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**The trajectory of the color line in a US immigrant gateway:
hypermdiverse spatialization in Los Angeles**

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Abstract

Focusing on Los Angeles (LA), we argue that attention to hyperdiversity and spatialization in US immigrant gateways clarifies the trajectory of the color line. This approach reflects that ethnoracial groupings are dynamic and evolving, analyzes inequality beyond Black-White dichotomies, and recognizes nonlinear and non-White-centric dimensions of residential assimilation. We show that socioeconomic inequality in LA has increasingly emerged since the 1970s along two axes—Black-Latino and White-Asian—and that the structure of residential segregation in LA intersects immigration dynamics to create unique patterns of isolation within groups and exposure between groups, setting distinctive conditions for interaction and identity formation. Two case studies — South LA and the San Gabriel Valley (SGV) — shed light on the mechanics of spatialization amid hyperdiversity. In South LA, Latino immigrants live alongside US-born Black residents. Shared experiences of racism and socioeconomic deprivation widen Black-Brown linked fate to create novel, precarious platforms for place-based identity formation and political resistance. In SGV, Chinese immigrants of diverse class backgrounds carve out a different path to residential assimilation by building an American ethnoburb without much contact with US-born Whites. Despite clear socioeconomic inequalities across the Black-Latino and White-Asian axes, neither case converges uniformly towards Whiteness.

Keywords

Hyperdiversity; spatialization; ethnoracial segregation; Black-Brown relations; ethnoburb; residential assimilation

One never forgets Los Angeles and Pasadena: the sensuous beauty of roses and orange blossoms, the air and the sunlight and the hospitality of all its races lingers long... To be sure Los Angeles is not Paradise, much as the sight of its lilies and roses might lead one at first to believe. The color line is there and sharply drawn.

W. E. B. Du Bois (1913:192–94)

Despite their shared intellectual roots, urban sociology and the sociology of migration increasingly began running parallel courses towards the end of the 20th century. Influential research on the spatial dimensions of urban poverty mainly analyzed Black-White inequality. By contrast, migration scholars sought to update assimilation theory in the face of rapidly changing US demographics, especially the exponential growth of Latino and Asian populations. Even as urban and migration studies diverged, however, scholars in both fields remained centrally concerned with neighborhoods and with integration into an often-reified White mainstream (see Jiménez and Horowitz 2013; Korver-Glenn et al. 2021; Montalva Barba 2022). Our goal in this paper is to use the neighborhood as an analytical bridge for studying urbanization and migration while avoiding teleological or normative assumptions about convergence towards Whiteness.

Our case is Los Angeles (LA),¹ the largest immigrant gateway on the US West Coast. We examine how waves of international migration have altered the ethnoracial and socioeconomic differentiation of space. We show that socioeconomic inequality in LA has increasingly emerged since the 1970s along two axes—Black-Latino and Asian-White—and that the structure of residential segregation in LA intersects immigration dynamics to create unique patterns of

¹ Unless otherwise noted, “LA” refers to the 158 municipalities and unincorporated places in LA County, California (see Data Desk 2021). LA County’s population in 2020 was 10.0 million, of which 3.9 million lived in LA City (Manson et al. 2021). “LA Metro,” or metropolitan LA, refers to the LA–Long Beach–Anaheim Metropolitan Statistical Area, home in 2020 to 13.1 million residents of LA and Orange Counties.

isolation within groups and exposure between groups, setting distinctive conditions for interaction and identity formation. This approach reflects that ethnoracial groupings are dynamic and evolving, analyzes inequality beyond Black-White dichotomies, and recognizes nonlinear and non-White-centric dimensions of residential assimilation.

In the paper, we first argue for the concepts of hyperdiversity (Tasan-Kok et al. 2013) and spatialization (Garrido 2021) as points of entry for jointly studying migration and urbanization in the contemporary US. We then briefly review how LA emerged as a hyperdiverse immigrant gateway. An original quantitative analysis follows, examining the spatial distribution of socioeconomic and ethnoracial groups across LA today. Lastly, we present case studies of South Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley (SGV) to illustrate key sociospatial dynamics that emerge from the quantitative analysis. We conclude by discussing the implications of these dynamics for future research.

Hyperdiversity and spatialization: bridging urban and migration studies

Sociologists of the early 20th century treated urbanization and migration as two sides of the same coin, developing ecological models to explain how urban growth accommodated population booms fueled by industrialization and migration (Park and Burgess 1925). At the time, major urban centers, such as New York and Chicago, were organized around Fordist manufacturing in a new free-enterprise system. Migrations from Southern and Eastern Europe and the Great Migration of Blacks from the rural South met tremendous demand for labor (Taeuber and Taeuber 1965). On the ecological view, residential segregation was an effect, not a cause, of social inequality that would wane in the long run through a naturalized process of assimilation. Classical assimilation theory predicted that, upon socioeconomic gains, individuals in segregated

neighborhoods would move to middle-class urban or suburban neighborhoods dominated and assimilate into Whiteness, losing their ethnoracial distinctiveness (Massey and Denton 1985; Alba and Nee 2005).

Toward the last quarter of the 20th century, migration and urban studies diverged as scholars renegotiated human ecology and classical assimilation. Urban sociologists were attentive to the dramatic shifts towards a post-Fordist, deregulated, and globalized economy, focusing mainly on the consequences of economic decline in prototypical industrial cities, such as Chicago and Detroit (Sugrue 1996; Wilson 1987). As these consequences were most drastic for Black urban dwellers, a voluminous literature on Black-White disparities emerged. Scholars replaced functional explanations with structural ones, connecting Black-White inequality to an interlocking set of individual actions, organizational practices, labor market conditions, and governmental policies (Charles 2003; Kasarda 1989). Although Black poverty has declined overall since the 1980s, Black-White segregation has persisted, with major implications for life chances and intergenerational mobility (Logan 2011; Massey and Denton 1993).

The preoccupation with Black-White disparities is less readily applicable to much of contemporary urban America, which international migration has transformed. Accelerated immigration to the US, particularly from Latin America and Asia, has occurred simultaneously with economic restructuring since the 1970s. In new immigrant gateways, such as LA and Miami, immigrants of color outnumber US-born Blacks (Portes and Stepick 1993; Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996). Newcomers to urban America, like their counterparts in the early 20th century, display patterns of ethnic clustering and spatial segregation. The color line, however, now expands more clearly beyond Black and White to include Latinos and Asians, making

segregated urban and suburban spaces more multiracial and multiethnic (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Pastor 2021; Horton 1995; Li 1998; Ong and González 2019).

Migration scholars responded to these changes by updating assimilation theory. The concept of segmented assimilation adds two possible ideal types to the linear model of classical assimilation: downward mobility to the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder and upward mobility through the ethnic community rather than through Whiteness (Portes and Zhou 1993). Segmented assimilation considers a range of interacting conditions of exit and reception that determine ethnoracial and immigrant groups' residential and economic outcomes. Immigrants and their families arrive with different amounts of material and symbolic resources (e.g., financial/human/social capital, job skills, language proficiency, cultural literacy, and transnational ties), and they encounter varying receiving contexts (e.g., labor markets, public attitudes, government policies, and preexisting ethnic communities) structured by ethnoracial inequality (Portes and Rumbaut 2014). Diverse origins are associated with diverse patterns of settlement and integration.

How can scholars correct for the increasingly parallel state of literatures on two social processes—urbanization and migration—that are so inextricably linked? As a platform for such a correction, we advance a combination of the concepts of hyperdiversity and spatialization in the context of immigrant gateway cities.

Hyperdiversity captures the social consequences of drastic demographic changes in immigrant gateways. It expands on the better-known concept of superdiversity, which scholars commonly deploy to study national origins, cultural and religious backgrounds, social class, and legal status (see Vertovec 2019). Hyperdiversity refers to a phenomenon in which intraethnic and

interethnic diversity intersect along a wider array of parameters, including lifestyles, attitudes, and practices (Tasan-Kok et al. 2013). Adding to the complexity of ethnoracial diversity, the concept opens an opportunity to explore how established social categories are challenged not only beyond the Black-White dichotomy but also beyond the White-nonwhite (People of Color, or PoC) configuration while allowing for overlapping identities among individuals within groups (Miyares 2004; Kraftl et al. 2019).²

We juxtapose hyperdiversity with spatialization to examine within- and between-group dynamics. Spatialization is the formation of new axes of social difference among individuals by virtue of sharing a residential context, even if they are members of different official demographic categories. From this perspective, spatial segregation is relational and constitutes, not just reflects, group differences (Garrido 2021). While officially designated demographic categories may reflect socially salient differences, groups form along other axes (Brubaker 2002; Monk 2022). LA appears to be the site of new spatialized social groups that are formed when two previously “distinct” groups come to occupy the same place, such as Black and Latino, Asian and Latino, or Asian and White. LA’s distinctive sociospatial organization facilitates unique forms of spatialization. This spatialization can have within-group dimensions, such as various generations and national origins within an ethnoracial community that share the same neighborhood, or various cultural or dialect groups of diverse socioeconomic statuses (SES) from the same national origin that converge in an ethnic enclave or ethnoburb. Spatialization can also have inter-group dimensions, such as between proximate ethnoracial groups facing similar

² The definition of hyperdiversity by Tasan-Kok et al. (2013) differs from that by Price and Benton-Short (2007). The latter uses population size (1 million or more), percent foreign-born (at least 9.5%), and group size (no one national origin group accounts for more than 25% of the foreign-born) to define hyper-diverse immigrant gateways.

structural inequalities in a shared space while simultaneously occupying different places in a social hierarchy (Garrido 2021).

Migration and the making of hyperdiversity in LA

Domestic migration and polycentrism, 1850–1970

LA has been a magnet for migrants for nearly two centuries, fueling its distinctive spatial expansion. From the 1850s through the 1960s, migration to LA was mostly domestic and predominantly White. US settlers founded modern LA in 1850, two years after Mexico ceded land of which Spanish colonizers previously dispossessed the Tongva and Tataviam peoples. In the absence of a major canal system, railways connected urban and rural areas, transported workers, moved agricultural produce and raw materials to the market, and opened up land for development (Fogelson 1967). The convenient rail system and an oil boom in the 1890s turned a small agricultural settlement into the most important economic hub in Southwest US at the turn of the 20th century (Lothrop 1993).

Domestic migration undergirded the rapid 20th-century development that imprinted LA's polycentric urban form. Real estate speculation, buoyed by propaganda of a new promised land, led to successive waves of westward domestic migration and settlement (Abu-Lughod 1999; Robinson 1942; Soja and Scott 1996). Spared the worst of the Great Depression, LA experienced remarkable growth in the aircraft, entertainment, automobile, furniture, apparel, and retail industries. LA's population grew from just over 100,000 in 1900 to 2.2 million in 1930. Already, nearly half of its inhabitants lived in suburbs that were often predominated by a single ethnoracial group. Subsequent wars drove booms in aerospace and other defense-related industries that depended heavily on migrant workers.

Unlike older US urban centers that underwent drastic spatial restructuring during the postwar period, freeway-driven suburbanization and sprawl mostly accelerated an existing prewar trajectory in LA (Jackson 1985). Increasingly self-contained, often demographically homogenous suburban settlements continued to proliferate, many with standalone commercial districts and employment centers (Garreau 1991; Laslett 1996). The population of LA more than tripled from 1930 to 1970, with 60% of its 7.0 million residents living outside the central city. Fragmented and multipolar, contemporary LA disrupted linear, uniform, and concentric models of urbanization and the classic image of the White suburb into which immigrants assimilate (Davis 2018; Dear 2002; Fogelson 1967).

International migration and diversity, 1970–present

LA's hyperdiversity is a recent development. In 1970, 85% of LA residents identified as monoracial White, and 11% were foreign-born. Latinos, especially Mexicans, have long lived in LA but constituted only 15% of the population in 1970. Black LA took shape in the 1920s and accounted for 11% of LA's population in 1970, disproportionately concentrated in the central city because of racist exclusion from suburbs. Restrictive immigration laws and discrimination kept LA's Asian communities relatively small and segregated in central-city enclaves through the 1960s.

Since 1970, international migration to LA has turned a domestic migration hotspot into a diverse immigrant gateway. While contemporary LA draws immigrants from all corners of the world, it is a particularly important destination for newcomers from Mexico, Central America, East and Southeast Asia, and the Middle East (Hamilton et al. 2001; Waldinger and Borzorgmehr 1996). A hub for many diasporas, metropolitan LA today has the US's densest concentrations of

immigrants from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, mainland China, Taiwan, Korea, Iran, and Armenia.³ Since 1970, the populations of immigrants, Latinos, and Asians have more than doubled as shares of LA's population. About one-third of LA residents identified as monoracial White in 2020, a 62% decrease from 50 years prior. People of color have suburbanized over the same period, resulting in remarkably similar overall ethnoracial population distributions between LA City and County.

The diverse SES of newcomers to LA results from a familiar selection process in US immigration. Many of LA's Asian immigrant groups—e.g., Chinese, Taiwanese, Koreans, Indians, and Filipinos—are hyper-selected, while Mexican and Central American immigrants are hypo-selected. Hyper- and hypo-selected immigrant groups are more and less college-educated, respectively, than their origin and destination societies (Lee and Zhou 2015). Hyper-selected groups enjoy favorable economic starting points, cultural frames of success supported by tangible and intangible within-group resources, and more positive public perceptions in the host society. These advantages cut across socioeconomic lines within hyper-selected immigrant communities, creating sources of social mobility that are scarcer among hypo-selected group. In sharp contrast, hypo-selected groups are of low SES upon arrival, and their socioeconomic disadvantages becomes exacerbated in the existing structured inequality of the host society. Moreover, hyper- and hypo-selections supply a racialized labor market that is increasingly bifurcated between college-educated professionals and low-wage service or agricultural workers (Davis 2018; Ong and Valenzuela 1996; Soja and Scott 1996), setting up the contemporary axes

³ Authors' calculations from 2015–19 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.

of ethnoracial inequality with important implications for segmented rather than linear assimilation.

The ethnoracial structure of socioeconomic inequality and residential segregation in contemporary LA

Two ethnoracial axes of socioeconomic inequality

Socioeconomic inequality (or class inequality) in metropolitan LA increasingly emerges along two axes: Black-Latino and Asian-White (Ong and González 2019). As we illustrate in Figure 1, Black and Latino populations are overrepresented in lower-SES neighborhoods, while Asian and White populations disproportionately reside in higher-SES neighborhoods. Populations along the Black-Latino axis are stratified mainly by nativity: US-born Black and Latino populations share nearly identical neighborhood-level socioeconomic outcomes that exceed those of Mexican and Central American immigrants. By contrast, stratification among groups on the Asian-White axis is predominantly ethnoracial and exhibits a more gradual gradient: US-born White population and Japanese immigrants sit atop the socioeconomic distribution, followed by immigrants from China, Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Such segmented residential outcomes are clearly associated with the varied contexts of exit and reception among immigrants and immigrant selectivity from Latin America and Asia despite intra-group diversity. Regardless of nativity, these two axes are clearly distinguishable by SES.

[Figure 1 about here]

The irregular spatial distribution of SES in LA Metro reflects the area's fragmented development (Figure 2). Affluent neighborhoods line the Pacific coast, the Westside, the

southern and northwestern San Fernando Valley (SFV), a suburban stretch from northern Glendale through Pasadena into the northwestern SGV, and a corridor from the southern rim of the SGV through the easternmost population centers of Orange County. A dense high-SES pocket in downtown LA is surrounded by a large ring of very poor neighborhoods in South and Central LA, in the Southeast, and on the Eastside. Other significant pockets of poverty are in Pacoima and Van Nuys in the SFV, El Monte in the SGV, western Long Beach, Pomona, and Santa Ana in Orange County. Middle-income neighborhoods are mostly concentrated in the SFV, SGV, Southeast, and northwestern Orange County.

[Figure 2 about here]

As we illustrate in Figure 3, geographical population centers along the Asian-White socioeconomic axis roughly encircle those along the Black-Latino axis.⁴ In addition to a shared hub in western Long Beach, Black and Latino population centers overlap prominently in South LA. The Black population mostly extends immediately south and west of this Black-Latino core; the Latino population spreads farther and in opposite directions with clusters in longstanding downtown and eastside barrios, the central SFV, and Santa Ana in Orange County. LA Metro's White population concentrates in east-west corridors from the Westside through Central LA and across the southern SFV. White neighborhoods, usually of high SES, also dot the South Bay coast and southeastern Long Beach. Asian population centers include Chinese and Japanese clusters on the Westside; a Filipino hub in central SFV; historic Filipino, Korean, Thai, and Chinese districts around central and northeast LA; Chinese and Vietnamese ethnoburbs throughout the SGV; Japanese and Filipino neighborhoods in the South Bay; a sizable

⁴ We calculated local Moran's *I* spatial autocorrelation (LISA) statistics to identify population centers (Anselin 1995).

Cambodian enclave in Long Beach; and a dense Vietnamese enclave, known as Little Saigon, in western Orange County.

[Figure 3 about here]

The structure of ethnoracial segregation: within- and between-group exposure

LA Metro exhibits unique spatial dynamics of exposure within and between ethnoracial and immigrant groups, which sets distinctive conditions of possibility for interaction. In Figure 4, we summarize spatial exposure, or the opportunities for within- and between-group contact that the residential layout of LA Metro affords (Massey and Denton 1988).⁵ In the upper panel, we compare spatial exposure in LA Metro to all other metropolitan areas in the US. All groups except US-born Blacks and Whites have more opportunities to interact with members of their own group in LA Metro than they would elsewhere in urban US. Black exposure to other Black residents is about average, while Whites are the lone group that has substantially fewer opportunities for intra-group contact. All ethnoracially minoritized groups in Figure 4 are much less exposed to the White population than their counterparts elsewhere in urban US, while opportunities for interaction across ethnic groups within the Latino and Asian communities are uniquely high. The Black population is in much closer contact to Latinos in LA Metro than elsewhere, but Latino exposure to the Black population is about average.

[Figure 4 about here]

⁵ We measured exposure using Reardon and O’Sullivan’s (2004) spatial exposure index.

Other dimensions of segregation are also exceptional in LA, including clustering and concentration.⁶ Ethnoracial enclaves abound in LA Metro. Compared to other US metropolitan areas, all four major US-born ethnoracial groups and almost every large immigrant group — especially US-born Asians and East Asian immigrants — are substantially more clustered in adjacent neighborhoods than the metropolitan average. Most groups are also much more likely to predominate the population of their neighborhoods in LA Metro than elsewhere in urban US. Often officially recognized and interspersed with the Latino population, enclaves of the Armenian, Black, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Persian, and Thai populations are highly visible. LA Metro’s ethnoracial groups are particularly likely to live in neighboring communities in which they constitute larger shares of the population than their US urban counterparts.

The structure of ethnoracial segregation in LA Metro sets the stage for a unique matrix of interactions within and across US-born and immigrant ethnoracial groups. LA is a demographically exceptional environment for US-born White and, to a lesser extent, US-born Black populations. US-born Whites’ residential contexts are shared and interspersed with Asians regardless of nativity and SES. In contrast, US-born Blacks’ residential contexts are interspersed with mainly foreign-born Latinos of lower SES, amidst a durable ethnoracial hierarchy. While hyperdiversity does not necessarily translate into tangible and regular interaction, the size of LA Metro’s immigrant communities (first generation and beyond) means that there are meaningful

⁶ Clustering and concentration are correlated but distinct. We follow Massey and Denton’s (1988) definition of clustering as contiguity and proximity; we measured it using permutation tests of the Moran’s *I* spatial autocorrelation statistic, defining relationships among units by adjacency. Departing from Massey and Denton, we define concentration as “the extent to which there are residential areas in which the group predominates” (Poulsen et al. 2002:231). This conceptualization tracks more closely with social-scientific notions of enclaves than Massey and Denton’s definition of concentration, which is based on how much physical territory a group occupies. We calculated concentration profiles to measure concentration (Hong and Sadahiro 2014).

opportunities for exchange within and across ethnoracial and immigrant groups that may not be present elsewhere in the US.

Some elements of LA's within- and between-group spatial exposure dynamics are representative of US immigrant gateways; others are exceptional even among major immigrant hubs. In the bottom panel of Figure 4, we compare spatial exposure in LA Metro among the 50 US metropolitan areas with the highest immigrant population shares. In many cases, the elevated levels of spatial exposure in the top panel are typical of immigrant gateways, suggesting LA Metro is a representative site for many facets of spatialization amid hyperdiversity in migrant destinations. In other cases, spatial exposure dynamics in LA Metro are exceptional even among immigrant gateways. For example, LA Metro's Black population has much higher than average rates of contact with immigrants from Central America than in other immigrant gateways, even as Central American immigrants' contact with the Black population is more typical. The region's Chinese immigrant community exhibits uniquely high levels of within-group exposure (or isolation), setting the stage for unique intra-ethnic forms of spatialization. Next, we turn to case studies of these two exceptional features of LA Metro among immigrant gateways — Black-Latino spatialization in South LA and Chinese spatialization in SGV (see Appendix for a guide to our comparative analysis).

Case studies of spatialization amid hyperdiversity

South LA: precarious linked fate along the Black-Latino axis

The boundaries of Black LA are ambiguous but clearly observable (Figure 5). Nearly 750,000 people currently reside in the cluster of 28 neighborhoods southwest of downtown LA that we illustrate in Figures 6. Formerly known as South Central, city planners recently — and

controversially — rebranded the area as South LA to combat racialized stigma (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Pastor 2021). Two uprisings that punctuate the history of LA — in Watts in 1965 and in the aftermath of the police assault of Rodney King in 1992 — occurred in South LA and continue to shape its reputation (Park 2019; Soja and Scott 1996). While the area often signifies Black LA, in recent years South LA has absorbed a substantial portion of LA’s booming Latino population. Just as South LA is no one place, its population is no one people. South LA is a racialized place and a shared space — a site of isolation and exposure, segregation and diversity, continuity, and change. It is an emblematic case of spatialization in LA’s hyperdiverse landscape.

[Figures 5 & 6 about here]

Pre-1960 demographics

Black LA emerged in South Central in the 1920s in response and resistance to changing labor markets, institutionalized racism, and White violence (Flamming 2005; Hunt and Ramon 2010; Sides 2006). Although restrictive covenants limited their housing choices elsewhere in the central city or in proliferating suburban sundown towns, Black newcomers to LA were more likely to own housing than their counterparts who relocated to other urban centers during the Great Migration. In South Central during the 1920s, the Black homeownership rate approached 40%, and Black-owned businesses thrived alongside a vibrant culture and jazz scene (Bryant et al. 1999). After *Shelley v. Kramer* curbed *de jure* housing discrimination in 1948, modest Black mobility and neighborhood attainment ensued. The Black population expanded southwest toward Compton and Inglewood, and Black homeowner communities emerged in Crenshaw, Baldwin Hills, Leimert Park, and West Adams. The spatial segregation and socioeconomic heterogeneity

of Black LA have endured since the 1960s. South LA contains some of the US's oldest and most prominent upper-middle-class Black neighborhoods, such as Ladera Heights and View Park–Windsor Hills, often called “Black Beverly Hills.” At the same time, many neighborhoods suffer from urban decline and disinvestment.

Sociospatial transformation

White flight accelerated after the Watts uprisings. Economic restructuring, disinvestment, socioeconomic deprivation, freeway construction, and aggressive policing had entrenched LA's ethnoracial inequalities on the verge of the international migration waves of the 1970s and 1980s. By 1990, nearly half of Black adults in South LA fell outside the labor force as a direct outcome of economic restructuring and labor market discrimination (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996). Many local businesses changed hands to non-White and non-Black immigrants, especially Koreans, which refers to a typical middleman minority entrepreneurship phenomenon (Cheng and Espirtu 1989; Park 2019). Middleman minority entrepreneurs are minority merchants who come do business in low-income, non-coethnic neighborhoods abandoned by the society's dominant group and who are perceived by their local customers as representing forces of oppression because of their lack of interest in long-term investment in the neighborhoods they serve (Min 1996). Interaction between middleman minority entrepreneurs and longtime Black residents is often limited to economic transactions and episodically erupts in conflict, highlighting the transmission of anti-Black racism even among immigrants of color in contemporary LA.

Like the rest of LA, South LA today is inextricable from the rapid growth of the Latino population. As Black LA emerged throughout the 20th century, the Black population shared

space with other ethnoracial groups. The nature of this cohabitation shifted qualitatively in the 1970s and 1980s, however, amidst a decades-long transition in South LA's demographics from predominantly Black to predominantly Latino. Outmigration of Whites and disinvestment left South LA with a cheap and available housing stock, making the area a feasible enclave for Mexican newcomers and Central American migrants fleeing political upheaval (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Pastor 2021). In the span of two decades, South LA changed from two-thirds Black to two-thirds Latino. Today, one-third of South LA's neighborhoods are Black-majority; the rest are Latino-majority. Latinos in South LA are primarily hypo-selected Mexicans and Central American immigrants. Most of them are of lower SES than US-born Black residents. Except for two predominant Black neighborhoods that are distinctly of middle- and upper-middle-class, all 26 neighborhoods in South LA are lower income, lower education, higher poverty, and mostly immigrant dominant compared to LA County's average levels. Whites or Asians make up less than six percent of the resident population in all but two South LA neighborhoods. The area's identity is definitively Black, Latino, and immigrant. As a consequence of White flight, the existing Black power base, organized around the politics of resistance, has expanded to incorporate Latinos, primarily through neighborhood-based organizations (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Pastor 2021).

Place-based interactions and identities

The Latinization of Black LA is often viewed as competition over space and resources between parallel racialized worlds (Martinez 2016; Vargas 2018). With the transition from predominantly Black to predominantly Latino basically complete, a sense of loss and fears of cultural erasure have grown among many Black residents of South LA. The visibility of Black businesses and neighborhood institutions has declined. Language barriers have compromised

access to neighborhood social and cultural life. Anti-Blackness within the Latino community and Black-Latino conflict in South LA are well-rehearsed in popular culture, journalism, and research. These themes accord with two conventional sociological assumptions about urban change: first, that the spatial distribution of populations reflects rather than co-produces inter-group boundaries, and second, that discrete groups of urban settlers will replace each other geographically over time through the process of succession.

The limitations of these assumptions — and of the resulting fixation on Black-Latino conflict — have become clearer in recent research on South LA that takes seriously the endogeneity between people and place and the spatio-temporal fluidity of ethnoracial identities. Black-Latino community-building and political coalitions have emerged alongside Black-Latino conflict in South LA (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Pastor 2021; Kun and Pulido 2013; Rosas 2019). Black and Latino desires for belonging and attachment to their spatial contexts have run up against overlapping experiences with police brutality, crime and violence, welfare state retrenchment, and disinvestment. These commonalities have gradually, if unevenly, widened the platform for Black-Brown linked fate and an increasingly shared place-based identity. They developed partially through quotidian interaction, especially among younger generations who grew up with more diverse social networks and often with less pronounced inter-group prejudices. Perhaps more decisively, Black-Brown linked fate and a place-based identity have emerged through residents' efforts to form and participate in neighborhood-based organizations, such as childcare centers, schools, social service providers, civic organizations, and community banks — including multiracial political organizing to secure resources and protections for South LA. These mechanisms of spatialization redefined ethnoracial boundaries, creating novel and heterogenous social and political identities across the Black and Latino populations — identities

unique to South LA — that would have been unthinkable in Black- or Latino-only enclaves. The convergence of Black and Brown identities, driven by Latino immigrants, points to a remarkable spatial outcome with profound implications for understanding PoC coalition and multicultural politics of resistance, which not only challenges White-centric sociological theories of assimilation, but also the theory of segmented assimilation (Korver-Glenn et al. 2021; Magaña 2022).

Looking into the future, Black and Latino communities in South LA share a tenuous right to place. As they struggle to safeguard the place they call home, they share growing concerns about gentrification and displacement (Barraclough 2009; Hondagneu and Pastor 2021; Sims 2016). Like many other Black and Latino communities across the US, South LA suffered disproportionately from subprime lending and the foreclosure crisis of the late aughts, leading to a significant loss of wealth, residential instability and overcrowding, and often the transfer of assets from to banks and absentee landlords. More recently, economic development and real estate investment in east, downtown, and central LA raise concerns about the spillover of gentrification and heighten the fears of further demographic change and rising rents among South LA's residents. Since LA's Black-Latino spatialization in recent decades is so heavily concentrated in South LA, urban development and ensuing demographic change in the coming years would be decisive for the viability of the spatialized Black-Brown solidarity that has emerged in South LA.

The Chinese ethnoburb in the SGV: mobility without assimilation along the White-Asian axis

The Chinese ethnoburb in SGV began in Monterey Park (MP), about eight miles east of LA's Chinatown. Dubbed the first suburban Chinatown (Fong 1994), MP's ethnoburb rapidly

expanded into neighboring working- and middle-class suburbs, such as Alhambra, Rosemead, and San Gabriel, and to wealthier suburbs in Arcadia and San Marino, as well as Walnut, Hacienda Heights, Rowland Heights, and Diamond Bar (Figures 7 & 8).

[Figures 7 & 8 about here]

Pre-1960 demographics

MP is one of 31 suburban municipalities in the SGV. With various single-family homes, tree-lined streets, and spacious green lawns, MP had been a typical bedroom community dominated by middle-class Whites from World War II until 1960. In the 1960s, upwardly mobile US-born Mexicans from the barrios of East LA, Japanese from the Westside, and Chinese from Chinatown began to purchase homes and resettle there, a pattern that fit well with the classical model of residential assimilation. By 1970, the suburb became multiracial with 51% non-Latino White (down from 85% in 1960), 34% Latino, 15% Asian (about 2/3 Japanese and 1/3 Chinese), but few Black. White flight occurred subtly as assimilated US-born Mexicans and Asians moved in but accelerated with the influx of more resourceful immigrants from Asia. In 1990, MP became the first Asian-majority (56%) city in the U.S. Three decades later, MP's racial composition became 66% Asian, 29 percent Hispanic, and 4% White. Although more than half of the residents in 2020 was foreign-born, key SES indicators, such as education, household income, homeownership, employment, are better than, or similar to, LA's average levels.

Foreign capital fueled suburban development

Unlike South LA, SGV's sociospatial transformation is preceded by foreign-capital fueled economic development and hyper-selected immigration (Zhou et al. 2013). In the 1970s

when South LA suffered from devastating impacts of economic restructuring, MP became a hotbed for development driven by the immigrant growth machine (Horton 1995; Lin and Chiong 2016). Investors and transnational entrepreneurs from Taiwan began to invest in real estate and business developments because of its desirable location and cultural ambiance—proximity to downtown LA, easy access to the international airport and two major ports, plenty of vacant lots, unused land, and affordable bungalow homes, and a visible Asian presence (Fong 1994; Zhou et al 2013).

The constant flow of foreign capital has been channeled into the ethnoburb by Chinese-owned banks and financial institutions, as well as by new immigrants' family savings. In the 1980s, about 30% of MP's new business licenses were registered under Chinese names (Tseng 1995). As of 2020, it was estimated that there were more than 150 businesses per 1,000 residents in the core of the Chinese ethnoburb (MP, Alhambra, Rosemead, and San Gabriel) and 91% of these businesses were minority-owned, mostly Chinese-owned. In contrast, there are about 80 businesses per 1,000 residents in South LA and 89% are minority-owned, mostly owned by middleman minority entrepreneurs.⁷ Newly sprung-up Chinese-owned businesses in MP and neighboring areas in SGV are more diverse in type and size than traditional ethnic businesses, catering to the needs of a rapidly growing coethnic population of diverse SES backgrounds. Real estate and land development is perhaps the most noteworthy economic activity, which has stimulated tremendous demand for residential and commercial space not only from immigrant Chinese who are already in the US, but also potential immigrants abroad as ethnic Chinese developers and real estate brokers capitalize on the highly specialized immigrant market (Fong

⁷ Authors' calculations from 2015–19 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates. Owners of minority-owned businesses in MP were mostly Chinese, Taiwanese, or Sino-Vietnamese, while minority-owned businesses in South LA were run by middleman minority entrepreneurs of diverse national origins.

1994; Zhou et al. 2013). At the outset, newcomers to the ethnoburb were from Taiwan. They were attracted to MP largely by foreign capital fueled real estate development and marketing promoters and advertisements in Taiwan that characterized MP as the “Chinese Beverly Hills.” Coincidentally, this contemporary pattern of development resembled LA’s earlier boom in which excess capital from eastern urban centers of the US fueled real estate speculations in the 1880s, leading to various advertisements and propaganda schemes promising increased property values and a good life in a healthy climate to lure potential buyers and movers from the mid-West (Lothrop 1993).

For the resourceful foreign investors, however, profits were not the sole focus. Many of them were willing to take losses in return for a safe place to park their money or provide a better future for their families in the US, and investing in the local economy has been one of the viable paths to permanent residency and citizenship provided by the reformed US immigration law (Tseng 1995; Zhou et al. 2013). Once MP established itself as “Little Taipei,” Taiwanese immigrants flocked to the area and were later joined by both the “*nouveau riche*” and working-class coethnics from mainland China and immigrants from other parts of Asia.

Hyperdiversity and fragmented identities

Hyperdiversity becomes a remarkable feature of the Chinese ethnoburb. Asians in MP comprise primarily of Taiwanese, mainland Chinese, Hong Kongese, and Sino-Vietnamese, along with smaller numbers of Filipinos and other Southeast Asians, as well as US-born Japanese and Chinese who are long-term residents. Among Chinese immigrants, newer arrivals are of diverse origins and SES backgrounds (Tseng 2013). A wide variety of dialects—Cantonese, Mandarin, Taiwanese, Hakka, Teochew, Shanghainess, Hunanese, Szechwanese,

Shandongness—spoken in the community attests to extraordinary diversity within Chinese ethnicity. Chinese immigrants are also tremendously diverse in SES, including highly skilled, low skilled, and the undocumented, but are overall hyper-selected, as compared to hypo-selected Latino immigrants in South LA.⁸ In the course of development, there is a second migration trend somewhat similar to the classic trend of White flight, in which wealthier Chinese immigrant families move from MP, the original core of the ethnoburb, to more exclusive suburbs further north and east within the SGV.

However, the out-movement of upwardly mobile Chinese immigrants from MP has not resulted in economic disinvestment, social disruption, and socioeconomic deprivation that South LA residents encounter. Foreign and domestic capital continue to fuel the development of the Chinese enclave economy, in real estate, commerce, and professional services particularly, in the core and surrounding areas regardless of spatial SES. The most immediate and direct effect of the Chinese enclave economy can be seen in the variety of tangible economic resources, which include various job and entrepreneurship opportunities, ethnically specific goods and services, including the ethnic system of supplementary education, and a wide range of ethnic cultural and civic organizations that have sprung up to serve the larger Chinese immigrant community in the ethnic spaces and beyond (Zhou et al. 2013). Chinese immigrants of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds are drawn to the ethnoburb immediately upon arrival not only because they can afford to attain homeownership or business ownership there, but also because they are needed as workers and consumers of the ethnic economy lodged in that ethnic space.

⁸ Taiwanese and mainland Chinese are both hyper-selected, but sino-Vietnamese are not. Sino-Vietnamese cluster in Rosemead and Alhambra. Despite their lower SES backgrounds, they are benefited from ethnic resources in the Chinese ethnoburb.

The mixing of coethnics of different SES is quite unique to SGV's Chinese ethnoburb, unlike many White middle-class suburbs where there are fewer rental housing and fewer residents of low SES. The return of middle-class coethnic and non-Asians to patronize ethnic businesses and participate in organizational activities in the ethnic community increases the chances of cross-class face-to-face interactions, which enable coethnic residents of lower SES to access both tangible and intangible ethnic resources and develop social ties, a kind of social capital conducive to social mobility (Zhou 2009). These ethnic economic and social developments alleviate the negative consequences associated with racialized residential segregation disproportionately affecting urban Blacks and Latinos (Krysan and Crowder 2017), while reinforcing the ethnoracial differentiation of space where Asians have limited contact with US-born Blacks and Whites.

While hyperdiversity affords opportunities for cross-class interactions with and across ethnic groups, it also creates challenges for ethnic formation and community building. Unlike South LA where shared lived experiences of exclusion and oppression among Blacks and Latinos form the basis for linked fate and place-based identities, identity formation in the Chinese ethnoburb in SGV appears to be fragmented and lacks attachment to the place due to diverse interests. The SGV case suggests that rather than gradually assimilating into established White middle-class suburbs, Chinese immigrants bring with them resources to carve out their own space in the suburbia already experienced White flight and develop a thriving Chinese enclave economy to serve as its base, leading to a divergent assimilation pattern characterized by the politics of diversity rather than the politics of resistance (Horton 1995).

Discussion and conclusion

Globalized, polycentric, hyperdiverse, and distinctively segregated, LA partially represents and partially stands apart from other immigrant gateways in the US. As the capital of the US-Mexico borderlands and the eastern capital of the Pacific Rim, LA has sustained long-standing diasporic networks that facilitate the flows of capital and labor. In LA, immigrants are always everywhere, and their settlements concentrated yet diffuse.

The sociospatial dynamics underscores a distinctive feature of contemporary spatialized racialization in LA. We have shown that, in South LA, virtually the entire Black population is heavily interspersed with Latinos, especially recent immigrants and their children. Although many segments of the Latino population elsewhere were socialized and politicized in Latino enclaves and suburbs with relatively low Black populations, the Black-Latino axis of socioeconomic inequality is clearly outstanding. In contrast, the Asian population, though as heterogeneous as Latinos, experience a different pattern of spatialization. They not only converge to Whites but also carve out their own spaces in the suburbs, making the Asian-White axis blurred.

The spatial distribution of newcomers and longstanding residents in LA continues to complicate classical ecological predictions. A globalized post-Fordist economy has combined with immigrant selectivity to produce an ethn racially stratified labor force. The populations that provide labor for this economy, however, have not consistently exhibited expected patterns of social mobility and residential movement from segregated ethnic enclaves to White middle-class suburbs. The Latinization of South LA and the development of the Chinese ethnoburbs in SGV raise important questions about residential assimilation and the urgent need for new theoretical formations. Classical assimilation theories homogenize ethnic networks and consider ethnic enclaves a trap rather than a driver for social mobility. Urban theories focus on how urban space

is differentiated to affect inhabitants' life chances, paying greater attention to Black-White disparities than to heterogeneous socio-spatial outcomes impacted by international migration. As our analysis indicates, however, segregated ethnoracial enclaves are heterogeneous and hinge on immigrant selectivity. The kinds of resources conducive to social mobility that are generated from ethnic networks and made available in enclaves vary significantly between hyper-selected immigrant groups (e.g., Chinese), hypo-selected immigrant groups (e.g., Mexicans and Central Americans), and longstanding populations confronting the intergenerational ripple effects of socioeconomic deprivation (e.g., US-born Blacks). Residents of different ethnoracial backgrounds may share the same space, but have, or are excluded from, access to place-based resources and opportunities to interact with people outside segregated spaces (Garrido 2021; Zhou 2009). While the conventional understanding is that Whites tend to flee diversity, the case of Chinese ethnoburb in SGV suggests that Whites also cash out on it, reaping the benefits of ethnic economic development and investment by resourceful immigrants.

Hyperdiversity amid spatialization creates new social groups, not merely consolidates existing ones. LA's sociospatial transformation is not entirely unique as it is highly patterned along the color line. However, spatialization is unique for an increasingly clear Black-Latino axis and a blurred Asian-White axis. Spatial segregation has differential effects on socioeconomic outcomes depending on the intersection of immigrant selectivity and ethnic formation at the local level. In South LA, for example, Latino immigrants of low SES may have less interaction with US-born Blacks despite physical proximity because of language and cultural barriers than with middleclass Latinos. In this sense, they may be less socially isolated than their Black neighbors. However, shared aspiration of homemaking and common lived experiences of racial exclusion heighten their sense of place-based civic identities and linked fate, helping Latino immigrants

find new platforms for collaboration and resistance for social justice. The resulting Black-Latino axis is clear, a Black-Brown path to residential assimilation that defies White-centric theories of assimilation. In SGV's Chinese ethnoburb, in contrast, Chinese immigrants carve out a different path to residential assimilation with their own ethnic resources and without much contact with US-born Whites. Their different lived experiences associated with diverse SES weaken the likelihood of forming linked fate even within the ethnic group and complicate the understanding of ethnic distinctiveness and Asian-to-White convergence.

In sum, LA's ethnoracial and socioeconomic differentiation of space in LA is dynamic, multivariate, and uneven. Its spatialization is socially structured beyond class and race in ways complicated by hyperdiversity. We have shown that interactive processes of immigration dynamics and differential contexts of host-society reception produce diverse spatial patterns and socioeconomic outcomes, changing trajectory of the color line in LA. However, the fundamental social structure of a persistent racial hierarchy remains stable to reproduce and exacerbate spatial inequality (Portes 2010), a key issue, along with many unanswered questions, awaits further exploration.

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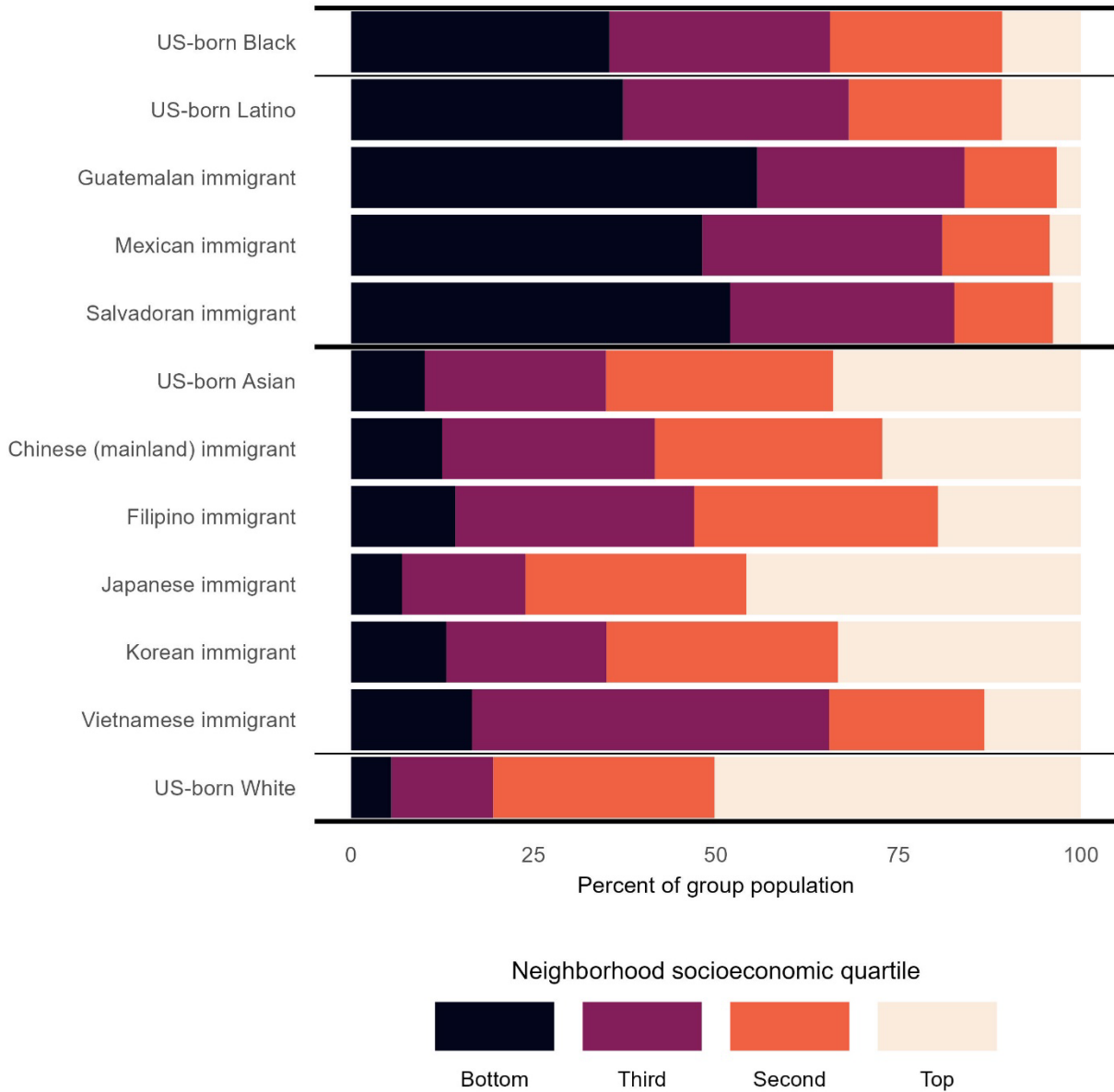
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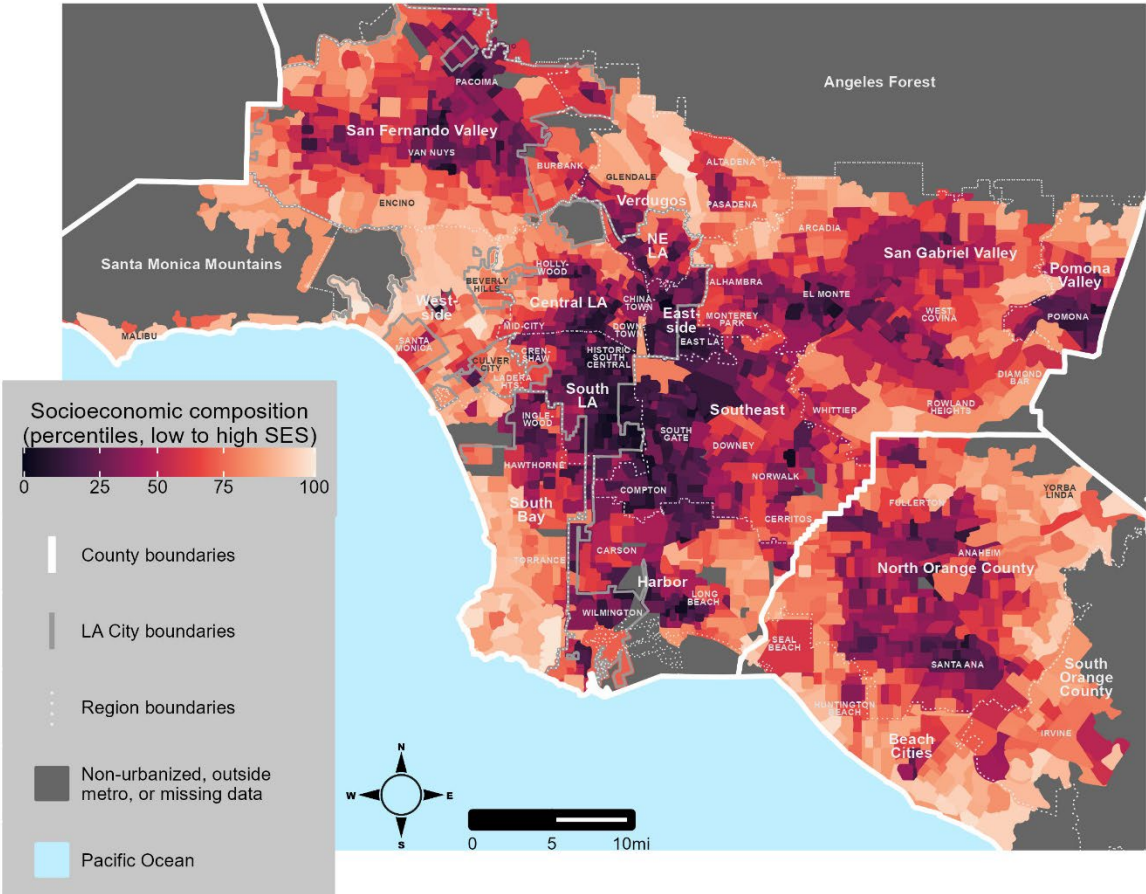
Figures

Figure 1: Neighborhood socioeconomic distribution of selected ethnorracial and immigrant groups along Black-Latino and White-Asian axes of inequality in LA Metro, 2018



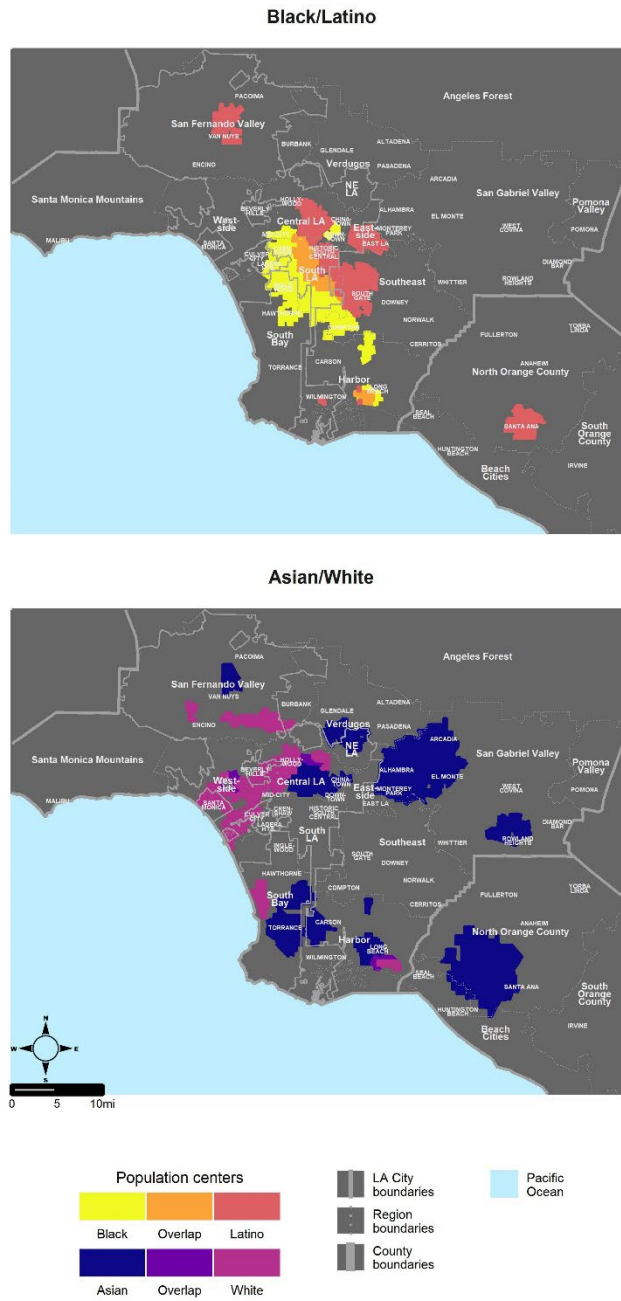
Sources: Authors' calculations from 2015–19 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates and socioeconomic dimension of US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2018 Social Vulnerability Index. Units of analysis are 2010 census tracts.

Figure 2: Neighborhood SES composition across urbanized LA Metro, 2018



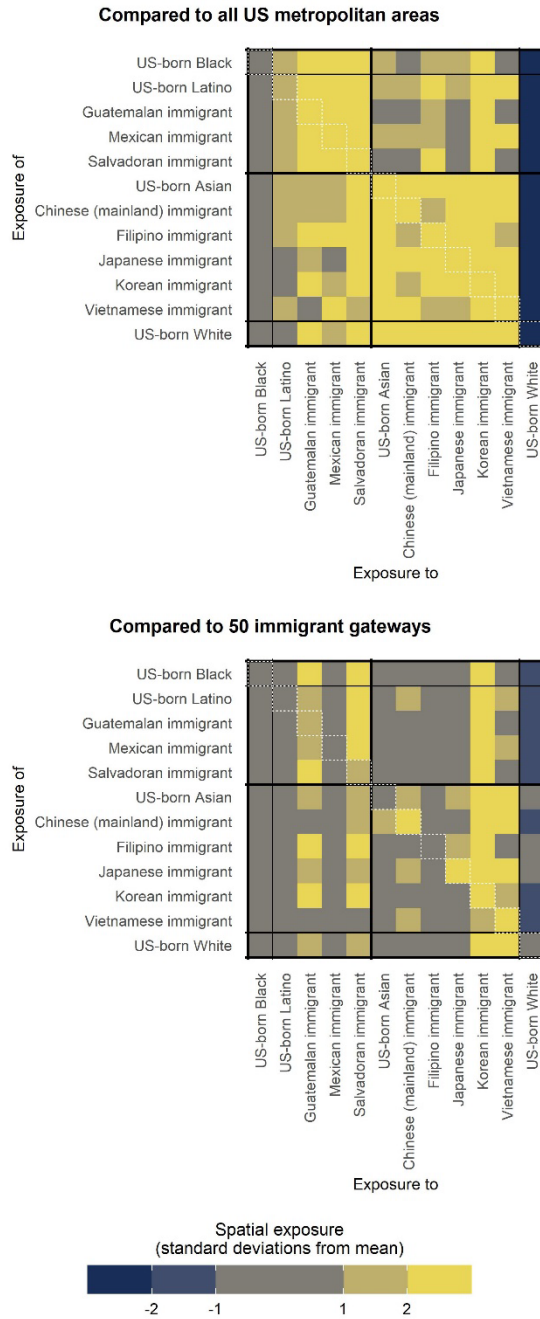
Sources: US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2018 Social Vulnerability Index (socioeconomic dimension); US Census Bureau 2019 TIGER/Line files; and *LA Times* Mapping LA project. Areal units are 2010 census tracts.

Figure 3: Population centers along Black-Latino and White-Asian axes of inequality in LA Metro, 2015–19



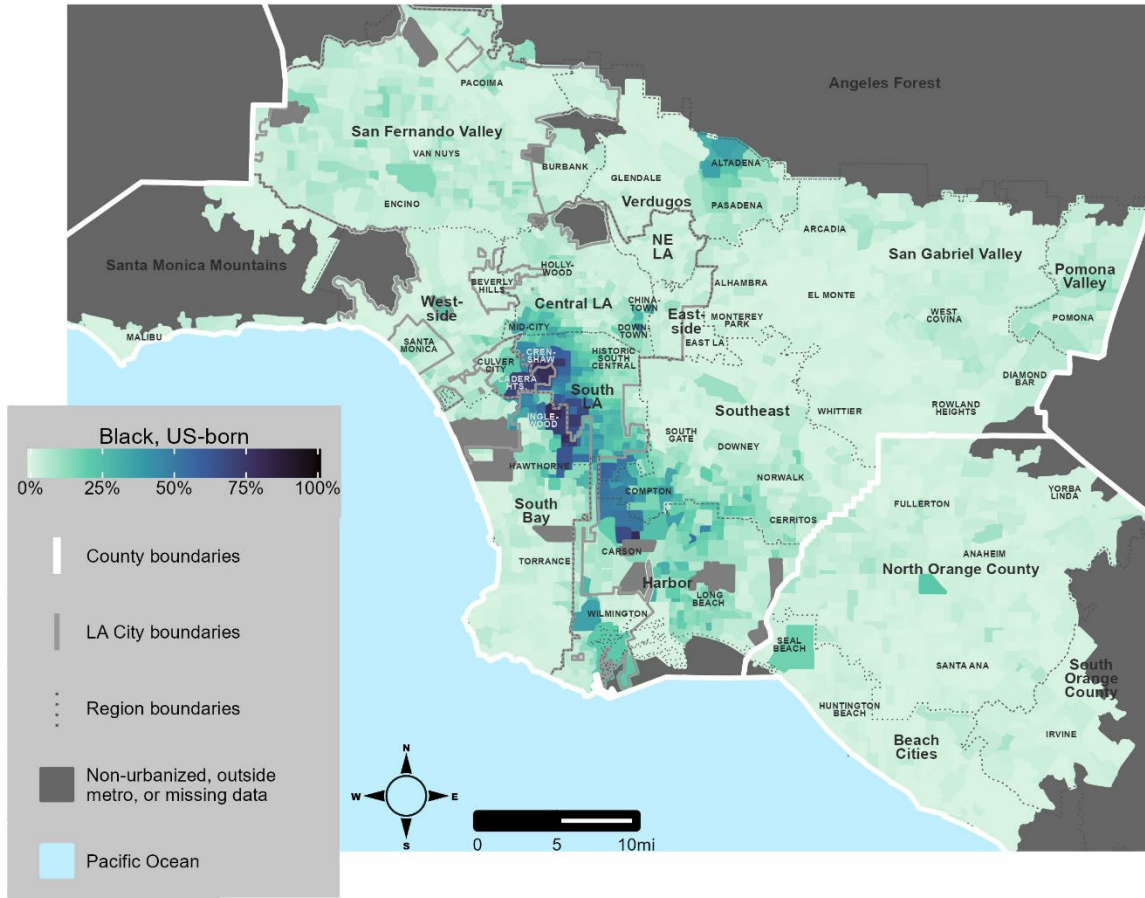
Sources: authors' calculations from 2015–19 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates; US Census Bureau 2019 TIGER/Line files; and *LA Times* Mapping LA project. Areal units are 2010 census tracts. Population centers identified by local Moran's *I* spatial autocorrelation (LISA) statistics. Black and White categories comprised of US-born individuals. Latino category includes US-born Latinos and immigrants from Mexico and Central America. Asian category includes US-born Asians and immigrants from East and Southeast Asia.

Figure 4: Spatial exposure among selected ethnoracial and immigrant groups along Black-Latino and White-Asian axes of inequality in LA Metro, 2015–19



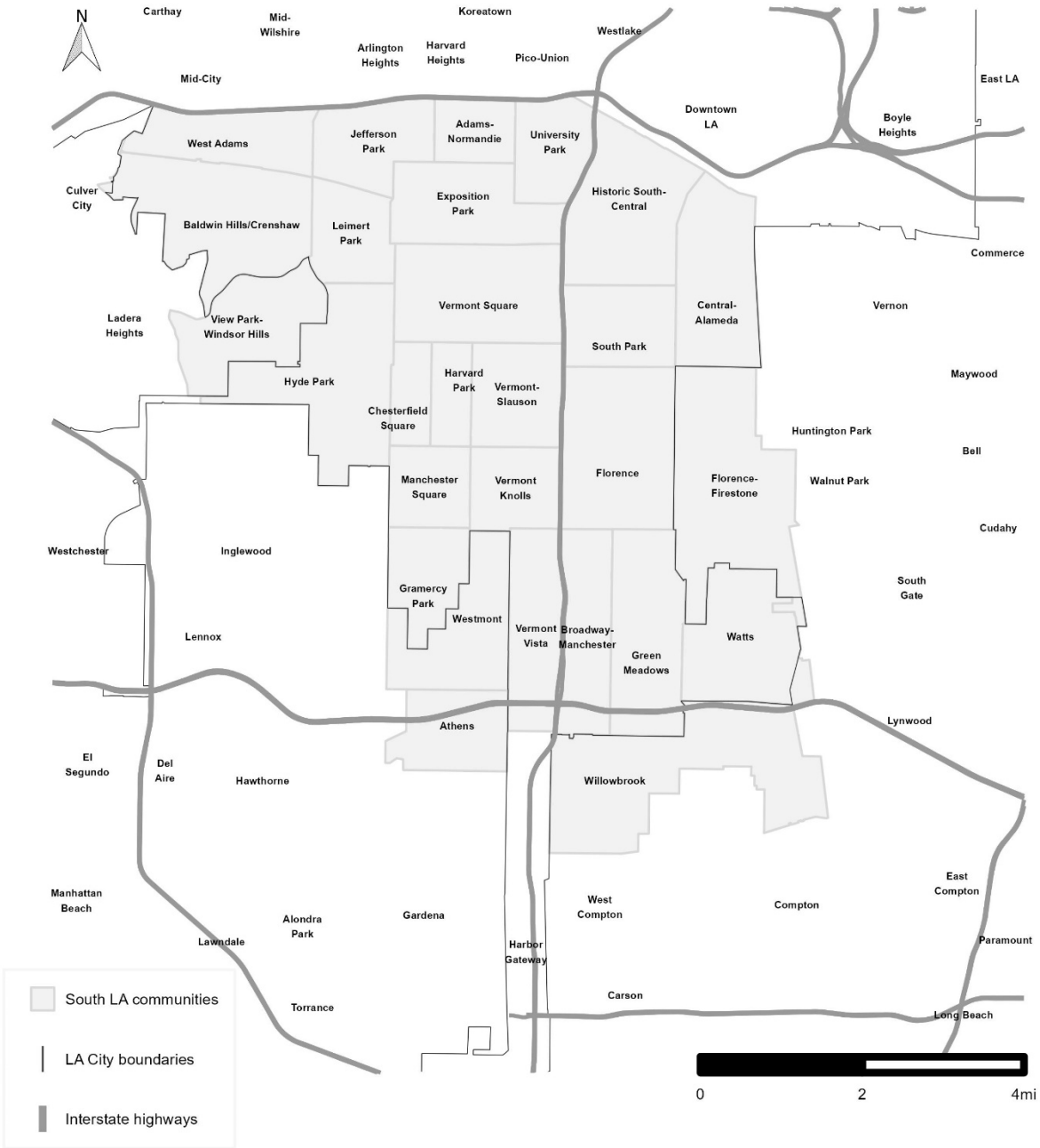
Source: authors' calculations from 2015–19 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates by 2010 census tracts. Selected immigrant gateways are the 50 metropolitan areas with the largest immigrant population shares.

Figure 5: US-born Black population share across urbanized LA Metro neighborhoods, 2015–19



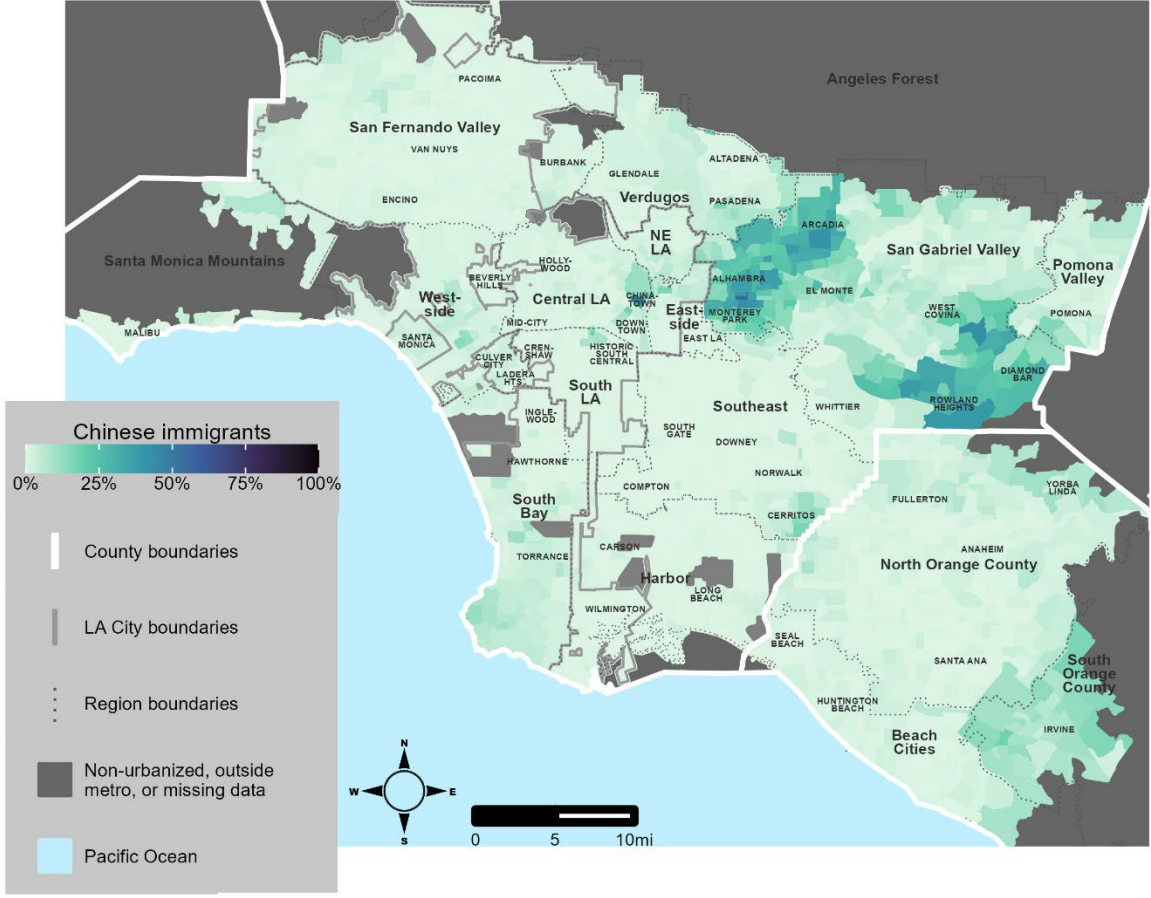
Sources: authors' calculations from 2015–19 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates; US Census Bureau 2019 TIGER/Line files; and *LA Times* Mapping LA project. Areal units are 2010 census tracts.

Figure 6: Communities in and around Black LA, 2021



Sources: US Census Bureau 2019 TIGER/Line files and *LA Times* Mapping LA project.

Figure 7: Chinese immigrant population share across urbanized LA Metro neighborhoods, 2015–19



Sources: authors’ calculations from 2015–19 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates. Includes immigrants from mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Areal units are 2010 census tracts. Geospatial data sourced from US Census Bureau 2019 TIGER/Line files and *LA Times* Mapping LA project.

Figure 8: Communities in and around LA Chinese ethnoburbs, 2021



Sources: US Census Bureau 2019 TIGER/Line files and *LA Times* Mapping LA project.

Appendix: Sociospatial Dynamics in Urban and Suburban Settings: South LA and the San Gabriel Valley (SGV)

| | South LA | SGV |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Pre-1960 demographics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Los Angeles where the majority of LA County’s Black population of diverse SES was segregated | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middleclass bedroom communities dominated by Whites with visible numbers of middleclass, US-born Asians and Latinos |
| Sociospatial transformation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White flight prior to Latino influx • Negatively impacted by economic restructuring; ethnic economy dominated by middleman minority entrepreneurs • Latinos became majority in 2000 • Social class composition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Native-born Blacks of diverse SES, but within group segregation by class ➢ Hypo-selected Latino immigrants • Black power base organized around the politics of resistance that incorporates Latinos | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White flight after Asian influx • Economic development fueled by foreign capital influx; ethnic enclave economy promoted by ethnic growth machine and dominated by coethnic entrepreneurs • Asians become majority in Monterey Park in 1990 • Social class composition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Native born of middle-class status ➢ Hyper-selected Asian immigrants with mixed-class residential pattern • Waning White power base upon White flight |
| Place-based identities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging Black-Latino Axis: clear • Expanding inter-group interactions • Linked fate across ethnoracial boundaries • Implications of spatial outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Divergence of segmented assimilation: the politics of resistance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging Asian-White Axis: blurred • Limited inter-group interactions • Fragmented identities within and across ethnicity and class • Implications of spatial outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Divergence of assimilation: the politics of diversity |