

# The southern lifestyle essay

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



The southern lifestyle is an idea, a concept that is perceived differently by many people. Some people consider the term southern to be a stereotype by demographic classification. Most believe it to be a way of life (culture), while others consider it to be an accent. The true southern lifestyle remains vague apart from for those who have experienced it. I believe the southern lifestyle to be more of an attitude than an accent, an attitude that is deeply rooted into their culture, their way of life, beliefs and even the general communal moral code.

The word southern is many times defined by a demographic classification, where it is majorly a stereotype, a generalization of physical, mental and emotional attributes of people from the south. The most prominent stereotype is of the southern being solely associated with redneck or hillbilly. By this stereotype, when telling about a southerner the following descriptions are commonly used: a strong accent or drawl, a barefoot mountain person, ignorant, a hillbilly with buck teeth and overalls, lazy an inbred, a moonshiner with a big beer belly, and a hick with a pick-up truck and a gun rack. When people relate the terminology together then they are illiterate, and as such it has always been one of the major stereotypes in the United States. The media particularly has always defined the Southern lifestyle by depicting it in this way. Many people despise any type of classification or stereotyping within the media, dreading bogus characterizations or imprecise portrayals of the southern people, traditions and customs. Exposure to southern stereotypes by the media is an attractive component in the American lifestyle that can make appalling impressions, add negative metaphors, and offer viewers with a negative peak to an

otherwise rich regional culture.

Some define the southern lifestyle as a culture. The southern culture has been and remains in general, a more socially old-fashioned (conservative) than those of the rest of the American Nation. Due to the important function of agriculture in the antebellum economy, society continued to be stratified according to land ownership, and the people frequently developed powerful connection to their churches as the chief community foundation. Due to its cultural influence, the South came up with its own exceptional literature, cuisine, customs and musical styles (such as country music, jazz, southern gospel, blues. Unique attributes from the southern culture included everyday manners, women acting like ladies and men being gentlemen, the strong bond of the southern families. From a young age, the knowledge of good from bad was passed on to southern children. Fairness and respect were paramount, to both peers and elders. Being a child from the south was considered a privilege and an honor due to the high levels of discipline and respect reflected by them.

Southern dialects make up the largest accent group in the United States. The various people in Southern America can be subdivided into various sub-dialects with variances in terms of speech across the regions. Some of the African American English speakers have some similarities with southern's dialect due the strong ties that African Americans have in the region . It is observable that southerners are usually eminent due to their speech and accent. However, it cannot be ruled that there exists a single southern accent. This is because, American English involves a combination of English spoken dialects found in most of the regions in the south.

It is worth mentioning that Southern American English speakers can be divided into various groups due to the fact that there exists speech differences. The dialect spoken in various degrees by many African-Americans, African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), shares many resemblances with dialect from the South, unsurprising given the strong historical ties the group has to the South. Due to these facts, it is inaccurate to define the Southern lifestyle as an Accent.

However, I believe the Southern Culture to be more than the definitions given above, I believe it's an attitude. Attitude is an idiom of sustenance or disservice to an individual. As said by one famous psychologist, Gordon Allport " the most idiosyncratic and essential notion in modern social psychology." Attitude embodies one's beliefs, way of life, life experiences and feelings that influence directly on a person's decision's, choices and behavior. This reflects the Southern culture, dialect and social trends within the people of the south. The attitude of the southern culture has mashed up of all these ingredients and trying to define it by one of either of the elements only serves to depict the southern lifestyle wrongfully. Attitudes can be either; Implicit or explicit. Both implicit and explicit attitudes appear to influence people's behavior, though in many ways. They tend not to be strongly linked with each other, though, in various cases, they are. Attitudes mould everyone's decision making process in their whole life. Attitudes also influence an individual's sense of self space, communication and language, dress and appearance and their time consciousness. All these directly impact on the people's culture and identity. The conservative nature of the southern culture, coupled with their diverse range of dialect, completes the ultimate

and complete definition of the Southern Lifestyle.

In conclusion, the Southern Lifestyle is not only a way of life, but also a culture and a group of diverse dialects mashed up into one. As such, it is an idea, a concept and an attitude that can only be experienced rather than defined by a few words. Anything outside of this would be a stereotype and an incomplete, unfair and thus an invalid definition of the Southern Lifestyle. The connection between attitude and behavior is a deliberate procedure, with a person actively deciding to engage in an attitude-related behavior. This is the true depiction of the word Southern. The Southern Lifestyle is an attitude of conservative, family-minded yet diverse people of the Southern region, who possess a unique dialect and rich history.

## **Works Cited**

Cobb, James C. *Away Down South: A history of Southern Identity*. 2004.

DRESSLER, WILLIAM W. "Lifestyle, Stress, and Blood Pressure in a Southern Black." (1990): 182-198.

"The Southern Stereotype." 29 August 2012. Study Mode. 30 September 2012

.

Wilson, Charles R. and William R. Ferris. *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1989.