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Latino/a Sociology

South Central Dreams

Finding Home and Building Community in South L.A.

BY PIERRETTE HONDAGNEU-SOTELO AND MANUEL PASTOR

Instructor's Guide

Race, place, and identity in a changing urban America

Over the last five decades, South Los Angeles has undergone a remarkable demographic transition. In *South Central Dreams*, eminent scholars Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Manuel Pastor follow its transformation from a historically Black neighborhood into a predominantly Latino one, providing a fresh, inside look at the fascinating—and constantly changing—relationships between these two racial and ethnic groups in California.

Drawing on almost two hundred interviews and statistical data, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Pastor explore the experiences of first- and second-generation Latino residents, their long-time Black neighbors, and local civic leaders seeking to build coalitions. Acknowledging early tensions between Black and Brown communities, they show how Latino immigrants settled into a new country and a new neighborhood, finding various ways to co-exist, cooperate, and, most recently, demonstrate Black-Brown solidarity at a time when both racial and ethnic communities have come under threat.

Hondagneu-Sotelo and Pastor show how Latino and Black residents have practiced, and adapted innovative strategies of belonging in a historically Black context, ultimately crafting a new route to place-based identity and political representation. *South Central Dreams* illuminates how racial and ethnic demographic shifts—as well as the search for identity and belonging—are dramatically shaping American cities and neighborhoods around the country.

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OVERVIEW

This book examines the tensions and collaborations that connect African Americans and Latinos in South Los Angeles. We wrote this book because both journalists and academics alike had misunderstood demographic transitions in inner-city neighborhoods like South LA. Usually, they highlighted racial conflict and sensationalized violence. While conflict and competition between Blacks and Latinos was certainly present, we show the emergence of a new kind of place-based solidarity intersecting with distinctive racial identities. South LA has changed over time, and it has changed across generations. No, it's not idyllic. But communities like South L.A. are places of deep love and pride, where people lead vibrant daily lives, enjoy fusion cultures and collaborate together as they struggle to solve common problems.

The 1980s and the 1990s were big boom years for Mexican and Central American immigration to the U.S. As traditional immigrant receiving neighborhoods became crowded, many newcomers found their way to the historically African American neighborhoods of South Central LA simply because these had the most affordable places to rent or buy a home. In this book, we ask: How do Latino immigrants and their families root themselves in new places, and what are some of the processes that unfold when this occurs in longstanding African American neighborhoods, places that were hard won through struggle over time? Going forward, what are some of the implications for civic and social change?

Our study draws on a multi-year, mixed-method project conducted by a team of ten researchers, and it's based on nearly 200 audio-recorded, transcribed interviews, which we conducted in homes, garages, parks, offices and urban gardens (100 with Latino residents, 25 with Black residents, 29 interviews with civic leaders and another 44 with Latino and Black men at public parks and community gardens). The book also includes several new databases charting historical demographic change. South Central Dreams provides both an intimate, close up window into how people experience urban life and race on the streets, in schools and homes, and we consider what this means for civic engagement.

The picture that emerges challenges traditional views of assimilation, identity formation, and urban politics, and emphasizes immigrant homemaking, racial-identity transformation and the resilience of Black/Brown collaborations in politics and place-making.

We hope this instructor's manual and a series of 60 instructor's slides will facilitate classroom adoptions of South Central Dreams. The slides are available for classroom use here:

<https://www.southcentraldreams.com/s/South-Central-Dreams-Instructors-Slides.pdf>

Instructor's Manual prepared by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Fernando Moreno. Instructor's Slides prepared by Fernando Moreno.

CHAPTER ONE

Making Sense, Making Home

This chapter introduces the study and the setting, and poses the central research questions guiding this book: How have Latino immigrants and their children made new homes for themselves in South LA, what types of relationships have they formed with African Americans over time, and what are the implications for Black/Brown collaborations in placemaking and politics? After reviewing the main paradigms for understanding immigrant integration (e.g. assimilation, transnationalism and exclusionism) and race relations (e.g., contact theory, racial formation), the authors argue for a theoretical framework highlighting change over time, spatial transformation, racial-ethnic sedimentation, place-based racial identity and immigrant homemaking. This chapter also introduces the research methods used in the three study neighborhoods: Watts, historic South Central Avenue, and Vermont Square/Slauson.

Questions for Discussion

- Why did so many Mexican and Central American immigrants settle in South Los Angeles neighborhoods during the 1980s and 1990s?
- What kinds of relationships did first generation Latino immigrants and their second-generation children form with their African American neighbors? How did this change over time?
- Describe the three major theoretical frameworks used to study immigration: Assimilation; Transnationalism; and Exclusion. What are some of the strengths of these paradigms? Why do none of these frameworks explain the Latino immigrant experience in South L.A.?
- What processes does an “immigrant homemaking” approach emphasize?
- Many scholars have described situations of “racial ethnic succession.” What does this mean, and how is “racial ethnic sedimentation” different?
- What are some of the social and economic factors that have led to a decreasing number of African Americans living in South Los Angeles?
- Although Latinos experience racist forms of exclusion in the United States, they have also expressed racism against African Americans. What are some of the historical legacies and experiences that have shaped Latino racism towards African Americans?
- The study finds that second-generation Latinos not only harbor fewer prejudices against Black people than their parents’ generation, but that they have embraced and identified with Black identities and struggles. What experiences shaped each generation’s racial stances?
- How does a perspective highlighting “relational formations of race” help us move beyond racial analysis focused on White/Black binary?

- Discuss the unique quantitative and qualitative research methods used for this study. What are the strengths of this approach? How might it have been further strengthened?

Suggested Activities

- Think about the neighborhood where you grew up, or where you live today. How would you describe the “place-based racial identity” of the neighborhood, and how has it changed over time?
- In South LA neighborhoods, immigrants neither assimilate to a white middle-class mainstream nor downwards to an underclass locked out of upward mobility. Look up some articles about the experiences of immigrants in your city or state. How do they compare to what you read in this chapter? Do you find evidence of immigrant home-making, or practices that are more similar to the other paradigms reviewed in this chapter?

CHAPTER TWO

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Always Changing, Always Contested

This chapter provides a brief history of South LA, emphasizing that it has always been a place of change. Before it became the heart of Black Los Angeles, African Americans were largely shut out of most of what is now South LA due to racially restrictive real estate practices, with a tipping point coming in the wake of the 1965 Watts Rebellion. We historicize the entry of Latino immigrants in the 1980s and 1990s, and lay the groundwork for understanding the ongoing shift in civic life, particularly the emergence of Black-Brown place-identified organizing groups as the major motive force in local politics. We then offer a detailed statistical profile of South LA (with most data ranging from 1980 to 2016), to provide a backdrop for the qualitative work of the next four substantive chapters.

Questions for Discussion

- What factors drove African-Americans to migrate and settle in South LA during the 1920s?
- How did World War II impact the development of South LA?
- The 1948 Supreme Court decision in *Shelley v. Kramer* ended racial covenants and partially opened the housing market to African Americans. How did this impact the neighborhoods of South LA?
- Describe the social conditions that led up to the 1965 Watts Rebellion. What were some of the consequences of this uprising on South LA?
- During the 1980s, what were the most pressing challenges facing South LA residents?
- Why did so many Mexicans and Central Americans leave their home countries in the 1980s? How did these experiences differ from immigrants who came after 2000?
- Why was South LA an attractive destination for Latino immigrants during the 1980s-90s?
- How did the 1992 uprisings in South LA influence Black and Brown organizing in LA?
- What are some of the unique challenges facing African-American residents in South LA today? What are some of the challenges African Americans and Latino residents share?
- Reflect on the history of South LA over the last century. How have things changed and how have they stayed the same?

Suggested Activities

- Think about the neighborhood where you grew up, or where you live today. How would you describe the “place-based racial identity” of the neighborhood,

CHAPTER TWO

and how has it changed over time?

- Research city data on-line to see how racial ethnic demographics in your own urban metropolitan area or city have been transformed or maintained over the last five decades. Present this on-line data in class, and identify and discuss the causes behind these outcomes.

CHAPTER THREE

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Echando Raíces, Settling In

How do Latino immigrants go about making themselves at home? This chapter draws on 40 interviews with first generation Latino immigrant residents, most of whom arrived in the 1980s and 1990s, to provide a subject-centered analysis of this process in South LA. A key theme is developing attachment to place and people, and shifting and sometimes contradictory perceptions towards African American neighbors, including gratitude, tension, connection and ambivalence. For example, a Latina grandmother who reported being fearful of Black neighbors when she first arrived –partly because of her own anti-black racism and partly because of experiences with crime – now expresses deep love and life satisfaction with her African American son-in-law and granddaughter. This occurs over time, as immigrant homemaking requires establishing a sense of security, familiarity, autonomy and future-making. Another chapter theme is settling in: once routed into South LA when traditional Latino immigrant entry neighborhoods filled up, Latino residents here now feel rooted, with high rates of homeownership (reflected in both the data of Chapter 2 and the stories shared in this chapter). One fascinating twist: African Americans played a key role in this Latino home-making, sometimes selling them houses, sometimes showing them how to interact with schools, and offering parental mentorship to newcomer Latino immigrants.

Questions for Discussion

- A process of “homemaking” has allowed Latino immigrants and their children to feel a deep sense of attachment and belonging in South Los Angeles. Describe how these processes unfolded over time.
- This chapter opens up by contrasting two Salvadoran immigrant women who have raised families in South L.A. yet articulate very different experiences and outlooks with their African American neighbors. Compare and contrast “Señora Zandrita Castro” and “Señora Zoila Carrillo.” How would you characterize their racial identities?
- Many among the older generation of Latino immigrants who have settled in South L.A. say they do not trust or rely on the police. What are these reasons for this?
- What are some of the ways that first-generation Latino immigrants began to establish closer relations with African American neighbors?
- Latino immigrants are changing the neighborhoods where they live, and one way is through the “rancho-ification” of homes and yards, which involves both a particular material, visual transformation, and also a particular attitude. Describe.
- A segment of first-generation Latino immigrants who came to South LA did so to buy a home. Why was homeownership an important goal for them? •

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Discuss some of their successes and disappointments with homeownership.

- While we have come to think of “home” and “work” as separate entities, many Latino residents in South LA creatively use their homes to generate income. Discuss how they do this. What are some of the benefits and drawbacks of combining these practices?
- What is Black parental mentorship, and how did this provide an important source of assistance to Latino immigrant adults raising children in South L.A.?
- If our nation is to move toward a goal of belonging for everyone in a multiracial community, what obstacles must be overcome?
- What are the primary sources of empirical evidence for this chapter? Compare some of the attitudes and experiences expressed in this chapter with those you have heard from your grandparents’ generation. Do you see similarities or differences?

Suggested Activities

- Reflect on your experiences moving to a new neighborhood, or to a college campus. What was your own “homemaking” journey, and how did you go about establishing a sense of security, familiarity, autonomy and a place for future-making? How did racial ethnic relations shape this process for you?
- Interview your parent or grandparent about any migration experiences, and compare these experiences to those of the Latino immigrants settling into South LA. In what ways did they establish security, accrue familiarity, secure autonomy, and make a future in this space? Did they face any challenges in these processes similar to those of people settling into South LA?

CHAPTER FOUR

CHAPTER FOUR

Being Brown, Knowing Black

This chapter relies on 60 interviews with 1.5 and second-generation Latinos who grew up in Black neighborhoods of South LA. While the experience was not uniform, including variation within a single family and over time, and different experiences of violence, we find several common themes. One is the deep impact of Black culture on Latino identity in South LA, especially the African American legacies of community uplift and resistance. Partly because of this influence, Latinos in South LA see themselves as distinct from Latinos in East LA, and some resent the anti-Black racism of Latinos who have had less contact with African Americans. A second theme – and it is partly connected – is a deep love and pride of place: unlike what one might assume from traditional assimilation theory, being from South LA is now a positive marker.

Questions for Discussion

- If you had to explain this chapter about how growing up with Latino immigrant parents in a Black neighborhood shapes second-generation Latino young adults, what would you say are three most important factors?
- Many of the Latino second-generation presented in this chapter describe having experienced overt hostility and sometimes physical violence with African American youth while they were growing up. Select one of these examples, and explain why they still grew to find friendship and solidarity with African Americans.
- What would proponents of segmented assimilation predict about Latino youth's closeness with African American youth? How do the findings and processes detailed in this chapter differ?
- Describe the recruitment strategy for securing interview respondents for this chapter. How do you think that strategy, and the interviewers, shaped the research findings?
- Many of the respondents in this chapter recall encountering or being involved with street violence. How did they seek to protect themselves? What are some of the gendered dynamics that influence these practices?
- Some of the interviewees in this chapter recalled being bused out from overcrowded neighborhood middle schools and high schools. What kinds of identity transformations did they experience in this process?
- Many of the second-generation Latinos raised in South L.A. are critical of the anti-Black racism they see in their parents and grandparents' generation. Do you think your parents and grandparents also hold more racist views of different groups than you do? Explain.
- A traditional view of socialization suggests that parents teach their children

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about race, but in this chapter, we learn about youth trying to educate their parents. How do they go about doing this? Can you relate to this in your own family?

- The second-generation Latinos interviewed in this chapter express a deep sense of love and pride in South L.A. and many of them are working toward community uplift and want to “give back” to the community that helped launch them. What kinds of things are they doing? What are some of the possible benefits and limitations of their efforts?
- This chapter includes several stories of Latinos expressing gratitude for mentorship or guidance they received from African Americans. Discuss some of these examples. To what extent have you benefitted from interracial mentorship and guidance?

Suggested Activities

- Find recent depictions of African American and Latinx young adults in popular culture or media representations. How do these images contradict or affirm the portraits of people and practices in this chapter?
- Did your childhood involve interacting with people from other racial and ethnic groups? How did these interactions (or lack thereof) influence your life and upbringing? Compare your experiences with those presented in the chapter, and with those of other students in the class.

CHAPTER FIVE

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Sharing Ground, Carving Spaces

This chapter looks at another aspect of home-making – the ways in which public spaces such as parks and urban community gardens, particularly in a park-poor area like South LA, represent a type of “domestic urbanism” and a venue for sharing space, belonging and carving out sovereignty. Due to both concerns over security and domestic obligations, these sites are rarely sites of leisure for women. For this reason, this chapter draws on 53 interviews conducted with African Americans and Latinos, mostly men, at public parks and community gardens, and highlights how the men find sanctuary and solace in nature, conviviality and sociability, and engage in practices of belonging that evoke “at home” feelings. The chapter also underscores the theme of sovereignty: public parks and gardens are places where Latino and African American men often remain in distinct locales, yet share an ethos of commonality and shared experience.

Questions for Discussion

- This chapter makes the point that we can practice “homemaking” in many parts of the city, expanding beyond the apartments, houses or dorms where we live. What are some of the places beyond your residence or dwelling where you find home and belonging?
- Describe the research methods used in this chapter. Why did the researchers decide to focus primarily on men and boys at the urban community gardens and public parks?
- According to the authors, what are some of the reasons public parks have been scarce in South L.A.?
- Think about the parks in your city. Describe how you see class, racial and gender inequalities reflected in these spaces?
- This chapter uses an intersectional analysis to argue that African American and Latino men are simultaneously empowered by masculine privilege and yet subordinated by inequalities of race, class and criminalization. Explain.
- At the urban community gardens in Watts, African American gardeners gifted copious amounts of the produce they grew, but the Latino immigrant men did not, and sometimes they sold it. What are some of the historical and social factors that explain this difference?
- Why is it important for Latino and African American working-class men to find public parks where they can enact fatherhood?
- What are some of the dangers and risks that African American and Latino men may encounter in public parks? Can you think of practices or policies that might minimize these?
- Why is growing vegetables an important contribution in Watts? What are

some of the lessons that the broader society can learn from the men who are growing food in Watts?

- Contrast the idea of “melting pot” society with the idea of an “ethos of togetherness.”

Suggested Activities

- Being surrounded by plant nature can be a profoundly therapeutic experience. Visit an urban community garden or public park in your city. Reflect on how it makes you feel, and observe who is there and what they are doing. How do you see race, class and gender present, and do you see any similarities with the themes discussed in this chapter?
- Interview your father or another adult man about where they go for leisure time and how they experience public park space. Are their experiences similar or different to what you read in this chapter?

CHAPTER SIX

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Organizing Community, Building Power

This chapter looks at the evolution of civic life in South LA. While we note that there is a longer history of Black-Brown coalition-building than many know, it is also the case that South LA became a key site for building Black political power in Southern California. The demographic changes have contributed to a sense of competition on the part of some Black residents and we rely on interviews with African Americans still living in South LA to chart both that sentiment and growing evidence of collaboration. We note that there have been major impediments for developing Latino political voice: high shares of undocumented immigrants, low shares of naturalized citizens, and subpar voter participation. We explore these historical and structural factors but also point to how the new dynamic community organizations and emerging political machine are building on notions of Black-Brown solidarity.

Questions for Discussion

- What methodology did the authors utilize to conduct the research for this chapter? How did the authors take community and identity into account in choosing these methods?
- What did community organizing look like in South LA during the 1930s?
- Discuss the history of multiracial coalition building in South LA. Identify factors contributing to the development of these movements.
- How did language barriers manifest in this chapter? In what ways did community members try to remedy these issues and tensions?
- What were some of the challenges African American residents and organizers of South LA faced as a result of the demographic shifts happening in the 1980s?
- How did communities come together around educational improvement, and how was this issue also a point of tension in South LA?
- In what ways did historically Black institutions reach out to Latino immigrants in South LA?
- How did Latino immigrants and African Americans in South LA experience policing? In what ways were these similar or different?
- How did “ethnic sedimentation” manifest in community organizing in South LA?
- How did the threat of displacement and gentrification shape multiracial community organizing in South LA?

Suggested Activities

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- Find recent examples of pan-ethnic or multiracial coalitions in your community or state. Are these the exception or the norm? How would you compare these coalitions to the events and experiences described in this chapter? Brainstorm with others about what can be done to strengthen these organizing efforts.
- Reflect on what you have learned about civic and community leadership from media representations such as documentaries or news coverage. In what ways does the media get it right, and in what ways do these popular representations ignore important issues brought up in this chapter?

CHAPTER SEVEN

Summing Up, Looking Elsewhere

This short chapter summarizes the themes of the book and discusses the implications for reworking theories of immigrant integration, inter-ethnic relations, and place-making. We also discuss some of the immediate practical issues facing South LA. Now threatened by gentrification, both African Americans who have felt a sense of loss as Latinos moved in and Latinos who now feel threatened by displacement are banding together to protect “home.” Finally, we discuss what our findings may mean for other urban areas of Americans experiencing similar Black-Brown transitions and transformations.

Questions for Discussion

- What lessons have you learned about Black-Brown social relations from this book? What are some of the social processes and relationships that allowed for the development of a “minority shared fate” among African Americans and Latinos in South L.A.?
- This chapter observes that groups of men who self-congregate along racial lines in spaces such as public parks and community gardens is somewhat similar to what we might see when students of color might sit together at lunch at predominantly white school institutions. What are some of the benefits of this kind of segregation and group congregation?
- How would you best describe the experience of Latino immigrant integration in South L.A.? Discuss the connections that second-generation Latinos feel and practice, and the ways in which this contradicts what might be predicted by theories of spatial assimilation?
- Discuss the racial ethnic identities of young adult Latinos raised in South L.A. have been shaped by relational racialization with African Americans. What are some of the implications for future civic engagement?
- Immigrant homemaking involves future-making. How do you see this operating in your neighborhood, city or state? What are some of the challenges?
- Neighborhoods in cities as diverse as Jackson (Mississippi), Milwaukee (Wisconsin), an Orlando (Florida), and Oakland (California) are undergoing similar processes as South L.A. Select one of these cities and discuss some of the differences.
- How does this book challenge what you thought you knew about racial ethnic change in the United States?

Suggested Activities

- What other cities in the US exhibit similar conditions or history to what you read about South LA. How about cities in countries other than the United States? In what ways are the experiences and histories of South LA unique,

and in what ways are these reflected in other sites and locations?

- Gather together media representations of cross-racial interactions in urban contexts. How are these depicted in popular media, and how do those depictions compares to those you have read about in *South Central Dreams*?