

A Note on Transcription Conventions

I use the following transcription conventions throughout this work:

<i>Notation</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Line breaks	prosodic junctures (usually pause-marked)
CAPS	syllables marked by strong prosodic stress
<i>Italics</i>	voice quality marked by heightened intonation
. . .	lengthy pauses (sometimes given in seconds)
=	rapid overlap; also indicated by line layout
“Quotation marks”	purportedly “direct” reported speech
Bold	words, phrases, or segments analyzed in text
[. . .]	transcript elides significant material on tape
[Brackets]	contextual glosses and paralinguistic descriptions
(xxxxx)	inaudible or questionable on tape

Where lines of transcribed discourse appear in parallel columns, this indicates simultaneous, overlapping speech. I have endeavored to match the visual appearance of these overlaps in the transcripts to the actual timing of the simultaneous utterances transcribed, but this often entailed significant approximation of the actual timing of the complex phenomena of interrup-

tion, overlap, simultaneous speech, and cross-talk. Although this transcription technique renders some of the transcripts in this book difficult to read, it captures an essential property of oral discourse in Texas working-class culture, which is characterized by what sociolinguists call “high-involvement style,” and in which turn-taking rules are rarely rigidly sequential.

A further word on the transcription conventions used in this book is in order. I am principally concerned in this study with the musical, prosodic, grammatical, dialectological, and semantic features of oral discourse in a working-class Southern community. My disciplinary commitments to linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, and ethnomusicology made it imperative for me to represent the speech of my interlocutors (in most cases) with an accurate attention to the local dialectal features of grammar, pronunciation, and lexicon, as well as the prosodic structure of line breaks, emphasis, tone of voice, sentence intonation, etc. This creates, however, complex problems of representation, I am concerned here not to play into stereotypes of working-class speech as “lazy,” “ungrammatical,” or “substandard” in any respect. As any linguist knows, and as any educated person ought to know, there is no such thing as an “ungrammatical” dialect, and indeed one goal of this volume is to demonstrate the grammatical regularity and expressive power of certain features of working-class Texas speech, rooted in the persistent orality I describe as a central dimension of Texas blue-collar culture.

A second and more troublesome problem with my use of relatively exact transcriptions of naturally occurring discourse arises, however, out of the anxieties and objections of my interlocutors *themselves* not to be represented in ways that might play into such stereotypes, regardless of my intentions, and their equally understandable concerns over my representation of their discourse as “coarse” by the standards of more prestigious dialects of English. In particular, many of my interlocutors have expressed concern over my representation of their use of profanity, a rich and characteristic feature of their discursive practice, but one that they sometimes wish to disavow. This is an even more pressing concern for those who have become more religious and less inclined to participate in the tavern-centered culture described here as they have become older, which is biographically characteristic for working-class Southerners. Men, especially, often turn away from religion in their youth but return to it in their senior years. (Issues concerning the use of profanity and the stereotyping of working-class discourse and culture are discussed in more detail at several points over the course of this book.)

Although I was *never* surreptitious about my use of a tape recorder and always had the permission and approval of the principal actors in this ethnography to record their natural discourse (and was in fact occasionally asked to turn the recorder off, a request with which I always complied), it is in the nature of long-term ethnography that an ethnographer's tape recorder gradually becomes relatively invisible as personal relationships between an ethnographer and his or her interlocutors deepen, as well as over the course of particular recording sessions.

I have taken various approaches to addressing these issues. First, I hope this book stands as a testimony to the richness, grammaticality, and rhetorical brilliance of even "average" working-class Texas English discourse, and no attentive reader can fail to take from this book a case for respecting the beauty, skillfulness, and power of a dialect that is so often stereotyped as "illiterate" and "ignorant." Where I have felt that representing even artful and expressive uses of profanity (or other discourse features) was problematic for a speaker, I have either used pseudonyms (as I have in many cases for other reasons as well), "split" individual actors across several different names, some of which are pseudonyms, or made judicious elisions or modifications to the actual recorded speech I transcribed, although I exercised this last option very rarely (for example, substituting a locally attested euphemism, such as "God-DOG-it" for "God-DAMN-it"). Finally, I have endeavored over many years, I think with success, to explain the purposes of my project and my techniques for representing natural, oral discourse to my interlocutors, and most of the principal actors whose real names are used in this book accept the choices I have made, even if they are not always completely comfortable with those choices.