2	7.5
Arkansas	8.0	5.1	Idaho	17.7	3.3
Florida	19.8	7.5	Iowa	15.2	1.3
Georgia	12.1	5.6	Kansas	13.0	1.1
Louisiana	12.4	5.5	Montana	21.1	4.8
Mississippi	10.1	5.7	Nebraska	16.8	.7
North Carolina	10.4	4.0	New Mexico	14.2	5.7
South Carolina	9.7	5.0	North Dakota	9.7	1.4
Tennessee	10.0	7.1	South Dakota	10.5	1.8
Texas	13.6	5.3	Vermont	16.7	.8
Virginia	18.4	5.0	Wyoming	23.5	4.5
Averages	12.4	5.6	Averages	15.8	4.2

a comparison of the SHR's of the eleven former Confederate states with those of the eleven most rural nonsouthern states. The nonsouthern states, mostly western, are closer in time to frontier days and are currently much more subject to instability caused by in-migration than are the southern

[13] The source for Table III is *ibid.*, Table 20. All rates are per 100,000 population.

states, but otherwise the two sets of states are similar enough for purposes of comparison. In 1940 the percentage of population living in the urban areas of the southern states ranged from 13.4 per cent to 36.7 per cent, with the mean falling at 26.1 per cent, while in the eleven nonsouthern states the degree of urbanization ranged from 13.6 per cent to 36.7 per cent, with the mean at 31.2 per cent. In order not to distort the picture more than necessary, Nevada, with an extraordinary suicide rate of 41.3 per 100,000 population, is omitted from the comparison. At the same time, Virginia and Florida, with nonsouthern SHR's, are retained in the southern sample. The results still show a significant difference between the suicide-murder ratio of the southern states and that of the most rural nonsouthern states. The strange bent of southern violence cannot be accounted for by the rural nature of southern society.

Poverty is also a logical factor to suspect as the underlying cause of the South's pattern of violence. Howard Odum computed that in 1930 the Southeast had 20.9 per cent of the nation's population but only 11.9 per cent of its wealth.[14] Whether or not the region was poor before it was violent is undetermined. Even more to the point, poverty alone cannot explain high homicide rates. The decline of homicides during business depressions in the United States underlines this argument, as does the fact that crime rates among second-generation immigrants are much higher than among first-generation immigrants despite increased material welfare of the former.[15] One study has found no significant correlation between crime rates and the proportion of the population on relief by county in Minnesota, whereas there was a strong correlation between crime rates and the degree of urbanization. Like the rural poor in Minnesota, the Japanese of Seattle were poor but honest and nonviolent.[16]

Though the data are extremely questionable, there is, nevertheless, a significant positive correlation between the SHR for the fifty-six world polities for which information is readily available and almost every measure of modernization that can be quantified.[17] It is difficult to determine whether it is underdevelopment or the process of change that accounts for this, for scholars have noted that the process of modernization generates various sorts

[14] Howard Odum, *Southern Regions of the United States* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1936), 208.

[15] Edwin H. Sutherland and Donald R. Cressey, *Principles of Criminology* (6th ed., New York, 1960), 92, 146–49.

[16] Van B. Shaw, "The Relationship between Crime Rates and Certain Population Characteristics in Minnesota Counties," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, XL (May–June 1949), 43–49.

[17] Simple intercorrelations were run between the indexes of homicide and suicide and measures of social and economic activity using data from *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators*, ed. Bruce M. Russett *et al.* (New Haven, Conn., 1964); and Statistical Office of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Demographic Yearbook, 1963* (New York, 1964), Table 25.

of conflict and violence.[18] For both developing and industrialized nations, education is the most powerful predictor of a country's SHR, but indexes of industrial and urban activity, along with reflections of the society's general welfare, are also significantly correlated with the SHR. This is true for the fifty-six world polities considered together as well as for the European nations as a group and for the non-European countries taken together. That southerners over the past half century have been growing more similar to nonsouthern Americans in their tastes in violence as the gap between the nation and the South in economic development has slowly narrowed also argues that there may be no increment of violence in the South that is not "explained" by the relative slowness of the region's development.

Multiple regression analysis offers a technique for testing the possibility that variations in the key indexes of modernization operating in an additive fashion might account for the South's particularity in rates of violence. Six independent variables measuring the four factors of wealth, education, urbanization, and age are included in this analysis. Except where indicated below, their values are taken from the *United States Census* for 1940. Urbanization is stated as the percentage of the population living within towns of 2,500 or more; education is measured by the median number of school years completed by persons twenty-five years old and older; "income" is the state's per capita personal income in dollars for 1940; unemployment is expressed as the percentage of the working force out of work; "wealth" is the state's per capita income in dollars in 1950; and age is the median age of the population. The values of each variable except "income" are recorded by race. "South" is a dummy variable included in the analysis in order to see if any of the unexplained residue of the dependent variable is associated with the fact of its occurring either inside or outside the South. All of the former Confederate states were assigned the value of one, while all nonsouthern states were recorded as zero. The dependent variables that require "explaining" are the suicide rate, the homicide rate, the sum of the suicide rate and homicide rate, and the suicide-homicide ratio. Even though these rates are taken from the most reliable source, *Vital Statistics of the United States*, there may be large errors between the published rates and the true rates. Some violent deaths are never recorded, and many are improperly classified, but there is no reason to suspect that there has been a long-term, systematic bias in the collection and recording of the statistics for the southern states.

[18] Richard S. Weinert, "Violence in Pre-Modern Societies: Rural Colombia," *American Political Science Review*, LX (June 1966), 340–47; *Internal War, Problems and Approaches*, ed. Harry Eckstein (New York, 1964); E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York, 1959). An important synthesis and statement of theory is Ted Gurr, "Psychological Factors in Civil Violence," *World Politics*, XX (Jan. 1968), 245–78.

For the purpose of the crude comparison between South and non-South, the *Vital Statistics* are acceptable.

The results of the analysis are summarized in Table IV. The coefficient of correlation between each of the independent variables and the dependent variable is found in the column labeled "Simple." The percentage of the variation in the dependent variable that is associated with, and thus "explained" by, the variation in the independent variable is found by squaring the coefficient of correlation. Education, for example, is the best single predictor of the white suicide rate. The simple coefficient of correlation of .62 between education and suicide in Table IV indicates that approximately 38 per cent of the variation in the white suicide rate among the forty-eight states in 1940 is associated with variations in the educational level of the populations. The positive correlation means that the suicide rate tends to rise from one state to the next as the educational level rises. The negative coefficients of correlation between each of the independent variables, except South, and the white homicide rate indicate, conversely, that the homicide rate tends to decline as the indexes of development rise.

The effect on the dependent variable of all of the independent variables considered together is measured by the coefficient of multiple correlation, "R." Thus 72 per cent of the white suicide rate and 52 per cent of the white homicide rate are explained by the seven independent variables operating in an additive fashion. The coefficient of partial correlation expresses the relationship of each independent variable with the unexplained portion of the dependent variable after the independent variables acting collectively have done all the explaining possible. The coefficient of partial correlation for the dummy variable (South) is the most important yield of the multiple regression analysis.

Even though the seven independent variables acting together explain 72 per cent of the variation of the white SHR among the forty-eight states in 1940, 28 per cent ($r = -.53$) of the remaining portion of the variation of the white SHR is associated with the South. This means that the white SHR is lower in the South than can be accounted for by the lower indexes of urbanization, education, wealth, and age. There is, similarly, a significant portion of the variation from state to state in the white homicide rate, and in the white suicide rate, that is not explained by variations in measures of development, but that is explained by southernness.

If the deviation of the South from the national norms for violence cannot be attributed to backwardness, or at least not to the static measures of underdevelopment, there are other possible explanations that should be considered. The concept of anomie, developed by Émile Durkheim in his

Table IV

Multiple Regression Analysis

Violence, Development, and Sectionalism in the United States, 1940[19]

Dependent Variables by State	R² Variation Explained	Urbanization		Education		Income		Unemployment		Wealth		Age		South	
		Simple	Partial	Simple	Partial	Simple	Partial	Simple	Partial	Simple	Partial	Simple	Partial	Simple	Partial
White Suicide Rate	.72*	.25	−.64*	.62*	.52	.56*	.14	.22	.33	.53*	.35	.55*	.59*	−.31	.42*
White Homicide Rate	.52*	−.45*	−.24	−.17	.09	−.42	.23	−.13	.26	−.42	−.12	−.58*	.24	.54*	.49*
White Homicide plus Suicide Rate	.57*	.07	−.59*	.52	.44*	.36	.20	.15	.35	−.34	.22	−.30	.41*	−.09	.50*
White Suicide-Homicide Ratio	.72*	.53*	−.02	.40*	.11	.63*	−.24	.25	−.18	.62*	.29	.76*	.49*	−.68*	−.53*
Nonwhite Suicide Rate	.30	.08	−.13	.30	.25	.47*	.26	.15	−.09	.34	−.00	.13	−.04	−.34	.08
Nonwhite Homicide Rate	.25	−.07	−.28	−.19	−.25	−.11	.18	−.17	.21	−.09	−.04	.04	.40*	.28	.37*
Nonwhite Homicide plus Suicide Rate	.22	−.02	−.30	−.03	−.12	.13	.27	−.08	.15	.09	−.04	.10	.35	.09	.37*
Nonwhite Suicide-Homicide Ratio	.35	.27	.32	.36	.31	.43*	.18	.30	−.11	.36	−.10	.12	−.40	−.36	−.09

[19] The asterisks in the table denote that the chance that a random ordering of the data would produce a relationship this strong is less than one in one hundred.

study, *Suicide,* in 1898, is frequently mentioned as an explanation of both homicide and suicide. Anomie has meant slightly varying but not contradictory things to different investigators. It is most generally understood to be a social condition in which there is a deterioration of belief in the existing set of rules of behavior, or in which accepted rules are mutually contradictory, or when prescribed goals are not accessible through legitimate means, or when cognition and socialization have been obstructed by personality traits that cluster about low ego-strength.[20] As it is manifested in the individual, in the form of anomy, it is a feeling of normlessness and estrangement from other people. An anomic person feels lost, drifting without clearly defined rules and expectations, isolated, powerless, and frustrated. In this state, there is a strong strain toward deviant behavior in various forms. The problem is that both homicide and suicide are thought to be related to it, and the theory does not predict what sorts of people or what groups will favor one form of behavior rather than another.

To look at southern violence as the product of anomie in any case would involve a great paradox. The most popular explanation of the high rates of violence in America as compared to Europe places the blame on the rapid urbanization, secularization, and industrialization of the United States and on the social characteristics associated with this remarkable growth: geographic and status mobility, an emphasis upon contractual relationships and upon social norms rather than upon personal relationships, competitive striving, and a cultural pluralism that involves a high level of dissonance among the values that everyone tries to put into practice.[21] The South has traditionally served as the counterpoint to the American way of life because it seemed to differ from the North in these very aspects.[22] Southerners have a greater sense of history than northerners, a greater attachment to place, and more deferential social customs. By all reports, southerners place more emphasis on personal relations and on ascribed statuses than do northerners. Not only do southerners prize political and social cohesion, but by most measures the South is much more homogeneous than the non-South.[23] Yet, though the South differs from the North on so many of the factors that supposedly contribute to anomie and thus to violence, the South is the nation's most violent region.

[20] Herbert McClosky and John H. Schaar, "Psychological Dimensions of Anomy," *American Sociological Review,* XXX (Feb. 1965), 14–40.

[21] David Abrahamsen, *The Psychology of Crime* (New York, 1960), 18–21, 177–83. These relationships are greatly illuminated by the discussion in David Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago, 1954).

[22] William H. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (Garden City, N. Y., 1963); C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge, La., 1960), 109–40.

[23] Jack P. Gibbs and Walter T. Martin, *Status Integration and Suicide: A Sociological Study* (Eugene, Ore., 1964), esp. Table 6.

One body of theory seems to predict higher rates of violence precisely because of the South's homogeneity. Reformulating the observations of George Simmel and Bronisław Malinowski, Lewis Coser writes that "we may say that a conflict is more passionate and more radical when it arises out of close relationships." "The closer the relationship," so the reasoning goes, "the greater the affective investment, the greater also the tendency to suppress rather than express hostile feelings. . . . In such cases feelings of hostility tend to accumulate and hence intensify." Such a theory fits the empirical observation that individuals who express hostility retain fewer and less violent feelings of antagonism toward the source of their irritation.[24] But Coser himself states that, though conflicts within close relationships are likely to be intense when they occur, "this does not necessarily point to the likelihood of more *frequent* conflict in closer relationships than in less close ones." There are situations in which accumulated hostilities do not eventuate in conflict and may even serve to solidify the relationship.[25]

The frustration-aggression hypothesis involves similar perplexities.[26] One of the alternative ways of adapting to frustration is, for example, to turn the frustration inward upon the self. In extreme cases this can result in suicide.[27] A psychoanalyst has concluded after an extensive study that a major portion of Sweden's high suicide rate is caused by the frustrations arising from a highly competitive, success-oriented society.[28] The general rise in suicide rates in the United States during economic downturns argues that the same mechanism is at work among some segments of the population. Consequently, nothing in the frustration-aggression hypothesis predicts the direction the aggression will take.

There are currently two theories that attempt to explain the generally inverse relationship between homicide and suicide as reactions to frustration. The first, developed by Andrew F. Henry and James F. Short, Jr.,[29] is based on the assumption that both homicide and suicide are the result of frustration-aggression and builds upon Porterfield's initial suggestion that the

[24] Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York, 1956), 57, 62, 71; Albert Pepitone and George Reichling, "Group Cohesiveness and Expression of Hostility," in *Personality and Social Systems*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and William T. Smelser (New York, 1963), 117–24.

[25] Coser, *Functions of Social Conflict*, 72.

[26] John Dollard *et al., Frustration and Aggression* (New Haven, Conn., 1939); Leonard Berkowitz, *Aggression: A Social Psychological Analysis* (New York, 1962); Aubrey J. Yates, *Frustration and Conflict* (New York, 1962).

[27] Karl Menninger, *Man against Himself* (New York, 1938), 23. The assumption that homicide and suicide are simply aggressions manifested in different directions is the basis of the concept of the suicide-homicide ratio.

[28] Herbert Hendin, *Suicide and Scandinavia: A Psychoanalytic Study of Culture and Character* (Garden City, N. Y., 1965), Chap. v.

[29] Andrew F. Henry and James F. Short, Jr., *Suicide and Homicide: Some Economic, Sociological, and Psychological Aspects of Aggression* (Glencoe, Ill., 1954).

strength of the relational system might have something to do with an individual's choice of either homicide or suicide.[30] Henry and Short adduce data on the relationship of homicide and suicide rates to the business cycle and to certain statistically distinct groups. They reason that overt aggression against others "varies directly with the strength of external restraint over the behavior of the adult—external restraint which is a function of strength of the relational system and position in the status hierarchy."[31] According to this theory, overt aggression increases as the strength of the relational system increases and as a person's position in the status hierarchy decreases.

Martin Gold has pointed out, however, that contrary to the hypothesis of Henry and Short, upper status people are likely to be more restrained by the expectations of others than are lower status people. Even more damaging is Gold's demonstration that the Henry and Short hypothesis does not correctly predict the greater preference of women for suicide rather than homicide;[32] nor does it correctly predict that suicide rates are lower among the middle classes than at either extreme of the social scale.

The second theory, fashioned by Gold, attempts to relate differences in child-rearing practices to preferences for hostility or guilt as an accommodation to frustration. Gold shows, specifically, that there is a positive correlation between the incidence of physical punishment commonly used in the child-rearing practices of certain groups and the rate of homicide for that group. His conclusion is that physical disciplining of children leads to aggression against others rather than against the self.[33] To confound the theory, restrictive child-rearing practices in Europe evidently do not lead to the physical violence that such practices among the lower classes in America are supposed to produce. It is also doubtful that there is a significant class differential in the degree of physical punishment used to discipline children.[34] William and Joan McCord found in their study of juveniles that there was no strong relationship between disciplining methods and criminality except when a child is rejected by his parents or when his parents provide him with a deviant role model; harsh discipline does

[30] Porterfield, "Indices of Suicide and Homicide," 488.

[31] Henry and Short, *Suicide and Homicide,* 119.

[32] Martin Gold, "Suicide, Homicide, and the Socialization of Aggression," *American Journal of Sociology,* LXIII (May 1958), 651–61. Gold originated the SHR, which he called the "suicide-murder ratio."

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] Melvin L. Kohn, "Social Class and the Exercise of Parental Authority," in *Personality and Social Systems,* ed. Smelser and Smelser, 297–314; Martha Sturm White, "Social Class, Child Rearing Practices, and Child Behavior," *ibid.,* 286–96; Bernard C. Rosen and Roy D'Andrade, "The Psychosocial Origins of Achievement Motivation," *Sociometry,* XXII (Sept. 1959), 185–215, cited in *Anomie and Deviant Behavior: A Discussion and Critique,* ed. Marshall B. Clinard (New York, 1964), 260–61; Bernard Berelson and Gary A. Steiner, *Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings* (New York, 1964), 479–81.

less damage than neglect.[35] Despite such complexities, it is reasonable to suppose that there is some causal relationship between the socialization of aggression and a group's SHR, but before such a relationship can be a useful ingredient of an explanation of southern violence, anthropologists and historians need to know much more about regional differences in child-rearing techniques.

Whether or not the cause can be located in child-rearing practices, several bodies of evidence point to the conclusion that southern violence is a cultural pattern that exists separate from current influences. For instance, several commentators have suggested that the habit of carrying guns in the South made murder a much more frequent outcome of altercations among southerners than among northerners. This argument is buttressed by a 1968 survey, reported in Table V, which showed that 52 per cent of south-

Table V

Per Cent of Families Owning Firearms[36]

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Total White	34	65	1
South	52	45	3
Non-South	27	72	1
Total Nonwhite	24	70	6
South	34	61	5
Non-South	15	78	7

ern white families owned guns, as opposed to only 27 per cent of their nonsouthern white counterparts. It may be, however, that this differential in ownership of guns is the result of a violent turn of mind rather than the cause of violence. This is the implication of the fact that when the House of Representatives in 1968 passed a weak gun control bill to restrict the mail-order sale of rifles, shotguns, and ammunition by the overwhelming vote of 304 to 118, representatives of the eleven former Confederate states nonetheless voted 73 to 19 against the bill.[37] It should be noted, too, that while some southern states have relatively strict firearms laws, these laws do not dramatically affect their homicide rates.[38] Furthermore, the assault rate is

[35] William McCord and Joan McCord, *Origins of Crime: A New Evaluation of the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study* (New York, 1959), 172, 198.

[36] The source of Table V is a survey of national statistical sample by Opinion Research, Inc., for a Columbia Broadcasting System program, September 2, 1968.

[37] New York *Times*, July 25, 1968.

[38] Carl Bakal, *The Right to Bear Arms* (New York, 1966), 346–53.

extremely high in the South, indicating that southerners react with physical hostility even without guns.

A glance at Table IV reveals that for Negroes either the data are grossly skewed or there is little relationship between violence and the selected indexes of social welfare. The barest hint exists that, controlling for the selected factors, there is some explanatory value in sectionalism, a conclusion that has independent verification. Thomas F. Pettigrew and Rosalind Barclay Spier found that the major correlate of the Negro homicide rate in the North was the proportion of Negroes in a given area who had been born and raised in the South and that this was in addition to the effect of migration itself. It had long been known that homicide was much less frequent among northern than among southern Negroes; this finding suggests that violence in the South is a style of life that is handed down from father to son along with the old hunting rifle and the family Bible.[39]

The great contribution to the discussion of southern violence made by Wilbur J. Cash in his book *The Mind of the South* was precisely that southern violence is part of a style of life that can only be explained historically.[40] According to Cash's own poetic and impressionistic rendering, violence grew up on the southern frontier as naturally as it grows up on any frontier. Violence was an integral part of the romantic, hedonistic, hell-of-a-fellow personality created by the absence of external restraint that is characteristic of a frontier. The cult of honor, with its insistence on the private settlement of disputes, was one manifestation of the radical individualism of the South, but there were other influences at work. The plantation, the most highly organized institution on the southern frontier, reinforced the tendency toward violence that had been initiated by the absence of organization. This was so, Cash argues, for two reasons: whites on the plantation exercised unrestrained dominance over blacks; and whites were generally raised by blacks and consequently were deeply influenced by the romantic and hedonistic Negro personality. Cash does not explicitly say what forces produced this Negro personality, but the implication is that it is fixed by the laws of genetics. But if the more likely position is taken that Negro and white personalities are shaped by environment and experience, then the reader is left with yet another Cashian paradox: violence in the white personality stems at the same time from the effect of being unrestrained and from imitating the Negro personality which was formed out of a situation of dependency and subordination.

[39] Thomas F. Pettigrew and Rosalind Barclay Spier, "The Ecological Structure of Negro Homicide," *American Journal of Sociology*, LXVII (May 1962), 621–29.
[40] Wilbur J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York, 1940; Vintage ed., 1960), 32–34, 44–52, 76, 115–23, 161, 220, 424.

The mediating variable that brings together the various inconsistencies in Cash's explanation of how violence came to be established in the late ante bellum period as part of the southern personality may be the absence of law. Not disorganization nor individualism, not dominance nor submission, not lack of restraint—none of these forces played as important a role as the absence of institutions of law enforcement in compelling southerners to resort to the private settlement of disputes. Cash makes this explicit in his treatment of Reconstruction, the second frontier.

During Reconstruction, according to Cash, southern whites resorted to individual and collective violence because the courts were dominated by carpetbaggers and scalawags. Though this is logical, it is not consistent with Cash's earlier argument that the growth of law had been inhibited on the ante bellum frontier by the desire of southerners to provide their own justice. Apparently the direction of causation in the relationship between law and violence changes in accordance with the needs of Cash's interpretation.

Just as the first and second southern frontiers simultaneously promoted social solidarity and individualism, the third southern frontier, progress, changed the South in the direction of the American norm of Babbittry while at the same time accommodating continuity in the basic traits of the southern mind. A further paradox is involved in the impact of progress on the pattern of violence. Because violence originally arose from individualism, Cash says, the growth of towns should have brought a decrease in rates of violence. This decrease did not materialize because progress also brought poverty, and poverty destroys individualism. Cash argues in effect that individualism produced violence in the ante bellum period and the loss of individualism produced violence in the twentieth century.

Though Cash failed to formulate a coherent theory of southern violence, he did focus on two factors that are obvious possibilities as the chief motive forces of southern violence: the frontier experience and the presence of the Negro. The American frontier did spawn violence, but it seems improbable that the frontier could have much to do with the fact that in the twentieth century southern states on the eastern seaboard have much higher rates of violence than the nation at large. There is also considerable difficulty with the notion that the presence of large numbers of Negroes accounts for the great propensity of whites for violence. There is, in fact, little interracial homicide,[41] and there is no reason to question John Dollard's hypothesis that Negroes murder and assault each other with such appalling frequency because of their daily frustrations in dealing with

[41] Marvin E. Wolfgang, *Patterns in Criminal Homicide* (Philadelphia, 1958), 222–36.

white men. Because aggressions against whites would call forth extreme negative sanctions, frustrated Negroes transfer their aggressive feelings to other Negroes.[42] If this is the case, it is difficult to see how high rates of violence among the dominant white group would also be attributed to the white-Negro relationship, especially when the presence of Negroes in the North is not accompanied by a proportionate rate of violence among the whites. It is also interesting that whites in South Africa who also experienced frontier conditions and a subordinate nonwhite population have a homicide-suicide ratio almost identical to the ratio for the American North but quite different from that of the South.

Subservience, rather than dominance, may be the condition that underlies a pattern of low SHR's. In his extremely popular book *The Wretched of the Earth,* Franz Fanon suggests that the oppressed status of a colonial people produces a pattern of aggressiveness directed against fellow colonials and a need to achieve manhood through violence. The task of revolutionaries is to mobilize the aggressive drives, provide them a sustaining ideology, and direct them against the oppressors.[43] Defeat in the Civil War and the South's resulting position as an economic dependency of the industrial Northeast qualify it for consideration as a violent colonial region. In addition to the difficulty of separating the effects of subservience from the effects of sheer underdevelopment, the problem with this line of reasoning is that the heroic myths created about the Lost Cause and the relatively early return of home rule after the Civil War may have mitigated the trauma of defeat and social dislocation. It would be difficult to maintain that the South's historical experience as a region is the equivalent of the sort of cultural conflict that leads to the loss of self-esteem, disrupts the processes of socialization, and initiates the cycle of self-crippling behavior within the subordinate group.[44] Furthermore, American Indians have responded to their experience of defeat and repression with higher rates of suicide and other intrapunitive behavior rather than with aggression against others. Similarly, while industrialization was transforming and disrupting its established folk culture, Harlan County, Kentucky, had the highest homicide rates in the country, but a study of community growth in New England finds suicide and depressive disorders highly correlated with the disruptive impact of geographic mobility.[45]

[42] John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (3d ed., Garden City, N. Y., 1949), Chap. XIII.

[43] Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, 1963).

[44] Thomas Stone *et al.,* "Poverty and the Individual," in *Poverty and Affluence,* ed. Leo Fishman (New Haven, Conn., 1966), 72–96.

[45] Paul Frederick Cressey, "Social Disorganization and Reorganization in Harlan County, Kentucky," *American Sociological Review,* XIV (June 1949), 389–94; Henry Wechsler, "Com-

Though the social sciences offer no clearly authenticated hypothesis that predicts the relationship in different populations between homicide and suicide rates,[46] there are some potentially illuminating investigations currently in progress. Assuming that depressed mental patients are people who have turned anger inward through introjection and guilt when under chronic stress, while paranoid patients are those who have turned anger outward through denial and projection, one study has found an interesting association between the pattern of intrafamily communication and the direction taken by mental pathology when it occurred. Depressed patients in this study came from families in which as children they were forced to try by themselves to attain the desired forms of behavior through positive, "ought" channels. Paranoid patients came from families in which they were forced into acceptable modes of behavior by negative "ought not" procedures.

In families of *depressed* patients the child comes to view his environment as non-threatening to him physically. It is something to be manipulated by him in order to bring about the desired effects that will win approval. There is directionality here, and it is *from* the child *toward* his environment. On the other hand, in families of paranoid patients the child comes to view his environment as having potentially harmful properties that he cannot control and that must be avoided in some way. Here the directionality is *from* the environment *toward* the child.[47]

The hypothesis is that a manipulative attitude toward the environment will be associated with intrapunitive behavior and that a passive attitude toward the environment, with the absence of the internalization of a feeling of responsibility for the self, will be correlated with a greater use of projection in ego-defense.

There are firm indications that cultural patterning as well as child-rearing techniques will affect the perception of the environment and the orientation of the personality on the paranoia-depression continuum. In Burma, a hierarchical society in which a person's prestige and authority increase as he gets older, the social and physical environment is typically perceived as potentially harmful, and Burma has one of the highest homicide rates in the world.[48] There is also the possibility of a connection between the high rates of violence among Afro-Americans and the recent diagnosis

munity Growth, Depressive Disorders, and Suicide," *American Journal of Sociology,* LXVII (July 1961), 9–16.

[46] Jack O. Douglas, *The Social Meanings of Suicide* (Princeton, N. J., 1967), 3–160.

[47] Hazel M. Hitson and Daniel H. Funkenstein, "Family Patterns and Paranoidal Personality Structure in Boston and Burma," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry,* V (Winter 1959).

[48] *Ibid.*

that the Negro psyche has been rendered paranoiac by the hostile American environment.[49]

Testing the hypothesis that a paranoid perception of the environment is the root cause of the pattern of violence in the white South is a problem for future scholarship. The most immediately useful technique would be a survey of attitudes toward violence, perceptions of the environment, feelings of personal efficacy, and other measures of alienation. There may be regional differentials in these categories as well as class, age, and sexual differentials. A rigorous comparison of rates of violence in perhaps a Kentucky county and an Ohio county at comparable stages of settlement is also a promising approach. The records of the county court, the reports of the state attorney general, and newspaper surveys might produce useful data on both individual and collective violence. Some effort must be made to determine when the South became violent; timing may reveal much about the relationship of slavery to violence. The possible effects of Scotch-Irish immigration, population density, temperature, and religious fundamentalism should be investigated with quantitative methods. Even though the SHR's of Australia and Canada fit the European mold, some insight may derive from pursuing such comparative cases in a detailed manner. Much can be done

Meanwhile, in the search for a valid explanation of southern violence the most fruitful avenue will probably be one that seeks to identify and trace the development of a southern world view that defines the social, political, and physical environment as hostile and casts the white southerner in the role of the passive victim of malevolent forces. When scholars locate the values that make up this world view and the process by which it was created and is transmitted, the history of the South will undoubtedly prove to have played a major role. The un-American experiences of guilt, defeat, and poverty will be major constituents of the relevant version of that history,[50] but perhaps they will not loom so large as the sense of grievance that is at the heart of the southern identity.

Southern self-consciousness was created by the need to protect a peculiar institution from threats originating outside the region. Consequently, the southern identity has been linked from the first to a siege mentality. Though southerners have many other identities, they are likely to be most conscious of being southerners when they are defending their region against attack from outside forces: abolitionists, the Union Army, carpetbaggers, Wall Street and Pittsburgh, civil rights agitators, the federal government, feminism, socialism, trade-unionism, Darwinism, Communism, atheism,

[49] William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs, *Black Rage* (New York, 1968).
[50] Woodward, *Burden of Southern History,* 3–26.

daylight-saving time, and other by-products of modernity. This has produced an extreme sensitivity to criticism from outsiders and a tendency to excuse local faults as the products of forces beyond human or local control. If the South was poor, it was because the Yankees stole all the family silver and devastated the region in other ways after the Civil War. If industrialization seemed inordinately slow in the South, it was because of a conspiracy of northern capitalists to maintain the region as an economic colony. Added to this experience with perceived threats has been the fact that almost every significant change in the life of the South has been initiated by external powers. This is even true of industrialization. Though there was a fervent native movement to sponsor industrialization, absentee ownership has been characteristic. Furthermore, the real qualitative change in the southern pattern of low-wage industry came as a result of World War II and the activities of the federal government.

Being southern, then, inevitably involves a feeling of persecution at times and a sense of being a passive, insignificant object of alien or impersonal forces. Such a historical experience has fostered a world view that supports the denial of responsibility and locates threats to the region outside the region and threats to the person outside the self. From the southern past arise the symbiosis of profuse hospitality and intense hostility toward strangers and the paradox that the southern heritage is at the same time one of grace and violence.