A Perceptual Dialect Map of Oklahoma

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This paper explores the perceptions that people in Oklahoma have about linguistic variation in their state. Respondents from Oklahoma (n=47) were given a map of the state and asked 1) to indicate where people speak differently and 2) to describe the way of speaking in those regions. Responses were summarized based on the regions indicated as different, the labels provided, and the spatial location of the labeled regions. The results show that Oklahomans perceive a distinction between urban and rural speech, with "standard" speech being found in urban areas. Rural speech is associated with southern speech as well as with the words "twang" and "drawl." The results emphasize the need to further explore the connection between southern and rural identity in Oklahoma and the complicated role that such identity may play in language variation and change in the state.[1]

Keywords: American English, perceptual dialectology, folk linguistics, language attitudes

1. INTRODUCTION. This paper summarizes the results of a study of Oklahomans' perceptions of linguistic variation in their state as measured by responses given to a perceptual dialect map survey. It first gives a brief introduction to traditional dialectology and the motivation for undertaking studies of perceptual dialectology.

Traditional dialectology considers the geographic distribution of variation within a particular language. Some of the earliest efforts to understand regional variation took place in the late 19th century in Germany (by Georg Wenker) and France (by Jules Gilliéron) and spread to Switzerland and Italy (Jaberg & Jud, 1928–1940), the British Isles (Orton, 1962), and the United States (e.g., Kurath, 1949). In the 20th

[1]I would like to thank Dennis Preston for his guidance, Samson Lotven and the two anonymous reviewers for their feedback, and participants and fieldworkers of the RODEO project.

century, regional surveys spread worldwide. In order to analyze the enormous amounts of data collected in these studies, the locations of particular forms (e.g., lexical items, syntactic constructions, or phonetic realizations) were plotted on maps, and attempts were made to identify areas where similar forms were used. If a clear regional distinction could be seen, a line (i.e., an isogloss) would be drawn on the map to indicate the boundary for the use of certain forms (see Figure 1). Sometimes, a number of isoglosses for different forms overlap, and such bundles of isoglosses can then be assumed to indicate the boundary between two major dialect regions. These major dialect regions can be objectively identified based on the collection and analysis of empirical data which can be a helpful tool in laying the descriptive groundwork on which to build theories of language use and change.

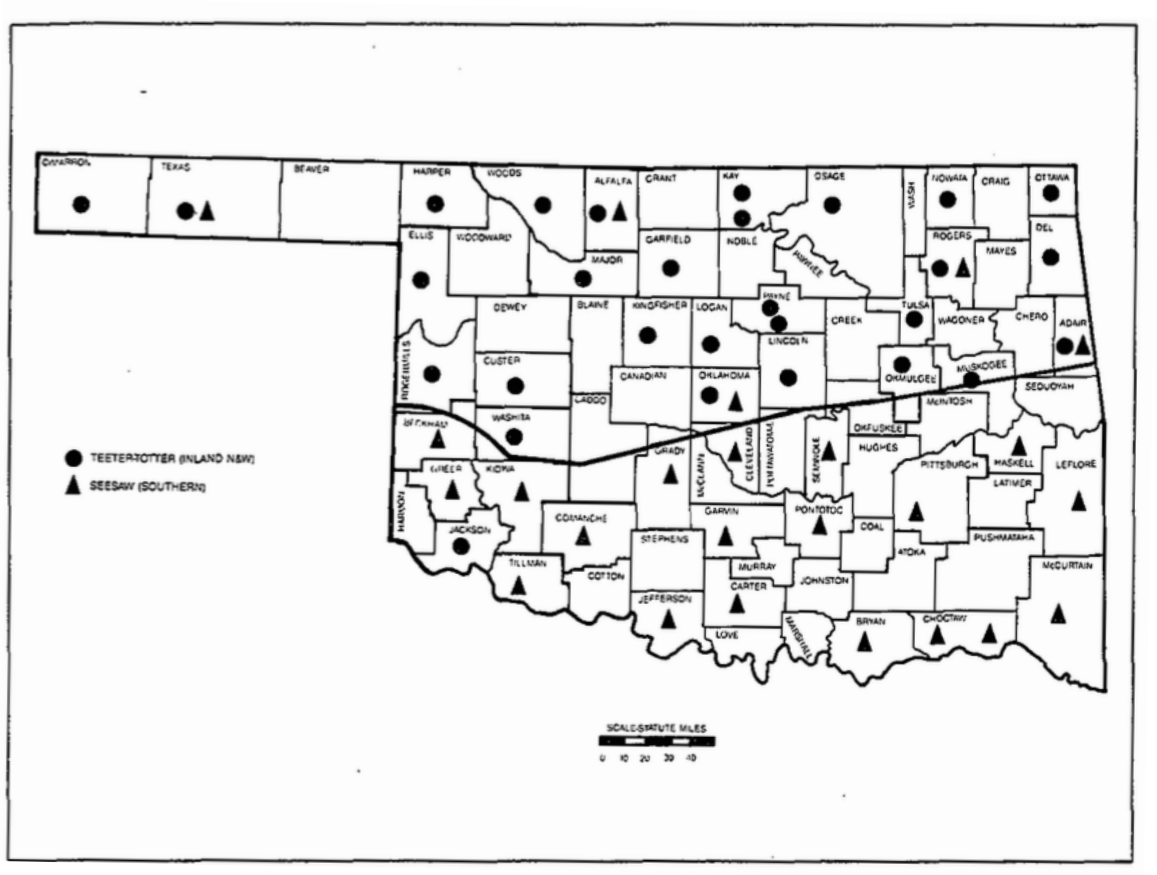


Figure 1: Isogloss showing border between use of "teeter-totter" (circle) and "seesaw" (triangle) in Oklahoma (from Southard, 1993)

In the years since these early dialect studies, linguists have become increasingly aware of the complex factors that influence language change. Traditional studies of dialect geography can help us to understand how linguistic features vary by region and how they may have changed over time (e.g., Kurath, 1949; Kurath & Raven I. McDavid, 1961; Kurath, Bloch, Hanley, Hanson, & Lowman, 1941; van Riper, 1958), but we would also like to know why a particular feature was chosen for change and how that feature has spread (or receded) with regard to social and attitudinal factors (e.g., Weinreich, Labov, & Herzog, 1968).

To address some of these questions, perceptual dialectology has sought to understand the interplay between speakers' actual use of language and their beliefs about and attitudes toward language. The earliest work in perceptual dialectology, which was conducted in the Netherlands and Japan, was developed to show the degree to which respondents' beliefs corresponded to actual dialect boundaries (see Preston, 1999). However, most later work in the area suggests that perceptual dialectology is valuable in helping to determine driving forces in and influences on language variation and change as based, at least in part, on respondent beliefs about and evaluations of regional varieties (e.g., Preston, 1989). It is important to note that belief, in many cases, creates reality. Believing in Santa Claus helps children to behave themselves during the year because they believe their actions determine if they will get toys or coal. The actual existence of a jolly bearded man who lives at the North Pole is incidental since the end results of the belief are the same regardless of the correlation between the belief and reality. As it is with Santa Claus, so it is with language.[2] By exploring the beliefs speakers have about language, we may be able to understand why they choose certain forms and abandon others. It is in this spirit

[2]Although a thorough review of the literature on the role of beliefs and expectations in language use is beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth mentioning a few studies to demonstrate the pervasive nature of these factors in language use. Studies regularly show that orientation toward local culture influnces linguistic production (Eckert, 1988; Labov, 1963; Reed, 2016). Recent perception studies have shown that listeners adjust their category boundaries for phonemes depending on who they believe they are listening to, a phenomenon that applies to a range of important sociolinguistic characteristics, including gender (Strand, 1999), sexuality (Munson & Babel, 2007), nationality (Hay, Warren, & Drager, 2006; Niedzielski, 1999), and age (Koops, Gentry, & Pantos, 2008).

that the present study of Oklahoma has been undertaken.

A number of earlier studies have paved the way for the current project. One of the earliest perceptual dialect studies was included as part of a larger Dutch dialect survey conducted in 1939. Respondents were asked to indicate:

1. In which place(s) in your area does one speak the same or about the same dialect as you do?

2. In which place(s) in your area does one speak a definitely different dialect than you do? Can you mention any specific differences? (Rensink 1955, 20, in Preston, 1999, xxv-i)

The perceptual dialect maps produced from this study and earlier studies in the Netherlands and Japan (Weijnen, 1946; Daan, 1970; Sibata, 1959; Mase, 1964; Nomoto, 1963; all appearing in Preston, 1999) were viewed with skepticism, and there was little consensus as to how such data should be analyzed and understood. Perhaps the only agreement shared by these earlier studies is that folk interpretations of dialect boundaries are imprecise at best and contradictory to actual boundaries at worst. However, as Preston points out, "the last word in this controversy may have to do with ends rather than means" (xxxii). If we intend to use these subjective maps to corroborate objective maps, such a comparison will likely be unfruitful, as the early studies generally concluded. But if we would like to consider the "independent value" of these subjective dialect maps, an entire field of study opens up that has the potential to inform us of an important factor in language change—the subjective evaluation of competing forms and systems (cf. Weinreich et al., 1968, 181–183, 186).

Although many techniques for assessing the linguistic folk beliefs of community members have been developed in the decades since these early studies (see Preston, 1999), one frequently used is the "draw-a-map" activity. The technique draws from the concept of "mental maps," first developed within the field of cultural geography (Gould & White, 1974). In a dialectological context, respondents may be given a map

of an area and asked to indicate areas where they believe people speak differently. They may also be asked to provide labels of the speech (or speakers) of those areas. Other techniques involve asking respondents the degree of difference between the dialect regions they identify (comparable to the earliest Dutch and Japanese studies) as well as asking how "correct" or "pleasant" they find the speech in those areas.

The present study seeks to extend the study of perceptual dialect maps into the state of Oklahoma. Although Oklahoma has been the target of several linguistic studies, such studies have been primarily interested in describing the production of English in the state. A couple of studies (Bakos, 2013; Tillery, 1992) asked respondents which region of the US they find Oklahoma to be most like (e.g., south, southwest, west, midwest). But none of them has considered beliefs about dialect boundaries within the state. William Van Riper conducted a number of interviews in the state in the 1960s in connection with the Linguistic Atlas of Oklahoma (Van Riper, 1979). In the early 1990s, Guy Bailey and colleagues began a project called SOD (Survey of Oklahoma Dialects) (Bailey, Tillery, & Wikle, 1997; Bailey, Wikle, Tillery, & Sand, 1991, 1993). Working with Tom Wikle, a geographer at Oklahoma State University, Bailey was able to create a number of innovative maps based on the SOD data depicting dialectal differences (based on production, not perception) within the state (Wikle & Bailey, 1996).

Most recently, Dennis Preston and students began a new project dubbed RODEO (Research On Dialects of English in Oklahoma) in 2009 (see Bakos, 2013; Weirich, 2013). In addition to the standard elicitation of casual speech, reading passage, and wordlist styles, respondents were presented with a blank map of Oklahoma (showing the location of Oklahoma City and Tulsa as well as the identity of surrounding states) and asked to indicate where people speak differently in Oklahoma and how they would describe the speech in that area (in the spirit of Preston, 1981). The present study will consider the perceptual dialect maps collected in association with RODEO and present a preliminary sketch of Oklahomans' mental dialect map of their state.

2. METHODOLOGY. The data for this project were collected under the auspices of Preston's RODEO study, and the method of analysis is influenced by Evans' (2011) study of perceived dialect regions in Washington state. Evans' study and analysis is inspired by Preston (1981, 1996) and Preston and Howe (1987). What Evans and other recent work in Britain, Germany, and Texas (Montgomery & Stoeckle, 2013; Lameli, Purschke, & Kehrein, 2008; Cukor-Avila, Jeon, Rector, Tiwari, & Shelton, 2012) add to this procedure is an update to the method of data presentation. Evans and others take advantage of ArcGIS digital mapping software (ESRI, 2017) to create aggregate maps based on similar regional labels.[3] Although the limited amount of data in the present study does not warrant the use of ArcGIS, the data will be analyzed and presented in a way that echoes that which the mapping software could produce.

2.1. RESPONDENTS. The maps used in this study were collected as part of a longer interview in which a full set of relevant demographic data were collected. Respondents were selected on the basis of convenience; however, an effort was made to collect a stratified sample based on demographic categories found to be relevant in Oklahoma speech according to Bailey et al. (1997), including gender, age, and place of residence (urban/rural). All respondents had lived in Oklahoma for at least half of their lives, and most had been born in the state. All together, 47 maps were analyzed. 16 of the maps were collected by one fieldworker in 2012, and the other maps were collected by several fieldworkers in 2009.

Respondents are fairly evenly distributed across each of the demographic categories mentioned above. 24 respondents were female and 23 were male. Ages ranged from 19 to 63 with a median age of 39. In fact, the ages were distributed bimodally, with a younger age group mode of 26.6 and an older age group mode of 46.6.

Participants also came from a range of hometown sizes.[4] 23 were from small

[3]For more information on using ArcGIS and other GIS programs for processing perceptual dialectology data, see Montgomery and Stoeckle (2013).

[4]Town sizes are summarized here into three categories based on population counts from the 2010 census: small, fewer than 10,000; medium, 10,000–49,999; and large, 50,000 and greater.

towns, 10 were from medium-sized towns, and 13 were from large towns. Hometown information was not available for one respondent. Most of the respondents were from the northern half of the state, a region that includes the two largest cities, Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Two respondents were from the southern half of the state.

2.2. MAP SURVEY INSTRUMENT. The map survey was conducted in the spirit of Preston's earlier work with mental dialect mapping (e.g., Preston, 1981). Respondents were presented with the map of Oklahoma described above. Respondents were asked to consider the map and perform the following two tasks:

1. Draw a line around places where you think people's English sounds different.

2. Next, write down what you'd call that way of talking, if you can think of a label for it. Give an example of what's different there (is it a word or pronunciation they use? Or a special way of talking?)

See Figure 2 for an example of a completed map. After drawing and labeling the map, respondents were asked to describe their map to the interviewer. Responses were recorded; however, the present study considers only the information that respondents wrote on the maps.[5] Since this is the first study of its kind in Oklahoma, it is important to allow respondents free reign to comment on the perceived dialect regions in order to gain the broadest possible understanding of the salient features in Oklahomans' perceptions of speech throughout the state.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE MAP SURVEY INSTRUMENT. The maps collected in this survey yielded two sorts of data: a relatively objective outline of where respondents believed dialect boundaries to exist and a more subjective set of labels provided to describe the speech in those areas. This study will focus on a general overview of the available data and attempt to draw attention to interesting

[5] Analysis of these oral comments would require a different method adapted to that kind of data, such as the rhetorical analysis developed by Rogers (2016).

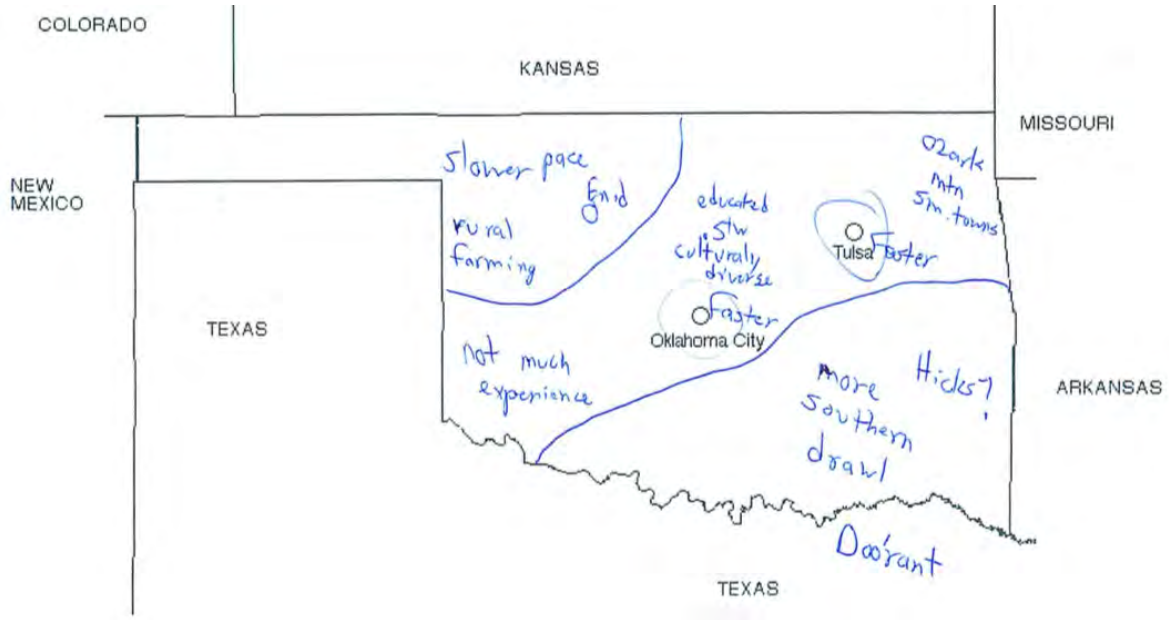
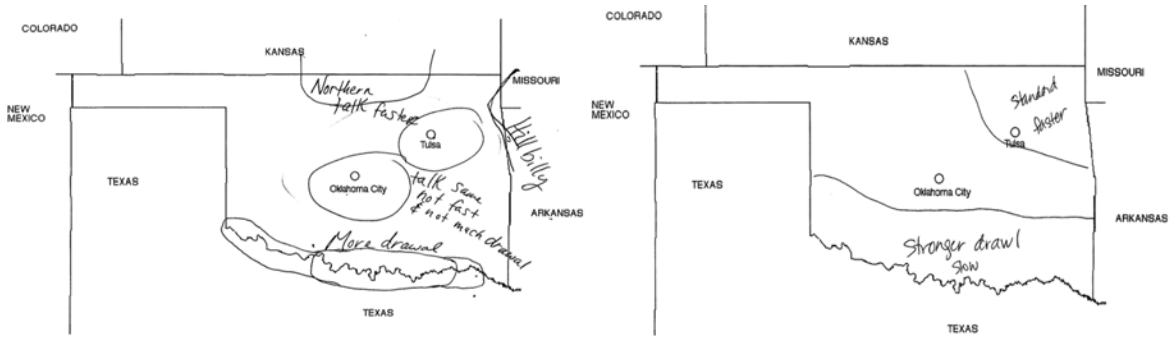


Figure 2: Completed perceptual dialect map

features that may be fruitful for future studies. It is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt an analysis based on demographic categories, and such work is left open for further study.

The initial analysis of the maps was conducted by hand. Each map was classified according to the general areas indicated as being different (see Appendix I). 13 rather specific areas were identified and were then reduced to seven on the basis of significant geographic overlap. For example, some respondents preferred to indicate smaller regions and others opted for larger regions (see Figure 3). It seemed likely that respondents were referring to similar areas despite large differences in the surface areas of indicated regions. Thus, the areas initially identified as the "small southeast" and the "large southeast" were combined into one category, the southeast. Some of the maps indicated only the names of particular cities or towns, and these point data were not considered when categorizing the maps according to region. When the maps were analyzed based on the labels provided, the city labels were included with their counties.

The qualitative labels associated with the indicated regions were also tallied



(a) **(b)**

Figure 3: Typical maps showing a) a narrow south region and a much smaller north region and b) a broad south region and a northeastern region

by hand (see Appendix II). Three major categories emerged: those referring to geographic region, manner of speaking, and general assessments of inhabitants of the region. There was often crossover between the major categories. The word "drawl," a manner of speaking label, would often be paired with "southern," a regional term. In these cases the labels were placed in both categories.

In order to create informative maps to show the distribution of the qualitative labels, the most frequent label groups were selected and associated with the counties encompassed by the lines drawn by respondents. A county map of Oklahoma was laid over each respondent's map, and a light box was used to make both maps visible. A manual tally was made each time a particular county fell within the perceptual dialect boundaries. Counties typically received a tally even if the boundary line only passed through a fraction of the county, unless it was apparent that the size of the county in relation to the area of the actual region indicated would have contributed to significant distortion of the intended region. As a result of using the entire county as the basis for creating aggregate maps and including rather than excluding partially indicated counties, the regions depicted in the maps tend to be larger than the actual areas drawn by respondents.

4. RESULTS. The results presented in this section consider, first, the geographic regions indicated by respondents without regard to the labels provided for those

regions; second, the labels provided by respondents without regard to which regions the labels described; and finally, the location of geographic regions described by the labels.

4.1. REGIONS. In total 47 maps were analyzed. While many of the maps provided clear and consistent regions of perceived dialectal differences, other maps diverged from the regions that emerged as the apparent community norms. In many cases the divergent maps simply took a broader or narrower view of certain regions and should not be considered to represent genuinely different dialect regions. In addition, some maps were not able to be analyzed for region because respondents indicated individual cities and towns rather than broad regions. One map had the majority of the state circled and labeled as "similar." When respondents indicated a specific town on the map and provided a label, that label was then associated with the most relevant region. In all, seven maps were excluded from regional analysis leaving a total of 40 maps.

Figure 4 shows all of the areas identified as "different" by the respondents. In this and all subsequent maps, the darker the color of a region on the map, the greater the relative number of occurrences of that region on the respondents' maps. The legend gives the range for the number of occurrences of each region indicated by each color. In Figure 4, for example, dark red indicates the counties were indicated on at least 28 individual maps

A list of all of the commonly indicated regions along with a description of how those regions were identified is presented in Appendix I. For the purpose of presenting these results, some of the common regions were combined on the basis of significant overlap and similarity of labels provided. Seven regions emerged as being places where Oklahomans believe people speak differently within the state: cities, southeast, southwest, south, west, north, and northeast/east. Although these regions seem to be merely reflective of respondents' knowledge of cardinal directions, Figure 3 shows that the perceived regions can vary in shape and size. The labels associated

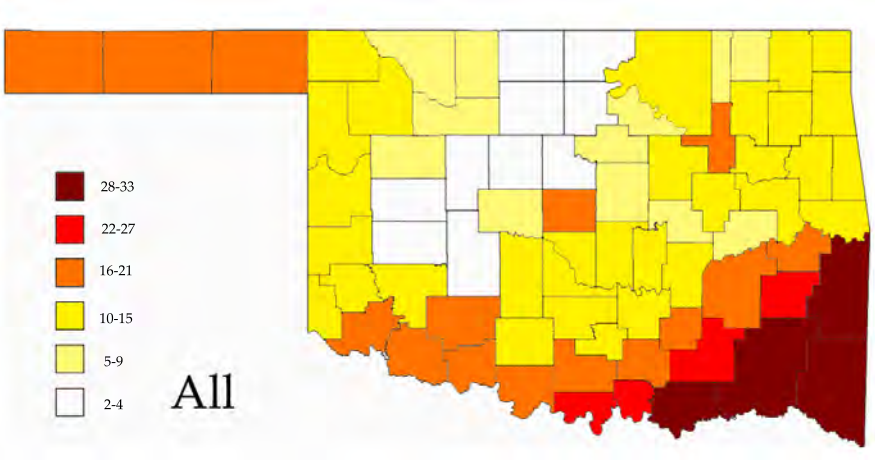


Figure 4: A map depicting the distribution of areas deemed to be "different"

with these regions also reveal the somewhat varied assessments respondents have of each location.

The seven most commonly indicated regions are shown in Table 1. By far the most salient region is the southeastern part of the state, occurring nearly twice as much as any of the other regions. What is more remarkable about this region is the relatively high level of agreement on its boundaries. Of the 27 times the Southeast was indicated, 15 maps show a curve extending from approximately the middle of the eastern border of the state down to an area roughly halfway between the eastern border and the point where Interstate Highway 35 (I-35) crosses into Texas. Only five maps indicate a southwestern area that extends north of the middle of the eastern border or west of I-35. This territory corresponds very well to popular culture representations of "Little Dixie," as shown in Figure 5.

The next most relevant regions were the cities and the West, being marked on almost 40% (n=16) of the maps. The western region combines two subregions, one that explicitly indicates the panhandle of the state (10 occurrences) and another that includes the panhandle along with a more broadly indicated West (six occurrences) (e.g., Figure 2). Oklahoma City is used as the dividing line for the western region in only three of the maps while the border of the western region is typically drawn closer to the panhandle and western border of the state. Only four of the maps depict

Region	# of times indicated
Cities	16 (39%)
Southeast	27 (66%)
Southwest	5 (12%)
South	13 (32%)
North	2 (5%)
West	16 (39%)
Northeast/East	14 (34%)
Total # of maps	41

Table 1: Number of times a given geographical region among all maps

a western region that extends down to the Texas border.

Oklahoma City and Tulsa, considered here as "the cities," also appeared as a region in fewer than half of the maps. In 16 out of 17 maps that indicated either city, both of these cities were circled. The only map that indicated a single city identified Tulsa as a place where people speak differently. Seven maps suggested that Oklahoma City and Tulsa can be considered a single dialect region by drawing a line to connect the two cities, circling both with one circle, or by otherwise indicating the similarity in writing.

Following closely behind the western region and the cities, the last two regions to be indicated on more than three maps are the southern and northeast/eastern regions, being indicated on 13 and 14 maps, respectively. The location and boundaries of the

Figure 5: An estimated location of the region known as "Little Dixie" (*Little Dixie*, n.d.)

southern region exhibit the most variation of any of the regions, indicating that there is no strong agreement on the location of this dialect boundary. Two of the maps that indicate this region include the entire length of the border with Texas. Only four of the maps that indicate a southern region also include a separate southeast region (see Figure 3a). When the southeast region is drawn according to the traditional boundaries of "Little Dixie," (see Figure 5) the southern region does not extend to the eastern border. However, if the southeast region is drawn as a relatively small area hugging the Arkansas border, the southern region does extend to the eastern border. Two respondents drew a southern region that extended up to Oklahoma City, six showed that the region extended roughly halfway to Oklahoma City, and the remaining five drew a region that was very close to the Texas border.

The northeast/eastern region includes areas that range from an indication of a very small portion of the borders with Kansas and Missouri to a partitioning off of the entire quarter of the state formed by drawing lines from Oklahoma City to the northern and eastern borders (see Figure 3b for a typical example). Of the five maps that depict a northeastern region large enough to encompass Tulsa, only one of them marks Tulsa as speaking differently from the rest of the northeast region. Six maps show a relatively small region that focuses on both the northern and eastern borders, whereas four maps suggest a more general eastern distinction. In contrast to the maps that depicted a southern region, two-thirds of the maps that acknowledged a northeastern region also drew a southeastern region. Only four also drew a southern region in addition to the northeast region.

The final two regions appeared on a total of five maps. These regions were rather difficult to classify as their low occurrence leaves open the possibility that they are not actually salient regions. Of the three maps indicating a southwestern region, all of them also indicate a southeastern region and the panhandle. It could be argued, based on similar labels given to the southeast and southwest on two of the maps, that the southwest region actually could be classified as belonging to the southern region,

but the high level of salience of the "Little Dixie" region blocked the respondent from drawing a shape that clearly indicates a southern designation.

Finally, the northern region is curiously narrow (see Figure 3a). Occurring on only two maps, the region is approximately the same size and in the same location on both maps. Both maps also indicate a southern region that stretches along all or most of the extreme southern border of the state, suggesting a north/south split, yet the limited region denoted by the northern area does not suggest that the respondents have a conception of a general "northern" dialect in Oklahoma in the same way as they indicate a "southern" dialect.

4.2. LABELS. The labels provided on the maps—138 in all—can be grouped into three broad categories (see appendix II), each of which can be broken down into sub-categories. The three broad categories are: LOCATION, MANNER OF SPEAKING, and GENERAL ASSESSMENTS OF INHABITANTS. The first category, location, may at first seem to be the least interesting as the labels often refer merely to directions or names of neighboring states. However, the relative frequency of mentions of these geographic regions or states provides an indication of which regions and states are most salient to Oklahomans. These regions and states may be likely to play a role in how Oklahomans construct their identities and attitudes toward variation within the state. The second category encompasses any labels that refer specifically to speech production, such as "twang" or ways of pronouncing words. Finally, the third category consists of any comments on the perception of non-linguistic cultural features of people who live in a particular region, such as "farming" and "hick." In addition, two categories of labels can be identified that cut across the broad categories, one that refers to a rural/urban distinction and another that combines aspects of the location and manner categories.

LOCATION. The most common location labels referred to regional directions (n=17), with many mentioning the south (n=11), two indicating the southeast, three

labeled west or western, and only one denoting the north. Specific states are mentioned 16 times in total: Texas nine times, Oklahoma referred to three times, and Arkansas, Louisiana, Colorado, and Missouri appearing once each. "Little Dixie" is indicated four times. One invented town is mentioned, "Po-Dunk, OK," evoking the idea of an uninteresting or backwards small town. 18 labels specifically distinguish between rural (n=14) and urban (n=4) regions.

MANNER OF SPEAKING. Of the 66 labels clearly referring to perceptions of speech production, 30 labels included some kind of comparative or superlative indicators, ten of which refer to some sense of unmarked production (i.e. "neutral," "clearer," "normal," or "less" of some marked feature, such as "twang"). Rate of speech is mentioned 14 times, ten times for slow speech and the remaining four indicating relatively more rapid speech. Mentions of some form of Southern speech occur eleven times, and "thick Oklahoman" appears twice. The words "twang" and "drawl" are recorded nearly equally, eleven and ten times, respectively. One respondent provided a phonetic representation of the pronunciation of "Doo-rant," Durant, a town of approximately 15,000 residents in the southern part of the state, suggesting a shift of the stress to the first syllable. The only other specific phonetic feature mentioned is "Missouri 'R'." It is not clear if the label is referring to a heavily rhotic variety of English spoken in the region or if it is somehow referring to the typical regional pronunciation of the final vowel in "Missouri" as schwa instead of /i/ (Lance, 2003).

GENERAL ASSESSMENTS OF INHABITANTS. Many of the labels classified in this category also belong to the other categories. Most of these labels imply a lack of sophistication in rural speech. Of these labels that have a clear negative connotation associated with rurality, "hick" is the most popular with nine appearances, "hillbilly" twice, and "backwoods" and "redneck" occurring once each. Rurality is suggested in 31 labels, "country" appears seven times, "rural" occurs four times, "farming" and "small town" twice each, and "middle of nowhere" once.

4.3. LOCATION OF LABELS. Although it should be evident where the region labels can be found, it is interesting to consider where certain subjective labels are found. This section will present several labels that do not necessarily have regional correlations. Despite using such a narrow data set, the findings presented in this section may be able to provide a preliminary description of the perceptions Oklahomans have of attitudinally charged geography. Indeed, if this project can provide any insights into the role of language attitudes in language variation and change, it is in this analysis.

OKLAHOMAN. Oklahoma is only explicitly referred to on three maps, but it is interesting to see where respondents believe "Oklahoman" is spoken within the state. One respondent writes "thick Oklahoman" in two regions, the panhandle and an area roughly corresponding to the location of "Little Dixie." Another respondent indicates Asher, OK, just east of Oklahoma City, as a place that has an "Okie drawl." The final map has divided the state into thirds, each with a particular brand of Oklahoman speech: "Red Dirt"[6] in the northeast, which is "very laid back" and with "more southern drawl"; "Native American" in the northwest, which is characterized by "longer vowels"; and "Texan/Mexican" in the south, which includes Oklahoma City and has a "faster cadence." These three maps do not provide a clear indication of where "Oklahoman" is spoken. In fact, they suggest that an "Oklahoman" way of speaking is not monolithic. While there is a vague notion that there is a prototypical dialect (which can be "thick"), ethnic varieties are acknowledged as being part of the linguistic landscape of Oklahoma as well.

RURAL. Rurality was indicated in two ways on the maps, either through a relatively neutral term, such as "rural," "country," or "farming," or through a word

[6]The soil in many parts of Oklahoma is tinged red due to a high concentration of iron minerals. "Red dirt" is a term that has developed as a popular notion associated with Oklahoma identity. Red Dirt music is a genre developed in the state with influences from artists in the outlaw country genre, such as Willie Nelson and Merle Hagaard. A popular song by the country duo Brooks & Dunn features a chorus line that orients a teenager's upbringing around a "red dirt road."

with negative rural connotations, such as "hick" or "hillbilly" (see Figure 6). Of the 16 maps where rurality was indicated, six used only neutral terms, five used only negative terms, and the remaining five used a mixture of the two. The neutral terms seem to be most concentrated in the western part of the state. The negative terms appear primarily in the south, southeast, and northeast/east regions and seem to be centered around the southeast region as eight of the eleven maps that include negative rural labels indicate regions that overlap with the southeast region. Two of the maps simply make a blanket statement that defined rural areas as places where "hicks" live. There is a general tendency among the maps that include both neutral and negative rural terms to define the western region with neutral terms and the southeastern region with negative terms.

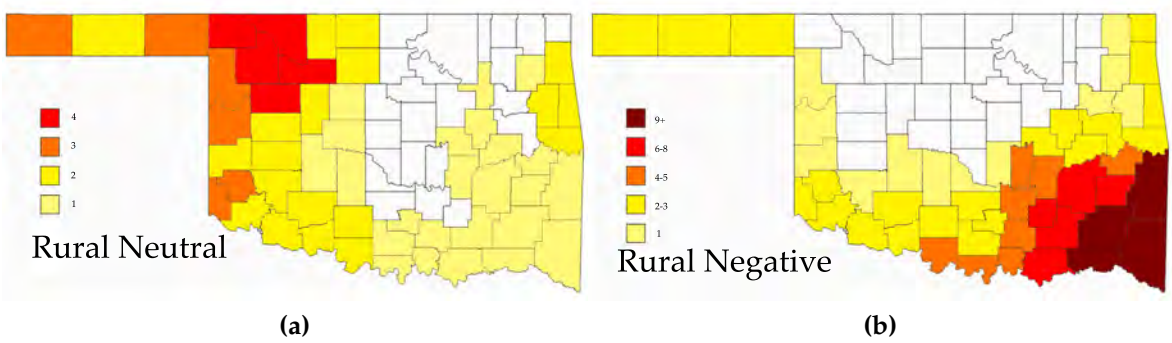


Figure 6: The distribution of negative and neutral terms for rural areas. Colors indicate number of maps on which a particular region was indicated.

SOUTHERN. Although it may seem as though the southern region would be clearly located, it is interesting to note that there is not as much agreement on the location of southern speakers in Oklahoma, suggesting a more generalized concept of the dialect (see Figure 7). 14 maps mention "southern" in their labels. Several different regions are described as "southern." Six maps describe the southeastern region as the only location of a Southern speaking style, and an additional three maps include the southeast along with the Texas border or entire eastern border. Three maps suggest a narrow band near the Texas border as being southern, and two indicate a

Southern influence in the western region of the state. Only one respondent claims a southern influence exclusively in the northeast—a counterintuitive location, although it supports the idea that "Southern" is a dialect label with only a general connection to the homologous geographic label.

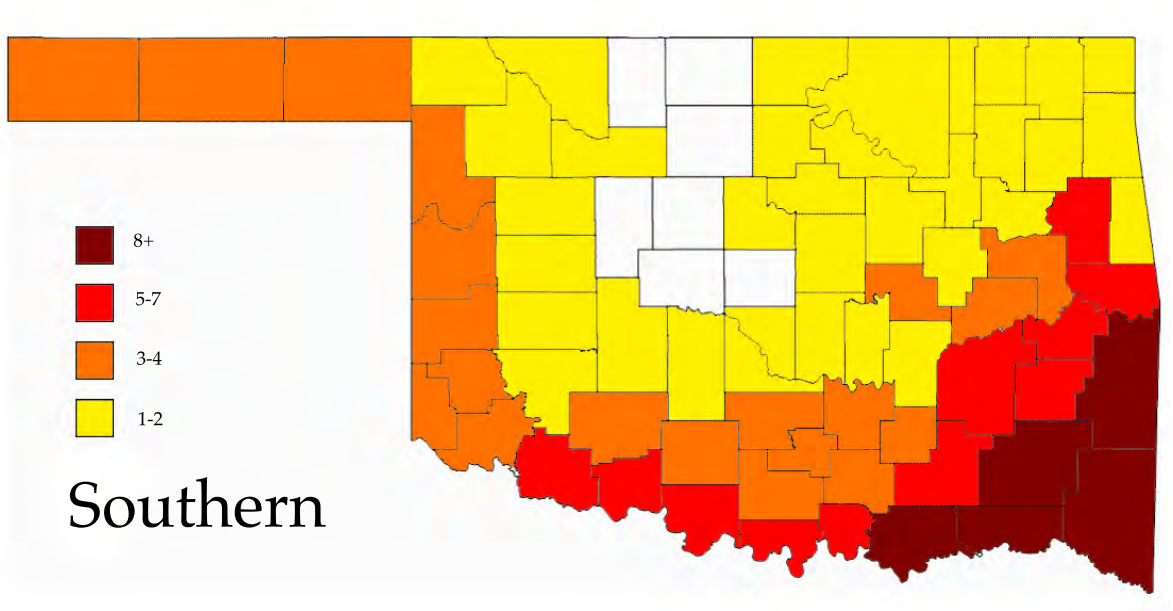


Figure 7: Distribution of "Southern" labels. Colors indicate number of maps on which a particular region was indicated.

STANDARD. Respondents were asked to indicate where English was spoken differently in Oklahoma, yet 13 of them were able to identify regions where people were different because they spoke in a "normal" way (see Figure 8). Actually, only three respondents used a word that indicated a standard way of speaking, but nine maps used comparatives to suggest that certain areas spoke in a way that could be considered more standard (e.g. "less drawl," "less accent," "clearer words"). Almost all of the standard regions included the cities—not surprising since, according to the principle of hierarchical diffusion, cities are often associated with social prestige and are the seats of standard dialect (see Bailey et al. (1993) for an overview of various kinds of linguistic diffusion based on data from Oklahoma). Only two maps indicate a "normal" region that is not one of the cities, an area north of Tulsa close to the

Kansas border, and in the town of Buffalo, which was labeled as "crisp, precise." Two maps include Tulsa in a larger northeastern region that is "standard" and has "less twang." One map shows that the cities have "better grammar." The cities also have less "accent," "country dialect," "drawl" (n=3), and "twang" (n=2). One map draws a large circle around the main body of the state and declares that it is all "similar." It is unclear what "similar" refers to; perhaps all speakers in the indicated region sound similar to each other, according to the respondent's perceptual judgments, or maybe the respondent believes people in these regions sound similar to him- or herself.

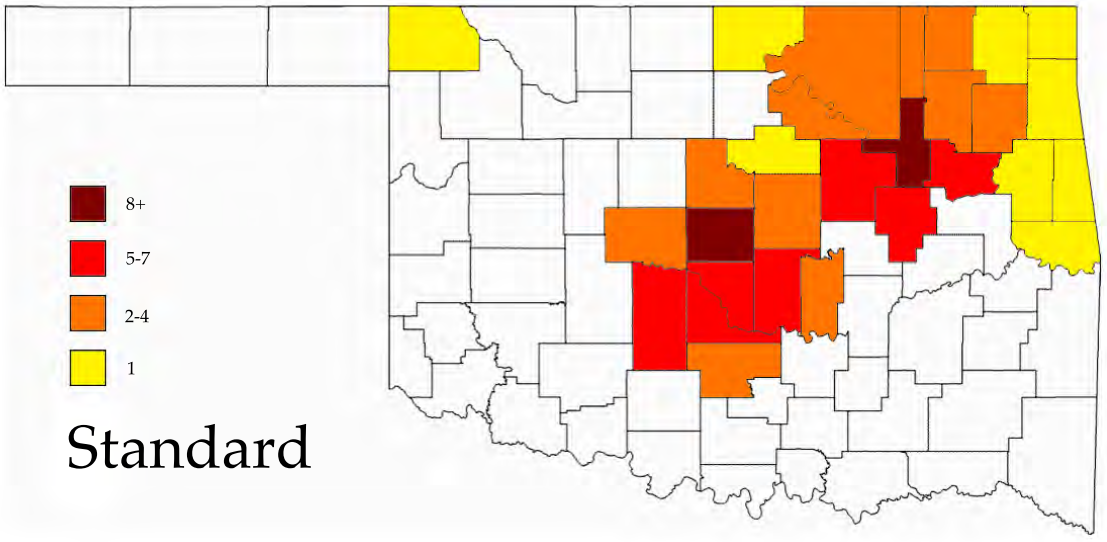
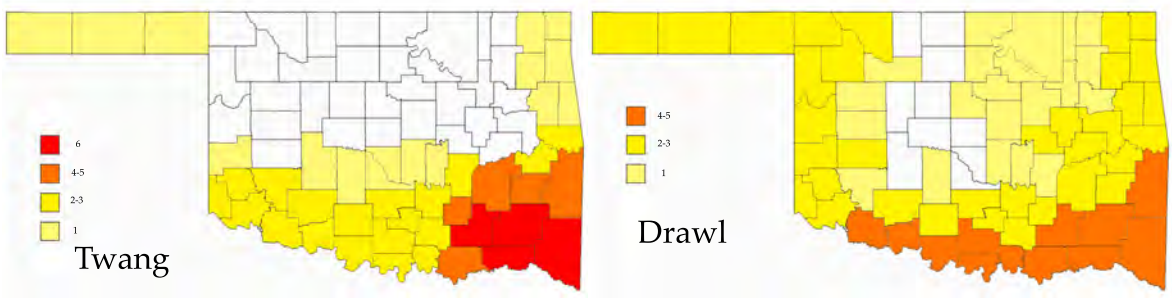


Figure 8: Distribution of labels suggesting standard speech. Colors indicate number of maps on which a particular region was indicated.

TWANG VS. DRAWL. Finally, "twang" and "drawl" are among the most mentioned features of Oklahoman speech, occurring many times and in equal proportions (see Figure 9). The maps suggest a geographic difference in distribution of the terms. Of the 17 maps that have either word, both words appear on only two maps. In both cases "drawl" is associated with the broader western panhandle region and "twang" appears along the Texas border and in Little Dixie. However, eight of the maps that only mention "drawl" describe regions in the southern and eastern regions of the

state. The four maps that only include "twang" also focus on the southern region with one map suggesting an eastern twang. Based on this evidence, it does not seem that a clear distinction can be drawn between the two words. On the one hand, the words seem to be roughly synonymous, yet their equal presence suggests a salient difference that allows both to remain relevant to speakers rather than one taking precedence over the other. Perhaps a larger sample would reveal a straightforward trend; however, it could be that the words are so semantically intertwined that a different approach is needed to identify any difference (see Rogers (2016) for a discourse analysis-based rhetorical approach to the use of "twang").



(a) (b)

Figure 9: Distribution of "Twang" and "Drawl." Colors indicate number of maps on which a particular region was indicated.

5. CONCLUSION. The results presented here reveal some interesting patterns in Oklahomans' perception of English in the state. The area known as "Little Dixie" emerged as not only the most salient dialect region in the state, but also as the most negatively perceived one based on the high frequency of negative rural descriptors, supporting Preston's (1999) generalization of earlier perceptual map studies that "respondents first draw stigmatized... areas most frequently" (xxxiv). The entire border with Texas, and the panhandle more specifically, were also noted as salient. The cities, somewhat unsurprisingly, were considered the most standard; however, they were most frequently indicated as such by the use of comparative adjectives, suggesting that even the people in areas that respondents believe speak "better" En-

glish can still have drawls, twangs, etc. Perhaps "twang" and "drawl" are associated with a sort of covert prestige among Oklahoma residents, even though these terms are often used to describe stigmatized speech. Indeed, Bailey et al. (1993) identified a pattern of contrahierarchical diffusion of certain features traditionally associated with rural and Southern speech, such as the quasimodal *fixin' to*, moving into more populated areas. They claim that an influx of immigrants from other parts of the United States encouraged native Oklahomans to adopt some features of local rural speech as a display of their nativity in the face of challenges from outsiders. Perhaps these same sensibilities have led to "drawl" and "twang" being perceived as slightly more positive features than they would have been otherwise.

The least salient region in the state is the northern border with Kansas. Not including the panhandle, which is a region of questionable genuine relevance, the northern border is not considered to have a "twang," nor does it have any negative rural associations. Only two maps explicitly acknowledged the area. There is no indication that this border region is considered so "normal" as to be ignored by the folk, although one map does identify a small region north of Tulsa as such. Rather, whatever underlying association people have with the southern border, they simply do not have a similarly salient counterpart for the northern border.

In general, there seems to be a preoccupation in the state with rurality, perhaps as a by-product of the state's historical Southern and South Midland heritage (see Southard, 1993). Overall, it is interesting to note the preponderance of areas labeled with rural terms (Figure 6). The dichotomy between the neutral rural region and negative rural region is certainly a topic worthy of further inquiry. Along the same lines, future work could consider if the more overtly negative terms, such as "hick" and "redneck," are also associated with covert prestige. Rural life is an important part of the cultural landscape of Oklahoma, so future investigations should approach the topic with a sensitivity to the complexities of a community that both reveres and reviles its own history and identity.

A study of the use, meaning, and distribution of "twang" and "drawl" in Oklahoma may also produce further insights into the use of language in the state. Pointed items on a questionnaire asking people to define these terms individually and in contrast with each other may elicit valuable responses. An auditory perception study could present speech samples to people and ask them to indicate which speakers have a "twang" or "drawl." Such a study would provide insight into what acoustic or phonological patterns or lexical items are associated with these terms. The words appear to be used to describe nearly the whole state, whether by their presence or near-absence. Along the same lines, can the more overtly negative terms (such as "hick" and "redneck") be considered as expressions of covert prestige?

Although this was a preliminary study, the data reveal the outline of the mental map of Oklahoma. Clearly, more work needs to be done in order to more thoroughly inform the study of language variation in Oklahoma and language change in the region over time. In particular it would be valuable to compare responses of people from rural and urban areas, from the southern and northern regions, and those who have positive and negative orientations toward the state and/or rural life.

6. APPENDIX I. Definitions used to summarize regional labels

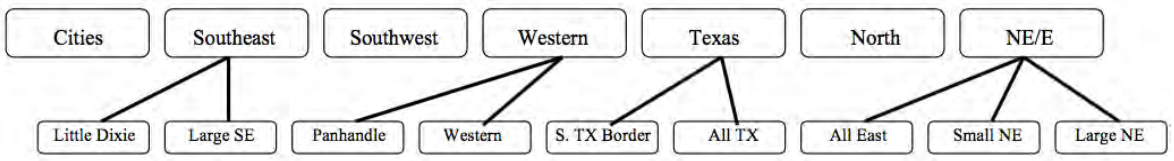


Figure 10: Hierarchy of major and minor regions

Cities Both cities (Oklahoma City and Tulsa) circled.

Only Tulsa A circle or box that only includes Tulsa and does not seem to be indicating a larger region.

Little Dixie A curve extending from about the center of the eastern border down to a point about halfway between I-35 and the eastern border.

Large SE A region that is larger than that normally considered to be Little Dixie. It may include the entire Southeastern quarter or even third of the state.

Panhandle A line or curve that seems to mark off the panhandle as a distinct region and may include part of the body of the state but should not appear to be indicating a general "western" region.

Western A line or curve that includes the panhandle and more. May approach Oklahoma City and extend to Texas.

TX border (no panhandle) This region may or may not include Little Dixie, but should not appear to combine the two. That is, it should not be a line parallel to the TX border that all of a sudden curves northward as it approaches the AR border.

All TX Includes the entire length of the TX border from west to east.

All East Includes the entire eastern border with no attempt to include Little Dixie.

Small NE A region fairly close to the NE border that does not include Tulsa.

Large NE A region in the NE quarter of the state that includes or excludes Tulsa. The lines should be outside of a box formed between the NE border and Tulsa.

Northern Any lines, no matter how much area they include, that indicate a distinct region along the northern border of the state.

Southwest A region in the Southwest part of the state that does not indicate entire southern border.

7. APPENDIX II. Subjective labels by category

Location	Western	southern influence
city	really country	Honky Tonk
urban	Oklahoman	more southern
international	west	**Manner**
metro	Texas	slightly more neutral
metro	Texan/Mexican	less drawl
backwoods	Oklahoman	clearer words
southeast	Texan	speak faster
Durant	Texas	same
Arkansas	Arkansas hick	faster
Po-Dunk, OK	Grand lake	talk same
Little Dixie	Northern	not fast
Tex/Ark	more Tex	not much drawl
Southeast	Southwestern	less twang
more country	rural	less accent
country boys	smaller town = more country	less country dialect
Little Dixie		better grammar
Little Dixie	country	less draw
southeast	Ozark mtns	slang
Little Dixie	small towns	slow
Louisiana	rural	deeper southern accent
rural	southern	extreme twang
Texan	more southern	twang
middle of nowhere	south comes out more	twang
Colorado	more southern	drawl
Western	more southern	more southern drawl

most "twang"
thick Oklahoman
some drawl
a lot of southern drawl
not a drawl
crisp
precise
slower pace
twang
talk slower
less twang
thick Oklahoman
more slang
grammar not correct
longer vowels
speak with a southern draw
slow speakers
Texas accent
stronger drawl
slow
twang

more drawal
faster cadence
twang
Texan accent
more southern drawl
high pitched
difference in speech
Missouri "R"
twangy
sound the same
jumble of rural accents
standard
more normal accent
talk faster
twang
speak slowly
have sayings we don't
draw out words
slow talkers
Oklahoma Indian sound
different
similar

very country dialect

General

hillbilly
hick
hick
old
more cowboy
hick
hicks?
farming
Native Americans
Ranchers / Farmers
like hicks
Arkansas hick
hillbilly
hick
redneck
educated
culturally diverse
not much experience
hickish
varied

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