

DEFINING THE SOUTHERN IN *SOUTHERN LIVING*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine (1) the editors' definition of the term "Southern" as it is presented in the pages of *Southern Living* magazine and (2) whether that definition originates with the magazine's readers and is merely reflected back to them in the magazine or whether it originates with the editorial staff and is then disseminated through the magazine. These questions are researched using two methods: content analysis of the magazine during the years 2005 and 2006 and interviews with editors at the magazine. The time period was chosen because it marks the 40th anniversary of the magazine's publication along with a redesign. The editors' definition of Southernness is determined to be (1) pertaining to a geographic region known as the South, and (2) conveying a sense of comfort through food, people, places, and even plants with which readers in the defined region are familiar. The origination of this definition is the readership itself.