

Resurgent Ethnicity and Residential Choice Among Second-generation Asian Americans in a Los Angeles Panethnic Suburb

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Abstract

We draw on forty-six in-depth interviews with residents of Cerritos, California, a middle-class majority Asian suburb in Los Angeles County to explore the meaning of resurgent ethnicity and the ways in which a racialized identity informs residential preferences and choice among second-generation Asian Americans. Findings suggest that second-generation Asian Americans are choosing to reside in a place that offers cultural and class-based amenities that reflects a multiethnic sensibility. They also make residential choices based on family ties to strengthen and maintain intergenerational relations and share mutual social and economic resources. For second-generation Asian Americans, this racially dominant but ethnically diverse spatial settlement also provides a sense of belonging, signifying the continuing significance of race among middle-class, acculturated racial minority groups. As U.S. ethnic populations continue to grow and continue the trend of suburbanization and segregation, understanding such places and their implications will become increasingly important.

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The fastest-growing racial group in the United States, Asian Americans, represents over forty-five ethnic groups that speak at least thirty-three languages (Asian Americans Advancing Justice—Los Angeles 2013). Between 2000 and 2015, the Asian American population grew to over twenty million, of which 59% were foreign born (López, Ruiz, and Patten 2017). The immigrant population encompasses those who have lived and worked in the United States for decades as well as those who have arrived more recently, representing a wide range of education levels, skills, occupational backgrounds, and resources. For both foreign-born and native-born Asian Americans, racial concentration notably has increased in recent years regardless of socioeconomic mobility (Logan, Alba, and Zhang 2002; Walton 2017).

Resurgent ethnicity theory hypothesizes that this rise in spatial segregation can be explained by in-group racial/ethnic preferences rather than limited resources and opportunities; Asian Americans with higher socioeconomic status who live near coethnics gain class-based resources such as better self-rated health, cultural and educational institutions, and retail spaces that serve the needs of particular ethnic and language groups (Lung-Amam 2017; Walton 2012, 2017; Zhou, Tseng, and Kim 2008). While offering an alternative explanation to spatial assimilation, ethnic resurgence has been studied primarily using quantitative methods to understand larger trends across the nation by national-origin groups. Meanwhile, much of ethnographic studies of Asian American ethnic communities and suburbanization have focused on places with a concentration of one Asian ethnic or national-origin immigrant group that provides class-based, cultural, and language-specific resources (Li 1999; Vö 2008; Zhou, Tseng, and Kim 2008). Given the centrality of immigration driving the population growth of Asian Americans in recent decades, this is not surprising. However, it is also critical to study the heterogeneity among and within Asian America that contributes to the “complex residential geographies” that challenge traditional theories of racial/ethnic incorporation and segregation (Li, Skop, and Yu 2016; Walton 2017).

Our study bridges this gap in resurgent ethnicity theory with a focus on second-generation Asian Americans who choose to reside among other Asians, but not necessarily with coethnics; it draws from forty-six interviews with residents of Cerritos, a middle-class Californian suburb in Southeast Los Angeles County (population 49,041 in 2015). Asian Americans, especially post-1965 immigrants, began moving to Cerritos in the 1970s and by 2010, the population was 65% Asian, making it one of thirteen cities or

unincorporated areas in Los Angeles County that became majority Asian American between 2000 and 2010 (Asian American Advancing Justice 2013; Bureau of the Census 2010). However, Cerritos does not have one dominant Asian ethnic group; Filipinos, Koreans, and Chinese each comprise at least 19% of the Asian population in Cerritos, with Asian Indians making up 13% (Bureau of Census 2018). This study offers insights into in-group preferences and residential choices of the children of post-1965 immigrants who were born and/or raised in the United States.

According to the social structural sorting perspective developed by Krysan and Crowder (2017), residential location choices and decisions are not only based on rational choice and economics but also on social factors that play a role in the various stages of housing selection, including one's perceptions of neighborhoods and communities; these perceptions are shaped by the existing racial stratification, neighborhoods in which the subjects grew up, and information gained from their friends, families, and other sources.

Our research utilizes the social structural sorting perspective to better understand a variant of ethnic resurgence and the multitude of factors that shape racial/ethnic experiences, residential choices, and the implications of such choices. We find that for the second generation, their experiences and perceptions shaped their residential selections. Race, class, and family ties emerged as important considerations for residential selection. They preferred living in Asian-majority neighborhoods because they perceived that they would experience discrimination or marginalization based on race in predominantly White neighborhoods. They also wanted and appreciated a variety of amenities across different ethnic groups because it reflected their own multiethnic upbringing. Finally, residents took intergenerational caregiving and family ties into account when making residential decisions to provide and access to mutual social and financial support; this was important given the high housing and living costs of the region. These residential preferences and strategies reveal a desire for multiethnic amenities; a shift toward community development and political formations around new alliances beyond ethnic groups and generations; and programs to support burgeoning multiethnic and multigenerational living and needs. As the second generation is projected to make up much of U.S. population growth in the next few decades, more studies that focus on racial, ethnic, class, and generational differences can provide insights into the changing landscape of residential assimilation, segregation, suburban development, and the continuing significance of racialized spaces in U.S. society.

Theoretical Background

Scholars have examined the role of U.S. neighborhoods in the cultural, socio-economic, and political assimilation of immigrants and racial/ethnic minority

populations (Logan and Zhang 2013; Wen, Lauderdale, and Kandula 2009). Spatial assimilation theory suggests that as racial, ethnic, and/or immigrant groups improve in socioeconomic status and acculturate to the dominant society, they move to more affluent, predominantly White neighborhoods with better amenities. However, racial concentration or segregation continues to persist in U.S. cities and neighborhoods, often linked to group differences in economic resources and opportunities (Massey 1985). The stratification theory argues that despite the outlaw of such practices, people of color and/or immigrants still experience housing and other types of discrimination, have less access to better housing conditions and amenities, and face barriers to upward residential mobility (Charles 2003; Logan, Alba, and Logan 1993).

Indeed, contemporary immigrants and their socioeconomic diversity have challenged traditional models of residential assimilation and segregation, particularly in cities and states which have served as immigration destinations and have emerged as centers of the new global economy (Li 2009; Logan, Alba, and Zhang 2002; Nee and Sanders 2001; Park and Kim 2008; Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Vergara 2009; Vö and Danico 2004). In the 1980s, Asian immigrants, some coming with higher education, training, and capital from homelands experiencing rapid industrialization in the global economy, began bypassing urban enclaves directly settling in middle-class suburbs as demonstrated in Li's (1999) influential study of the San Gabriel Valley Chinese ethnoburb in Southern California. The 2010 census showed that more than 50% of Asian Americans lived in the suburbs; suburbanization also increased among Blacks and Latinx while it decreased for Whites (Frey 2011). As a result, suburbanization no longer means that people of color are choosing predominantly White spaces. Asian Americans complicate notions of suburbanization, and there is great differentiation within the population that continues to form residential enclaves (Chowkwanyun and Segall 2012). The resurgent ethnicity framework attempts to explain such differentiation.

Resurgent Ethnicity and Social Structural Sorting Perspective

Resurgent ethnicity theory suggests that people of color and immigrants with socioeconomic resources are exercising choice, preference, and "in-group attraction" to live among coethnics. Economic constraints are not the primary cause of racial/ethnic spatial concentration, and ethnic identity continues to persist despite assimilation and adaptation into U.S. society (Charles 2003; Logan, Alba, and Zhang 2002; Walton 2017; Wen, Lauderdale, and Kandula 2009). For example, in 2007, about 37% of Latinx tracts and 53% of Asian tracts in Los Angeles, California, were middle-class, signifying resurgent neighborhoods (Lee 2018). Scholars of resurgent ethnicity have studied potential benefits of living with middle- and high-income coethnics, such as how

ethnicity- and class-based resources could provide better health and other immigrant/minority social mobility (Lee 2019; Walton 2012).

In general, studies on Asian American residential patterns have referred to Asian Americans as one racial group without disaggregating subgroups or focused on places one Asian ethnic group is residentially and/or economically dominant. Other studies have expanded this literature. Walton (2017) examined the changing patterns of Asian American neighborhoods in California over a decade among Chinese, Filipino, Korean, and Vietnamese populations. Vö and Danico (2004) posited how post-1965 Korean and Vietnamese immigrants created “post-suburban” spaces in Orange County, California while Lung-Amam (2017) explored how Asian Americans challenge, negotiate, and remake suburban landscapes in a “postracial” affluent suburb. The “techno-ethnoburb” of Fremont, located in northern California’s Silicon Valley, is the largest Asian American (51% in 2010) municipality in the continental United States. While it is referred to as both “Little Taipei” and “Little India” (a nod to the Taiwanese and Indian American communities), conflicts around schools, shopping plazas, and building regulations reveal tensions around race and suburbanization. Notably, while the resurgent ethnicity framework has been applied to the settlement patterns of both foreign-born and native-born persons, the research has been focused on the experience of the immigrant population (Li 2009).

Utilizing the social structural sorting perspective, this study examines resurgent ethnicity and in-group preferences of second-generation middle-class Asian Americans living in a racially concentrated but ethnically heterogeneous suburb in Cerritos, California. In the social structural sorting perspective, Krysan and Crowder (2017) argue that in order to understand segregation that continues from one generation to another, more attention needs to be paid to “rootedness of residential decisions in social processes, interactions, and networks” of individuals which shape their knowledge, perceptions, and eventual selections of neighborhoods and housing (42). Not only do networks shape their perceptions and selections of neighborhoods but the desire to maintain social connections is also an important factor that traditional theoretical arguments dismiss or ignore.

Applying the social structural sorting perspective of second-generation Asian Americans, a growing population that has been understudied in this literature, can help understand the complexities and perpetuation of racial and ethnic segregation, identities, and hierarchies. Moreover, this lens takes into account the theory of regional racial formation—that due to the uneven histories and settlements of different racial/ethnic groups of heterogeneous socioeconomic status and nativity across the nation and regions, racial and ethnic concentration, identities, and relations are locally and spatially formed and constructed (Cheng 2013). We use a qualitative case study of Cerritos, an

Asian-majority suburb in Southern California, to provide an “in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Cresswell 2013; Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 37; Yin 2013) to explore how resurgent (pan)ethnicity—racially concentrated places without ethnic or national-origin concentration—is at work, and what such a community and its residents can inform about mobility, integration, and segregation, and implications for housing, economic, and cultural community developments and policies.

Methods

The study draws from observations, documents, reports, audiovisual materials, and forty-six semistructured in-depth interviews conducted between 2015 and 2019 to examine the intersections of race, class, and residential preferences of Asian American residents of Cerritos, California, an Asian-majority suburb that will be described in detail in the next section. Initial recruitment of participants was through personal networks; we reached out by phone, email, and in person to recruit Cerritos residents. We also used snowball sampling and asked those within our personal networks to identify and find additional participants.

We conducted interviews with residents who self-identify as Asian American and are at least eighteen years of age or older. More than two-thirds of the Asian Americans interviewed are U.S. citizens by birth. Less than a third of the sample are foreign born, including persons who immigrated as adults (defined as the first-generation) and others who immigrated as children before adolescence and were socialized and educated in the homeland and the United States (defined as 1.5 generation). Scholars have described the 1.5 generation as an “in-between,” distinct generational identity within immigrant families that acknowledges the different experiences between parents who immigrate as adults and their children who immigrate at a younger age who arrived after the passage of the 1965 Immigration Reform Act (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). On the other hand, many 1.5- and second-generation persons (U.S. citizens by birth) have shared experiences growing up with immigrant parents (Yoo and Kim 2014). Based on the respondents’ discussions, this study uses the term “second-generation” to refer to both 1.5- and second-generation who came of age in the United States with at least one first-generation parent.

The majority of the sample is heterosexually married (76%) and between the ages of thirty and forty-five years. Most respondents had a college degree or higher (85%) and an annual household income over \$130,000 (70%). Respondents’ ethnic backgrounds included Asian Indian (four), Chinese/Taiwanese (ten), Filipino (eleven), Japanese (three), Korean (eight), Sri Lankan (three), Thai (one), Vietnamese (two), and mixed-heritage Asian

Americans (four). In-depth interviews with residents allowed us to explore perspectives and feelings about choosing to live and living in Cerritos. Conversations allow for greater clarification, exploration, and understanding of complex social processes to uncover the comprehensive choice and experience (Weiss 1994). Interview topics included the decision to live in Cerritos, past residential experiences, daily life including the use of ethnic amenities, and racial/ethnic identities and relations. Interviews lasted between one to three hours and were audiorecorded. Most were conducted in respondents' homes with some occurring in offices and public places such as the library and parks.

Interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber, trained undergraduate research assistants, and software. We utilized open coding to identify larger themes in the findings. We first examined the transcript individually and looked at the repetition of words and concepts. To improve reliability in coding, the coresearchers separately coded each interview to affirm and cross-check patterns. Based on those that appeared most frequently we developed larger themes. For example, moving closer to family to help support their health needs would be coded into the larger theme of family ties.

One of the coauthors grew up in and currently resides in Cerritos. This positionality provided greater background information, a historical perspective, and a connection to many potential participants. Some respondents remarked that participating in the study gave them a positive feeling about helping a fellow resident and helped them reflect and think about their identity in new ways. While such closeness could mean greater information, it also may unintentionally influence respondents to answer in a particular way. One way the authors addressed this concern was by asking the same question in different ways and asking for clarification and elaboration. To address possible bias in participant recruitment, both authors began with personal networks but relied heavily on snowball sampling and referrals to residents by people who were not a part of the study.

The Asian Americanization of Cerritos

Cerritos is also the only Asian-majority city in Los Angeles County that is located outside the San Gabriel Valley; it is located about twenty miles southeast of downtown Los Angeles and borders on Orange County. Interstate 5 (North/South), Interstate 605 (North/South), and State Route 91 (West/East) run through or near the city, providing residents easy access to major freeways for commuting (see Figure 1).

Cerritos was first incorporated in 1956 as Dairy Valley, part of an agricultural zone of Los Angeles County that developed rapidly after World War II and was renamed in 1965 after voters approved a new residential zoning district.

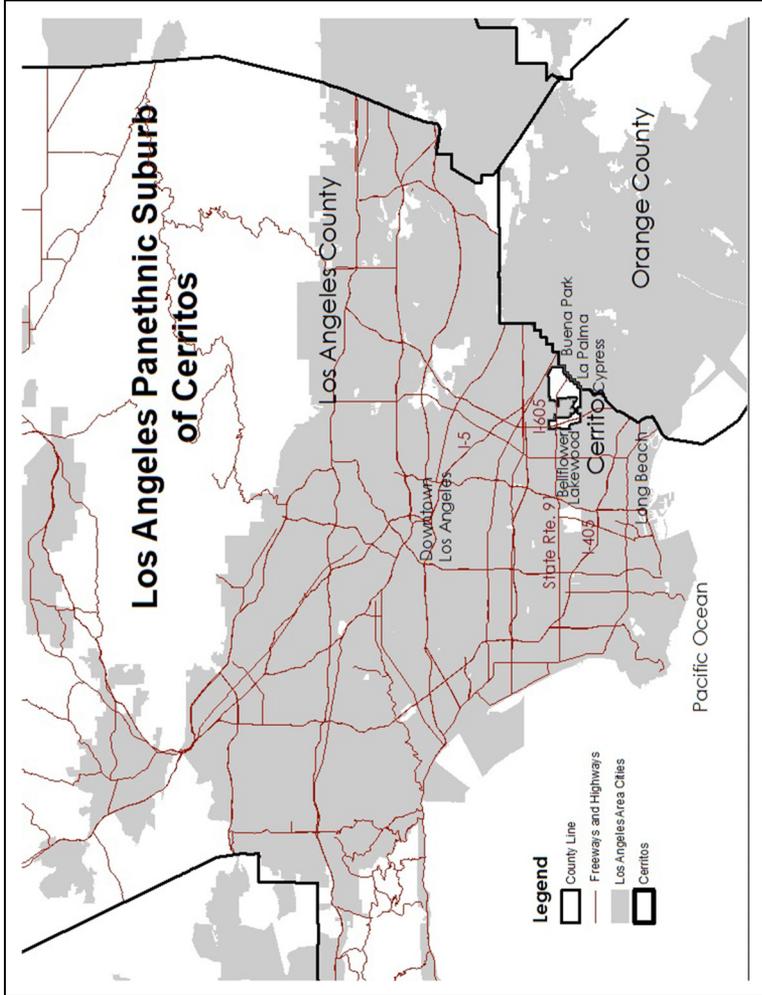


Figure 1. City of Cerritos regional map.

The commercial, residential, recreation, and educational plans were results of meticulous planning: “Cerritos was not going to be like so many other new communities that had mushroomed with little direction. From the beginning of the change to suburban development, the city council and administration knew they wanted to attract solid, middle-class homeowners” (Cenovich 1995). The dairy farmers sold their land at great profit and the cows and feedlots were replaced with carefully developed housing tracts and neighborhoods.

City officials also capitalized on the location, developing the city as a commercial hub of the region as freeways were built through and around Cerritos. For example, it is home to the Cerritos Auto Square, the self-proclaimed “world’s largest auto retailer,” and the Los Cerritos Center, an indoor shopping mall built in 1971 (Cenovich 1995). The commercial properties and the retail sales taxes generated funded amenities such as a performing arts center in 1993 and an award-winning library that was the first building in North America to use titanium panels when it was expanded in 2002 (Cerritos Library n.d.).

Cerritos has extensive recreation areas, including parks and community centers. The parks have earned the city Playful City USA awards from KaBOOM!, a national recognition program receiving the award for ten consecutive years between 2008 and 2018 (Los Cerritos News 2018). Cerritos has also garnered national attention for its schools; a part of the Artesia–Bloomfield–Carmenita Unified School District that spans across several cities, it is home to Whitney High School, a magnet school that consistently ranks as one of the top high schools in California (Humes 2004; Totty 2019).

The city began as a middle-class White suburb and according to a special census conducted in 1976, Whites, including the Portuguese and Dutch immigrant dairy farmers and workers who arrived in the area in the 1920s and 1930s, comprised about 67% while “Orientals” made up 10.2% of the total population (Cenovich 1995). The availability of new and relatively affordable single-family homes attracted new residents, including Asian Americans, beginning in the 1970s. This group included new immigrants, many of whom entered through the occupational preferences of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965, as well as multigenerational Americans and native Angelenos moving into the newly built suburban homes after the easing of restrictive covenants. Asian Americans who worked in nearby naval and military bases, hospitals, and the aerospace industry learned about Cerritos from market makers such as housing developers, mortgage lenders, and real estate agents, who provided information and assistance about where to live and helped transform Cerritos into a majority Asian suburb (Brown and Chung 2008).

By 1980, Asians made up 21% of the majority White city and in 1990, 44% of the total population. Asians became the majority group in 2010

(Bureau of the Census 2010; Cenovich 1995). By comparison, Asian Americans comprise 14.5% of Los Angeles County, a rate lower than Whites and Latinxs, but almost double that of African Americans (see Figure 2).

Cerritos has a higher foreign-born rate than the county. In 2017, the overall foreign-born rate in the county was 34% compared with 45% in Cerritos (Bureau of the Census 2017b). The foreign-born rate among Asian Americans in the city has held steady from 64% in 2007 to 62% in 2014 (Bureau of the Census 2010, 2017a). This rate is comparable to that for foreign-born Asians in Los Angeles County. Cerritos residents also report higher levels of educational attainment, median household income, and homeownership. According to Table 1, in 2017, about 31% of Los Angeles County residents held a bachelor's degree or higher compared with 51% of Cerritos residents. The median household income in Cerritos was about \$37,000 higher compared with the county. Additionally, 46% of county residents owned their own home, compared with almost 80% of residents of Cerritos.

Table 1 provides context to Cerritos by comparing its demographics to Monterey Park, the subject of many Asian American suburban studies. Monterey Park has about 11,000 more residents than Cerritos with a slightly higher percentage of Asian Americans (67.1%, compared with 61.2% in Cerritos). However, there are some socioeconomic differences as Cerritos has a significantly higher homeownership rate, median household income, and percent of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher.

In most other Asian-majority communities in the greater Los Angeles area, there is one dominant ethnic group; for example, Monterey Park's Asian population is 68.5% Chinese (Bureau of the Census 2010). In comparison, Chinese, Filipinos, and Koreans together make up over 60% of the Asian population in Cerritos (see Figure 3).

Findings

While many respondents' decisions affirm the importance of school quality, convenience, and cost as discussed in the prior literature (Alonso 1964; Talarchek 1982) our findings highlight important social factors and the contexts that influence such decisions (Krysan and Crowder 2017). First, respondents appreciated living with a critical mass of other Asian Americans but in an environment with a mix of multiethnic and mainstream amenities, informed by their own experiences growing up in diverse communities. Second, respondents prioritized the quality of schools but expressed educational preferences and ideas about childhood environment distinct from first-generation Asian Americans. Finally, they were motivated to

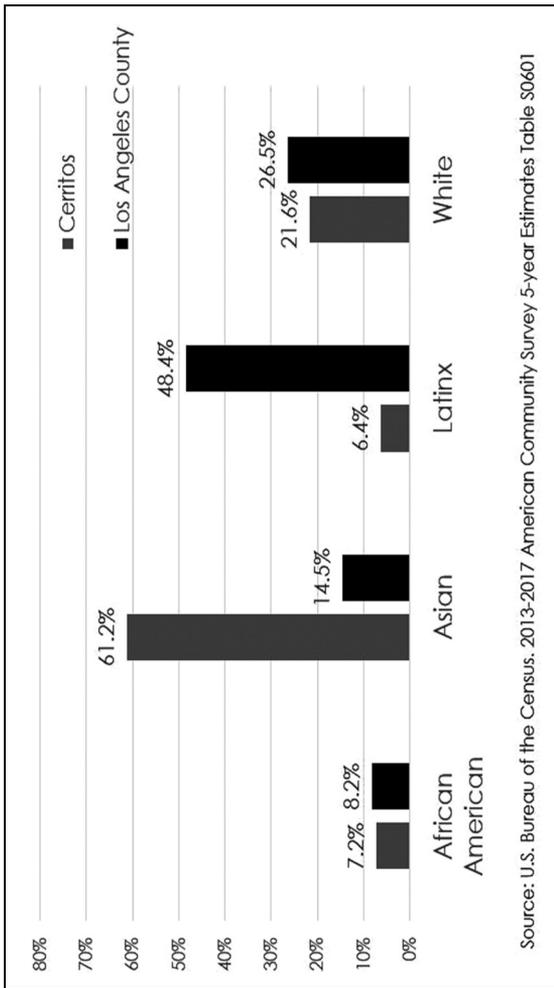
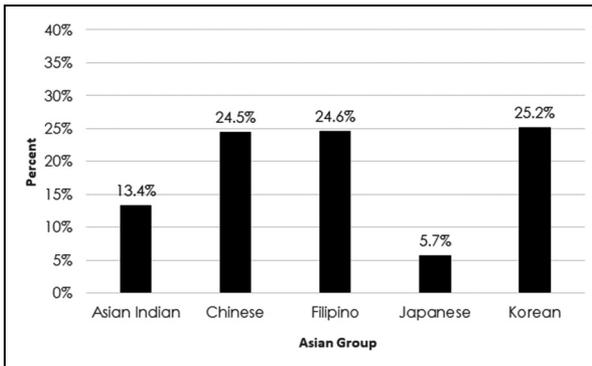


Figure 2. Racial composition comparison, 2017.

Table 1. Demographics in the City of Cerritos, Monterey Park, and Los Angeles County, 2017.

	Cerritos	Monterey Park	Los Angeles County
Total population	50,145	61,056	10,105,722
Race			
Asian	61.2%	67.1%	14.5%
African American	7.2%	0.5%	8.2%
Latinx	12.8%	26.4%	48.4%
White	15.2%	3.9%	26.5%
Education			
Bachelor's degree	32.0%	21.9%	20.4%
Graduate/professional degree	19.2%	10.0%	10.9%
Homeownership	78.9%	53.7%	45.9%
Median household income	\$98,953	\$55,117	\$61,015

Source. Bureau of the Census (2017a).

**Figure 3.** Cerritos Asian ethnic groups ($n = 30,670$), 2010–2014.

strengthen and maintain family ties which provide mutual social and financial support.

A Preference for Asian and Multiethnic Amenities

Past studies described coethnic amenities and services such as restaurants and grocery stores that attracted many immigrants to settle in ethnic suburbs (Li 1999; Li, Skop, and Yu 2016; Lung-Amam 2017). When we asked about what attracted residents to Cerritos, respondents reported a desire for ethnic and nonethnic restaurants, markets, and professional services.

Planned and developed as a commercial hub, Cerritos is home to an array of Asian “ethnic” businesses: ethnic and “pan-Asian” mom and pop businesses owned by first- and second-generation ethnic entrepreneurs; branches of local chains started by Asian American entrepreneurs in the United States; and branches of Asia-based global chains. Thus, residents and visitors have access to a number of Asian ethnic shopping plazas, ethnic restaurants, cafes, and other businesses as well as non-Asian and mainstream chain restaurants, cafes, and businesses. The commercial zones of Cerritos also crisscross those of neighboring cities such as Artesia, which is bounded by Cerritos and is home to a concentration of South Asian businesses and a commercial strip known as Little India (Sheth 2010).

Most respondents described the availability of different Asian ethnic options as one of the benefits of living in Cerritos. One South Asian American male respondent said that it was a factor that drew his family to settle there.

... [w]e were looking at other cities too. It was no comparison because we felt the diversity. Like she and I like Korean food. We go out and eat sushi and Japanese and Thai food. It annoys me when people say, “oh it’s, all Asian.” And I’m like, “do you understand how many countries there are in Asia? Like how diverse it is here?” You know, everyone thinks it’s not diverse, it’s mostly Asian, and I’m like, no, if you look they are so different. It’s just so amazing for kids to grow up knowing how to eat with chopsticks, knowing Korean food.

The second-generation Asian Americans found some coethnic/other Asian amenities to be less important. For example, less than a third of residents mentioned ethnic-specific markets as a reason they moved to Cerritos even though more than half used ethnic and other Asian markets. Many shopped at Asian American market chains that cater to one ethnic group but carry a mix of other Asian ethnic and mainstream products and also at mainstream American chains. This may be due to the increase in Asian grocery items found in non-Asian markets as well as the broader palates, acculturation, and cooking patterns of second-generation Asian Americans that extend beyond ethnic foods with which they were raised (Wang 2015). In contrast, Asian immigrants may prefer coethnic markets for familiar cultural goods and the ability to communicate in their primary language (Li 2009).

Preference for Racial Community and Ethnic Heterogeneity

The importance of living in a predominantly Asian place went beyond having convenient access to different cultural amenities. Similar to post-1965

immigrants who looked for neighborhoods with middle-class amenities as well as people of the same ethnic or racial groups, Asian Americans in Cerritos also described what it was like to be a critical mass who are not made to feel like the “oddball out” as a racialized other. Despite the fact that the population is majority Asian, the lack of one dominant group also contributed to the feeling that they lived in a multiethnic, “accepting,” and “balanced” community due to the combination of Asian ethnic groups and non-Asians.

For some respondents, the racial and ethnic make-up of Cerritos reflected their own sense of racial and ethnic identity. For example, a female in her thirties explained how she identifies more as a “pan-Asian” than a Korean, presumably in comparison with the first-generation or more recent immigrants.

I don't feel super strong Korean, I feel more pan-Asian and being in Cerritos makes me feel more comfortable... I like that there are a few White people here and still diverse... the city is not dominated by one ethnicity and I like that it is balanced.

Similarly, another Korean American woman in her thirties, who grew up in Cerritos and moved back to the city with her spouse and children, described it as a racially and ethnically heterogeneous place where Asian Americans are not viewed as foreign due to their race and/or culture.

It's kind of just an accepted thing, like we have Little India, we have almost every ethnicity, type of food you can find. And it's not a shock, you know. I can go to other cities and it's like, “oh, what is this kimchee” or “we don't have that.” I think because I've grown up in it and maybe I've just gotten used to it and there's no—you don't feel like some oddball out, because everybody is different. There's more of an acceptance of that. And you know, when you travel and go to predominantly Caucasian places, you're just this weird —“ooh, you speak English.” And I just really appreciate Cerritos just for the acceptance of it. And they're used to having a variety of ethnicities.

Respondents who grew up in Cerritos or other cities with similar demographics as part of the dominant racial group observed how growing up in such a community defined their ideas of what it meant to be Asian American. Similarly, for people of less represented Asian ethnic groups, Cerritos' geographic location and inter-city school district allowed Asian Americans of different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds to interact regularly; even though Cerritos is an Asian-majority suburb, it borders cities with larger Latinx, Black, and White populations within a multiracial region (Cheng 2013). A Thai American male in his thirties whose family moved

around parts of Southeast Los Angeles County in the 1990s observed this about Cerritos in his high school years:

It's on the border of LA County and Orange County... like you have the hip hop culture, you have the gang culture, you had all these different elements that would end up in Cerritos along with the whole money and Orange County from that other side of Cerritos. And so, you ended up in this very unique—this unique bubble where you had rich kids, but a lot of these rich kids were tough as well. Not all of them, but you have these little groups. For an area that was really high income, it had a lot of gangs... I grew up in a certain Asian America that I felt dispelled a lot of the stereotypes that we have as Asian Americans. In the Cerritos-Long Beach area, a lot of Asian Americans are tough. We play sports. We get in B-boy crews. There are gangsters. We didn't take crap from a lot of people.

As one of the few Thais Americans among his peers, this respondent experienced an ethnic and socioeconomic heterogeneity in Cerritos that many Asian American suburbs did not have. He developed a panethnic Asian American identity as he interacted with Filipino, Cambodian, and other Asian ethnic groups. Living in Cerritos, then, provided different options and preferences compared to what he called, "simple, natural ethnocentrism."

A Vietnamese American woman in her twenties shared that her parents moved to Cerritos for the academics and did not pay attention to the fact that there were few other Vietnamese Americans. She returned to Cerritos after attending college in a Southern California city with a smaller Asian American population. These experiences made her realize how her ethnic and racial identities were sharpened by location and demographics. She discussed the strong Filipino influence in her life in Cerritos and how she developed a stronger racial identity as an Asian American in response to the racialization she and friends of various Asian backgrounds experienced in college.

My lifestyle [in Cerritos] seemed normal because a lot of my friends were Asian too and we had similar cultures. We didn't experience any racism really because we meshed well... Growing up in Cerritos, I was exposed with heavy Filipino influence, although my family is Vietnamese. Because all of my friends are Filipino, I became very used to the Filipino culture... If I lived in a city like Westminster [one of the Orange County cities that make up the Vietnamese ethnic enclave of "Little Saigon"], I think I would embrace my Vietnamese culture more. When I was in [college], it definitely did feel less diverse, but I surrounded myself with Asian ethnic friends and joined cultural clubs/organizations. I do feel a stronger sense of my racial identity though.

A Filipino American respondent who also grew up in Cerritos and moved back with spouse and children also attributed his sense of racial and panethnic identity to his hometown and college experience that emphasized the shared political concerns and social issues of Asian American communities (Espiritu 1992). Growing up in Cerritos created a sense of belonging as an American of color and a sense of shared experiences and identity with Asian Americans of different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

You know that there's a sense of pride in this place that we're not, you know, foreigners or strangers. This is our hometown, born and raised... Um, in terms of Asian American, we have similar experiences [in college]. Our activism, being involved in Asian American Studies, you know, fighting for the discipline... taking all these classes... supporting the nonprofit sector of social services for our community...

For second-generation Asian Americans, other Asian-majority cities in the area seemed to cater to one ethnic group and in particular, immigrants and their language and other cultural needs and preferences. In comparison, Cerritos provided a desirable alternative that was not limited by one ethnicity or generation. It offered a unique racialized "Asian American" place and a sense of belonging due to its suburban amenities, geographic location, and demographics of mixed ethnic groups and generations over the decades.

Recreating and Expanding Childhood Opportunities: Schools, Academics, and Community

The importance of strong public schools in residential choice has been established in the literature and our respondents do not differ in that regard. Many grew up in Cerritos or had grown up in other parts of Los Angeles and Orange Counties where they had attended or heard about its highly ranked schools. In addition, respondents believed that Cerritos would provide other opportunities and benefits for their children, such as growing up in a "safe" place where households could maintain specific Asian identities while embracing values and priorities among the residents.

This perception appeared to be generational; many second-generation respondents saw other Asian-majority suburbs with one dominant ethnic group as also first-generation dominant and heavily influenced by their premigration definitions and models of academic emphasis. Many had grown up as children of immigrants who stressed high grades and test scores as the only way to achieve upward mobility in the United States, especially because of the parents' own experience with cultural barriers, language barriers, and lack of U.S. degrees and certifications (Yoo and Kim 2014).

Respondents who did well academically recalled the “model minority image” of Asian Americans as high academic achievers, which created racial and economic divisions around who were the “smart” kids in the city and the school district (Cheng 2013; Lee and Zhou 2015; Lung-Amam 2017; Ochoa 2013). Many respondents had followed the path of education to achieve socioeconomic mobility but did not want to recreate that type of parental pressure for their own children and Cerritos was perceived to be less first-generation, ethnic-specific, and insular as articulated by this second-generation Korean American father:

I personally like Cerritos because I don't like it when it's all Koreans... Because I don't want them to feel the pressure of oh, “this person got into this school or this person is in this school”... I want [my daughter] to be independent but, you know, be happy. I feel like with Koreans, it's not like that, because when I remember growing up... like our parents, they're very like, they used to tell us like oh, you have to be more, you know, study more because they hear from their friends saying, “oh my friend's daughter is going to Harvard” But I don't want that for our kids.

Research shows that for most post-1965 immigrants, ethnic suburbs provided an important combination of highly ranked schools and sociocultural resources such as tutoring centers that helped them achieve social mobility for themselves and their children (Zhou and Bankston 2016; Zhou, Tseng, and Kim 2008). Many respondents were beneficiaries of these ethnic class-based resources but wanted to diffuse such academic pressure and competition for their own children. Rather than touting academic and tutoring centers in Cerritos, they discussed creating a general sense of safety and comfort being surrounded by different racial and ethnic groups who shared “core values” around education. A mixed-heritage Asian American male in his mid-forties explained how he moved back to Cerritos so that his own children could grow up in a multiracial and ethnic community with the “same core values”:

... it's the, it's the safety of knowing what, how your kids are going to be, who their friends are going to be. It's safe because we know the school, our families are around. So, I went to Whitney for junior high and high school, so for me, and I've always said this, which is I think it's all about core values. So, we're different ethnicities. We have different personalities but we all got to the same place differently... I just think we kind of, we kind of clicked because we have the same core values. And it's not just the school system. I think it's the type of people that are here...

For many second-generation residents, Cerritos is an ideal community in which many of the suburban amenities—convenient location, housing, and

highly ranked education system—combine with a sense of multiethnic presence and solidarity to create a “safe” place where “different ethnicities” with “different personalities” are connected through shared core values through and beyond the school system. This may be different from the first-generation definitions of cultural amenities. For example, while respondents mentioned attending cultural celebrations and events, most did not send their children to language schools. Language schools were available due to the critical mass of the ethnic/language populations; for example, Filipino Cultural School, a summer language and heritage program for Filipinx American youth established in 1965 was recently revitalized by a group of young Filipinx. This finding is distinct from the prior literature which noted the importance of language schools and additional ethnic-based educational programs for first-generation Asian American in residential locations (Zhou and Bankston 2016; Zhou, Tseng, and Kim 2008).

Apart from such institutions, residents hoped that living in an Asian-majority city with different ethnic groups and/or family in proximity would help to maintain certain aspects of one’s heritage despite variance in how much one actually knew about and/or practiced one’s cultural elements and traditions. A 41-year-old Korean American respondent emphasized having respect for elders as a “traditional” cultural value in her family:

My family is a traditional—well, not so traditional—but to a certain degree they’re traditional. They still expect you to bow to them when you see them. You know when you drink they expect you to turn to the side and drink... We don’t see [the elders] that often, but they [the children] know that when we do get together, they are to bow and greet the elders.

Similarly, a forty-two-year-old Sri Lankan American woman shared how her children’s friends call her “auntie,” creating a sense of respect, extended kinship, and shared sense of belonging: “... when the kids’ friends come over, they call me Auntie, you know, they take off their shoes so they’re just good kids. Yeah, it’s just like they’re my family.” This sense of family and extended kinship—fictive or not—was a critical aspect of why respondents chose to settle in Cerritos.

Family Ties, Social Support, and Multigenerational Resources

Family ties were an important and positive part of almost all of our respondents’ decisions on where to settle. This is consistent with Krysan and Crowder’s (2017) social structural sorting perspective to understand residential decisions that consider individuals’ networks and social connections in addition to economic constraints and discrimination. Living with or in

proximity to family allowed the second generation to nurture the relationships across generations and to take care of their aging parents. While some families were able to immigrate with their extended relatives, others' kinship ties are disrupted by immigration and transnational locations; in this case, the adult children may be one crucial source of social, emotional, physical, and/or financial support for the aging first-generation immigrants who came in large waves after 1965 (Yoo and Kim 2014). One Korean American female resident moved to Cerritos to live near her sister and their parents. She said

... [i]t checks all the boxes. Our siblings are here. It makes it easier for us to pull our resources to take care of our parents. Like logistically easier too. Actually, my sister lives on a corner lot, so we're working on extending that house to build like a little place for our parents so they can live there forever and we can take care of them.

A clear pattern of need and desire for a "village" of intergenerational caregiving emerged among the respondents, especially for those with young children. A Filipina American in her thirties ended up moving in with her parents who are long-time Cerritos residents and discussed how it made economic and caregiving sense to live together in one household:

My mom retired and she's kind of, um, old fashioned and losing her mind. They are just getting older. And then my dad has had health issues. He's had a couple heart attacks in the past. And so, when my son was one, they asked us—because I would drop the kids off at my parents' house—mom was like, and she had retired, if I built onto the house, would you guys come back?' And at first we're like, no, no, no. But the more we thought about it, it just started making a lot more sense to us and in terms of us wanting our kids to grow up with their grandparents around. So, they built another couple of rooms in their existing house and we moved back in - we sold our place and moved back in.

Some individuals were motivated to move to Cerritos to be closer to family to help provide care while some discussed the desire to have grandparents involved in their child's upbringing. A forty-one-year-old Filipino American male recalled how he and his wife made the decision to move to Cerritos:

If we're serious about each other, the school district is awesome, you know what I mean? We could get, if we have kids, well we have kids now, where family is local. And as you know any help you could get, when you have your village a lot closer, it makes a world of difference. So that was an important piece.

For some respondents, moving back to Cerritos ideally allowed them to work out logistical and economic considerations of childcare and create opportunities to nurture their children's relationship with their grandparents and other kin. A mixed-heritage Asian American in his thirties shared the positive experience he and his wife has with family members helping in childcare. He said, "Seriously, [our family members] do so many things—we can't do it all. Her mom takes [my daughter] to piano every Friday. If they have other lessons during the week, my dad takes them; my aunt picks them up from school every day. That's the biggest thing."

To facilitate and access mutual support, many second-generation Asian Americans have decided to reside closer to family, an important aspect to consider in resurgent ethnicity among post-1965 immigrants and their adult children. For some, the ability to live in Cerritos was tied to parents who provided some type of financial assistance or resources for their adult children. Some parents had built considerable home equity value or had finished paying off the mortgage over the decades, which allowed them to provide financial support to residents to purchase homes. Within the expensive and competitive housing markets of Los Angeles and Orange counties, many residents were not able to afford homes on their own or at least not in the areas they initially desired. Although wealthy in comparison with some nearby cities, Cerritos is not a "technoburb" like Fremont in the Silicon Valley that attracts capital and highly trained workers in technical professions and companies (Lung-Amam 2017); the occupations of residents are more mixed. Thus, in some cases, parents stepped in to provide additional assistance. For instance, one father-in-law offered a couple to buy his home at a lower cost and then rebuild the home the way they wanted. This was enough of a financial incentive for the couple to return to Cerritos despite wanting to purchase in West Los Angeles. The Taiwanese American respondent in her thirties explained, "We tried to buy a place in LA during the housing boom and we actually put multiple offers on different condos but it was ridiculous." She stated, "When that was raised, we said – why wouldn't we take advantage of that? It is easier to raise our family in Cerritos. It was the best decision of our life."

Other ways parents supported respondents was by assisting with down payments which allowed respondents to utilize money they had saved to build wealth in other ways. Moving to Cerritos became a very pragmatic decision for some respondents to get into the housing market; many were in dual-income households but still could not afford to buy a home at all or one in the area of their preference without financial help. Thus, family ties created additional resources to motivate respondents to move to the city.

From these findings, Cerritos emerges as a multigenerational, panethnic Asian American community rooted in ethnic diversity and family ties; it is also created by extended family sharing exorbitant living and caregiving

costs and weighing other economic constraints in Los Angeles County and the state of California (Smith and Branson-Potts 2020). The need for more affordable housing is a critical challenge for the residents and leaders of the county and the state (Hiltzik 2020). Resurgent ethnicity among second-generation Asian Americans, then, may be viewed as a strategic response to this economic reality for those who cannot or do not wish to move out of state. It remains to be seen how the counties and states will address this issue that is vital to its residents and leaders.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings reveal that ethnic resurgence for second-generation Asian Americans has a different meaning than for foreign-born Asians who have been the focus of prior literature. Their concept of a suburban middle-class ethnic community includes panethnic and multiethnic goods and services, an ethnically diverse residential population, a strong public school system with opportunities for extracurricular activities for their children, and a desire and need to maintain and rely on local family ties. Many of these factors are consistent with those identified/defined by the social structural sorting perspective but our findings illuminate the distinct experiences of Asian Americans who are children of immigrants and how the intertwining of family ties and financial challenges of living in areas with high housing costs are contributing to ethnic resurgence, and as a result, the persistence of racial segregation. Our findings expand on the social structural sorting perspective whose important study on understanding and breaking the cycle of segregation is based on quantitative and qualitative data collected in Chicago and Detroit, with a focus on African American and Latinx residents.

In many ways, resurgent ethnicity among second-generation Asian Americans is informed by ethnically Asian and racialized American identities and desire for a shared community (Cohn 2012). Therefore, there is potential for political conflict that belies the idea of racial/ethnic homogeneity, as their values and preferences may differ from both first-generation Asian immigrants, other Asian ethnic groups, and non-Asian residents. Up until now, Cerritos has been able to avoid much of the tension that exists and has been documented in other majority Asian places. This may be due to the heterogeneity of the Asian population; this made it difficult to identify an opponent or opposition. For instance, signs in English are already the norm in Cerritos due to its ethnic diversity and thus, controversy around signage and language has been silent. For similar reasons, none of the commercial plazas exhibit culturally influenced architecture that has vexed residents in other communities. More recently Asian Americans have achieved a

supermajority on the city council, including the election of two second-generation Asian Americans for the first time. The second-generation tends to identify as more liberal and democratic compared with first-generation Asians and older White residents who previously dominated local politics (Cohn 2012). Thus, greater political tensions are likely to arise as these individuals represent different generations, ethnic groups, and political affiliations within the community.

Based on our findings we anticipate three potential areas of greater conflict. The first exists around amenities. Cerritos restaurants and grocery stores have become increasingly diverse, but mostly through Asian or Asian American-owned businesses; in the last decade a Jollibee (Philippines-based fried chicken chain) replaced a KFC and Lunasia (the third branch of a dim sum restaurant based in the San Gabriel Valley) replaced Coco's (an "American" casual dining restaurant). Based on comments posted to the city's Facebook page and the NextDoor app, non-Asian residents oppose the influx of more Asian establishments. For example, when Ralphs, a grocery store on the south side of the city, closed and was replaced by an H-Mart (a Korean American grocery chain headquartered in New Jersey) many residents stated their desire for more "American" establishments opposed to "another Asian market."

The second area that may prove controversial is education. For example, the school district curriculum and culture may be influenced by the ethnic, language, and generational make-up of Cerritos residents and how this heterogeneous population defines strong quality programs. Many of our residents shared that they would like to be more involved in their children's schools and the district in the future. As they become more involved with their desire to support academics and extracurricular activities, these parents may challenge or expand the existing definitions of quality schools in their communities.

The last potential controversy we discuss is related to the kind of housing that is developed and/or remodeled in the area. To date, there have been no major conflicts around remodeling or tear downs to build larger homes that have been documented in other Asian-majority communities (Lung-Amam 2017). Cerritos is already dense with limited land for new residential development; thus, residents seeking multigenerational living arrangements have few options besides remodeling for expansion or living in adjacent neighborhoods. One option which is not currently available to residents is to build another unit on the same lot as, from its inception, Cerritos's strict residential zoning policies ensure that multiple families would not be able to live in separate units on the same lot. The desire and need for multigenerational living suggest a need for greater flexibility in residential zoning. A zoning change would allow the development of affordable Accessory Dwelling Units and/or "granny flats" on the same lot, which have proliferated across

the nation in places with high housing costs (Badger 2016; Mukhija 2014). In less dense areas where new homes are being built, developers should consider this trend to meet the needs and preferences of multigenerational families.

Multigenerational living supports mobility particularly in places with high housing costs. Indeed, for some residents, Cerritos became an attractive choice because family members could provide monetary and childcare assistance to ease the financial burdens. Families turned to each other and provided invaluable intergenerational resources and support; the literature on resurgent ethnicity similarly discusses how spatial concentrations of racial groups and coethnics could provide resources, such as better health, for communities of color (Walton 2012).

Our study relies on an individual's recall of events as they reflect on their experiences selecting and choosing Cerritos as a neighborhood. This is a limitation as the recall may differ from what they thought at the time the decision was made. This concern may be eased by the fact that most of the residents made this decision within the last five to seven years. In addition, the smaller sample size especially among those smaller Asian ethnic populations limits our ability to generalize. As a case study our generalizability is also limited. However, exploring one place in depth also provides us with rich detail that contributes to important discussions that interrogate the reasons residential segregation continues to persist and the ways in which spatial assimilation theory continues to be challenged in a complex way.

We find that for the second-generation, resurgent ethnicity and preference/choice go beyond wanting ethnic class-based resources and means to social mobility. They do not want to be the "oddball out" in their hometowns or have their belonging questioned in predominantly White neighborhoods. Second-generation Americans, particularly Asians and Latinx, are projected to make up virtually all the growth through 2050 (Cohn 2012). As more second-generation Americans come of age, they will consider socioeconomic resources, ethnic/panethnic resources, and attitudes about racial assimilation and exclusion to contribute to a different type of ethnic spatial settlements and change the demographics of suburbs nationwide. We should continue to explore the benefits and the policy implications of racially concentrated communities. As the U.S. population continues to grow in racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic heterogeneity, studies of neighborhoods such as Cerritos urge scholars to reimagine concepts of spatial assimilation and segregation and its implications.

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