

## Martha Stewart's Linguistic Presentation of Self\*

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*Gendered use of language by mass media celebrities potentially both reflects sociolinguistic patterns and influences language change. Martha Stewart is a complex figure who has become a powerful corporate executive through representing the traditional woman's role of homemaker and commodifying her vision of upper-middle-class "good taste." Martha Stewart's linguistic presentation of self on her television show is analyzed in terms of three interrelated frames: politeness, credibility, and authenticity. Her language use is discussed in relation to scholarship on gender and language, and her potential for motivating language change is considered, as well as appropriate methodology for measuring any such influence.*

### 1. Introduction

This paper began several years ago when I noticed that Martha Stewart was pronouncing the word 'herb' with an initial h, using a typically British pronunciation. The next sociolinguistically salient event occurred in a conversation with my mother, who had been watching the daily television show, *Martha Stewart Living*, for some time and liked it

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\* This paper is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Winifred "Freddie" Evans Davies (1916-2000), who, in a world of "housewives," defined herself as a "homemaker."

very much. My mother was proudly prescriptive and quite confident in assessments of American upper-middle-class usage, and had said "herb" in the more frequent American style without an "h" all of her life. She commented, "I say [ʔrb]...but I'm not an authority," suggesting that she was questioning her own judgment after hearing Martha's pronunciation. It occurred to me that this mass media celebrity could potentially have linguistic influence over her audience. Then I began to notice people saying, sometimes mockingly, "it's a good thing," Martha Stewart's trademark phrase. If such observations represent potential influence at the levels of ritual phrases and the pronunciation of individual words, might there also be other sorts of influence? It struck me that Martha Stewart's complex public persona, combining traditional gender roles of both women ("homemaker") and men (corporate executive), is a sociolinguistically interesting phenomenon. How is Martha Stewart using language on her television show, how can we appropriately conceptualize her "gendered" language, and how might we try to investigate any potential influence by such a mass media celebrity on language change?

## 2. Sociolinguistics and the Mass Media

The majority of the research in this area has focused on news media discourse (Bell & Garrett 1997; Fairclough 1995; Herman & Chomsky 1988; Lakoff 2000; Leitner 1997; van Dijk 1985). As a sociolinguist who has approached the question of how audiences might be incorporating language from sources of public discourse into their English, Scollon points out that "there have been virtually no studies of the social practices by which the discourses of the media are appropriated in face-to-face interaction." (1998:vii). The current stance among sociolinguists seems to be that the mass media as an institution is not affecting our production, in the sense that it is not moving us toward homogenization and standardization of dialect, or at least of accent. Labov's work (in press) shows us that regional accents are not only surviving, they are diverging. If we consider the work on sound change which identifies the prototypical leader as an upwardly mobile woman whose family are relatively recent immigrants, an enterprising "mover and shaker" within the community (Labov 1990), and extrapolate to the media, we can see that Martha Stewart fits the profile very well. Could mass media facilitate language change by projecting such a person into substantial daily contact with an enormous audience? Whereas a celebrity like Oprah Winfrey may influence her audience to read certain books, or to take up walking, her image as a talk show host is not as arbiter of taste and guide

in do-it-yourself gracious living. Martha Stewart is modeling behavior; it seems a short step for the audience to take her as a linguistic model as well, especially if her presentation of self embodies a coveted social goal. Fairclough argues that "analysis of media discourse should be recognized as an important element within research on contemporary processes of social and cultural change. . . ." (1995:2).

## 3. Gendered Language

Research on gender and language has typically abstracted away from the gendered individual to attempt to generalize about the linguistic behavior of the social category, especially about the occurrence of selected linguistic features (Eckert 1989; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1998). A more comprehensive treatment of gendered style exists within the tradition of interactional sociolinguistics (e.g. Tannen 1996), and some pioneering work has focused on the linguistic individual (Johnstone 1996). Johnstone and Bean (1997) argue for the sociolinguistic study of public modes of discourse, and Maclagan, Gordon and Lewis (1999) confirm Labov's (1990) claims that sound changes that are not stigmatized are led by young women with energy and enterprise in their communities who remain, however, conservative with respect to stigmatized variables, and also demonstrate the value of examining the language performance of individuals in a holistic way. Current work on gender and language (Bergvall, Bing, & Freed 1996) also challenges dichotomized thinking in this area, and Wodak and Benke's (1998) review article advocates the analysis of contextualized gendered language. Bucholtz notes that :

...the discipline has shifted away from a comparative framework in which discovering differences in the linguistic behavior of women and men as groups is the central research goal toward an approach rooted in the details of context, ... and attentive to individual variation within, as well as across gender categories. (1999a:20-21)

The close examination of linguistic individuality as performed in public discourse, especially that of a highly visible person in an apparently traditional gender role, but whose total situation encompasses aspects of both traditional gender roles, is thus a valuable exercise.

## 4. Cultural Critiques of the Martha Stewart Phenomenon

The main critique of Martha Stewart seems to be that she represents an extreme form of hypocritical inauthenticity. On the one hand,

she presents a fantasy world of upper-middle-class leisure, a nostalgia for fifties-style homemaking, and foists yet another version of Superwoman onto her audience. The hypocritical dimension is the unacknowledged base of wealth from which Martha Stewart operates. Thus, the perception is that she somehow hoodwinks her audience into failing to realize that she herself is an ambitious corporate billionaire and her lifestyle is actually possible only because of an army of corporate servants. In striking contrast to this view, Joan Didion, in a recent piece in *The New Yorker* (2000), suggests that Martha Stewart is rather an important symbol of women's power, that she is not Superwoman but Everywoman. Didion suggests that she empowers women through agency (of do-it-yourself), and quotes as evidence the objectives as stated in the initial public stock offering in Oct. 1999: "to turn our consumers into 'doers' by offering them the information and products they need for do-it-yourself ingenuity 'the MS way'" (271). Didion refers to Martha Stewart's "protean competence" and proposes that the underlying message of the Martha Stewart phenomenon is that competence in the home can translate into competence outside the home. According to Didion, "the dreams and fears into which Martha Stewart taps are not of feminine domesticity but of female power, of the woman who sits down at the table with the men and, still in her apron, walks away with the chips" (279).

Another sort of cultural analysis draws on mixed spiritual metaphors. At one extreme we have an essay by Anne Taylor Fleming on *The Newshour with Jim Lehrer* (2000) that appears to combine Eastern and Western spiritual traditions. The Eastern tradition is connoted by the word "guru," but the main elaboration of the metaphor is in terms of Protestant (Calvinist) Christianity: Martha Stewart is "the ultimate lifestyle evangelist" who presents "a vision of grace, a way to live," "a redemption through lifestyle" in which "you will ascend into the ranks of the trendy and tasteful, immediately identifiable by the rest of the chosen. You will be blessed, saved, exalted..." According to Fleming, the message of the Martha Stewart phenomenon is that "How you live is who you are; lifestyle is an index of character." Thus, in a consumerist reversal of traditional Christian teachings, "it's not what's inside, but outside," the accoutrements of your lifestyle "are now the measures of your soul." At the other extreme is an unsigned essay on an unofficial Martha Stewart website entitled "Martha Stewart: Domestic Doyenne or Goddess of Greed," in which the spir-

itual metaphor also appears in two different forms. One is the same Christian evangelist image, but the other form is the goddess/witch.

Over the past decade, as Martha Stewart has emerged on the American popular culture scene as a new symbol of good taste drawn from an idealized traditional upper-middle-class (white, heterosexual) lifestyle for upwardly-aspiring American women, she has attracted the attention of scholars in American Studies and Popular Culture Studies. In the vision of domesticity that she presents, woman is in the role of homemaker, and, in fact, Martha Stewart explicitly claims as her goal "to elevate that job of homemaker" (Rose 1999). Martha Stewart's language is of course only part of the whole package, but in a recent Modern Language Association session (Newman & Wazana 1998) entitled "The Hermeneutics of Martha," no scholarly work focused on Martha Stewart's language. She presents herself linguistically on her television show as a particular sort of person in relation to the viewing audience, and in relation to her guests in relation to the viewing audience. If we conceptualize her as a very successful commodity, it seems fair to assume that her gendered linguistic self-presentation is carefully crafted to produce a particular effect. According to Didion, "the only real product of this billion-dollar company is Martha Stewart herself." (2000:272). The October 1999 IPO corporate prospectus proclaims that all products are "only vehicles to enable personal communication with Martha." In contrast to Betty Crocker, she is not a fictional institutional image, but rather a personal "presence" (274).

## 5. Analytic Framework and Data

This paper uses the analytic frameworks and tools of interactional sociolinguistics, in which language is conceptualized as a resource that speakers use to try to project a particular identity in context. Linguistic devices at all levels of linguistic organization potentially serve as contextualization cues (Gumperz 1992) to evoke or invoke cognitive frames (Goffman 1974) or schemas that channel interpretation. The notion of presentation of self also stems from Goffman (1959), and his dramaturgical metaphor fits nicely in this brave new media world of performance of a personal "presence." Bell's (1984) audience design model is appropriate to some extent, given Martha Stewart's presentation of self as a marketed commodity, but her style cannot be analyzed as purely responsive to the attributes of audience members because of the personal presence imperative. Coupland's (forthcoming) "speaker

design model" is an extension and elaboration of Bell toward the perspective I'm taking here, that style is seen as "initiative"—as a means of projecting one's personal identity. For data I draw on a typical week of the *Martha Stewart Living* television program,<sup>1</sup> ethnographic interviews with both fans and detractors, and material about Martha Stewart from popular culture. Martha Stewart's linguistic presentation of self is analyzed in terms of three overlapping and synergistic frames that she must manage appropriately in relation to her audience.

### 5.1. *The First Frame: Politeness*

She must present a model of appropriate politeness (civility, graciousness). Rather than fitting neatly into any politeness framework (e.g., Brown & Levinson 1987), her style illustrates the importance of examining politeness as performed in context, in relation to individuality. Thus Martha Stewart's elaborate thanking rituals would seem to fit within a politeness style oriented toward not imposing upon others (called distance, negative, etc. within different frameworks), a more formal politeness. Yet other aspects of her style seem more consistent with a "solidarity" politeness style in which the main principle is to assume similarity and commonality with others. Within this style might be included her expressions of personal enthusiasm and passion, and her relentlessly positive attitude. This aspect of her politeness could of course be seen in relation to her commodification. Yet elements of a non-imposing politeness are also present here, as she carefully acknowledges that her audience may have different preferences, as in example (3) below.

#### 5.1.1. *Rituals*

Rituals of politeness surround thanking guests. Martha Stewart could choose other alternatives, treating guests, especially her employees, more as part of the set, but she assumes the role of gracious hostess. The examples show interaction with an employee (1) and a guest (2), and illustrate the elaboration of her politeness rituals and especially the double-thanking of her closings.

(1) Martha Stewart (MS), Susan Spungen (SS), her employee at the magazine

<sup>1</sup> I actually audiotaped two weeks' worth of shows in the month of December 1999, and took notes on others.

- 01 MS: thank you very much for sharing these recipes with all of our viewers
- 02 SS: sure
- 03 MS: I think they will love them and find them a very nice addition to their repertoire  
          thanks, Susan
- 04 SS: sure

(2) Martha Stewart (MS), Sebastian Beck (SB), guest expert on green tea

- 01 MS: Sebastian, thank you very much for the perfect cup...of perfect green tea
- 02 SB: you're welcome  
          Thank you
- 03 MS: [thank you very much

### 5.1.2. *Careful "Involvement"*

The segments in which she demonstrates how to do something are presented in a personal way, consistent with a solidarity politeness style and with Tannen's (1989) characterization of "involvement." She uses "I," and addresses the audience as "you," as illustrated in example (3). Whereas she clearly expresses her personal preferences (lines 01, 06-08), she is also careful to acknowledge the importance of the audience's preferences (lines 03, 05, 07).

(3) Ginger Tea: Martha Stewart monologue

- 01 And I like to slice it very thinly, on an angle, like that...
- 02 and simmer for about thirty to forty minutes
- 03 with a quarter of a cup or so, depending on YOUR taste,
- 04 of brown sugar—just light or dark brown sugar
- 05 you could add a little bit of fresh lemon if you like
- 06 but I would prefer just letting it cook like this
- 07 and then add the lemon juice, if you like the taste of lemon
- 08 right before you're gonna drink it

### 5.1.3. *Positive Attitudes and Passionate Enthusiasm*

A striking aspect of Martha Stewart's linguistic presentation of self is her strongly positive orientation toward whatever is happening on the show. Her positive attitudes and passionate enthusiasm are expressed

linguistically through intensifiers and hyperbolic lexical choice (“a really wonderful backdrop,” “just delectable,” “exquisite collection,” “the perfect cup ...of perfect green tea”), and through expressive phonology (as illustrated in (4) through capitalized letters).

(4) Green tea: Martha Stewart (MS) and SB, her guest expert

- 01 MS: dragon pearls  
I LOVE that
- 02 SB: dragon pearls

(5) Mandolines: Martha Stewart (MS) to her food editor employee

- 01 MS: and ah I really adore this tool  
but I see great improvements  
have been made in terms of  
adding the blades very  
easily this I love too

## 5.2. The Second Frame: Credibility

She must project a credible expert status (Kothoff 1997) in all areas that she talks about and demonstrates. In doing this she builds on her projected passion, and her perfectionism, counting on the audience to assume that these qualities have led to expertise.

### 5.2.2. The Teacher

She positions herself as a teacher by advertising her television shows as an opportunity to “learn something new” (the end of “pre-view clip”). Didion (2000:278) characterizes Martha Stewart as a leader and a teacher: “It is easy to do, Martha has already ‘figured it out.’” In example (6), she takes on the “lecturer” role, but she tempers it by framing her utterance as a question, “Do you know...?”

(6) Ginger tea: Martha Stewart monologue

- 01 Do you know that ginger, this kind of root,  
or rhizome, really, was once so revered  
that all spices were generically  
referred to as “ginger”?

In fact, the spice merchants of many  
European towns could be found on Ginger Street

### 5.2.3. Experience

Martha Stewart’s extensive experience is conveyed linguistically through presuppositions built into discourse: “I always like to do it this way,” and “My favorite way...” both presuppose her experience and thus her expertise. Warnings also imply that she has made all the mistakes and learned from them. Example (7) is an explicit description revealing why her way is the best.

(7) Martha Stewart monologue on ginger tea:

- 01 Some people like to take the rhizome,  
cut it into pieces like this,  
and then just smash it like that  
but I find that when you smash it you kinda lose—  
see all that moisture here on the board—  
you kinda lose all that onto the board  
so I would prefer just slicing it thinly like this

### 5.2.4. Agency

Agency, which goes beyond “do-it-yourself,” is expressed in various ways. As we have seen in “ginger tea” above, she virtually takes her audience by the hand and leads them through a process. She also demystifies, by exposing “secrets of chefs”, for example, as we see in example (8) below in her introduction to the segment on mandolines.

(8) Martha Stewart introducing segment on mandolines:

- 01 Presenting food that looks like it comes from a three-star  
restaurant is an art  
this kitchen tool is called a mandoline  
it will look like this, or like this, or even like this  
three different versions of one of the trade secrets  
of all the great chefs  
a mandoline makes it easy to quickly cut vegetables  
in an array of uniform shapes

### 5.3. *The Third Frame: Authenticity*

Finally, she must come across to her audience as an authentic, genuine, and non-patronizing person. In a media context, as Bucholtz (1999b) demonstrated in relation to the shopping channel, authenticity is a performance and a production. Martha Stewart must convey the personal presence which is at the core of her corporate enterprise.

#### 5.3.1. *Personal Communication*

She presents herself not as an authority but as the friend who has figured it out. She reveals her preferences and passions. Even though she is known for her perfectionism, example (9) illustrates another dimension of her personal presence through the vagueness of her instructions. The segment has the feel of being taught by someone in her own kitchen, of being part of an ongoing process of socialization in which the audience is respected as capable of working with the principles that she is offering. The audience, of course, also knows that the recipe will be on her website.

(9) Martha Stewart monologue on ginger tea:

- 01 Are you feeling a little bit flu-y, or does your kid have the sniffles?  
Well here's a ginger tea that will really help you forget  
that you're not feeling well  
It's my special ginger tea  
...  
Ginger is certainly one of my favorite spices  
But one of my favorites is this refreshing ginger tea  
You'll need about oh a half of a rhizome like this:  
Half will just do, you just break it off like that  
This big piece is great for a big pot of water  
maybe four cups or six cups  
And I like to slice it very thinly, on an angle, like that  
...  
And now just bring this to a boil  
and simmer for about thirty to forty minutes  
...  
And believe me, when you drink this  
you just forGET that you aren't feeling well

### 5.3.2. *A Successful Upwardly-Mobile Role Model (who also values her roots)*

Martha Stewart was not born into the world that she represents in her media role, and she thus embodies an American success story (American Academy of Achievement 2000). Furthermore, because she has had to learn upper-middle-class taste herself, she becomes potentially more authentic for the upwardly aspiring members of her audience (at the same time that she may become less authentic for audience members who are themselves upper-middle-class). Whereas Martha Stewart has achieved a higher social status than she was born into, she clearly acknowledges and values her roots. Example (10) is from a segment in which her mother makes Polish cabbage rolls. According to García and Fishman (1997:342), ethnicity (especially in relation to food) is a positive rather than a marginal aspect of the multicultural life of the New York City area, and thus such a segment is authentic in relation to that context. The food is homely rather than elegant, it is identified as a family recipe, and Martha provides the Polish name for the dish. Bringing her mother on the show and acknowledging her debt to her mother's culinary skills clearly situates her as a daughter, as part of a family, and as part of an immigrant tradition. This segment was identified by fans interviewed as contributing positively to their sense of Martha Stewart's personal "presence."

(10) Martha Stewart (MS) and her mother (M) making Polish cabbage rolls:

- 01 MS: Well thank you very much, Mother,  
for another one of the Kostyra family recipes  
02 M: You're welcome  
03 MS: In Polish, it's known as [galumki]  
04 M: Yeah  
05 MS: and elsewhere in the world as stuffed cabbage  
Try it, you'll really enjoy it  
And it's very good

### 5.3.3. *The Relative Authenticity of Her Linguistic Variety*

Martha Stewart's idiolect has clearly been influenced by the social worlds that she has moved into, as we can hear when we listen to her mother on the show. I have not, however, found commentary on her accent (or variety in general) in any popular culture sources, so I

assume that it is not typically experienced as problematic or inauthentic. Regional influence from Philadelphia can possibly be seen in her lack of reduction of high front vowels in the words “cauliflower” and “beautiful” (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998:284). Otherwise she seems to have a general East Coast upper-middle-class accent, clearly originating from the New York area. Certain characteristics of her speech could be seen as hypercorrections, or as a symbolic concern with “correctness.” I began the paper with her typically British pronunciation of “herb,” which she claims always to have pronounced in that way. Martha and her mother both aspirate intervocalic t in “water” and “little,” but Martha does it apparently differentially, depending on how much attention she’s paying to speech. She also displays a possibly parallel phenomenon of a stronger than typical enunciation of the d in “garden,” rather than reducing it to an unreleased alveolar stop with following nasal release. Given the fact that Martha’s mother was a teacher, and the daughter of immigrants, it seems quite probable that she was oriented to such British-model pronunciations as the “correct” way to speak during the era when she was educated.

Within each show, Martha Stewart shifts along the range of her informal standard variety<sup>2</sup> depending on the particular context. Since certain parts of the show are obviously scripted, when she is reading from cue cards or reciting memorized text her language is at the formal end of her informal standard. In (9) above, for example, her syntax is more complex, her enunciation is more precise, and her lexicon is more elaborated. In (9), where she is talking relatively spontaneously while she demonstrates how to make ginger tea, she displays certain typical speech reductions of the informal standard (“kinda” for “kind of,” “gonna”<sup>3</sup> for “going to”), and her lexicon is less elevated (“flu-y,” “kid” rather than “child”). In some of her more informal speech she definitely appears to be relaxing toward the vernacular, in her use of “there’s” with plural subject (“so there’s very nice names”), her use of the verb “lay” intransitively (“Bend the hanger so it will lay flat”) and “between” used with more than one object (“Well today we’re gonna explain the difference for all you gardeners between bulbs and corms and tubers and rhizomes”). All of these usages might be considered by some to fall into vernacular territory. “Agreement with existential ‘there,’” however, is the only structure listed by

<sup>2</sup> cf. Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (1998) for discussion of dialect from this perspective.

<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, whereas she consistently reduces “going to” to “gonna,” I’ve not yet found an instance of her reducing “-ing.”

Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1998:335-336) in their “appendix of socially diagnostic structures;” they point out that this usage occurs in virtually all vernacular varieties and that “standard varieties are moving toward the pattern...”

## 6. Martha Stewart and Gendered Language

How can we talk about Martha Stewart’s language use without falling into the traps of dichotomized thinking about gender, reductionism, and decontextualization of data? Martha Stewart’s language is clearly part of a “gendered” persona, and obviously includes stereotypes of “women’s language,” identified by Lakoff (1975) many years ago. But it seems to me that conceptualizing certain forms, structures, or discourse patterns as inherently expressing power (or lack of it) is to fall into another conceptual trap. We need rather to note that this gendered individual in public discourse is speaking from a position of power and agency. Martha Stewart was selected as one of the ‘50 Most Powerful Women’ by *Fortune Magazine* in Oct. 1998, as well as one of ‘America’s 25 Most Influential People’ by Time Magazine in 1996 (Television Food Network, 2000). Didion (2000:279) summarizes (from a website) what contributors take from Martha: “Martha is in charge, Martha is where most men aren’t and can’t, Martha has her own magazine, Martha has her own show, Martha not only has her own corporation but has it in her own name.” Yet a potential paradox arises in relation to the role of “homemaker” that she is projecting on the show. If she is in fact elevating the job of homemaker to a position of greater social status and influence, will her language use in that projected persona be redefined as more powerful? Didion (2000:279) quotes a contributor to the Unofficial Martha Stewart Website who defines Martha Stewart as “a good role model....she’s a strong woman who’s in charge, and she has indeed changed the way our country, if not the world, views what used to be called ‘women’s work’”. The danger, and main critique if we think in terms of styles of language as conveying power, is that she is perpetuating a cruel hoax on her audience by modeling “powerless” language for them.

## 7. Martha Stewart’s Potential for Motivating Language Change: From a Room of One’s Own, to a Home of One’s Own, to a Corporation of One’s Own

We have already noted a number of plausible reasons why Martha Stewart might influence the language use of her audience. She appears

to match the characteristics of sociolinguistic leaders in change. She is identified by her fans as a good role model of a successful and powerful woman. She may play a spiritual role for some of her audience. There are several additional reasons that might be considered. One is that Martha Stewart is redefining the notion of "home" more inclusively by expanding it to match the changing demographics of the United States. Another might be found in her democratizing of "taste," in particular by her introduction of a line of merchandise at K-Mart, a low-status discount store. Such a marketing move is in fact consistent with her practice on the television show of including segments representing a range of levels of expertise and financial resources (both Duck with Orange Sauce and Spaghetti 101). Whereas one could react negatively to the K-Mart operation as patronizing, Johnson (1999), a journalist who admits to having maligned Martha Stewart in the past, now apologizes to her and thanks her because "She has taken the tacky out of discount."...by providing "inexpensive, yet classy" merchandise. Thus Martha Stewart is potentially expanding her audience and her influence by enlarging her "taste public," which potentially creates a new subculture community of fans.

### 8. Appropriate Methodologies

How can we deal with subcultural communities of taste publics that confound traditional SES categories? Even though it has been limited to media interpretation, the discipline of communication studies is exploring qualitative methods in the form of reception analysis with interpretive communities. Such communities, "relying on specific contextualized frames of cognitive and affective understanding, appear to crisscross, to a degree, standard socioeconomic audience categories, hence mediating the further impact of media in ways that are only beginning to be explored in empirical research" (Jensen 1991:138). Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) call for finding a balance in critical discourse analysis between close analysis of discourse and an appropriate social contextualization for the analysis. Scollon (1998), the only sociolinguist who has attempted to understand the impact of public discourse on audience language use, advocates social interactional approaches. Clearly, the research problem calls for ethnographic methodologies (cf. Johnstone 2000).

Moving into the subcultural taste community by identifying and interviewing fans (and then tracking social networks of fans) would

seem to be a good place to start. So far, just a few such ethnographic interviews have yielded (1) apparently Martha-Stewart-induced uncertainty about the pronunciation of a lexical item, (2) expansion of vocabulary in specialized domains (e.g., mandoline, steel-cut oatmeal, rhizome), and also (3) the adoption of Martha Stewart's trademark expression, "it's a good thing." The interviews have revealed that Martha Stewart's influence on linguistic usage can extend from a white upper-middle-class Northern/Western elderly urban woman, to a white middle-aged peripatetic professional woman, to a poor rural young white Southern woman. There is a large fan community among gay men, and the fan community among women of color is unexplored, although there is a media personality characterized as "the black Martha Stewart." The Martha Stewart phenomenon provides an interesting opportunity to explore the complexities of contemporary American culture and sociolinguistic change.

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