

HISPANICS IN THE SUBURBS – COMMUNITY ADAPTATION IN OLATHE, KANSAS

BY

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the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## Abstract

Olathe, a predominately white community in Kansas, went through a building boom in the late 1990s that “pulled” a wave of Hispanic immigrants into the area, a people that simultaneously were being “pushed” out of Mexico and Central America by government upheaval and economic turmoil. In this process Olathe people found they had to adapt to the new population in order to provide needed services, maintain their own culture, and ensure that local laws were observed by the immigrants. My study explores this process of change.

After reviewing the historical presence of Hispanics in Olathe between 1910 and 1990 and reasons for their recent surge in numbers, I employ a multifaceted approach to examine the adaptations made by the community. This consists of cultural landscape analysis, seventy-seven detailed interviews, quantitative spatial analysis of the results, and scrutiny of Hispanic-related articles in two local newspapers. I utilize the theoretical themes of *language as power*, *otherness*, and *hybridity* as guides to assess the overall process, including which cultural group in the community is wielding power under various conditions and how this relationship is tied to areas of Hispanic density.

Because perceptions are a guiding force for how people interact with space, I examine how interviewees’ viewpoints of Hispanics and the majority’s responses are affected by areas with differing Hispanic population levels. Similarly, I compare observed cultural differences with areas of differing Hispanic density. The results show that, in some cases, perceptions are impacted more by personal experience or deviations from cultural norms than by proximity to dense Hispanic locales. Several cultural differences, ways in which *othering* was exhibited or observed, cultural landscape types, and majority-employed adaptation methods are tied to areas having immigrant populations equal or greater than eight percent.

Using an agglomeration of interview and landscape-analysis data, I also create a timeline of adaptation by the Olathe community and discuss the sequence of change in the city. My research finds that Olathe's churches, schools, and probation services were the earliest responders by providing language services, special services and products, and adjusting to the Hispanic culture. Other business and organizations soon followed using these same approaches. They also implemented education and partnerships about and for the immigrants, including Hispanic traditions. Finally, I describe how acculturation efforts by the majority have affected Olathe, determine a percentage threshold for when an immigrant population starts to affect a host community, and suggest adaptation methods other communities may find useful.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Between the times I first worked in Olathe, Kansas, in 2000, and when I then came back again in 2004, something had changed. It was subtle—the same way when you look at an old friend who just changed her hair style or went from glasses to contacts—but important. As I tried to put my finger on this difference, I happened to be considering where I was going for lunch that day. What sounded good? Greasy burger? No. Barbecue? No. Mexican? Perfect! I remembered Chapala’s—the *one* Mexican restaurant that was there before—but as I drove around, I noticed new choices to pick among: Mi Ranchito’s, Mexico Lindo, Mariscos Vera Cruz, Charritos, and Corona Garden. Wow, four years had produced at least five additional, “authentic” Mexican restaurants. I looked a little closer and saw that old strip centers were now being populated with businesses that displayed only Spanish-language signs in windows. I also noticed Hispanic<sup>1</sup> people. They occupied whole apartment complexes and walked through many neighborhoods and stores. Local 7-11 and Price Chopper stores had special aisles dedicated to Mexican products.

Not only were Hispanic people visible on the streets and in stores, I began to observe as well how they were impacting city government, schools, social-service agencies and other similar enterprises. In fact, my job gave me a front-row seat. I worked for the city’s Municipal Services department, served as interim manager for the Office of Human Relations, and was active on Olathe’s Diversity Committee and its Americana Jubilee Multicultural Festival.

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<sup>1</sup> I am using the word Hispanic to refer to individuals who come from Spanish-speaking countries or regions. This can include, but is not limited to: Mexico, many Caribbean islands, and most of the countries of South and Central America. People who fall in this category have also been referred to in various literatures as Latino, Chicano, and Mexican, and may be indicated as such if used in a quotation or as a reference. My definition is similar to that outlined by the U. S. government for the 2000 census (U. S. Census Bureau 2000c).

Evidence for adaptation was everywhere. Businesses were offering brochures in Spanish. Olathe Municipal Services had a Spanish-speaking employee to assist customers who came with questions or to pay their bills. The school district had a bilingual department plus a number of staff and school programs directed specifically at Spanish-speaking students and families. Churches held services in Spanish. Grocery and convenience stores were modifying their stock to meet Hispanics' taste preferences. Additionally in 2004, reporters for the Olathe News wrote a series of articles about Hispanics in Olathe. All of these things led me to believe that the formerly quiet and predominately white, middle-class suburban city of Olathe had acquired a new complexity. I decided to study this place as a case example of how communities adapt to a new ethnic group.

When people talk about an immigrant population moving into a city, suburb, or neighborhood, they often emphasize the acculturation of that population. But the place the immigrants move to also adapts in a reciprocal process. This can be seen in ways that I have noted above plus many others including city-sanctioned celebrations of the immigrants' native holidays and the promotion of distinct neighborhoods.

In a study on Chinatown in Vancouver, British Columbia, Kay Anderson (1987) demonstrated how an ethnic neighborhood is constructed more by the majority group to categorize and confine a culturally different population than it is by the minority population itself. This can be seen in Olathe. It is common to hear various non-Hispanic people refer to a specific part of town that has an apartment complex largely populated by Hispanics and various surrounding ethnic businesses as "Little Mexico."

Studies elsewhere have demonstrated that schools, churches, and police departments adapt first as an immigrant population increases (Broadway 2006, De Leon 2001, Stull and

Broadway 2001). With a Hispanic influx, for example, schools may print flyers in both English and Spanish, give hiring preference to teachers who speak Spanish, provide English learning programs for students and parents, and/or provide Spanish interpreters (personal experience, Stull and Broadway 2001). Schools and churches may also establish recreational activities for Spanish-speaking students. Valerie Mendoza, for example, has documented sponsorships by Catholic and Protestant organizations in Kansas City through boy scouts, girl scouts, campfire girls, and sewing schools (1997: 186). Churches may offer bilingual services and literature (Chen 2004a, personal experience), open food pantries (Chen 2004a), list organizations that can help immigrants with various services (Cultural Relations Board 2000), and provide church staff who speak Spanish (personal experience). Police departments may hire police officers who speak Spanish, use the AT&T Language Line (an over-the-phone interpreter) to communicate with offenders, and provide bilingual literature (Davis 2005, personal experience, Stull and Broadway 2001).

A second way a city or suburb adapts is through businesses. Mendoza has pointed out that, soon after Mexicans became numerous in Kansas City around 1915, local liquor stores began to use Spanish language advertisements and cater to the new clientele's specific tastes (1997: 100). In addition, the Jones Store, a prominent department store in Kansas City at that time, ran an advertisement touting that they "had Mexican employees who served their countrymen with courtesy" (Mendoza 1997: 115).

As immigrants increase, so do the number of businesses adapting. This was what Mendoza found in the Kansas City of the 1920s and the same thing is happening now in Olathe (1997: 140). According to Tim McKee, vice president of economic development for the local chamber of commerce, "Many Hispanic businesses are opening to fill the basic needs of the



larger Hispanic community . . . . [They] are dispersed throughout the city, but clusters . . . can be found on Dennis Avenue and by Kansas Highway 7 . . . . There are definitely more Hispanic businesses than there was 10 years ago” (Chen 2004b: 8A). Smith and Furuseth (2004) observed that apartment complexes with a large number of Hispanic tenants quickly began to use Spanish language signs. As immigrant numbers increase, non-Mexican businesses start to advertise in Spanish, place ads in Spanish-speaking papers, establish aisles dedicated to Mexican products, and hire Spanish-speaking staff. Additionally, Daniel Arreola (1988) has found that brilliant colors provide a cue to recognize Hispanic ethnic identity on the landscape.

Still another way to adapt comes when the local place begins to celebrate holidays from the immigrants’ native lands. A sure sign that the Mexican population was in Houston, Texas, to stay came when all residents of that city started to celebrate Mexican holidays (De Leon 2001: 10). Through personal observations in 2006, I saw something similar beginning to happen in Olathe. Much advertising for Cinco de Mayo was evident and Mexican restaurants were so crowded that day they commonly had customer wait times of an hour or more.

### **Similar Communities**

An immigrant community typically produces a distinctive cultural landscape. This is a result of many factors, including isolation, an unwillingness to learn the local language, and a desire to have items reminiscent of native lands (Erdentug and Colombijn 2002, Mendoza 1997). An example from Pennsylvania has been described by Jian Guan: “As an ethnic community, Philadelphia Chinatown represents both residential and commercial concentrations . . . . It provides its residents and other Chinese visitors with a ‘comfort zone’, offering a sense of security and support in cultural, linguistic and spiritual aspects through social organizations, churches and kinship associations” (2002: 126-127). Traditional Chinese architecture, types of

businesses, business names, and a large gate marking the physical entrance are all ways in which that community has modified Philadelphia's cultural landscape to mimic Chinese culture. Olathe has not had such extreme adaptations, but changes are definitely occurring.

Considerable research exists on the economic impact made by Hispanic peoples on American states and cities. One such study focused on Nebraska (Decker, Deichert, and Gouveia 2008) found that immigrants made major contributions in terms of generating additional jobs, filling needed sectors of the economy, and substantially contributing to tax revenue. When these positive factors were weighed against additional costs for government and other services, Decker, Deichert, and Gouveia found "while the contribution-to-cost ratio is 1.0 for the native population, the corresponding ratio for the immigrant group is 1.07, indicating that this group 'pays in' about 7 percent more of what it uses in terms of governmental support" (2008: 1). These results imply that cities perhaps should be spending even more money on adaptation efforts than they are.

Lourdes Gouveia, one of the authors of the Nebraska study, previously reported her findings on the impact of Hispanics in the cities of Omaha, Lexington, Lincoln, and Grand Island (2006). There she discussed the benefits and costs of a large and rapid increase in immigrants:

Our work documented the strain on local schools, the struggle of non-profit social agencies trying to provide housing and basic necessities for newly arrived workers, and an initial wave of crime associated with age as well as contingents of California-based criminal groups that sought to take advantage of this vulnerable population. By the same token, we documented benefits such as a healthy increase of sales taxes, the revitalization of downtown businesses (most of which were bordered up at the end of the farm crisis), and the fact that the immigrant presence created additional jobs for native-born or older residents while taking virtually none from them (160).<sup>2</sup>

Monica Davey has written about an instance in Fremont, Nebraska, where political leaders rejected an ordinance that would ban businesses from hiring illegal immigrants. This ordinance

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<sup>2</sup> Gouveia is referring to the newcomer Hispanic immigrants as the vulnerable population.

would have required businesses to use a federal database, E-Verify, before hiring and landlords to rent only to people who had secured a new city occupancy license costing five dollars.

Landlords then had to turn such information over to the police (2010: A12). Although this Fremont experience does not demonstrate a community adapting to the Hispanic immigrants, it does show that their presence impacts the political scene.

Iowa is another Midwestern state impacted by what Mark Grey (2000, 2006) has referred to as “rapid ethnic diversification.” Here, the bulk of immigrants arrived in a five-to-six year time span. Because Iowa has an aging population and low birth rates, most residents felt they needed new blood for a healthy economy. To attract immigrants, the governor started pilot programs in Marshalltown, Mason City and Fort Dodge (2000). Planning teams were set up to work with chambers of commerce and other community leaders in helping school systems deal with varying levels of English proficiency and high enrollment turnovers (Grey 2006: 48).

Health care professionals also made changes. The Iowa Department of Public Health created a new multicultural office and modified existing free or low-cost healthcare programs to accommodate Latinos. They translated printed and web material in Spanish, provided Spanish language interpreters, and allowed children to qualify regardless of their parents’ immigration status (Grey 2006: 51-53). Law enforcement officials joined the Iowa efforts as well—hiring Spanish-speaking officers and creating Spanish languages videos to inform people of their basic rights and responsibilities (Grey 2006: 56).

Communities in other states are making adjustments similar to those in Iowa. The public school system in Frederick County, Maryland, for example, faced a 252 percent increase in Hispanic children from the year 2000 to 2010. Officials there have provided access to English Language Learner instructors at elementary schools. Older students get bused to a central

location for help. Simultaneously, the Frederick County YMCA has brought in interpreters for potential non-English speaking members (Eckstein 2011).

As can be seen, cities all across the United States are responding to Hispanic immigrants much like they are in Olathe. Hispanic numbers and presence have grown so that they have become a part of the United States' culture, economy and politics. Their presence cannot be ignored. Evaluating how communities are adapting should help the general process forward with as much grace and ease as possible.

### **Overarching Theoretical Themes**

Postcolonial theory often is applied to the aftereffects of areas where one group of people has been colonized by another. Olathe should not be thought of as a traditional colonized area, of course, but it has been greatly affected by a fast-growing Hispanic population. These people came to fulfill labor demands. As their numbers grew to five percent of the city's population in 2000 and then to ten percent in 2010, business owners and service providers had to decide how they were going to respond.<sup>3</sup> Postcolonial theory provides a context for these choices. This theory is broad. If a different language is spoken, scholars may focus on issues of *language as power*. Certainly, as a result of the different languages and/or cultures involved, the concept of *otherness* becomes important. Finally, because of different ways in which the older and newer groups interact in daily life, the issue of *hybridity or adaptation* arise. I will explore each of these concepts in turn.

Additionally, I will look briefly at the more general issue of power in society and how it can be employed and resisted. This idea was developed largely by the poststructuralist scholar Michel Foucault (1980). Even though Foucault did not think of himself as a pioneer, he was the

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<sup>3</sup> From my experience and result of the interviews, Hispanics did not demand or request that the majority make such expansive changes or adjustments via language and customs. This is something the majority did without prompting.

first person to probe into the mechanism behind power or, in other words, how power impacts the order of ideas. From this he reasoned that, to question power means to ask whom the discourse serves—what set of ideas benefit which people? Foucault’s basic idea certainly applies to my research. The white majority population in Olathe clearly wields the local power, and I want to explore how the perceptions and adaptations of this group have impacted the Hispanic minority. These actions can be addressed specifically with the concept of *language as power*, and in a wider context, with the ideas of otherness and hybridity. It is important to recognize that the concept of power is always present even if it is not blatantly apparent, and that it constantly impacts how people interact within and between spaces. As Foucault has said, “Power *is* ‘always already there’ . . . one is never ‘outside’ it . . . [and] there are no ‘margins’ for those who break with the system to gambol in” (1980: 141).

Furthermore, Foucault contemplated how power can be considered as a positive force. This idea runs counter to a broad literature that refers to groups in power as always having a negative influence. In his words:

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (Foucault 1980: 119).

This idea provides another way to consider the impact of one group of people on another. It will be useful with analysis of the varying concepts and in summarizing results.

### *Otherness*

The distinguished literary scholar Edward Said (1978) once noted how Europeans tended to group all non-European (Asia, Africa, Middle East) peoples together as not only different from themselves, but also culturally inferior. Europe was the Occident in this mindset and non-

Europe was the Orient. Further, Said argued that the Europeans gained an identity from this labeling process. What he called Orientalism is now seen in more general terms, and has become known as the concept of *the other*. *Other*, therefore, is the idea of identifying one people as being different from another's norm in terms of some set of cultural practices (Bhabha 1994, Carli et al. 2003, Parameswaran 2002, Said 1993). Homi Bhabha (1994) has gone so far as to argue that everybody needs to have *the other* to exist, and that the concept is based on image rather than on reality: "It is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming the image" (44).

M. Satish Kumar (2002) has employed the idea of *the other* in his work on Madras (today known as Chennai), India. His theme is that the British colonizers there treated the native peoples in disparate, subordinate ways by defining them as fundamentally different from themselves in terms of language, caste, religion, race, and trade. As the concept of *the other* becomes ingrained in a society, it permeates a person's identity whether they have agreed to it or not. Edward Said (1978) addressed this idea when speaking about a man being Oriental: First he is Oriental, then a man. From this delineation, stereotypes can be extrapolated—true or not—thereby helping to predict *the other's* behavior. One example Said gives is from the nineteenth-century scholar Ernest Renan, who generalized that all Semitic speaking peoples must have the same cultural qualities and behavior (1978: 231). Additionally, ideas regarding anatomy, history, anthropology and even geology could be formed from these assumptions (1978: 232). Although these are only perceptions and not facts, they can enforce attitudes and drive behavior.

Said spent a great deal of time discussing Lord Evelyn Baring Cromer's<sup>4</sup> knowledge of the Oriental Egyptians and how he conceived it, because this knowledge impacted and guided how Cromer ruled and interacted with these peoples (1978: 38-39). This example is directly analogous to my study in Olathe and gives credibility and value to studying how and why a majority population perceives, reacts, and responds the way it does to an incoming minority population. Olatheans did not necessarily see the Hispanic minority as a group to be controlled or one of lesser value, but certainly they formed ideas about these people and then used this new knowledge to create policy and otherwise help integrate them into the community.

Identifiers of *otherness* are made visible in many ways, by how both groups of people act, think, and are perceived; how cultural identities are exhibited; and how differences in language are spoken or displayed. In fact, the creation of *the other* helps to maintain each group's spatial and cultural identity and to control their interaction. Said (1978) spoke directly to these points:

We must take seriously Vico's great observation that men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made, and extend it to geography: as both geographical and cultural entities—to say nothing of historical entities—such as locales, regions, geographical sectors as “Orient” and “Occident” are man-made. Therefore as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other (4-5).

Homi K. Bhabha talked about finding identity when confronted by *the other*. This concept can be applied when looking at human interactions in space: “In postcolonial text the problem of identity returns as a persistent questioning of the frame, the space of representation, where the image – missing person, invisible eye, Oriental stereotype – is confronted with its

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<sup>4</sup> Lord Cromer spent twenty-five years ruling in Egypt on behalf of the British. He is recognized as having “raised Egypt from the lowest pitch of social economic degradation until it now stands among Oriental nations . . . alone in its prosperity, financial and moral” (Said 1978: 35-36).

difference, its Other” (1994: 46). From here we can question the space that exists and which group’s identity occupies that space.

Said (1978) continued on to acknowledge that Orientalism can be used to study and understand the power relationship between the Occident and Orient: “Orientalism is more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a veridic discourse about the Orient” (6). This is valuable to my study because it shows that, when investigating and understanding *the other*, I can use this information to understand the power relationship between Olathe business people, service groups, school officials, and others with Hispanics.

Said (1993) expressed the idea that *the other* challenges the notion of one’s identity and often causes new alignments to materialize across borders, types, nations, and essences. Jenny Robinson (2002) made a similar point when looking at white British colonizers and black South Africans. She noted how colonizer and colonized not only impact self-identity, but also work together to form new histories and geographies. Again, Olathe is not being colonized, but changes made for *the other* can still impact majority identity. These changes can be through interactions based on law, government policy, cultural conventions, and practices. Robinson continued to say that part of recognizing *the other* is to identify common humanity and reach out for compassion and mutual recognition. This has been done in Olathe, where various groups have recognized how to help Hispanic residents to become part of the greater community and provided the tools for this interaction to take place.

#### *Language as Power*

Language is a useful means for communicating our thoughts, wants, and needs. But, when two different languages are encountered in the same space, they can become a source and driver of



power to guide, divide, and control or merge varying populations. When such juxtaposition occurs, the more powerful group of people can use *the other's* language to their advantage. Said (1978), for example, wrote that: “To have such knowledge of such a thing [i.e. the other language] is to dominate it, to have authority over it” (32). In this statement, Said was referring to Great Britain’s occupation of Egypt in 1910, but the proposition certainly applies more broadly. In fact, I believe the idea of knowledge as power can be expanded to understanding and using the language of *the other* by the majority. Such knowledge can then be employed in various ways, including guiding the minority group in a direction you want them to go.

Said continued his point as follows: “Study of esoteric Oriental languages is useful for obvious rudimentary strategic reasons; but it is also useful for giving a cachet of authority, almost a mystique, to the ‘expert’ who appears able to deal with hopelessly obscure material with firsthand skill” (1978: 291). By learning *the other's* language the mainstream group increases their power and ability to control.

Said showed the modern applicability of this concept in discussion of a report made in 1958 on the “Present State of Arabic Studies in the United States.” He and the report argued that foreign languages are no longer the “sole province” of humanity scholars. Instead, they are and can increasingly be a tool for engineers, economists, and social scientists for the design of policy objectives or propaganda efforts (Said 1978: 292). In Olathe, this statement is particularly relevant for how city officials and other Anglo leaders are employing the Spanish language as a means of advertisement, community building, supporting equal rights, and more.

As the numbers of Spanish-speaking people in Olathe increase, the majority English population has had to adapt, if only so the growing minority can understand the basic laws and cultural customs of the area. This can be communications as simple as advising people that

children need to wear seatbelts in the car, that a valid license is required to drive, that laws prohibit the parking of cars on the lawn, and that children need to arrive at school on time every day. To deal with this language barrier, service providers and others have sought Spanish-speaking employees and interpreters, utilized brochures, or employed the AT&T Language Line:

You come here [to the bank] on a Friday afternoon. Any one of our branches in Olathe at three o'clock and you will see folks getting off coming to cash their paychecks. . . . We have lines for folks in Spanish. This is the line for the check cashing because some times the volume is very large. . . . We have a flyer of our range of services in Spanish<sup>5</sup>. . . . [when explaining bank locations identified on the Spanish flyer] banking centers where we have bilingual representation. . . . Have certain compliance signs that are hung in Spanish. . . . We use a really neat digital signage solution amongst our banking centers. . . . We offer information slides on it in Spanish as well (T. Vargas, pers. comm.).<sup>6</sup>

Edward Said looked at the language-as-power issue primarily in terms of the colonizer not speaking the native language and so being dependent on natives to interpret. In turn, the natives could take advantage of the colonizer (Said 1993: 151). They could deliberately misinterpret at times. They also could choose to either cleave to their native tongue as a way to stay native or to learn the new language as a way to become one with the colonizer (Said 1993: 213). In Olathe, language is power in the context of the majority using it to assist the Hispanic minority become accustomed to Olathe's way of life. In a sense, the English-speaking majority, as the disrupted group, is employing the new population's Spanish language, not as a separator or divide between the two groups, but to bring both segments together.

Cheryl McEwan has written that connections exist "between the relations of power that order the world and the words and images that represent the world" (2003: 343). Similarly, Said (1993) held that media is a mode of articulation that brings the world together. Their ideas in action can be seen in Olathe when the local newspaper created a Spanish-language version of

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<sup>5</sup> This brochure explains what individuals need to do to obtain a loan and to open an account. The cover is designed to be inclusive by saying *nuestros servicios* (i.e. our services).

<sup>6</sup> Tony Vargas (vice president of information technologies and chairs Hispanic Task Force at First National Bank of Olathe), interview with the author, Olathe, KS, November 12, 2008.

itself and when the Olathe Public Library added Spanish-language materials. According to local librarian, Lori Hyten (pers. comm.):<sup>7</sup>

When I first came there were some Spanish-language materials, but a very, very, very, limited collection-very very very limited. And it became apparent to me. . . . that we were having a lot [emphasis] of Latinos coming into the library. And we didn't have stuff in Spanish language for them. . . . [The Spanish language collection] is a transitional collection, it's not intended to mirror or duplicate the main collection. It's for those Latinos who arrive in the Olathe community with little or no English. And it's intended to help them make the adjustment to this community. So it involves [an] emphasis on learning English material and on essential living skills, for instance pregnancy, health materials while someone is (the assumption being) learning English, they also need to raise their kids, take care of their health, cook, and to a lesser degree leisure materials.

The power in language can further be seen when colonized or minority peoples use such abilities to enter the world from which they had been excluded. Carli et al. (2003) have demonstrated this process when they studied border towns in Germany, Italy, and Austria. New language skills led to increased job opportunities and social esteem. Lunga (2004) found a similar situation in postcolonial Zimbabwe. Although both of these studies stressed how the minority group benefited from new language skills, the opposite also is happening in Olathe with the majority English speakers often reaping rewards from being bilingual. For them Spanish is a tool to connect to and access the Hispanic immigrant community.

### *Hybridity*

Hybridity is a term used increasingly in postcolonial and neocolonial discussions to recognize the complexity and implications of modern culture. It is perhaps best understood “as a communicative practice constitutive of, and constituted by, sociopolitical and economic arrangements” (Kraidy 2002: 317). Intercultural practices are not static in most current situations, but are continuously negotiated. Hybridity recognizes this new reality, and Kraidy goes on to argue that the concept “belongs in the arsenal of the critical cultural scholar, because

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<sup>7</sup>Lori Hyten (reference librarian—Olathe Public Library), Interview with the author, Olathe, KS, August 14, 2008.

it illuminates issues of context, process, and representation central to intercultural and international communication” (335).

From Kraidy’s words we can see that hybridity is a vague, though useful concept for exploring power relations and the results of those conflicts on language, customs, laws, and much more. Homi Bhabha (1994) has added that, when things are different, they produce hybridity. In other words, differences become drivers of adaptations (1994: 53). The idea is that foreignness can be an agent for change. This can occur, for example, when the immigrant element destroys the original structure of reference and communication:

Not simply by negating it but by negotiating the disjunction in which successive cultural temporalities are “preserved in the work of history and at the same time cancelled.”<sup>28</sup> . . . And through this dialectic of cultural negation-as-negotiation, this splitting of skin and fruit through the agency of foreignness, the purpose is, as Rudolf Pannwitz says, not “to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German [but] instead to turn German into Hindi, Greek, English.”<sup>29</sup> (Bhabha 1994: 227-228).

Violet Lunga (2004) took on some of these same issues by studying how hybridity is reflected in and by language in postcolonial Africa by colonizing and colonized peoples. She recognized, for example, that this is a survival strategy where one group is adapting to gain power.

Cultural hybridity is not an instant process. Panos Hatziprokopiou (2003) stated how the incorporation of immigrants into a society involves “continuous and dynamic interactions” and varies depending “on the characteristics of the particular place where immigrants settle and organise their lives” (1033). Whether dealing with immigrants or natives, it is helpful to recognize the values that each group can contribute. Said, for example, has noted that if Europeans had respected natives more in the past by learning their values and characteristics and supporting them rather than taking over, a more peaceful transition toward a true hybrid culture could have taken place in the various colonial empires (1978: 249).

Said has gone so far as to claim that: “Indeed all culture is hybrid . . . and encumbered, or entangled and overlapping with what used to be regarded as extraneous elements” (1993: 317). Others support this view and Marwan Kraidy (2002) added the idea of how cultural mixing can be used in order to maintain control, a situation that exactly reflects what is happening in Olathe. By blending the dominant American culture with elements of the Hispanic one, the majority group is able to avoid subjugation by the minority population. Simply put, cultural mixing helps to preserve the majority’s existing way of life.

The creation of cultural hybridity in a place can be propelled by an acknowledgement that *the other* can have a positive impact on that locale just as easily as not. One way this can be done is simply by recognizing the formation of immigrant networks. Hatziprokopiou’s 2003 study of Albanians in Greece, for example, found that “like immigrants anywhere, [these people] unavoidably interact with the local population, which may result in the eventual breakdown of cultural barriers and prejudices” (1050). Such interactions take place socially and in the workplace, and can lead to “interactive networks of assistance in job-finding, teaching of the Greek language, and material help” (Hatziprokopiou’s 2003: 1051). Also, groups have formed in Greece to help immigrants integrate into the host community. Hatziprokopiou found that such social networks and organizations played an important role in migrant incorporation.

Such cultural hybridity can be seen in Olathe. A group called the Hispanic Ministries Task Force was started there by a Spanish-speaking minister through a majority-dominated church. A number of majority organizations come together in this way to help assimilation. Their activities range from child care to city services to law enforcement (S. Romero, pers.

comm.).<sup>8</sup> By having the majority make adaptations—initiating hybridity—to the immigrant group, they establish a welcoming community.

Bringing all the theoretical concepts discussed above together, Said has written that: “Survival in fact is about the connection between things” (1993: 336). The English-speaking majority has exerted power—become the source of power—by deciding to use the Spanish language themselves in the form of brochures, translators, and smaller endeavors, as well as trying to understand the Hispanic culture in a more general sense. Such action has enabled them to maintain control of their city—to be assured that laws are followed, people are kept safe, learning environments are uninterrupted, and the new group not taken advantage of by others. When this happens, cultural boundaries are blurred, creating at least some neutral spaces where no cultural contestations occur (Lunga 2004: 295). Homi Bhabha (1994) has called such locales *third space*. Hybridity can remove the sense of otherness in this way and create an environment where groups gradually become part of the same community in the same space. Acculturation by the Hispanic minority is accompanied by acceptance by the majority, English-speaking population. This, in turn, helps the majority group to accept and incorporate more of the Hispanic cultural traditions without fear of losing their own.

### **Greater Contribution**

As minority populations grow, city governments can either cope with change as it unfolds or wait until problems arise, thereby compromising community relations. It is in the interest of government officials to accommodate the interests and values of all residents because, when people feel connected to an area, they are more likely to keep neighborhoods clean and free of crime. In addition, a strong sense of community can help when fighting common problems

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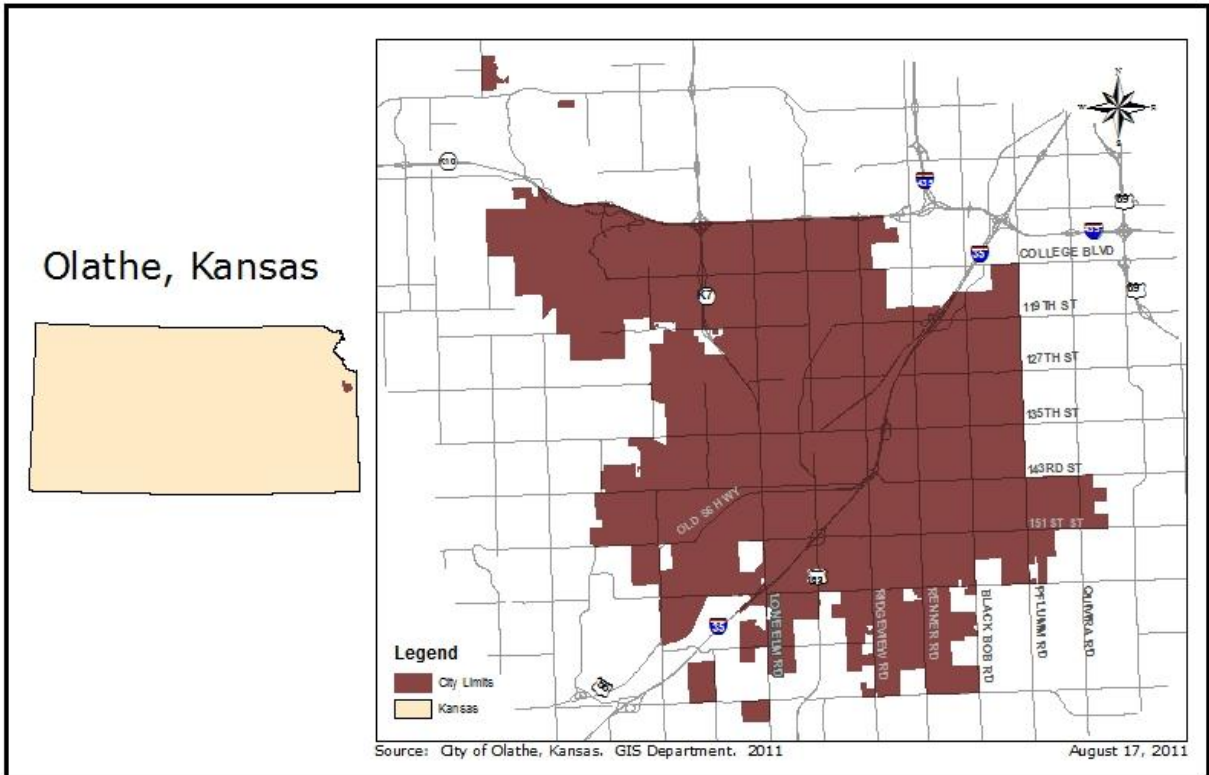
<sup>8</sup> Sylvia Romero (pastora for Center of Grace Church), interview with the author, Olathe, KS, November 19, 2008.

whether they are related to political issues, transportation infrastructure, or environmental concerns.

This study should aid policy makers by identifying positive, negative, or neutral impacts associated with how a majority population adapts to a large minority immigrant population. Information gained about areas of past and potential conflict can be used to help resolve problems before they start. Areas that have little to no conflict can be used to identify best practices to model. It can help to clear up unknowns, alleviate fears and provide an understanding of how groups can adapt to each other. On a larger scale, this information may be useful for immigration reform policy. In addition, this study adds to the collective work being done on Hispanics in the United States, creating a more comprehensive picture of the impacts and contributions this group has made.

### **The Study Area and the Research Questions**

Olathe, the county seat of Johnson County in east-central Kansas, was founded in 1857 (Map 1). Its name means beautiful and comes from the language of the Shawnee Indians who used to live in the area. The city once served as a stop along the Santa Fe Trail and its people still take pride in this heritage. A large metal sculpture of a wagon train was dedicated in 2007, and the community owns and operates the Mahaffie farmstead, which once served as a stagecoach stop. Olathe functioned as a typical Midwestern small town until the expansion of Kansas City led to its suburbanization about 1970 (Olathe Historical Society. Accessed November 3, 2009. [http://www.olathehistoricalsociety.com/history\\_timeline.cfm](http://www.olathehistoricalsociety.com/history_timeline.cfm)).



Map 1: Olathe’s location within Kansas with details of the city limits as of 2009.

Olathe has been and remains a predominately white community (Table 1). Until 1990, African Americans were the city’s largest minority group, averaging about five percent of the population from 1900 thru 1980. Hispanics then assumed this role with 5,060 (5.4%) people in 1990. The change in ethnicity was sudden and caused by a rapid suburbanization process that produced a local boom in home construction and business openings. Leaders loved the growth, of course, and touted the city as an ideal setting: small-town virtues combined with major employers such as Farmers Insurance, Garmin International (navigation and communication devices), the Olathe Medical Center, Honeywell (aerospace innovation design and manufacturing), the Olathe School District, and Johnson County’s government offices.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> All companies and agencies listed employed at least 1000 people in 2008.



Table 1: Population characteristics of Olathe, 1890-2005

Year	Total Population	Native Born	Foreign Born	Percent population Foreign born	Hispanic	White	Black	Other
1890	3,294	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1900	3,451	3,310	141	4.09%	NA	3,198	249	4
1910	3,272	2,976	117	3.58%	NA	3,093	179	0
1920	3,268	2,876	167	5.11%	NA	3,043	219	6
1930	3,656	3,296	75	2.05%	NA	3,371	269	16
1940	3,979	3,679	65	1.63%	NA	3,744	235	0
1950	5,593	5,272	67	1.20%	NA	5,339	251	3
1960	10,987	10,881	106	0.96%	NA	10,563	395	29
1970	17,718	12,025	531	3.00%	107	17,353	479	85
1980	37,258	36,652	606	1.63%	472	35,685	899	674
1990	63,440	62,163	1,277	2.01%	1,145	59,731	1,912	1,709
2000	92,962	87,477	5,485	5.90%	5,060	82,393	3,440	7,129
2005	117,116	106,510	10,606	6.37%	6,965	89,387	7,400	3,958

Source: Census records and estimates<sup>10</sup>

Olathe is a good place to study current community adaptation because of its recent and major Hispanic immigration (Chen 2004b). That group's total was 1,141 (1.8% of the city population) in 1990 (Chen 2004b), but then rose sharply to 5,060 (5.4%) in 2000 (Chen 2004b) and to 10,771 (10%) in 2005 (Spivak 2005), an 844 percent increase in 15 years. Today Olathe has the highest concentration of Latinos of all Johnson County suburbs (Lewis and Ruiz 2006). The Olathe Daily News ran a series of articles in 2004 about different aspects of the local Hispanic community, suggesting how prominent this presence has become (Chen 2004a, Chen 2004b, Smith 2004a, Smith 2004b, Smith 2004c). In addition, on November 13, 2005, the Kansas City Star identified Olathe as the community most welcoming to diversity in the entire metropolitan area. As Jeffery Spivak wrote:

<sup>10</sup> The official definitions for the various groups of people (Hispanic, White, Nonwhite, Colored, Black, foreign born, etc.) vary for each census, and this impacts the population counts. For example, people of Mexican origin may have been counted as white in earlier censuses but as Hispanic in more recent years. For values listed as NA, the overall city population was too few for that value to be published due to privacy concerns.

Their [the Latino] presence is spreading, and while they sometimes face discrimination, this city of bedrock values is making extra efforts to accommodate them . . . . It's the range of services and opportunities that has been drawing Hispanics to Olathe . . . . They [Latinos] choose Olathe . . . because of its affordable housing, because relatives are there, because of the schools and because of the community's lack of crime . . . . For both new immigrants and longer-established Latino residents, Olathe offers a lot to make them feel accepted (2005: A21).

The obvious Hispanic presence in Olathe intrigued me, and I wanted to see how businesses, social-service agencies, schools, government, and other elements of the mainstream society made adaptations to this segment of the population. Additionally, I wondered if differences in this impact varied spatially based on where concentrations of Hispanics resided. Impacts of adaptation theoretically could be anywhere from animosity to a feeling of enrichment by being exposed to a different culture and language. I wanted to know how this cultural change affected the community.

I started the research with the notion that local businesses, education, social service groups, government agencies and hospitals, would feel the impact first. They would have to adapt out of necessity. For example, children have to go to school regardless of their English-language ability and hospitals must help all people despite any language or cultural differences. In addition, I thought that money would be the motivator for adaptation by businesses. Finally, I thought the Hispanic minority would be the driver of change through its usage of Spanish.

In order to understand what was happening I asked the following research questions:

1. What historical role did Hispanics have in Olathe up to 1930?
2. Today, how has the influx of Hispanic immigrants into the suburb of Olathe caused businesses, social-service organizations, health-care providers, churches, police and others that serve the community to adapt? Has the adaptation impacted their perception (safety, quality, cleanliness, etc.) of the area they are in or of the city as a whole?
3. Today, are there any differences in the cultural landscape of areas dominated by Hispanics versus those that are not?
4. Today, does the majority population have any awareness of *otherness* associated with specific areas?

5. Today, have some organizations resisted adaptation? For those that have adapted, why are some of them more proactive than others? What does this mean? Does adaptation follow a sequence?

### **Chapters Overview**

This dissertation consists of eight chapters after the introduction, each tying to the research questions. Chapter 2 covers how my study area was selected, how maps are used, and what was involved in my cultural landscape analysis. I speak about the interview process and how it contributes to gathering a fundamental understanding of the participant group as well as the sampling method and interviewee characteristics. Finally, I address how newspaper reviews were used and contributed to the overall research.

Chapter 3 takes on the challenging task of placing Hispanics in Olathe through time. I look first at the general background and origins of the Olathe community and then focus on why Hispanics have immigrated there. The chapter presents information on Mexican states of origin uncovered during interviews, what types of jobs the new arrivals held, and the reasons for coming to Olathe. Sometimes the stories they tell differ from those appearing in standard accounts written by Anglos. I start with 1930 and go to 2000.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore cultural differences and perceptions and are based primarily on interviews. Chapter 4 focuses on differences, and draws on newspaper information including inferences in articles or advertisements. I also talk about the spatial distribution of those opinions. Chapter 5, on perceptions my interviewees have about the Hispanic population and the adaptations the majority has made, draws on mental maps and the spatial interaction between the location of responses and Hispanic population concentrations. I specifically address senses of otherness exhibited by the majority population and what that means.

Chapter 6 presents my analysis of Olathe's cultural landscape. I discuss visible distinctions between majority and Hispanic houses and businesses while exploring cultural and

socioeconomic causes for these findings. I also discuss how my results compare to stereotypes identified during interviews and differences that exist based on respondent locations.

By piecing together information from interview questions and mental maps, I provide an overview discussion in chapter 7. I list how different sectors in the community have adapted to the Hispanic presence in the city. I provide explicit examples along with maps comparing adaptation rates for various neighborhoods to the patterns of Hispanic residence. I then present a timeline of events based on collected interview data. Discussions of how these changes fit with overall themes provide a sense of response to Hispanic immigration.

Finally, in a concluding chapter 8, I tie all the findings back to the original research questions. I identify positive, negative, and neutral impacts of the various adaptations and discuss how the results can be used.