Citation:

**Basic Summary:**
This article discusses the subculture of violence thesis in relation to the South. The subculture of violence thesis provides an explanation for the disparate rates of homicide in the southern region of the United States; the culture of this region must be supportive of violence. Ellison discusses previous research in this area, criticizing much of it for relying on dummy variables as a measure of culture, instead of measuring attitudes, values or beliefs of Southerners. Ellison mentions that perhaps violence is used more often for defense in the South, and this use of violence may be affecting the region’s rate of homicide and violent crime. Ellison also states that previous research has not explored conservative religion in reference to this issue. He attempts to remedy these problems by using survey data on attitudes toward violence and religious attitudes in his study.

**Hypotheses:**
Ellison mentioned several expectations, but did not explicitly state and label hypotheses. Some of his expectations were that southerners would hold higher levels of approval toward violence in defensive situations, and that values from conservative Protestantism (especially relating to a vengeful God) may help legitimize the use of violence in certain situations.

**Data Source and Method of Collection:**
Ellison used data from the 1983 General Social Survey, a survey on a variety of social issues, conducted semiannually in the form of personal interviews. The N (sample size) ranged from 1443 to 1449, depending on the specific variables in the model.

**Variables:**
Ellison had two dependent variables, defensive and retaliatory violence. Defensive violence was measured by three scenarios where there was a clear implication of defending property or persons. Retaliatory violence was measured using two scenarios where there was no clear defensive justification.

The independent variables measured whether a respondent was a native Southerner, an in-migrant, or an out-migrant. To test assumptions about religion, Ellison included measures of religious attendance (how many times the respondent indicated attending church services or activities weekly) and a variable indicating “hierarchical images of God” (p1229), indicating the “likelihood that God is a master, king, judge, and father” (p1229). Several additional variables were included, measuring urban residence, gender, race, age, education, family income, level of social interaction, TV viewing, and exposure to violence.
Method of Analysis:
Ellison used OLS regression techniques to test his assumptions. Several different models were run, including a series measuring interaction effects. The tables were well organized. The dependent variable was clearly stated in all tables. A survey instrument was not provided, but several of the questions from the GSS were quoted in the article.

Major Findings:
Ellison pointed out several major findings. He did find support for the southern subculture of violence, as native southerners were more likely to support defensive violence, even after controlling for the influence of other variables. There were links with the religious culture of the South as well, since those with hierarchical images of God were also supportive of defensive violence, and religious attendance for southerners was positively associated with support for defensive violence. Also, younger southern natives seemed less supportive of defensive violence than older natives.

Conclusions:
Several conclusions were drawn from this research, supporting the notion of a southern subculture of violence. However, the finding that younger southern natives were less supportive suggests that either the subculture of violence is disappearing, or that a significant amount of time spent in the South is required before the subculture is internalized. Support is also found for the expectations regarding religion, indicating that conservative Protestant religious values may further reinforce the use of violence for defense. I would, however, agree with the author when he states that more research is needed on this end. The questions regarding images of God do not seem to capture what he discusses as important in terms of conservative religious doctrine focusing on vengeance and “an eye for an eye” at the beginning of his paper.