

Are Southern death-row inmates more polite?

April 8 2014

Southern states are known to uphold a culture of honor and adhere to traditional politeness norms, but does this hold true for death-row convicts? A new article published today in *SAGE Open* finds that Southern death-row offenders are more likely to apologize for crimes in their final statements than offenders from other regions of the U.S.

Researcher Judy Eaton analyzed executed prisoners' final statements from across the U.S. between January 2000 and December 2011. Of the 299 Southerners and 60 non-Southerners studied, offenders were two times more likely to apologize in their final statements if they were from a southern state.

The author analyzed three additional elements of each apology – whether the apology included a request for forgiveness, feelings of regret, and appeared to be earnest or sincere (together labeled "remorse"). A comparison of Southerners and non-Southerners on these elements showed that although Southerners did apologize more, there were no differences in degree of remorse for the two groups. While the data suggest that saying "sorry" and expressing [remorse](#) may be quite different, Eaton believes that apologies can still be helpful for [victims](#) of the convicts' crimes.

"If Southern victims (or their families) adhere to the same politeness norms or social scripts as [offenders](#), it may be that an [apology](#) from an offender, regardless of whether it is sincere, may make victims' families feel better."

More information: "Honor on Death Row: Apology, Remorse, and the Culture of Honor in the U.S. South" *SAGE Open*, 2014.

Provided by SAGE Publications

Citation: Are Southern death-row inmates more polite? (2014, April 8) retrieved 17 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-04-southern-death-row-inmates-polite.html>

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