

Summer 2009

Searching for a New Brand: reimagining a more divers Orlando

Kevin Archer

Central Washington University, kevin.archer@cwu.edu

Kris Bezdecny

California State University, Los Angeles, kbezdec@calstatela.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/faculty_graduate_school



Part of the [Behavioral Economics Commons](#), [Economic History Commons](#), [Labor Economics Commons](#), [Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#), and the [Regional Economics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

2009, Archer, K. & Bezdecny, K. Searching for a new brand: Reimagining a more diverse Orlando, *Southeastern Geographer*, 49, pp. 185–199.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship and Creative Works at ScholarWorks@CWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Faculty Scholarship for the School of Graduate Studies and Research by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@CWU. For more information, please contact pingfu@cwu.edu.



PROJECT MUSE®

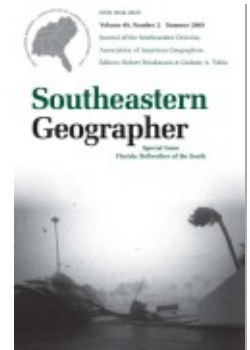
Searching for a New Brand: Reimagining a More Diverse
Orlando

Kevin Archer, Kris Bezdecny

Southeastern Geographer, Volume 49, Number 2, Summer 2009, pp. 185-199
(Article)

Published by The University of North Carolina Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/sgo.0.0042>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/263456>

Searching for a New Brand

Reimagining a More Diverse Orlando

KEVIN ARCHER

University of South Florida

KRIS BEZDECNY

University of South Florida

INTRODUCTION

It is now well-documented that, in these increasingly globalizing and post-industrial times, urban authorities must pay close attention to the images their cities project in order to attract increasingly footloose capital and highly-educated professionals (Amen et al. 2006; Florida 2003). Constructing a positive image is a crucial part of packaging the city as a place to be consumed. In this context, Orlando, Florida (Figure 1) seemingly has led a charmed life since the arrival of Disney company in the early 1970s, as the overwhelming image projected by this place-partner is one fitted to the needs of post-industrial firms and professionals alike (Bartling 2007; Fogle-song 2001). The Disney image of good, clean, down-home fun and ultimate safe escape from the vicissitudes of normal street-life provided the growing metropolis of Orlando just what was needed as advanced economies began restructuring toward increasingly post-industrial pursuits.

This sanitized image of Orlando was reinforced by the city's own history. A small agricultural and transportation crossroads town in the middle of a wide swath of equally agricultural central Florida, Orlando had not experienced the growth of

industry and the rapid urbanization that this generally entails by the time Disney arrived. As a result, there was no built or social sediment of industrialism that needed to be re-imagined for the new post-industrial times. This has proven to be a distinct advantage. Neighboring Tampa, for example, has had a difficult time attempting to smother a previous built and social past of manufacturing, heavy industrial port facilities, working class neighborhoods of color, and other industrial remainders in order to project an image more suited to the times (Archer 1996). Indeed, Tampa's trouble in doing this—most recently exemplified by the unevenly successful attempt to bury the city of Tampa within the more blanched, leisurely evoked image of "Tampa Bay" which includes coastal St. Petersburg and Clearwater—serves to underscore Orlando's post-industrial advantage. Orlando, in this respect, can be considered a thoroughly post-industrial metropolitan area arising, as it has, on a virtually featureless pre-industrial plain.

This, in itself, would be a reason for urbanists to study Orlando closely. In this piece, we will focus specifically on emerging problems maintaining the hitherto successful Disneyesque image of the place. The metropolitan area has grown extremely

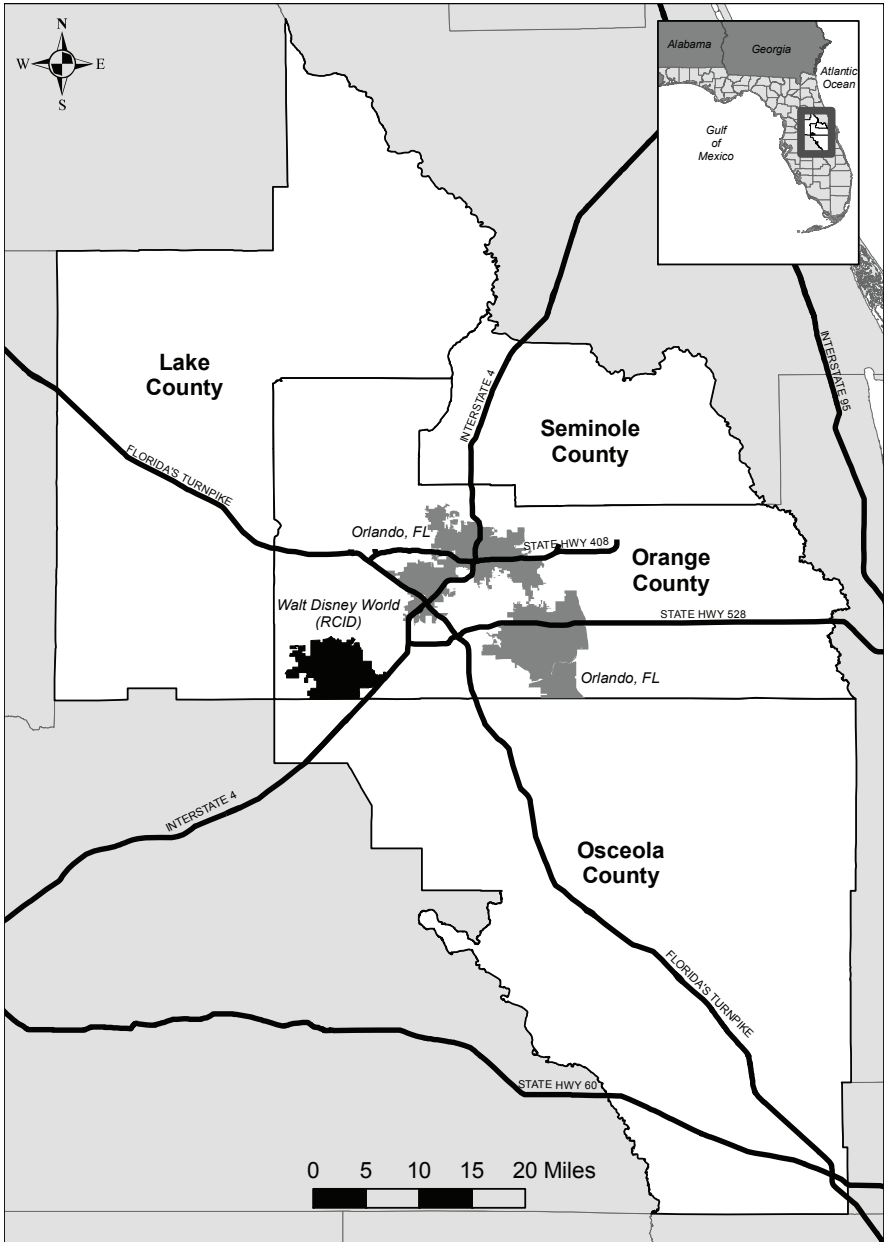


Figure 1. Orlando and central Florida.

rapidly in the last four decades as a result of this success, taking up a much larger swath of central Florida territory in its wake (Archer 2006; Hiaasen 1998). With this rapid growth, however, has come the problem of extending the Disney veneer over an increasingly un-Disney-like built and social environment. It is not just the territorial spread of ever-more kitchy, non-Disney roadside attractions that is cracking this veneer, but also the rapid growth in the numbers of the very people who help construct and maintain it or otherwise live and work beneath its hegemonic surface. As Disney has greatly expanded its own attractions within its vast territory, and as it has been joined in the area by many other tourist attractions both major (like Sea World and Universal Studios) and minor (all the various other “worlds” dotting the metropolitan area), there has been an explosion of mostly low-wage tourist-related jobs both at the attractions themselves and in the myriad hotels and restaurants that cater to visitors. As discussed below, while it might have been relatively simple early on—in what one commentator has called the marriage between Orlando and “the Mouse”—to imagineer (a Disney term meaning the combination of imagination and engineering) a safe, delightful image of the metropolitan area, this is no longer possible precisely because of this early success (Foglesong 2001). Indeed, as the metropolitan population has exploded and ethnically diversified it has become increasingly impossible for local authorities, both public and private, simply to “engineer” such a Disneyesque “image” of the place.

Overall, the increasing commodification of city-space has resulted in vigorous place competition on local, regional, and

increasingly global scales. This has, in turn, created inequities both between competing places and within those places, especially as public resources are used in the attempt to maintain an image that will lead professionals and firms to select a specific place over other alternatives. Orlando, for example, invests heavily to establish and maintain an image of a post-industrial, professionally attractive metropolis in ascendancy on the global scale (Hood and Bachmann 1997; Dyer 2006b). Ultimately realizing that the social and built results of Orlando’s low-wage economic foundation was increasingly detrimental to this quest, local authorities at the Economic Commission of Mid-Florida Inc. launched a \$17.5 million dollar campaign in 2000 to create a more “high-tech” professional image of the metropolitan area (Burnett 2000). Even more recently, the Orlando/Orange County Convention and Visitors Bureau launched a two-year \$68 million campaign with the branding catch phrase: Orlando “built for families, made for memories” in an obvious attempt to recover some of the earlier Disneyesque magic (Kassab 2006). As a result, even today Orlando is not often imagined for its social problems that have rendered it, according to recent accounts, one of the “top U.S. cities for crime” (Daily Mail 2008) and even one of the “25 most dangerous places in America” (Allman 2007). Rather, it is best known the world over as being, quite literally, the happiest place on earth (Haberfield 2000).

In the end, creating and maintaining an image that successfully attracts professionals and firms is no easy feat. It requires the suppression of any local characteristics that might otherwise sully the place-image being marketed. It is our contention, how-

ever, that suppressing such contrary characteristics is no longer as effective as in the past and may soon be impossible in Orlando as a direct result of the growth and ethnic diversification of the metropolitan population. Increasingly, diverse and even contrary voices are being heard more often in the mix of local discourse and political interest.

THE PERSISTENCE OF PRE-WORLD ORLANDO

In a short article it is impossible to substantiate fully this last claim. Here we focus specifically on the nature and what we consider the significance of the very rapid growth of the Latino, particularly Puerto Rican, population of Orlando. To the extent that this growing population finds its voice in the local governance of the metropolitan area, significant changes in local government as well as in Orlando's overall image will likely occur. Both are likely to be much more a matter of political negotiation and less a matter of engineering, however imaginative. To contextualize this assertion, however, it is necessary to describe the traditional ethnic relations of the place. Before Disney established its World some 20 miles to the southwest of downtown, Orlando's real world was Black and White like most other small agricultural towns of the South. Blacks and Whites lived and worked in relative close proximity but in strict isolation from each other, socially and spatially. Racial boundaries were strictly enforced and hierarchies maintained from slave times through those of Jim Crow all the way to Disney times (Kassab 2003). When such boundaries were transgressed—such as in 1888 when “an Irishman distinguished himself”

by running local blacks out of the polls (Bacon 1977, pg 173), or when some Blacks attempted to vote in 1920, only to be chased away again to find later that their entire community, Ocoee, had been set to full torch (Gannon 1996; *Orlando Sentinel* 2001; Ortiz 2005)—the violent terror tactics of the slave period were rehearsed to put Blacks fully back into their place. The “community” of the Orlando area was really a community of communities with local diversity forcibly smothered under what former Mayor Carl Langford calls its small-town “sleepy” agricultural façade (Langford 1976).

Significantly, Orlando was the very last city in Florida to deny Blacks the right to vote, only finally extending this right as a result of State legislation in 1950 (Bacon 1977). Such exclusionary politics provided the context within which things got done, or engineered, as a result of decisions made at the top of the ethnic and gendered political hierarchy, with little input or oversight from the rest of the community. Indeed, this good ole Southern White boy political tradition fit very well with the rural small-town nostalgia of Walt Disney in his quest to solve what he considered to be the urban problems of the 1960s. His Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT) was to be equally small, with problems engineered away by experts, not discussed and debated endlessly by non-expert residents more democratically (Fjellman 1992; Watts 1997).

Pre-World Orlando thus set the socio-spatial stage for the Orlando that exists today. As late as the 1970s, Black youths were recorded as being critical of what they considered to be local politics modeled fully on those that “had long governed the Old South” (Judge 1973, p

601). The first attempt to recount the history of the Black community—significantly published as late as 1991—drew the conclusion that:

the city of Orlando, as a whole, has become prosperous economically, politically, and educationally. However, when evaluated with the success of Orlando as a whole, the black community falls short in all of these areas (Argett 1991, p 41).

As a more recent newspaper article describes, not much has changed since. Post-World Orlando still retains a Black-White foundation of socio-spatial isolation and mutual suspicion. It is a city divided between largely rich White eastern neighborhoods with highrise “condos” and “boutiques,” and largely poor Black western neighborhoods with deteriorating material and social infrastructures. As the author puts it, this divide is actually physically marked by railroad tracks (and Interstate Highway 4) whereby on the east side, the *right* side of the tracks, “are picket fences. On the west, barbed wire” (Santich 2001).

This is not a unique history among those of small Southern agricultural towns. What is significant is that it is a major part of Orlando and its history, a city geographically located quite far from the true slave South. While slavery did exist in Orlando in the decade preceding the Civil War (Gore 1951), Black-White relations in Orlando were actively imagineered spatially and socially in a largely non- and mostly post-slavery context. The prevailing image of the place went a long way toward maintaining its socio-spatial order. Orlando politics, in this context, was not considered something with which local Blacks should concern themselves. Again, this

small-town authoritarianism appealed to Walt Disney’s sense of the need to control an increasingly out-of-control urban world (Watts 1997). This made what has been called the “marriage” between Orlando and the Disney Company, at least in the beginning, quite compatible (Foglesong 2001).

AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER,
A MARRIAGE TO INCREASINGLY
FORGET

By the time Disney established itself in the area in the 1970s, Orlando was thus socially and spatially segregated and, even after Disney, Orlando’s traditional Black community has been largely left out of the Disney success story both in its built and social environment (Archer 1996; O’Brian 2007). In this respect, the Black community, until very recently, has been rendered largely invisible and politically voiceless beneath the imagineered, Disneyesque veneer in much the same manner as it was throughout Orlando’s pre-Disney past. Black-White tensions have been largely shrouded in the consciously created image of the city as a clean, safe, professional family-friendly environment. Yet, again, recent changes in the population mix of the metropolitan area suggest that this shroud is beginning to wear thin. To understand why this is the case, however, necessitates a brief look at the evolution of the Disney-Orlando relationship.

There are now enough accounts of the results of Disney’s arrival in the Orlando area to obviate a full rehearsal (Fjellman 1992; Archer 1997; Hiaasen 1998; Foglesong 2001). Here, we will merely underscore three issues. First, by locating its theme parks deep within its 43 square

miles of territory some 20 miles southwest of downtown Orlando, Disney ensured that the future metropolitan area would be territorially stretched in both social and built terms. Being located near Disney property is good for both non-Disney businesses and Disney's increasing numbers of low-wage workers alike. This territorial stretch of the built and social environment away from the traditional downtown area signified, and continues to signify, a major threat to the ability of traditional Orlando authorities to exert control over the entire metropolitan area. This is certainly the case when the built environment does not maintain Disney quality standards and, more importantly, when the social environment increasingly consists of migrants, particularly ethnic minorities, who have not been properly disciplined to the traditional ethnic order of historical Orlando.

Second, because the Florida legislature gave this private company so much public political power, including an autonomous governmental entity (the Reedy Creek Improvement District) and the ability to float public municipal bonds for its development needs, Disney emerged and evolved as a rival local political power purveying sometimes collaborative and yet sometimes quite competitive, even adverse, development policies with regard to the metropolitan area as a whole (Hiaasen 1998; Foglesong 2001). The power of Disney in local politics remains considerable, but certainly was quite overwhelming in the beginning. That Disney had such power over local public affairs was bound to cause conflict in the marriage between the Company and local officials. And that Disney's location far down the road from the traditional city created new infrastructural and public management needs in-

cluding ever more congested built and social environments and commuting flows not under the jurisdiction of Disney itself, has indeed become a quite contentious social and political issue over the years.

Finally, the very nature of Disneyesque development needs to be emphasized. Disney's presence in Orlando became a very powerful agglomerative magnet for similar firms in the tourist-entertainment sectors. That rapidly growing employment in these sectors was, and remains, mostly low-wage with few benefits and high turnover rates, has resulted in a growing local population that is both economically marginal and, yet, potentially politically active based on their material needs. This population is also increasingly diverse (ethnically) further suggesting much change in the social mix of the metropolitan area as a whole. In short, Disneyesque development itself has rendered Orlando much like a vulnerable single-industry town in this respect: it is based on highly cyclical sectors of relatively low-paid, service-sector jobs filled by an ever-growing, ethnically diverse workforce.

ORLANDO'S POST-WORLD SPECTERS OF CHANGE

In this evolving developmental context it is far more difficult to maintain the ever-happy Disney image for the metropolitan area as a whole. Certainly, parts of the area appear to fit this image, like Disney's own town of Celebration or, indeed, Disney Downtown itself, or the east side of Orlando's railroad tracks, or much of Seminole County, for example. But these areas, isolated and controllable as they are developed and maintained to be, are increasingly being surrounded by built and social

otherness that is much less easily imagined in a Disneyesque way. Even local authorities now recognize this, though attempts have been made to mitigate this through highly selective annexation of surrounding areas (Brewington et al. 2003). As a result, former mayor Glenda Hood recently intimated that, while Disneyfied Orlando has become a global household word, which should be considered a good thing, it is a word that is too associated with a certain type of socio-economic development increasingly considered a not-so-good thing. What is needed, she continued, is a new “brand” for Orlando, one less connected to tourism and entertainment and more to the new economy of information and high-technology and global economic competitiveness (Hood 2002). Whether or not her choice to resurrect the old Orlando motto of the “New City Beautiful” will do this trick is open to debate; but the message remains. Buddy Dyer, the present mayor, has through his two terms repeated the substance of it: Orlando, to be globally competitive, needs to re-imagineer itself (Dyer 2006a; Dyer 2006b).

Whether this attempt to re-imagineer Orlando will be successful (however this may be judged) is, as yet, unclear. Our point is that such an attempt at re-imagineering was made necessary by the increasing visibility of the evolving and diversifying socio-spatial elements of the metropolitan area from beneath the traditionally imagined Disneyesque façade. The rest of this article will focus specifically on one of these elements: the growing population of Hispanics, especially Puerto Ricans, in the area. Before turning to this, however, it is important to at least notice here that the Black population is also changing. Orlando

has become an important destination of what one demographer has called the “new great migration” of Blacks back to the south (Frey 2004). While Atlanta remains the prime destination for these new internal migrants, Orlando has been steadily increasing its share. Indeed, between 1995 and 2006 it is estimated that, while the total population of the Orlando metropolitan area increased by 46 percent, its Black population increased by as much as 80 percent. These numbers are projected to be 65 percent and 85 percent respectively between 2006 and 2030 (BEBR 2008). Of significance is that these internal migrants are coming from different, mostly northern, regions and they are, according to Frey, mostly college-educated. This is precisely the type of outside, undisciplined influence that is likely going to change the way things are done, and then branded, in Orlando.

ORLANDO BECOMES A MAJOR PART OF THE “NEW LATIN NATION”

Based on the results of the 2000 Census, many are arguing that the United States is rapidly becoming Latinized, not just regionally anymore, but nation-wide, given trends in migration and birth-rates. The number of Hispanics in the U.S. represented 12.5 percent of the total population of the country, having grown approximately 58 percent in the last decennial period compared to a growth rate of 13 percent for the national population as a whole (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). In 2003, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that by 2050, non-Hispanic whites will be only half of the total population while Hispanics will account for close to 25 percent.

Table 1. Change in Hispanic population over time in the Orlando region, 1980–2000.

	1980		1990		2000		1990– 2000
	Total Spanish Origin	Percent Spanish Origin	Total Hispanic Origin	Percent Hispanic Origin	Total Hispanic or Latino	Percent Hispanic or Latino	Percent Increase of Hispanic Population
Orlando city	5,024	3.9%	14,121	8.6%	32,510	17.5%	130.22%
Lake County	2,255	2.2%	4,305	2.8%	11,808	5.6%	174.29%
Orange County	19,726	4.2%	64,946	9.6%	168,361	18.8%	159.23%
Osceola County	1,089	2.2%	12,866	11.9%	50,727	29.4%	294.27%
Seminole County	5,157	2.9%	18,606	6.5%	40,731	11.1%	118.91%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

These demographic trends are leading to the formation of what Portes (2007) calls a “new Latin nation,” much more diverse and much more Hispanicized.

Orlando has become a significant magnet for this new Hispanic population (Table 1). Between 1995 and 2006, for example, the Hispanic population of the metropolitan area grew by as much as 182 percent, mostly in Orange and Osceola counties. Whereas in 1995, only 11 percent of the region’s population was Hispanic, this group represented an estimated 22 percent of the total population of Orlando city in 2006. These rapid growth trends will likely continue, with the growth rate of the metropolitan Hispanic community projected to increase by another 145 percent between 2006 and 2030. By the latter date, Hispanics will represent as much as 33 percent of the Orlando metropolitan region’s total population (BEBR 2008).

Besides the raw trends of growing ethnic diversity in the metropolitan region (Blacks are projected to increase their proportion of the total population of Orlando

city from 12 percent in 1995 to fully 17 percent by 2030), the importance of this increasing Latinization of the region is twofold. First, the new Hispanic population is locating in a distinct pattern, favoring southern and eastern Orange and adjacent Osceola Counties (Figures 2 and 3). These areas include mostly new developments in the continuing stretch of the region’s territory. The Hispanic population of Orange County, for example, represented only 13 percent of the total in 1995, but an estimated 24 percent by 2006. By 2030, Hispanics will account for an estimated 36 percent of the county total. Similarly, whereas Hispanics accounted for 17 percent of the total population of Osceola County in 1995, by 2006 this was estimated to be as high as 40 percent. Finally, by 2030 the Hispanic population is projected to account for as much as 53 percent of the county total (BEBR various years).

That this new Hispanic population came to be located within the metropolitan region in this distinct way is the result of both immigrant networking as well as the need

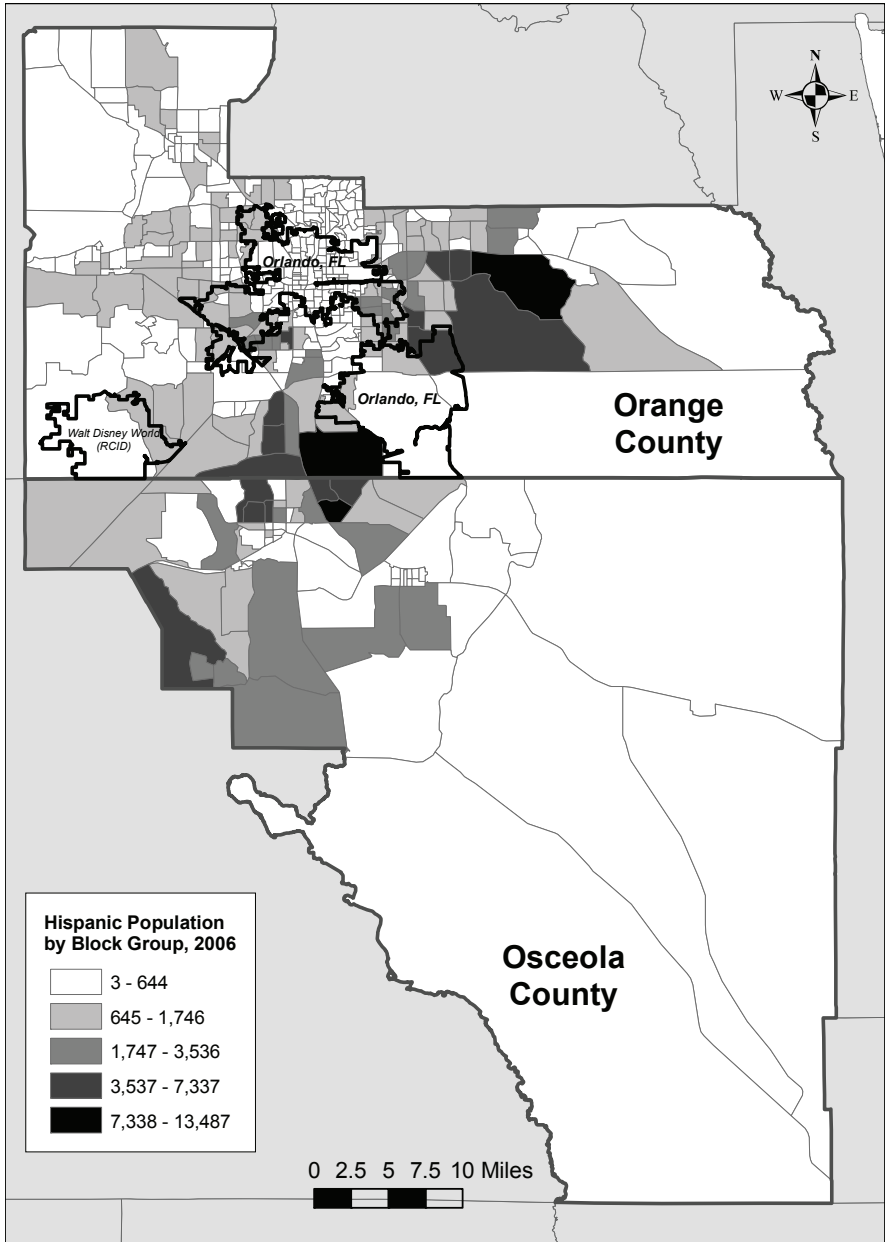


Figure 2. Hispanic population by block group. Data Source: ESRI Demographic Dataset 2006.

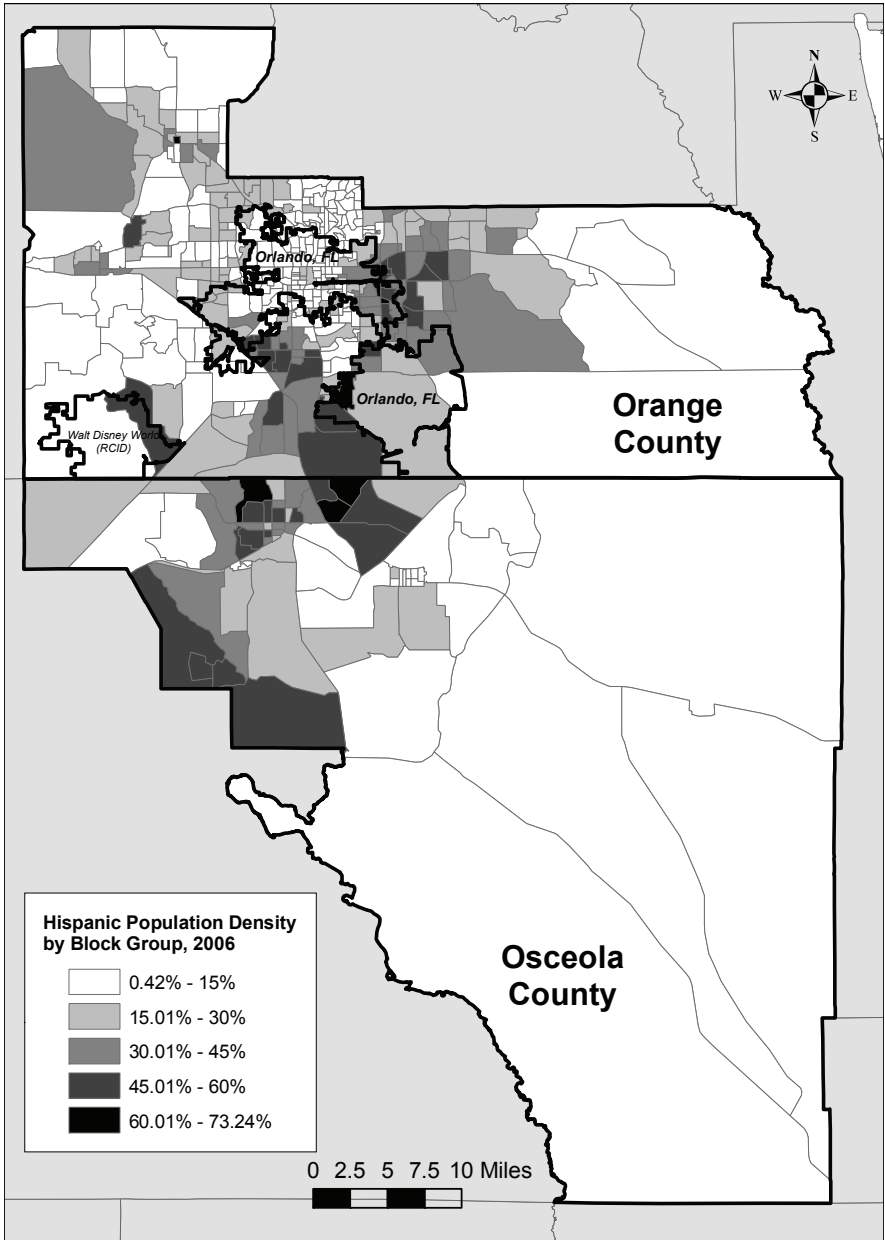


Figure 3. Hispanic population concentration by block group. Data Source: ESRI Demographic Dataset 2006.

for affordable housing in less congested areas of the metropolitan region. For our purposes, this pattern of location is important because it is another form of the socio-spatial stretch of Orlando, increasingly beyond the ideological and managerial reach of traditional city authorities. This, ironically, was partially the result of earlier choices made not to annex regions near downtown into the city in order to disenfranchise mostly minority populations impacted by city decisions (Brewington et al. 2003).

The second aspect of this Latinization of Orlando of importance is its very nature. By far the fastest growing and now most numerous Hispanic group in the metropolitan region consists of Puerto Ricans. While some Puerto Ricans came to locate as agricultural workers in the area in the 1940s and 1950s, there has been an explosion of immigration to Orlando in more recent decades rendering the metropolitan area now the fourth largest in terms of total Puerto Rican population after New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago (Duany 2002; Duany and Matos-Rodriguez 2005). This immigration was initially facilitated by the purchase of local land by many individual Puerto Ricans attracted by lower living costs, comfortable climate, and proximity to the island, including a large tract developed by the son of a former governor of Puerto Rico in the 1970s (Schneider 2001). It was also the result of active recruitment by Disney and other tourist-related businesses to fill its ever-growing number of jobs. Of significance is that this immigration has come not only from the island itself but also from internal sources, particularly from northern cities, which have gone through no little industrial restructuring and job losses. Of the esti-

mated total Hispanic population of the metropolitan area in 2006, over 50 percent is Puerto Rican with the closest national rival being Mexican at about 12 percent (Padilla 2001; U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

THE EVOLVING “ORLANDORICAN” PHENOMENON

In terms of the current plot this is a very significant trend. In general, the most recent Puerto Rican immigrants to the Orlando area have been relatively more educated, skilled, and white-collar than either their farm worker ethnic forebears or other Hispanic immigrants like Mexicans who are generally lower-skilled and mostly blue-collar. Like the earlier Cuban immigrants to south Florida, Puerto Ricans represent a new population with aspirations of social and economic progress and full participation in metropolitan social and political life. This is not entirely the case, of course, as many work in the same menial low-end tourist-entertainment sectors that other Hispanics, particularly Mexicans, dominate (Hernandez Cruz 2002). But, according to most accounts, Puerto Ricans, both from the island and from northern cities of the mainland, are generally more middle-class and white-collar professional than other Hispanics, save for the longer located Cuban population of the area (Duany 2002; Duany and Matos-Rodriguez 2005; Fishkind and Associates 2006).

But, importantly, Puerto Ricans are not Cubans. Cubans have long dominated the Hispanic scene in Florida as mostly conservative Republican stalwarts on the local and national scales. They also have the reputation of being quite discriminatory in their relations with other, especially more “colored,” Hispanic groups as well as with

the native African-American population of south Florida (Aja 2006). Lipman (2000) even suggests that Puerto Ricans specifically targeted the Orlando area for relocation because south Florida is dominated by Cubans, leaving little opportunity for other Hispanics to have a voice in the community. Indeed, as the recent presidential elections have made clear, the Puerto Rican dominated Hispanic community of Orlando is more than likely to be liberal and Democrat in outlook. If it is true, as Duany and Matos-Rodriguez (2005) contend, that central Florida continues to be a "mecca" for Puerto Rican immigrants, this suggests a major new force in the traditionally quite conservative politics of the Orlando metropolitan region.

Other characteristics of the rapidly growing Puerto Rican population in the area reinforce this impression. Most Puerto Ricans, particularly those coming from the Island, initially identify themselves racially as "White," when Census prompted, much like Cubans generally do (Duany 2002; Duany and Matos-Rodriguez 2005). This is a complicated issue which has to do both with the island's long colonial status with Spain and the United States, and the relationship between those born on the island and those not (Duany 2002). However derived, this image is important in the context of metropolitan Orlando because Puerto Ricans for the most part see themselves as equal, not inferior, in racial status with even the traditional local elite. This self-understood White privilege renders this population much more likely to make demands on behalf of the entire Hispanic community within the local social context. This White privilege is also reinforced by the fact that Puerto Ricans, unlike many other Hispanic immi-

grants, arrive having full U.S. citizenship rights and usually higher English language proficiency skills due to the island's continuing colonial status. Finally, that Puerto Ricans (especially from the island) also have a cultural tradition of extremely high turnouts for democratic elections suggests that the Puerto Rican voice will be heard quite loudly in local elections to come (Lipmann 2000; Camara-Fuentes 2004).

There is certainly also a class aspect to this assumed White privilege on the part of many Puerto Ricans suggesting a more white-collar, educated, professional self-image which succeeds more in separating this Hispanic community from others, particularly Mexicans, consisting of more people of color in lower socioeconomic classes. Indeed, this is a separation which can also be signaled by the preference for the label of Hispanic (White) over Latino/a (Colored) in the very process of self-labeling the larger community (Aja 2006). As mentioned, this has certainly been an issue in the relations between Cubans and other Latin Americans in south Florida. Nevertheless, we do not think that this is likely to be the story in the Orlando area because the growing Puerto Rican population is a full mixture of immigrants from both the island itself and from other cities of the mainland. Many mainland immigrants retain some of this White self-image, to be sure, but they are also more likely to see themselves within the American context as an ethnic minority both as a result of more working class family origin from northern industrial cities and their actual experience with active racial discrimination (Duany 2002). Puerto Ricans from the mainland increasingly relocating to Orlando are thus more likely to identify and sympathize with other people of color in-

cluding, importantly, those of African origin. In the end, it is still too early to determine the precise ways this rapidly growing, generally less conservative Hispanic voice will impact local politics and the on-going imagineering of Orlando. It is already clear from the national elections, however, that significant change may be afoot.

PRE-WORLD ORLANDO MEETS
POST-WORLD ORLANDO

The Black and White, bifurcated town of Orlando that found itself ‘married to the mouse’ (Foglesong 2001) in the early 1970s is now rapidly diversifying its ethnic-base and attempting some marital separation, at least in terms of its image. City Hall recently has become fond of underscoring that ethnic diversity in the metropolitan area will attain a level by 2015 that the rest of the country will not reach until 2055 (Orlando Economic Development Commission 2007). This, local leaders believe, is a significant advantage for Orlando in the ever increasingly global place-competition for professionals and firms. In fact, it is quite remarkable that this small, white-washed cross-roads town of the 1960s, has become what we have argued is a quintessentially post-industrial multicultural metropolitan region in the early 21st Century. This is a region that, by 2006 estimates, had a combined Black-Hispanic population which amounted to as much as 37 percent of the total and that, by projection, will amount to as much as 50 percent of the total by 2030 (*BEBR* 2008). And these estimates, conservatively biased as they already are, leave out the growing Asian population identified in the area.

For our purposes, this rapidly growing ethnic diversity in the metropolitan area

portends change in the way Orlando traditionally has done business, both privately and publicly. While the pre-World Orlando Black community was mostly disciplined into silence and then largely ignored when the World arrived, the newly arrived Black population is unlikely to be so disciplined, either economically or politically. It really matters, as City Hall touts, that Orlando now ranks third in the nation for Black net migration, but perhaps not for the reasons it suggests (Orlando Economic Development Commission 2007). Again, this is a growing population that is more likely to raise a local voice for the entire community. In terms of our brief focus on the increasing Hispanic presence, the emphasis has been on the diversity within it, particularly in terms of Puerto Rican specificity. We have argued that it matters that the largest and fastest growing Hispanic population in Orlando is Puerto Rican because of the specific cultural traits this community exudes. Indeed, the more profound context of this stance is that labels like Hispanic or Latino/a hide as much as they render clear. For present purposes, however, it is merely necessary to suggest that this particular Hispanic community is also unlikely to be disciplined in the Black-White southern style.

But perhaps we overstate. If, with the help of mainland immigrants, the Puerto Rican community discards its self-image of White privilege and identifies more with the plight of their less economically successful, equally Hispanic-Latino/a neighbors—then a true Hispanic or Latino/a community could be forged. And if, writ larger, this scenario were to include an increasing identification with other local sub-altern ethnic and class communities, particularly Blacks, to forge a truly di-

verse community, then Orlando would very shortly lose its traditionally white-bread, class-color diversity-ignorant, private-public power structure and resulting (self)-image. Yet at this point, this is merely a social project yet to be achieved. Our goal here has been to explain how the changing dynamics of Orlando are creating a foundation on which such a project could be built.

REFERENCES

- Aja, A. 2006. The intra-immigrant dilemma. *New Politics* 10(4). Accessed at <http://www.wpunj.edu/newpol/issue40/Aja40.htm>.
- Allman, T.D. 2007. The theme-parking, mega-churching, franchising, McMansioning of America. *National Geographic* 211(3):96–115.
- Amen, M.M., K. Archer, and M.M. Bosman, eds. 2006. *Relocating global cities: From the center to the margins*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Archer, K. 1996. The limits to the imagineered city: Sociospatial polarization in Orlando. *Economic Geography* 73(3):322–336.
- . 2006. The Disneyfication of central Florida. In *The encyclopedia of southern culture volume 2: Geography*, editor. R. Pillsbury, 45-49. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Argett Jr., L. 1991. *A history of the black community of Orlando, Florida*. Fort Bragg, CA: Cypress House Press.
- Bacon, E. 1977. *Orlando: A centennial history, volumes 1-2*. Chuluota, FL: Mickler House.
- Bartling, H. 2007. Immigrants, tourists, and the metropolitan landscape: Producing the metropolis of consumption in Orlando. In *Tourism, Economic Development, and the City*, editor, J. Rath, 107-122. New York: Routledge.
- Brewington, K., M. Harris, and L. Gibson. 2003. City lines split minority vote. *Orlando Sentinel* 20 February.
- BEBR (Bureau of Economic and Business Research). Various years. *Florida statistical atlas*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Burnett, R. 2000. Orlando area to spend \$17.5 million to create high-tech image. *Orlando Sentinel* 28 August.
- Camara-Fuentes, R. 2004. *The phenomenon of Puerto Rican voting*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Daily Mail* 2008. Orlando in top 20 U.S. cities for crime. 25 November.
- Duany, J. 2002. *The Puerto Rican nation on the move: Identities on the island and in the United States*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Duany, J. and F. Matos-Rodriguez. 2005. "Puerto Ricans in Orlando and central Florida." Hispanic summit, Orlando, Florida. 78pp. Accessed at <http://www.orlando.org/clientuploads/hsummit/hsummit-prcentralflorida.pdf>.
- Dyer, B. 2006a. *Interview with the morning-after show*. O-Rock 105.9 FM, Orlando, Florida. 27 April.
- . 2006b. *State of the City address*. Orlando, FL: City of Orlando.
- Eliot, M. 1993. *Walt Disney: Hollywood's dark prince*. New York: Carol Publishing Corporation.
- Fishkind and Associates. 2006. *Hispanic communities of central Florida: Economic contributions to the region*. Orlando, FL: Fishkind and Associates.
- Fjellman, S. M. 1992. *Vinyl leaves: Walt Disney World and America*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Florida, R. 2003. *The rise of the creative class: And how it's transforming work, leisure, community, and everyday life*. New York: Perseus Publishing.

- Foglesong, R. 2001. *Married to the Mouse: Walt Disney World and Orlando*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Frey, W. 2004. The new great migration Black Americans' return to the South, 1965-2000. *Population Studies Center Living Cities Census Series*. Washington, DC: Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, the Brookings Institution.
- Gannon, M., ed. 1996. *The new history of Florida*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Gore, E. H. 1951. *From Florida sand to "The City Beautiful": A historical record of Orlando, Florida*. Winter Park, FL: Orange Press.
- Haberfield, C., ed. 2000. *Fodor's Walt Disney World, Universal Studios Escape and Orlando*. New York: Random House.
- Hernandez Cruz, J. 2002. La emigracion puertorriquena a Florida y el 'Mundo maravilloso de Disney. *Dialogo*. August.
- Hiaasen, C. 1998. *Team Rodent: How Disney devours the World*. New York: Ballantine.
- Hood, G., and B. Bachmann. 1997. *Orlando: The City Beautiful*. Memphis, TN: Tawery Publishing.
- . 2002. *State of the City Address*. Orlando, FL: City of Orlando.
- Kassab, B. 2003. Dyer defeated Old Orlando with old-fashioned campaign. *Orlando Sentinel* 26 February.
- . 2006. Orlando's new slogan targets moms. *Orlando Sentinel* 16 December.
- Langford, C. 1976. *Hizzoner the mayor*. Orlando, FL: Chateau Publishing.
- Lipmann, L. 2000. *City council election indication of growing Hispanic political clout*. Cox News Campaign 2000 archive. Orlando, FL: Cox News.
- O'Brian, W.E. 2007. Race (and space) matters: Exploring residential segregation to introduce geography in an interdisciplinary curriculum. *Journal of Geography* 106:3–12.
- Orlando Economic Development Commission. 2007. Metro Orlando Profile. 37pp. Accessed at <http://www.orlandoedc.com>.
- Orlando Sentinel*. 2001. A town start to face truth about race riot in its past. 12 February.
- Ortiz, P. 2005. *Emancipation betrayed: The hidden history of Black organizing and White violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Padilla, M. 2001. Puerto Ricans stream into central Florida. *Puerto Rico Herald* 24 May.
- Portes, A. 2007. The new Latin Nation: Immigration and the Hispanic population of the United States. *Du Bois Review* 4(2):272–301.
- Santich, K. 2001. East side, west side—the great divide: Downtown Orlando is still split by race, by income, by quality of life—and by the railroad tracks. *Orlando Sentinel* April 22.
- Schneider, M. 2001. Rising influence of Hispanics evident across Central Florida. *Orlando Sentinel* 29 March.
- United States Census Bureau. 2000. *U.S. Census of the Population: 2000. Social and economic characteristics of the population, Florida*. Accessed at <http://www.census.gov>.
- Watts, S. 1997. *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American way of life*. Chicago: Irwin Professional Publishing.

KEVIN ARCHER is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at University of South Florida, Tampa, FL 33620. Email: karcher2@cas.usf.edu.

KRIS BEZDECNY is a PhD candidate in the Department of Geography at University of South Florida, Tampa, FL 33620 and an Educational Specialist at ESRI, Inc., Redlands, CA 92373. Email: kbezdecny@esri.com.