

**AN EVOLVING MAINSTREAM:
A LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES ANALYSIS OF MIGRATION AND
ASSIMILATION IN CARY, NC**

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INTRODUCTION



Figure 1. The shop front of *Biryani Maxx* in Cary, NC

Based on the text displayed at this restaurant front, advertising a non-vegetarian combination lunch including dishes such as *daal curry* ‘lentil curry’, *chicken dum biryani* ‘spiced rice with chicken’, and *mirchi ka salan* ‘peanut chutney,’ at first glance, one might guess that the restaurant is located in some middle-class shopping complex in New Delhi or Hyderabad in India. The only signals that reveal that this is not a restaurant in India are the dollar pricing and the restaurant’s subtext, “Indian Cuisine,” which would be a superfluous label in India. Rather, I took this photograph at a restaurant called *Biryani Maxx* in the town where I grew up: Cary, a suburb of Raleigh, North Carolina. When most people imagine ethnic diversity in the United States, North Carolina is probably not one of the first places that comes to mind. Yet this sign is not an anomaly in Cary; in fact, there are over thirty visibly Indian or South Asian restaurants

peppered throughout the area, not to mention other types of establishments such as grocery shops, beauty parlors, and clothing boutiques.

These visible signs, along with the language inscribed upon them, thus reveal an evolving social, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in Cary. However, beyond merely signaling a newfound diversity, which can be superficially gleaned from public data sources such as the results of the census or surveys, these signs reveal an intricate social organization not visible in numbers alone (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). Through the public signage, we can see how communities create, adapt, claim, and share space among various groups of people (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). The ways in which different communities constitute and present themselves, as well as how they interact with and are integrated into the larger society, are thus established directly into the linguistic landscape of the town.

In this paper, I will juxtapose how two migrant groups, the South Asian and the Hispanic communities, establish their presence in Cary, North Carolina by means of this public signage. Initially conceptualized by Landry and Bourhis (1997) as the examination of language on public signs for purposes of measuring ethnolinguistic vitality, early studies of linguistic landscapes were primarily concerned with quantifying the codes of languages on signs. However, for this study, I draw on an ethnographic methodology for analyzing the linguistic landscapes (Blommaert, 2013). While still taking the signs in space as my starting point, I use sociohistorical information, interview data, and ethnographic observations to analyze more deeply how the signage indexes and symbolizes sociocultural relationships, much of which is not visible from the language code on the signs alone. Based on this, I will demonstrate that the linguistic landscape in Cary reveals the differential levels of sociocultural assimilation that these two communities have achieved in time, a difference tied to history, class, and geography. My analysis reveals that, although the two communities have a nearly equal historical presence in the town in terms of size, the South Asian community has created its own celebrated identity in town and become “mainstream” in Cary society, while the Hispanic community remains peripheral, both in terms of their visibility in the LL and in sociocultural status.

Assimilation, Power Geometries, and the Linguistic Landscape

Whenever immigrant groups settle in new places, questions arise about how they will adapt to the place, as well as how the host community will react. Social scientists and politicians,

among others, have long been interested in this process of assimilation, which has led to several conceptual models still invoked today. Early American models, which were based primarily on data from European immigrants in the early twentieth century, predicted a “straight-line” assimilation in which groups would move up in society overtime and become culturally more similar to the dominant, white Protestant majority. Often viewed as problematic, such models assumed a monolithic “mainstream America” as the benchmark of assimilation. Later scholars complicated this, however, pointing to how structural barriers block some groups’ success at integrating, and they predicted both downward and upward mobility (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Nevertheless, these models still tended to view homogenization into a dominant mainstream as a desirable (and possible) end goal, failing to acknowledge how migrant groups themselves alter, transform, and diversify the mainstream.

Alba and Nee (2003) aimed to rectify this with a modern reconceptualization of the “straight line” assimilation, which scholars have called “new assimilation.” They argued that rather than a shift of new groups towards unilaterally resembling the host community, the change is variable and multidirectional, defining assimilation as “the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences... [in which] individuals on both sides of the boundary see themselves more and more alike, assuming they are similar in terms of some other critical factors such as social class” (p. 11). This definition recognizes that not only do immigrants change over time to resemble their host society, but the host society (the “mainstream”) also changes in response to the arrival of the immigrant group. This implies a multidirectional flow of cultures where a conglomeration of people, languages, and cultures interact and evolve (Appadurai, 1996).

Despite this positive prediction, Alba and Nee (2003) also concede that assimilation and access to influence over the mainstream are closely linked to the initial sociocultural and economic characteristics of migrant groups. In order to better understand this process, Massey’s (1991) conceptualization of power geometries becomes useful. In understanding globalization and the differential changes brought to destinations by migration, Massey urges an emphasis on space and movement rather than time and change alone. She elaborates:

For different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these [migration] flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn’t, although that is an important element of it; it is also

about power in relation to the flows and the movement. Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. (Massey, 1991, p. 25)

This concept implies that any assimilation or entry into a mainstream status is not simply a product of time, but rather is closely linked to the processes of migration; not all groups will be moving to a place in the same manner, with the same intention, or from the same home country condition, all of which will affect their access to assimilation.

In terms of the linguistic landscape, as researchers have argued that signs constitute and symbolically construct public space (Scollon & Scollon, 2003), we could expect that immigrant groups that have a relatively more visible presence in the linguistic landscape have achieved a greater degree of this assimilation. Blommaert (2013) makes this link, though not explicitly, when studying his neighborhood in Antwerp, Belgium, showing how the signage of different immigrant groups overtime evolves along with their overall socioeconomic status. For example, the Turkish community, which has become settled and rooted in his neighborhood, displays relatively permanent, multilingual signage that reaches out to both mainstream Belgians as well as Turkish immigrants and other groups. However, the signage of the Polish community, which is more transient, is monolingual and much less fixed, appearing mostly on vehicles, which points to the relative impermanence of this community in the neighborhood. Using Alba and Nee's (2003) terminology, we then might argue that the Turkish community has more successfully assimilated, fundamentally altering the culture and landscape of the neighborhood, whereas the Polish community, which has migrated with little power, has not yet done so. The signs therefore offer a unique sociolinguistic lens to examine the processes of assimilation, though this must be couched in an ethnographic understanding of how different groups come to and settle in new places.

Migration to the US and Linguistic Landscapes

In recent years, researchers have also begun applying the method of linguistic landscapes to better understand migration and the migrant experience in the United States. Most have focused on distinct urban ethnic enclaves, exploring how communities use language on signs for a variety of purposes. Leung and Wu (2012) found that in the Chinatown of Philadelphia, business owners

use several Chinese languages to both appeal to the broader, imagined audience of “Chinese” (Mandarin) speakers, as well as reach out to the speakers of the various local languages of China. They argued that these owners constructed both global and local identities in the linguistic landscape simultaneously. Leeman and Modan (2009) examined the Chinese used in the Chinatown of Washington, DC, which, unlike the Philadelphia Chinatown, has experienced a great loss in its Chinese-speaking population. Nevertheless, Chinese is omnipresent, and can be found on establishments from local restaurants to multinational corporations, such as Starbucks, a factor which led them to conclude that Chinese is not used instrumentally, but primarily as a means to construct an appealing neighborhood identity. They stress the importance of how symbolic language can be used to create space, which may or may not be tied to the language used in the community. On the other hand, looking at “Little Ethiopia” also in Washington, DC, Woldemariam and Lanza (2015) illustrate how the Ethiopian community has imbued Amharic words and cultural images symbolic of a unique Ethiopian identity, demonstrating a level of pride and transnational connection to the homeland. These divergent cases point to the need for analysis which consider factors beyond code choice, as the instrumental and symbolic meaning of languages in space will vary considerably with context.

Some studies have also begun to examine places less traditionally associated with multilingual communities that now display signs of multilingual signage. Troyer, Cáceda, and Giménez Eguíbar (2015) found that in the small town of Independence, Oregon, despite having a large Hispanic population, the Spanish language was limited in the linguistic landscape. Based on the signs as well as interview results, they concluded that the large Hispanic community is largely avoiding the use of Spanish to hide, especially considering the anti-Spanish rhetoric found in the town and country. On the other hand, Roeder and Walden (2016) examined how recent Hispanic communities have begun to carve out distinct spaces in and around Charlotte, NC, a city not traditionally identified as a gateway for migration. They concluded that while the increased signage may indicate the community’s desire to settle in Charlotte, the signs generally lack any symbolic or indexical association with the Carolina region. Rather, most of the signs included names, images, and symbols associated with Central American countries or pan-regional Hispanic identities, which they argue may lead to the separation of this group from broader Charlotte community. These studies both illustrate how immigrant groups are beginning to settle into new spaces across the country, yet mark their space differently.

While most of these studies hone in on how single immigrant groups have created distinct spaces in the linguistic landscapes of US cities, few have compared how different groups do this within the same space. However, a comparison can help shed light on how different communities interact and claim space, pointing to the different factors which allow or inhibit access to the linguistic landscape. Cary offers a case of a recently multicultural place where several groups co-exist in the same space, making it ideal for such a study. Furthermore, most previous studies in the US have examined how immigrant groups maintain cultural identities, but rarely consider how these identities have altered the overall mainstream culture.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Characterizing Cary, NC

Cary, a suburb of Raleigh, itself but a sleepy Southern capital a few decades ago, is part of one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country, the “Triangle”- Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill. Now a “town” with over 150,000 people, Cary boasts a median income higher than the state and national averages, as well as one of the lowest crime rates in the entire nation for a city of its size. Labeled “super suburbia” by National Geographic (Bourne, 2001), Cary has long been viewed as a highly regulated, homogenous suburb populated primarily by upper-class white families. Growing up in Cary, I often heard that Cary stood for “containment area for relocated Yankees,” something which I could not argue against as my parents too had come from Western New York. Despite these caricatures, however, Cary has become one of the largest and fastest-growing immigrant communities in North Carolina today, with over 20% of its population being foreign-born (Johnson & Appold, 2014). In this paper, I will examine two of the largest immigrant groups in the region (which are admittedly highly diverse themselves): the South Asian community, which includes families from India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh, and the Hispanic community, which includes families from Mexico, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, as well as other Central and South American countries. In the section that follows, I will offer a brief overview of the recent histories of these two broad groups.

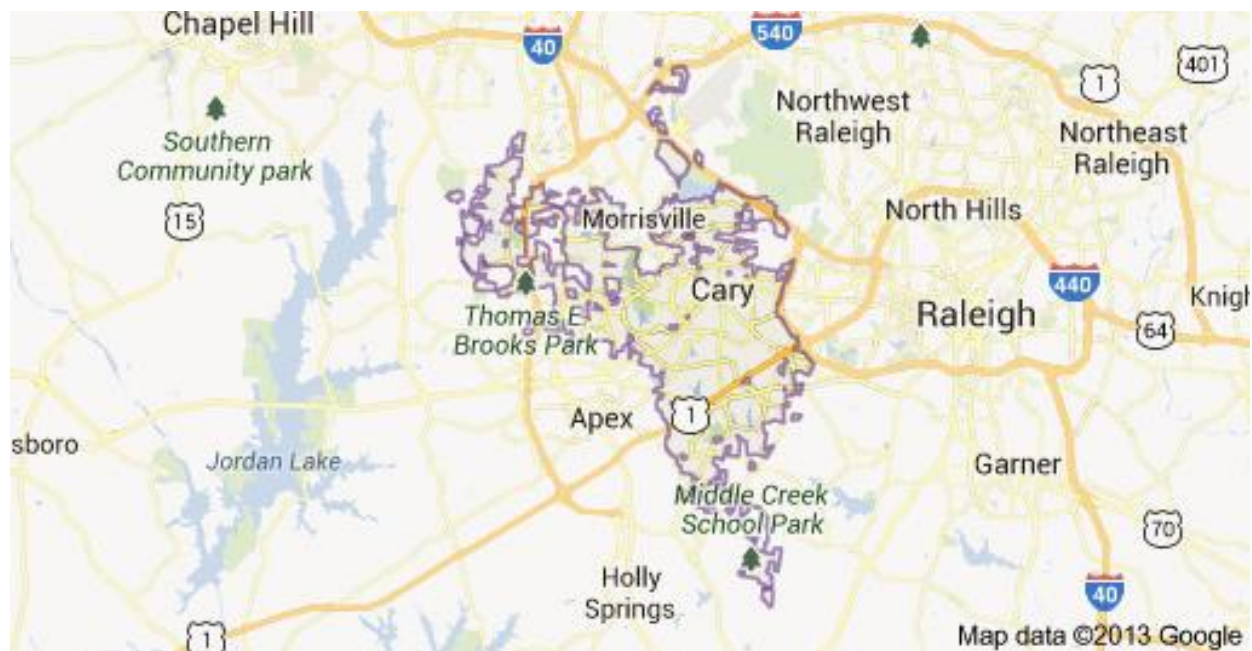


Figure 2. Map of Cary, NC. Cary is a sprawling suburb located near Raleigh, NC. The Research Triangle Park borders Cary to the northeast.

Demographics and Migration to Cary, NC

Although at a superficial level, an examination of official census data begins to reveal the historical development of these communities in Cary. Based on data from the 2000 US Census, in 2000, 3.47% of Cary’s population considered themselves “Indian” and 4.28% considered themselves “Hispanic” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). As the label “Indian” excludes other South Asian groups, this figure can be expected to be slightly larger for the greater South Asian community. By the late-mid 2000’s, these numbers grew to 5.4% and 8.3% respectively. By 2010, they were 6.40% and 7.66%. As of the most current estimate, 7.56% of Cary residents consider themselves Indian and 8.87% consider themselves Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). There is no estimate for 2016 yet, but based on the growth trends and the consideration that the label “Indian” is not inclusive of the entire South Asian community, we can estimate that the communities are now approximately equal in size in Cary. While this general growth trend reflects an overall trend throughout the United States (Johnson & Appold, 2014), we can also observe trends here which reflect the economic and social changes affecting North Carolina (see Figure 3).

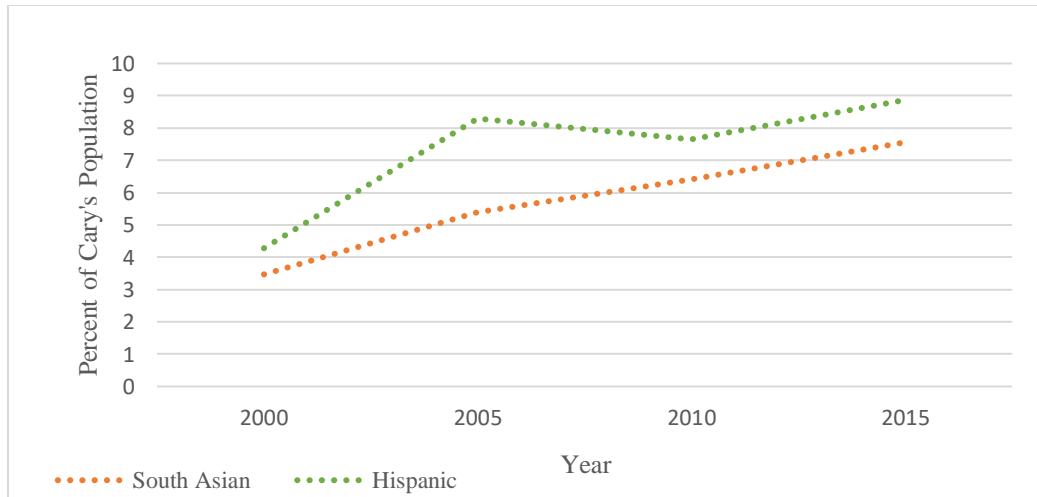


Figure 3. Growth of the South Asian and Hispanic Communities in Cary, NC (2000-2015). Percentage estimates are from the U.S. Census Bureau.

We can see that between 2000 and 2015, both the Hispanic community and South Asian communities have experienced growth. In fact, Cary has become one of the fastest growing South Asian communities in all of the United States (AAF & SAALT, 2012). There are a few probable reasons for these trends.

The first reason is the development of the region as center of technology and higher education. First, since the 1960s, North Carolina has been undergoing structural changes to modernize and diversify its economy, which is best embodied in the Research Triangle Park (RTP), a large research and development park that sits between Raleigh, Durham, and Cary. Host to over 200 primarily medical and technological companies today, the driving force behind the success of RTP has been its focus on high-tech innovation (Link & Scott, 2003). While this success has spurred the overall growth of the Triangle, thus attracting immigrants from all around the world, it has specifically lured a new workforce with highly technical, specialized skills. Besides the Research Triangle Park, the Triangle is also home to three major research universities: Duke University in Durham, North Carolina State University in Raleigh, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. These highly ranked universities continue to attract students and researchers from across the United States and abroad.

At the same time, India and other countries of South Asia have been undergoing similar structural changes, which has led to an extremely large population of specialized, college educated workers, particularly in the technology and medical sectors. Many of these workers

first come to the US to continue their education on a student visa or to work at a company on an H1-B visa, a visa which the US government specifically offers to temporarily bring in immigrants with specialized technical skills. Both of these visas can lead to permanent residency status and eventual citizenship. Across the United States, South Asians have been the largest recipient of the H1-B visa (Patterson, 2006). This means that on average, the South Asian migrants to the United States largely come with high educational backgrounds and work in professional occupations such as health, engineering, and information technology, factors which match the profile of RTP (Waters & Pineau, 2015). Thus, as the park continues to flourish, the South Asian community has continued to rapidly expand.

Besides technology, North Carolina also has a strong agricultural sector, which has required an increase in laborers, many of whom come from Latin America. In fact, North Carolina has more agricultural workers from abroad than any other state (Gill, 2012). In general, the majority of the Hispanic community in North Carolina have come to work in lower income jobs, such as farming, cooking, and cleaning. Unlike the South Asian immigrants, who by and large work alongside longer-term American residents, the Hispanic population is much more hidden from the public gaze. Nevertheless, this group still continues to grow in size.

These two different migratory routes reveal very different power geometries at play. The South Asian community has largely come to the North Carolina through a prestigious channel and occupies positions in multinational companies. The US government actually solicits and sponsors these immigrants. On the other hand, the Hispanic community has generally come through other routes to work in mostly labor positions. On top of this, the support from home countries differs greatly across the two groups. While the Indian government has gone great measures to maintain its relationship with foreign workers, such as offering dual citizenship to non-resident Indians (NRIs) and establishing a governmental ministry particularly for the support of NRIs, Mexico and other Latin American countries have been considerably less proactive (Patterson, 2006). While both groups have grown at an equal rate, their trajectories are very different, which likely contributes to the differences they have achieved in terms of their success into the mainstream culture.

Language Use in Cary

Another statistic of interest here is the language use data in Cary. According to the most recent data, 7.5% of Cary residents claim to speak Spanish at home, while 4.1% claim to speak an Indian language (1.5% Hindi, 1.1% Gujarati, 1.1% Other Indic, 0.4% Urdu). If we add in the contiguous town of Morrisville, the number of speakers of an Indian language jumps and becomes nearly equal to Spanish speakers. When asked whether they speak English very well, over 75% of the respondents who speak an Indian language responded yes, while only 47.6% who speak Spanish did (Statistical, 2015). This figure points to another important factor in these migrant groups' power geometries. In India and other parts of South Asia, English functions as a lingua franca of business and education, and most highly-educated people from this region have significant experience using English. Thus, most of those who come to North Carolina from South Asia can speak English, which significantly eases their transition into the primarily English-speaking mainstream. On the other hand, English is a foreign language in Mexico and most other Latin American countries, and significant access to English education is restricted more to upper classes. Considering that most of the Hispanic migrants who come to the area are laborers, it is likely that their background in English is limited, which poses a hurdle to integration that does not face the majority of South Asian migrants.

The Field: Chatham Square

The data for this particular study comes from a suburban strip mall, Chatham Square. Located less than a mile from the historic downtown center of Cary, Chatham Square is an old, unassuming collection of businesses. Originally composed of small diners, specialty stores, and art shops, the area has transformed over the years into a hub of multiculturalism and multilingualism in the area. Recognized by journalists as a "gateway to the world" (Cummings, 2011) and more recently, a "Little UN" (Cox, 2016), Chatham Square houses an eclectic range of multicultural shops, from a Bengali sweets shop to a Hispanic ministry. As such, this is not an ethnic enclave. Nevertheless, due to the disproportionately high number of South Asian businesses in this area, it has also been called a "Little India," both by members and non-members of the South Asian community. Because of this, I would argue that it functions as a microcosm to the overall demographic changes occurring in Cary and other nearby towns.

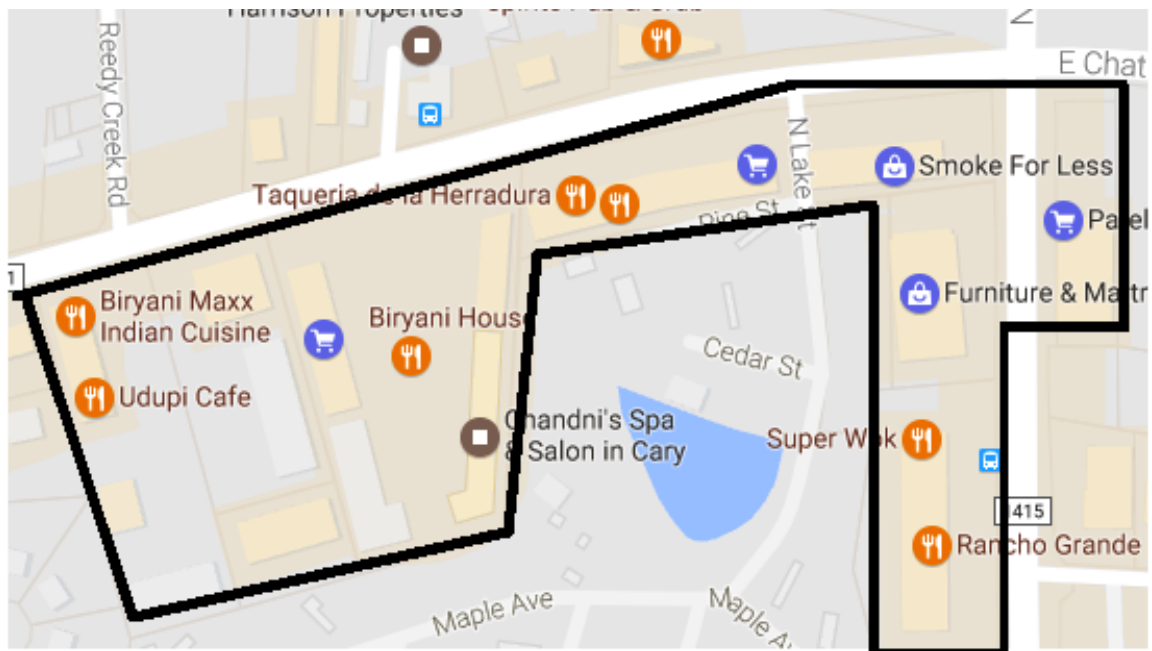


Figure 4. Map of Chatham Square and surrounding shopping centers. Although just a small strip of shopping malls, Chatham Square displays a high degree of linguistic and cultural diversity.

Admittedly, Chatham Square (along with the adjoining strip malls) is but a small shopping area within the sprawling town of Cary. However, despite the small size compared to large urban neighborhoods, strip malls can offer interested case studies of emerging communities (Roeder and Walden, 2016). Furthermore, because this particular strip mall is centrally located roughly between the town center and the town's main mall, Cary Towne Center, at the intersection of two busy streets, Chatham St. and Maynard St., the area remains highly visible to commuters and passersby. Also, as mentioned, the diversity found here is disproportionately high compared to other areas of the town, as this area has grown into a particularly vibrant center of multiculturalism. Every time I return home, I notice new spice shops, Indian restaurants, *taquerías* 'taco shops,' and markets popping up in shopping centers both old and new.

METHODOLOGY: ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES

For this study, I primarily draw upon Blommaert's (2013) ethnographic approach to linguistic landscapes that he developed to analyze his neighborhood of Oud-Berchem in Antwerp, Belgium. He argues for a primarily qualitative analysis which synthesizes a longitudinal, historical understanding of the place being studied and synchronic data embodied by a corpus of photographic snapshots of the signs in the area. This methodology has several important implications.

First, Blommaert (2013) argues that we must attend not only to what language is represented on the signs, but also what meanings each sign contains. In particular, he draws on Scollon and Scollon's (2003) concept of geosemiotics. Scollon and Scollon (2003) asserted that we must analyze the indexical and symbolic meaning of signs, both of which require interpretation beyond mere language choice. The indexicality of a sign refers to how a sign makes meaning in reference to another sign or object, whereas the symbolic meaning refers to how signs may represent something which is ideal or metaphorical. For example, in Cary, there is a South Indian restaurant with a sign that reads "Udupi Cafe Vegetarian South Indian Cuisine" (Figure 5). To the left of the text is a picture of what appears to be a young Krishna (a Hindu god), with a *tilaka* 'Hindu mark' on his forehead, a garland around his neck, and a peacock feather in his hair. The indexical reading of this sign tells us that at that location, there is a vegetarian restaurant which specializes in South Indian food; it invites customers into the space to enjoy a meal. However, the name Udupi also carries a symbolic significance, particularly for potential patrons familiar with India. Udupi is a coastal region of Karnataka (a state in South India) known throughout India for its delicious vegetarian dishes. In fact, in any major city in India you will find restaurants called simply "Udupi," signifying this type of cuisine. The image of Krishna to the left of the text further deepens this connection, as he is the main patron of the Udupi region. Thus, by choosing this name and using this image, the owners of the restaurant create a symbolic association with this region, conjuring up images of idyllic temple towns serving pure vegetarian cuisines.



Figure 5. A sign for Udupi on the side of a car. The image on the left appears to be a depiction of a child Krishna, who is the patron of Udupi. The sign indexes a South Indian restaurant nearby, but symbolizes a relationship with region of Karnataka well-known for its vegetarian food and temples.

Furthermore, Blommaert (2013) stresses that all signs must be considered and contextualized as indicators of the past, present, and future sociocultural conditions of migrant groups. Even a small sign with a limited audience may be an indicator of emergent multiculturalism. For example, when first collecting my photographic data, I did not notice any signs of multilingualism in the signage of a tobacco shop called *Smoke for Less*. The shop title is English, and almost all of the window signs are typical English advertisements for cigarette brands. However, while talking with the owner of a nearby Bengali sweets shop, *Mithai*, she mentioned that, despite never having gone into *Smoke for Less*, she knew that the owner was Ethiopian because of a sign that reads “Habesha Market.” Having little familiarity with the languages and cultures of Ethiopia, I had assumed that Habesha was the name of a tobacco brand when I saw the sign, an assumption probably shared by many who visit the shop without any connection to Ethiopia. However, inside, surely enough, you can buy a variety of Ethiopian foodstuffs, such as *injera*, an Ethiopian flatbread, as well as Ethiopian magazines, DVDs, and daily products. The small sign with only one non-English word, therefore, designates the space as an Ethiopian community store, but only for those who know the word and have a connection to Ethiopia. Though the sign may be statistically insignificant, it points forward to the presence of an emerging community.

In addition to Blommaert's (2013) methodology, I also utilized other methods which fit within the scope of ethnographic linguistic landscapes. First, I conducted open-ended interviews with six shopkeepers and two customers to gain a deeper understanding of the area's signage, history, and sociocultural makeup (Malinowski, 2009). Four of the shopkeepers were of South Asian descent and worked in the area's Indian markets, and two were from Mexico and worked in the Hispanic markets. The two customers were both of South Asian descent and frequented the Indian markets. In addition, I took field notes inside the shops in the area, paying particular attention to how languages were used in the space (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Lastly, I examined various documents related to the history and diversity of the area, including newspaper articles, magazines, community websites, and planning documents. Triangulating the data in this way allows me to construct a deeper understanding of the linguistic and cultural situation in the area as opposed to if I had only taken pictures of the signs.

THE CURRENT STUDY

The fieldwork for this study was done mostly over the course of a week in March of 2016. I took 134 photographs of signs for this research in and near Chatham Square during that time. I also conducted the interviews with the shopkeepers during that period. I returned to the area and took additional photographs in January of 2017 to note any major changes. I interviewed the two South Asian customers over Skype in March of 2017.

Sign Analysis

Coding for sign visibility. In order to begin analyzing the signs collected, I categorized them into four main groups based on their relative prominence and location in the landscape (Blommaert, 2013):

- (a) *Main signs*: Primary signs that appear above the shops' entrances. Clearly visible from the roadside, and thus able to reach the largest audience, these permanent signs contain the shops' names along with a possible secondary line of description.
- (b) *Window signs*: Signs onto the windows or hanging up on the inside of the windows. Associated with specific shops, these signs tend to offer additional information of the services offered within the shop.

- (c) *Fliers/Minor signs*: Fliers and signs hung up on the inside of the windows. These signs are small and are not visible from the street side. These are impermanent and can frequently be changed. Because some shops contained several signs from the same language with little function besides corporate advertising, these were counted as a single sign for the final analysis so as not to skew the distribution (Troyer, et. al., 2015).
- (d) *Decontextualized signs* (Scollon & Scollon, 2003): Signs not attached to any walls, such as signs on cars, signs stuck in the grass, and signs on newspaper stands. These signs are not necessarily associated with any single shop, such as Spanish-language newspaper stands.

Coding for language. After breaking the signs down into these three main categories, I further classified them based on the languages represented. Coding for most languages, including Spanish, was fairly straightforward. However, coding for Indian languages was particularly more complicated, which requires extra explanation.

As a former British colony, India is a part of what Kachru (1982) coined “the Outer Circle” of English speakers. As such, English has been fully nativized to the Indian context and Indian English is a co-official national language of the Republic of India, serving as a lingua franca of business and education (Kachru, 1983). Therefore, based on this, I had to develop an appropriate coding scheme which fairly represented Indian English. If a sign contained an Indian term or name, I considered this to represent an Indian language. However, if there was explanatory language offered on the sign that would indicate the intended audience reaches beyond the South Asian community, I would argue this as bilingual (Backhaus, 2010). For example, *Biryani XPRX* and *Biryani Maxx* (shown in the introduction) are two restaurants in the area specializing in biryani, a popular dish consisting of spiced rice, meat, and vegetables. Given that the word biryani (now a pan-Indian word and a borrowed word in English) is in the title of the restaurants, any person of South Asian background would immediately recognize the type of food expected in these two restaurants, as such biryani joints are ubiquitous throughout South Asia. However, both restaurants’ main signs contain subtexts (*Indian and Indo-Chinese Cuisine* and *Indian Cuisine*, respectively) clarifying that they serve Indian food. Such a label would be superfluous if appearing in a South Asian context, thus signifying that the sign is meant for a broader audience who understands American English, but not necessarily Indian English.

I also coded in this way proper names and nouns, which, although often transcending linguistic boundaries, continue to connote associations with certain places or cultures, even if this is not clear to all consumers (Curtin, 2009). For example, one restaurant I visited was called *Madras Dosa & Curry*. As the sign clarifies that the restaurant is a “South Indian restaurant,” any English-speaking readers would know what type of food to expect inside. However, Madras, the former name of Chennai, capital city of Tamil Nadu (a state in South India), symbolizes a specific Tamil identity. Customers familiar with India would immediately recognize the type of food served here, beyond the label “South Indian.” For this reason, I labeled the sign *Madras Dosa & Curry* as bilingual, representing both English and a Pan-Indian English.

Signs of Chatham Square. As expected, English, the main lingua franca of the United States, is the most commonly used language on the signs (see Table 1). The producers of these signs consist of both L1 and L2 English speakers, both from the United States and abroad. However, Spanish also commands a large presence in the landscape, with many shops advertising completely in Spanish. This will be explored more in a later section.

Table 1
Languages on Signs in Chatham Square (Percentages)

Language	Main Signs	Window Signs	Fliers/Minor Signs	Decontextualized Signs	Total
English-monolingual	42 (64.6%)	8 (36.3%)	9 (31.0%)	3 (16.7%)	62 (46.2%)
Spanish-monolingual	7 (10.8%)	3 (13.6%)	7 (24.1%)	3 (16.7%)	20 (14.9%)
Chinese-monolingual	0.0	1 (4.5%)	0.0	0.0	1 (0.7%)
Japanese-monolingual	0.0	0.0	1 (3.4%)	0.0	1 (0.7%)
Bilingual (with English)	16 (24.6%)	10 (45.5%)	12 (41.4%)	12 (66.7%)	50 (37.3%)
<i>N</i>	65	22	29	18	134

The next largest group of signs are bilingual, containing traces of other languages along with English (see Table 2). These bilingual signs illustrate the superdiversity in Cary, with over twelve languages on display, even if only in minor instances. Note that the languages most represented in the bilingual signs are Indian languages, indicating a strong community identity as well as an ability to interact with non-South Asian members of the community.

Table 2
Breakdown of Bilingual Signs (Percentages)

Language (with English)	Main Signs	Window Signs	Fliers/Minor Signs	Detached Signs	Total
Pan-Indian English	11 (68.8%)	2 (20.0%)	0	5 (41.7%)	17 (34.0%)
Spanish	1 (6.3%)	2 (20.0%)	2 (16.7%)	5 (41.7%)	10 (20.0%)
Japanese	2 (12.6%)	1 (10.0%)	0	1 (8.3%)	4 (8.0%)
Chinese	1 (6.3%)	0	2 (16.7%)	0	3 (6.0%)
Hindi	1 (6.3%)	2 (20.0%)	5 (41.7%)	0	8 (16.0%)
Telugu	0	0	1 (8.3%)	0	1 (2.0%)
Urdu	0	0	0	1 (8.3%)	1 (2.0%)
Arabic	0	2 (20.0%)	1 (8.3%)	0	3 (6.0%)
Swahili	0	0	1 (8.3%)	0	1 (3.0%)
Korean	0	1	0	0	1 (3.0%)
<i>N</i>	16	10	12	12	50

Language Use among the South Asian and Hispanic communities

The first category I identified, the main signs, are the most visible indicators of diversity in the linguistic landscape. These signs reach out to a large potential audience and are meant to “recruit, attract, and inform” (Blommaert, 2013, p. 61). Therefore, the language used on these signs by the South Asian and Hispanic communities makes for a useful starting point to compare how they establish their presence and reach out to greater audiences. To examine this distinction, I hone in on those signs which outwardly indicate an affiliation with one of the communities, either by choice of language or by a direct reference to a cultural identification. Even though I know that shops like *CJs Accounting* are Indian-owned businesses, I have excluded them for the present comparison as the signs themselves do not index any relationship to either community. Based on my count, 17 shops indexed a symbolic relationship with the South Asian community, while eight shops indexed a relationship with the Hispanic community (see Table 3).

Table 3
Languages Present on Main Signs of Shops Indexed as “South Asian” or “Hispanic”

South Asian Shops	<i>n</i> = 17	Hispanic Shops	<i>n</i> = 8
English only	4 (23.5%)	English only	1 (12.5%)
Bilingual	12 (70.5%)	Bilingual	1 (12.5%)
Indian language only	0 (0%)	Spanish only	6 (75.0%)

A striking divergence emerges in the language used on the main signs of these two communities. A majority of the South Asian shops are either bilingual or presented only in English. On the other hand, a majority of the Hispanic establishments were titled in Spanish only; no sign featured only English. This reveals a major difference in how these communities use their linguistic resources, as well as what linguistic repertoires they have at their disposals.

The signs in the landscape invariably tell us about an intended audience (Backhaus, 2010). As most of the Hispanic-owned shops have signs written only in Spanish (for example in Figure 6), we can assume that the intended audience consists solely of Spanish speakers: mostly immigrants and their children. While such salience indicates confidence and strength in the Spanish-speaking community (Blommaert, 2013), it also indicates a lack of integration with the majority, English-speaking community in Cary. Although more people in North Carolina are learning Spanish than in previous years, the population that commands Spanish remains limited. Therefore, economically-speaking, the shopkeepers would benefit most by using bilingual shop signs, which would pull in both Spanish and non Spanish-speaking customers. However, their lack of English signage suggests that they perhaps do not feel that non-Hispanic Americans would have any interest in the products offered. This may be linked to the negative sentiment against Latino immigrants across the country. Vocal politicians (e.g., Donald Trump, as of late) have publicly rebuked Latino migration, claiming that migrants are “taking away ‘American’ jobs.” This rhetoric may deter Hispanic communities from creating spaces which invite a non-Hispanic audience (Troyer, et. al., 2015). While I did not find specific evidence of this in my interview data, as both Hispanic shopkeepers that I interviewed commented that Cary was a tranquil place to live, it could be a factor. Furthermore, this lack of integration may not be

intentional. Rather, this display could be the result of a limited access to the English language, which might point to a larger socioeconomic issue; namely, the Hispanic migrants who come to the area tend to have relatively lower levels of education and economic power (Johnson & Appold, 2014), barring them from effectively receiving English education, and thus remaining peripheral in society.



Figure 6. A Spanish sign in Chatham Square. Non-Spanish speakers in Cary, where Spanish has never been a major language, would likely not be able to make sense of this sign as a local seafood restaurant.

On the other hand, the South Asian community primarily displays bilingual signs consisting of English and some Indian language. Much like Woldemariam and Lanza (2015) found in the “Little Ethiopia” of Washington, DC, these signs maintain connections to a local identity, but also invite others into the spaces. The South Asian community in Cary avoids the use of specific Indian languages and scripts on signage not as a way to hide culture, but rather as a way to unite the Indian community and confidently reach out to a wider base.

As mentioned earlier, English is a lingua franca of India, so the use of English unites the South Asian community more than any individual Indian language would. Gautam, one customer that I interviewed, explained:

Yeah, you have to- um, you want to be able to communicate with all Indians, right? And, you can't really do that with a singular language. Even if you put it in Hindi, that then isolates everyone that doesn't speak Hindi in India. That includes me. And so then if you do it in another language like Telugu, no one else understands that either. So you have to use English, to be honest.



Figure 7. *Madras Dosa & Curry* is English in code, but symbolizes a relationship with Tamil Nadu and the Tamil community in Cary.

Within this unity created by English, we can interpret many Indian business signs as symbolically creating space within the community underneath which lies a rich linguistic diversity. For example, as mentioned, *Madras Dosa & Curry* (Figure 7) explicitly symbolizes an affiliation with Tamil Nadu. While the shop's subtext reaches out to a pan-South Asian audience and beyond, it still clearly identifies with a culture back in the heart of South India. Inside, Hindi and Tamil music plays, and pictures from popular destinations in Tamil Nadu line the wall. This affordance to maintain their identity is available to the Indian community likely due to the high regard given to Indians in the United States. Furthermore, even businesses which do not symbolize any particular community on their main signs post fliers and window signs which index the linguistic diversity within the South Asian community. For example, at *Triangle Indian*

Market, there were fliers with regional languages such as Hindi and Telugu (Figure 8). For example, one flier written in Hindi and English created by the International Hindi Society, advertises in Hindi for a “night full of humor and song.” Next to that is a flier created by the Triangle Telangana Association written in Telugu-English advertising for a Telangana cultural night. Thus, while the main signs indicate unity and openness of the community, smaller signs illustrate diversity and an ability to maintain cultural ties related to particular regions, languages, and religions of South Asia.

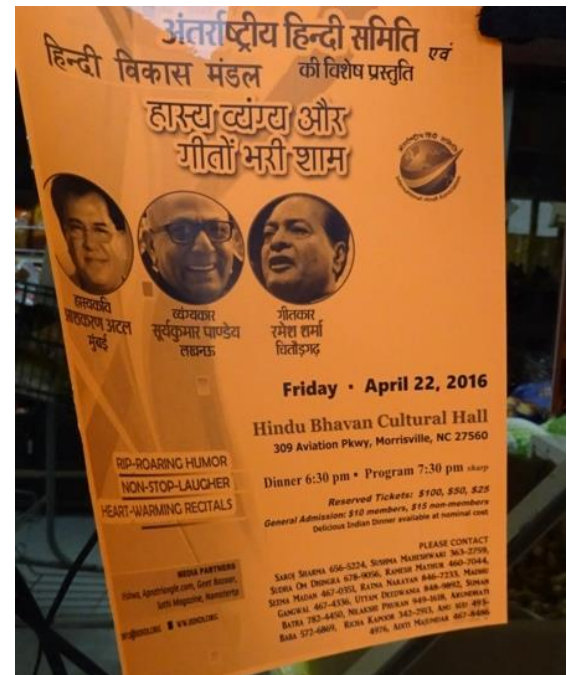


Figure 8. These bilingual fliers are posted side-by-side in the window of *Triangle Indian Market*, an Indian market opened by a Telugu-speaker originally from Andhra Pradesh.

Interactions Between the South Asian and Hispanic communities

While I have hinted at the differential levels of assimilation that the two communities have achieved through their own signage, their hierarchical socioeconomic statuses become especially evident when we see how these two communities interact in space.

Fresh Halal Meat Int'l Grocery and Fish is a small grocery-cum-butcher shop which primarily sells South Asian and Middle Eastern products and meats. Since 2008, it has been owned by an Indian man from Mumbai. Before that, it had a sequence of owners from the Middle East and Pakistan. On the day I visited, I encountered a small handwritten sign on the

door reading *Necesito Ayuda* (Figure 9). This lone sign, which literally means “I need help,” is clearly intended to solicit an employee from the Spanish-speaking community. While talking with the owner of the shop about his clientele, he mentioned Indian, Pakistani, and African customers, but made no reference to any Hispanic customers. Thus, unlikely to be understood by the shop’s main clientele, we can see that the shop owner is reaching out to Hispanic passersby who frequent the nearby *tiendas* ‘shops’ and *taquerias* ‘taco shops.’ Further, since the clientele is not Spanish-speaking, we can assume that he is not looking for somebody to work the cashier. Rather, he wants somebody who can work in the butchery, a low-paying, manual labor type job.



Figure 9. A sign soliciting help at *Fresh Halal Meat Int'l Grocery and Fish*.

It is interesting to note the unnatural nature of the Spanish on the sign. Rather than a more standard way to indicate help is wanted, such as “*se necesita ayuda*” or “*ofertas de empleo*,” the owner chose a very direct phrase which sounds almost like an automatic translation. This gives us an insight into the current status of the shop. First, the unnatural use of Spanish indicates that there is probably no employee there yet that is fluent in Spanish. This shows us that the shop is undergoing an upward transition. Much in line with practices across the restaurant industry throughout the US, the owner is targeting a lower income group as a source of cheaper labor.

Second, despite an incomplete access to Spanish, the owner craftily utilizes what linguistic resources he has to serve his economic interests. This indicates a high level of educational privilege and resources. We can compare this to the Hispanic community's signage, where at many shops, very few traces of languages other than Spanish can be found.

I similarly found this type of relationship represented in the spoken languages used in Indian markets. For example, at *Patel Brothers*, one of the major Indian markets in Chatham Square and the whole Cary area, several languages are regularly used, including Spanish. Aditi, who has grown up in Cary and previously worked part-time at Patel Brothers, shared:

A: Among the clientele, they're speaking their own um their own dialects, so like if they're Marathi, they're speaking Marathi. But then, if they're asking like an Indian worker a question, they would always talk in Hindi or English. And then, the owners would all speak Gujarati with each other because they were all Gujarati. But then to the workers, they would speak in Hindi, and to the clientele, they would speak in English. And then, if they were speaking to their employees that were non-Indian, who were all Spanish speaking, so they knew Spanish and so they would all speak Spanish with them.

Similar to the case of *Fresh Halal Meat Int'l Grocery and Fish*, Spanish is positioned as a language of labor, which the Indian owners have added to their repertoire, assumedly to reach out to his population. Spanish is not generally found in India, so it can be inferred that these business owners learned some levels of Spanish specifically for the purposes of business. On the other hand, at *Las Tres Fronteras*, a large Mexican market, I encountered few languages other than Spanish. When talking to the shopkeeper there, Mario, he confirmed this observation, stating that a majority of his customers are Spanish speaking. Even when I pressed him about other languages, the only other language he mentioned was the Portuguese spoken by some Brazilian customers.

I also encountered evidence of this linguistic divide in the ideologies of the South Asian community while talking to Siva, the head chef at *Madras Dosa & Curry*. He expressed confusion over the Hispanic community's relationship with English:

S: Yeah, Hispanic community, still a, maybe they are staying here more than uh five or ten years, they, I don't know, why they are not, still now they don't want learn English and, yeah few people, not people, many people say 80% of the people I seen a lot of Latino people, they don't want to speak, they, they not ready to learn, I don't know.

As an immigrant himself who did not attend an English medium school growing up in India, Siva experienced learning English on his own. His words reflect a common rhetoric in America which paints the Hispanic community as unwilling or unable to learn English. This reflects different opportunities afforded to the two communities, which in turn reveals another socioeconomic difference. Both back in India and in the US, Siva had access to English language speakers, teachers, and materials, which allowed him to gain proficiency on his own. This case illustrates a linguistic power geometry operating between these two communities. Because Siva had access to English through his connection to the South Asian community, he was able to overcome language barriers upon coming to the United States. However, prior to shifting, most Hispanic immigrants probably had little access or need of English in Mexico and Latin America. In the US, then, a lack of systemic support for their learning, coupled with the large community who speak Spanish, keeps them isolated from gaining proficiency in English.

We can see from these instances how the South Asian community has positioned itself higher than the Hispanic community in terms of their socioeconomic and linguistic status. The Hispanic community, though strong in number, displays few instances of other languages in their public signage and space. While a few examples exist of Hispanic shops using English, such as a description of services (Figure 10), it remains limited. However, as mentioned earlier, even small signs can be an index of larger changes, and these signs may be an indication that the Hispanic community is slowly gaining a foothold in Cary. Furthermore, while most first generation migrants may continue to have limited access to English, both Spanish-speaking shopkeepers reported that their children were growing up bilingual, using English at school and Spanish at home. Also, I should note that this lack of English does not necessarily disturb the Hispanic community, nor do members of the community directly perceive themselves as marginalized. Mario, the shopkeeper from *Las Tres Fronteras*, explained that the area seemed to be a calm place for all people to live: Hispanics, white people, black people, and Asians. Though I asked about any unfair practices, he claimed that he felt comfortable. While the Hispanic community appears to remain peripheral socioeconomically and linguistically at the moment, as the area continues to diversify and the economy continues to recover, we could see the Hispanic community assimilating more into the mainstream in the coming years.



Figure 10. This shop front primarily includes Spanish, though it does include the English phrase “Walk-Ins Welcome.” Interestingly, this was the only business that had its hours listed only in a language other than English.

An Evolving Mainstream

So far, based on this analysis of the linguistic landscape in Cary, we can see how the two communities have claimed space differently and are thus represented differently. Beyond the signs, there is ethnographic evidence of how these two communities have experienced different levels of social acceptance, and thus assimilation, as a reflection of their social, economic, and linguistic resources coming into the country. In particular, the South Asian community has quickly gained a remarkable level of acceptance in the area. The Hispanic community, on the other hand, seems to have made less of an impact, perhaps except in the area of restaurants and food culture.

South Asian culture in Cary. Nagi Reddy, founder and owner of the Triangle Indian Market since 1995, the first Indian market in the Southeast, recognized this new culture, partially attributing it to economic success and partially attributing it to cultural visibility:

NR: Because at the work place, some Indians are eating at the desk and (?), and they are

seeing the food, smelling, haha and then they all are now used to, so we are, we are into the *mainstream* [emphasis added] also slowly, whether foodwise, and I would say it's a kind of globalizing. *It's not like one ethnic, so it's all new* [emphasis added].

As Nagi Reddy points out, this form of assimilation is not the case where a new group is wholly absorbed into the old group. Rather, there exist layers of diversity side-by-side in a new mainstream culture.

Aditi, who has lived in Cary since 2000, shares a similar sentiment:

A: I bring like Indian food to like lunch, like at my job, and all my friends are like Aditi, your mom made you Indian food? Bring me some tomorrow! And you know, they're like begging me as opposed to before I would like, be like "Shit, I have Indian food for lunch today, maybe I'll just throw it away and buy." You know, those are the kinds of things that would go through my head...Now, everyone is so accepting and, I just feel like when I was growing up, it was really hard being like South Asian in an area that people didn't really know about South Asian culture, but now, it's so well-known that I feel comfortable.

This anecdote particularly emphasizes how dramatically the understanding and acceptance of South Asian culture has increased in Cary in the last decade.

Furthermore, while collecting photographs in Chatham Square, I went by *Biryani Maxx*, the biryani restaurant mentioned earlier. As I approached, a South Asian man outside informed me that the restaurant was closed. While normally this short interaction would be expected or commonplace, he addressed me at the end of his statement with *yaar*, a casual Hindi term usually used to address friends and acquaintances. Wearing nondescript clothing, I did not display any outward indication of my association with the Indian community or my knowledge of the Hindi language. Rather, we see that the community created in this place has transformed the area into a place where at least short multilingual addresses may become acceptable.

Perhaps, no shop in the area illustrates this ongoing evolution of the mainstream better than the established Indian sweet shop, *Mithai*. Opened in 2003 by Sudha and Suchitra Dutta, *Mithai* has become one of the most well-known Indian sweets shops in the American Southeast. The Duttas, whose families come from Bengal, a region known throughout India for its desserts, paid homage to their Bengali heritage through their shop's signage. Although the shop advertises itself as a pan-Indian sweet shop, their main shop sign features the word *mithai* 'sweets' in both the Roman script (Figure 11), which would be understood by most speakers from India as the the

word is common to many languages, as well as in the Bengali script, a script which would have considerably less readership.



Figure 11. The main sign at Mithai featuring Indian-English, Bengali, and American English

When I visited the shop this time, I was surprised to find a Caucasian man and his Bengali-American wife in place of the Duttas. After talking to them for a bit, I got to know that they had recently acquired the shop from Sudha, who had decided to retire from the job. Davina and Craig, the new owners, plan to expand the shop and broaden the customer base beyond the South Asian community.

The wife, Davina, whose family is also Bengali, shared with me her concern that the large Bengali script would isolate non-Bengali or non-South Asian customers from shopping at their store. Thus, they are planning to create a new logo, which keeps the name *Mithai*, but downsizes the Bengali script. However, as a symbolic association with Indian culture, they plan to paint their outdoor tables and chairs saffron, one color of the Indian flag.

Inside, the new LCD display menu that Craig and Davina installed features vibrant pictures of fresh vegetables and nuts (Figure 12). They advertise their products with a variety of health buzzwords, such as “No Synthetic Additives,” “No Chemicals,” and “Hormone-free milk.” These types of food issues are common concerns among the upper-middle class residents in Cary that I have met, white and South Asian. They have recently even added “superfood smoothies” to their menu. Thus, while the owners continue to offer the same fundamental dishes--authentic sweets and snacks from Bengal--the new owners are rebranding the restaurant to attract a wide audience beyond the South Asian community. Just gleaning the Facebook reviews, this appears to be successful so far: based on their public profiles, the clientele commenting is no longer just Indian, but includes several white, North Carolina natives as well.

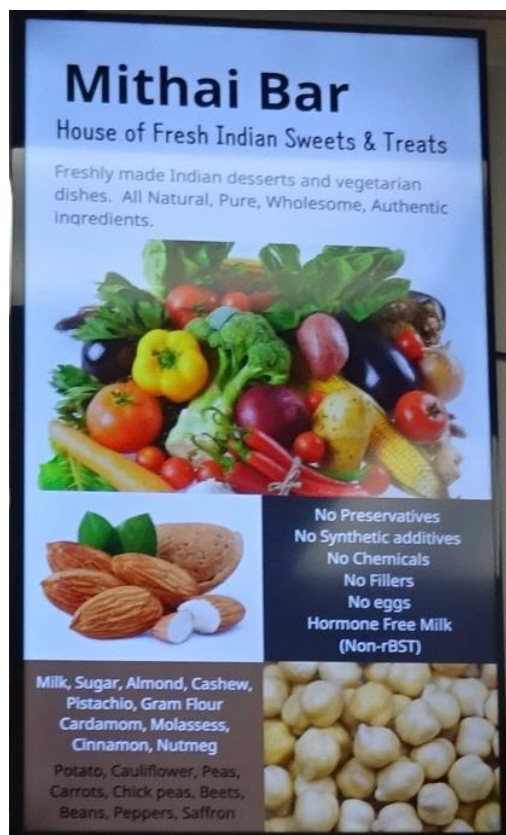


Figure 12. One screen from the new menu at *Mithai*. The owners are trying to reach out to a new health-conscious customer base, advertising their products as natural.

The case of *Mithai* is similar to a case Blommaert (2013) observed in his neighborhood, in which an Indian couple bought a small Dutch café. Instead of turning it into an Indian restaurant, they kept the Dutch menu and décor, maintaining the old-time clientele, but also added a few Indian dishes, which attracted a new crowd eager to try to an “exotic” cuisine. A part of superdiversity, he called this a continuity with a fundamental change, what he called an “Indian accent” in this case. For *Mithai* in Cary, we are seeing a similar transition. However, we see an inverted process occurring, a process which turns the notion of mainstream in Cary upside-down. We see a formerly immigrant owned shop, beloved for years by the community, being picked up by members of “mainstream” America, keeping it mostly the same, but adding their own flair; an American accent?

These examples are just the beginning. Down the road from Chatham Square, a banner draped over an old sign out front of a church advertises the opening of a new Hindu temple in place of the Christian church (Figure 13). Here, we see a new group claiming a space formerly

equated with the mainstream as their own, signaling a stronger level of comfort or pride. In another part of town, a small restaurant called *Masala Wrap* opened last year. Owned by three Indian migrants working in the IT sector, this new establishment has been described by the media as a place for “fast casual Indian food” (Weigl, 2016). However, at this Chipotle-like restaurant, you can order a wrap stuffed with typical Indian ingredients like *paneer* ‘Indian cottage cheese’, chicken tikka, and mint chutney with a side of masala fries and a mango *lassi* ‘yogurt beverage.’ Something not likely found in India, this meal represents a cultural hybridity (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004). Furthermore, at least three local theaters now show Indian films--even regional films--regularly, side by side with the biggest Hollywood hits, and serve samosas and *namkeen* ‘salty Indian snacks’ in addition to standard fare such as popcorn and nachos. Also, Cary hosts *Diwali*, the Hindu festival of lights, as one of its major annual holidays, placing it next to other traditional mainstream festivities like Christmas, Easter, Kwanzaa, and Independence Day.



Figure 13. The sign advertising a new Hindu temple is draped over the sign of a former Christian church in Cary.

Hispanic culture in Cary. Unlike the South Asian community, I have found considerably less evidence of this cultural mainstreaming with the Hispanic community. While Cary does hold one holiday which is related to the Hispanic community, *Estrella de la Esperanza* ‘Star of Hope,’

a celebration coinciding with the Christian holiday of Epiphany (or Three King's Day), and the event does have cultural elements (food and a parade), it is mostly a fundraiser to collect donations for local (primarily Hispanic) families in need.

The area where I have found the most acceptance or mainstreaming of the Hispanic community is in the food culture, though this seems to be a general trend across the country and does not represent anything unique to Cary. When I have visited the restaurants which only advertise in Spanish, I have noticed far fewer white, non-Spanish speaking customers than when I have gone to places that specifically label themselves as Mexican restaurants. However, there are indications of change in the language practices of newer Mexican restaurants. For example, *Esmeralda Grill* (Figure 14), which recently opened in Chatham Square, started out as a mobile taco truck that initially catered primarily to Hispanic customers during the lunch hours. However, as of 2016, the owners have also opened this permanent shop in Chatham Square, adding to the growing authentic Mexican food scene in the area. We can see that the main sign is symbolically bilingual: the structure and title is English, but the name of the owner, Esmeralda, retains its Spanish status. Compare this to the older taco truck, which is simply titled in Spanish: *Taquería Esmeralda*. Furthermore, the window signs contain both English and Spanish. Interestingly, the English message "Restaurant also available for private parties," was painted there before, when another biryani joint was located there. The owners chose to keep that English text, while also adding another Spanish advertisement for the dish *barbacoa de chivo* 'goat barbecue.' This example indicates a potential shift in how the community is reaching outside of the Spanish-speaking community, pointing towards future processes of assimilation.



Figure 14. Esmeralda Grill perhaps signals a growing mainstreaming of the Hispanic community in Cary.

CONCLUSION

Through the ethnographic study of the linguistic landscape of Cary, NC, I have demonstrated and argued that, despite having grown at a similar rate in the area, the South Asian and Hispanic immigrant communities have achieved significantly different levels of assimilation in the broader community due to differences in their initial socioeconomic characteristics and power geometries. An important implication of this finding is that global cultural flows are not equally accessible to all, but are linked to and embedded in social structures and power geometries. This has played out crucially in the town of Cary, where the introduction of the South Asian community has drastically altered the culture, but the Hispanic community has remained relatively isolated.

As Cary continues to grow, what is mainstream will continue to morph as forces of diversity expand. This raises further questions about future processes of assimilation and integration in the United States, especially as immigrants continue to migrate to places without major histories of immigration. Furthermore, future research on this area could take a more spatially-driven approach, with further consideration of issues of language in space (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2016).

While the linguistic landscape certainly sheds light on the issues discussed, an even closer ethnographic analysis would better explain the current societal changes occurring with migration, both in terms of language and culture.

We can see that the South Asian community, along with their cultural practices, have become a part of the social fabric of the town of Cary. Though the Hispanic community remains linguistically and economically peripheral today, it is likely that with time, the community will become more settled and experience more socioeconomic success. These groups will continue to redefine the notion of mainstream in North Carolina, as well as the United States at large.

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