



---

The Puerto Rican Yard-Complex of Lorain, Ohio

Author(s): Robert B. Kent and Augusto F. Gandia-Ojeda

Source: *Yearbook (Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers)*, Vol. 25 (1999), pp. 45-60

Published by: University of Texas Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25765874>

Accessed: 24-08-2017 17:51 UTC

## REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

[http://www.jstor.org/stable/25765874?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25765874?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents)

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

*University of Texas Press* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Yearbook (Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers)*

# The Puerto Rican Yard-Complex of Lorain, Ohio

---



**Robert B. Kent**

*Department of Geography and Planning*

*University of Akron*

*Akron, Ohio 44325-5005*

*rkent@uakron.edu*

*and*

*Departament d'Història, Geografia, i Arte*

*Universitat Jaume I*

*Castelló, 12080, España*

**Augusto F. Gandia-Ojeda**

*Departamento de Planificación*

*Oficina de Ordenamiento Territorial*

*Municipio de Ponce*

*Ponce, Puerto Rico 00731*

*agandia@coqui.net*

## **ABSTRACT**

The study seeks to determine if Puerto Ricans on the US mainland express their ethnicity with residential landscaping. The urban residential landscape of Puerto Ricans in a manufacturing town in the Midwest, Lorain Ohio is examined, contrasting the use of landscape markers and home and yard maintenance among Puerto Ricans and their non-Hispanic neighbors. The characteristics of approximately 300 homes and yards in one south Lorain neighborhood are examined using data from a city directory to establish the ethnicity of the residents of each home (Hispanic vs. non-Hispanic). Significant differences between the two groups with respect to the use of landscape markers and home and yard maintenance were found. A "Puerto Rican yard-complex" is identified in Lorain which is characterized by religious yard shrines, well kept front yard flower gardens, potted plants, well maintained yards, and homes painted in pastel colors.

Cultural geographers, architects, other scholars have a long tradition of documenting the characteristics of the urban landscape and interpreting the social, cultural, and psychological underpinnings of its creation. Much of this work examines the nature of formal and monumental architecture — churches, government buildings, and public institutions — libraries, concert halls, and theaters. At the opposite end of the spectrum, a significant body of research has focused on the nature and characteristics of the vernacular urban landscape, and this work has centered largely on neighborhoods and residential landscapes. In the context of the United States much of this work on urban residential landscapes has centered on the landscape characteristics of neighborhoods (Arreola, 1988; Duncan, 1973); the details of house design, facades, and ornamentation (Curtis, 1980; Curtis and Helgren, 1984; Manzo, 1983; Yip, 1978) and the organization and presentation of yards and exterior residential

space (Arreola, 1981; Greenbaum and Greenbaum, 1981; Janz, 1992). These studies have examined the urban landscapes of majority populations as well as those of ethnic minorities.

As the second largest ethnic minority population in the United States, Hispanics, and particularly Mexican-Americans, have been the focus of much of the work on ethnic residential landscapes in urban areas. Arreola (1988) argues that in parts of the Southwest, Mexican-Americans have created a unique urban residential landscape. The dominant element is the single family residence and its yard — which Arreola has defined as the “Mexican American housescape”. He identifies a set of exterior elements including yard enclosure, brilliant house paint colors, and the occasional religious yard shrine as the Mexican American housescape’s key components.

While Mexican Americans do represent the largest single ethnic group among Hispanics in the United States, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and an increasingly diverse group of other peoples of Latin American origin now call the United States home and have established significant urban population concentrations across the country. Cultural geographers however have devoted comparatively little attention to the characteristics of their urban residential landscapes. This paper seeks to extend the study of the urban residential landscapes of Hispanics in the United States to groups other than Mexican Americans. In this paper we focus on the urban residential landscape of a Hispanic community in Lorain, Ohio where Puerto Ricans represent nearly 20 percent of the town’s population, account for the vast number of its Hispanic residents, and have been permanently settled for nearly 50 years.

This study examines three key questions about the impact of Puerto Ricans on Lorain’s residential landscape. First, are the Puerto Ricans in Lorain expressing their ethnic identity through the use of residential landscaping? Second, what kind of material elements are they using and can it be demonstrated that these elements are substantially different than those used by non-Hispanics? Third, does the use of residential landscape elements among Puerto Ricans in Lorain differ from the patterns of use by other Hispanic groups in the United States, notably the residential landscapes of Mexican-Americans in the Southwest?

Finally, we believe that the study of the cultural landscape, and specifically urban residential landscapes of ethnic groups, can benefit from the use more detailed and systematically collected data, as well as more rigorous methods of data analysis than has often been the case. Many studies by geographers of the cultural landscape have frequently depended on casual survey techniques, sparse empirical data, and descriptive overviews to analyze urban residential landscapes. A premium has often been placed on “contextualization” at the expense of empirical data upon which a more informed understanding could be built. We believe more attention should be paid to the collection and analysis of empirical data. This would lead to studies whose results and conclusions provide the building blocks for a more complete and dependable understanding of the characteristics and differences between the residential landscapes of different ethnic groups in the United States. In this study, we attempt to follow such an approach.

## HISPANIC SETTLEMENT IN LORAIN

Lorain, Ohio is a medium-sized industrial city on the shores of Lake Erie whose population stood at just over 70,000 in 1990. The first Hispanics to settle in the city were Mexicans and Mexican-Americans who arrived in the early 1920s and worked as railroad laborers and as industrial workers (Jacinto, 1981). These immigrants established a modest presence in Lorain congregating in a small neighborhood in south Lorain that included a variety of ethnic businesses as well as community organizations. The community’s population numbered close to 1,300 during the latter half of the 1920s. The economic collapse brought by the Depression eliminated many of the railroad jobs in the city and reduced other employment opportunities, and by the beginning of World War II, scarcely 200 Mexicans or Mexican-Americans remained in Lorain.

In the years immediately following World War II, industrial expansion and increasing manufacturing output by the town’s dominant industrial employer, National Tube Company (a subsidiary of US Steel), provided the impetus for additional Hispanic migration to Lorain (Rivera, 1987; Maldonado, 1979). Labor shortages led the company to use recruiters to find additional workers. Recruiters

sought and found employees for the company in the rural districts of Puerto Rico. The first contingent of Puerto Ricans arrived in Lorain in the fall of 1947, and by June of the following year, about 500 had settled in the city. Puerto Rican labor recruitment to Lorain continued into the early 1950s and by mid-decade the city's Puerto Rican community numbered about 2,500. Many of the immigrants lived initially in company barracks, but most eventually settled in the southeast corner of the city, immediately adjacent to the National Tube Company. They occupied homes in a neighborhood dominated by single family residences originally built as company housing for the factory's workers.

By the beginning of the 1990s, Hispanics accounted for nearly 20 percent of Lorain's population. Among the city's Hispanics, Puerto Ricans are the dominant group, accounting for about 9,400, while individuals of Mexican descent number slightly over 2,100 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1993). Hispanics are distributed throughout the city, but are most numerous in the census block groups in the city's southeastern corner adjacent to the tube factory (now owned and operated by Kobe/USS). Puerto Ricans are most concentrated in this neighborhood, while those of Mexican descent are distributed more evenly over the city (Fig. 1).

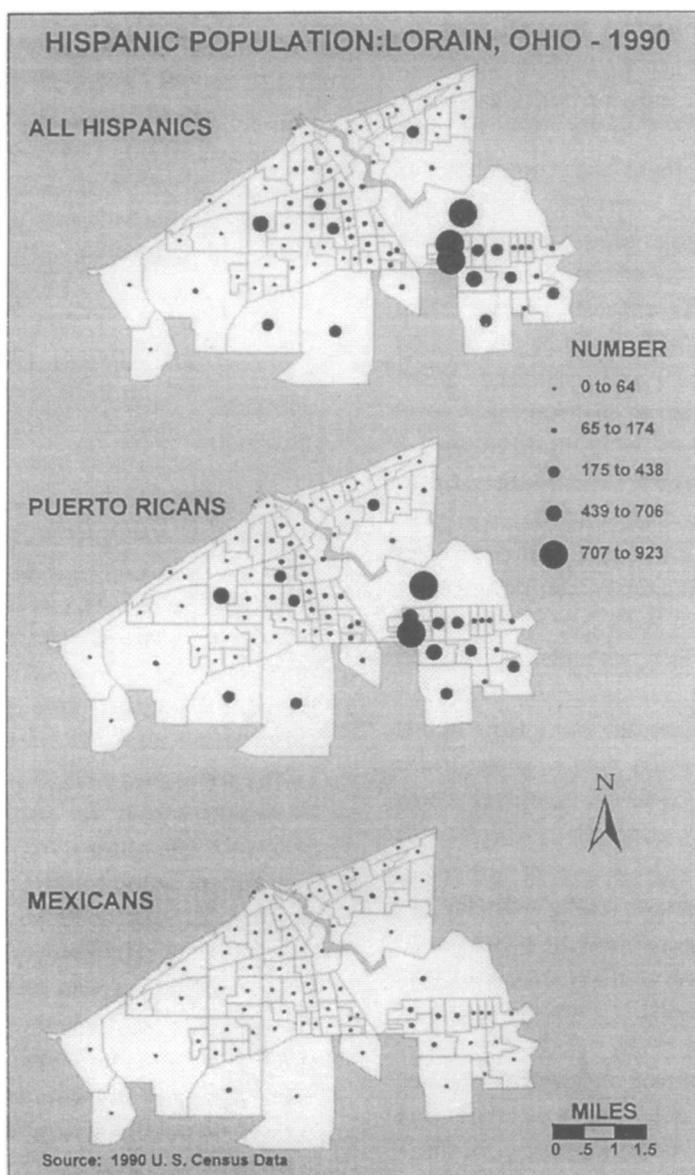


Figure 1. Distribution of Hispanic Population in Lorain, Ohio, Total by Block Group

## METHODOLOGY

This paper follows the methodological approach proposed by Rapoport (1982) to study landscape meanings. This approach is an adaptation of non-verbal communication models developed originally for gestures and facial expressions. The model asserts that distinct sets of material elements embody meaning in varying cultural contexts. This approach divides material elements in fixed, semi-fixed, and non-fixed elements. Fixed elements are most frequently represented by permanent structures: houses, churches, and public buildings. Usually these are established and controlled by the dominant socio-economic groups. Semi-fixed elements are those such as furniture, gardens, curtains, mailboxes, signs, colors, and many other elements that can be changed quickly and easily. The non-fixed elements refer to people themselves, and their behavior, clothes, cars, and other highly mobile elements. New immigrant ethnic groups normally use the last two categories most frequently to express their identity because these elements require less investment and can be changed easily to adjust to new situations. To migrant ethnic groups in urban contexts, such as Hispanics in Lorain, expressing identity becomes a central concern. Such groups cluster together to share common codes such language, religion, or eating traditional foods (Siegel, 1970). Landscaping has a prime role in establishing ethnic identity in these neighborhoods. Because these groups have severe economic restrictions, they often use semi-fixed elements to express their ethnic identity in the landscape.

The first step was to accurately identify the boundaries of the Puerto Rican neighborhood in Lorain. Historic documents, perceptions of community members, field reconnaissance, and census data, provided insight on the geographical extent of the neighborhood (O'Brien, 1954; U.S. Census Bureau, 1993). This information, especially recent census data and field reconnaissance, identified a large area in southeast Lorain bounded by Fulton Road and Lorain Avenue and running between East 28th Street to East 36th Street as the principal concentration of Hispanics in Lorain. In the five contiguous census block groups, which form the core of this neighborhood, Hispanics account for between 40 and 67 percent of the population. In 14 adjacent or contiguous block groups, Hispanics represent 20 to 40 percent of the population. Puerto

Ricans are the dominant Hispanic group in these block groups representing over 80 percent of the total (Fig. 2).

A survey of the study area was conducted during August 1994. A systematic cluster sample was taken, where single family residential houses were surveyed. No duplexes, multi-plexes, or apartment buildings were included. These blocks were distributed in a checkerboard arrangement to ensure coverage of the entire neighborhood and 397 houses were surveyed.

Observation forms and photographs were used to gather the field data. The observation form provided a systematic format for collecting the data. Preliminary field trips to Lorain and a review of the pertinent literature provided information about the semi-fixed material identity markers that might be found in Lorain's Puerto Rican neighborhood. Important sources included work by Arreola (1981 and 1988), Curtis and Helgren (1984), Manzo (1983), and Dingemans and Datel (1979). The basic list of elements surveyed included the following:

- Houses - paint color, porches and their decoration and furnishing (i.e. hammocks, macramé plants holders, and pictures allusive to Puerto Rico and Mexico); flags; wrought iron grillwork; and potted plants.
- Enclosures - fences and shrub enclosures.
- Front yards - highly elaborated flower gardens; figures of fauna, such as, the "coqui" (a species of frog indigenous to Puerto Rico) roosters, and geese; and yard shrines dedicated often to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, *La Milagrosa* (associated with Puerto Rican Catholics), and the Virgin of Guadalupe (associated with Mexican Catholics).
- Maintenance - paint quality and yard upkeep

The summary survey data reported in this paper and presented in tabular form in the results section fall into ten categories of house and yard ornamentation and maintenance. These categories are house paint color, house paint quality, the presence and type of house ornaments, the presence and type of yard ornaments, the presence and type of wrought-

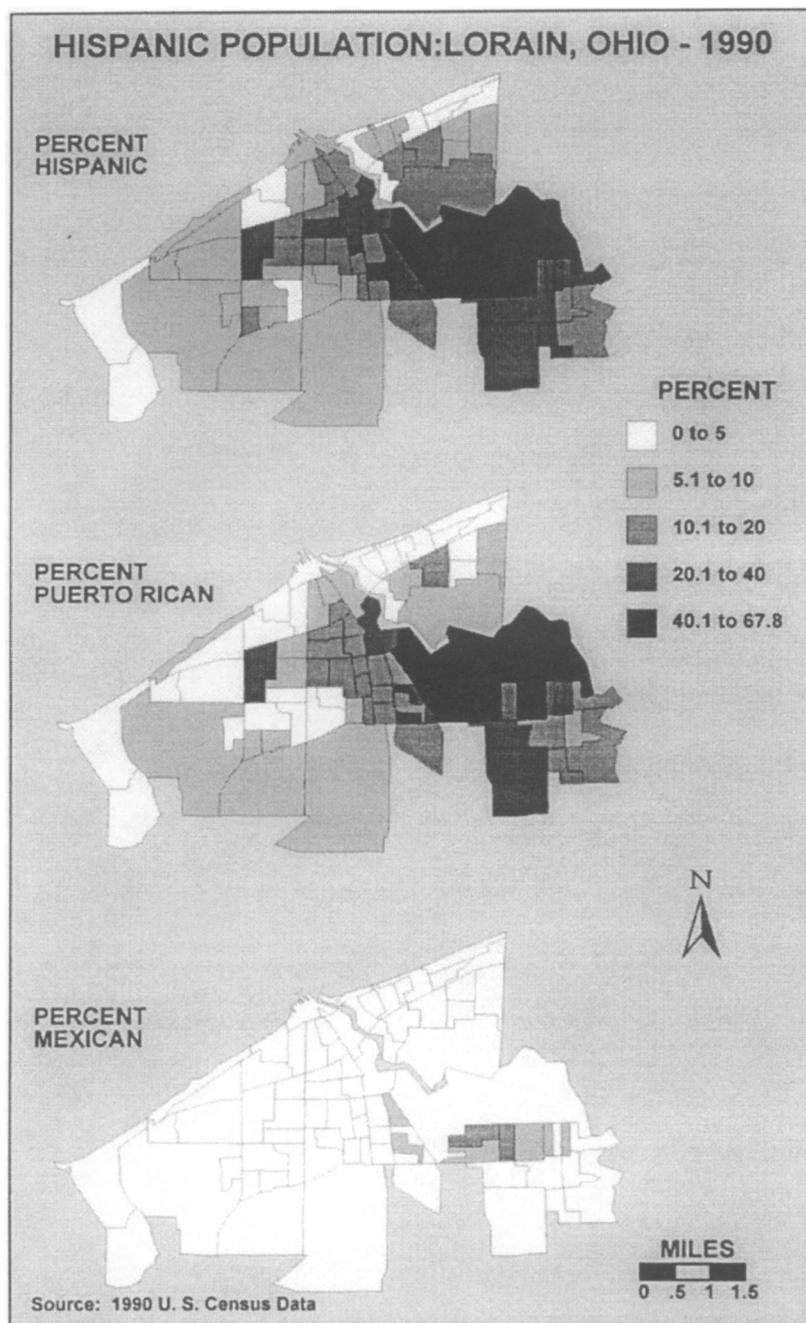


Figure 2. Hispanic Population in Lorain, Ohio, Percent by Block Group

iron work, flag display, yard enclosure (fences) and type, the quality of yard maintenance, presence of front yard gardens, and the presence of potted plants in front yards and on porches. The presence or absence of these markers was tabulated for each of the houses in the area surveyed.

No effort was made in the field study to determine the specific Hispanic ethnicity of the neighborhood's residents. While the neighborhood is clearly dominated by those of Puerto Rican origin, over 80 percent, and for the purposes of this study, it is considered a Puerto Rican enclave — Mexican-Americans comprise the balance of the Hispanic population. Therefore, the discussion that follows

in the results section of the text and in the tabular material which accompanies it, simply uses the term Hispanic rather than Puerto Rican.

The ethnicity, Hispanic vs. non-Hispanic, of each house's residents was established using the Polk City Directory (Polk Company, 1993). These directories list each street address, and when entries are complete provide data on the name of the occupant, whether the dwelling is owner or renter-occupied and occupational data. In this study, a Hispanic residence is defined as one occupied by a person with a Spanish surname. Eighty houses were excluded from the sample because home ownership and/or ethnicity could not be determined. In addition, 40 vacant houses were excluded from the sample. After these exclusions, the sample size was reduced to 289 houses. Hispanic residences constituted about 60 percent of the sample, 175 houses. Descriptive statistics summarize the use of semi-fixed landscape markers in this neighborhood in Lorain's, while chi-square tests are used to establish the magnitude and significance of differences which are identified between Hispanics and non-Hispanics.

**THE RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE**

The field survey of houses in Lorain provided a rich variety of data on the use of semi-fixed landscape elements used as part of house facades and front yard gardens, as well as on house and yard maintenance between Hispanic and non-Hispanic

houses. The descriptive statistics portray important differences in the patterns of house and yard adornment and care between Hispanics and non-Hispanics in Lorain, while the results of the chi-square statistical tests indicate that these differences are statistically significant in several categories.

The survey revealed considerable differences between the characteristics of house and yard adornment and maintenance between Lorain's Hispanic and non-Hispanic residents. House paint color, the quality of yard maintenance, the presence of front yard flower gardens, and the use of potted plants on front porches and walkways all vary notably between the homes of Hispanics and non-Hispanics. In all of these cases both the descriptive data as well as chi-square tests of the results suggest appreciable differences between the two groups.

Striking variation in paint color between homes occupied by Hispanics and non-Hispanics arise (Table 1). Nearly 40 percent of the homes of non-Hispanics are painted white, but among Hispanics, this figure stands at only 20 percent. For homes painted in pastels, the relationship is reversed — 22 percent of Hispanics homes are painted in pastel shades, while only 12 percent of the homes of non-Hispanics fall in this category. Yellow, brown, gray, and blue are used much more frequently on homes of Hispanics than non-Hispanics, and conversely non-Hispanics use green, red, and terracotta at about twice the rate of Hispanics (Table 1). The chi-square

Table 1

House Paint Colors in South Lorain: Hispanics and Non-Hispanics

Color	Hispanics		Non-Hispanics		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Pastels	39	22.3	14	12.3	53	18.3
Cream	38	21.7	21	18.4	59	20.4
White	34	19.4	43	38.6	77	26.6
Yellow	17	9.7	5	4.4	22	7.6
Brown	16	9.1	7	6.1	23	7.9
Gray	15	8.6	7	6.1	22	7.6
Blue	7	4.0	3	2.3	10	3.5
Green	5	2.9	6	5.3	11	3.8
Red	3	1.7	5	4.4	8	2.8
Terra	1	0.6	3	2.6	4	1.4
Total	175	100.0	114	100.5	289	99.9

Chi-Square: Pearson: 22.01528; p=.00850; Likelihood Ratio: 22.12333; p = .00850

Table 2

Yard Maintenance on Residences in South Lorain:  
Hispanics and Non-Hispanics

Quality	Hispanics		Non-Hispanics		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Shabby	8	4.6	18	15.8	26	9.0
Adequate	135	77.6	91	79.8	226	78.2
Admirable	32	18.4	5	4.4	37	12.8
Total	175	100.6	114	100.0	289	100.0

Chi-Square: Pearson: 20.13693;  $p = .00004$ ; Likelihood Ratio: 21.58207;  $p = .00002$

statistic is large (22.01) and highly significant ( $p = .008$ ) for house paint colors between Hispanics and non-Hispanics. This use of pastel colors is consistent with current practice in Puerto Rico, where Jopling (1988:204-205) notes that a palette of Caribbean/Mediterranean colors including aqua, light green, blue, salmon, and various pastel shades is widely used on the island.

Ethnicity also appears to account for much of the variation in yard maintenance, at least at the extremes — i.e. shabby and admirable yard maintenance (Table 2). Residences with shabby yards were uncommon among Hispanics, accounting for only 4.6 percent, while the yards of non-Hispanic residences were categorized as shabby three times as frequently, in 15.8 percent of the cases. Likewise, admirable yard maintenance, characterized by neatly cut lawns, carefully edged grass along sidewalks, well-tended flowerbeds, and pruned shrubbery was frequent among Hispanics. Nearly one-fifth of the neighborhood's Hispanic's yards were admirably maintained, while only 4.4 percent of the yards of

non-Hispanics could be classified as admirable. On the other hand, adequate yard maintenance showed little difference between Hispanics and non-Hispanics, with about three-quarters of both groups having adequately maintained yards. Overall however, these differences yield a chi-square statistic that is high (20.13) and significant statistically ( $p = .000$ ) (Table 2).

Front yard residential gardens, usually consisting of annual flowers, often marigolds, in one or more cultivated beds extending across the front of the house or running from the front of the house along the driveway to the sidewalk on the street, occurred frequently (Fig. 3). One-third of all houses surveyed had such gardens (Table 3). Front yard gardens were encountered much more frequently in the yards of Hispanic residents than non-Hispanics, 45 percent and 18 percent respectively. Statistically the differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanics are highly significant (chi-square = 22.50,  $p = .000$ ).

Potted plants represent another form of front yard adornment, although these are comparatively

Table 3

Front Yard Residential Gardens in South Lorain:  
Hispanics and Non-Hispanics

Presence	Hispanics		Non-Hispanics		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	78	44.8	20	17.5	98	34.0
No	97	55.7	94	82.5	191	66.0
Total	175	100.5	114	100.0	289	100.0

Chi-Square: Pearson: 22.50066;  $p = .00000$ ; Likelihood Ratio: 21.31083;  $p = .00000$



Figure 3. Front yard flower garden and well maintained yard.

uncommon in south Lorain. Just over 11 percent of all homes surveyed had potted plants in the front yard (Table 4). Again, Hispanics tended to utilize potted plants more frequently than non-Hispanics, almost 15 percent in the former group and just 7 percent in the latter. The chi-square statistic is not highly significant, although it does suggest a relationship

between ethnicity and the presence of potted plants in yards (chi-square = 3.60, p. 057).

Hispanic yards and houses also differed from those of non-Hispanics with respect to flag display, horse ornamentation, and the use of yard ornaments. In these cases, the differences were not statistically significant when analyzed using the chi-square test

Table 4

Potted Plants in Front Yards in South Lorain:  
Hispanics and Non-Hispanics

	<u>Hispanics</u>		<u>Non-Hispanics</u>		<u>Total</u>	
<u>Presence</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	25	14.3	8	7.0	33	11.4
No	150	85.7	106	92.0	256	88.6
Total	175	100.0	114	99.0	289	100.0

Chi-Square: Pearson: 3.60526; p=.05760; Likelihood Ratio: 2.92250; p= .08735

Table 5

Flag Display in South Lorain:  
Hispanics and Non-Hispanics

Flags	Hispanics		Non-Hispanics		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Puerto Rico	6	3.4	1	0.9	7	2.4
U.S.A.	4	2.3	0	0.0	4	1.3
Both	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
None	165	94.3	113	99.1	278	96.2
Total	175	100.0	114	100.0	289	99.9

Chi-Square: Pearson: 4.62884;  $p=.09882$  Likelihood Ratio: 6.31897;  $p=.04245$

for the entire set of observations gathered. However, when one or two characteristics were considered within a set — the descriptive statistics suggest credible differences. Such was the case with respect to the display of flags, the use of signs, and the presence of religious yard shrines.

Flag display occurs rarely on homes in the study area (Table 5). The Puerto Rican flag was found on only 2.4 percent of the homes, while the U.S. flag was displayed even less frequently, in just 1.3 percent of all cases. Hispanics are more prone to flag display than non-Hispanics by a margin of 10 to 1. Surprisingly however, Hispanics displayed the flag of the Puerto Rican Commonwealth and the U.S. flag with almost the same frequency, 3.4 percent and 2.3 percent respectively (Table 5). Statistically significant differences, however, are not present when

comparing flag display among Hispanics and non-Hispanics in South Lorain.

Only 16 percent of all residences in this study had house decorations and ornamentation (Table 6). Wind chimes occurred with the greatest frequency, on 9 percent of all dwellings. Geometric figures appeared on just over 5 percent of the homes, but the remaining categories of house ornamentation occurred rarely. Variation in the occurrence of house ornamentation did not appear to be strongly related to ethnicity. The differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanics are small in almost all categories, except signs. Signs were observed on the homes and in the yards of Hispanic residents much more frequently than on the homes of non-Hispanics (Fig. 4). About 7 percent of all Hispanic homeowners had signs, evenly divided between signs in English and

Table 6

House Ornaments in South Lorain:  
Hispanics and Non-Hispanics

Ornaments	Hispanics		Non-Hispanics		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Chimes	16	9.1	11	9.6	27	9.3
Spring Hats	4	2.9	4	3.5	8	2.8
Geometric	11	6.3	5	4.4	16	5.5
Religious	3	1.7	1	0.8	4	1.4
Signs:						
English	6	3.4	2	2.6	8	2.8
Spanish	6	3.4	0	0.0	6	2.0
None	128	73.1	91	79.8	219	75.8
Total	174	99.9	114	100.7	289	99.3

Chi-Square: Pearson: 6.19599;  $p=.40160$ ; Likelihood Ratio: 8.383669;  $p=.21132$



Figure 4. Spanish-language sign advertising sweet peppers in yard.

signs in Spanish. By contrast, less than 3 percent of non-Hispanics had signs on their homes, and all of these were in English.

Yard ornaments were recorded in nearly 40 percent of the yards (Table 7). An eclectic range of lawn and yard ornamentation characterized the homes surveyed. Religious shrines were the most common

Table 7

Yard Ornaments in Front Yards in South Lorain: Hispanics and Non-Hispanics

Type	Hispanics		Non-Hispanics		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Shrines	23	13.2	4	3.5	27	9.3
Flamingo	2	1.1	1	0.9	3	1.0
Frogs	3	1.7	3	2.6	6	2.1
Deer	8	4.6	5	4.4	13	4.5
Livestock	8	4.6	1	0.9	9	3.1
Flora	1	0.6	0	0.0	1	0.3
Humans	5	2.8	2	1.7	7	2.4
Other	26	14.9	20	17.5	46	16.0
None	99	56.9	78	68.4	177	61.2
Total	175	100.4	114	99.9	289	99.9

Chi-Square: Pearson: 13.10889; p= .10816; Likelihood Ratio: 15.03795; p .05841

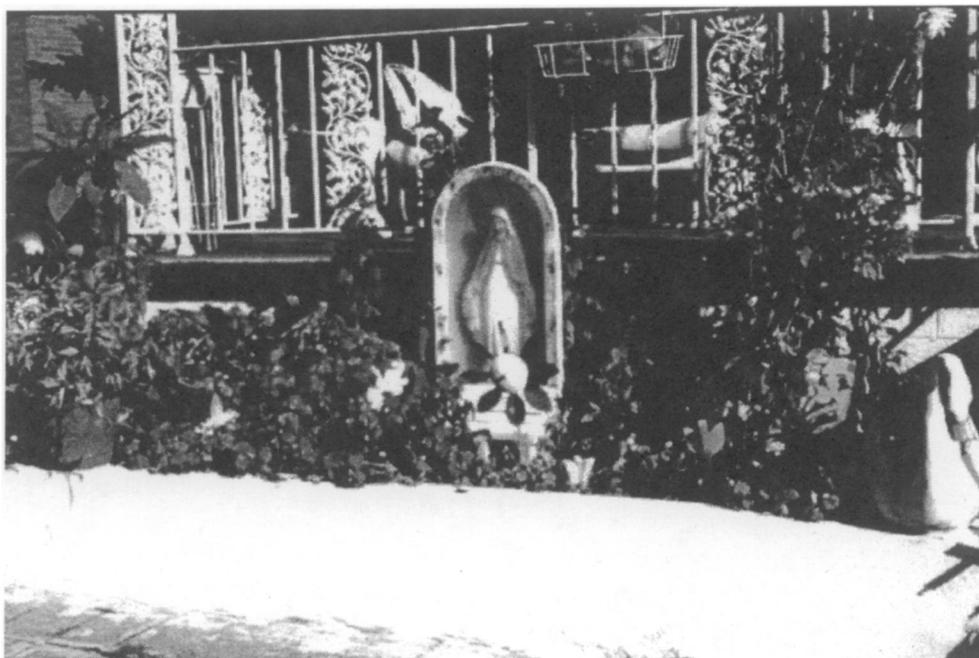


Figure 5. Yard shrine of the “Milagrosa” in a highly elaborated front yard.

single category, and occurred in nearly 10 percent of the yards. Animal images, including deer, livestock (cattle and sheep), frogs (the Puerto Rican “*coqui*”), and flamingos were present in about 10 percent of the front yards, while human statues — characteristically the hitching post servant — were found in 2 percent of the cases. A diverse range of “other” yard ornaments represented the largest category, 16 percent.

Ethnicity, however, does appear to account for the variation in the presence or absence of one type of yard ornamentation — religious shrines. These are found in the yards of Hispanic households in 13 percent of the cases, but in only 3.5 percent of the yards of non-Hispanics. In Lorain, these shrines appear to reveal something of the national composition of the Hispanic community. The greatest numbers of yard shrines are of the “Milagrosa”, one of the many images of the Virgin Mary. This version of the Virgin Mary has open arms and wears a white mantle with a light blue canopy (Fig. 5). The “Milagrosa” Virgin became the center of the popular devotion in Puerto Rico beginning around 1850 (Davila, 1989). In the Lorain neighborhood, the “Milagrosa” accounted for 89 percent of all yard shrines in the sample. The Virgin de Guadalupe, the Mexican representation of the Virgin Mary,

accounted for 7 percent of the yard religious shrines found in the neighborhood. Apart from the yard shrines, ethnicity does not appear to account for important differences in the presence of other types of yard ornamentation. The chi-square statistic is high, but not statistically significant (Table 7).

Several of the landscape elements evaluated in Lorain revealed no differences between its Hispanic and non-Hispanic households. No distinction could be established with respect to yard enclosure; the use of wrought iron work on porches, doors, or windows; or house maintenance as measured by paint quality.

Front yard enclosure is common in Lorain, and nearly half of all homes have some front yard enclosure (Table 8). Chain link fencing is most frequent and nearly one-third of all homes use it, while wooden fences were present in just less than 8 percent of all front yards. Symbolic fencing, usually shrubbery, occurred at 8 percent of all residences. The descriptive statistics revealed no discernable differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanics in the use of front yard enclosure in Lorain, nor did the chi-square test. Indeed, the data indicate that Hispanics and non-Hispanics demonstrate similar patterns in the use of front yard enclosure in the Lorain study area. Wrought iron work on residences is also commonplace in Lorain, and most appears to

Table 8

Residential Fences in South Lorain:  
Hispanics and Non-Hispanics

Fences	Hispanics		Non-Hispanics		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Symbolic/Vegetation	12	6.9	11	9.6	23	8.0
Chain Link	57	32.7	34	29.8	91	31.5
Wood	17	9.8	7	6.1	24	8.3
None	89	50.6	62	54.4	151	52.2
Total	175	100.0	114	99.9	289	100.0

Chi-Square: Pearson: 2.06784;  $p = .55845$ ; Likelihood Ratio: 2.09778;  $p = .55235$

be decorative rather than for purposes of residential security. Almost half of all residences incorporate wrought iron work on either front doors or porches (Table 9). However, it is usually exclusively used on porches. It is rarely found on doors and almost never on windows. Only 2 percent of all homes surveyed had ironwork on doors, but fully 45 percent of surveyed residences used it on the porch (Fig. 6). Elaborate wrought iron work characterized almost one-third of all porches in South Lorain, while simpler ironwork designs typified the remaining 15 percent. There is little variation in the use of wrought iron among Hispanics and non-Hispanics, and the differences are not statistically significant. The largest differences appear with respect to simple wrought-iron work on porches, with somewhat larger

percentages of Hispanic than non-Hispanic residences having this feature (Table 9).

The survey data show only modest differences between the paint quality on the homes of Hispanics and non-Hispanics (Table 10). The most notable difference occurs with respect to homes on which the paint is characterized as new or admirable — 33 percent of Hispanic homes fall in this category, while only 24 percent of the homes of non-Hispanics do. Most of this difference is made up in the category of homes with adequate paint condition. Some 59 percent of the non-Hispanic homes fall into this category while just 51 percent of the Hispanic homes do. The proportion of homes with peeling paint or otherwise inadequate paint jobs is nearly the same for both groups — about 16 percent. In no case are

Table 9

Wrought iron Work on Residences in South Lorain:  
Hispanics and Non-Hispanics

Type	Hispanics		Non-Hispanics		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Door Elaborate	4	2.3	0	0.0	4	1.4
Door Simple	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Porch Elaborate	33	19.0	12	10.5	45	15.6
Porch Simple	51	29.3	38	33.4	89	30.8
None	87	60.7	64	56.1	151	52.2
Total	175	111.3	114	100.0	289	100.0

Chi-Square: Pearson: 6.62177;  $p = .08498$ ; Likelihood Ratio: 8.18595;  $p = .04232$



Figure 6. An example of the “Puerto Rican yard complex” in South Lorain including wrought-iron grill work, front yard flower garden, potted plants, and a religious shrine.

there statistically significant differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic groups in this regard.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study show Puerto Ricans in Lorain use a range semi-fixed visual markers on their residences and follow a pattern of home and yard maintenance that identify their distinctive ethnicity. These markers are sometimes subtle, and as isolated elements in the urban residential landscape are not necessarily remarkable. Indeed, in some cases these identity markers are coincident with the values of mainstream middle class “American” values and are typical of homeowners in most residential neighborhoods — attractive front yard plantings, well tended front yards, and homes which are well maintained and frequently painted. Others, however

are more unique, homes painted in pastel colors, the presence of religious yard shrines, and wrought-iron grillwork on porches.

While the landscape characteristics and features which distinguish Puerto Rican and Anglo households in Lorain are generally not remarkable individually, when viewed together they represent a complex of semi-fixed visual markers and house and yard maintenance characteristics that clearly distinguish Puerto Rican ethnicity. The Puerto Rican yard-complex in Lorain contains, in various permutations, religious yard shrines, well kept front yard flower gardens, front porch or front yard flower pots, well maintained yards, attractively painted homes, and homes painted in pastel colors (Fig. 6). For example, among those 23 Hispanic homes with religious yard shrines, 19 have front yard flower

Table 10

Paint Quality in South Lorain:  
Hispanics and Non-Hispanics

Quality	Hispanics		Non-Hispanics		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
New	58	33.4	28	24.3	86	29.8
Adequate	90	51.1	67	59.1	157	54.3
Peeling	27	15.5	19	16.5	46	15.9
Total	175	100.0	114	99.9	289	100.0

Chi-Square: Pearson: 2.46001;  $p = .29229$ ; Likelihood Ratio: 2.49563;  $p = .28713$

gardens, 16 have porch or front yard flower pots, and 8 have front yards that are admirably maintained.

The Puerto Rican yard-complex in south Lorain sends a series of messages about the ethnic affinity, personal values, and the standards and ideals of the wider community. On the one hand, while a casual observer may easily miss the nuances of the yard-complex, within the context of the south Lorain neighborhood its presence is easily distinguished. Pastel house colors, religious shrines, and wrought-iron grill work are distinctive landscape elements and identify the household as Puerto Rican. The premium placed on house and yard maintenance by the neighborhoods Hispanic residents is in large measure a reflection of their high level of home ownership in the neighborhood, which reaches two-thirds. We believe as well that the yard-complex in Lorain also serves to reflect solidarity with the standards and ideals of the broader community. In south Lorain the neatly trimmed lawns, well painted homes, potted plants on the porch, and flowers in the front yard of Hispanic homes all fit neatly and properly into the landscape "ideals" of middle and upper class residential neighborhoods in the United States. Kimber (1973) has observed a similar phenomena in rural Puerto Rico, where many homes were characterized by open yards planted with fruit trees as well as edible, medicinal, and decorative plants. She suggests these orchards and food gardens have tended to become lawns and flower gardens due to an industrializing economy and a strong tendency to copy middle class American models. Thus, we see the yard-complex in south Lorain as reflecting one element of the acculturation of Puerto Ricans in south Lorain to life in the United States.

The characteristics of Mexican-American residential landscapes in the Southwest have been well documented and this research provides a useful benchmark for comparison of the situation in the Puerto Rican neighborhood in South Lorain. Arreola (1988) has proposed the existence of the "Mexican-American housescape" as typifying the urban residential landscapes of Mexican-Americans in much of the Southwest. Based in part on the use of twelve San Antonio barrios as case studies, he identifies an ensemble of three landscape elements as being key to this "housescape". In order of declining importance these are fenced front yards ( $x=68\%$ , range 24-100%), brightly painted exteriors ( $x=47\%$ ,

range 67-26%), and religious yard shrines (less than 1% in all cases) (Arreola, 1988:314).

The Puerto Rican yard complex identified in Lorain is clearly distinct from the Mexican-American housescape identified by Arreola. While front yard enclosure is common in Lorain, there is no evidence to suggest it is typical of the neighborhoods Hispanic residents. Religious yard shrines on the other hand, are far more common than in San Antonio's Mexican barrios, by a factor of about 10 to 1. The only element of the Mexican-American housescape that corresponds to the Puerto Rican yard complex of Lorain is the use of bright colored exterior paint on residences. Furthermore, the Puerto Rican yard complex incorporates additional components not noted in research on the Mexican-American housescape — the front yard flower gardens, the high frequency of well maintained yards, and the liberal use of potted plants in front yards and porches.

The results of this case study raise an unavoidable question. How do the landscape characteristics of this Puerto Rican urban residential neighborhood differ from those of other Puerto Rican neighborhoods in the continental United States? Clearly, the social, economic, and even residential conditions encountered by Puerto Ricans in Lorain have been different from those encountered by Puerto Ricans in large metropolitan areas. Have the rural origins of Lorain's Puerto Rican migrants, their access to well-paid manufacturing jobs, and the availability of low density single family residences produced a urban residential landscape largely distinctive from other Puerto Rican neighborhoods in the eastern United States? The absence of published research on the urban residential landscapes of Puerto Ricans in the continental United States makes it impossible to answer these questions. Perhaps the recent interest in the folk community centers, or *casitas*, of New York's Puerto Rican neighborhoods, will awaken additional interest in Puerto Rican residential landscapes in New York and its suburbs, Chicago, Boston, and Cleveland (Sciorra, 1990; Aponte-Parés, 1997).

At the onset of this study, we argued that the study of the cultural landscape, and specifically urban residential landscapes, can benefit from the use of more detailed and systematically collected data, and more rigorous methods of data analysis. In this case study, we have attempted to follow this admonition.

We encourage other geographers who study the urban residential landscape, and indeed of cultural landscape in general, to pursue data collection strategies that will provide a strong empirical base for their research. Many of these sources and techniques have been available for decades, but have been used only sparingly by many researchers. Statistical analysis of survey data can, and often

should, inform research into cultural landscapes, although this approach is not common. We are convinced that a whole range of "new" geographical techniques including advances in socio-economic databases in urban areas, geographic information systems, global positioning systems, and the ability to wed these data and techniques hold great promise for enterprising students of the cultural landscape.

## REFERENCES CITED

- Aponte-Parés, Luis. 1997. Casitas, Place and Culture: Appropriating Place in Puerto Rican Barrios. *Places* 11:53-61.
- Arreola, Daniel D. 1981. Fences as Landscape Taste in Tuscon Barrios. *Journal of Cultural Geography* 1 (1): 96-105.
- Arreola, Daniel D. 1988. Mexican American Housescapes. *Geographical Review* 78(3): 299-315.
- Curtis, James R. 1980 Miami's Little Havana: Yard Shrines, Cult Religion and Landscape. *Journal of Cultural Geography* 1(1):1-15
- Curtis, James R. and David M. Helgren 1984. Yard Ornaments in the American Landscape: A Survey Along the Florida Keys. *Journal of Regional Cultures* 4:78-92.
- Davila Rodriguez, Arturo. 1989. *Maria en la religiosidad popular de Puerto Rico*. Bogotá: Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano.
- Dingemans, Dennis J. and Robin E. Datel 1979. Field Measures of Central City and Suburban Neighborhood Quality. *Journal of Geography* (March):102-108.
- Duncan, James S. Jr. 1973 Landscape Tastes as a Symbol of Group Identity. A Westchester County Village. *Geographical Review* 63(3):334-355.
- Greenbaum Paul, Greenbaum S. 1981. Territorial Personalization. Group Identity and Social Interaction in Slavic-American Neighborhood. *Environment and Behavior* 13(5): 575-589.
- Jacinto, Frank. 1981 *The Mexican Community in Lorain*. Avon, Ohio: Privately Printed.
- Janz Wesley R. 1992. The Extension of Identity into Home Fronts: Two Milwaukee, Wisconsin Neighborhoods. *The Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 9(1): 48-63.
- Joplin, Carol F. 1988. *Puerto Rican Houses in Sociohistorical Perspective*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press.
- Kimber, Clarrisa T. 1973 Spatial Patterning in the Dooryard Gardens of Puerto Rico. *Geographical Review*. 63(1):6-26.
- Maldonado, Edwin. 1979 Contract Labor and the Origins of Puerto Rican Communities in the United States. *International Migration Review* 13(1):103-121.
- Manzo, Joseph T. 1983 Italian-American Yard Shrines. *Journal of Cultural Geography* 4(2):119-125.
- O'Brien, Robert. 1954. *A Survey of Puerto Ricans in Lorain, Ohio*. Lorain, Ohio: Neighborhood House Association of Lorain.
- Polk Company 1993. *Polk's Lorain (Lorain County) Ohio, City Directory, 1992*. Taylor, Michigan: The Polk Company
- Rapoport, Amos. 1982. *The Meaning of the Built Environment: A Non-Verbal Communication Approach*. Beverly Hills, London, and New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Rivera, Eugenio. 1987. The Puerto Rican Colony of Lorain. *The Centro Bulletin* 2(1):12-23.
- Sciorra, Joseph. 1990. 'I Feel Like I'm in My Country': Puerto Rican Casitas in New York City. *The Drama Review* 34(4):156-168.
- Siegel, Bernard. 1970. Defensive Structuring and Environmental Stress. *American Journal of Sociology*. 76 (1): 11-33.
- U.S. Department of Commerce. 1993. *Population and Housing Characteristics for Census Tracts and Block Numbering Areas: Lorain-Elyria, Ohio*.
- Yip, Christopher. 1978. A Time of Bitter Strength: The Chinese in Locke, California. *Landscape* 22 (2):3-13.

**RESUMEN**

El estudio intenta determinar si los puertorriqueños en los EEUU continental expresan su etnicidad mediante la apariencia externa de sus viviendas. El paisaje residencial de una vecindad de inmigrantes puertorriqueños en un pueblo del medio-oeste de los EEUU, Lorain Ohio es examinado, comparando el uso de marcadores del paisaje y el mantenimiento de las casas y jardines residenciales entre los puertorriqueños y sus vecinos no-hispanicos. El análisis de los datos reveló diferencias significativas entre los dos grupos. Se identificó un “complejo puertorriqueño de jardín” que caracteriza sus casas y jardines en Lorain, lo cual comprende nichos religiosos, uso de mazetas para plantas, jardines de flores delanteros, jardines bien mantenidos, y el uso de colores claros (pastel) para sus casas.