

Roy D'Andrade
Some Causal Kinds of Powers that Culture is Made Up Of
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When does culture influence behavior and when does it not?

Question posed by M. Brown for the Conference: Toward a Scientific Concept of Culture

To start, let us agree to define *culture* as a polysemous mass noun, used at various levels of contrast (*culture vs nature*, *culture vs idiosyncratic behavior*, *culture vs society*, *culture vs practical reason*, etc.), whose current core meaning centers on *shared schemas*. These schemas can be organized in various ways into cognitive models, taxonomies, prototypes, theories, ideologies, and the like (D'Andrade 1995).

With respect to Brown's question, the issue can be formulated as: *When do ideas influence behavior and when do they not?* The standard answer from the universal model of the mind is: *An idea will influence behavior only if the person who holds the idea has some want or need which motivates that person to do something, and only if the idea has some bearing on how to satisfy the relevant want or need* (D'Andrade 1987). Weber's oft quoted explication of this point is that beliefs about salvation only influence those who want to be saved. Ideas tell us what is in the world and by doing so they help us get what we want and avoid what we don't want, but are not sufficient by themselves to cause behavior. It should be pointed out that without *any* ideas about what is in the world, most animals become completely unhinged, unable to do anything more than produce knee-jerks and sneezes. Ideas may not be *sufficient* causes of behavior, but they are *necessary* causes. Without ideas there wouldn't be human behavior.

Depending on other assumptions, the proposition that ideas are necessary but not sufficient causes of behavior produces several different models about the relation between culture and behavior. A number of these models are laid out below.

Model A

Human goals (motives, desires, etc.) are random - different people want different things. Any cultural schema may influence one person but not another because that cultural learning is connected in some relevant way to what that person wants but not necessarily to anything other people want.

In Model A, although cultural ideas are important in understanding behavior they are not good *predictors* of behavior because human motives are so various. Most social scientists consider Model A inadequate because it is generally agreed that people everywhere have many similar goals and desires. Some goals, like avoiding hunger and physical discomfort, are psychologically compelling to almost everyone. Other goals, like earning money, are general prerequisites for achieving other goals, so that whatever a person wants, money may be helpful, and because of this almost everyone wants money.

Model B

Many human motives and goals are commonly shared. Cultural schemas which are connected to shared motives and goals can predict individual behavior because the necessary motivations can be assumed.

Thus if a group hunters and gatherers knows how to make and use atlatls, but has no knowledge of other effective projectile technologies, this group will be strongly influenced by its cultural ideas concerning the manufacture and use of atlatls. Henrich, in this volume, describes the case of Hadza and Kalahari conformity to their separate cultural traditions of bow making and poison extraction. Given that each technology works, and that the members of each society do not know an alternative technology, each

society's cultural ideas about how to make bows and extract poisons are almost perfect predictors of behavior.

Of course, Model B doesn't say that cultural ideas *alone* influence behavior. But it does say that cultural ideas *predict* what people will do because the underlying motivations are shared. However, Model B is also considered by most social scientists to be unrealistic because there is no *competition* between cultural ideas. What if, in some group, ideas about making Hadza bows are in competition with ideas about making Kalahari bows? Which set of cultural ideas will affect their behavior?

Model C

Human motives and goals are shared to various degrees. Cultural schemas which are connected to shared motives and goals potentially influence individual behavior because the necessary motivation is present. But where there are competing cultural schemas related to the same goal, the cultural schemas which yield the more satisfactory outcomes will tend to be selected over cultural schemas which yield less satisfactory outcomes.

The addition of the assumption of competition between cultural ideas diminishes the causal efficacy of cultural ideas. Given the presence of many competing cultural ideas the situation reverts to that of Model A - there is not much to say about the relation of cultural ideas to behavior except that some cultural idea is probably involved in whatever people do. The important *predictive* factors in Model C are not cultural ideas, but the differential *satisfactions* that come from holding one cultural idea rather than another.

The differential satisfactions in Model C can involve simple *efficiency*, like which technique of planting produces more corn. They can also involve direct testing of whether some cultural idea is *true* or not (e.g. does getting cold and wet cause one to catch cold?), or any other kind of criterion that is relevant to people. Thus the particular satisfactions may involve finding the idea that is most true, or most moral, or most effective, or most beautiful, or least anxiety producing. The kind of satisfaction is not the issue here. The point is that the major causal work is done by the processes which select cultural ideas - cultural ideas in themselves are not where the action is. Issues of self-interest, cost, prestige, social relations, adaptive fitness, and the like, are where the causal action is.

Model C is probably close to the standard model in the social sciences, and has been neatly formulated by Sperber (1985). It is central to many of the papers in this volume, notably in the paper by Richerson. But it does not seem to be the model of most American cultural anthropologists, who hold something closer to Model B. For example, anthropologists "who believe in culture" are likely to say that economists who construct models about what should be done to help non-Western societies are bound to be mistaken because they "do not take culture into account." But given alternatives, not culture but the balance of costs and rewards *are* what need[s] to be taken into account according to Model C.

While Model C is standard social science, certain doubts persist. Some kinds of culture do not seem to be all that selectable. And perhaps some kinds of culture are not just ideas. For example, although the *nation state* can be talked about as if it were basically just an idea - an *imagined* community (Anderson 1991) - it makes an odd sort of idea. States, unlike ideas of things, actual or imaginary, are corporate entities, can go to war with each other, kill each other's citizenry, expand boundaries, and on and on. Such entities have an enormous range of causal powers. One might like to believe that the modern nation state is basically just an idea and so can be thought away, and all we need to do is realize the whole thing is a fantasy and it will lose its grip on us. But it won't because it's not.

Are institutions *culture*? Here the extensive polysemy of the term *culture* creates multiple confusions. At a high level of contrast, culture includes all kinds of institutions - few anthropologists would want to exclude institutions like marriage or descent or chieftainship or ritual from the domain of culture. But, for a curious set of reasons, cultural anthropologists like to *talk* about culture as if it were *nothing but* ideas. So what many cultural anthropologists do is simply exclude the term *institution* from their vocabulary and discourse. For example, in a debate about the concept of culture presented in the American

Anthropologist (2001), none of the five participants even mentioned institutions. American cultural anthropologists, when they say anything about institutions at all, treat them as if they were an epiphenomenon of ideas, ignoring the fact that the causal powers of institutions are strikingly different than the causal powers of ideas alone.

This brings us to the question "What are institutions?" Parsons, for example, defines institutions as "the integration of cultural-pattern elements of the motivational systems of individuals in such ways as to define and support structured systems of social interaction" (1961:35). Sperber says "an institution is the distribution of a set of representations which is governed by representations belonging to the set itself." (1985:87). Furubotn and Richter define an institution as "a set of formal and informal rules, including their enforcement arrangements" (2000:6). Many social science definitions of institutions are equally unhelpful, perhaps because institutions are such familiar objects of ordinary life that definitions are unnecessary.

A detailed account of the nature of institutions has been presented by John Searle in his recent book, *The Construction of Social Reality*. Searle, a natural language philosopher, begins his discussion of institutions by pointing out that institutions are a distinctive kind of *entity*. Searle holds that institutions are *real things*, but a very special kind of real thing. Institutions are not facts that exist independent of people, like snow or electrons. Institutions could not exist if we did not believe they exist. But they are more than just ideas or meanings. Institutions are formed by the *social agreement* that some object, X, has a special *symbolic* status, Y, in some context, C, and *because* X is (counted as) Y, certain *norms* (*deontic* powers) apply to or are given to X. For example, certain printed pieces of paper (X), are given, by agreement, the special symbolic status of being *money* (Y), and because these pieces of paper are (counted as) objects of value they are given special powers, and can be used to purchase goods and services, pay debts, etc. Every role (*father, president*) is an institution whereby some person in the proper context is given, by agreement, the special status of being a special entity (*father or president*) and because the person in this category is (counted as) this special entity, particular normative rights and duties are agreed upon for that person. Institutions can be *corporate*, like the nation state or the post office, or *distributed*, like property and Sunday and handshaking and chess. Institutions are ubiquitous, forming extensive hierarchies and interlocking chains of sub-institutions within themselves.

Much more can be said about institutions concerning their self-referential nature ("What is *money*? - whatever is counted as *money*"), the way speech acts can create certain institutional facts ("I christen thee..."), and the gradient between formal and informal institutions, etc. Institutions are ordinary and common entities of the human world and we all know a great deal about them. For example, we appreciate quite well the *power* of institutions. Policemen can arrest one. Debts have to be paid. Property cannot be taken from its rightful owner. And so on for thousands of norms which are embedded in hundreds of institutions. Institutions and their associated norms are the most apparent, ubiquitous, and immediate *causal force* in human life. In fact, they are so immediate, apparent, and ubiquitous that many social scientists do not find them interesting to study - we already know too much about them.. The more interesting question is what causes the institutions and their associated norms to be as they are, or to change, or to resist change, etc.

Are institutions *really* culture? As stated above, an institution is certainly more than an idea because it contains a *social agreement* that because X is Y, certain *norms* apply to Y. And norms are an agreement about what *should* be done. Does the power of an institution come from the *idea* or from the *social agreement*? Or is the power of an institution due to the *fusion* of idea and social agreement, not separable into either? Isn't the melding of idea and social agreement into a seamless entity a fascinating cultural phenomenon in its own right?

The general process of selection does not seem to work the same way with institutions as it does with the pure cultural ideas of level 4 and below. Some years ago an article in the Scientific American on time-keeping made the point that there is a very good, very simple yearly calendar that any one can learn to use quickly and effectively. This calendar has thirteen months of four weeks each, making 364 days. The last day of the year is given its own special name. Such a calendar has nice properties; Wednesdays, for example, always fall on the 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th of each and every month throughout the year. With the same number of days in each month, bookkeeping would not only be easier, it would be more rational

because monthly charges would always be for the same number of days and hours. In an aside, the author said that despite the clear advantages of this calendar over any known alternative, it had no chance of being accepted anywhere in his lifetime, or probably ever. That could be right. For one person's calendar to work, it must be the same as everyone else's calendar. How can anyone change if everyone has to change before anyone can change?

So, with institutions, competition and selection does not always act directly or rapidly. Institutions create norms for highly intermeshed actions and systems of actions. Of course, institutions do change, sometimes by top-down authority, sometimes by complex bottom-up interactions, but in any case the result is not like the direct selection on causally unconnected replicators (genes, memes, etc.). This point is made by Durham in this volume and more extensively elsewhere (1991). The U.S. has a federal system and a presidency, Great Britain has a centralized government and a parliamentary system, and neither is likely to change soon whatever the advantages of either. Economic conditions, population pressure, new ideas, and many other factors do influence the creation and modification and elimination of institutions. New institutions are constantly arising and flourishing, while old institutions become otiose. Selective pressures are always present. But the scale of time and the degree of complexity of interactions involved in institutional change makes institutional change not like the change of simple ideas. Weber spent a lifetime working on how and why the West developed the distinctive institutions of rational capitalism, and the issue still arouses controversy.

It is interesting that under some conditions rapid change can take place with respect to institutions. Joel Robbins, who worked with the Urapmin of New Guinea, describes a case of culture change in which an entire Western institutional complex -Charismatic Christianity - was whole-heartedly adopted into a relatively traditional tribal society (1998). The effects of the adoption of this institutional complex on other Urapmin institutions and ideas has been from one perspective pervasive and long reaching, but from another perspective one can be surprised that so much of the old culture (including institutions) remains in place and intact.

Model D

Culture includes both cognitive schemas and institutions. Cultural schemas may problematically related to what people will do because of the competition between schemas, but unlike simple cognitive schemas, institutions are relatively stable and powerful causal forces, acting as direct constraints and enablements of human behavior.

Some anthropologists object to including institutions as part of culture, arguing that the essential nature of culture is restricted to ideas pure and simple and holding that institutions belong to *social structure* or *society*. But this leaves the domain of culture impoverished; without games, language, honors, rituals, kinds of money, roles, clans, or property, all of which are institutions *par excellence*. Culture becomes nothing but thin ideas.

The usual counter to this is to say that culture consists of things like the *idea* of money, or the *idea* of clans, but not money or clans. However, this move immediately leads to even greater problems. In the US, people certainly have the idea of polygamy, as well as many other interesting notions. Since we *have* these ideas - they are shared and transmitted - are they all part of American culture? Under that definition, American culture has an emperor and a king and a patriarch. The point is obvious.

One response to this problem is to say that culture consists not of just any transmitted ideational material, but *ideas* of what is *right*, what is *true*, what is *efficient*, etc. But the restriction on transmitted and shared ideas to those which have the special character of being thought to be true, beautiful, good, efficient, etc., runs into a multiplicity of other problems. People constantly contend about exactly such matters, and to require consensus on the good, true, beautiful and efficient before it becomes part of the culture will leave the greater portion of human belief outside culture. It is much more economical to say that whatever the American people think about the electoral college, it is an American institution and *in that sense* part of American culture. In general, *culture* defined as *ideas simple* makes a clean ontological division of the world but the amputation leaves a head with no body.

One strategy to escape these problems is to say, following a major strand of Parsons' thought, that culture is not a collection of *things* at all, but rather an abstract *dimension* or *analytic distinction* which applies to certain *aspects* of things. Just as some things can be said to be *green* or *heavy*, some things can be said to be *cultural* - which is to say that these things have the quality of being *meaningful* in a special way. The goal of the cultural analyst is to abstract the meanings that can be found in the making of a jug, the presentation of a greeting, the norms of a role, the practice of a curer, the ideas of a savant, or whatever. Artifacts, institutions, behaviors, ideas, all are grist for the analyst's mill. According to this view, none of them are culture. Rather, culture is the *analysis* of meanings – in the first case those of the people being studied, in the second case those presented by the analyst.

Geertz presented such an analysis in his essay, *Person, time, and conduct in Bali: an essay in cultural analysis* (1973). Carrying out this type of analysis is complex and difficult and, indeed, Geertz's work has encountered strong criticism (Kuper 1999, Shankman 1984). The methodological problems of this approach are legion. While there are procedures by which one can measure the heaviness or greenness of things, no procedures are given to determine which meanings about the fundamental nature of personhood are present in Balinese kin terms. Similar problems occur with Levi-Straussian structuralism, where commentary on analyses of the meanings of various myths leads to less and less conviction that the original analyses are correct and more and more doubt about whether myths even have *these* kinds of structure. (Thomas, Kronenfeld, and Kronenfeld 1976).

One putative virtue of the *culture as meaning* model is that it gives culture great potential causal power. Culture has great potential causal power because, it can be asserted, institutions and practices and artifacts are formed by the very meanings that the analyst discovers they express. This, of course, is the idealist move in philosophy, a move which turns the heterogeneous world into pure idea. And, the argument goes, even if everything *isn't* really pure idea, at least everything in human life is *formed* by pure idea - i.e. is culturally constructed - which is much the same thing.

Model E

Culture (in a special Parsonian sense) is defined as ideational qualities or meanings that can be discerned in the institutions, practices, artifacts, and conceptions of a society, but is not the same as these institutions, practices, artifacts, or conceptions. The task of the cultural analyst is to discern these meanings. These underlying meanings are said to have great causal power because they are thought to form or create the very institutions, practices, artifacts, and conceptions of a society that express these meanings.

Model E is held primarily by literary, hermeneutic and postmodern anthropologists. It is greatly disliked by those with a scientific orientation for obvious reasons; no procedures are stated by which the meanings said to be inherent in institutions, artifacts, etc., can be determined, no methods are given to falsify hypotheses about the content of these meanings, and no way is presented to test the hypothesis that these meanings actually form or create or do anything. Support for an interpretation rests on the ability of the analyst to convince others, which can then argued to be the only standard for *truth* in any case, forming an argument which runs in a truly vicious circle.

The last model to be presented here is based on the assumption that ideas can sometimes be very compelling and powerful. Consider, for example, the power of *prejudice*. Racial and ethnic stereotypes are known to be extremely difficult to change. When not socially constrained, these stereotypes often lead to discrimination and abuse. It is unfortunately the case that racial and ethnic stereotypes are highly shared in many societies and are a definite part of those cultures by almost any definition.

Stereotypes and prejudice are just one among many types of *affectively and motivationally compelling ideas*. Religious convictions, political beliefs, and attitudes about food and sex, are other examples. Descriptively, it *seems* that rather than these ideas deriving their causal force by being connected to a motive, that the idea and motive become one. Idea and affect are so fused together it becomes impossible to say whether the X hate the Y because they think the Y are monsters, or whether the X think

the Y are monsters because they hate them so much. When ideas are held with such great conviction they are said to be strongly *internalized*. Spiro, in a discussion of internalization of cultural propositions (1997), points out that a variety of processes can bring about internalization. For example, a proposition may be internalized because it has strong empirical support, or because it gives effective guideline for the accomplishment of some purpose, or because it fits past cognitive or emotional experiences, or because strong motivations are satisfied by believing it.

The phenomenon of internalization has other names. Philosophers, for example, speak of *propositional attitudes*. A propositional attitude is an attitude taken towards some proposition. If *p* stands for some proposition, one can *believe p*, *doubt p*, *deplore p*, *value p*, *intend p*, *want p*, *be enchanted by p*, and so on. That is, one can be in almost any mental states with respect to a proposition (but not all - it sounds odd to say one is *hungry for p*). An idea which has been internalized is an idea about which someone has a strong propositional attitude - the idea is in some way important to that person and arouses attitudinal states.

Conceptually, one would think that it is important to distinguish between propositional attitudes which are *cognitive* (believing *p*, wondering about *p*, doubting *p*, etc.), in contrast to propositional attitudes which are *affective* (deploring *p*, liking *p*, being annoyed by *p*, loving *p*, etc.), or those which are *motivational* (wanting *p*, avoiding *p*, needing *p*, etc.) However, the results of much empirical research do not support this trichotomy. For example, in a study of values, D'Andrade and Leininger (n.d.) used a number of rating scales (___ is good, I have a positive attitude towards __, ___ is important to me, etc.) Respondents were asked to use these scales to rate various items (competition, having friends, power, living in a changing world, advertising, etc.). The scales were intercorrelated and the correlation matrix submitted to a principal components analysis. The results are presented in Table 1.0 below. The first component is very large and combines cognitive, affective, evaluative, and motivational items into a single dimension. It is as if the many different possible propositional attitudes have been blended by respondents into a *single* generalized attitude. In actual encounters with the world it appears humans respond with a very general *pro* versus *con* stance, grouping together those things that are important, that one cares about, that are good, that one wants to bring about and that one feels strongly about in contrast to those things that aren't. No doubt in the right situation people are capable of more differentiated propositional attitudes. However, this general fusion of goodness, goal striving, and affective charge has been noted by a number of investigators and is a standard finding in attitude research (Aronson, Wilson, Akert, 2002).

TABLE 1.0
Principal Components Analysis of 24 rating scales
3 components (unrotated)
10 concepts 54 UCSD students
r computed across scales and respondents

SCALES	COMPONENTS		
	C 1	C 2	C 3
value having	0.89	-0.01	0.06
mean much to you	0.89	-0.10	0.11
care about	0.89	-0.07	0.09
important to you	0.88	-0.15	0.10
motivated to get	0.83	-0.17	-0.03
one of your goals	0.81	-0.19	-0.11
a guiding principle	0.79	-0.23	-0.16
positive feeling about	0.78	0.07	0.37
positive attitude towards	0.78	0.15	0.39
like having	0.78	-0.11	0.19
helps people	0.77	0.05	0.29
is good	0.76	0.22	0.27
try to get	0.76	-0.11	-0.23
one of your interests	0.76	-0.38	-0.13
strong feelings about	0.74	-0.15	-0.19
often think about	0.70	-0.24	-0.31
involved with	0.70	-0.29	-0.31
admire others for	0.65	0.52	0.05
sure of your ideas about	0.63	-0.18	0.12
make you feel proud	0.62	0.58	-0.30
have many ideas about	0.61	-0.08	-0.18
is morally right	0.53	0.41	0.24
make you feel respected	0.52	0.64	-0.35
feel obligated to	0.46	0.47	-0.33
<i>variance accounted for</i>	<i>0.54</i>	<i>0.08</i>	<i>0.05</i>

Thus, depending on the way the proposition is phrased, what is called here an *internalized idea* could also be called a *strong attitude* or *basic value* or a *positive goal*. The same psychological phenomenon seems to underlie all these terms. To emphasize this point, we will use the phrase *affectively and motivationally charged idea* to describe this phenomenon. The proposal that ideas and affects can combine to form a distinct mental entity has support from recent research using functional MRI. A recent neuro-imaging study found that under certain conditions cognitive and emotional brain activities converge and merge into a single brain state. In this brain state differential cognitive and emotional brain processes are lost (Gray, Braver and Raichle, 2002). It is notable that in the case of strong prejudices, for example, the prejudicial cognitive schema becomes isolated from normal cognitive capacities to reason and make distinctions, and at the same time the plasticity and context sensitivity of the regular affective-motivational system is lost.

Internalization is not the only way in which ideas can come to have exceptional causal effects. Ideas can also be *collectivized*. That is, a collectivity can come to some agreement that *it*, as a collectivity,

deplores X, or admires X, or fervently believes X, or takes whatever propositional attitude is collectively agreed upon to be appropriate (Gilbert, 2002). For lack of better term, let us call this a *collectivized belief* or a *group belief*. It is what *we* think. Collectivizing belief further increases the causal power of an idea because it is not just that one learns to deplore X, one also learns that deploring X is what *we* do, bringing normative powers of obligation and conformity to bear on deploring X. For example, although as an individual matter most Americans fear and hate terrorism, the present social understanding that this is how *we* feel probably adds to the force with which the sentiment and idea is expressed and acted upon.

Model F

Culture is defined to include ideas, institutions, affectively and motivationally charged ideas, and collectivized ideas. Institutions, affectively and motivationally charged ideas, and collectivized ideas typically have considerable causal force. Cultural ideas alone, on the other hand, are problematically related to what people will do because of the competition between ideas and the necessity that ideas be linked to motives to influence behavior.

Having examined six different models, each of which accords culture a different degree of influence on behavior, it seems clear that the degree to which culture influences behavior depends primarily on what is included or excluded in the definition of culture. A secondary point is that there really isn't much disagreement about which kinds of cultural/social/ psychological things have strong, medium, or weak influences on behavior. It is generally agreed that transmitted ideas pure and simple are frequently not predictive. However, processes of insitutionalization, internalization and collectivization meld ideas into strong causal forces.

Ideas simple, internalized ideas, collectivized ideas, and institutions do not exhaust the list of kinds of causal cultural entities. Examination of the effects of other cultural entities, such as the effects of *collective symbolic representations* (flags, plays, sacred texts, etc.) on behavior, or the special effects of *ritual qua ritual*, will not be attempted here. But consideration of these related cultural phenomena would reinforce the conclusion that there are many different kinds of cultural entities with different kinds of causal force.

Research Issues

It is interesting that these philosophic issues tend to reappear in controversies generated by empirical research. Let us consider as an example research on violence and the culture of honor in the American South (cf Nisbett and Cohen 1996). In a series of publications Nisbett and Cohen have shown that college undergraduates from the American South are more likely to get angry and aggressive when insulted than undergraduates from the North. They explain this as due to the culture of the South, and specifically to the southern *code of honor*. Nisbett and Cohen link the greater anger and aggressive behavior of southern undergraduates to what they call the *southern culture of honor*. In a variety of survey and literature studies they have found that the cultural representations and social policies of the South, compared to the North, excuse and actively support the use of violence as a response to insult or threat.

What Honor Code?

In contrast to the detailed documentation of reactions to insult and attitudes towards violence, Cohen and collaborators present little direct ethnographic data on the current code of honor in the American South. Honor codes differ by society and by historical period but they all share an important characteristic. To say a group has an honor code means that the members of a group not only define certain things as honorable but also that they treat an honorable person with respect and deference and treat those without honor with contempt or indifference. In an honor code society, social rank is strongly influenced by degree of honor, which is considered to be an objective fact about a person. A society does not have an honor code if people just admire strong, aggressive men or get angry at insults. An honor code is an institution, not just a set of *attitudes*.

Because an honor code, by definition, is an institutionalized normative part of a culture, it has a special kind of causal force that attitudes by themselves do not have. An honor code is a code people are expected to follow and must follow or suffer the consequences. Because honor is a *right* to respect, people who are honorable *should* be treated respect, and people who are not honorable *should not* be so treated. This raises the question of the exact nature of the honor code in the current American South. The ethnographic material presented by Nisbett, Cohen and collaborators is based primarily on eighteenth and nineteenth century historical accounts. The code they outline appears to be a version of the gentlemen's honor code. However, it is unlikely that gentlemanly honor is now the cultural code for southern men; duels, ostentatious shows of good breeding, and a life of social leisure are things of the past. Even in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in the American South the European gentlemen's honor code was probably held by only a small percent of the population.

To investigate further the honor code of the American South, D'Andrade (2002.) developed a questionnaire asking respondents from the University of Tennessee, the University of Georgia, the State University of New York at New Platz, and the University of California at San Diego to rate how they would respond to fourteen insult scenarios. Examples of these scenarios are:

You are driving on the road and somebody cuts in front of you without signaling. You beep your horn and the person flips you off with an obscene gesture.

A homeless man approaches you and asks you for money. You say no and he calls you a "cheap bastard" in a loud voice.

You find out your lover has been cheating on you and lying about it.

You are with your Japanese-American family on a trip. You stop at a restaurant and ask if your daughter can use the rest room. The waitress tells you the rest room is "reserved for paying customers and red blooded Americans."

You are having an argument with someone. This person starts saying obscene things about your mother.

You are walking down the hallway when somebody bumps into you, knocking you aside. The person turns and calls you an asshole.

For each scenario respondents made a series of ratings concerning:

- (1) the anger aroused by the incident;
- (2) the amount of disrespectfulness shown by the other person in the incident;
- (3) the degree of insult involved in the incident;
- (4) the degree to which honor would be at stake in such an incident;
- (5) the strength of the wish to do something back aroused by such an incident;
- (6) what one would do if this actually happened (nothing, walk away, etc.);
- (7) if this happened, what one thinks people would think if one did nothing back;

The expectation was that American southern men, and, to a lesser degree, women, in comparison to Californians or people from New York State, would give higher ratings for most of the scenarios, especially those having to do with sexual trespass, physical provocation, and slander, since these tend to be focal issues in most honor codes. This prediction was made on the basis of what it means to hold an honor code: If one has internalized an honor code one will invoke it frequently and saliently, breaches of the code will arouse anger, lead to physical violence, and one will expect to be judged on the basis of what one did back. It was expected that southern women would show a profile of scores similar to the southern men, but would be less involved in feeling that their honor was a stake in the various incidents and less concerned about what people would think of them if they did nothing.

Surprisingly, none of the scales showed significantly higher ratings for southerners for any of the scenarios. No systematic differences were found between regions. The modal response to the various scenarios was to ask for an explanation (33%) or not respond (30%). Only 8% of the respondents indicated that they would retaliate physically for any insult.

Women, compared to men, responded with more anger and felt more disrespected on all scenarios except the date scenario (someone puts their hands on your date in a suggestive way). Women also felt more insulted in eleven of fourteen scenarios. One might speculate that the reason women show a pattern of greater anger along with stronger feelings of being insulted and disrespected is that women expect more courtesy than men and therefore find the same degree of violation more aggravating. That men are more likely to say they would respond more aggressively corresponds to the usual finding of greater male propensity to physical action and violence (Maccoby 1998).

Overall, these results show that there is a strong common American code with respect to the norms for response to insults. These norms are quite similar across the country. Basically, the appropriate response to insult is not to respond in kind, but to either ignore the insult, ask for an apology, or simply inform the person they are behaving improperly. These results cannot be due a sampling bias based on using college students as respondents since a fifth sample of Long Beach high school students SHOW shows the same pattern.

How Come?

The most obvious objection to these findings is that questionnaires can't be trusted. However, a series of non-questionnaire experiments the same results were found by Cohen, Vandello and associates (1998). In one study northern and southern students were shown video tapes in which a college student is bumped by another person as he walks down a hallway and is called an *asshole*. In the videotapes the student either responded aggressively or shrugged off the incident and kept walking. Both northerners and southerners, asked to rate their preference for the two, preferred the *less* aggressive male, and *no* significant differences in preference between North and South were found.

In another study reported by J. Vandello and D. Cohen (n.d.), individual participants witnessed an event staged by three confederates. In this event a male confederate stepped on a case supposed to be holding the eyeglasses of a second male confederate, creating a loud cracking sound (actually dry pasta). When the victim complained and asked for an apology the perpetrator was rude and confrontational. After the perpetrator left the room the victim then asked the subject a series of questions. For half the subjects the victim asked questions about whether he should confront and attack the perpetrator. For the other half of the subjects the victim asked questions about whether he should go apologize. When the victim left the room the third confederate, a woman, asked the subject open ended questions about the confederate who had had his glasses broken. All responses of the subject were tape recorded and coded.

Strikingly, again there were *no* significant differences between northern and southern subjects in their answers to questions and suggestions about what the victim should do. *Nor* did northern and southern participants differ in their choices for the victim as partner in a future experiment in either the hostile or apologetic condition. These results, using live experiments and video presentations, confirm the questionnaire findings reported above. The simplest way to put these finding is that southerners do not differ from northerners and Californians in their judgments of what to do in the case of insult, and these judgments are not the judgments one would expect from someone holding an honor code. It should be noted that consistent gender differences are found with respect to response to insult, with women making more negative judgments about aggressive responses.

How can one describe this widely shared code held by Americans? E. Anderson (1999) has used the term "code of decency" to contrast with the "code of the street." This decency code can be described as a code in which one must be honest, respectable, and civil. If people are unpleasant, rude, or insulting, one should ignore them or tell them they are behaving improperly and ask them to explain or apologize, but one should not retaliate with verbal insult or physical force. Actually, the politeness aspect of this code is somewhat stronger in the south, as Cohen et al report (1996) in a study in which southern males were found initially to be more polite to an aggravating confederate than northerners.

Unlike honor codes, in which one needs to be concerned with how one is perceived because of the threat of loss of reputation, and in which one must attack those who infringe on one's honor, the code of decency stresses treating others civilly no matter how they act along with relative unconcern about one's own reputation or getting even. Of course, sometimes decent individuals 'lose it' in the face of provocations and resort to bad language, violence, and attempts to retaliate. However, when this happens, the individual has broken the decency code and the normal response is shame, guilt, and apology. The degree to which individuals actually internalize this code of decency probably varies greatly, but not the understanding that this is how one should behave. In some areas of the country various aspects of the code are stronger or weaker, but the basic elements appear to be understood almost everywhere from High Schools in the inner city of Long Beach to Tuscaloosa and New Platz. One would guess even Red-Necks and Street Warriors understand the decency code, although they do not hold to it.

The problem then, is to reconcile findings that on the surface appear contradictory. The South, it is argued here, has the same code of decency as the rest of the country. Southerners are not different from northerners in what say about how they would respond to various insults, or the degree to which they believe their honor is at stake in these insults, or what they think they would do about these insults, or in their preference for those who respond aggressively to insult compared to those who are not aggressive, or what they think people will think of them if they don't retaliate to insults. But they are different in that they become more physically aroused in the face of insult.

There are real differences in certain norms between the South and the North. *Violence to protect oneself* is personally endorsed, normatively supported, and represented in a positive light throughout the South and West. For example, the New York Times of March 12 2001 reports that the Charlie Condon, attorney general of South Carolina, has announced a policy that it is "open season" on home invaders - "invade a home and invite a bullet," he said. "I'm putting home invaders on notice that if an occupant chooses to use deadly force, there will be no prosecution." It has been speculated that southern reliance on self-protecting violence is the result of a lack of reliable state mechanisms of social control during both the pre- and post-bellum periods (Nisbett and Cohen 1996).

Why then should southern undergraduates show higher levels of cortisol in response to insults but not differ from non-southerners in what they say about how angry such insults make them? Perhaps a deep sense of masculine pride, an uninstitutionalized narcissism, is at work here. Something like this has been said to be characteristic of southerners. Or it may be that greater use of physical punishment in early socialization has had an effect outside awareness on emotional responsiveness to any kind of aggression. Or it may be that just experiencing more physical violence sensitizes southerners to violence, making them more physically aroused in situations that involve violence, and whether this is experienced as anger, or fun, or fear, depends on context.

Another possibility is that under the conditions of an actual encounter, the southern norms involving the use of violence to *protect* the self become the contextual system of meaning that steers the response rather than the decency model. The southerner has two relevant normative models. The first is the decency model. The other is the self-protection using violence model. These two models are not necessarily in contradiction. Southern undergraduates did not punch out or verbally abuse the insulters - they followed the American decency code. But when insult happens to a southerner, there is enough threat to invoke the southern self-protection by violence model which triggers a strong expectation of having to physically defend themselves. Southerners do not report experiencing more anger to insult than northerners but their bodies – as measured by cortisol response - are ready to fight. possible

Implications

The point to this illustration is that the culture => behavior schema is much too simple to be of use in actual analysis. What is the culture of the South? Is it the cultural representations of the gentlemanly model found in advertisements and novels and movies and artifacts like swords and dueling pistols? Is it the discourse of southerners about honor - the talk and discussion that people carry on about their own actions? Is it what people really feel and think about things - not what they say, and not what is publicly

represented in various media? Is it the institutional norms that they hold and follow about what one should do, like the code of decency?

The strategy used by Nisbett, Cohen and their associates was to relate a difference in affective behavior - anger in response to insult - to culture. They found newspaper stories that expressed the idea that it is excusable to commit murder in the face of extreme insult. They found crime statistics that show that southerners are more likely than northerners to murder someone in a personal dispute, but no more likely than northerners to murder someone in a robbery. Was this southern culture? Did this show that the South had a culture of honor? There are no answers to these questions because the term *culture* includes too many kinds of different things. It includes too much and so measures nothing. But when the research was narrowed down to a question about the degree of difference between Southerners and other Americans with respect to a specific institution - an honor code - then it became possible to reach reasonable conclusions about the causal role of the decency code versus the honor code in affecting southern response to insult. Ambiguities remain about exactly what piece of southern culture is causally active in the Nisbett and Cohen experiment, but not whether the response is caused by a cultural institutionalized honor code. There is no evidence for such a code.

This seems to be a typical research story. Some interesting fact about the human world is found. Some attempt is made to locate the possible cause of this fact. Initially, large abstract forces are invoked as explanations - culture, society, personality, biology, economics, religion, etc. These categories turn out to include too many different kinds of things to determine whether or not any one of them actually explains the fact. Later investigation turns out to show that *specific* things with particular causal force like institutions, historical events, social conditions, defense mechanisms, internalized cognitive models, and so on, are the most probable causes of the fact. But the categories of culture, society, personality, biology, etc. are not replaced in our *theories* by these more specific things, and so everyone goes back to arguing about whether the really important causes in human life are culture, or society, or personality, or biology, rather than working on reformulating theories of what really causes what.

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