

# Uses of Southern-sounding speech by contemporary Texas women<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Anglo-Texas women typically do not think of themselves as Southerners, but many can use speech forms that came to Texas from the American South. The relationship of Texas women to Southern speech is complex, and Texas women orient to and use Southern forms in various ways. Several of the possibilities are briefly illustrated. These examples serve to raise questions about language crossing and stylization in contexts in which the variety being adopted does not clearly 'belong' to an outgroup, and to suggest some new avenues for thought about what 'regional varieties' are and how regionally-marked speech forms can serve as rhetorical resources.

KEYWORDS: Crossing, Southern U.S. speech, Texas, region, rhetoric, self-expression

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Several years ago, a conference paper about another facet of this project led to a press release from Texas A&M University's public relations department, which in turn led to a number of interviews with TV and newspaper reporters from around Texas and elsewhere. What particularly interested the reporters was the claim that Texas women could choose ways of talking for strategic purposes, and the way of talking they seemed most curious about was one associated with Southern womanhood. The day after an article about the project appeared in the Dallas newspaper, a woman who had read it called to tell me that we were exactly right about a Texas woman's ability to make rhetorical use of Southern-sounding speech. She did so all the time, she said, in her work selling mailing lists over the telephone, and the strategy was very successful. As Terri King put it, 'My Southern drawl makes me \$70,000 a year!' Shortly thereafter, King was interviewed (at my suggestion) for a Fort Worth *Star Telegram* article based on the project, and she elaborated: 'It's hilarious how these businessmen turn to gravy when they hear it. I get some of the rudest, most callous men on the phone, and I start talkin' to them in a mellow Southern drawl, I slow their heart rate down and I can sell them a list in a heartbeat' (Stevens 1996: E1).

The Terri King anecdote illustrates one use of features of speech associated with the South by a woman from Texas. In this paper I consider this and a variety of other uses of ways of talking associated with Southern women, by white female Texans, for whom sounding Southern is not always or completely ingroup but also not always or completely outgroup. I will suggest that there is a variety of ways in which Southern-sounding speech can function for these women and for the people they interact with, ways ranging from the relatively unstylized to the highly stylized and from the relatively automatic and non-strategic to the highly planned and strategic.

I do this with an eye to two more general goals. First, I am interested in delving further into the issue of 'language crossing' (Rampton 1995b) especially as related to 'crosses' into a variety that in some sense is part of the usual in-group repertoire and in some sense is not. Previous studies of language crossing have reminded us that speakers can and do make use of languages and varieties associated with other groups. White Americans cross into African-American Vernacular English (Bucholtz 1997; Cutler 1996; Preston 1992); Afro-Caribbean and Anglo youngsters in London use bits of Punjabi (Rampton 1991, 1995a, 1995b); Anglo-Americans use Spanish words and phrases (Hill 1993, 1995), and so on. In all these cases, the crosses are into languages or varieties that are not those the speakers learned first, not those they use most, not those they know best; languages or varieties that are quite clearly not part of the unmarked repertoire of the groups with which they are primarily associated by others or primarily identify themselves. The functions these crossings can serve, though varied, all have something to do with the otherness, in these senses and others, of the languages or varieties that are crossed into. For example, when Anglo-Americans use a Spanish expression like 'no problemo' it can, as Hill points out, have connotations it doesn't have when Spanish-speakers use it. In contrast, the situation I examine in this paper involves speakers' use of features of a variety that has been part of their repertoire in one way or another since early youth, a variety that is identified with one of the demographic categories with which they partly or sometimes identify themselves or against which they define themselves, a variety in which many of them can be said to be fluent (in the sense that their uses of it sound native, as well as in the sense that they are members of or at least on the margins of the group whose usage defines fluency). Their uses of this variety are in some ways like the more marked crossings described by Rampton and others and in some ways different.

Secondly, I am interested in continuing my exploration of the role of region in linguistic variation in the contemporary world, and the connections between physical space, cultural place, and language (Johnstone 1990). Since its beginnings in nineteenth-century dialect geography, sociolinguistics has treated region as a basic explanatory variable. In the relatively homogeneous, non-mobile, often rural social groups that were traditionally the focus of dialectology, the connection between geographical and linguistic facts seemed fairly

straightforward: communicative isolation, together with 'natural' tendencies for languages to change, explained regional variation, and most people could reasonably be said to talk the way they did because of where they were from (though of course the relationship between region and speech was never really causal). In the more heterogeneous, mobile, globally (or at least nationally) interactive groupings that characterize the contemporary social world, however, the relationship between geography and linguistic variation is more complex. Rather than disappearing, regional differences are in some cases taking on new symbolic value, and regionally-marked ways of talking are coming to serve new, more clearly rhetorical functions. This study explores one facet of this process, and is part of a larger study of how region intersects and interacts with other ways of imagining oneself and being imagined (see Johnstone and Bean 1997 for an overview of the larger project). In highlighting the ways speakers' choices from among regionally-marked forms can take different forms and serve various purposes, the paper suggests how the study of regional dialect might articulate with the study of the ways physical spaces become human, cultural places via discourse (cf. Relph 1976, 1981). In challenging the claim that virtual place has supplanted geographical place in the formation of contemporary identities (cf. Meyrowitz 1985), the paper suggests possible ways in which dialectology might articulate with media theory. I return to both of these themes later on, though neither can be developed fully in the space available here.

## TEXAS AND THE SOUTH; SOUTHERNNESS AND TEXANNESS

Historically, economically, and culturally, Texas is both a Southern state and a Western one.<sup>2</sup> Many Anglo-Texan settlers came from the coastal or mountain South, bringing their plantation or small-farming economy and their Southern or South Midland ways of talking with them. White Texans owned slaves and fought on the side of the pro-slavery Southern confederacy in the Civil War of the 1860s, and the post-Civil War history of Texas was like that of other Southern states. Unlike other Southern states, though, Texas was once a colony of Mexico, and there was (and still is) considerable Hispanic influence. Anglo-Americans and European settlers came relatively late, in the early 1800s. Texas was briefly an independent nation, and the Lone Star flag and the ideology of uniqueness and independence associated with it continue to be ubiquitous. While the agricultural economy of the better-watered eastern half of the state was like that of the South, cattle ranching in western Texas and, later, oil throughout the state made Texas' economy different. A greater proportion of Texans now live in large urban areas than elsewhere in the South.

Perhaps not surprisingly in light of these differences, Texans do not automatically think of themselves as Southerners. In a survey of 59 Texas college students,<sup>3</sup> my co-worker Judith Bean found that 34 percent chose 'Texan' from

a list of labels for themselves, more than chose 'American' (24%). Twelve percent chose 'Texan and Southerner.' Only 2 percent, however, chose 'Southerner.' When asked about this, Texans tend to say that being a Southerner is incidental to being a Texan. Janet Wilson, one of the women with whom we conducted a more detailed case study (and to whom I return below), said this, for example:

Interviewer: Do you consider yourself a Southerner?

Wilson: Yeah, I think we must, in some ways. I mean we were on the side of the Confederacy.

Being Southern is, for Wilson, a historical fact about Texas which becomes relevant in her life only sporadically, as, for example, in conversations with her children about their school history lessons. It is not a fact about herself that has consistent contemporary relevance. Other women, including Sophie Austin (to whom I also return shortly) claim that they are Southwesterners, not Southerners.

Southern speech is part of white Texans' sociolinguistic world, however, whether or not they identify themselves primarily as Southerners. People talk, sometimes out of a vaguely nostalgic wishfulness and sometimes for very specific strategic purposes, about 'Texas speech.' (An early 1990s campaign advertising Texas as a tourist destination claimed, for example, that Texans speak 'a whole other language.') But it is obvious to most Texans that Anglo-Texans who sound stereotypically like Texans also sound like Southerners. While there are phonological features that are notably rarer (post-vocalic r-lessness, for example) or more common (monophthongal /ay/ before voiceless obstruents) than in Southern speech elsewhere (Bailey 1991), the features Texans tend to think of as particularly Texan (such as the use of *y'all*) are actually pan-Southern. People who feel that they have 'an accent' are aware that it is (or is at least very similar to) a highly stigmatized accent in the US, one associated with ignorance, poverty, backwardness, and bigotry (Lippi-Green 1997: 202–216; Preston 1997).

As I point out later in the paper, it has been important for economic and political reasons throughout Texas' history for the state to position itself in contradistinction to the South. To make this move in personal terms is easy for some Texans (Hispanics, for example, who are not tied to the South historically or in the popular imagination, can easily position themselves as Southwestern rather than Southern), but more difficult for others. Anglo-Texans, particularly those from the eastern part of the state, can say they are not Southerners, but many of their forebears were from the South, and, sometimes, some of them sound like Southerners. Anglo-Texans thus have to deal with Southernness in a way others do not. Partly for this reason – like people identified with stigmatized varieties elsewhere as well – Anglo-Texans tend to notice ways of talking and their social meanings, think about them, and enjoy talking about them in what often turn out to be highly perceptive ways.

Among the features associated with the interactional style of Southerners are:

- metalinguistic displays of politeness such as elaborate greetings (Spears 1974) that call attention to the speaker's awareness of the possibility of offense;
- relative indirectness in interaction (Johnstone 1992) including strategies for mitigation such as hedging, the use of evidentials like *I feel like* + *S* or *I don't believe* + *S*, and the use of conditionals in the performance of face-threatening acts (Brown and Levinson 1987); and
- honorific address and reference forms, especially for kin, such as *sir*, *ma'am*, and *cousin* (Ching 1987; Davies 1997).

Particularly associated with women (at one time especially upper-class women) is the 'Southern drawl' in the technical sense of the term: diphthongization or 'multiphthongization' of vowels, leading to perceived slowing of speech (Feagin 1979). But just as sounding Southern means different things in different situations, so can it be indexed in different ways in different situations. In exploring situations in which Southern speech becomes relevant, I have thus relied on particularistic close reading rather than on the kind of preconceived checklist of features associated with most variationist sociolinguistic research. To start with a list would be to prejudge what counts as sounding Southern, when what counts as sounding Southern and why is in fact an ethnographic question.

In what follows, I illustrate the claim that Southern-sounding talk can serve a variety of functions for Texas women with brief discussions of several examples.<sup>4</sup> This material is drawn from a body of data which Judith Mattson Bean and I have collected for a larger-scale study of how particular speakers draw on, transform, and appropriate the sociolinguistic resources that are available to them. Our analytical methodology combines discourse analysis with other facets of ethnographic analysis. We are interested in what people say and in how they say it, and our goal, in part, is to connect the cultural discourses that circulate in Texas women's worlds – ways of thinking about oneself, ways of speaking, ways of imagining how talk and writing work – with facts about their actual discourse.

## SOME USES OF SOUTHERN-SOUNDING SPEECH

The idealized Southerner who is the focus of traditional regional dialectology – rural, non-mobile, older, with limited contact with information or people from elsewhere<sup>5</sup> – is a person for whom sounding Southern cannot serve any strategic function, because she has no other way of sounding. Such speakers probably do not really exist, since presumably no one is completely monostylistic. But there are relatively monostylistic speakers – people who are relatively immobile geographically and socially and whose social world is relatively homogeneous and unchanging, and, as Dorian (1994) shows, there are situations in which linguistic variability does not take on symbolic

value. For such speakers and in such situations, sounding Southern would be invariable and automatic. Because sounding and acting Southern would not, for such speakers, contrast with any other way of sounding and acting, it could not be a rhetorical (or, in Gumperz' 1982a terms 'metaphorical') resource.<sup>6</sup> In part because of our research design, we have not come across any speakers in the course of our study for whom sounding Southern is semiotically neutral (or, for that matter, any speakers who cannot actually talk about what it can mean for them to sound Southern). Our focus in this study is on speakers whose sociolinguistic worlds (like those of the Caribbeans studied by LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985) are relatively heterogeneous and linguistically unfocussed, speakers who can do a variety of things with language and who can talk, at least to some extent, about what they do.

### 1. *Sophie Austin*

An actual speaker who uses Southern speech features relatively invariably is Sophie Austin. She was born in the early 1920s and was 70 when McLeod-Porter talked to her. She is a retired journalist, now active in historic preservation in the small East Texas town where she lives. Miss Sophie (as she would be addressed where she lives) thinks of herself as combining Western directness with Southern indirectness: 'We can be direct, but [we] know how to couch [what we say] with courtesy and consideration. We took that [Southern] gentility and we blended it' with ways of acting encouraged by 'the expanse of Texas,' 'freedom,' and 'the outdoors.'<sup>7</sup> Texans are 'windchesty' (they have opinions about things and 'have a way of getting to the point'), she says, but, raised as 'a lady,' she has always felt it important to be, or to orient to expectation that she be, 'retiring.' McLeod-Porter 1992 describes some of the ways Miss Sophie's interactional style illustrates this blend of regionally-marked ways of talking, with particular reference to her uses of indirectness, euphemism, and literary-sounding metaphor in samples of her speech and writing.

Miss Sophie's Southern-sounding speech features were acquired during a childhood in a relatively homogeneous, isolated setting. More than for any other of the speakers to be considered here (except the hypothetical one above), it makes sense to attribute the fact that Miss Sophie sounds Southern at least in part to the fact that she is from East Texas, where most people she was exposed to as a child sounded and acted Southern. This is to say that there were, in her youth, relatively few other models for how to sound and act, or at least relatively few models she would have been able to adopt.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Miss Sophie's education encouraged her to adopt a style that was both expressive of gentility in a traditionally white Southern way and relatively invariant. Being 'ladylike,' stressed especially at home, required the former. As Miss Sophie put it, 'I knew that when I was with Mother, I was to be like Mother, which was quiet and dignified.' Learning in school that there was one 'correct' way to be, act,

and speak, and that eloquence and expressiveness required consistency, encouraged invariance.<sup>9</sup> Miss Sophie's education took place well before teachers and curricula began to suggest the possible acceptability of strategic adoption of various ways of talking, and Miss Sophie is very explicit about her belief that 'Standard English' is the way to talk and that 'slang,' which is her term for any non-standard way of speaking, is an indication of 'vulgarity.'

Although Miss Sophie probably sometimes sounds Southern simply because it is her default way of sounding, her professional life has included situations in which she is aware that sounding like a Southern lady has been strategically useful. For example, as they discussed a recent TV interview Miss Sophie had made, McLeod-Porter asked her to comment on her 'very quiet, low-keyed style.' Miss Sophie commented, 'You choose your strategies for what's ahead of you, right?' and claimed she could 'act as well as anyone.' A more direct, less 'retiring' and less Southern-sounding way of talking would be more appropriate if she were asking for money for a project, for example: 'It would be very direct. I'm here to do so and so, matter of fact, business-like, right?'

## 2. *Tracy Rudder*

The kind of speaker who is best captured in variationist sociolinguistic research<sup>10</sup> is one like Tracy Rudder, a college student who was 20 years old when she was interviewed, born in the early 1970s (about 50 years after Miss Sophie). Her use of Southern-sounding speech is more variable and is related to her private, 'vernacular' identity rather than her public identity. She switches toward Southern-sounding forms relatively unselfconsciously when the situation is right, though, like many Texans, she is quite articulate in analyzing what she does in retrospect, both in conversation with her peers and in talking to a researcher about her speech. Accommodation theory (Giles and Powesland 1975) probably accounts for her behavior well. Here she talks about sounding Southern with her friends, but less in more academic contexts:

I probably feel most natural when I'm with my friends. I mean, the ugly truth is that I'm becoming more and more educated. How is it possible to read Hemingway and turn around and talk like an inbred backwoods redneck? My friends know I'm Southern – so are they, though. That's okay. I just wouldn't want them to think I was some backwoods redneck or that I'm just some big funnel that my culture and education are running through. . . . [W]e kind of keep a check on each other.

Unlike Miss Sophie, Tracy is oriented here to what is stigmatized about Southern-sounding speech as well as to what may be rhetorically effective about it. 'Sounding country' is clearly desirable in some contexts, for some purposes (Johnstone 1998). Some students in Texas high schools and universities adopt Southern-sounding ways of talking (together with other markers of ruralness such as stylized cowboy dress, country music and dancing, and pick-up trucks) to express their allegiance to traditional 'small-town' values,

whether or not they actually come from small towns. But Tracy's set of attitudes about her variety (it is not an educated way of sounding, but it's appropriate with friends, who understand its uses) is also very common, and probably more typical of people of her generation than of people of Miss Sophie's. Southern speech was less known and recognized outside the South in Miss Sophie's day than it is now, due in part to large-scale migrations of Southerners to the west during the 1930s and to the north after the Second World War, and to the increasing visibility of Southerners in national politics and the media. Southern-sounding speech is thus probably more stigmatized now, by outsiders and Southerners alike, than it was earlier. Migration of people from elsewhere into Texas during several oil booms has created an enhanced need for an 'in-group' way of talking by which people who consider themselves 'real' Texans can identify themselves to and with each other. Bailey (1991) shows, for example, that certain phonological and lexical features associated with sounding like a Texan are increasingly in use with the need for Texans to distinguish themselves from Northern in-migrants.

### 3. Janet Wilson

Orienting to Southernness somewhat differently, Janet Wilson claims not to use Southern-sounding speech ('I think I've probably tried to minimize it'), not so much because she thinks it sounds uneducated as because she thinks it sounds rural. Having spent most of her life in Houston, she thinks of herself as urban and identifies Southern style with the country. ('[Y]ou have to be urban, you know, and not get the accent going'). But in the course of a summer workshop in a Northern state, Wilson (a middle-aged teacher and truant officer, born in the early 1950s) realizes that her Southern sound 'is there, no matter what.' One form she uses, *y'all*, comes to index her as a Southerner, and this becomes obvious to her when the Northerners hail her as 'y'all.' *Y'all* is 'just a very Southern thing,' Wilson says, thinking back about the experience, 'that I wasn't aware of.' So while her initial answer to our question 'Is there some value . . . in sounding like you're from Texas?' is 'No,' talking through the Rhode Island experience makes her realize that she likes the 'familiarity' associated with that way of being seen (JW Janet Wilson, DP Delma McLeod-Porter, BJ Barbara Johnstone, JB Judith Bean):

- JW: *[W]hen I was in Rhode Island I realized you c- you know, it's it's there*  
 DP: Umhm  
 JW: *no matter what.*  
 DP: Is there some value (when you're somewhere else) of sounding like you're from Texas?  
 JW: No, I, ah, w- *except, the uses of uh y'all.*  
 DP: Umhm  
 BJ: What did, what did they think of that?

- JW: They got a lot of, they they thought, they couldn't believe that people actually did say that, they thought it was a television thing  
 ((laughter))
- JB: Oh really?
- JW: from movies and
- BJ: Umhm
- JW: So I'd walk in the room and they'd say 'Hi y'all.' You know, w- we *talked about y'all*, as a form, and I consider it, very useful, I can't understand why people in, from the North don't use it, *it's very familiar, it's, and it has its place in our language.*
- DP: Uh huh. Uh huh.
- BJ: Uh huh.
- ?: [( )]
- BJ: [And they] tended to think that you just used it wholesale instead of you.
- JW: Yees, *they didn't understand the familiarity and you know that sort of thing and how you use it. I I I don't know, it's just a very Southern thing, that I wasn't aware of, I I guess I was aware of it but it's just it still strikes me as odd that, people everywhere don't ((laughing)) use it.*

In Janet Wilson's case, a nearly invariable Southern feature becomes an index in a new way, coming to identify her as a Southerner and with a relaxed, practical way of using language. Wilson's uses of *y'all* before her encounter with the Northerners could not have been called stylized, but afterwards she could (and may) have used *y'all* as a strategic way of styling herself, displaying her Southernness for rhetorical and self-expressive ends,<sup>11</sup> to accomplish interactional goals that sounding Southern might help with and to show who she is and how she wants to be seen.

#### 4. Terri King

Terri King, the telephone salesperson I described above whose 'Southern drawl makes [her] \$70,000 a year,' represents a more fully stylized use of Southern-sounding speech. She draws on one specific model for southern femininity, the model of the 'Southern Belle.' The Southern Belle as a literary type is most famously represented in Margaret Mitchell's 1936 novel – and the subsequent movie – *Gone with the Wind*. A description of this female type that gets used over and over is 'an iron fist in a velvet glove.' As Shirley Abbott (1983) explains it, this image of the wealthy white Southern lady – the plantation mistress, slender-waisted and physically delicate but mentally tough, tenderly seeing to the well-being of the slaves and fiercely devoted to her family – served in part to make slavery (required if the plantation system were to remain economically viable) appear palatable or even desirable. It is part of what Tindall (1980: 162) refers to as 'the romantic plantation myth of gentility.' Abbott suggests that one reason for the image's survival after the end of plantation culture is that it involves a set of 'managerial techniques' that can work (Abbott 1983: 106). The Belle acts helpless, dependent, dumb, and

passive to get a man, over whom she exerts control through his weakness, by virtue of the fact that she can forgive him. Abbott herself, who is from the South, 'grew up believing . . . that a woman might pose as garrulous and talky and silly and dotty, but at heart she was a steely, silent creature, with secrets no man could ever know, and she was always – always – stronger than any man' (1983: 3). Texas women talk about sounding like a Southern Belle in similar ways, claiming that it is particularly useful as part of a sexually-charged manipulative strategy.

When asked to show how Southern Belles talk, people often adopt higher-than-usual pitch, a wider-than-usual intonation range, and exaggerated facial and hand gestures, in addition to trying to sound polite, tentative, loquacious, and cute. Monophthongal /ay/, at least in the pronouns *I* and *my*, is almost invariably part of the performance, even for speakers who find the variant difficult to produce. King claims that her 'Southern drawl' can be turned on and off as needed, and she demonstrated both the on mode and the off mode in our conversation. ('Turning on the Southern charm' is something many Southern women, not just Texans, talk about doing, claim they do, and can be heard to do.)<sup>12</sup> King, like all the other women considered so far, is a Texan, so sounding Southern is, for her, not 'passing' (cf. Bucholtz 1995) but a strategic use of an ingroup variety.

## DISCUSSION

These examples suggest that 'language crossing' and 'styling' are more complex than is suggested by studies dealing with people's uses of languages or varieties that are clearly felt to 'belong' to others. The relationship of Texas women to Southern speech is, as I have shown, complicated. For one thing, Southernness can be indexed in a variety of ways, linguistic and paralinguistic, phonological or interactional, as well as in other semiotic media such as dress, grooming (careful make-up and hair styling are often indices of a Southern feminine identity), religious affiliation, and so on. While a list of Southern speech features could be a useful heuristic in identifying when someone might be sounding Southern, what actually counts as sounding Southern has to be determined via ethnographic work. This may be more true the less performed (Bauman 1977) the 'other' variety is. Repeated performances of a way of speaking may lead to increasing stylization, as people come to expect a limited set of features to index a relatively limited repertoire of ways of using the variety. In less performed situations – situations in which speakers are not calling attention to their language use to the same extent, or at all – there is probably a larger range of phenomena that can serve to cue a speaker's sociolinguistic identity and its particular meaning in the context.

Furthermore, different Texas women orient to and use Southern forms in different ways in different situations. The examples above illustrate just a few of the ways sounding Southern can function: sounding Southern can be part of a

display of gentility, it can indicate closeness and friendship, it can set a Southerner apart from others, it can be used to manipulate men, and so on. In some cases, sounding Southern is tied to personal identity in a very immediate way, so that speaking any other way is what seems marked; in other cases, sounding Southern is what is marked, switched into. Some uses are fairly automatic, the default choice; some are self-conscious and perhaps even pre-planned. When sounding Southern serves strategic functions, its strategic goals can be more or less salient to speakers and to their interlocutors. (Presumably, the effectiveness of Terri King's strategy depends on her being aware and her clients' being unaware that she is turning on the 'mellow Southern drawl' precisely to woo them.)

In the cases considered in this paper, people are moving in and out of ways of talking that do not always or clearly index groups they aren't already members of. As Pratt points out (1987; see also Irvine 1996), the boundaries of 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' are fluid. The same speaker, using features of the same variety, might sometimes be 'crossing' into it across a boundary and sometimes not: the same person might, for example, sound Southern to make a point about her identification with other Southerners, positioning herself inside the group, or sound Southern in a parody of 'typical' Southerners, positioning herself outside the group. This is particularly clear in the cases considered here, since Texans clearly are for some purposes Southerners, in a way that Anglo-Americans are not African American or Mexican-American or Afro-Caribbeans, Punjabi. Furthermore, when a Texas woman makes use, relatively automatically or relatively self-consciously, of linguistic indices of Southernness, she is willy-nilly making the forms less Southern and more Texan, claiming ownership of them, and so making them less 'other.' So perhaps crossing is the first, most highly performed and stylized, step in the process by which people have always borrowed ways of talking.

The work described here also raises questions about the model of the relationship between region and variation on which much traditional dialectological and variationist sociolinguistic research is based. This model sees region as more or less the cause and regionally-marked speech forms as the effect: different people talk differently because they come from different places, the basic reason for this being communicative isolation. I suggest that where one comes from is indeed related to how one talks, but not so directly. Rather, region and the speech of people from that region are mediated by individuals' rhetorical and self-expressive choices. People from the South, for example, are relatively likely to have at least some access to the resources of Southern speech, which they use – or don't – for particular reasons related to who they are and what they are doing at the moment. This way of thinking about regional variation has the virtue, among others, of not marginalizing people who do not speak the way others expect them to given where they come from, whether because they reject this way of identifying themselves – Texas humorist Molly Ivins, for example, whose performances of Texanness involve

a very masculine and Western style, claims quite specifically not to talk or act like a Southern Belle because, being tall, she is 'ineligible' (Ivins 1991: 198) – or because for one reason or another their access to local sociolinguistic resources is relatively limited. For example, children of academics who grow up in university towns may have a social cohort consisting mainly of sons and daughters of people who, like their own parents, are from elsewhere, so that they may hear local-sounding speech less than other children do, and local-sounding speech may be discouraged by parents and peers. Yet they may still sometimes orient to and make use of local ways of talking. The traditional approach to language and region discounts such people as not being 'authentic' members of the community – no dialect atlas fieldworker would have interviewed such a person, and field methods in the Labovian tradition have also usually favored informants who are long-time residents of the area under study. Rather than categorizing people into regional groups (and excluding people whose regional roots are seen as insufficiently deep) and then asking how each group uses language, we need to ask, with Michael Montgomery (1997: 19), 'Who adopts a Southern style, and for what reasons?'

A related observation is that the distinction cultural geographers make between physical 'spaces' and cultural 'places' (e.g. Relph 1976, 1981) is highly relevant to dialectology and sociolinguistics, though we have tended to conflate the two. Physically delimited areas – spaces – are not places unless they have meaning for people as distinct from other places. Dennis Preston's (1989) work on perceptual dialectology illustrates this with reference to how people map regional dialects; it is also important for understanding uses of regionally-marked speech like the ones I have described here. To give just one example, part of the reason for the part-self, part-other relationship of Texas women to Southern speech is to be found in the historical development of the concept of Texas as a place distinct from the South (Doughty 1987) and the corresponding development of an image of what it means to be a Texan. To attract settlers from the South, Texas land developers like Stephen F. Austin had to find ways of talking about Texas that made it seem different and more desirable. One way they did this, Doughty points out, in keeping with a widespread 19th-century ideology about the relationship of humanity to nature, was to present Texas as wilderness which it was mankind's moral duty to tame. This is in part what gave rise to the still-current idea that Texans – as well as pick-up trucks driven in Texas, Texas-brewed beers, and 'tawkin' Texan' – are tougher than their counterparts in other places. This in turn is part of what gives sounding Southern in Texas the meanings it has.

In the US, and perhaps elsewhere, region continues to be an important semiotic resource, perhaps partly because of people's resistance to what they see as media- and economically induced homogenization of other aspects of life. Social theorist Anthony Giddens speaks of the 'disembedded' quality of contemporary social life (Giddens 1991: 146–147), in which 'place does not

form the parameter of experience' (1991: 147). He acknowledges 'active attempts to re-embed the lifespan within a local milieu' such as 'the cultivation of a sense of community pride' (1991: 147), but he is pessimistic about the likelihood that people can effectively reinstate local meaning into their lives. But resistance to globalization via re-appropriation of the local may be especially likely in areas like Texas, with its long history of regional exceptionalism. This resistance is itself commodified in ads, political campaigns, and so on which play on regional imagery, as when trucks made in Detroit are advertised as 'Texas Fords' and a brewing company with its roots in Milwaukee stresses that the beer sold in Texas is 'brewed in Fort Worth.' Some theoreticians of cybercommunication to the contrary (e.g. Meyrowitz 1985, who argues that the electronic media have made real – non-virtual – place obsolete), people continue to ground aspects of their identities, in a variety of ways, in actual places.

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## NOTES

1. Although the analysis represented in this paper is mine, the Texas women study is a group project. Delma McLeod-Porter arranged for our interviews with Sophie Austin and Janet Wilson (which, like all the names in this paper, are pseudonyms) and conducted and transcribed the Austin interview herself. McLeod-Porter, Judith Mattson Bean, and I all talked to Wilson; I transcribed that interview. Vicky Christopher interviewed Tracy Rudder and transcribed the portion of the interview used here. I am grateful to Bean for letting me use some of the results of her student survey and for her ongoing work on the Texas women project, to Ben Rampton and Mary Bucholtz for organizing the 1998 International Pragmatics Association panel at which I first presented these ideas, and to all the panelists for many valuable insights about language crossing and related phenomena. Extensive and extremely useful comments from Rampton, as well as suggestions from Judith Bean and from two other readers, helped in the process of making a conference talk into a journal article.
2. The largest of the 48 continental states, Texas is located in the south-central U.S., bordered on the south and west by Mexico. The canonical history of the state, told mainly from the perspective of rural Anglo-Texans, is Fehrenbach 1968; histories focused more on non-Anglo Texans, and on urban life, are Montejano (1987), Campbell (1989), and Miller (1990). For an overview of regional and social variation in the U.S., see Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1998). Sources on Southern speech in particular are listed in McMillan and Montgomery (1989).
3. This language-attitude questionnaire was designed to give us a sense, at the beginning of the project, of what it could mean to Texans to be from Texas, and how being Texans related to other aspects of their senses of identity. This particular question required respondents to identify which one of a number of national, regional, and ethnic labels they would 'generally use to describe [themselves].' Other choices were African-American, Hispanic-American, and 'other.'
4. The material about Sophie Austin and Janet Wilson comes from interviews

conducted by Delma McLeod-Porter, Judith Mattson Bean, and me. In these conversations, which lasted 1–2 hours, we combined ethnographic and sociolinguistic interviewing techniques: as we asked the women to talk about how they talked (and wrote), we also tried to elicit the range of styles, from most to least self-conscious, that was available to them in the context of a conversational interview. In both of the cases discussed here, McLeod-Porter was known to the interviewee beforehand, in Sophie Austin's case as an on-and-off resident of a nearby community and in Janet Wilson's case as one of her best friends. Because some of the case-study women are well known in ways that make their identity impossible to disguise completely, and because, for some, the publicity they hoped to receive through being featured in the project was one of their motivations for participating, we did not guarantee any of them anonymity. But their names, as well as the names of everyone else whose speech I discuss, have been changed in this paper. The interview with Tracy Rudder was part of another facet of the Texas women study, which involves shorter interviews with a larger number of younger Texas women, women who are in the process of developing public voices. It was conducted by Vicky Christopher, who was a friend of Rudder's. It was based on a fairly loose protocol developed by Bean which encouraged interviewers to get at the subject of sociolinguistic identity indirectly, through questions about home, family, and self-image. Terri King's contribution started, as I have said, as a response to a newspaper article about my research.

5. Fieldworkers for the U.S. dialect atlas projects tried to find informants who had been born in the area and had lived there almost uninterruptedly. Because the atlas projects had ultimately arisen in the European attempt to collect folk speech, the preference was for the oldest rural settlements. Informants were classified into three groups by their level of education, how much they read, and how much contact they had with people from elsewhere. These groups usually also corresponded with age groups, as the oldest informants would be the least 'cultured' and have the least education. The purest examples of folk speech, and thus the best data for the description of regional variation, in this paradigm, were those provided by people with the least influence from outside the area via education or personal contact. See Preston (1993) for an overview of the U.S. dialect atlas projects.
6. It should be noted, of course, that even a (hypothetical) monostylistic speaker of a Southern-sounding variety could be taken by others to be using it strategically – to be *acting* Southern rather than just *being* Southern. Someone who unintentionally puts on a show simply by acting the only way they know how to act is a potential source of humor, and Southern characters often have this role in fiction and film and on television in the U.S.
7. 'Open space' and 'freedom' are key elements of Texas' ideology of exceptionalism. They are both, of course, appropriated from the United States' exceptionalist mythology. In the popular imagination, Texas is both the U.S. writ large and different from the rest of the U.S.
8. Miss Sophie would certainly have interacted throughout her life with many African-Americans as well as with Anglo-Americans like herself. As far as pronunciation goes, Southern blacks and whites of Miss Sophie's generation are difficult to distinguish (Haley 1990). But there are differences in interactional style. Due to the racism and social hierarchy of the day (and to a considerable extent of this day, too), Miss Sophie would, however, have found it inconceivable to adopt features of African-American interactional style in public contexts. Thus, while African-American speech ways were arguably more available to Miss Sophie than they

- are to contemporary Anglo-American teenagers like the ones studied by Cutler (1996, this issue) and Bucholtz (1997), they were less likely to become useful expressive resources for her, thus less likely to be adopted. 'Contact' in the sense of mere contiguity does not necessarily imply influence, unless people have a use for the other variety they are exposed to.
9. In suggesting that one's formal education might have a bearing on his or her speech style, I am departing from the generally accepted view in variationist sociolinguistics that 'vernacular' speech, acquired early from family and peers, represents a person's authentic way of speaking. It is true that features of pronunciation acquired early in life, and usually not in school, are often more robust (more resistant to change, and hence less available as strategic resources) than later-learned elements of style. But I am specifically interested in elements of style that *can* serve as strategic resources.
  10. It could be argued that, rather than describing different kinds of speakers, different theories describe different things about all speakers. It is certainly true that dialect geography and variationist sociolinguistics highlight different facts about speakers, varieties, and variation. But they also describe somewhat different populations. In contrast with dialect geographers, variationist sociolinguists have been specifically interested in speakers who are not monostylistic, since one of the foci of this work is on stylistic variation from context to context. The typical research subjects in the Labovian paradigm have been urban, younger than the average dialect atlas informant, and often somewhat better educated. Many of Labov's (1966) New York informants read passages and word lists aloud; many of the early dialect atlas informants were illiterate.
  11. The idea that linguistic choices can serve rhetorical purposes has a history of several centuries, which I can hardly do justice to here. The idea has been rediscovered by sociolinguists several times. One influential approach to the rhetorical function of variation is that of John Gumperz (1982a, 1982b). The idea that discourse is in some fundamental sense self-expressive can be traced at least to the Romantic movement of the 19th century and to literary 'expressive individualism.' In linguistics, Roman Jakobson pointed to this function of language in his well-known 1960 diagram of the components of communication. Johnstone (1996) is an exploration of the role of self-expression – speakers' need to express their autonomy and individuation – in language and linguistics.
  12. It should be noted, of course, that the same speakers can make various uses of Southern-sounding speech. King may well sound Southern in other contexts too, for other reasons, including ones like those discussed above.

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