Nisbett, 1993

A Different Perspective on Why

Different Cultural and Historical Traditions
- Frontier Culture: defensive violence to protect property and family
- Law is unavailable/unreliable & resources are scarce
- Southern Culture
  - Defensive protection of one’s honor
  - Social control to save face
  - Use of aggression as social control
Different Attitudes

Attitudes Toward Violence (Nisbett, 1993)

Endorsement of:
  • Violence in General: Southerners = Northerners
  • Defending Family & Property: Southerners > Northerners (also Hayes & Lee, 2005)
  • Corporal Punishment: Southerners > Northerners

And perceive peers as more accepting as well
(Vandello et al., 2008)
Let's take an Audit...

"Audit" study (Cohen & Nisbett, 1997)

912 Job Application requests sent to:
- Wal-mart, motel chains, hotel chains, family restaurants, and motorcycle dealers
- In North vs. South
- Letters varied...

“There is one thing I must explain because I feel I must be honest and want no misunderstandings. I have been convicted of a felony, namely __________.”

NOTES page
An additional follow-up

In Study 2, 303 college newspapers were sent facts for a story concerning a stabbing in response to a family insult vs. a pistol-whipping in the course of a convenience store robbery.

94 reporters created stories that were subsequently coded by reviewers blind to source.

Southern and western papers were more sympathetic toward the perpetrator and presented his actions as more justified than northern papers did.
Let's Call You a Name...

The "A$$^@!*" Study (Cohen et al., 1996)

Experimental test of honor

- Take some Northerners & Southerners
- Add an insult
- And see who laughs vs. gets angry
- And who has violence on the brain
You can almost taste it...

[Graph showing percent change in cortisol level and testosterone level for Southern and Northern subjects under control and insult conditions.]

NOTES page
Playing chicken

[Graph showing the distance at which subjects give way to a confederate, with two lines indicating different groups: Northern Subjects and Southern Subjects.]
Let's REALLY Irritate You

"Art Therapy" Study (Cohen et al., 1999)
Enter the "Annoyances"

1) “Let me get a couple of your crayons, Slick. I’ll give them back later.”

2) “This really sucks. I hate drawing.” Crumples up paper, shoots, missing, but hitting participant. “Watch out there, Slick.”

3) Then hits participant with another paper wad, apologizes insincerely: “Oh, sorry, Slick. Trying to hit the basket.”

4) Reaches over & takes 2 more crayons from participant “I need these ones now, Slick.”

5) Hits participant with another paper wad, “Man, you keep getting in my way” followed immediately by another hit, saying “He shoots, he scores.”
It doesn’t end there...

6) Goes over to participant and says: “Great art work. I can tell you’re really in touch with your inner feelings. But you need to put your name on it.” He then writes “Slick” on the participant’s drawing.

7) Hits the participant with another paper wad, saying “You’re sitting there like a sitting duck. Maybe I’ll call you Duck instead of Slick.”
8) Launches another paper wad, hits, & says “Sorry about that Duck.”

9) “Duck, you need to duck” and hits the participant again. Amused with himself, he says, “Get it, Duck – duck?”

10) Looks at participant’s drawing: “You know, your drawing is pretty weak.”

11) Hits the participant with another paper wad and adds: “I don’t know about your drawings, Slick, but you make a pretty good target.”
Now Let's Observe

[Diagrams showing comparison between Southern and Northern Subjects on Anger minus Amusement and Risk of Confrontation scales, both against Annoyance levels]

NOTES page
Also Linked to Accidental Deaths
Barnes et al., 2012

Researchers from the University of Oklahoma found that white men and women living in southern and western states are more likely to engage in risky behavior that leads to accidental death. • States with honor culture have 14% higher accidental death rate (19% in rural areas).

And to Violence Against the Self
Osterman & Brown, 2011

• Nearly 1 in 10 men report using a firearm to commit suicide, and a high percentage of those states are in the South and West. • States with higher rates of firearm ownership and violent crime are more likely to have higher suicide rates. • States with higher rates of firearm ownership also have higher rates of firearm suicides. • Finally, states with higher rates of firearm regulations also have higher rates of firearm suicides.

And School Shootings?
Brown et al., 2009

• High school students in states with lower socioeconomic status are more likely to engage in violent behavior. • Students in states with higher rates of firearm ownership are more likely to engage in violent behavior. • States with higher rates of firearm ownership also have higher rates of firearm suicides. • Finally, states with higher rates of firearm regulations also have lower rates of firearm suicides.
And to Violence Against the Self
Osterman & Brown, 2011

• Study 1 showed that, controlling for a host of statewide covariates, honor states in the United States have significantly higher suicide rates than do nonhonor states.
• Study 2 shows that statewide levels of antidepressant prescriptions (an indicator of mental health resource utilization) are lower in honor states, whereas levels of major depression are higher, and statewide levels of depression are associated with suicide rates only among honor states.
• Finally, Study 3 shows that individual endorsement of honor ideology is positively associated with depression.
And School Shootings?

Brown et al., 2009

- High-school students in culture-of-honor states were significantly more likely than high-school students in nonculture-of-honor states to report having brought a weapon to school in the past month.

- Using data aggregated over a 20-year period, it was found that culture-of-honor states had more than twice as many school shootings per capita as non-culture-of-honor states.
Critiques & Alternatives?

- Herding link debunked (Chu et al., 2000)
  - Rural murders rare
    - Almost entirely explained by poverty
  - Low-status compensation (Henry, 2009)
- More about masculinity norms ("Precarious manhood;" Bosson et al., 2009)
  - Is that the same as honor?
- What about women?
Is it really a Southern thing?

GREETINGS FROM DOWN SOUTH IN DIXIE

If so, what part of the South?