

Chicano LA Gangs 1970 // Chicano Chicago Gangs 2020

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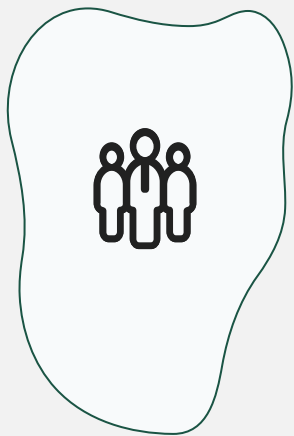
01

Introduction

Brief History of Each Era + The Suburb Reader Connection

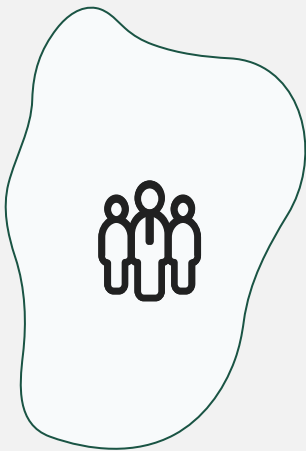


My lived experiences, up until this point in my life, has lead me to want to question the intersections of Chicano Chicago and East LA gangs .



LA 1970s

- Imprisoned Populations + Ronald Reagan



Chicago 2020

- Rise of crime in the summer of 2020



LA county map

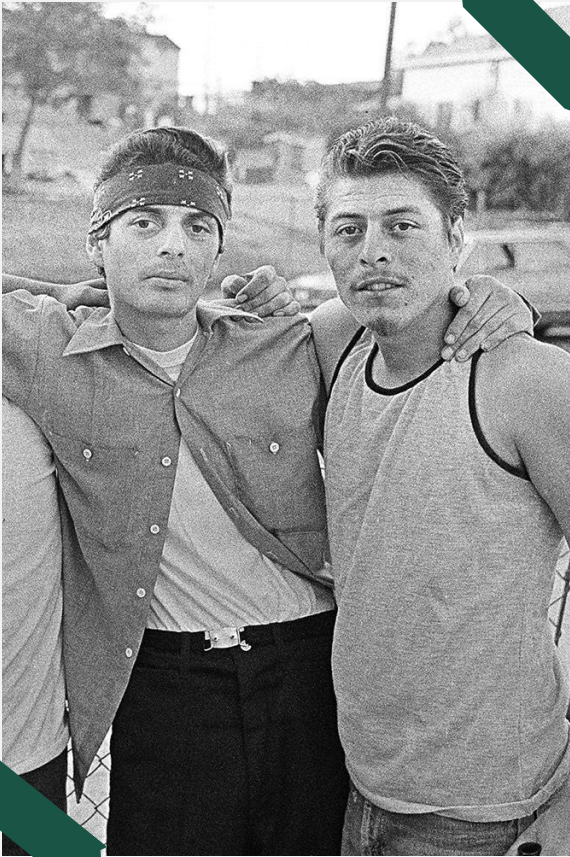


Image Taken By: Wynn Miller, around 1970

LA 1970s

Los Angeles, and more specifically East LA, saw its rise in gang violence during the 1960s and 1970s, two leading factors being the release of ex-imprisoned peoples and Ronald Reagan's switch into president.

A concentration of gang members in the East LA area was forming community with ex-imprisoned people, who had all entered prison together, and would all leave prison together. They were a part of a group called pachucos, who targeted by police in the two earlier decades. (1)

Similarly, Reagan's foreign policies in Central American Countries had a large effect on the formation of these gangs. There was a rise in cocaine-related street drugs. What this meant: LA Street were now building higher capital, which resulted in the buying of more arms for their gang. (2)

Chicago 2021

Chicago experienced its deadliest summer yet since the 1990's just last year, in 2021. This homicide-filled summer was a result of the ongoing battle of Chicago gangs in boosting their reputation in the streets of the city. (3)

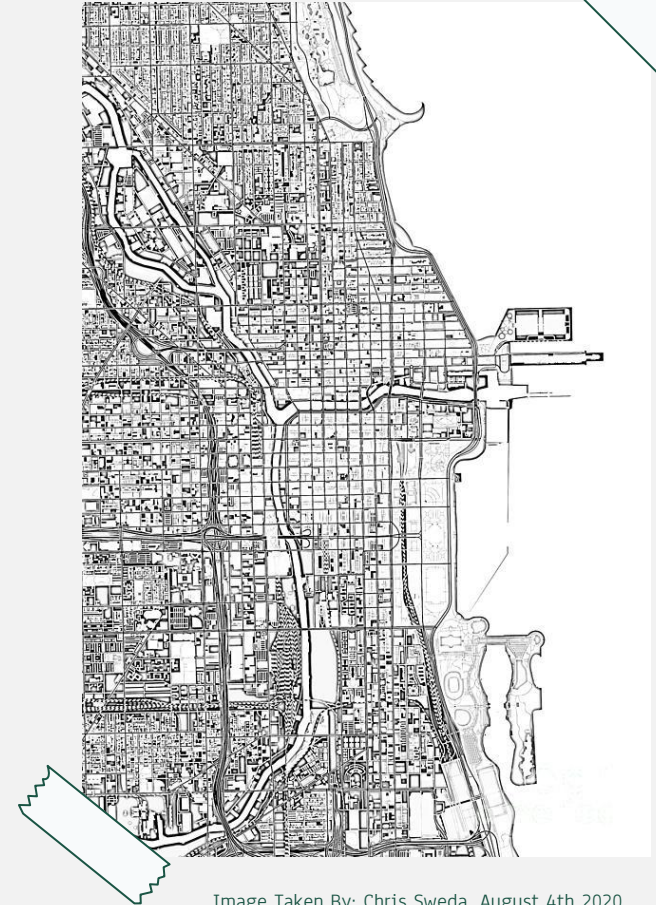


Image Taken By: Chris Sweda, August 4th 2020

THESIS

Through a historical, sociological, and cartographic exploration of the similarities and differences between East LA Chicano gangs in 1970 and Southwest [Side] Chicago Chicano Gangs in 2021, I argue that the similarities and , more importantly, differences of these cities help one process the formation and effects of the formation of these groups.



02

Historical Analysis

Inequalities, and the way they play out through geography.



URBAN LAYOUT OF THE LAND

POSSESSIVE INVESTMENT IN WHITENESS

//

How did the investment and prioritization in certain [white] communities lead to the intentional layout of both of these cities?

LOS ANGELES LAYOUT

//

How is it set up? Compare and Contrast with Chicago!

CHICAGO LAYOUT

//

How is it set up? Compare and Contrast with Los Angeles!

POSSESSIVE INVESTMENT IN WHITENESS

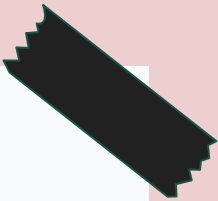
One thing that Los Angeles and Chicago have in common is the heavy presence of white power and hidden effects of it, especially in the development of gangs in low income areas. In his 11th chapter of *The Suburb Reader*, Becky Nicolaides and Andrew Weise introduce George Lipsitz idea of "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness". In short, this term seeks to explain the many ways white people are directly and indirectly (by ways of hierarchy, bureaucracy, and imbalance of power) invested in, leaving everyone else with not as many resources. All that policies invested in whiteness do is create a further gap between marginalized and white folk. (4) When the disinvestment reaches its breaking point, and there are no resources to be found within the communities that need it the most, they seek to other ways of living that fill them with all that their life can afford to be and do, leaving behind the life that could've been. Their life that could've been should never be blamed on them; our white society was not made for them to succeed. Similarity, they are victims of geographical inequality.

Chicago saw the development of its gangs result from a lot of similar ways. In the act of separating Chicago's different geographical sections, one can reference the work of Ernest Burgess in his "Urban Areas in Chicago: An experiment in Social Science Research" article. In his research, Burgess unpacks the different zones that come about with large urban centers, like Chicago, and East LA for that matter.

His work specifically focuses on the Chicago area, where he classifies the cities into five different circular zones. The Southwest side of Chicago, which is the focus of my studies, would be classified as what Burgess classified as The Zone of Independent Workingmen's Homes (7), which serve as the second immigrant settlements. While the characteristics attached to this second zone don't particularly line up with modern-day SW Side Chicago, it is true that it is home to some of the largest Chicano populations in Chicago (first and second generation immigrant families).



Like East LA, Chicago's Southwest side has always been home to immigrants. While Chicago's Southwest side has always been home to a range of European immigrants, like Italians, Lithuanians, Czechs, Russians, and Polish individuals, it became home for Mexican immigrants in the later half of the 20th century. Gang activity, more generally, started to escalate during the 1950s, when there was racial conflicts between the white "greaser" and the Black people who were slowly moving into Chicago's Southwest side neighborhoods, like Gage Park and Archer Heights. Due to this, the Southwest Side of Chicago remained predominantly white up until the 1990s, when a large influx of Mexican immigrants arrived to the neighborhood. While Mexican immigrants arrived about two decades after they had arrived in East LA to settle, they brought similar trends. Similar to East LA, Mexicans started finding a secure home in the Southwest side, as that is where they found themselves being the majority. This ethnic enclave was a large center for the working class, a large employer being the Midway International Airport . It was classified and transitioned into a working class neighborhood as the white middle-class individuals that had lived in the neighborhood fled to the suburbs. (8)



03



Sociological Approach

Why were these people joining gangs at these specific moments in time?

Sociological Timeline (for both cities)

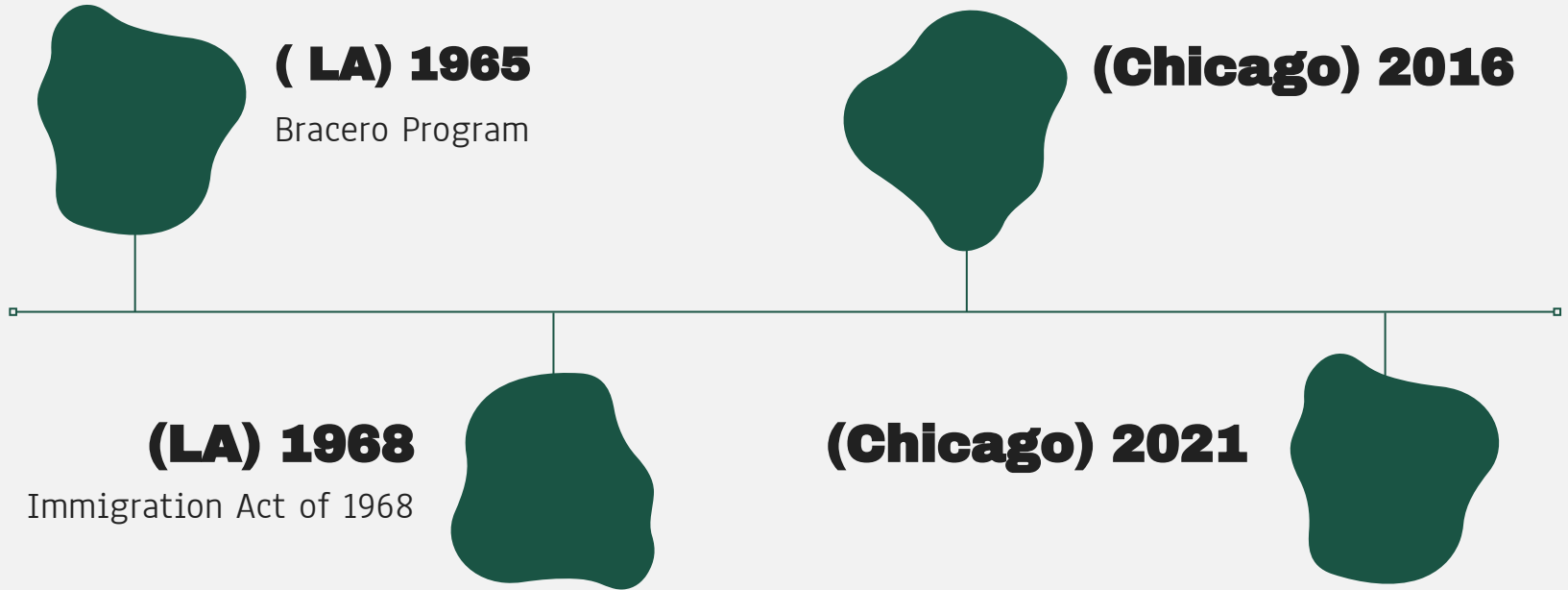




Image Taken By: Wynn Miller, around 1970

SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF LOS ANGELES 1970 AND CHICAGO 2020

East LA and Chicago, in their individual times, experienced different sociological reasons for the large migration of Mexican immigrants. The leading causes for the migration of Mexican immigrants in the 1970s could be linked to two policies: the termination of the Bracero Program and the enactment of The Immigration Act of 1965. The termination of the Bracero program came on December 31st, 1964, after long consideration.

The Bracero program was terminated for many reasons, some of the biggest being the economic evidence that the presence of Braceros reduced the wages of US Farm workers (9). The Bracero Program duration from 1954 to 1964 resulted in the immigration of between 1.5 and 2 million Mexican immigrants in the United States (10). After it was determined, The Immigration Act of 1965 followed. This act was a document that eliminated the quotas that had limited the amount of immigrants who could migrate into the United States. Its basic objective was to create a modern-day immigration law, which included eliminating the race-based national original systems that the country had seen for so long. After this act took place in June of 1968, there was a huge wave of immigrants from Mexico to come after. To give some perspective on the fast-paced arrival of Mexicans in the United States, one should compare the shift from 760,000 Mexicans in 1970 to the 2.2 million residing in the US by 1980 (11).

This large influx of Mexicans arriving in the country made a lot of them find a home in California, the state that still stands as the largest home of Mexican immigrants. This high concentration led to the development of culture within the migrants, and a lot of those chose the organized gang life. The populations that disregarded the gang life nonetheless had to live surrounded by it. It is during this time that we see Chicanos, the children of Mexico-born parents, start to grapple with their identity. Their identity is viewed as transitional. They are not one, but also not fully the other. To cope with this transition, and absence of a secular culture, some turned to gangs. (12)



Image Taken By: Joseph Rodriguez, 1993

The Suburb Reader 5-6 Figures is the perfect example of a map of California before setting up its divisions. I have always said that so many don't realize the political nature of space, but I think this simple layout of California truly does not reflect the growing tensions of the 1940s, as dated by the map. (13) It is for this reason that I hope to explore gang zoning maps, as it will expose me to that politicized nature that so many textbooks lack, especially when it comes to niche topics like gang zoning.

Although the same immigration trends do not exist for Chicago in 2020, it is interesting seeing the data sets come in. In between the years 2009 and 2019, there is less than a million Mexican immigrants in the United States. This data set proves that more Mexicans are leaving the United States than are coming in (Figure 1-1). Although the sociological situation might look differently, there is a rise in Chicago gangs nonetheless. But why is this? One reason might lie in Chicago's divestment from Chicago Public Schools in the last half a decade. There has been an increase in the closing or defunding of schools located on the South and South West sides of Chicago, home to Black and Latinx families, respectively. When a student cannot find community in a school, because of its lack of funding for extracurricular, they look for this community elsewhere.

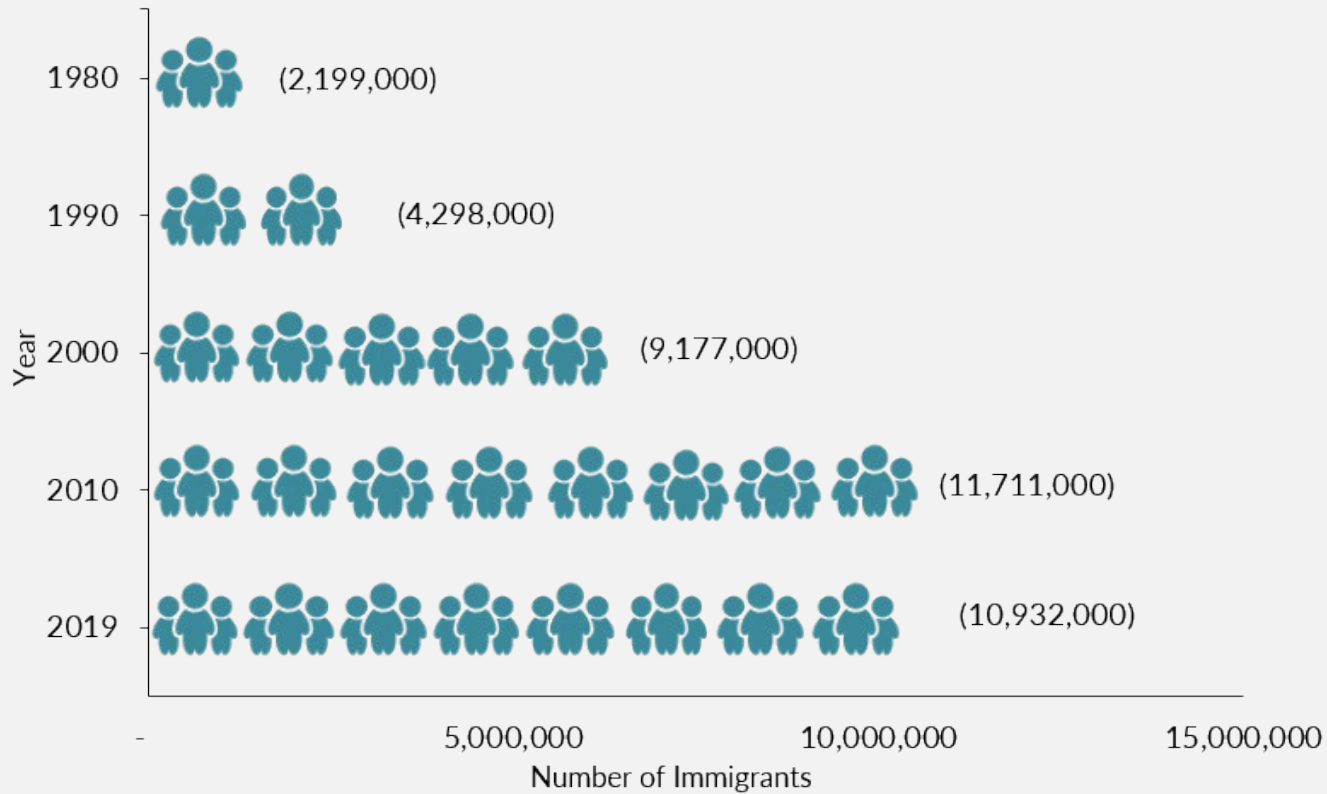


FIGURE 1-1

04

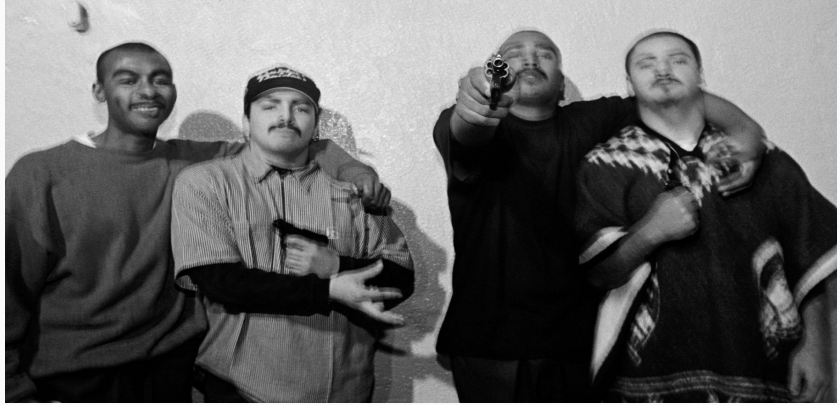


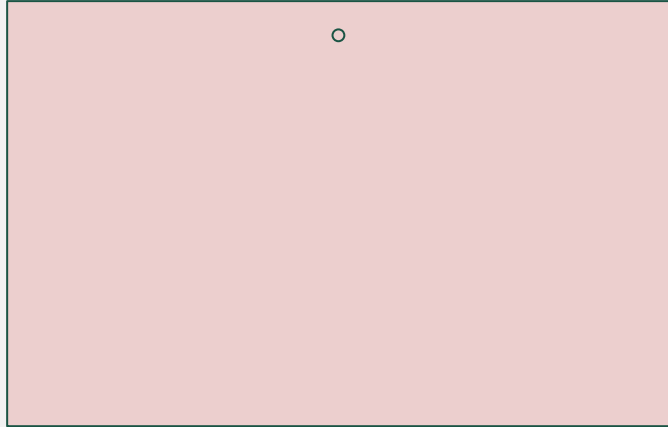
Image Taken By: Joseph Rodriguez, 1993

Map Analysis

What do these interactive maps tell us about these cities?

WHERE CAN THESE MAPS BE FOUND ONLINE?

(Progression of Gangs in 2 cities over the course of the 21st century)



*Disclaimer: I could not find any 1970 maps of Los Angeles, in relation to their gangs. These maps will full be analyzed for their relationships between each other as developing 21st century maps.

Map 1:

<https://www.kulturevulturez.com/breakdown-chicago-ghetto-hoods-gangs/>

Map 2:

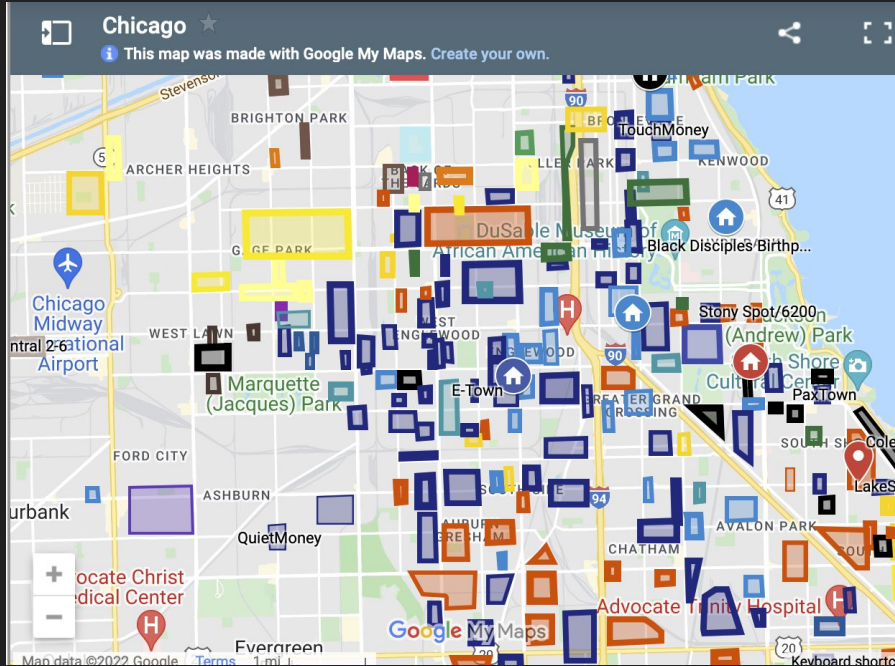
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Map 3: [city_gang_injunctions.jpg](#)

Map 4:

https://chicagopolicedept-my.sharepoint.com/personal/gisteam_chicagopolice_org/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fgisteam%5Fchicagopolice%5Fforg%2FDocuments%2FGang%20PDFs%2F2020%2Epdf&parent=%2f_Personal%2Fgisteam%5f_Chicago_Police%5Fforg%2FDocuments%2FGang%20PDF_s&gad=1

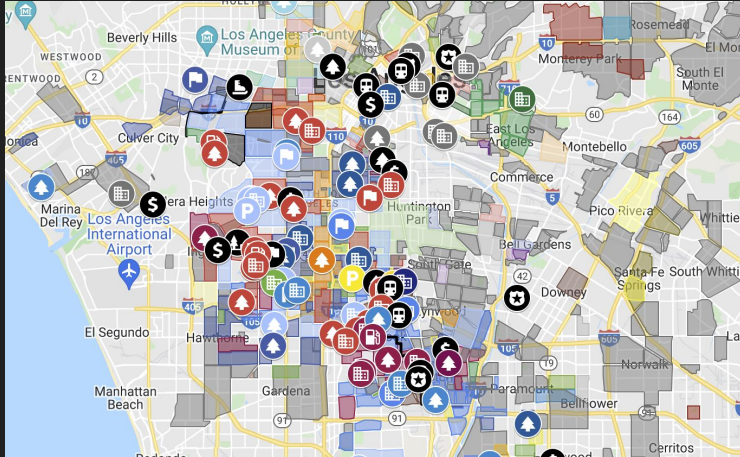
MAP #1 ANALYSIS



In their similarities and differences, one could argue that the most differences between LA and Chicago lie in the zoning of their gang. In Kulture Vulture's interactive, one could see the concentration of all the distinct gangs in the city. As proved by the map, there are likely over 40 gangs in the city of Chicago, and this is in the South and Southwest sides alone. Earlier, it had been mentioned how these sides had been beacons of hope for the working class, as it was the only place that was welcomed. This is translated in the maps display of the high concentration of gangs. The area displayed on the map is a land that houses Chicago's largest black and brown communities. More specifically, Kulture Vulture details the ways in which the Pilsen and Back of the Yard Neighborhoods (found in the center of this photo) were victims of urban renewal, which led to the steady migration of the Latino population into the west sides of Chicago. This is evident today, as Little Village is particularly known for its high organized crime.

MAP #2

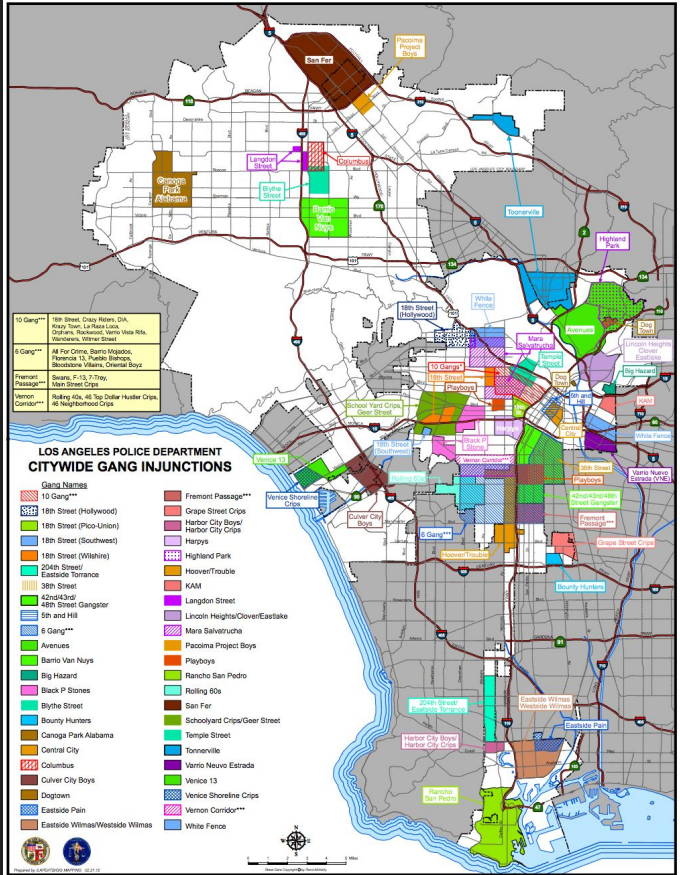
ANALYSIS



In this second map, we see the high concentration of gangs in Los Angeles, but more specifically, East Los Angeles. While Chicago's gangs were dispersed, one could say that Los Angeles gangs are more highly concentrated in the South and Southwest sides of LA. The South and West sides being affected by gangs is similar within both cities, but generally Chicago seems to have a more spread out concentration of gangs. Alike in this sense, both maps and cities struggle with the differential zoning of different gangs. There are neighborhoods and areas that have about five different gangs living in one area, which results in further conflict for the community and greater city. LA's most notorious gangs, the Bloods and Crips, are bigger gangs that have subsections of their own. This, in their creation and execution, rarely happens to Chicago gangs. All Chicago gangs are usually entities of their own, and "Disciple gangs" are really the only ones that could be considered having subjection, although the number of gangs with that title is very few.

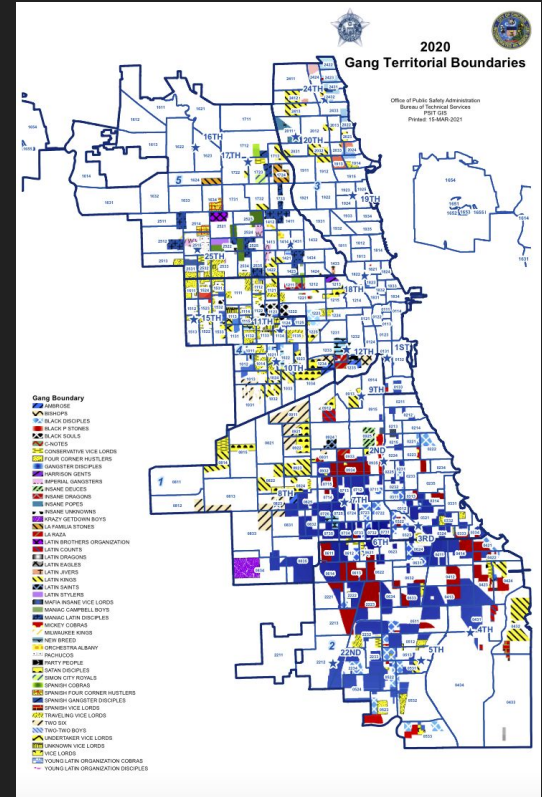
With a different scale, our next map, courtesy of the Los Angeles Police Department, paints a clearer picture of the overlays of a lot of the gangs in LA. When zoomed in, one could see the colors of one gang overlapping with the striped design of another, as according to the key. One explicit difference in this map is the inclusion of a key that described the different gangs that belong under a subset of another. Unlike the previous one, that just names the gangs with similar ones, this puts different gangs together. This is interesting, as I have only ever interacted with gangs as ones working against each other. It is interesting how maps serve to pull information together, and how this information can be interpreted differently by many. Nonetheless, it has been such a revelation to realize that there are gangs grouped together, no matter how similar or different they are, based on their closeness to each other. This would not happen in Chicago.

MAP #3 ANALYSIS



This 2020 Map locates different gangs in Chicago, and it is courtesy of the Chicago Police Department. Similar to our last, both of these maps have been provided to the public by their respective police departments. In this map, one can notice a more obvious difference (than the previous Chicago map) of the lack of gangs on the Southwest side that peaks out. This can be explained due to the white flight that happened in this neighborhood! The Southwest side, physically, is known for having bigger houses as you travel more far west. This capital that exists in the neighborhood, and high emergence of white people, can be seen through the lack of gangs in this neighborhood. These Neigh Robin Hoods are highly resources, as they are nearing and in close proximity to the suburbs.

MAP #4 ANALYSIS





05

Conclusion

Where do we go from here?



In the end, there are many similarities and differences that Los Angeles and Chicago gangs display, and it is no lie that the different decades truly defined what their gang looked like for their respective times. Through approaching this research through a historical lense, we see the many ways witness in our bigger urban spaces plays a role into the distribution of gangs. To learn that whiteness will always be invested in, physically and tangibly or not, is step one in understanding why gangs develop. Furthermore, a sociological approach helped us understand why there was a large settlement of Mexican Americans in these areas in the first place. By specifically looking at these two cities, it helped unpack specifically the problems affecting each city, and why gangs formulated the way they did. In doing this research, I am realizing now that the developing modern city, in any point in time, will always struggle to grapple with the social tensions of coming together. Gangs were birthed from the idea of coming together, to fight against all forces working against them. There are so many overlaps in their historical and sociological contexts, and I believe these truly serve as indicators of what to look out for in urban contexts when looking forward. Our communities, as shown by the maps, or more tightly packed as ever. In understanding our histories of displacement, I'd argue it is easier to see the many ways our divisions have always come from a fight against something greater: whiteness.

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