

Linguistic Discrimination Against Latino Residents of Garden City, Kansas

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Previous studies laud the cultural integration of immigrant and established Latino communities in Garden City, Kansas, but substantial anecdotal evidence and a well-documented history of discrimination suggest that some racial tension persists. Part of a larger study on Spanish language maintenance in Kansas, this research aims to analyze perceptions of linguistic discrimination in Garden City. Data consisted of 35 sociolinguistic interviews with Latino residents; meetings with public servants and community/business leaders; participant observation; and an extensive literature review. Interview questions explored participants' conception of the role of Spanish in and outside of the home and how they use the language in different spheres of their lives. Participants also shared memories of discrimination they may have experienced based on language practices in an effort to draw connections between discrimination, language maintenance and ideology. Recordings were transcribed and subjected to sociolinguistic discourse analysis to find correlations between background, language use and discrimination. This study contributes to sociolinguistics by providing information about language attitudes in Kansas, and by describing the sociopolitical contexts in which many Latinos in Kansas use Spanish. Additionally, the study will help build a sociolinguistic database and establish Kansas as a new sociolinguistic region for Spanish speakers in the U.S.