

Where in the World Is Juan—and What Color Is He? The Geography of Latina/o Racial Identity in Southern California

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In 1980, for the first time, the US Census Bureau broadly allowed respondents to identify themselves as Latinas/os or Hispanics, in addition to designating their “race.” To the surprise of some, 38 percent of the newly minted Latinas/os rejected the usual race categories, marking “some other race” (SOR) rather than white, black, Asian, or Native American. Thinking that matters might change as respondents became accustomed to the forms, Census authorities grew more concerned when in 1990 43 percent of Latinas/os marked SOR. Believing that the issue might be related to question sequencing—respondents were asked to identify race first, then Hispanicity—the sequence of the questions was reversed in 2000. The logic of the Census Bureau: perhaps once respondents were able to mark the Latina/o identification, they would then be more willing to mark a standard racial category as requested. That year, the percentage of Latinas/os marking SOR stayed relatively steady at 42 percent, with an additional 6 percent choosing a new multirace category. Looked at another way, the share marking “white” fell from 52 percent to 48 percent between 1990 and 2000.

The popularity of the SOR designation should not have been a surprise to Census bureaucrats: Latinas/os, especially ethnic Mexicans, have long been seen as nonwhite in the popular and political imagination, and since the Chicana/o movement many have embraced a nonwhite identity.¹ At the same time, Latina/o racial subjectivity has attracted considerable scholarly attention over the last decade, including examinations of how “whiteness” may be open to peoples who were previously considered nonwhite (including Asians and Latinas/os),² how the multiracial experience affects racial and color identification,³ and how racial subjectivity is contested within families and communities that seem, at first glance, to be racially similar.⁴ While obviously a matter of academic interest, racial subjectivity also has significant political consequences. Since Latinas/os became the largest “racial minority” in 2000, scholars and activists alike are grappling with how Latinas/os will intersect with the existing

black–white binary and what this may mean for alliances with other people of color, especially African Americans.⁵

While scholarly explorations of Latina/o racial identity have included work on Puerto Ricans and Latinas/os as a whole, much of the literature has concentrated on the Mexican-origin population.⁶ This is due both to the size of the population (nearly two-thirds of all US Latinas/os are ethnic Mexican),⁷ as well as its long tenure in the United States and its perhaps more complicated relationship to whiteness. These complications arise from Mexicans' association with *mestizaje*, as well as the fact that some Mexican American organizations have claimed “whiteness” as a way to fight discrimination.⁸ As a result, historians, legal scholars, and sociologists have illustrated the various ebbs and flows surrounding whiteness claims over time and have also examined the variables (such as income or education) associated with specific racial identities.

While these are vital pieces of the story, much less attention has focused on whether Latina/o racial identity varies over space and what this might suggest about the larger racial formation and its evolution. In this essay we examine Latinas/os' racial identity over a seven-county area of Southern California. As the largest concentration of Latinas/os in the United States, Southern California offers a rich window into Latina/o racial identities. Specifically, we ask the following questions: What are the main factors that determine how Latinas/os across Southern California identify racially? How does such identification vary by nationality, nativity, immigrant cohort, educational attainment, and income? Is identity also affected by the race/ethnicity of one's neighbors, and is there a difference in how urban and suburban Latinas/os identify across a metropolitan area? What do the answers to these questions suggest in terms of the spatiality of racial subjectivity, and what are the implications for racial identities in the future?

To get at these issues, we start with a historical discussion of ethnic Mexicans and racial identity (approximately 82 percent of Southern California Latinas/os are of Mexican origin).⁹ We next turn to contemporary racial identity among all Latinas/os, reviewing the national-level data in the census and revealing the distinct patterns by country of origin. We then consider the specific geography of Southern California, particularly the long-standing presence of Latinas/os in certain suburban areas. Finally, we test our ideas using regression analysis—a multivariate statistical approach that tries to sort out which factors determine racial identity and which have little or no impact.

Our empirical work focuses on Southern California Latinas/os who identify as either white or SOR, and examines the impacts of national origin, age, income, education, length of time in the United States, language, spouse, and

most importantly, space. While many of the effects are of general interest—for example, speaking a language other than English raises the probability of identifying as SOR, while being higher income raises the probability of identifying as white—our distinct contribution involves space. We found that the more Latina/o a neighborhood is, the more likely a Latina/o resident will choose “other”; the more segregated a neighborhood is, the more likely a Latina/o resident will choose “other”; and the more suburban a neighborhood, the more likely a Latina/o resident will choose “white.” Race and space, it seems, are interlocked in terms of racial identity.

Ethnic Mexicans and the History of Racial Identity

Chicana/o studies traditionally assumed Mexican, and by extension, Latina/o racial identity, as nonwhite. This is understandable, given that ethnic studies arose out of the antiracist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and as Ian Haney-Lopez has shown, it was at this moment that young Chicanas/os, especially in Southern California, embraced a nonwhite racial identity.¹⁰ Yet many of the parents of those activists did *not* choose such an identity themselves. Indeed, a growing body of evidence demonstrates the extent to which Latinas/os claimed whiteness as a strategy for countering discrimination in the early twentieth century, especially in Texas.¹¹

Mexican whiteness was partly a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) that ended the US–Mexican War. As both George Martinez and Martha Menchaca have pointed out, prior to this time, Mexicans were not seen as white people.¹² However, because the treaty stipulated their inclusion as citizens, they *legally* became white in order not to contravene the United States’ naturalization laws, which reserved citizenship for whites. But while the treaty may have declared Mexican Americans to be white, they were not treated as such, something that opened up multiple racial paths toward claiming rights. Gomez, for example, argues that “Mexican” was cultivated as an intermediary racial category between Anglos and Indians in New Mexico in order to secure advantage above Pueblo Indians. In the early twentieth-century US South, ethnic Mexicans confronted a more rigid color line, and not only made great efforts to be seen as white but were largely accepted as such.¹³ Meanwhile, in Texas during World War II, Mexican Americans pressured Texas legislators to pass a bill banning discrimination against members of the Caucasian race—since both the treaty and Texas law certified Mexicans as Caucasian. Tellingly, the law never passed, and it remained perfectly legal to discriminate against Mexicans.¹⁴

Much of the existing scholarship has focused on the extent to which Mexican Americans sought whiteness. Yet it is important to realize that not all Mexican Americans desired whiteness. We get that impression because so much of the literature is centered on Texas, which, with its rigid color line, resulted in many Mexicans employing the “other white” strategy. However, Texas, wedded as it was to the southern racial formation, does not represent the entire Southwest. For instance, the Asociación Nacional México-Americana (ANMA), an explicitly leftist, working-class organization that was active across the Southwest in the 1950s, eschewed whiteness, saw their constituents as an aggrieved racial minority, and sought to build alliances with other people of color, including African Americans and Jews.¹⁵ It is unclear whether ANMA was an anomaly or whether such a pattern is indicative of a larger trend among leftist and/or working-class formations, but the fact that its membership eschewed white supremacy indicates that monolithic assumptions are not in order and that regional differences may exist.

In the contemporary period, the racial identity of Latinas/os, especially that of Mexicans, may have major implications for the United States’ racial future. Some authors argue, for example, that Latinas/os along with Asian Americans may be absorbed into the ever-expanding circle of whiteness.¹⁶ In this scenario, as whites become a demographic minority, they compensate by allowing some racial others to become “honorary whites,” thus maintaining their power. Jonathan Warren and Frances Winddance Twine believe that such a move will fundamentally change the category of white itself. Latinas/os and Asian Americans will not simply join the ranks of whites but rather transform the existing category of white to a diversity of peoples of color, *excepting* African Americans.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has complicated this scenario by noting that honorary white status does not imply full acceptance—the status can be revoked at any time and may be more akin to a “buffer zone.”¹⁷ He has argued that in the coming years Latinas/os may be split between honorary whites—middle-class, native-born Latinas/os who can phenotypically pass as white if they so desire—and a collective black that could include immigrants, the working class, and those Latinas/os who cannot pass as white. Some suggest that rising intermarriage rates between Latinas/os and whites is evidence of this process of “whitening.”¹⁸

The problem with these views is that they do not quite square with an inconvenient set of facts: the percentage of Latinas/os who identified as white on the census declined dramatically between 1980 and 2000. Although there was a reversal of this trajectory in 2010, we argue below that this was a function

of how the questions about race and Latina/o identity were asked. If there is actually a move away from whiteness rather than toward it, this opens up an entirely different set of political possibilities, including alignment around a broad “people of color” identification and coalition.

Complicating Contemporary Latina/o Racial Identity

To address some of these questions, we turn below to data from the US Census Bureau. But understanding the choices made now requires understanding choices made earlier, both by Latinas/os and by statisticians. In keeping with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Latinas/os were largely counted as “white” between 1850 and the 1970s (when Hispanic/Latino was created as a category, with race made a separate choice). An important exception was in 1930 when Mexicans were counted as a “separate race.” But an outcry from both Mexico and *Mexicanos de afuera* led to a redesignation as white again in the 1940 census.¹⁹

After a large influx of Puerto Ricans in the 1950s and 1960s, the Office of Management and Budget, which oversees the census’s categories, began collecting information on Spanish-language groups. At roughly the same time, Chicana/o activists began pressuring the government to gather more information on the Mexican-origin population in order to better understand its needs. This intersected, oddly enough, with the desire of the Republican administration of Richard Nixon to construct another “minority” group: with the “Southern Strategy” of appealing to disaffected whites in full bloom, the black vote was lost to the GOP, and “Hispanics” looked like another group ripe for cultivation.²⁰

The conflation of these trends led to a question about “Hispanic” origin (whether a respondent was “Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, Other Spanish”) being asked in the 1970 long-form census. The long form was generally administered each decade to a smaller sample but had more questions and offered more detailed information than could be garnered from the short form that everyone fills out. In fact, there were two samples that year, one of 15 percent of the population and one of 5 percent. The Hispanic origin data was based on the smaller of the two, thereby reducing its reliability.²¹ A more targeted count was formalized in 1976 by Public Law 94-311, which required the collection of economic and social data on “Americans of Spanish origin and descent,” and in 1980 the Census Bureau introduced a Hispanic question that was used on the short form filled out by all respondents.

While the Bureau offered Latinas/os the new opportunity to self-designate as Latina/o, they also asked them to choose a racial identity: American Indian, Asian American, black, white, or “some other race” (the category multiracial was introduced in 2000).²² The problem should be readily apparent: the historic and distinct racialization of Latinas/os is not acknowledged by the census. When asked to self-identify, most researchers have found that Latinas/os tend to identify their race in terms of national origin.²³ Thus “Mexican” is a commonly cited category, which makes perfect sense given the deeply racialized nature of the term, especially in the southwestern United States. Moreover, many non-Mexican Latinas/os also see these terms as racial categories, as do many non-Latinas/os.²⁴ With Latinas/os not able to register that identity as a race, a significant percentage of Latinas/os have opted for SOR; in fact, Latinas/os constitute 97 percent of all SOR respondents.

As noted in the introduction, when the Census Bureau initially saw the number of Latinas/os who identified as SOR, it did not see this as a rejection of US racial categories but rather as a failure of Latinas/os to properly understand the question and/or what race is.²⁵ Not surprisingly, Latina/o activists and numerous scholars have challenged this interpretation. For instance, some have argued that the terms *Latina/o* and *Hispanic*, in fact, function as racial categories in the United States and should be treated as such in the census.²⁶ Others have pointed out that the census’s racial categories are rooted in an outdated Anglo-American conception of race that is at odds with Latin America’s more fluid racial formations. There has been, consequently, a robust debate on how to treat Latinas/os in the census, and the Bureau has explored many options, which, as we show, affects how people answer the question.²⁷

In any case, table 1 shows how Latinas/os have been answering the question(s) as asked. As can be seen, the vast majority of respondents in all years identify as either white or SOR. It also shows the increase in the share of SOR between 1980 and 1990, then a leveling in 2000. We believe the slight drop in 2000 is actually a function of the introduction of the multiracial category; since many of those identifying as multirace in 2000 would likely have identified as SOR in earlier years, this actually suggests an increase in that year. What is clear, in any event, is the decline in the percentage declaring “white” between 1980 and 2000.²⁸

In 2010, however, there is a significant decrease in SOR and an accompanying rise in the percentage of Latinas/os declaring “white.” This might lead some to conclude something dramatic has happened in the arena of self-identification: are Latinas/os increasingly embracing honorary whiteness, perhaps because of the anti-immigrant politics of recent years? We think there is a simpler explanation: a change in the wording of the question.

Table 1.**Latina/o Census Racial Identification, 1980–2010.**

Year	White	SOR	Multiracial	Black	API	Amer. Indian
1980	57.7%	37.7%	—	2.7%	1.2%	0.7%
1990	52.2%	43.2%	—	2.9%	1.1%	0.7%
2000	47.9%	42.2%	6.3%	2.0%	0.5%	1.2%
2010	53.0%	36.7%	6.0%	2.5%	0.5%	1.4%

Sources: IPUMS Census SF3, 1980, 1990; US Census SF1 (American Factfinder), 2000, 2010.

In the 2000 form, immediately preceding the questions on Hispanic heritage and race, the respondent is told to “Please answer BOTH questions” about Hispanicity and race. This reads like a gentle warning to be sure to complete the form entirely. In 2010 the note says: “Please answer BOTH Question 8 about Hispanic origin and Question 9 about race. For this census, Hispanic origins are not races.” Both the 2000 and 2010 notes have an arrow pointing to them to draw attention and are also in bold—but the 2010 warning stands out more and basically reads like a stern admonition to fill the form out by choosing a race and making sure that it is not Hispanic. Despite this, 37 percent of the respondents chose SOR, seeming to disobey directions and follow their hearts.²⁹

Of course, not all Latinas/os share the same racial identity. Table 2 shows how the six largest Latina/o groups in the United States identified racially in 2010 (groups are listed by relative population size). As can be seen, 85.4 percent of Cubans identified as white, while only 29.6 percent of Dominicans did. The ethnic Mexican population identified as 52.8 percent white and 39.5 percent SOR. The largest Central American groups, Salvadorans and Guatemalans, were more likely to identify as SOR than as white.

But aside from the issue of national origin—something we take into account in our statistical analysis—there is a great deal of uncertainty over what factors contribute to a particular racial identity and what that identity means to the respondent. An early study by Sonia Tafuya examined the correlation between Latina/o racial choice and other indicators in the 2000 census, including wages, employment, poverty rate, voter participation, and educational attainment. Among the most interesting of her findings was that the longer Latinas/os resided in the United States, the more likely they were to identify

Table 2.
Racial Identification for Largest Latina/o National-Origin Groups, 2010.

National-Origin Group	White	SOR	Multiracial	Black	API	Amer. Indian
Mexican	52.8%	39.5%	5.0%	0.9%	0.4%	1.4%
Puerto Rican	53.1%	27.8%	8.7%	8.7%	0.8%	0.9%
Cuban	85.4%	5.8%	3.7%	4.6%	0.3%	0.2%
Salvadoran	40.2%	50.5%	6.9%	1.0%	0.4%	1.1%
Dominican	29.6%	46.0%	9.7%	2.9%	0.4%	1.4%
Guatemalan	38.5%	49.4%	7.2%	1.1%	0.9%	3.0%
South American	65.9%	24.9%	6.6%	1.4%	0.5%	0.8%
Other Central American	48.5%	33.7%	8.5%	7.7%	0.5%	1.1%

Sources: US Census, The Hispanic Population: 2010, May 2011, p. 14..

as white (although this finding was from a series of cross tabulations and so could have been due to other factors, such as increased income or education over time; as we show below, we find a different pattern once we control for those variables).³⁰

Interestingly, as more researchers have examined Latina/o racial identity, there is declining consensus on what characteristics are associated with a particular identity. For example, while Tafoya found that a higher income was associated with a white identity, Michael Joseph and Jeffrey Timberlake found that it was not.³¹ Likewise, Tafoya, Julie Dowling, and Clara Rodriguez found that the longer one is in the United States, the more likely one is to self-identify as white,³² but Tanya Golash-Boza and William Darity, Edward Telles and Vilma Ortiz, and John Logan found the opposite.³³ Indeed, in Rumbaut's analysis of the children of immigrants, he found that the second generation was far more likely *not* to identify as white.³⁴ Even language results have been contradictory. Dowling, in her study of Tejanos and California Mexicans, found that Spanish speakers were more likely to identify as SOR, but Golash-Boza and Darity found that English speakers were more apt to not identify as white.³⁵

Spatializing Racial Identity

The mixed results above are partly due to scholars using a multiplicity of data sets that vary over time and place. And one thing that we *do* know is that racial identity also varies over time and space. Context may be everything when it comes to asking Latinas/os about race: in her classic study, Rodriguez found significant variations depending on who was asking the questions, the racial choices offered, and even the order of the racial categories. We should expect that temporal and spatial context might make a difference as well.

An example of temporal change can be seen in recent challenges to the idea that age is positively correlated with whiteness. Excluding those born before 1945, the data indicate that Latinas/os were becoming increasingly nonwhite over generations—at least until 2010 when the question changes and the trend breaks. This would support what researchers have called the racialization of the “Hispanic/Latina/o” category, which is based on experience.³⁶ In the words of Golash-Boza, “In contemporary US society, we learn our racial place through interactions with others. If others classify us as white, we learn to expect preferential treatment. If others classify us as something other than white, we learn to expect marginalization.”³⁷ In short, Latinas/os are becoming increasingly nonwhite because they are regularly told in a multitude of ways that they are not white.

Below, we look at the dimension of time by examining how length of time in country affects the Latina/o choice of SOR. Our main new contribution, however, is in the area of space, a topic that has not been heretofore carefully explored. Indeed, most of the existing spatial knowledge about the racial identity of Latinas/os tends to be very general. For instance, as previously mentioned, Latinas/os are more apt to identify as SOR in the West, although there is a major difference between Texas and California. In the 2000 census, 39.7 percent of California Latinas/os identified as white, but 58 percent did in Texas. In their comparative study, Telles and Ortiz found that ethnic Mexicans who grew up in San Antonio were five times more likely to identify as white than their Los Angeles counterparts.³⁸ Along the border, Dowling found that a whopping 80 percent of Latinas/os identified as white, with the argument being that this was an effort to distinguish themselves from Mexican nationals.³⁹ Most analysts attribute this difference to distinct political cultures and histories and the fact that Texas embraced a black–white binary that historically pushed Mexicans to identify as white. In contrast, California has historically recognized an assortment of racial categories,⁴⁰ and the power of the Chicana/o movement encouraged ethnic Mexicans to eschew a white identity.⁴¹

Logan's 2003 study is the only one we know of that has carefully looked at spatial effects at a more local level. Logan found that Latinas/os tend to racially identify in terms of the dominant local racial group. Hence there are more black Hispanics in heavily black areas; more white Hispanics in predominantly white areas; and more "Hispanic Hispanics" in areas dominated by Latinas/os ("Hispanic Hispanics" is how he defines Latinas/os who identify as SOR).

A strong predictor of racial identification of Hispanics is the racial mix of the metropolitan region where they live. Among metros with the largest Hispanic populations, Miami has the highest share of white Hispanics; New York has the highest share of black Hispanics. In California and Texas, Hispanic Hispanics generally are the majority of Hispanics.⁴²

Logan also found that not only do Latinas/os tend to identify racially with the locally dominant group, but they also tend to have similar profiles to them. Thus black Latinas/os were similar in education, wages, segregation, and employment to African Americans, and white Latinas/os were similar to non-Hispanic whites in terms of their social profiles. Logan speculated that Latinas/os adopt racial identities that not only reflected the pool of available life partners but also resonated with the larger community context.

Logan's work opens up a consideration of the relationship between Latina/o racial identity and community context, but does not really explore the spatial

structure in ways that resonate with contemporary research on urban America. Since the 1980s, research on race and urban space has been dominated by Douglas Massey's concept of "spatial assimilation."⁴³ According to Massey, a key indicator of any racial/ethnic group's integration into the dominant society is the degree to which it is residentially integrated with other groups, especially whites. And because whites overwhelmingly reside in suburbia, suburban residence was seen as a hallmark of acculturation and racial integration. Accordingly, one possible hypothesis is that suburban Latinas/os are more likely to identify as white than their urban counterparts.

Of course, suburbia has become a differentiated space over time, with a diversity of suburbs yielding a new set of typologies.⁴⁴ Hence we can no longer speak of "suburbs" per se, but often differentiate according to location (e.g., "inner-ring" suburbs) and status (e.g., "ethnic suburbs"). Moreover, while most researchers have viewed suburban residence as both a function of greater acculturation and the enhanced socioeconomic status of people of color, Jeffrey Timberlake, Aaron Howell, and Amanda Staight have argued that such changes are largely a function of housing supply: since the vast majority of the United States' postwar housing stock has been built in suburbia, all kinds of people must move to the suburbs simply because that is where the housing is.⁴⁵ These transformations are apparent among the Latina/o population. Almost half of all Latinas/os now live in the suburbs, and between 1990 and 2000 suburban growth outpaced central city growth for Latinas/os.⁴⁶ One question for us is what impact this spatial pattern may have on racial identity.

Latinas/os in Southern California

To get at these questions, particularly the role of time and space, we examine the nature of Latina/o racial identity in Southern California. Although the Mexican presence in Southern California extends back to the late 1700s, its size, influence, and geography have changed considerably through Spanish settlement, Mexican independence, the Mexican American War, Anglo conquest, and the modern era.

Originally, the Spanish crown settled the region via a series of presidios, missions, and land grants that were intended to wrest the land from indigenous hands and control that population. From this initial expropriation two important spatial patterns emerged. First, a nucleus of Mexicans settled in central Los Angeles—what would become downtown. This particular concentration of Mexicans diminished after the US takeover, as incoming Anglos pushed the Mexicans eastward.⁴⁷ This was the beginning of the greater Eastside—the

largest contiguous stretch of ethnic Mexicans in the United States. Currently, Los Angeles's urban core and its immediate environs in all directions are predominantly Latina/o spaces.

The other prominent feature of Mexican settlement was a vast number of small rural communities associated with agriculture, railroads, ports, the mission system, and other extractive industries. These rural settlements were preceded by the ranchos of the Californios, which in turn were based on both Spanish and Mexican land grants. As Anglo-Americans assumed landownership, they converted large expanses of pasture to more intensive crop cultivation that required a workforce—if only seasonally. Mexicans resided in these rural communities, or *colonias*, which provided the basis for many towns, including Ontario, El Monte, Santa Paula, Santa Ana, Pomona, and Pacoima.⁴⁸ Other communities were initially formed by the mission system, and then later developed into agricultural areas and eventually towns. Examples of these settlements include San Fernando, Santa Barbara, San Gabriel, Ventura, San Diego, and San Juan Capistrano.⁴⁹

After the US conquest in 1848, the Mexican population was rapidly overwhelmed by the arrival of Anglo-Americans, a process sped along by the real estate speculation of the early twentieth century. The Mexican population underwent a revival during and immediately after the Mexican Revolution (1910–20) when a wave of Mexicans fled to the United States, leading to what Douglas Monroy calls the “rebirth” of Mexican Los Angeles.⁵⁰ Many of the new immigrants clustered in and around the urban core, rural communities, and nascent suburbs. Belvedere, in what is now called East Los Angeles, constituted the largest Spanish-speaking district in Los Angeles in the late 1920s, housing thirty thousand ethnic Mexicans.⁵¹ During the Great Depression, the population pattern flipped, as Mexican residents were scapegoated and a formal campaign of repatriation was initiated. Under repatriation almost a million Mexicans were deported from the United States, the majority of whom were citizens.⁵²

While there was always some contact between the *colonias*, the urban core, and *barrios*, things changed dramatically with World War II. Because of the massive growth of people and industry, new housing was built in outlying areas. Consequently, many small, rural communities became more firmly connected to the urban core. Pacoima, for example, once a *colonia*, was eventually consumed by the urbanizing San Fernando Valley and transformed into a suburban barrio.⁵³ Consequently, many of these rural *colonias* became sites of redevelopment struggles, as municipalities sought to raze low-income communities to build new housing.⁵⁴

What is striking, then, is the extent to which ethnic Mexicans were suburbanized in Southern California well before the post–World War II housing boom. This was partly a function of rural roots and the encroachment of the city, but also because ethnic Mexicans faced lesser residential discrimination than African Americans and so were able to move into the eastern suburbs starting as early as the 1940s.⁵⁵ This pattern intensified during the 1960s and 1970s because of the advent of antidiscrimination laws, growing economic prosperity, and continual housing pressures in the urban core. As more Mexicans entered the middle class, many moved from East LA into the eastern suburbs. Pico Rivera offers a case in point. In 1950 there were eighteen thousand inhabitants in Pico Rivera; by 1960 there were almost fifty thousand, of which 30 percent were Spanish-surnamed. By 1970 the city was 65 percent Latina/o. As of 2010 there were almost sixty-three thousand residents, of whom 88 percent are Latina/o.⁵⁶ This story occurred repeatedly across the San Gabriel Valley.

In contrast, the intense development of the “Inland Empire” did not begin in earnest until the 1970s. As housing prices escalated, many Los Angeles and Orange County home buyers started looking farther north and east. While initially characterized as primarily white, many people of color also joined this out-migration, as they sought both affordable housing and an escape from the perceived ills of the urban core and mature suburbs, especially after the 1992 civil unrest. This led to the rapid development of previously more isolated inland and northern coastal communities, including Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Clarita, and Oxnard.

This geographic transformation was accompanied by an intense restructuring within the urban core. Starting with the Watts civil unrest (1965), whites began leaving central Los Angeles in significant numbers for nearby suburbs, such as Maywood and Southgate. By the 1980s and 1990s, partly in response to Latina/o and Asian immigration, whites moved to newer suburbs on the urban fringe and out-of-state destinations. Latina/o immigrants then moved into these “mature suburbs” as well as into South LA.⁵⁷ This pattern was repeated in the eastern part of the San Fernando Valley (as whites and wealthier residents moved to the west side of the valley), in Orange County (as whites and the affluent moved to the southern part of the county), along the northern coast, in San Diego, and the Inland Empire. Figure 1 shows this process for Latinas/os from 1970 to 2010.

The other crucial demographic dynamic over this period was the diversification of Latinas/os. While the Latina/o population was overwhelmingly Mexican in 1960, the influx of Central Americans in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as other immigrant Latinas/os, produced important shifts. Figure 2 shows the

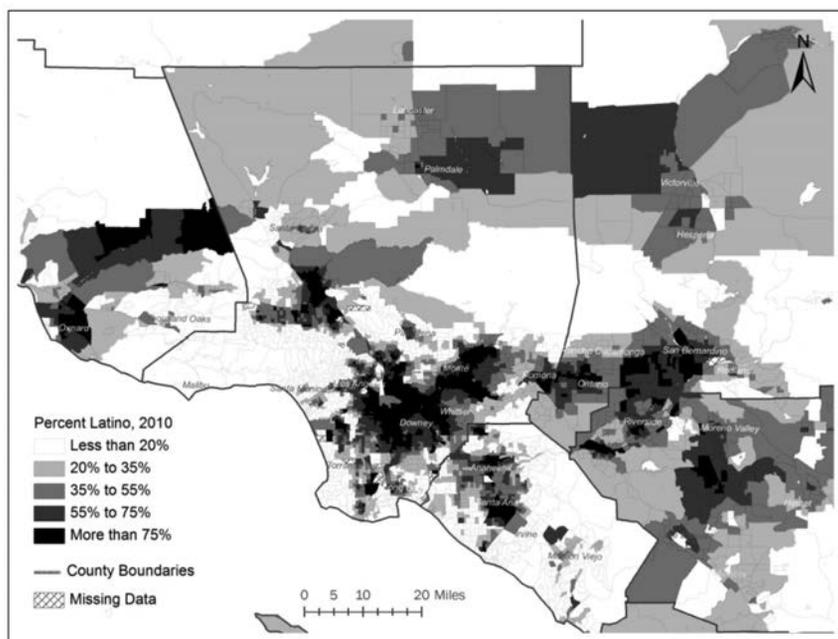


Figure 1.
Changing Latina/o Locations in
Southern California, 1970–2010.

2010 national origin of Latinas/os in Southern California (defined as Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Ventura, San Diego, and Imperial Counties). As can be seen, the population is still predominantly Mexican, with 81 percent identifying as such. Central Americans are another 9 percent, while “other Latinas/os”—primarily those who identify as Latina/o but with no specific country of origin—are 6 percent. Southern California has very small shares of South American and Caribbean groups (Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Dominicans) that have a more significant presence in the national picture.

It is the combination of this history and this demography that makes Southern California an apt location for testing the determinants of Latina/o racial identification. The area has a long-time Mexican presence, but there is also a set of newer national origin groups as well as new Mexican and other Latin American immigrants, allowing us to control for nationality and examine the impacts of length in country. The region has very few Caribbean Latinas/os, allowing us to avoid the complexities of how that population navigates racial identity in light of its African heritage amid antiblack racism (clearly a topic in need of further investigation). While Southern California has many Latinas/os

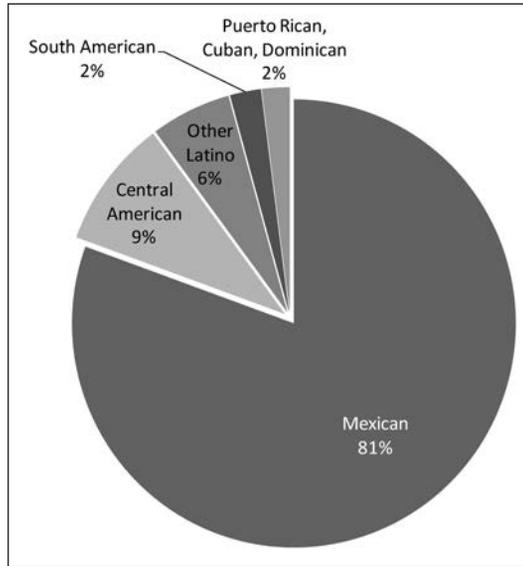


Figure 2. National Origin Composition of Latino Population in Southern California, 2010.

who are low income, there is also a strong middle class, a fact that allows us to look at the impacts of income. And the geographic configuration is just right for looking at the relationship between spatial location and racial identity at a local level: Latinas/os are located in areas that vary by whether the main proximate group (that might, as in Logan's argument, affect their racial identity) is African American, Latina/o, Asian, or white. Finally, they live in suburbs as well as in the urban core, and those suburbs include much older and newer locations.

Choosing Race

Survey data alone cannot fully explain how Latinas/os identify racially—the choice on a form could be driven because that is the way the respondent sees herself, because that is the way she thinks she is seen, or some combination of the two. Moreover, the rather limited sets of choices available on a census form do not capture the full complexity of racial identity or allow us to explore how some see the concept of Latina/o as a race itself. On the other hand, while it is not entirely clear what SOR means to Latina/o respondents, it is clearly a way to assert a nonwhite identity that is neither black, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, or white.

Because of this, drawing on the census data, if properly tempered by theory, history, and analysis, can tell us something about Latina/o racial subjectivity. Below, we use the American Community Survey (ACS), which has replaced the decadal long form and provides a sample of the US population each year. We combine the three most recent years available (2008 to 2010), to increase sample size and improve reliability, resulting in 56,378 individual observations of Latinas/os in Southern California that meet the criteria (explained later) for the analysis below. We start with 2008 because that is the year in which the ACS shifted to the current question format. Including earlier years would involve a different question format and thus a different sort of choice set. Moreover, recall that the current question has the various bolded warnings that one should choose a race and that Hispanic is not a race; hence, we feel that 2008–10 may reflect more intentionality in the choice, since one is being more or less consciously steered away from choosing the vaguer SOR category.

One advantage of the ACS data is its level of geographic specificity. Each ACS record includes economic, social, and demographic data on the housing unit or individual. To avoid individual identification, the smallest spatial unit attached to each record is the Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA). PUMAs contain a minimum population of one hundred thousand and can be viewed as large proxies for neighborhoods. Fortunately, in Southern California, PUMAs resemble well-known areas and allow us to readily distinguish between urban and various suburban spaces. Figure 3 shows the PUMA geography for Los Angeles County; we show the county by way of example, but the actual analysis focuses on the broader Southern California terrain and so includes the other six counties mentioned above.

Our empirical approach is modeled after Dowling as well as a recent study by Amon Emeka and Jody Agius Vallejo that explores whether individuals who check Latin American ancestry also identify as Latina/o in the census.⁵⁸ The basic strategy is to employ a logistical regression, one in which the dependent variable is either “no” or “yes” to a particular question, and the right-hand side or independent variables are then used to explain the choice. In this case, the dependent variable is SOR racial identity, and the independent variables include factors like income, education, and age. The regression results tell us whether the variables are correlated with the racial identity choice, in which direction, and how significantly. Because we introduce many independent variables in what is termed a multiple regression, we are investigating what is the “marginal” effect of, say, income once we control for national ancestry, family situation, geographic location, and so on.

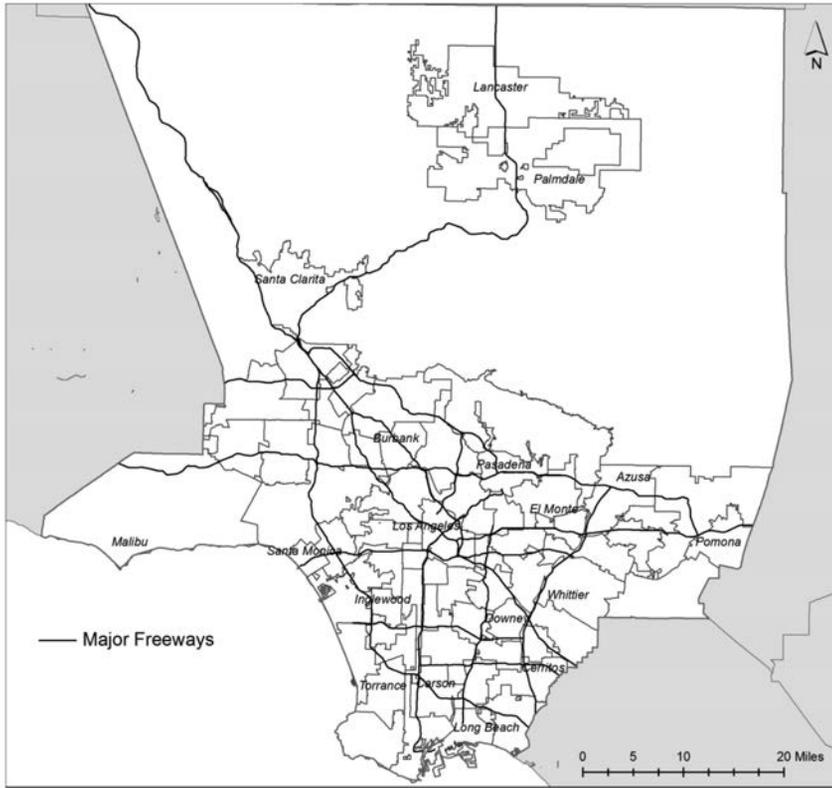


Figure 3. Public Use Microdata Areas in Los Angeles County.

We limit our analysis to Latinas/os who choose either SOR or white. We exclude those respondents who choose black, Asian, native (indigenous), or multirace. This is mostly for technical reasons: the regression model can only handle a binary dependent variable—that is, choosing one outcome or another. But we also believe that if one is phenotypically black or *indio* or Asian by origin, then marking one of those categories might seem to the respondent like less a choice than marking white or “other.” While this limitation of only two choices might be problematic in areas with many Puerto Rican or Dominican respondents, this is not a major problem in Southern California, where 90 percent of Latinas/os choose “white” or SOR.

The analysis focuses on householders only, partly because we initially found a high correlation between the racial identification of the householder and others in the household. We realized quickly that while this might be attributable to a shared sense of ethnicity in a household, it is also the case that it is generally

householders who answer the ACS questionnaire for the entire household and so are using their own views about white and SOR to define the racial character of all household members. In this sense, including the entire population in the logistic regression would introduce a statistical problem, specifically that larger households would inappropriately get more weight simply because the householder is able to define the characteristics of more household members. The results are not different if we include the whole population, but our choice seems more methodologically appropriate—and this is the approach taken by Ameka and Agius Vallejo as well.⁵⁹

Before proceeding to the results, we should stress that our findings are correlates, not determinants. In other words, they indicate *linkages* between variables, they do not tell us what variables *cause* or lead to particular outcomes. Of particular note is the possibility of reverse causality. For example, living above the poverty line is associated with a lower probability of identifying as SOR—that is, a higher probability of identifying as white. While this could result from class position, it may be, conversely, that Latinas/os with lighter skin (and who think of themselves as white) may experience less discrimination and hence garner more income. This problem is unavoidable given the data, and so we treat the variables as correlates.

We run five tests, adding sets of variables as we go. Given the importance of country of origin as previously discussed, each regression includes a set of controls for national origin (including tags for whether the person is Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Costa Rican, Guatemalan, Honduran, Nicaraguan, Panamanian, Salvadoran, Other Central American, Argentinian, Bolivian, Chilean, Colombian, Ecuadorian, Paraguayan, Peruvian, Uruguayan, Venezuelan, Spaniard, Dominican, or Other Latina/o). The pattern is as expected: Cubans, Argentinians, and Chileans are much more likely to mark white, while Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans are much more likely to mark SOR.⁶⁰ Because of space limitations we do not report separately the results on national origin, but the reader should be clear that those controls are in each test.

As can be seen in table 3, for each of the individual characteristics we explore, there is a reference group. For the age variable, it is those thirty-five years and younger, while for gender, it is males. A reference group is the measure or variable that acts as the frame of reference in which all groups are compared. For each variable, we calculate the effect on the probability of identifying oneself as SOR; these are called coefficients. So in the first test (see table 3), those between the ages of thirty-six and fifty are 3.3 percent less likely to identify as SOR compared with those younger than thirty-five. Likewise, those between the ages of fifty-five and sixty-five are 7.8 percent less likely and those older

Table 3.
Correlates of Latino Householder's Racial Identification as "Other" versus "White" in Southern California, 2008–2010.

Independent Variable	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5
Age					
Age 35 and younger	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Age 36 to 50	-3.3% ***	-3.8% ***	-5.0% ***	-4.6% ***	-4.6% ***
Age 51 to 65	-7.8% ***	-8.6% ***	-9.8% ***	-9.4% ***	-9.7% ***
Older than age 65	-16.1% ***	-17.6% ***	-18.4% ***	-18.3% ***	-18.7% ***
Sex					
Male	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Female	-1.2% *	-1.3% **	-1.1% *	-1.7% **	-1.7% **
Household Income					
Below poverty level	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Above poverty level		-2.2% **	-2.1% **	-1.4% *	-1.1% #
Educational Attainment					
Less than High School	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
High School Degree		-1.2% #	0.5%	0.5%	0.8%
Some College or AA Degree		-5.5% ***	-2.9% ***	-2.8% ***	-2.1% **
Bachelor's Degree or Higher		-13.5% ***	-10.7% ***	-10.3% ***	-9.6% ***

Table 3. Continued.

Independent Variable	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5
Recency of Migration					
U.S. born	Ref.		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Immigrated before 1980	4.0% ***		4.0% ***	4.0% ***	3.5% ***
Immigrated 1980 to 1989	3.6% ***		3.6% ***	3.6% ***	3.1% ***
Immigrated 1990 to 1999	1.7% #		1.8% *	1.8% *	1.1% &
Immigrated 2000 or later	0.1%		0.1%	0.1%	-0.5%
Language Abilities					
Speaks only English at home	Ref.		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Speaks another language at home	8.0% ***		8.0% ***	7.4% ***	6.7% ***
Race of Spouse					
Non-Hispanic White	Ref.		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Non-Hispanic Black	27.8% ***		27.8% ***	27.8% ***	27.3% ***
Latino	10.8% ***		10.8% ***	10.8% ***	9.2% ***
Non-Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islander	15.6% ***		15.6% ***	15.6% ***	14.1% ***
Non-Hispanic Other or Multiracial	20.6% ***		20.6% ***	20.6% ***	20.4% ***
Unmarried or spouse not present	13.5% ***		13.5% ***	13.5% ***	11.3% ***
Geographic Characteristics					
PUMA percent Latino					8.0% ***
PUMA percent Non-Hispanic Black					4.4% #
PUMA percent Asian Pacific Islander					7.8% **
PUMA Residential Dissimilarity Index					3.9% &
PUMA with Recently Built Housing					-7.7% ***
PUMA with Oldest Housing					1.1% #

Source: American Community Survey, 2008–2010, pooled.

than sixty-five are 16.1 percent less likely than the youngest cohort to identify as SOR. Women, meanwhile, are slightly (1.2 percent) less likely to identify as SOR than men. Recall again that we also have country of origin controls in place.

Note also the asterisks next to the coefficients; these indicate the statistical significance of the relationships. For the age variables, for example, all are significant at the .001 level (meaning that the probability that this result is in error is less than one in a thousand—hence, we can be quite confident that this is a “true” result). For the gender variable, the result is significant at the .01 level (meaning that the probability that this result is in error is one in a hundred). We also have marks that can be used for the .05, .10, and .20 significance levels (associated with probabilities of one in twenty, one in ten, and one in five). While this is a broad range of significance levels to consider, it makes sense to do so in such an exploratory exercise.

The initial results on age are in keeping with most of the literature and make sense if we think about older Latinas/os seeing themselves as white. Indeed, those in the oldest cohorts may have come of age in the Mexican American generation and actively fought for whiteness and its attendant privileges.⁶² Note also that the coefficients (the size of the effect) rise with age—each older cohort is much more likely than the previous to see themselves as white. The younger cohorts, in contrast, have come of age amid intense anti-immigrant movements, specifically Proposition 187 in 1994, in which Latinas/os, and ethnic Mexicans in particular, were told in no uncertain terms that they were not welcome, not American, and seemingly not white.⁶² We have no ready explanation for the gender differential, but, as we show, it does hold relatively steady across the various tests. Despite being statistically significant, it is a very small effect (as measured by the coefficient). One possibility is that Latinas, who are less likely to be employed than Latinos, experience a more constricted social sphere defined by the home, school, and neighborhood where they encounter less discrimination, which, in turn, reduces the propensity to reject whiteness (nothing like being rejected yourself to get you to reject the category you are being shut out from).

In test 2 we introduce independent variables that are associated with income and educational levels. To simplify matters and avoid correlations with other independent variables like education, we simply ask whether the Latinas/os in the sample are below or above the poverty level.⁶³ We find that money does indeed whiten: those above the poverty level choose white over SOR, and the result is significant at the .001 level. The regression also includes education, with more education associated with a lower propensity to identify as SOR.

That we find two independent effects for education and income is somewhat novel in the recent empirical literature; by contrast, Emeka and Agius Vallejo drop income in their regression specification because it is so collinear (or correlated) with education that they cannot obtain a separate effect.⁶⁴

The third test incorporates independent variables on recentness of migration and language. Those who speak a language other than English at home are 8 percent more likely to consider themselves SOR compared with those who speak English at home. Given the racialized nature of language in the United States, this is not surprising.⁶⁵ What is more interesting are the results obtained when we examine those who immigrated in 2000 or after, those who immigrated in the 1990s, those who immigrated in the 1980s, and those who came before 1980, all in comparison with a US-born reference group.⁶⁶ As it turns out, the less recent the cohort, the more likely its members are to identify as SOR, suggesting that more in-country experience racializes Latinas/os as nonwhite. Again, this is in keeping with the work of Golash-Boza, who argues that we learn our race through everyday experiences.

It is also useful to note that the introduction of these variables shifts (slightly) the education and income effects—both are now smaller. The change makes intuitive sense: because immigrants are often lower income and less educated, the income and education variables were partly capturing the effect of immigration experience in the earlier test. This may be why Tafoya earlier found that recentness was more associated with choosing SOR on the form—and it suggests the power of a multivariate analysis: it allows us to tease out the separate effects.

The fourth test factors in the race or ethnicity of the individual's spouse, with the reference group being those married to a non-Hispanic white. All Latina/o householders that do not have a non-Hispanic white spouse are much more likely to identify as SOR, with the effect strongest for those married to African Americans or to partners who identify as "other" or multiracial. This also makes sense: one can see how Latinas/os partnered to persons who identify as nonwhite would be more apt to identify as SOR, as they have an additional opportunity to regularly engage racialization from a different perspective. Interestingly, the likelihood of identifying as SOR is actually slightly stronger for those who are unmarried (they may still be coupled, but the census data do not include that information) than it is for those respondents who are married to Latinas/os. This may be an artifact of age, since unmarried individuals tend to be younger. Note that the effects of being in the thirty-six to fifty and fifty-one to sixty-five age brackets decline in this specification, lending credence to that view.

The final test centers on geographic characteristics. As noted above, PUMAs are the finest level of geography that can be matched with individual answers in the ACS. In our regression, we include the percentage of the PUMA that is Latina/o, non-Hispanic black, and Asian Pacific Islander; a measure of Latina/o residential segregation (a so-called dissimilarity index that looks at the degree of geographic separation within a PUMA of Latinas/os and non-Hispanic whites); and a measure indicating the age of the housing in the PUMA. The latter is a novel variable and was built by calculating a weighted average of the housing units in any particular PUMA; we then broke the PUMAs into those where the average housing unit was built before 1955, those where the average housing was built in 1975 or later, and those in between, a process that conveniently yielded about one-quarter each of the oldest and newest categories. While there are several ways to distinguish urban and suburban communities, housing age provides the least biased estimate, and this tripartite definition is a more objective way to distinguish the urban core, including the very oldest suburbs, the more traditional post-World War I suburbs, and the newest and more far-flung suburbs.⁶⁷

As it turns out, Latina/o householders are more likely to identify as SOR when surrounded by more Latinas/os, more African Americans, and more Asian Pacific Islanders (as compared with being surrounded by non-Hispanic whites). Interestingly, the effect is smaller and less significant for the percentage of African Americans, suggesting that there may be some racial distancing occurring in those areas (i.e., still more of a propensity to identify as SOR but less so). We also find that when Latinas/os within a PUMA are more segregated from non-Hispanic whites, Latina/o householders are more likely to identify as SOR (although the effect is significant only at the .20 level).⁶⁸ In short, both living near other people of color, including other Latinas/os, increased the likelihood of identifying as SOR. This is consistent with Logan's finding that Latinas/os' racial identity tends to vary with the demographics of those around them (although his findings were for metropolitan areas and not for the detailed geography we provide).

Finally, we turn to the question of suburban location. As previously mentioned, we measure this by the age of the housing stock. We do this for two reasons. First, we think that this offers a more sensible split than simply considering a central city and its surrounding suburbs. Indeed, Los Angeles, the central city that anchors Southern California, also contains within it areas considered prototypical suburbs, such as the western San Fernando Valley. Conversely, those are suburban communities in the industrial corridor of southeast Los Angeles (such as Compton) that might be better considered part

of the urban core.⁶⁹ Second, doing the split by age of housing rather than by our own assumptions about locations removes any “prior” beliefs that would then suggest we were trying to prejudge the results.

As it turns out, our premonitions were more or less accurate. We assume that the PUMAs with the oldest housing stock represent the central city and older suburbs, and that the PUMAs with the most recent housing are more “exurban.” The intermediary reference group is areas with housing built during the classic years of suburban expansion in Southern California. When we map this data (see fig. 4), the results are as anticipated: the central city of LA and the adjoining older suburbs have the oldest housing; the ex-urbs of the Inland Empire, Palmdale/Lancaster, and the easternmost suburbs of Ventura County as well as South Orange County and northern San Diego County have the newest housing stock; and everything else, mostly the traditional postwar suburbs, falls in between these two categories.

So what is the effect of urban space on racial subjectivity? Interestingly, the real effect comes in the newest areas: Latina/os there are 7.7 percent less likely to identify as SOR, while those in the urban core are 1.1 percent more likely to identify as SOR (although the effect is weaker for the latter than the former).⁷⁰ Apparently, even though older inner-ring suburbs have become more diverse, the most suburban space, particularly locations with the newest housing, still serves the classic “whitening” function.

How does this statistical finding square with other research on the importance of suburban space? Lisa Garcia Bedolla found that residents of East LA were much more apt to have what she calls a “positive attachment” to other Latinas/os than were Latina/o residents of Montebello, a nearby suburb. This positive attachment, she argues, is essential for the development of political engagement and, she speculates, stems from East LA’s long history of political activism and struggle. In contrast, residents in nearby suburbs tended to be more pessimistic, disempowered, and not politically engaged, and did not have a strong positive attachment to other Latinas/os. It is possible that this kind of dynamic is contributing to a more white identity in the new suburbs, versus the urban core and older suburbs. It is also the case that Garcia Bedolla’s analysis of attachment to other Latinas/os squares with our finding the probability of identifying as SOR—a nonwhite identity—goes up if there are more Latinos in one’s geographic location.

Of course, we know that many of these newer suburbs are not primarily white but, in fact, racially mixed, including Asians, African Americans, Latinas/os, and whites. This suggests that it may be the *idea* of living in a suburb that is prompting Latinas/os to embrace whiteness, rather than being surrounded

In any case, we see two key social processes affecting the nature of Latina/o racial identity, one temporal and the other spatial. First, it is very clear that the longer one is in the United States, the more one learns that one is not white. Racism, anti-immigrant sentiment, and other forms of exclusion teach people their place in the racial hierarchy. This is apparent in the data analysis, and we think in the heated and racially polarized debates about immigration that swirl around us. Second, suburbs are still powerful places that embody “America,” success, and acculturation, and they either draw Latinas/os who desire whiteness or encourage Latina/o residents to adopt a white identity.

As a result, two distinct geographies of Latina/o racial identity may be glimpsed. The urban core is heavily racialized as nonwhite and immigrant, and is the site of intense political activism, as seen in labor struggles, voting rights campaigns, environmental justice activism, and, perhaps most importantly since the 1990s, the target of intense anti-immigrant campaigns. All these forms of political activism not only teach Latinas/os their place in the racial hierarchy but also encourage a positive attachment to other Latinas/os—all of which contributes to an SOR identity. Meanwhile, in the newer suburbs, even if Latinas/os are not moving there to escape poor immigrants and other people of color, the weak political culture and lack of community that Garcia Bedolla observed in traditional suburbs might readily contribute to a white(r) identity.

One wild card in this spatial configuration of race is the current housing crisis. As noted, many of those Latinas/os and African Americans who moved to buy cheaper suburban housing with subprime loans have lost their investments and sometimes their hopes. The impact this will have on racial and class consciousness remains to be seen, although there is evidence that the foreclosure crisis is leading to greater social and economic polarization among Latinas/os with racial implications.⁷⁴ Will Latinas/os in the suburbs shift identities and join together with more politicized urban Latinas/os? Will the evolving Latina/o racial subjectivity contribute to a broader people of color consciousness? Will all of this imply a reconfiguration of racial and spatial politics?

Tackling these questions fully would require other complementary methods, including focus groups, in-depth interviews, oral histories, and other qualitative methods that reveal the reasons behind empirical findings. It would also require more historical analysis; we are quite cognizant that the statistical analysis we offer is really just a snapshot in time and that race is a dynamic construct (as illustrated in our analysis of the shifts with year of immigrant arrival). Despite that, we note that our regression analysis generally squares with our earlier theoretical and historical overview, raises important questions for future research, and has some important implications for theorizing and organizing about Latina/o racial subjectivity.

Conclusion

As Latinos have become the nation's largest "minority" group, some have argued that Latinas/os, particularly Mexicans, are permanently "othered" because of the US racial order, while others have suggested that Latinas/os may assume a path of "honorary whiteness," a status that may be subordinate but would still leave to one side alliances with African Americans and other groups of color. While fully mustering the information to address those alternative futures would require a wide range of qualitative studies—the steady refusal of Latinas/os to conform to the census's preferred categories has provided us with an opportunity to examine how Latinas/os answer the question about race and determine which factors are crucial in those choices.

When we do this using data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, we find that age, income, and education tend to "whiten"—meaning that older, richer, and more educated Latinas/os are less likely to designate themselves as SOR when offered a range of racial choices. We also find that retaining Spanish is associated with SOR identification, partly attesting to the racialization of language. All this could be taken to suggest that Latinas/os are on a slow but steady path to whiteness: after all, they are likely to get older, richer, and more educated as time goes on.

But this would miss several interesting patterns that are also revealed by our analysis. For one, being married to anyone who is not white—or being unmarried—is associated with choosing SOR. Perhaps more significant is the dimension of time: the less recent an immigrant, the more likely he or she is to mark SOR, a pattern that suggests that garnering more experience in the United States convinces immigrants that there is indeed a racial hierarchy and that they are not included in the most favored status. A final important and novel contribution of this work: space matters. Latinas/os living in areas that have a higher percentage of people of color and are more racially segregated are more likely to identify as SOR, while those living in the most suburbanized areas are much more likely to identify as "white."

Instead of speculating which trajectory will dominant, it is possible that both may continue to characterize the Latina/o experience. Indeed, Bonilla-Silva's argument of a triracial structure supports the idea of Latinas/os' racial fragmentation. Such a dynamic would clearly have important implications for how we think about race, place, and organizing. Researchers have found that living near people different from oneself leads to better interethnic relations—a key factor in racial solidarity.⁷⁵ In fact, a cursory glance at the political landscape of the urban core reveals many examples of people of color organizing.⁷⁶

While this work may address several important questions, it also opens up many others. Complementing this sort of broad theoretical and quantitative sweep with case studies that illustrate the specificities of identity formation in particular places is critical—as is more-theoretical work on racialized geographies in general. At the same time, the results suggest that worries about the Latina/o drift to honorary whiteness may be overstated: a broader identity, one that would place Latinas/os squarely in the middle of the demographic change that is leading to a more diverse “new majority,” is not only possible but perhaps likely, particularly given the results we find on the immigrant experience. Of course, such an identity will not come automatically—demography is not destiny—and while the cultivation of new solidarities will be the task of future activists, continued research on what individual and community factors are driving Latina/o racial subjectivities now can make an important contribution to that ambitious goal.

Notes

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7. See www.pewhispanic.org/2011/05/26/country-of-origin-profiles/ (accessed March 14, 2012).
 8. *Mestizaje* looms large in the Mexican racial formation. The Mexican state embraced *mestizaje*, which further marginalized both indigenous people and Afro-Mexicans. See Tanya Hernandez, *Racial Subordination in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). While Mexico cloaked itself in *mestizaje*, Americans found Mexicans' mixed-race status reprehensible and the needed ideological justification for their subordination and US conquest (John Michael Rivera, *The Emergence of Mexican America: Recovering Stories of Mexican Peoplehood in US Culture* [New York: New York University Press, 2006]). However, as Tomás Almaguer has shown, *mestizaje* has also protected Mexican Americans from some of the most egregious elements of white supremacy (*Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008]). Others have suggested that Mexican immigrants bring ideas of *mestizaje*, as part of the Mexican racial formation, with them to the United States.
 9. Calculated from the 2010 American Community Survey for six counties in Southern California: Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, and San Diego. Note that Imperial County was not included in this calculation because of its relatively small size.
 10. Haney-Lopez, *Racism on Trial*.
 11. Foley, "Partly Colored or Other White"; Brian Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Saldaña-Portillo, "How Many Mexicans [Is] a Horse Worth?"; Steve Wilson, "Brown over 'Other White': Mexican Americans' Legal Arguments and Litigation Strategy in School Desegregation Lawsuits," *Law and History Review* 21 (2003): 145–94; Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell*; Guglielmo, "Fighting for Caucasian Rights."
 12. Martinez, "Legal Construction of Race"; Menchaca, *Recovering History*.
 13. Weise, "Mexican Nationalisms, Southern Racisms."
 14. Guglielmo, "Fighting for Caucasian Rights." Indeed, in *Hernandez v. Texas* the state argued that precisely because Mexicans were white, that they were not entitled to any protections to ensure jury representation . . . despite the fact that no Mexican in the county in question had served in at least

twenty-five years. Gross refers to these strategies as a “Caucasian cloak” insofar as they provide cover for continued racial domination (*What Blood Won't Tell*).

15. Laura Pulido, “Checked Choices, Political Assertions: The Unarticulated Racial Identity of the Asociación Nacional México-Americana,” in *Critical Ethnic Studies: An Anthology*, ed. Jodi Kim, David Hernandez, Dylan Rodríguez, Andrea Smith, Shana Redmond, Sarita See, and Dean Spade. Forthcoming.
16. Jonathan Warren and Frances Winddance Twine, “White Americans, the New Minority? Non-Blacks and the Ever-Expanding Boundaries of Whiteness,” *Journal of Black Studies* 28 (1997): 200–218; George Yancy, *Who Is White?* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003); Mia Tuan, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites?* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Lee and Bean, “Reinventing the Color Line.”
17. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, “From Bi-racial to Tri-racial’: Towards a New System of Racial Stratification in the USA,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27 (2004): 931–50; see also Christine O’Brien, *The Racial Middle* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).
18. See Richard Wright, Serin Houston, Mark Ellis, Steven Holloway, and Margaret Hudson, “Crossing Racial Lines: Geographies of Mixed-Race Partnering and Multiraciality in the United States,” *Progress in Human Geography* 27 (2003): 457–74; Zoltan Hajnal and Mark Baldassare, *Finding Common Ground: Racial and Ethnic Attitudes in California* (San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, 2001); see also Lee and Bean, “Reinventing the Color Line.”
19. Foley, “Partly Colored or Other White.”
20. Geoffrey Fox, *Hispanic Nation: Culture, Politics, and the Constructing of Identity* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997).
21. See Campbell J. Gibson and Emily Lennon, “Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850–1990,” Population Division Working Paper No. 29, February 1999, US Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC. Experts believe that there was at least a 5 percent undercount that year, even after the Census Bureau tried to compensate for the low response to the Hispanic-origin question by including individuals with Spanish surnames, who indicated that Spanish was spoken in their household or who indicated birth or parentage in a Latin American country or Spain. See also Jeffrey Passel, *Census History: Counting Hispanics* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Hispanic Center, 2010).
22. Pacific Islanders were also split out from the Asian category in 2000, while American Indians and Alaska Natives were combined.
23. Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Paul Taylor, Mark Hugo Lopez, Jessica Hamar Martínez, and Gabriel Velasquez, *When Labels Don't Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Hispanic Center, 2012).
24. Steven Hitlin, J. Scott Brown, and Glen H. Elder Jr., “Measuring Latinos: Racial vs. Ethnic Classification and Self-Understandings,” *Social Forces* 86 (2007): 587–611.
25. Rodríguez, *Changing Race*.
26. Hitlin, Brown, and Elder, “Measuring Latinos.”
27. For an exhaustive discussion on the Census Bureau’s efforts, see Rodríguez, *Changing Race*.
28. Note also the decline in 2000 in the percentage declaring “black,” suggesting perhaps that some “black” respondents in earlier years would have preferred multiracial.
29. Further evidence that the 2000 census did not actually signal a movement toward whiteness can be seen in a recent national study that found only 36 percent of US Latinas/os identified as white, while 61 percent of the sample chose nonwhite identities (Taylor et al., “When Labels Don't Fit,” 9).
30. There are also important issues of causality. For example, Tafoya found that white Latinas/os were more integrated and economically successful than SOR Latinas/os—but do they identify as white because they experience less discrimination, or does their integration lead them to identify as white? Similarly, there are wage penalties for darker Latinas/os as compared with their lighter-skinned counterparts—and darker-skinned Latinas/os who have experienced discrimination are probably more likely to *not* identify as white not simply because of phenotype but because of experience. In short, cause and effect are challenging to tease out, meaning that statistical assertions must be tempered by the awareness of theoretical complexity. On wage penalties, see Margaret Hunter, “If You’re Light You’re Alright: Light Skin Color as Social Capital for Women of Color,” *Gender and Society* 16 (2002): 175–93; Golash-Boza and Darity, “Latino Racial Choices”; Reanne Frank, Ilana Redstone Akresh, and

- Bo Lu, "Latino Immigrants and the US Racial Order: How and Where Do They Fit In?," *American Sociological Review* 75 (2010): 378–401.
31. Tafoya, "Shades of Belonging," 12; Michael and Timberlake, "Are Latinos Becoming White?," 115.
 32. Tafoya, "Shades of Belonging," 14; Dowling, "Lure of Whiteness," chap. 3; Rodriguez, *Changing Race*, 140.
 33. Golash-Boza and Darrity, "Latino Racial Choices"; Telles and Ortiz, *Generations of Exclusion*, chap. 9; Logan, "How Race Counts," 4.
 34. Rumbaut, "Pigments of Our Imagination," 17.
 35. Golash-Boza and Darrity, "Latino Racial Choices," 26.
 36. Hitlin, Brown, and Elder, "Measuring Latinos"; Michael and Timberlake, "Are Latinos Becoming White?"; Golash-Boza and Darrity, "Latino Racial Choices"; Frank, Redstone Akresh and Lu, "Latino Immigrants and the U.S. Racial Order."
 37. Golash-Boza, "Dropping the Hyphen-Becoming Latino(a)-American through Racialized Assimilation," *Social Forces* 85 (2006): 33.
 38. Telles and Ortiz, *Generations of Exclusion*, 234.
 39. Dowling, "Lure of Whiteness," 115–17.
 40. Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines*.
 41. Telles and Ortiz, *Generations of Exclusion*, 93; Haney-Lopez, "Racism on Trial."
 42. Logan, "How Race Counts," 2.
 43. Douglas Massey, "Ethnic Residential Segregation: A Theoretical Synthesis and Empirical Review," *Sociology and Social Research* 69 (1985): 315–50.
 44. Michael Katz, Mathew Creighton, Daniel Amsterdam, and Merlin Chowkwanyun, "Immigration and the New Metropolitan Geography," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 32 (2010): 523–47; Myron Orfield, *American Metropolitanities: The New Suburban Reality* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2002); Brian A. Mikelbank, "A Typology of U.S. Suburban Places," *Housing Policy Debate* 15 (2004): 935–64; Bernadette Hanlon, Thomas Vicini, and John Rennie Short, "The New Metropolitan Reality in the U.S.: Rethinking the Traditional Model," *Urban Studies* 43 (November 2006): 2129–43; Bernadette Hanlon, "A Typology of Inner-Ring Suburbs: Class, Race, and Ethnicity in U.S. Suburbia," *City and Community* 8 (Fall 2009): 221–46; Wei Li, "Anatomy of a New Ethnic Settlement: The Chinese Ethnobarb in Los Angeles," *Urban Studies* 35 (1998): 479–501.
 45. Jeffrey M. Timberlake, Aaron J. Howell, and Amanda J. Staight, "Trends in the Suburbanization of Racial/Ethnic Groups in U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 1970–2000," *Urban Affairs Review* 47 (2011): 218–55.
 46. Manuel Pastor, "¿Quién Es Más Urbanista? Latinos and Smart Growth," in *Growing Smarter: Achieving Livable Communities, Environmental Justice, and Regional Equity*, ed. R. Bullard (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 73–103; Roberto Suro and Audrey Singer, *Latino Growth in Metropolitan America: Changing Patterns, New Locations* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Hispanic Center, 2002).
 47. On early Mexican Los Angeles, see Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), chap. 2; Antonio Rios-Bustamante and Pedro Castillo, *An Illustrated History of Mexican Los Angeles, 1781–1985*, Chicano Studies Research Center, Monograph No. 12, University of California, Los Angeles, 1986, esp. chap. 2; Antonio Rios-Bustamante, "Nineteenth Century Mexican Californians a Conquered Race: From Landowners to Laborers and 'Tenants at Will,'" in *Regions of La Raza: Changing Interpretations of Mexican American Regional History and Culture*, ed. A. Rios-Bustamante (Encino, CA: Floricanto, 1993), 237–69; Douglas Monroy, *Thrown among Strangers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850–1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).
 48. See, for example, Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900–1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).
 49. See Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); see also William Devereil, *Whitewashed Adobe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), chap. 4.
 50. Douglas Monroy, *Rebirth: Mexican Los Angeles from the Great Migration to the Great Depression* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); see also George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), chap. 3.

51. Rios-Bustamante and Castillo, *Illustrated History*, 132.
52. Francisco Balderama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).
53. On the San Fernando Valley, see Laura Barraclough, *Making the San Fernando Valley: Rural Landscapes, Urban Development, and White Privilege* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).
54. See Jerry Gonzalez, "A Place in the Sun: Mexican Americans, Race, and the Suburbanization of Los Angeles, 1940–1980" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2009).
55. Felker-Kantor, "Fighting the Segregation Amendment."
56. Early data on Pico Rivera comes from Gonzalez, "Place in the Sun," 5; Gonzalez, "Mexican American Politics in Suburban Los Angeles," 9; George Ramos, "Latino Middle Class Growing in Suburbia," *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 1997. See also Wendy Cheng, "The Changes Next Door to the Diazes: Suburban Racial Formation in Los Angeles's San Gabriel Valley," *Journal of Urban History* 39 (2013): 15–35.
57. On the restructuring of southeast LA, see James Curtis, "Barrio Space and Place in Southeast Los Angeles, California," in *Hispanic Spaces, Latino Places*, ed. D. Arreola (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 125–41. On south LA, see Melvin Oliver, James Johnson, and Walter Farrell, "Anatomy of a Rebellion: A Political-Economic Analysis," in *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. R. Gooding-Williams (New York: Routledge, 1993), 117–41. On white outmigration, see W. Frey and K. Liaw, "Immigrant Concentration and Domestic Migrant Dispersal: Is Movement to Nonmetropolitan Areas 'White Flight?'," *Professional Geographer* 50 (1998): 215–32; James Allen and Eugene Turner, *The Ethnic Quilt: Population Diversity in Southern California* (Northridge: Center for Geographical Studies, California State University Northridge, 1997), chap. 3.
58. Dowling, "Lure of Whiteness"; Amon Emeka and Jody Agius Vallejo, "Non-Hispanics with Latin American Ancestry: Assimilation, Race, and Identity among Latin American Descendants in the US," *Social Science Research* 40 (2011): 1547–63.
59. Emeka and Agius Vallejo, "Non-Hispanics with Latin American Ancestry." The results are also generated with population weights so that they better reflect the population at hand; to do this, we generate weights for just the observations that are in the regressions themselves, appropriately adjusted for each sample.
60. Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are also less likely than Mexicans to mark SOR, but this may be because we have, by nature of the data construction, excluded black and multiracial identifiers in that group. Moreover, once we are past Mexicans and Central Americans, the sample share is small and the results cannot be considered reliable.
61. On the impact of the Cold War on Mexican American political activism in Los Angeles, see Shana Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), chaps. 4, 6.
62. This follows Golash-Boza's argument in "Dropping the Hyphen."
63. In 2011 poverty for a family of four was defined as an annual income of \$22,350.
64. See Emeka and Agius Vallejo, "Non-Hispanics with Latin American Ancestry."
65. On the usage, politics, and racialization of Spanish, see Rosaura Sanchez, "Mapping the Spanish Language along a Multiethnic and Multilingual Border," in *Aztlan* 21 (1992–96): 49–104; Lisa Garcia Bedolla, *Fluid Borders: Latino Power, Identity, and Politics in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), chap. 3; see also Otto Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), esp. chap. 6.
66. An alternative specification would be those who arrived less than ten years ago, ten to twenty years ago, and so on, with adjustment made for each year in the data set. The problem with that is that the data show "bulges" of arrivals in 1980, 1990, and 2000—not, we think, because there was any real jump in those years (judging from data on immigration flows) but because respondents with dimmer memories tend to choose a nice round year.
67. We also looked at the age of the housing unit itself, an approach that yielded similar results. However, the problem with that strategy is that it is an individual characteristic, while all the other characteristics are neighborhood characteristics; for consistency, we went with the average age of housing in the PUMA.
68. We measure segregation with the dissimilarity index that measures the percentage of Latinas/os that would need to move to be evenly distributed in that neighborhood. Given that we are also controlling for the percentage of African Americans, Latina/o, and Asian/Pacific in the PUMA, it captures the likelihood of interacting with other groups.

69. Manuel Pastor, "Looking for Regionalism in All the Wrong Places: Demography, Geography, and Community in Los Angeles County," *Urban Affairs Review* 36 (July 2001): 747–82.
70. The regressions are what statisticians call "well-behaved": coefficients and statistical significance levels are generally stable across the tests, and when they change, they do so in reasonable ways (e.g., the impact of income falls as we introduce more variables, like immigration or geographic location, that are associated with income). On the other hand, issues of causality remain elusive, something that is inherent in this research: individual racial identification could be driving geographic location even as location also changes ethnic and racial identity.
71. This is an interesting question especially in light of George Lipsitz's concept of "moral geographies of differentiated space," in which he argues that people of color in such residential spaces respond differently than whites ("The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape," *Landscape Journal* 26 [2007]: 10–23; see also Cheng, "Changes Next Door to the Diazes"). For an interesting example of identity politics in nonwhite suburbs, see Wendy Cheng, "'Diversity' on Main Street? Branding Race and Place in the New 'Majority-Minority' Suburbs," *Identities* 17 (2010): 458–86.
72. Frances Winddance Twine, "Brown Skinned White Girls: Class, Culture, and the Construction of White Identity in Suburban Communities," *Gender, Place, and Culture* 3 (1996): 205–24.
73. Jody Agius Vallejo, *Barrios to Burbs: The Making of the Mexican-American Middle Class* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).
74. Deirdre Pfeiffer and Emily Tumpson Molina, "The Trajectory of REO's in Southern California Latino Neighborhoods: An Uneven Geography of Recovery," *Housing Policy Debate* (2012): 1–29.
75. An exception to their general finding was between African Americans and Latinas/os in South Los Angeles. See Eric Oliver and Janelle Wong, "Intergroup Prejudice in Multiethnic Settings," *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (2003): 567–82.
76. Manuel Pastor, "Common Ground at Ground Zero? The New Economy and the New Organizing in Los Angeles," *Antipode* 33 (2001): 260–89; see also Manuel Pastor and Enrico Marcelli, "Somewhere over the Rainbow? African Americans, Unauthorized Mexican Immigration, and Coalition Building," *Review of Black Political Economy* 31 (2003): 125–255.