THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SPATIAL ASSIMILATION THEORY IN DESCRIBING CURRENT SETTLEMENT PATTERNS OF POLISH IMMIGRANTS IN PORTLAND, OR

By

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A RESEARCH PAPER

Submitted to

THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOSCIENCES

In partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE GEOGRAPHY PROGRAM

May 2012

Directed by
Dr. Laurence Becker
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank my advisor Laurence Becker for all of his work, ideas, and encouragement to guide me through this research project and paper. I would like to acknowledge Hannah Gosnell and Dwaine Plaza as members of my graduate committee, and for their ideas to help shape this research project. Lastly, I would like to thank my wife and two kids who have sacrificed much to allow me to finish my graduate degree.
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ABSTRACT:
The settlement patterns of European immigrants arriving around the turn of the 20th Century have been described using the theory of spatial assimilation. Recent academic literature has called into question whether this theory is still relevant in describing the settlement patterns of recent non-European immigrant groups, but has not been addressed whether or not this theory is still effective in describing continued European immigration. This research evaluated US census data to determine that a Polish ethnic enclave in the metro region of Portland, Oregon does not exist. Additionally, the absence of the Polish enclave appears to have a positive impact on the acculturation and assimilation of the Polish immigrants in the study area.

INTRODUCTION
Spatial Assimilation has been used by many scholars to describe the settlement patterns and eventual assimilation of European immigrant groups around the turn of the 20th century. However, current scholarly literature has begun to question whether the theory of spatial assimilation is effective in describing the immigrant settlement patterns of non-European immigrant groups in the United States (Alba et al, 1999; Newbold, 2003). Although the literature has questioned the effectiveness of the spatial assimilation theory in describing settlement patterns and assimilation processes of non-European immigrant groups, it has not questioned whether the theory is still effective in describing
the settlement patterns and assimilation processes of current European immigrant groups to the United States. In addition to the issue of European vs. non-European immigrant groups, researchers have observed that ethnically segregated clusters of immigrants are occurring both within cities and suburbs, which is also contrary to the theory of spatial assimilation (Logan et al, 2002; Murdie, 2010). Because the theory of spatial assimilation appears to have difficulty in explaining current trends among ever-diversifying immigrant groups to North America, it calls into question whether the theory is still effective in describing the settlement patterns of recent European immigrants to North America.

This paper investigates the effectiveness of the theory of spatial assimilation in describing the recent settlement patterns of Polish immigrants in Portland, Oregon. To determine whether the theory of spatial assimilation is still effective in describing the settlement patterns of Polish immigrants, two questions need to be answered: first, is there an ethnically segregated Polish community in Portland, Oregon, and; second, how does the absence or presence of an ethnically segregated Polish community in Portland Oregon, impact the acculturation and eventual assimilation of first generation Polish immigrants? A primary element of the spatial assimilation theory is that immigrants entering a host society will tend to live near or with other immigrants of the same ethnicity (Allen and Turner, 1996). The hypothesis to the first question above is that there is no ethnically segregated Polish community among current first generation Polish immigrants to Portland, Oregon. If it is found that no ethnically segregated Polish community exists, then the hypothesis to the second question is that the acculturation and assimilation process will be positively impacted. Conversely, if an ethnically segregated Polish community exists, then the hypothesis to the second question is that the
acculturation and assimilation process will be negatively impacted. As noted above, the continued effectiveness of the spatial assimilation theory among current European immigrant groups has not been investigated in the academic literature. Therefore, this paper will provide additional knowledge and narrow the gap in the literature in that respect.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The theory of spatial assimilation has its roots in the theories of assimilation described by early sociologists such as Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, Emory Bogardus and Milton Gordon. Theorists Park and Burgess define assimilation as, “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons or groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history are incorporated with them in a common cultural life” (Gordon, 1964). As defined by Park and Burgess, assimilation is a process which takes time and effort. Two of the early assimilation theories that have broad application were introduced by Robert Park and Milton Gordon. Park described the assimilation process through a four-step ethnic relations cycle in which individuals or groups come into contact with each other and then begin to compete. This competition will lend itself to accommodation and finally assimilation (Martin, 2000). Milton Gordon built on Park’s theory of assimilation; however, he theorized that there are seven, not four, stages of assimilation and that individuals or groups may remain stuck indefinitely in any one of the stages (Martin, 2000). The first two stages of Gordon’s assimilation theory are cultural and structural assimilation. Cultural assimilation, as defined by Gordon, is the process of assimilation defined by Park and Burgess above. Structural assimilation is the process by which an
individual or group interacts with other individuals or groups in social contexts and have equal participation in the social institutions without regard to ethnicity (Martin, 2000). Gordon explains that achieving cultural assimilation does not guarantee that an individual or group will begin to become structurally assimilated, and then move onto the other stages of assimilation (Gordon, 1964). As noted above, one theme from the two theories of assimilation is that the assimilation process takes time and effort to be successful.

The amount of time and effort it takes for an individual or group to assimilate with another person or group varies, and is dependent on many factors. Emory Bogardus (1954) explains that many challenges to assimilation arise when an immigrant joins a host culture, because that immigrant will bring with them different cultural values, language, religion, government views and standards of living. The greater the differences between the immigrant and the host society, the slower the assimilation process will be. In Robert Park’s seminal work “The City” (1915), he notes that the segregation of racial minorities into residential clusters slows down the assimilation of an immigrant or immigrant group. He said, “that where individuals of the same race or vocation live together in segregated groups, neighborhood sentiment tends to fuse together with racial antagonisms and class interests,” which will result in a slower assimilation for that group of individuals because they are less likely to interact with members of other races or vocations (Park, 1915). Doug Massey (1981) tested the theories of ethnic segregation and social class and found that as social status increases there is a negative effect on ethnic segregation. This negative effect implies that spatially segregated ethnic groups, as their social status rises, will become assimilated with the host society and over time move freely within the host society, demonstrating spatial assimilation.
The theory of spatial assimilation describes a movement by an individual immigrant or immigrant group away from an ethnically segregated group and into a community that is primarily dominated by the ethnic majority (Alba et al, 1999; Massey, 1985; Massey and Denton, 1985). An ethnically segregated group is commonly referred to as an ethnic enclave. An ethnic enclave is a formally defined geographic space or region that is the place of residential and economic concentration of a certain ethnic group (Portes and Jensen, 1989). Building on the theory of spatial assimilation, researchers have argued that as an immigrant or ethnic group becomes more familiar with the ethnic majority’s cultural values, language, religion etc. (acculturation), and improves in economic status (social mobility), it will then move away from their initial ethnic enclave to a more spatially dispersed area among the ethnic majority (Massey, 1985; Murdie, 2010; Pamuk, 2004). As described above, this research will attempt to demonstrate that a Polish ethnic enclave does not exist in Portland, Oregon, and that the absence of an ethnic enclave will have positive impacts to the acculturation and assimilation process for first generation Polish immigrants.

The Polish community in Portland, Oregon has its beginnings in the late 19th century, when Polish immigrants met at a local Polish restaurant called the Bialy Orzel, ‘White Eagle’ (PLBA, 2010). In 1892, this group of immigrants registered with the Polish National Alliance in Chicago, Illinois and became the first nationally recognized Polish organization in Portland, Oregon (PLBA, 2010). In the beginning of the 20th century, this same group of Polish immigrants organized themselves and created the Polish Library Building Association (PLBA). This association was registered with the State of Oregon on July 8, 1911, and worked to construct the Polish Hall which was
completed in 1914 (PLBA, 2010). The PLBA is still in existence today and estimates that the number of first generation Polish immigrants in the Portland Metro Region is no more than 1,000 individuals (PLBA, 2010). Although the Polish community in the Portland Metro Region is a small percentage of the overall population, this research will provide a unique opportunity to study a small ethnic community in a mid-sized US city.

The economic and cultural node of the Polish community in the Portland Metro Region appears to be located in the Overlook neighborhood which is in north Portland, west of I-5 and north of the I-5/I-405 interchange. St. Stanislaus Polish Catholic church is located in this neighborhood as well as the Polish Library Hall and a few Polish businesses and restaurants. Although this area appears to be the node of Polish commerce and culture, it does not appear through this research that the area has many first generation Polish immigrants living in this area. Such a phenomenon is contrary to the historical settlement patterns of Polish and Eastern European immigrants to the United States, and is one of the foci of this paper.

In addition to the spatial component of this research, another purpose of the research is to determine how the presence or absence of a Polish enclave impacts the acculturation and assimilation process for first generation Polish immigrants in Portland, Oregon. A Polish enclave would be an instant social network for arriving immigrants to Portland. Boyd (1989) notes the decision for an immigrant to migrate is often influenced by the existence and participation in the social networks, connecting people from the sending country to the receiving country (Ryan et al, 2009). These transnational links are important to sustain immigration of a specific ethnicity to a specific location over time. These social networks also provide arriving immigrants with shelter, food,
infrastructure, and employment opportunities (Ryan et al, 2009). The presence of a Polish social network (enclave) in Portland, Oregon would likely encourage continued immigration from Poland, and have short-term benefits to newly arriving immigrants. However, Robert Park (1915) notes that these enclaves can impede the assimilation process when the enclave is limited to members of the immigrants’ own ethnicity. Therefore, it is anticipated that the presence of a Polish enclave in Portland, Oregon would be detrimental to the assimilation process for Polish immigrants.

Although the presence of a Polish enclave could be detrimental to the assimilation process, Polish immigrants do have inherent advantages to assimilation in the US. One major advantage is their skin color, white. There has been a surge of literature since the mid-1990s on the topic of whiteness and white privilege in the US (Bonnett, 1997; Dwyer and Jones, 2000; McIntosh, 1990). Housel (2009) defines white privilege as having a perceived control over situations, a sense of belongingness, and an image of self as legitimate, because you belong to the dominant group. Because most Polish immigrants are white, they are able to benefit from ‘white privilege’ in these ways. However, just being white does not guarantee a person access to all the benefits of whiteness. John Hartigan (2003) argues that there are marginalized whites in the US labeled ‘rednecks,’ ‘hillbillies,’ and ‘white trash’ who are not part of the mainstream constructions of whiteness and its privileges. Polish immigrants can fall from the graces of full white privilege if asked to speak or do something that reveals them as an outsider.

**METHODOLOGY**

The research aimed to answer two primary questions: 1) is there a Polish enclave in the Portland Metro Region; and 2) does the presence or absence of an enclave
positively or negatively impact the acculturation and eventual assimilation of first
generation Polish immigrants? To answer the first question, US census data for census
years from 1960 to 2010 were analyzed using Geographic Information System
technologies. The second question was answered by analyzing interviews of eight first
generation Polish immigrants living within the Portland Metro Region. A more detailed
discussion of the methodologies employed to answer the two questions above is provided
below.

POLISH ENCLAVE

To see whether a Polish enclave existed in the Portland Metro Region, this
research analyzed US census tract level data for each census year from 1960 through
2010, excluding 1980. The data were obtained from the US Census Bureau’s website
(www.census.gov, 2012). The 1980 data were not available either through the US Census
Bureau’s American Factfinder database, or the bureau’s historical census databases.
Attempts were made to locate the 1980 data through other non-census related databases,
but could not be found. The research includes data from the two prior and three
subsequent census years, so the trends and patterns that are being sought through this
research can be determined without the data from 1980. The specific data extracted from
the censuses were the number of the foreign born population born in Poland, and the total
population for each census tract in the study area. As noted above, this data was recorded
per census tract, which provided a logical means of mapping the data using GIS software.

Geographic data incorporated in the GIS database for this research were acquired
from the Regional Land Information Systems section of the Metro website
(www.oregonmetro.gov, 2012). Specific data acquired included, census tract boundaries
for each of the census years in the study, freeways, and County boundaries. The data extracted from the US census were then inputted into the appropriate attribute tables for the census tract data layers for each year in the study. With the census and GIS data combined, it was possible to manipulate and analyze the data.

Buffers of 1, 5, 10, 25 and >25 miles were created to assist in analyzing how far away Polish people were living from the central node of the Polish community (see Figure 1). For this research the Polish node or center of Polish activity was determined to be census tract 35.02 in Multnomah County, which contains St. Stanislaus’ Church, the Polish Hall, Grandpa’s Café, and the location of the annual Polish Festival. The buffers made it possible to extract how many Polish people lived in census tracts within 1, 5, 10, and 25 miles of the Polish node for each of the years of the study. This information, as well as the total population that lived within these buffers, was extracted from the GIS database. The extracted information is displayed in Tables I-V below.

In addition to the buffers, a series of choropleth maps were created that display the number of Polish people and the total population living within the study area for each
of the years studied (see Figure 2 and Appendices A-J). Choropleth maps are simply thematic maps that display patterns based on a proportional share of the statistical variable being shown. The classification scheme for the maps is a defined interval. The interval for the maps showing the number of Polish people is 15, while the interval for the maps showing the total population is 1,000. These intervals are consistent for each of the years analyzed.

**EFFECTS ON ASSIMILATION**

As noted in the historical context section of this paper, settlement patterns have an effect on the assimilation of an immigrant or immigrant group. Interviews of current Polish immigrants who live in the study area were conducted by the researcher to determine whether the current settlement patterns of Polish immigrants in the area have a positive or negative effect on the acculturation and eventual assimilation of the immigrants. Prior to recruitment and interviewing research participants, the research project was reviewed and approved by the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board. The participants were initially recruited via e-mail through the PLBA’s listserv, and by personal invitation by the researcher at special events at St. Stanislaus’ church and at the annual Polish Festival. Those who participated
were asked to recruit additional participants. A few of the later participants were found through this method, however, this method of finding participants was not very successful. In total, eight Polish immigrants participated in the study through an interview. All of the interviews with one exception were done in person at either Grandpa’s Café or St. Stanislaus church. The one exception was a phone interview. The interviews followed a schedule that asked 36 different questions in three broad categories (see Appendix K). The interviews were recorded with a digital recorder and later transcribed from the digital recordings for analysis. Because the scope of the study included only eight participants, findings from the interview data may not necessarily be able applicable beyond the Polish community in the study area.

The principles of the illustrative method were employed to analyze the qualitative data, because the primary hypothesis is that the spatial assimilation theory is no longer effective in describing the current settlement patterns of Polish immigrants. The concept of the illustrative method is to apply theories to a concrete historical situation or social setting (Neuman, 2011). The literature shows that the theory of spatial assimilation was effective in explaining and demonstrating assimilation of European immigrants from the early 1900s, based on historical settlement patterns (Allen and Turner, 1996; Massey, 1985). As noted in the historical context section of this paper, other theories that play a role in the immigration, acculturation and eventual assimilation of the Polish immigrants are the theories of structural and cultural assimilation, the theory of transnationalism, chain migration, and the theory of whiteness. The research evaluated the qualitative data against each of these theories to see whether or not these theories provide an explanation
to the immigration, settlement patterns, and assimilation of the first generation Polish immigrants in the study area.

RESULTS
GIS DATA

As noted in the methodology section above, data from each of the five census years analyzed were extracted from the GIS based on 1, 5, 10, 25, and >25 miles buffers. The buffering distances are measured from census tract 35.02 in Multnomah County, which contains St. Stanislaus Church and the Polish Hall (see Appendices A-J). The specific data extracted from the five census years were the number of census tracts within a buffer distance, the number of tract containing Polish people, the total number of Polish people, and the total number of people living within the buffer. To only account for data within a specific buffer, data from smaller buffers were subtracted from the total numbers within the larger buffer (e.g. 1 mile buffer data is subtracted from 5 mile buffer data, etc.). The data are provided in Tables I-V for each of the five census years that were studied.

Table I: 1960 Summary Statistics for All Buffers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buffer Distance</th>
<th>Number of Tracts within Buffer</th>
<th>Number of Tracts with Polish People</th>
<th>Total Number of Polish People</th>
<th>Total Population within Buffer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Mile</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>68,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Miles</td>
<td>(105 - 22) = 83</td>
<td>(97 - 18) = 79</td>
<td>(2,051 - 407) = 1,644</td>
<td>(396,078 - 68,965) = 327,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Miles</td>
<td>(190 - 105) = 85</td>
<td>(168 - 97) = 71</td>
<td>(3,188 - 2,051) = 1,137</td>
<td>(684,836 - 396,078) = 288,758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Miles</td>
<td>(243 - 190) = 53</td>
<td>(209 - 168) = 41</td>
<td>(3,564 - 3,188) = 376</td>
<td>(812,851 - 684,836) = 128,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;25 Miles</td>
<td>(245 - 243) = 2</td>
<td>(210 - 209) = 1</td>
<td>(3,571 - 3,564) = 7</td>
<td>(815,582 - 812,851) = 2,731</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table II: 1970 Summary Statistics for All Buffers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buffer Distance</th>
<th>Number of Tracts within Buffer</th>
<th>Number of Tracts with Polish People</th>
<th>Total Number of Polish People</th>
<th>Total Population within Buffer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Mile</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>58,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Miles</td>
<td>(112 - 23) = 89</td>
<td>(84 - 13) = 71</td>
<td>(1,608 - 231) = 1,377</td>
<td>(401,778 - 58,160) = 343,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Miles</td>
<td>(207 - 112) = 95</td>
<td>(155 - 84) = 71</td>
<td>(3,061 - 1,608) = 1,453</td>
<td>(817,201 - 401,778) = 415,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Miles</td>
<td>(262 - 207) = 55</td>
<td>(183 - 155) = 28</td>
<td>(3,450 - 3,061) = 389</td>
<td>(1,004,528 - 817,201) = 187,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;25 Miles</td>
<td>(264 - 262) = 2</td>
<td>(184 - 183) = 1</td>
<td>(3,450 - 3,450) = 0</td>
<td>(1,008,342 - 1,004,528) = 3,814</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table III: 1990 Summary Statistics for All Buffers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buffer Distance</th>
<th>Number of Tracts within Buffer</th>
<th>Number of Tracts with Polish People</th>
<th>Total Number of Polish People</th>
<th>Total Population within Buffer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Mile</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>52,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Miles</td>
<td>(116 - 24) = 92</td>
<td>(26 - 5) = 21</td>
<td>(329 - 63) = 266</td>
<td>(378,591 - 52,730) = 325,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Miles</td>
<td>(253 - 116) = 137</td>
<td>(199 - 26) = 173</td>
<td>(621 - 329) = 292</td>
<td>(1,028,287 - 378,591) = 649,696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Miles</td>
<td>(327 - 253) = 74</td>
<td>(262 - 199) = 63</td>
<td>(725 - 621) = 104</td>
<td>(1,409,750 - 1,028,287) = 381,463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;25 Miles</td>
<td>(328 - 327) = 1</td>
<td>(262 - 262) = 0</td>
<td>(725 - 725) = 0</td>
<td>(1,412,239 - 1,409,750) = 2,489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table IV: 2000 Summary Statistics for All Buffers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buffer Distance</th>
<th>Number of Tracts within Buffer</th>
<th>Number of Tracts with Polish People</th>
<th>Total Number of Polish People</th>
<th>Total Population within Buffer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Mile</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>58,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Miles</td>
<td>(116 - 24) = 92</td>
<td>(28 - 1) = 27</td>
<td>(324 - 6) = 318</td>
<td>(402,210 - 58,321) = 343,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffer Distance</td>
<td>Number of Tracts within Buffer</td>
<td>Number of Tracts with Polish People</td>
<td>Total Number of Polish People</td>
<td>Total Population within Buffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Miles</td>
<td>(287 - 116) = 171</td>
<td>(59 - 28) = 31</td>
<td>(843 - 324) = 519</td>
<td>(1,228,812 - 402,210) = 826,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Miles</td>
<td>(396 - 287) = 109</td>
<td>(72 - 59) = 13</td>
<td>(932 - 843) = 89</td>
<td>(1,786,320 - 1,228,812) = 557,508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;25 Miles</td>
<td>(397 - 396) = 1</td>
<td>(72 - 72) = 0</td>
<td>(932 - 932) = 0</td>
<td>(1,789,457 - 1,786,320) = 3,137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table V: 2010 Summary Statistics for All Buffers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buffer Distance</th>
<th>Number of Tracts within Buffer</th>
<th>Number of Tracts with Polish People</th>
<th>Total Number of Polish People</th>
<th>Total Population within Buffer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Mile</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>66,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Miles</td>
<td>(115 - 21) = 94</td>
<td>(20 - 3) = 17</td>
<td>(263 - 34) = 229</td>
<td>(445,831 - 66,850) = 378,981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Miles</td>
<td>(305 - 115) = 190</td>
<td>(46 - 20) = 26</td>
<td>(733 - 263) = 470</td>
<td>(1,364,425 - 445,831) = 918,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Miles</td>
<td>(454 - 305) = 149</td>
<td>(60 - 46) = 14</td>
<td>(971 - 733) = 238</td>
<td>(2,054,994 - 1,364,425) = 690,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;25 Miles</td>
<td>(457 - 454) = 3</td>
<td>(60 - 60) = 0</td>
<td>(971 - 971) = 0</td>
<td>(2,066,094 - 2,054,994) = 11,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INTERVIEW DATA

As noted in the methodology section above, eight first-generation Polish immigrants who live within the study area were interviewed. The results of the interview follow the areas of investigation in the interviews: 1) Considerations of Immigration; 2) Considerations of Settlement in Portland Area; and 3) Methods of Assimilation (see Appendix K).
Considerations of Immigration

Six of the participants noted the political climate in Poland during the 1980s as a reason for immigrating. Other reasons for deciding to immigrate included falling in love, better economic opportunities, and being forced to leave by the government. In preparing themselves to immigrate, four of the participants had studied English although only one of the participants felt their English was sufficient before immigrating. Two participants said they did nothing to prepare themselves, two had previously visited the US, and two had immigrated to another country before coming to the US. In response to what the participants did to prepare themselves for the culture of the US, six said they had done nothing, while two had said they had read a lot of material about the US, as well as reading many books written by American authors.

Of the eight participants, one immigrated to the US in the 1950s, while five came in the 1980s, one in the 1990s, and one in the 2000s. In response to whether or not the participants spoke English prior to immigrating, two said yes, one said some, three said very little, and two said no. In terms of the participants’ education prior to immigrating to the US, five participants had obtained a degree from a higher education institution (e.g. trade school, technical school, or university), while two had attended university but had not received degrees, and one had very little formal education.

Considerations of Settlement in Portland Area

Upon arrival in the US, five of the participants lived within the study area and three lived outside the study area. The two primary reasons why the participants lived in these areas are: 1) the participants were assigned; or, 2) the participants had a relative or friend living in the area. In general, the participants who had a relative or friend living in
the area moved in with the friend or relative when first immigrating to the US. Two of the participants were provided with a living situation by the Tolstoy Foundation, which is a sponsoring agency for immigrants. In response to how long the participants lived in the city they first immigrated to, two said less than one year, three said less than 10 years, one said less than 15 years, and two said they have lived there the whole time.

For the three participants who did not live within the study area when first immigrating to the US, they were asked the question of how many times they had moved before living in the study area. One participant’s first move was to the study area, while the other two participants moved twice before settling in the study area. The same three participants were asked why they decided to live in the study area. Two of the participants responded that the climate was similar to the climate in Poland. All three participants said that they or their spouse had found employment in the area prior to moving here.

In response to where the participants live today, five responded that they live in Clark County, while one participant lives in each of the other three counties in the study area (Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington). In response to why the participants decided to live in these areas, three said to be closer to work, three said they bought a house, one wanted to live closer to the central city, and one said the move was for personal reasons. Before living in the study area, only two of the participants said they had either friends or relatives living in the area. Since living in the area, none of the participants said that they have had friends or relatives from Poland immigrate to the study area.
Methods of Assimilation

To maintain their Polish culture and heritage, seven of the participants said they were involved with the Polish Hall and Library Association; six of the participants said they attend St. Stanislaus Church; three said they celebrated traditional Polish holidays; three watched Polish TV or subscribed to Polish newspapers and magazines; and other answers included attending Polish school, speaking Polish in the home, socializing with other Poles, and eating Polish foods. Seven of the participants felt it is important or very important to maintain their Polish culture and heritage. Three of the participants did express sentiments that they felt more American than Polish, or that they were more interested and involved in the American than the Polish culture. All of the participants said they stay connected with people or events in Poland. The participants said they stay connected in many ways including: Skype, newspapers, internet, phone, television, and traveling to Poland. Six of the participants indicated that maintaining these connections was important or very important. One felt obligated to keep in contact, while the last participant did not feel it was important to stay connected.

When asked how comfortable the participants felt speaking English, seven expressed some comfort level. Only one of the participants did not feel very comfortable. This one participant spoke primarily Polish in the home and worked in jobs that did not require much interaction with others, so the need to speak English was not a priority. In response to identifying times when the participants felt uncomfortable speaking English, six participants said there are seldom to no times when they feel uncomfortable. One said he has trouble when speaking English with people from other countries, while another
said he has trouble speaking English when the conversation involves scientific terminology.

The participants were asked about their current relationship status and whether or not they have been in a relationship with an American. Seven of the eight participants said they are currently in a relationship. Three of the seven participant’s relationships are with Americans. Four of the participants have ever been in a relationship with an American since immigrating to the US.

The participants were asked about their professional lives both prior to and after immigrating to the US. Before immigrating to the US, the participants’ careers included: electrical engineer, teacher, accountant, nurse, heavy construction, college student, choreographer, mechanic, and safety inspector. Currently, six of the participants are employed and two are retired. The careers of the six participants currently working in the US include: accountant, licensed insurist, engineer, interpreter, medical specialist, and maintenance mechanic.

The final four interview questions regarded owning real estate, and attending educational institutions in the US. All eight participants indicated that they owned the home that they live in. Two of the participants said that they owned additional land, and one said that they plan to shortly. Five participants said that they have attended an educational institution in the US. Of those five, three participants noted the major differences between the educational system in Poland and the US. All three noted that in Poland, college through a Master’s degree is free, and that the education is based more on the core concepts and classes, such as history, science, foreign language and not so much on elective courses. The other two participants who attended an educational institution in
the US noted that they enjoyed their experience as a student and didn’t find too many differences between the education system in the US and Poland.

ANALYSIS

The analysis below is organized to answer the two primary questions of the research: 1) is there a Polish ethnic enclave in the study area; and 2) does the presence or absence of the Polish enclave have a positive or negative effect on the acculturation and eventual assimilation of first generation Polish immigrants? Given the spatial assimilation theory, and the historical settlement patterns of Polish immigrant groups in the US, the null hypothesis to the first question is that there is a Polish ethnic enclave. The hypothesis to the second question is contingent on the answer to the first question. For example, if it is found that no ethnically segregated Polish enclave exists, then the null hypothesis is that the acculturation and assimilation process will be positively affected. Conversely, if a Polish enclave exists, then the hypothesis is that the acculturation and assimilation process will be negatively affected.

EVALUATION OF PRESENCE OF POLISH ENCLAVE

The generally accepted definition of an ethnic enclave is a residential agglomeration of a particular ethnic group. Portes and Jensen (1989) further define an ethnic enclave as a formally defined geographic space or region that is the place of not only residential but also economic concentration of the ethnic group. In the Portland metro region, the area of Polish economic and civic concentration is in the Overlook neighborhood. This neighborhood contains St. Stanislaus Catholic Church, which provides services in Polish, the Polish Hall, the Polish Library, and Grandpa’s Café. Given the presence of these businesses, organizations, and institutions all located not only
in the same neighborhood, but within the same block, it appears the concentration of
Polish commerce and civic activity is present.

The next step to determine whether a Polish enclave is present is to see whether or
not there is a residential agglomeration of Polish residents in and around the economic
and civic concentration. This research evaluated the number of Poland-born residents
within the study area at spatially defined distances from the census tract that contains the
economic and civic center of Polish activity. The spatially defined distances were
selected at 1, 5, 10, 25, and >25 miles, because at these distances it can become apparent
through visual and basic quantitative analyses whether or not there is residential
agglomeration of Polish residents. As noted in the methodology section, the data of
where Polish immigrants live was acquired from the US census, for the years 1960, 1970,
1990, 2000, and 2010. Analyzing several census years provides the ability to look at the
patterns at a temporal scale. Figures 3 and 4 below display the number of Polish
immigrants, the total population, and the spatial buffers for the data analyzed from the
first and last census years.
Figure 3: 1960 census data showing the number of Polish immigrants and the total population within census tracts that are 1, 5, 10, 25, and >25 miles from the Polish economic and civic center.
Figure 4: 2010 census data showing the number of Polish immigrants and the total population within census tracts that are 1, 5, 10, 25, and >25 miles from the Polish economic and civic center.
In comparing and analyzing these two maps it is visually clear that while the total population in the study area has increased over the past 50 years, the number of Polish immigrants has substantially decreased. In 1960, the total number of Polish immigrants in the study area was 3,571, while in 2010 that number was a mere 971. In looking at the intermediate years, the number of Polish immigrants decreases in 1970 to 3,450, in 1990 the number was 725, and in 2000 the number increases to 932. While the cause of the drastic drop in the number of Polish immigrants is unknown, it is important to note that the primary pattern in the spatial distribution of Polish immigrants remains constant through all of the analyzed years. That spatial pattern is that the majority of Polish immigrants live in a census tract that is more than 1 mile but less than 10 miles away from the economic and civic center of Polish activity (see appendices A-J).

A couple of plausible reasons for this pattern include the theory of chain migration, and the theory of distance decay. The theory of chain migration says that a pioneering immigrant in the host society provides means for another immigrant to come to the same area, and then that immigrant will do the same for future immigrants, and this pattern continues creating a ‘chain’ immigration effect (Haug, 2008). The theory of distance decay basically says that the interactions between two objects become less frequent the farther apart the two objects are. This theory is based on Tobler’s first law of geography which states that “all things are related, but near things are more related than far things” (Tobler, 2004). Another practical explanation of this pattern is that immigrants living within these buffers have remained or have moved within these buffers, but not outside of the buffers over the years. Another spatial pattern of interest help to answer whether there is a residential agglomeration of Polish immigrants is that in 1960, there
were many more census tracts within the 1 and 5 mile buffers that contained Polish immigrants than in the later census years. This pattern suggests that Polish immigrants were living closer to the economic and civic center in the mid-1900s, but that since that time the Polish immigrants are living farther away from this node and each other, which is contrary to the concept of an ethnic enclave.

Given the analysis above, it is evident that there is an economic and civic center of Polish activity in the study area. However, based on the 1960-2010 census data, it does not appear that there are highly centralized or agglomerated residential neighborhoods that are located in conjunction with the economic and civic center. Therefore, while there are aspects or perhaps remnants of a Polish enclave, it does not appear that a Polish enclave exists in the study area.

**EVALUATION OF THE IMPACTS THAT THE ABSENCE OF A POLISH ENCLAVE HAS ON THE ACCULTURATION AND ASSIMILATION OF POLISH IMMIGRANTS**

A couple of the primary assumptions of the spatial assimilation theory are that immigrants arriving in the host society will live in ethnically segregated enclaves, and that once they have assimilated they will move away from the enclave and be able to function in the host society. This research has demonstrated that a Polish ethnic enclave does not exist in the Portland metro region. Therefore, consistent with the early theories of assimilation described earlier in the paper from sociologists such as Park, Bogardus, and Gordon, an evaluation of the impacts to the acculturation and assimilation of Polish immigrants in the study area should indicate a positive effect. To measure whether or not the absence of a Polish enclave has had a positive effect on the acculturation and assimilation of the Polish immigrants, this research will evaluate the responses to the
interview questions that address the methods of assimilation. Specifically, the areas of evaluation will be on the immigrants’ English language capacity, cultural identity, interethnic relationships, educational attainments and home ownership while in the US. Because the scope of the study included only eight participants, the findings from the interview data will not necessarily be able to be applied beyond the Polish community in the study area.

The interviews conducted as part of this research provide insight and tell the story of the acculturation and assimilation of the Polish immigrants in the study area. One dimension of the acculturation and assimilation processes that is often referred to or studied to indicate whether or not the process is occurring is the ability of the immigrant to speak the language of the host country (Birman and Trickett, 2001). During the interviews, half of the participants said that they had studied English in preparation to immigrate to the US, although only one felt they had enough English speaking ability to get by in the US prior to immigrating. After living in the US, all but one of the participants stated that they felt comfortable speaking English in most circumstances. This demonstration of the immigrants’ ability to speak English and their comfort with the language is an indication that they are becoming acculturated, based on this criterion.

Another commonly identified theme to determine whether or not an immigrant is acculturating is cultural identity (Birman and Trickett, 2001, Phinney 1990). In this case, the research is really seeking to reveal with what culture the participants identify themselves. Seven of the eight participants stated that it was very important for them to maintain their Polish culture and heritage. A few of the participants did note sentiments that while it was important to maintain their native culture and heritage, they felt more
American than Polish and participated in more American cultural activities than
traditional Polish cultural activities and events. These sentiments are again a sign that
these immigrants are becoming acculturated to the American culture.

Most of the participants also stated that they were involved at some level with St.
Stanislaus Church or the Polish Hall, and all of the participants said that they kept
apprised of events, people, and places in Poland. Specific events that participants said
they kept informed of included national elections, local politics, and local sports teams.
Most of the participants said that they kept in close contact with family and friends in
Poland and would return to Poland to visit those that they had left behind. Keeping in
close contact with events and people in Poland do not assist, but rather hinder the
participants’ acculturation and assimilation.

Interethnic marriages are another criterion to evaluate if an ethnic group is
assimilating into the host society. Arias (2001) states, “one important measure of the
degree of social distance between distinct ethnic groups is the prevalence of interethnic
marriage.” Interethnic marriages fundamentally show social integration between the two
cultures involved in the marriage, and thus display structural assimilation. Of the
participants interviewed, half have been or are married to Americans. As noted above,
these marriages demonstrate a degree of structural assimilation for the participants who
were in these relationships, because the immigrants are interacting with members of
another culture in one of the most interpersonal relationship on an individual level.

The final criteria that will be analyzed to determine whether the Polish
immigrants are acculturated or assimilated are participation in formal educational
institutions in the US, and home ownership. It can be implied that an immigrant attending
and participating in educational institution in the US has sufficient social capital and a willingness to invest in the host society. Similarly, immigrants who own their home are demonstrating a willingness to invest substantial time and money in the host society. Five of the eight participants said that they had attended an educational institution in the US. Two of those five received degrees from universities, while the other three had taken classes from institutions of higher learning, but were not degree-seeking students. These investments in education demonstrate a degree of acculturation and assimilation for those who participated. In addition to the educational investments, all of the participants in the study indicated that they owned homes in the US, since immigrating. As noted above, the action of home ownership clearly demonstrates an investment of time and money in the host society.

Given the analysis above, it is clear that the participants who were interviewed as part of this research display qualities of acculturation and assimilation. Although the total number of Polish immigrants in the study area is small, it is not appropriate to generalize and infer the results of this study to the whole Polish population in the study area because the sample size is only eight participants.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effectiveness of the theory of spatial assimilation in describing the recent settlement patterns of Polish immigrants in the Portland, Oregon metro region. In mapping and analyzing the US census data, it is evident that a Polish ethnic enclave does not exist in the Portland metro region. The presence of an ethnic enclave is a necessary component of the spatial assimilation theory, which posits that arriving immigrants will reside in an ethnically segregated enclave until
a point where they are economically and socially able to leave the enclave, demonstrating assimilation. The absence of a Polish enclave means that the spatial assimilation theory cannot be used to describe the settlement patterns of Polish immigrants in the Portland metro region. Because the spatial assimilation theory cannot be used to describe current settlement patterns of Polish immigrants in the study area, it raises the question of what existing theories may be used to describe the settlement patterns, or are the settlement patterns not described by any existing theories.

One existing theory that may provide insight into the settlement patterns is the theory of whiteness. As described earlier in this paper, Polish immigrants may benefit socially and economically from the mere fact that their skin color is the same as the majority of Americans. Their skin color may allow them to avoid residential discrimination and forced segregation, thereby allowing them to immigrate and settle in a more dispersed way than traditional enclave-style immigration.

Another explanation of the dispersed settlement patterns could be that Polish immigrants living in the study area are secondary migrants. This means that Portland is not the immigrants’ arriving destination, but is a place that they had moved to after living in America and assimilating to the culture and way of life in the country. When immigrating to America, a few of the participants in this study did live in other American cities prior to living to Portland, while more than half of the participants had immigrated to cities in other countries prior to immigrating to the US and the Portland metro region. These previous immigration experiences likely gave the participants more knowledge and ability, so that when they immigrated to the study area, they did not need to rely on an enclave to immigrate and settle in the region.
This research also evaluated whether the absence of the Polish enclave had a positive impact on the acculturation and assimilation of the Polish immigrants. All of the Polish immigrants who participated in interviews met at least one, and in most cases, met many of the criteria used to evaluate the acculturation and assimilation of the participants. This could be interpreted that the absence of the Polish enclave has a positive affect on the acculturation and assimilation of Polish immigrants in the Portland metro region.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX

A: Mapped 1960 Census Data – Polish Population Distribution

1960 Polish Immigrant Distribution
Counties: Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington

Legend
County Boundary Fill
COUNTY
- Clackamas
- Clark
- Multnomah
- Washington
- tract1960_Buffer 1 Mile
- tract1960_Buffer 2 Miles
- tract1960_Buffer 10 Miles
- tract1960_Buffer 25 Miles

1960_Polish_Immigrants
Number of Immigrants
- 3 - 15
- 16 - 30
- 21 - 45
- 46 - 90
- 91 - 150
- 100 - 129
- 121 - 125

0 4 8 16 24 32 Miles
B: Mapped 1960 Census Data – Total Population Distribution

1960 Total Population Distribution
Counties: Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington

Legend
- County Boundary Fill
- Clackamas
- Clark
- Multnomah
- Washington
- 1960 Census Tracts
- 1960 Total Population
- Population Per Census Tract
  - 100 - 1000
  - 1001 - 2000
  - 2001 - 3000
  - 3001 - 4000
  - 4001 - 5000
  - 5001 - 6000
  - 6001 - 7000
  - 7001 - 8000
  - 8001 - 9000
  - 9001 - 10000
  - Inset1960_Buffer 1 Mile
  - Inset1960_Buffer 5 Miles
  - Inset1960_Buffer 10 Miles
  - Inset1960_Buffer 25 Miles

Scale: 0 5 10 20 30 40 Miles

N
1970 Polish Immigrant Distribution
Counties: Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington

Legend
County Boundary Fill
COUNTY
- Clackamas
- Clark
- Multnomah
- Washington
tract1970_Buffer_1 Mile
tract1970_Buffer_5 Miles
tract1970_Buffer_10 Miles
tract1970_Buffer_25 Miles
tract19/0_Buffer_Polish_Speaking
Polish_Spe
- 0 - 15
- 16 - 50
- 51 - 45
- 46 - 60
- 61 - 75
- 1970 Census Tracts
D: Mapped 1970 Census Data – Total Population Distribution

1970 Total Population Distribution
Counties: Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington
1990 Polish Immigrant Distribution
Counties: Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington
1990 Total Population Distribution
Counties: Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington
2000 Polish Immigrant Distribution
Counties: Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington
H: Mapped 2000 Census Data – Total Population Distribution

2000 Total Population Distribution
Counties: Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington
2010 Polish Immigrant Distribution
Counties: Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington

Legend
County Boundary Fill
COUNTY
- Clackamas
- Clark
- Multnomah
- Washington
- iso2010_Buffer 1 Mls
- iso2010_Buffer 5 Mls
- iso2010_Buffer 10 Mls
- iso2010_Buffer 25 Mls
2010_Polish_Immigrants
Number of Immigrants
- 4 - 15
- 16 - 30
- 31 - 45
- 46 - 60
- 60+
- 2010 Census Tracts

1: Mapped 2010 Census Data – Polish Population Distribution
J: Mapped 2010 Census Data – Total Population Distribution

2010 Total Population Distribution
Counties: Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington

Legend
County Boundary Fill
COUNTY
Clackamas
Clark
Multnomah
Washington
Red 2010, Buffer 4 miles
Red 2010, Buffer 1 mile
Red 2010, Buffer 1/2 mile
Green 2010, Buffer 2 miles
Green 2010, Buffer 1 mile
Green 2010, Buffer 1/2 mile
2010_Total_Population
Population Per Census Tract
0 - 1,000
1,001 - 2,000
2,001 - 3,000
3,001 - 4,000
4,001 - 5,000
5,001 - 6,000
6,001 - 7,000
7,001 - 8,000
8,001 - 9,000
9,001 - 10,000
10,001 - 12,000
12,001+ Census Tracts

Scale
0 5 10 20 30 40 Miles

N
K: Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

A. Pre-immigration

1. What were the reasons that you immigrated to the United States?
2. What did you do to prepare yourself to immigrate?
3. How did you prepare yourself for the culture in the United States?
4. When did you immigrate to the United States?
5. Did you speak English prior to immigrating to the United States?
6. What level of education did you obtain prior to immigrating to the United States?

B. Considerations of settlement in Portland

1. When you first immigrated to the United States, in what city did you live?
   a. Why did you immigrate to that city?
   b. How long did you live in that city?
   c. How did you find a place to live in that city?
2. How many times did you move before living in Portland?
   a. Describe the reasons for moving?
3. Why did you decide to live in the Portland area?
4. What city or neighborhood do you live in today?
   a. Why did you decide to live there?
   b. How did you find a place to live in the Portland area?
   c. After living in Portland, how many times did you move prior to your current residence?
5. Prior to living in Portland, did you have any friends or relatives living in the area?
   a. Have any of your friends or relatives moved to the Portland area after you moved here?

C. Methods of assimilation

1. What do you do to maintain your Polish culture and heritage?
   a. How important is it for you to maintain your Polish culture and heritage?
2. Do you stay connected with people or events in Poland?
   a. How do you maintain these connections?
   b. Describe how important it is to you to keep these connections?
3. How comfortable to do feel when you speak English?
   a. Are there times when you feel uncomfortable with your ability to speak English? If so, explain when those times are?
4. Are you in a relationship with another person?
   a. Is the person you are in a relationship with, an American?
b. Have you ever been in a relationship with an American since immigrating to the United States?

5. Are you currently employed?
   a. What is your current profession?
   b. What professions, if any, did you have before immigrating to the United States?

6. Do you own your home that you live in?
   a. Do you own any homes or land in the United States?

7. Are you or have you been a student at an educational institution in the United States?
   a. Describe your experiences as a student?