

Regional Naming Patterns and the Culture of Honor

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Throughout American history, violence has been more common in southern and western states than in northern states and violence continues to be viewed more positively and constructively in these regions. Two studies are presented which test the hypothesis that regional differences in violent behaviors and attitudes are reflected in geographic names. The first shows that place names in the South and West are more likely than place names in the North to begin with "violent" words such as *gun* and *war*. The second study extends the investigation beyond place name "fossils" to contemporary name choices and shows that business names in the South and West are more likely than those in the North to begin with violent words. Implications of these naming patterns for the maintenance of regional differences in violence are discussed.

The incidence, acceptance, and endorsement of violence vary strikingly across the United States. Per capita homicide rates are higher in southern and western states than in northern states (Baron and Straus 1988; Nisbett, 1993). Gun ownership is more common in the South and West and gun control laws are more lax (Cohen 1996). Southern and western citizens are more likely than northerners to subscribe to "macho" magazines (Lee 1995), play college football (Baron and Straus 1989), endorse corporal punishment for children (Cohen and Nisbett 1994), and believe that their children should fight bullies rather than reason with them (Cohen and Nisbett 1994).

In a series of recent papers, Nisbett and Cohen have argued that these regional differences reflect a "culture of honor" that arose in the frontier South and West because of their historical herding economies coupled with the lack of effective law enforcement. Livestock rustlers can quickly destroy a herder's livelihood. This danger would be quite

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palpable even if The Law were available since both thieves and booty could be long gone before a search party was mobilized. In frontier America, even this measure of law enforcement was often absent, and so herders were left to fend for themselves. In such an environment, herders deterred prospective thieves with a tough demeanor and an honor code that advertised one's family and property as sacred. Any violation of that sanctity would be met with quick and harsh retaliation.

Evidence for this "culture of honor" has been obtained through ethnographic, survey, and experimental investigations. First, culture of honor characteristics have appeared consistently in herding societies around the world (Schneider 1971). Second, attitude surveys have found that southern and western Americans do not condone violent responses to triggering events across the board. Rather, they differ from northern Americans only when honor is at stake (Cohen and Nisbett 1994). Furthermore, regional differences in homicide rates are restricted to violations of personal honor, such as barroom insults (Nisbett 1993). Third, southern and western businesses show more sympathy to job applicants who have criminal records when the crime involves a defense of honor than when it does not. Finally, when insulted, southern males respond with more anger than northern males and show stronger physiological signs of stress and aggression, e.g., increases in cortisol and testosterone levels (Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle and Schwartz 1996).

Although the frontier history shared by the South and West could account for their similarities, there is some evidence that the South is significantly more violent than the West. For example, whereas southern and western juries in capital cases recommend the death penalty at equal rates, these sentences are actually carried out more frequently in the South. School discipline in the South is also more likely to involve corporal punishment (Cohen 1996). Cohen attributes these patterns to the long history of slavery and post-slavery racial subjugation in the South, where white dominance was maintained by both state sanctioned and vigilante violence. Cohen provided further evidence for this attribution by predicting and finding subpatterns in measures of violence within the South. In particular, he reasoned that states with greater levels of slavery should show higher levels of violence. He therefore compared the upper South and the lower South on various measures of violence. In comparison with slave states in the lower South such as Alabama and Georgia, those in the upper South, such as Maryland and

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Delaware, had relatively small slave populations and remained in the Union during the Civil War. These historical differences are correlated with contemporary differences in institutionalized violence. Thus, death sentences have been carried out much more frequently in the lower South than in the upper South. Corporal punishment is also used in school discipline more often in the lower South.

In sum, extensive evidence has implicated important historical antecedents in southern and western violence. Still, it is not clear why these regional patterns persist when their precipitating conditions—slavery and/or a precarious herding lifestyle in a dangerous frontier—no longer exist. In their work on the culture of honor, Cohen and Nisbett (1997) suggest that various institutional forces may help to maintain this culture and its violent consequences. For example, Cohen and Nisbett found that college newspapers in southern and western states showed more sympathy than northern newspapers to crimes committed in defense of honor (e.g., a stabbing provoked by an insult to one's sister). No regional differences were found in descriptions of a robbery, which did not involve an honor violation. The survival of certain "culture of honor" patterns in the legal systems of southern and western states might also reinforce congruent attitudes. For example, northern states generally have "retreat rules," by which a person must first attempt to retreat from a potential assailant before giving a more violent defense. Legal codes in southern and western states lack such rules, and historical analysis indicates that residents viewed them as humiliating affronts to personal honor (Cohen 1996). Current residents of southern and western states could assimilate certain attitudes toward violence through exposure to such legal codes and other institutions established during the frontier period and, due to their conservative nature, surviving its demise.

In this article, I will test whether certain linguistic patterns exist that reflect the prominence of violence in the South and West, and might help to promote the continued acceptability of violence in these areas. In particular, I will focus on regional differences in the prevalence of proper names that have violent connotations, such as names of locations (e.g., *Murderer's Creek*) and businesses (e.g., *Gunbarrel Liquors*). Naming is an important linguistic behavior personally and socially since names testify to family and cultural identity, reinforce the values associated with those identifications and advertise them publicly (e.g., Fischer 1989). To the extent that violence is more salient and more

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positively valued in the South and West than in the North, names with violent connotations should be more prevalent in those regions.

Study 1: Violence in Place Names

Many places, throughout the United States, have names based on proper nouns, such as the names of people of local, national, or international importance. But proper names have not been the sole source of American place names and many locations have been named with common nouns, for instance Ash Grove, NY and Lobster Cove, ME. In addition to choosing locally important (and innocuous) fruits and animals for place names, however, Americans have also named some sites after violent objects (Guntown, MS), actions (Murder Hill, NY), and persons (Outlaw Canyon, NM). Given the history of violence in the South and West, such names should be more prevalent there than in the North. Regional differences should be less apparent for place names that lack violent connotations.

Method

Regional definitions: Southern, western, and northern regions of the continental United States were defined according to Cohen and Nisbett (1997), who in turn relied on census classifications. The sixteen southern states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia (Census Divisions 5, 6 and 7). The eleven western states are Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming (Census Divisions 8 and 9). The remaining 21 states were considered northern.

Place name source: The United States Geological Survey's on-line database of place names was the source of data for this study.¹ This database, known as the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS; see McArthur 1995 and Payne 1995 for further information), returned all place names in its registry that began with the keywords described in the next section, along with the state and county in which each one was located, and the type of feature so identified (e.g., lake, summit, park, populated place such as a city or town). Unfortunately, the current version of the GNIS search engine does not return places that contain a keyword in non-initial position. However, language comprehension research indicates that words at the beginning of phrases are particularly

memorable (Gernsbacher and Hargreaves 1988), and so it seems reasonable to focus on place names that start with violent words.

Violent keywords and controls: The following procedure was used to select keywords with violent meanings. First, I searched the electronic version of the *American Heritage Dictionary* for all words that contained *weapon, firearm, armed, combat, conflict, kill, killer, murder, murderer, criminal, violent, or violence* in their definitions. These words were selected because they appeared in the definitions of many salient violent words, such as *gun, bullet, and war*. This search returned 638 words, excluding phrases like "foul play" and all proper nouns. However, many of these items had multiple meanings, some of which were nonviolent. For example, *cutthroat* can refer to a type of trout as well as a murderer and *sight* can denote the sense of vision or an aiming device on a firearm. Hence, it is not clear that place names beginning with such words derive from violent meanings. To verify that each place name draws upon the violent meaning of its initial word would be a prodigious undertaking. However, a safeguard was imposed to reduce the ambiguity problem. In particular, words were considered violent only if their primary meaning in *The American Heritage Dictionary* contained one or more of the words used to obtain the original list (e.g., *weapon*). Thus, *cutthroat* was included because its 'murderer' meaning is primary. *Sight*, on the other hand, was excluded because its dominant visual sense meaning did not involve violence. This definitional criterion led to the removal of 439 words from the list.²

A representative sample of the remaining 199 words was drawn for place name analysis. Words were selected quasirandomly in that the odds of selection were proportional to word frequency, with frequency values obtained from Francis and Kučera (1984). The frequency bias was used to increase the chances that a large number of places would be involved in the analysis. Words were submitted to the GNIS search engine in order of selection until twenty successful searches were obtained. A search was considered successful if the GNIS returned at least ten place names within the 48 contiguous states that began with the target keyword. To meet this constraint, 34 words were actually submitted to the GNIS search engine, but *accused, assassin, attack, combat, conflict, corps, destroy, duel, fling, invasion, rebellion, strife, tripwire, and violent* produced fewer than ten matches each. The 20 words that met the frequency requirement are listed in table 1. They include names

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for weapons (e.g., *gun*, *bomb*), violent persons (e.g., *outlaw*) and events (e.g., *murder*, *war*). To extend the range of the sample, the results included morphological variants for each keyword. For example, the tallies for *gun* included place names beginning with *gunpowder*, *gunbarrel*, and *guntown*, among others. Similarly, *warpath*, *warrior* and related words were included in the counts for *war*.

Table 1. Keywords Used to Search the GNIS Database.

Violent Keywords		Nonviolent Keywords	
battle	murder	ash	omega
blade	outlaw	chalk	pea
bomb	pistol	cheese	square
bullet	poison	eel	strawberry
cutthroat	rifle	emerald	temperance
fight	shoot	glass	turnip
fury	spear	lizard	twilight
gun	strike	lobster	vine
kill	trigger	mitten	wagon
military	war	moose	wheat

Some of the selected keywords, such as *spear*, could pose interpretive problems because they have surname uses. There are three reasons why such ambiguities do not appear serious, however. First, if surnames with violent connotations are distributed uniformly throughout American place names, then regional differences in common noun usage will be diluted. Hence, the surname ambiguity would only underestimate any regional differences. Second, if the violent connotations of some surnames make them attractive place names for southerners and westerners, then their use provides another reflection of regional values. Third, even if some place names, e.g., those beginning with *spear* derive historically from a personal name, most Americans, including those who currently live in or near these sites, would not be aware of the historical background of the place names, and so would tend to interpret them in terms of their common, violent meanings.

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To test adequately the hypothesis that violent place names cluster in the South and West, control words are needed to rule out artifactual accounts of the results. For instance, there are 27 southern and western states in the analysis, compared with 21 northern states. Furthermore, the former states comprise a much larger surface area than the latter, and hence have more potential places to name. Any name type might then be more common in the South and West than in the North. The following procedure was therefore used to obtain a set of 20 control words. First, proper names like *Franklin* were excluded from consideration as control words since the violent word set consisted of common nouns, verbs, and adjectives rather than names. The control set should have a similar makeup. Next, to increase the ease of finding common words that serve as place names, a dictionary of American place names was consulted (Stewart 1970). This dictionary was sampled by randomly selecting a page and then submitting the first common word entry to the GNIS database. If the names of ten or more locations began with that word, it was included in the control set. This random selection process continued until 20 control words were obtained. Twenty-four words needed to be sampled to obtain 20 items that met the frequency requirement. The four words that did not meet the frequency criterion were *abalone*, *bauxite*, *curiosity* and *emblem*. The control words are listed in table 1. As can be seen, the meanings of the control words are clearly less fierce than those of the violent words.

Results

The number of place names that began with each keyword was tallied separately for southern, western, and northern states. The proportion of such place names that occurred in the South and West was then calculated for each keyword. For example, there were 296 place names that began with *gun*, with 109 located in southern states, 121 in western states, and 66 in northern states. Hence, 78% of these *gun* place names appeared in southern and western states. Similar proportions were calculated for the remaining 19 violent words and the 20 control words, and the means for the two word classes compared using t-tests.

As predicted, the mean proportion of place names with violent words was higher in the South and West than in the North. On average, 80% of places beginning with violent names were in the South and West. In contrast, only 66% of places beginning with the non-violent

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control words were located in these regions ($t(38)=3.21$, $p < .005$). This pattern appeared when the West and South were compared separately with the North. When names in the South were compared with those of the North, 63% of violent names appeared in the South compared with 44% of the non-violent names ($t(38)=2.78$, $p < .01$). Similarly, the ratio of violent names in the West to those in the North was 66%. The corresponding ratio for the control words was only 51% ($t(38)=2.39$, $p < .03$). The West and South, on the other hand, did not differ significantly in the incidence of places named with violent words compared with control words; 48% of the violent names and 41% of the nonviolent names appeared in the South ($t(38)=0.77$, $p > .40$).

Two potential problems with the results presented so far need to be addressed. First, since the states were not considered separately, the regional differences could be due to one or more atypical states. For instance, the differences could be carried by one or two northern states with an extremely low incidence of violent place names. Second, the initial statistical tests used the keyword as the unit of analysis, and so treated each word equally even though they varied greatly in the number of place names that began with them. For instance, 541 place names began with *battle* but only 17 began with *cutthroat*. Since *battle* and *cutthroat* were treated equally in the statistics, place names that began with the low frequency word were effectively given more weight. The statistical analyses would therefore exaggerate regional effects if the high frequency violent words were distributed uniformly across the United States, but the low frequency words were concentrated in the South and West.

To address these two problems, a second set of statistical tests was performed with the state as the unit of analysis. Each state was scored for the proportion of violent place names among the total place names recorded for that state. Each individual place name was therefore weighed equally in this scoring system, thus giving words like *battle*, which appeared in many place names, a greater impact in this analysis than it had in the first one. The resulting mean proportions of violent names were .51, .44, and .32 for the South, West, and North, respectively. All pairwise comparisons among these means were significant (South vs. West, $t(25)=2.43$; South vs. North, $t(35)=6.32$; West vs. North, $t(30)=3.41$; $p < .03$ in each case). Thus, the results for the keyword analysis were replicated in this state analysis, with the

additional finding that violent place names were significantly more common in southern than western states. This pattern is consistent with data indicating more positive attitudes toward violence in the South (Cohen 1996).

In most circumstances, statistical significance is used to generalize from a sample to a population. However, that induction is meaningless in this case since the entire population of relevant states (i.e., those in the continental US) was examined. Still, the statistical significance does refute the possibility that the results from the first analysis were due only to a few atypical states. This is further confirmed when the states are ranked according to the proportion of violent place names. Not one northern state appeared among the ten states with the highest violence proportions whereas nine such states appeared among the ten with the lowest proportions. Furthermore, only two northern states appeared among the twenty states with the highest proportions whereas sixteen appeared among the twenty with the lowest proportions.

As one further illustration of regional differences in violent place names, consider the distributions of place names beginning with the opposites *war* and *peace*. In the North, *peace* places outnumber *war* places by two to one (127 to 62). In contrast, *war* places outnumber *peace* places by almost two to one in the South (193 to 113) and three to one in the West (95 to 34).

Study 2: Violence in Business Names

Study 1 documented the greater prevalence of violent words in southern and western place names than in northern place names. This difference is consistent with the historically higher levels of violence in the South and West, and these fossil remnants of that history may help to maintain current regional differences in violent attitudes and behavior. Such effects might be amplified if violent words in more recent name coinages also cluster in the South and West. Study 2 will test this possibility by examining the names of businesses.

Method

Regional Definitions: Northern, southern, and western states were defined as in study 1.

Business Name Source: DeLorme's electronic telephone directory (Phone Search USA, 1997 release) was used to find businesses in the

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continental United States that began with certain keywords. Like the GNIS source for place names used in study 1, the program returned only business names that began with the keywords submitted.

Violent Keywords and Controls: A new set of violent words was randomly drawn from the list described in study 1. Since selection was weighted by frequency, many of the keywords from study 1 were also chosen here. Keywords were submitted to the electronic directory in order of selection until twenty successful searches were obtained. Successful searches returned at least ten businesses that began with the target word or a morphological variant, such as *gunsmoke* for the keyword *gun* or *cannonball* for the keyword *cannon*. Thirty-two words had to be submitted to the directory search to meet this frequency requirement. The words that failed the constraint were *accused*, *artillery*, *assault*, *backlash*, *conscript*, *destroy*, *invasion*, *ordnance*, *prosecutor*, *robbery*, *shrapnel* and *weapon*.

Twenty nonviolent control words were drawn from the Battig and Montague (1969) category dominance norms. These norms were generated by presenting subjects with a category name, such as "fruit," and then asking them to list as many category members as they could recall in 30 seconds. Category dominance was then measured by the number of subjects who listed a particular category member. I obtained nonviolent control words from these norms by randomly selecting twenty categories and, within each of these categories, one of the five most dominant members. Business names that began with each of these control words were then extracted from the directory. Table 2 lists the violent and control keywords for this study.

Results

An initial examination of the results of the search revealed many businesses that dealt in violent products or services, such as firearms and self-defense training. It is not surprising that the name for a gun shop begins with the word *gun*. Any regional differences in the prevalence of such shops could create corresponding differences in the frequency with which violent words appear in business names. However, such differences would not reflect direct effects of culture on name choice, but only indirect effects mediated by correlations between culture and business proclivities. It would be more interesting to find violent words used to name businesses like restaurants or automobile

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repair shops that do not have an intrinsic connection with violence. Name choices here could be attributed more easily to the overall cultural milieu. Violent businesses were therefore excluded from the analyses. These cases could be identified easily and objectively because the directory coded each listing for business type. Table 3 lists the exclusions. (Some listings did not have a specific code; these were accordingly labeled with a "0.") The business type could be inferred from the name for many of these cases (e.g., "Killer Chicken Café"), but just to be conservative, businesses coded with "0" were also dropped from the analyses.

Table 2. Keywords Used in Searching the DeLorme Electronic Directory of Business Names.

Violent Keywords	Nonviolent Keywords (and Categories)
attack	apple (fruit)
battle	bean (vegetable)
bayonet	copper (chemical element)
bomb	dog (four-legged animal)
bullet	doll (toy)
cannon	green (color)
explosion	head (body part)
fight	hill (natural earth formation)
gun	maple (tree)
kill	sapphire (precious stone)
military	saw (tool)
missile	shirt (article of clothing)
murder	sparrow (bird)
outlaw	table (item of furniture)
overcome	tent (dwelling)
pistol	trout (fish)
rifle	tulip (flower)
shoot	vanilla (flavoring)
smash	water (nonalcoholic beverage)
war	wool (type of cloth)

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Table 3. Violent Businesses Excluded from Analysis in Study 2.

Ammunition except small arms manufacturing
Archery supply stores retail
Armed forces recruiting
Army and navy goods stores
Explosives manufacturing
Gun shops and gun smiths retail
Karate and martial arts supply stores
Martial arts and self defense instruction
Military and veterans organizations
Military fields
Ordnance and accessory manufacturing
Small arms ammunition manufacturing
Small arms manufacturing
Special industries manufacturing
Sporting goods stores

Another potential confound in the data concerns the lack of independence between business and place names. In particular, many businesses are named after the city or town in which they are located; for example, *War Taxi* in War, WV and *Rifle Realty* in Rifle, CO. The presence of such cases in the data could make it seem as though southern and western businesses are named more often with violent words. However, such effects would in reality be driven by the greater frequency of violent place names in the South and West rather than any additional inclination to use violent names by current residents of these regions. I therefore excluded businesses from the analyses if their names began with the same word as the city or town in which they operated. This restriction was imposed on the businesses in both the violent condition and the nonviolent control condition. The latter needed to be included because the relative scarcity of violent place names in the North could artificially dilute the presence of violent business names in this region.

The number of businesses that began with each keyword was tabulated separately for southern, western, and northern states. Each keyword then received a score corresponding to the proportion of hits

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that occurred in the southern and western states. The means for the violent and nonviolent words were then compared. As predicted, business names that began with violent words came from the South and West more frequently than names that began with the nonviolent control words. On average, 68% of the violent names came from southern and western businesses compared with only 53% of the nonviolent names ($t(38)=4.07$, $p < .0005$). The relative scarcity of violent names in northern businesses appeared in separate comparisons with the South and West. Among southern and northern businesses, 58% of those with violent names were located in the South, but only 39% of those with nonviolent names ($t(38)=4.06$, $p < .0005$). Among western and northern businesses, 45% of those with violent names were located in the West compared with only 34% of those with nonviolent names ($t(38)=2.75$, $p < .01$). Relative to the nonviolent control words, the South and West did not differ significantly in the prevalence of violent business names as 61% of violent names and 56% of nonviolent names appeared in southern businesses ($t(38)=1.11$, $p < .20$). Once again, however, the trend is consistent with other evidence showing a stronger culture of violence in the South (Cohen 1996).

As in the place name study, statistical tests were also conducted with the state as the unit of analysis. Each state was scored for the proportion of businesses with violent names among the total businesses returned in the directory search. The mean proportions were .14, .13, and .08 for the southern, western, and northern states. Both the southern and western businesses contained a significantly higher proportion of violent names than the northern businesses (South vs. North: $t(35)=7.12$; West vs. North: $t(30)=3.60$, $p < .005$ in both cases). The values for the South and West were not significantly different ($t(25)=.55$). When the states were ranked according to proportion of businesses with violent names, no northern state appeared among the top ten and only one appeared among the top twenty. In contrast, nine northern states were among the bottom ten and fifteen among the bottom twenty.

Discussion

If so inclined, a family in Alabama could have their television serviced at Warrior Electronics, their dog housed at Gunsmoke Kennels, their home addition built by Bullet Construction, and their children taught at Battleground School. A Texan could be born in Gun Barrel

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City, pray at Battle Ax Church, fish at Bullet Creek, dine at Shotguns Bar BQ, work at Outlaw Avionics, and be interred in Battle Creek Cemetery. Of course northerners can also encounter places or businesses with violent names, such as Bloody Pond in New York and Shotgun Willie's Saloon in Massachusetts. In the United States one does not have to travel far to see violence highlighted. However, such opportunities are rarer in the North than in the South and West.

There is as yet no evidence that these linguistic patterns affect attitudes or behaviors involving violence. In particular, we cannot say whether the predominance of violent names in the South and West helps to maintain the greater acceptability of violence in these regions. However, there are many psychological mechanisms that could produce such effects. For example, the more frequently an object is encountered, the more it is liked in general (Zajonc 1968). The greater frequency of violent words in southern and western names could therefore increase the positive evaluations given to the objects and actions that those words denote. More generally, high frequency conveys many perceptual and cognitive advantages. Thus, high frequency words are easier to identify (e.g., Forster and Chambers 1973) and recall (e.g., Rubin and Friendly, 1986) than low frequency words. While driving down a road crowded with businesses and their banners, hungry southerners and westerners should find it easier than northerners to identify or remember a restaurant with a violent name. More interestingly, research suggests that the attractiveness of an object increases when it is easier to identify (Bornstein and D'Agostino 1992). The greater frequency of violent names in the South and West might not only make such names and their meanings easier to recognize by residents of those regions, but, as a direct consequence, also more attractive or desirable.

In sum, the greater environmental availability of violent names in the South and West will make them more cognitively available to residents of those regions than to northerners. The research discussed above suggests that this increased availability could affect attitudes toward violence. But could violent behavior also be influenced? There is evidence that increasing the environmental and cognitive availability of violence can indeed stimulate violent actions (see Berkowitz 1974 and 1984 for reviews). For example, Berkowitz and LaPage (1967) placed

undergraduates in a situation where they could use mild but annoying electric shocks to punish a fellow student for mistakes on a laboratory task. More shocks were administered when the laboratory contained some salient violent objects, such as a gun, than when it contained neutral objects, such as a badminton racquet. Of more relevance to the present paper, similar effects occurred when subjects were merely exposed to words with violent meanings (Loew 1967; Parke, Ewall, and Slaby 1972; Turner and Layton 1976). For example, Turner and Layton (1976) asked their subjects to first learn a set of violent or neutral words. Subjects exposed to the violent words later gave more intense shocks to a fellow participant who made mistakes on a laboratory task. Such experiments suggest that mere exposure to violent words could increase predispositions to violence, perhaps by activating violent thoughts and schemas with which those words are associated (Berkowitz 1974; Anderson, Benjamin and Bartholow 1998). Such effects might be amplified where violent words are particularly frequent, as in the South and West.

Violent words and concepts might also inherit some acceptability from the socially positive entities with which they are associated through naming, such as schools, churches, and respected businesses. One possible mechanism for such inheritance could involve a desire for cognitive consistency (see Sabini 1992 for a review of this large literature). A person who regularly attends church services presumably has positive attitudes toward religion. If that person also had negative or neutral attitudes toward guns, an apparent conflict would arise while praying in "Rifle Range Church." Cognitive consistency could be achieved by lowering one's opinion of religion or raising one's opinion of firearms, and history suggests that the church militant generally triumphs over atheistic pacifism. Of course, any positive views toward violence might also generalize to businesses with which they are associated. Thus, a business in the South and West might be regarded more favorably if it contained violent words in its name. Smaller or opposite effects should be found with similar businesses in the North.

In sum, regional differences in American values concerning violence predict corresponding regional differences in name usage. On many measures, Americans from southern and western states view violence

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more positively and constructively than Americans from northern states. The research presented here found that place and business names in the South and West are more likely than those in the North to begin with violent words. Southerners and westerners who hear, read, say, or write these names are therefore given repeated reminders of their regional values. It remains to be seen whether such exposures reinforce those values, but given the regular association of violent words with positive objects in the South and West, it is doubtful that such words erode them. After all, how profane can guns, pistols, rifles, bullets, etc. be when they are repeatedly linked to the sacred in places like "Gunpowder Church" and "Bullets Chapel"?

Notes

1. Internet address: www-nmd.usgs.gov/www/gnis.
2. The seriousness of the ambiguity problem is also lessened by the fact that alternative meanings to the violent keywords vary idiosyncratically from word to word. The one aspect of meaning that they share is their violent connotation. Hence, the use of multiple violent keywords and appropriate statistical tests can minimize the possibility that the results are spurious.

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An important project of which readers of *Names* should be aware is Wilfried Seibicke's *Historisches Deutsches Vornamenbuch* [Historical Dictionary of German First Names], which is in process of publication. Vol. I (A-E) was published in 1996 and Vol. II (F-K) in 1998. The remaining two volumes will follow in due course. On completion, this substantial compendium by the foremost German scholar in the field will undoubtedly be the definitive work on German first names and no library should be without it. A full review of the entire series will follow upon publication of the fourth volume.

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