

# A Language Attitude Analysis of Regional US Speech: Is Northern US English Not Friendly Enough?

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## ABSTRACT

*In a number of publications in the area of 'perceptual dialectology' (e.g., Preston 1989), I have complained that 'classical' language attitude surveys do not take into consideration the respondents' folk linguistic awareness of variety (neither of the identificational strategies they use in 'locating' speakers nor of the 'mental maps' they have of regional speech areas). In this study I show how previous findings from perceptual dialectology may be used in an attitude research study and discuss the results of such a study of young Northern US (Michigan) respondents with regard to their own and to 'Southern' US speech. In conclusion, I suggest that such linguistically 'secure' speakers may be assigning even greater affective value to stigmatized areas than similar speakers from such areas have in past surveys. (Keywords: perceptual dialectology, language attitudes, regional dialectology, social psychology of language, linguistic (in)security, folk linguistics).*

## RESUMEN

*En diversos trabajos del área de la 'dialectología perceptiva' (ej. Preston 1989) me he quejado de que los estudios 'clásicos' sobre actitudes lingüísticas no prestan atención a la conciencia lingüística popular de variedad de los encuestados (ni a las estrategias de identificación que utilizan para 'localizar' a los hablantes ni a los 'mapas mentales' que tienen sobre las áreas de habla regional). En el presente estudio muestro cómo emplear las conclusiones anteriores de la dialectología perceptiva en un estudio de investigación sobre actitudes de encuestados jóvenes estadounidenses 'norteños' (Michigan) frente a su propia habla y a la de los 'sureños', y discuto sus resultados. Como conclusión, sugiero que los hablantes lingüísticamente 'seguros' pueden estar asignando a las áreas estigmatizadas un valor afectivo incluso mayor que lo que han hecho en estudios anteriores hablantes de características similares de dichas áreas. (Palabras Clave: dialectología perceptiva, actitudes lingüísticas, dialectología regional, psicología social del lenguaje, (in)seguridad lingüística, lingüística popular).*

## 1. SOME BACKGROUND

In Preston (1989) I complained that language attitude research did not determine where respondents thought regional voices were from and, worse, did not know if respondents even had a mental construct of a "place" where a voice could be from: that is, their mental maps of regional speech areas might not include one with which a sample voice could be identified.

For example, if one submitted a voice from New England to California judges and the judges agreed that the speaker was "intelligent", "cold", "fast", and so on, researchers could reasonably conclude that Californians judged that voice sample in that way. They should not conclude, however, that that is what Californians believe about New England voices, for a majority of the judges might not have agreed that the voice was from New England (perhaps they would have called it a "New York" voice). More generally, Californians may not even have a concept of "New England" speech. Perhaps the most detailed mental map of regional US speech available to them is one which simply identifies the "Northeast" (whatever their folk name for that region might be).

It is odd that this long-standing problem has caused so little discussion among those who do language attitude studies. In perhaps the earliest "classic" study of attitudes towards regional and ethnic varieties in the US, Tucker and Lamhart (1969) note that neither northern nor southern European-American judges identified the ethnicity of educated African-American speakers better than chance (scores ranging from 47% to 54%). But, in spite of their concluding plea in that article to investigate identification when ratings are done, their suggestion has been very seldom followed.

Of course, that failure does not vitiate all language attitude research work which has not asked for regional and/or ethnic identification of the sample voices presented for evaluation. Milroy and McClenaghan (1977) note an interesting consistency of ratings of Scottish, Southern Irish, Ulster, and RP varieties even when judges misidentified accents. They comment on this finding as follows:

It has been widely assumed that an accent acts as a cue identifying a speaker's group membership. Perhaps this identification takes place below the level of conscious awareness. [...] Presumably by hearing similar accents very frequently [one] has learnt to associate them with their reference groups. In other words, accents with which people are familiar may *directly* [italics in original] evoke stereotyped responses without the listener first consciously assigning the speaker to a particular reference group.

Milroy & McClenaghan (1977: pp. 8-9)

Irvine (1996) has more recently commented on this transfer of linguistic features to social facts which apparently make the unconscious reactions Milroy and McClenaghan note possible:

*Iconicity* is a semiotic process that transforms the sign relationship between linguistic features and the social images to which they are linked. Linguistic differences appear to be *iconic* representations of the social contrasts they *index* —as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group's inherent nature or essence [italics in original].

Irvine (1996: 17)

In other words, the presumed social attributes of a group are transferred to the linguistic features associated with it (as Irvine notes), and an occurrence of those features may directly trigger recognition of those attributes without being filtered through (conscious) identification of the group (as Milroy and McClenaghan note).

Perhaps responses to language and language variety may operate along a continuum (or several continua) of consciousness or "awareness" (just as language performances involve degrees of "monitoring" or "attention to form," e.g., Labov 1972: 208). In Preston (1996a) I review a number of these possibilities for "folk linguistics," suggesting that folk-linguistic facts (i.e., linguistic objects as viewed by nonlinguists) may be subdivided for "awareness" along the following clines.

- (1) *Availability*: Folk respondents range in their attention to linguistic features from complete disregard for to frequent discussion of and even preoccupation with them.
- (2) *Accuracy*: Folk respondents may accurately, partially accurately, or completely inaccurately represent linguistic facts (and their distribution).
- (3) *Detail*: Folk respondents' characterizations may range from *global* (reflecting, for example, only a general awareness of a variety) to detailed (in which respondents cite specific details).
- (4) *Control*: Folk respondents may have complete, partial or no "imitative" control over linguistic features.

An important fact about these several clines is their relative independence. For example, a respondent who claims only a general awareness of a "foreign accent" may be capable of a completely faithful imitation of some of its characteristics and a completely inaccurate imitation of others. On the other hand, a respondent who is preoccupied with a variety might have no overt information about its linguistic makeup but be capable of performing a native-like imitation of it.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the range of so-called language attitude effects ought to be treated in a similar way. That is, attitudinal responses which are based on the respondents' association of a sample voice with a particular social group may be different from ones based on reactions to linguistic caricatures such as *ain't*. Responses which may be based on some sort of cline (e.g., masculine-feminine, degree of "accent") may be different from those based on the recognition of "categorical" features (e.g., correct-incorrect).

Whatever the answer to these and other questions, there is no doubt that folk linguistic responses to regional varieties can profit from being investigated by using a variety of research methods. I have tried to piece out some of the attitudinal puzzle concerning responses to US regional varieties by determining what the mental maps of regional varieties are (from a number of different regions) and by asking respondents to characterize regions of the US (usually by state) on scales of language "correctness," "pleasantness," and "degree of difference" (from the home area of the judges). (e.g., Preston 1996b).

In this research, I try to combine the results of these folk linguistic investigations with the more classic language attitude research model. That is, I try to answer at least a part of my own criticism of language attitude research by employing the "cognitively real" mental maps of speakers in an assessment of their attitudes towards regional variation.

## II. METHODS

The first requirement of this project was to make use of the respondents' actual mental map of regional speech areas. In previous work (e.g., Preston 1989), following the lead of cultural geographers (e.g., Gould and White 1974), I have simply asked respondents to draw maps of where they believe varieties are different. Figure 1 is a typical example of such a hand-drawn map.

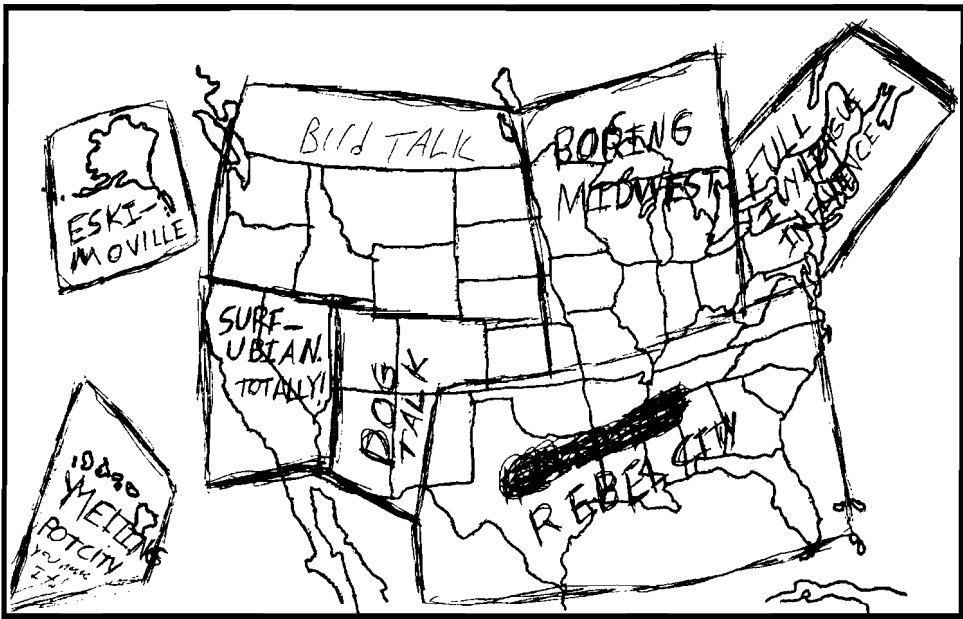


Figure 1: A Michigan hand-drawn map

Although one may profit from an investigation of these individual maps (by, for example, looking at the labels assigned various regions, e.g., Hartley and Preston, in press), their usefulness for general language attitude studies depends on the degree to which generalizations may be drawn from large numbers of such maps. This may be done by drawing an (approximate) boundary for each salient region from the first map and then "overlaying" each subsequent respondent's map and drawing the "perceptual isoglosses" for each region.' A more sophisticated version of this procedure makes use of a digitizing pad which feeds the outlined area of each salient region into a computer so that a more precise numeric determination can be made of the "boundary" of each hand-drawn region (Preston and Howe 1987). Figure 2 shows a computer-determined map for the mental map of US regional speech areas derived from the hand-drawn maps of 147 southeastern Michigan respondents (from a variety of status and age groups, male and female).

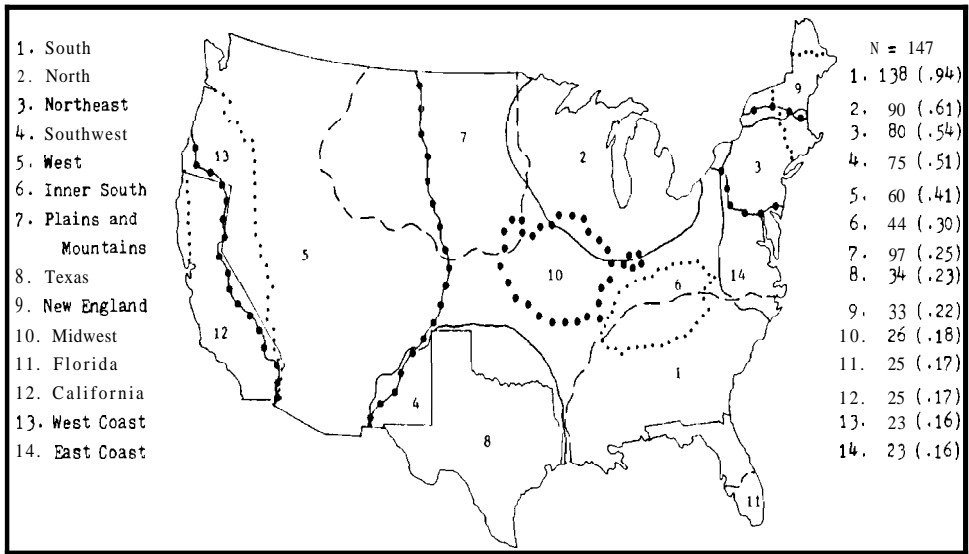


Figure 2: Computer-assisted generalizations of hand-drawn maps showing where southeastern Michigan respondents believe speech regions exist in the US.

Given this mental map determined in previous research (one, it was assumed, which would be typical of the respondents to be investigated in this research), it was next determined, in “classic” language attitude research style (e.g., Shuy and Fasold 1973), what labels would be relevant to an investigation of attitudes to those areas. For the respondents studied here (young, European-American, Michigan university students), the most frequently mentioned labels were the following:

- |                   |                   |                            |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| slow — fast       | formal — casual   | educated — uneducated      |
| smart — dumb      | polite — rude     | snobbish — down-to-earth   |
| nasal — not nasal | normal — abnormal | friendly — unfriendly      |
| drawl — no drawl  | twang — no twang  | bad English — good English |

These descriptors were elicited by showing a large number of respondents (none of whom participated in the later evaluation task) a simplified version of Figure 2 and asking them to mention any characteristics of the speech of those regions which came to mind. The most frequently mentioned descriptors were selected and arranged into the pairs shown above. These pairs were then presented in a six-point “semantic differential” task as shown below.

The respondent judges (85 young, European-American southern Michigan residents who were undergraduate students at Michigan State University) were shown a simplified version of Figure 2 and given the following instructions:

## INSTRUCTIONS

This map shows where many people from southern Michigan believe speech differences are in the U.S. We will give you a list of descriptive words which local people have told us could be used to describe the speech of these various regions. Please think about twelve<sup>3</sup> of these regions. and check off how each pair of words applies to the speech there.

For example. imagine that we gave you the pair "ugly" and "beautiful"

ugly                                                                beautiful  
           a            b            c            d            e            f

You would use the scale as follows:

If you very strongly agree that the speech of a region is "ugly." select "a."

If you strongly agree that the speech of a region is "ugly." select "b."

If you agree that the speech of a region is "ugly." select "c."

If you agree that the speech of a region is "beautiful." select "d."

If you strongly agree that the speech of a region is "beautiful." select "e."

If you very strongly agree that the speech of a region is "beautiful," select "f."

Use the op-scan form (and the numbers on it) for all answers.

1) First. please tell us your sex

a. female      b. male

Go on to Region #1 (which begins with question #2 on the next page). Refer back to the map on this page whenever you like.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

### III. THE RESULTS

The first step in classic language attitude work is to determine whether or not the paired items used in evaluating the "samples" can be reduced. This is normally carried out by means of a factor analysis. The results of such analysis for all areas rated are shown in Table 1.

Two robust factor groups emerge. The first (which I will call "Standard") shows loadings from those categories which one associates with education and majority norms. Note, however, that the last three factors in this group ("Formal," "Fast," and "Snobbish") are not necessarily positive traits. Factor Group #2 (which I will call "Friendly") loads affective factors (including two which are negatively loaded — "Down-to-earth" and "Casual" — in Factor Group #1).

These groups will not surprise old hands at language attitude research. As Ryan, Giles, and Sebastian (1982: 8) note. «With regard to the structure of attitudes toward contrasting

language varieties, the two major dimensions along which views can vary can be termed *social status* and *group solidarity* [italics mine]».

Factor Group #1	Results	Factor Group #2	Results
Smart	.76	Polite	.74
Educated	.75	Friendly	.74
Normal	.65	Down-to-earth	.62
Good English	.63	(Normal)	(.27)
No drawl	.62	(Casual)	(.27)
No twang	.57		
Casual [Formal]	.49		
Fast	.43		
Down-to-earth [Snobbish]	-.32		

Table 1: The two factor groups from the ratings of all areas. Parenthesized factors indicate items which are within the .25 to .29 range; "-" prefixes indicate negative loadings and should be interpreted as loadings of the opposite value (given in brackets).

A full analysis of these data would, of course, go on to consider the realization of each of these factors (and groups) with regard to each of the areas rated. First, that would be too space-consuming, and second, I believe a sample of two particularly salient areas (for these respondents) will provide a good insight into the mechanisms at work here.

I have chosen to look at the respondent ratings of areas 1 and 2 from Figure 2. The reasons are straightforward. Region 1 is the US "South," and Figure 2 shows that it was outlined by 94% (138) of the 147 respondents who drew hand-drawn maps. For these southeastern Michigan respondents, it is clearly the most salient regional speech area in the US. Although one might note anecdotal or popular culture characterizations of why that might be so, a look at Figure 3 will provide an even more dramatic explanation. In an earlier task in which I asked southeastern Michigan respondents to rate the states (and Washington, D.C. and New York City) for "correctness," it is clear that the South fares worst. On a one-to-ten scale (with one being "least correct"). Alabama is the only state which reaches a mean score in the 3.00 - 3.99 range, and, with the exception of New York City and New Jersey, the surrounding southern states (Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Georgia) are the only other areas rated in the 4.00 to 4.99 range. In short, the salience of southern speech would appear to lie in its distinctiveness along one particular dimension — it is incorrect English. The second most frequently rated region (by 90 out of 147 respondents or 61%) is the local one called "North" in Figure 2, but more accurately "North Central" or "Great Lakes." At first, one might be tempted to assert that the local area is always salient, but a closer look at Figure 3 will show that these southeastern Michigan raters may have something else in mind when they single out their home area. It is only Michigan which scores in the heady 8.00 to 8.99 mean score range for language "correctness." In short, perception of language correctness (in the positive direction) determines the second most salient area for these respondents.

Although investigation of the ratings of other areas will doubtless prove interesting, a careful look at those of the high-prestige local area ("North") and of the most highly stigmatized area ("South") will prove most revealing.

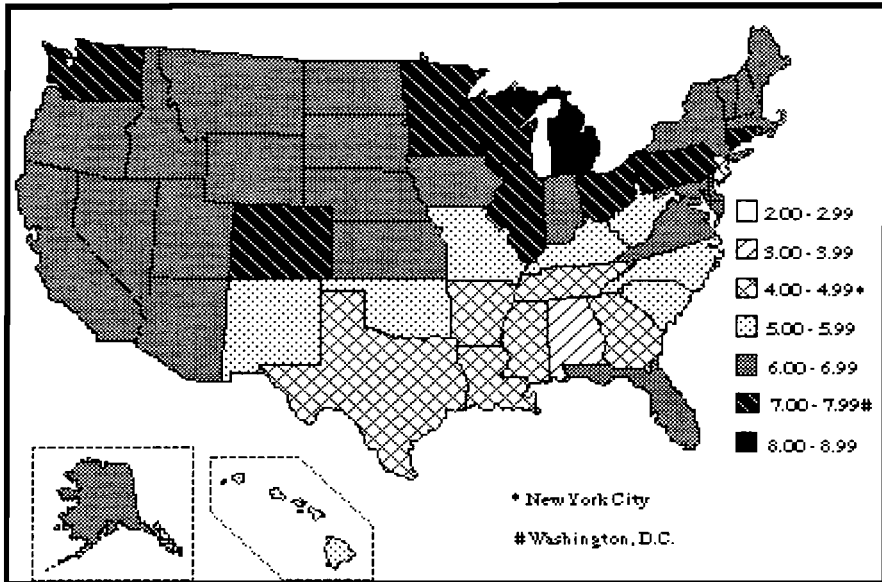


Figure 3: Means of ratings for language "correctness" by MI respondents for US English (on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 = least and 10 = most correct).

Table 2 shows the means scores for the individual attributes for the North and South. Perhaps the most notable fact is that the ranked orders are nearly opposites. "Casual" is lowest-rated for the North but highest for the South. "Drawl" is lowest-rated (meaning "speaks with a drawl") for the South but highest rated (meaning "speaks without a drawl") for the North. In factor group terms, the scores for Factor Group #2 (and "-1" loadings) are the lowest-ranked ones for the North; these same factors (e.g., "Casual," "Friendly," "Down-to-earth," "Polite") are the highest-ranked for the South. Similarly, Factor Group #1 scores are all low-ranked for the South; the same attributes are all highest-ranked for the North.

These scores are not just ordered differently. As indicated by the "@" in Table 2, a series of paired t-tests shows that there is a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the attribute ratings for the North and the South, except for "Nasal" and "Polite". For those attributes which load on Factor Group #1 ("No Drawl," "No Twang," "Fast," "Educated," "Good English," "Smart," and "Normal"), the means scores are all higher for the North. In other words, these Michigan raters consider themselves superior to the South for every attribute of the "Standard" factor group. This is not very surprising, considering the results from earlier research on "correct" English shown in Figure 3.

Before considering the scores for the attributes in Factor Group #2 ("Friendly"), let's see what Michigan raters have done previously in a direct assessment of the notion "pleasant" (as was shown above in Figure 3 for "correctness"). As Figure 4 shows, the South fares very badly again. Alabama (actually tied here by New York City) is the worst-rated area in the US, and the surrounding southern states are also at the bottom of this ten-point rating scale. One may note, however, that the ratings for the "pleasantness" of the English of southern states are one degree less harsh than those for "correctness." Similarly, there is no "outstanding" (8.00-



8.99) rating as there was for "correctness." making Michigan no longer the uniquely best-thought-of area (since it is joined here by Minnesota, Illinois, Colorado, and Washington). In previous work (e.g., Preston 1996b), I have taken this to indicate that northern speakers have made symbolic use of their variety as a vehicle for "standardness," "education," and widely-accepted or "mainstream" values. On the other hand, southern speakers (who are well-aware of northern prejudices against their variety) use their regional speech as a marker of "solidarity," "identity," and local values.'

MEANS SCORES (ORDERED): NORTH			
Rank	Factor	Mean	Attribute
17	-1 & 2	3.53	Casual
11	ø	3.94@	Not nasal
9.5	2	4.00	Friendly
9.5	2	4.00@	Polite
8	1	4.09	Educated
7	1	4.12	Fast
6	2 & 1	4.19	Down-to-earth
5	1	4.41	Good English
4	1	4.53	Smart
3	1 & 2	4.94	Normal
2	1	5.07	No Twang
1	1	5.11	No drawl
MEANS SCORES (ORDERED): SOUTH			
Rank	Factor	Mean	Attribute
1	-1 & 2	4.66	Casual
2	2	4.58	Friendly
3	7 & -1	4.54	Down-to-earth
4	2	4.20@	Polite
5	ø	4.09@	Not nasal
		*	
6	1 & 2	±3.22	Normal [Abnormal]
7	1	±3.04	Smart [Dumb]
8	1	#±2.96	No twang [Twang]
9	1	\$2.86	Good English [Bad English]
10	1	\$2.72	Educated [Uneducated]
11	1	±2.42	Fast [Slow]
12	1	±2.77	No drawl [Drawl]

Table 2: Mean scores of attributes. \* marks the only significant (p < 0.05) break between two adjacent scores (determined by an analysis-of-variance with a Tukey comparison of means); "±" marks values below 3.5 (which indicate the opposite polarity, shown in brackets here and in Table 3); "#" indicates the only scores significantly different for gender (p < 0.05, determined by a series of t-tests); "@" marks the only two attributes ("Nasal" and "Polite") for which there was no significant difference (p < 0.05 on a series of paired t-tests) between the ratings for North and South.

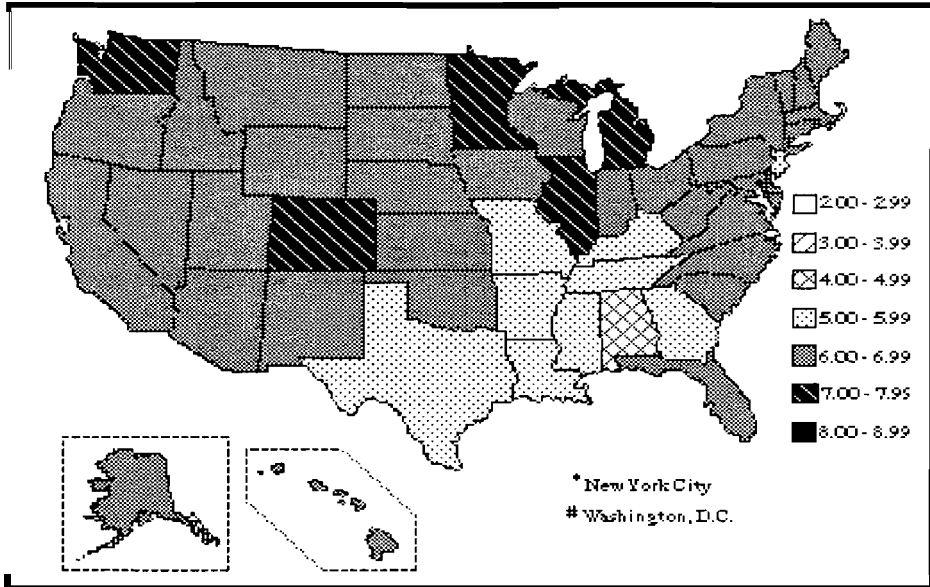


Figure 4: Means scores for "pleasant" English by MI respondents (ratings as in Figure 3).

For those attributes which load on Factor Group #2 (or -1), the means score is higher for the South for "Casual," "Friendly," and "Down-to-earth." There is no significant difference for "Polite" (as noted above), and the North leads the South in Factor Group #2 attributes only for "Normal," but it is important to note that "Normal" loaded (positively) on both groups.

This is indeed a new finding for rankings of the prejudiced-against South by linguistically-secure northerners. These data suggest that, for these eighty-five young Michiganders, the "Friendly" attributes (excepting only "Polite") are more highly associated with southern speech than with speech from the local area.

A few other statistical facts confirm and add to the results reported so far. Sex (the only demographic variable testable in this experiment) played little or no role. No rating of any attribute for the North differed by sex, and only "Twang" and "Fast" differed for the South. (Female raters found the South "twangier" and "slower.") More importantly, note (in Table 2) that no attribute rating for the North falls below 3.5 (the median value of the six-point scale), while all of the Factor Group #1 ("Standard") attributes are rated below that score for the South. Perhaps even more dramatically, analysis-of-variance tests of the means scores for North and South independently show that there is no significant break ( $p < 0.05$ ) between any two adjacent means scores for ratings of the attributes for the North. On the other hand, there is such a significant difference for the South between the Factor Group #2 (and -1) attributes and the Factor Group #1 attributes, as shown by the "\*" in Table 2. In other words, there is a continuum of relatively positive scores for the North and a sharp break between the two factor groups for the South.

This break can be even more directly shown in Table 3 which displays the combined means scores for the two factor groups and the two areas focused on here. It is only Factor Group #1 ("Standard") for the South which is very different from any other. Unfortunately, this representation of the results hides the important fact that ratings of individual attributes for North and South are nearly all significantly different (as shown in Table 2 above). What it does reveal, however, is that this model of research found considerably better ratings of the South by northerners along the "affective" dimension than did previous research on "pleasantness" ratings (as shown, for example, in Figure 3).

	North	South
Factor Group #1	4.44	*3.18
Factor Group #2	4.13	4.24

Table 3: Factor group means (all attributes combined)

## CONCLUSIONS

What does this approach contribute to language attitude study? Most importantly, I believe we can be relatively assured that the judges have rated regions which are "cognitively real" for them; that is, they have rated areas for which the notion "regional speech" has been shown to have folk linguistic status.

Unlike classic matched-guise attitude studies, this research provides respondents with the category name and mapped outline of regions rather than actual voice samples. The obvious benefit of this is that I do not have to use what could only be gross, stereotypical imitations of varieties (if one speaker tried to imitate all the varieties studied here or even the two more carefully looked at). Since some recent language attitude research has shown that there is little or no difference in evaluations when the stimulus is a category name or an actual speech sample (e.g., Coupland, Williams, and Garrett, *in press* and Williams, Garrett, and Coupland, *in press*), I have not considered this manner of presenting the stimulus to be a deficiency. Of course, the question of whether or not respondents can identify varieties is still an open one and requires independent study. Here I chose to investigate the "stereotypes" respondents have of regional voices (without submitting a sample), and I consider this to be one approach to the larger question of identification of and attitudes towards regional varieties.

It is the case that the respondents in this study were all young, college-enrolled undergraduates, but the mental map (Figure 2) which was shown to them was derived from a study of a variety of age groups and social classes in southeastern Michigan. In fact, however, there were found to be very few important differences in age, gender, and status representations of dialect regions or even in the evaluations of them (e.g., Preston 1988). I believe, therefore, there are no important differences between the cognitive map of regional speech for the respondents studied here and the generalization shown them (derived from Figure 2).

The major finding of this study, however, is that there is a considerable difference in the rankings here of the "affective" dimension of attitudes of Michiganders to the South and those given by similar respondents in my earlier research. As Figure 4 shows, the ratings for the local area for "pleasantness" were among the highest, and the ratings for the South along

the same dimension were among the lowest. In the present study, however, the South actually did significantly better than the local area in three key characteristics of the affective factor group (#2 — "Friendly," "Casual," and "Down-to-earth") and was not significantly different on a fourth ("Polite"). As Table 3 shows, there is hardly any difference between the overall ratings of Factor Group #2 for the North and South. That is a very different picture from the one seen in Figure 4.

What accounts for this amelioration of attitude towards the South among these raters'? I think there are several possibilities.

First, one might assume that the global label "pleasantness" (used in the earlier research) does not as subtly (or perhaps as "covertly") elicit the attitudes along this dimension. That is a real possibility, but I cannot resolve it here.

Second, one might attribute this amelioration to the age of the respondents. Although they are the same age as the youngest group studied in the earlier research, they are certainly not their contemporaries. Those earlier data were collected in 1986-87; the data for the current study were collected in 1996. Since I do not have ratings from older respondents in the current research, however, it is difficult to make this comparison straightforwardly. There is some evidence (although it is confounded by region) that the respondents of the late 1990's may be behaving differently from those of the late 1980's, but the difference would appear to be in the area of evaluations of "correctness" (more closely parallel to Factor Group #1, "Standard") than along affective lines. In her work in Oregon, Hartley (1996) notes that a number of respondents (citing what sounds very much like a somewhat sophisticated linguistic relativism) refused to evaluate regions of the US for "correctness" (or rated them all the same).<sup>9</sup> She notes, however, no such accompanying reluctance for rating "pleasantness," and the student fieldworkers for the present study reported no such reluctance among these young southeastern Michigan judges in rating "correctness" or "pleasantness."

Third, one might suspect that some sort of "covert prestige" attaches itself to southern speech (since it is clearly seen as "incorrect"). If that were the case, however, one might expect to see a strong gender differentiation (with a male preference for the stigmatized variety), but, as Table 2 shows, there is little gender significance in the ratings. Additionally, high ratings for such attributes as "Friendly" hardly point to "tough" characteristics. I believe, however, that this last possibility moves in the right direction, but I also believe that previous definitions of "covert prestige" are too "tough" and "male" oriented to cover the entire territory.

Let us consider another possible interpretation. Although many hand-drawn maps of US dialect areas by Michigan respondents label the local area "standard," "normal," "correct," and "good English", some also treat it as seen in Figure 1 (where it is called "boring"). Since there is obviously no dissatisfaction with the local variety as a representative of "correct English," what is the source of the preference for other varieties along affective dimensions'? Recall that I have suggested (e.g., Preston 1996b) that a group has a tendency to use up what might be called the "symbolic linguistic capital" of its variety in one way or another (but not both). Speakers of majority varieties have a tendency to spend the symbolic capital of their variety on a "Standard" dimension. Speakers of minority varieties usually spend their symbolic capital on the "Friendly" dimension.

I suggest that northerners (here, southeasterii Michiganders) have spent all their symbolic linguistic capital on the standardness of local English. As such, it has come to represent the norms of schools, media, and public interaction and has, therefore, become less

suitable for interpersonal use. In short, these young Michiganders don't identify other varieties for their "covert prestige" on the basis of anti-establishment or tough characteristics alone: they also assign covert prestige to a variety which they imagine would have more value than theirs for interpersonal and casual interaction, precisely the sorts of dimensions associated with Factor Group #2. Of course I do not doubt the existence of "covert prestige" along the traditional "masculine" or "tough" lines that Trudgill (1972) points out: I simply suspect that there are other kinds of covert prestige, or at least one in which friendship, solidarity, trust, informality, strong emotion, and such factors are highlighted. Southern US English would appear to be such a variety for these judges.

I will not develop here the popular culture, folkloristic, and qualitative evidence for this interpretation, although I am sure such caricatures (many encoded in the notion "southern hospitality") are well-known, and northerners indeed comment on the fact that southern speech "sounds nice". From a language variation point of view, of course, we are ultimately more interested in the general social and linguistic mechanisms which are at work here.

Ryan, Giles, and Sebastian (1982: 9) outline the following evaluative possibilities for majority (LV1) and minority (LV2) speakers:

Type of Preference	Judges			
	LV1 speakers		LV2 speakers	
	Status	Solidarity	Status	Solidarity
A. Majority group	LV1	LV1	LV1	LV1
B. Majority group for Status / in-group for Solidarity	LV1	LV1	LV1	LV2
C. In-group	LV1	LV1	LV2	LV2
D. Majority group for Status / Minority group for Solidarity	LV1	LV2	LV1	LV2

In these terms, I wonder if speakers of Inland Northern US English (i.e., the Michiganders studied here) have changed from Type B to Type D! Perhaps speakers of some of these varieties have moved in the direction of RP speakers in Britain (the group Ryan, Giles, and Sebastian use to illustrate the LV1 pattern of their Type D). In other words, the inappropriateness of their own ("Standard") variety to interpersonal modes of communication has caused them to evaluate other (nonstandard) varieties higher for the characteristics identified as belonging to the "Friendly" factor group.<sup>8</sup>

Space will not allow a thorough discussion of other interpretive dimensions of this finding, but I will briefly mention some.

In Preston (1992) I note that, although young European-American imitations of African-American speech might be regarded as racist, many appear to have other motivations — sounding not only "tough" and "cool" but also "casual" and "down-to-earth." This motivation among younger speakers is complex. Although adolescents are often presented with a dichotomous choice between mainstream ("approved") and nonmainstream ("rebellious") behaviors, a middle ground exists in which there is a desire to succeed along traditional lines but another to display egalitarian principles, ones which require, on the linguistic front, the (at least partial) use of varieties seen as stigmatized. As a result of other associations with both the standard and the perceived nonstandards, these latter varieties also seem to be more appropriate for casual, interpersonal use. I believe the "in-betweeners" in Eckert's (1989)

suburban Detroit study (i.e., those who want to be neither the mainstream "Jocks" — perceived as "snooty" — nor the anti-establishment "Burnouts" — associated with drug culture) display just such an attitude. One of them characterizes this dilemma of such "neutrals" as follows:

They [i.e., the "neutrals," neither "Jocks" nor "Burnouts"] just don't want to seem to turn to drugs to cope with their problems, and, uh, they want to. they want to **have** good grades. you know. **but** not be stuck up where you'll look at someone and say "Well, you are lower than me," and stuff like that.

Penelope Eckert (1989: 174)

In Britain as well, Rampton's work (e.g., 1995) evaluates the occurrence and meaning among adolescents of cross-ethnic language use (i.e., "code-switching") and concludes that a principal function is its reflection of a desire to do away with ethnic boundaries.

In other words, in resolving the adolescent tension between mainstream and nonmainstream behavior, a linguistic option might be the use of "standard" English in settings which require that variety and a mixing of the speaker's native variety with perceived nonstandards in settings which require "casual" use.' In short, **I** do not believe that the use of or preference for nonstandard (or stigmatized) varieties by adolescents is uniquely associated with the "anti-language" interpretation offered by Halliday (e.g., 1976) and apparently embedded in most interpretations of "covert prestige".

**I** will not press this favoring of stigmatized varieties into service for general sociolinguistics too much further, but **I** want to mention the fact that it is one (alternative) option in the search for accounts for the introduction and spread of novel elements (particularly into the mainstream speech community): that is, it is another option in the search for answers to the problems of "actuation" and "embedding" (Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog 1968). Rampton's work referred to above also notes that the adolescent use of other varieties provides an opportunity for "practice" (while making the "social statement" that such selection implies). If that is true, then all the cases of accommodation, imitation, and acquisition of "socially motivated" non-mainstream varieties discussed **here** (and in many other places in the sociolinguistic literature) are opportunities for the introduction and spread of alternative forms. This may be particularly true when those elements are introduced into the wider speech community by adolescents whose own native variety is closer to the mainstream (although their initial motivation in acquiring them was accommodation to nonmainstream varieties as a part of the solution to the "adolescent dilemma" outlined above).

This interpretation is potentially an addendum to the "weak ties" argument for linguistic change outlined in J. Milroy (1992). In suggesting that persons with low-density networks are likeliest to be the "early adapters" (e.g., 183) in linguistic change, Milroy appears to overlook the age factor (in which younger, even adolescent, speakers seem to lead). If we use Eckert's terms to characterize the members of adolescent social networks, both "Jocks" and "Burnouts" have high-density group relations (corresponding to the high "solidarity" values of the highest and lowest status speakers shown in Figure 7.1 of Milroy 1992: 213). The "weak ties" group (like the "lower middle" and "upper working" status sectors in Milroy's representation) would be the "Neutrals" of Eckert's suburban Detroit adolescents. They are not among themselves a tightly-knit cohesive group, and they "borrow" linguistically from the lower-status (or "nonmainstream") burnouts. As such, they are in a privileged position to introduce such

elements into the wider speech community.<sup>10</sup>

The young southeastern Michiganders reported on here have similar privilege, and, although we cannot know their various social status backgrounds, we can assume that their university status will have some effect on their later social position. The fact that they prefer a stigmatized variety to their own for affective characteristics suggests that they are not only changing their attitudinal perception to the "Type D" outlined above but that they are also (potential) borrowers of norms from stigmatized speech communities in their own attempts to achieve a more casual, interpersonal style.

Of course, a great deal more quantitative and qualitative work will need to be done to establish this direct link between attitudes and language change, but I believe such work will be a productive enterprise, and I urge attitudinal work which focuses on the occurrence (and frequency) of specific linguistic features, as done in, for example, Labov (1966) and Graff. Labov, and Harris (1983) but so seldom replicated in more recent studies.

Even if this direct link cannot be shown conclusively to exist, the patterns of language regard outlined here form an important part of the study of variation in its social context, one which has implications for both the more broadly-based ethnographic approach to sociolinguistics and linguistic intervention in schools, law, medicine, communications, and other areas of public concern.

## NOTES:

1. In Prestoii (1996b: pp. 347-49) I provide a detailed analysis of the phonetic and phonological failures of a northerner (Michigander) talking "southern" (saying the phrase «Y'all know what I'm talkiing about now, don't you»).
2. I did this for respondents from Hawaii, southerniiaiaia, southern Michigaii, western New York, and Nev. York City iii Prestoii 1986.
3. Texas and California (areas 8 and 13 in Figure 2) were excluded from the rating so as to limit the task to one large op-scan form ("electronically scorable answer sheet"). Since "Texas" and "Southwest" and "California" and "West Coast" overlapped considerably iii the generalization of the hand-drawn task, this was not seen as especially detrimental.
4. Although the paired opposites were presented to the respondents with "negative" and "positive" sides randomly distributed, the "positive" poles were all moved to the high (i.e., "6") end of the scale for all the quantitative analyses reported below. I realized after I did this that there might be cultural misunderstandings of what I consider to be the "positive" end. They are "Fast," "Polite," "Down-to-earth," "Educated," "Normal," "Smart," "Casual," "Good English," "Not nasal," "Friendly," "Speaks without a drawl," and "Speaks without a twang." I apologize to readers who disagree with my assignments. That should not detract from the contents of the paper.
5. In fact, ratings of southern respondents' ratings of "correctness" and "pleasantness" show just the opposite pattern of Michigaii raters. For example, Alabama raters regard their own state's variety as uniquely pleasant but rank themselves in the middle on the "correctness" scale.
6. Hartley suggests that Oregonians are aware of their diverse US origins (including southern backgrounds) and are reluctant on those grounds to evaluate other regions, but this interpretation would appear to be confounded by the fact that they were not reluctant to rate the same regions for "pleasantness".
7. In fact, there are many such comments in Niedzielski and Preston (in press)

8. In fact, these northern raters may have been Type D for some time, and the caricaturistically blunt "pleasant" assessment I asked for in earlier work was simply not sensitive enough to elicit that aspect of their evaluation of southern speech

9. Of course I know that there is such a "linguistic" object as "standard US southern English," but it does not exist for the nonlinguist northern respondents under discussion here. It is simply one of a variety of "incorrect" Englishes (e.g., Preston 1996b).

10. Labov's "lames" might also be seen as such "early adapters"

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