

Perceptions of “Southern” Utah English

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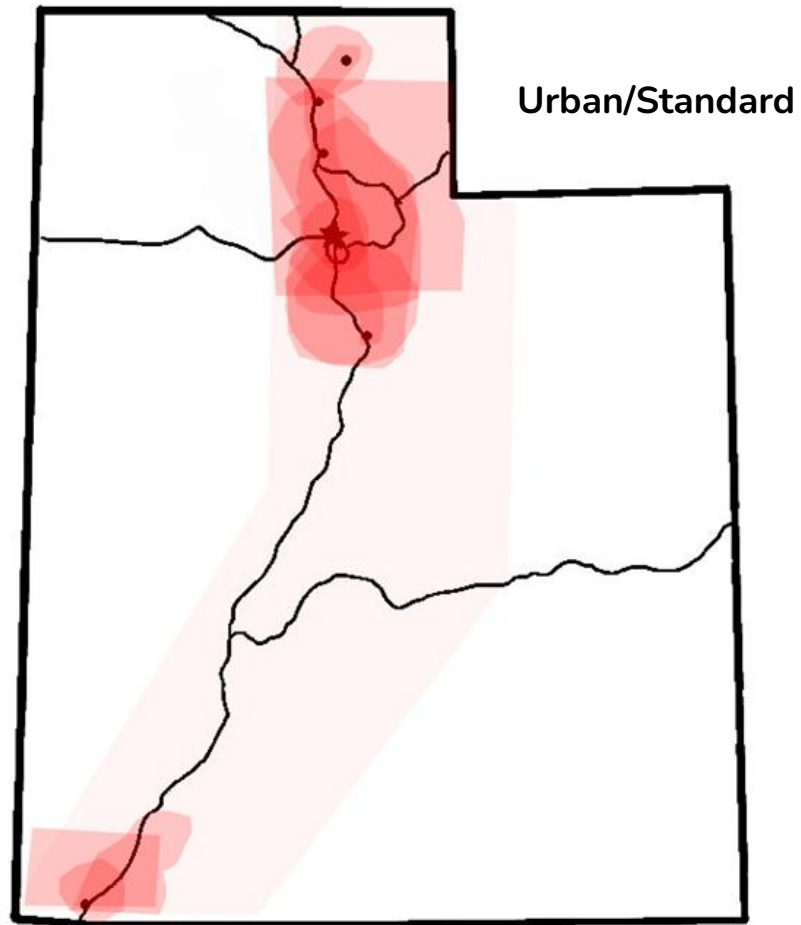
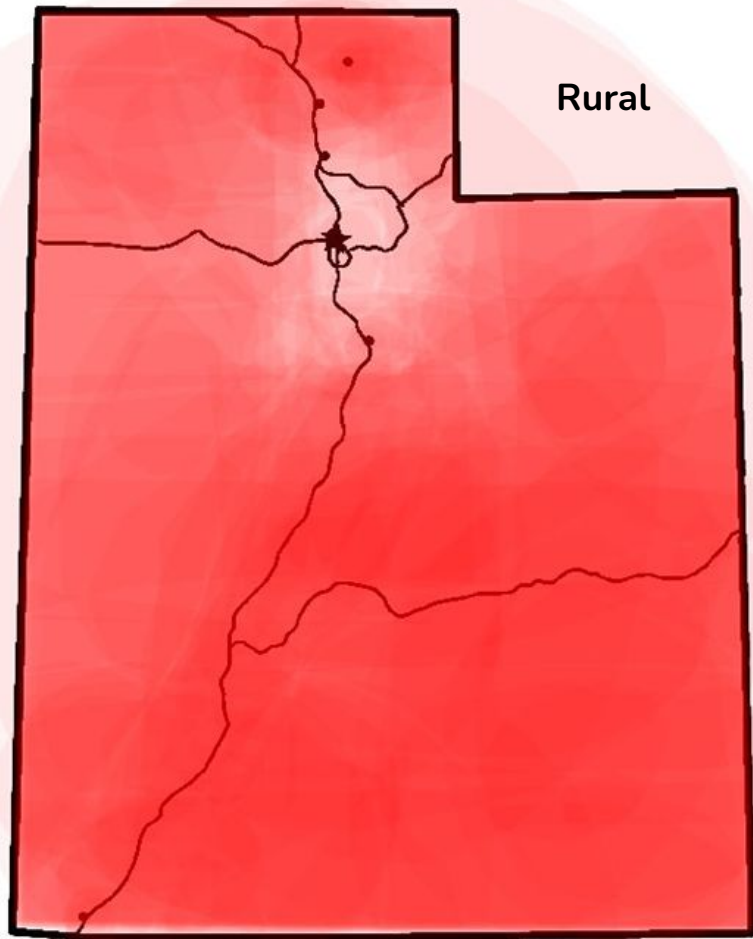
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Introduction

- Utahns generally have **negative perceptions of their own speech** (Savage 2014, Eddington & Brown 2021, Stanley 2023)
- Utahns are **aware of certain features in their speech**, namely pronunciation of “mountain” (Eddington & Savage 2012; Stanley & Vandiernet 2018; Eddington & Brown 2021, Stanley 2023)
- Previous dialectology research (Lillie 1998; Eddington 2022; Stanley 2022) indicates that speech in some areas of Utah are **described as “Southern”**; this is generally found to differentiate urban vs. rural regions
- Two experiments were developed to better understand this classification as well as general language regard in Utah.
 - Experiment 1: Draw-a-map task
 - Experiment 2: Perceptual Audio Survey

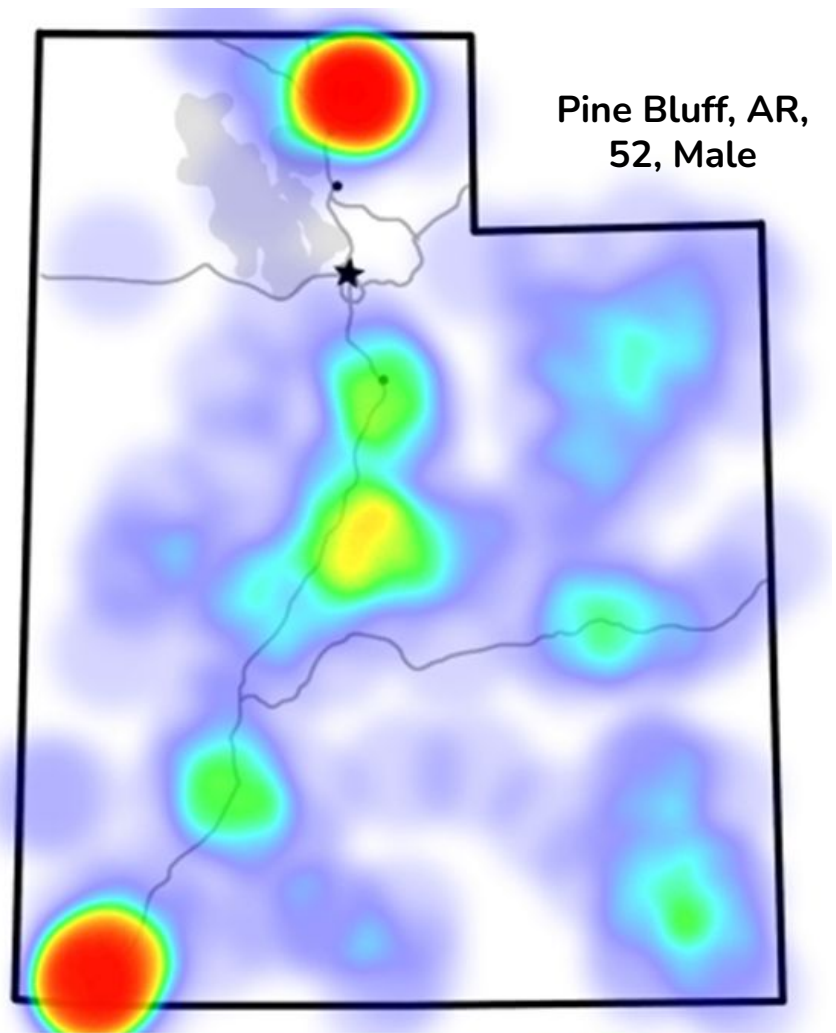
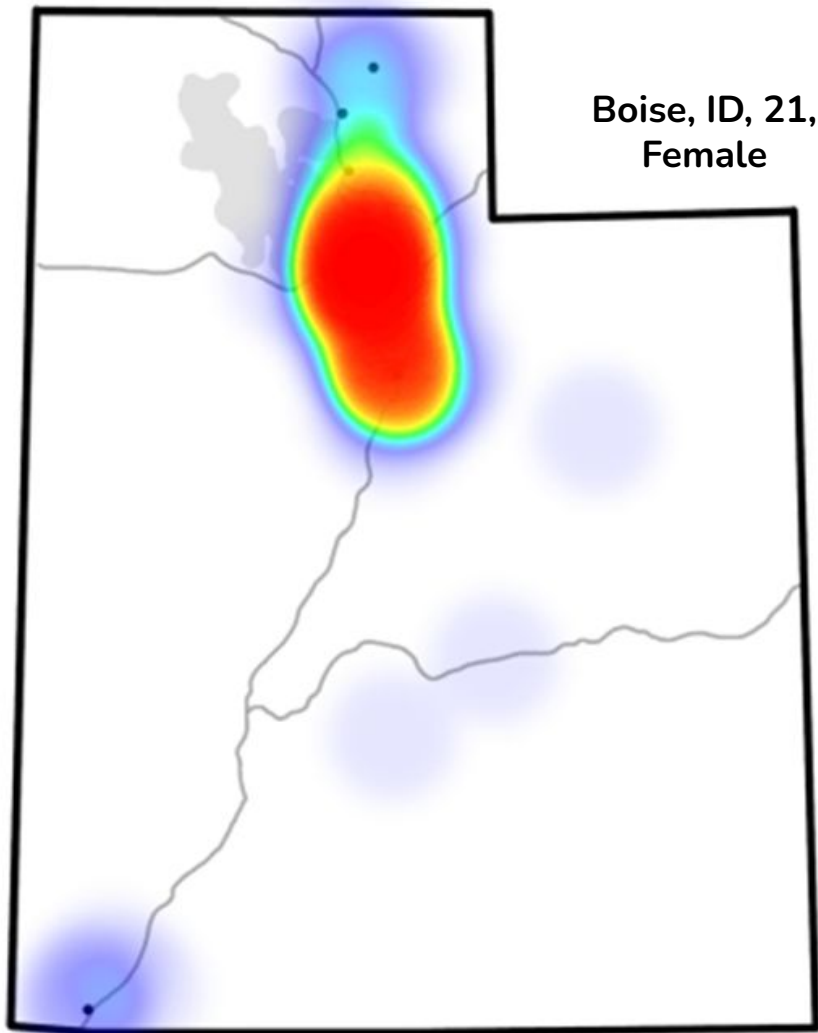
Experiment 1: Draw-a-map task

- Follows the methods used in previous **draw-a-map** studies (Preston 1989; Bucholtz et. al 2007; Lameli, Purschke & Kehrein 2008; Evans 2011; Stanley 2022)
- 194 surveys were collected
 - 96.4% of participants were age 18–25
 - 28.7% claimed Utah as their home state
- 12 label categories were created based off keywords
 - The **“Rural” category** had the highest token count with 128 references: *hick, country(side), redneck, Southern, rural, farmer, cowboy, twang, sticks, boonies, small town, uneducated, Texan, drawl, pioneer*
 - The **“Urban/Standard” category** had 11 references: *standard, normal, average, resembles western U.S. dialect, city, urban*
 - (For the other 10 categories, ask me in the Q&A.)



Experiment 2: Perceptual Audio Survey

- Builds off existing methods of using voices as stimuli for **placement in a geographic area** (cf. “voice-placing task”, Cramer & Montgomery 2016:10, or “dialect classification task,” Chartier 2020)
- Slight deception
 - Speakers came from all over the US
 - Listeners were **led to believe that speakers were from Utah.**
 - Asked to place speakers on a map of Utah.
- 159 surveys were completed
 - 61% of participants were born 1994–2004 (ages 18–29)
 - 57.8% spent majority of childhood years in Utah



Conclusion

- Younger, western speakers were more likely to be placed in urban centers while older, southern speakers were placed away from urban centers.
 - Shin et al. (2020) finds similar results in South Korea with age.
- Although little evidence suggests Utah English has features of Southern American English, **these features are indexical of rural Utah** (and likely rural America)
- Perceptions don't always align across experiments
 - St. George (in Southern Utah) is perceived as sounding “Californian” in the draw-a-map task while actual Californian speakers in the perceptual audio survey were more likely to be placed in Northern Utah closer to Salt Lake City

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Category	Keywords	Count
Rural	<i>hick, country(side), redneck, Southern, rural, farmer, cowboy, twang, sticks, boonies, small town, uneducated, Texan, drawl, western, pioneer</i>	128
Standard	<i>standard, normal, average, resembles western U.S. dialect, city, urban</i>	11
Mormon	<i>Church, Mormon, do not cuss (ex. fetch, flip, oh my heck, etc.), religious, General Conference, missionary, LDS, censored language</i>	20
Utah	<i>Utah</i>	78
California	<i>California, Valley Girl</i>	14
Idaho	<i>Idaho</i>	5
Mountain	<i>mountain, button, fountain, Layton, T-dropping, don't pronounce 'Ts', straightener</i>	56
CARD-CORD Merger	<i>Switching o's and a's, born-barn, fark-fork (Spanish Fark), our-are, car-kor</i>	7
Pre-lateral Merger	<i>feel-fill, mail-mel, meal-mill, Camille-Camill, pillow-pellow, milk-melk, well-whale, nail-nell, deal-dill, treadmeal-treadmill</i>	21
<u>Sundee</u>	<i><u>Saturdee</u>, <u>Wensdee</u>, Sunday = <u>Sundeh</u></i>	10
WH Aspiration	<i>strong "wh", wh as just h sound, white</i>	5
All State	<i>*Participant circled entire state or wrote comment describing entire state</i>	10

Question #	Age	Sex	City and State
1	21	M	San Diego, CA
2	21	F	Boise, ID
3	32	F	Spokane, WA
4	75	M	Mesa, AZ
5	32	M	Idaho Falls, ID
6	29	F	Ogden, UT
7	31	F	San Diego, CA
8	22	F	Berkeley, CA
9	50	M	Charleston, SC
10	30	M	West Jordan, UT
11	52	M	Pine Bluff, AR
12	59	F	New Orleans, LA
13	60	F	Milwaukee, WI