Changing the Landscape of an American Town: Immigrantrification of a Korean Ethnoburb and Its Cultural and Economic Consequences

Halyna Lemekh

Accepted: 16 September 2022 / Published online: 1 October 2022 © The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature B.V. 2022

Abstract
This study focuses on the social, cultural, and physical transformations—referred to as immigrantrification (gentrification by immigrants)—initiated by Korean immigrants in Palisades Park, a well-known Koreatown in New Jersey, in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. It draws on data collected from ethnographic field research conducted in 2019–2020, including 67 interviews. Gentrification initiated as a profitable investment strategy of middle-class, entrepreneurial Korean immigrants has followed the town’s revitalization brought about by the population and economic growth and the expansion of amenities during the establishment of the Korean ethnoburb. While many residents complain about overcrowding, pollution, land-use intensity, and parking problems, Guatemalan immigrants—active participants in labor-intensive gentrification who have established their sub-enclave, gradually supplanting White residents—express fear of being priced out of the immigrantrified town. Thus, this study addresses two issues underrepresented in the gentrification discourse — third-world immigration and ethnic minority gentrification — by expanding the research on Korean gentrifiers.

Keywords Gentrification · Guatemalan immigrants · Immigrantrification · Immigration · Korean immigrants · White exodus

Introduction
The arrival of immigrants to New York City (NYC) has profoundly affected its entire metropolitan area, including 31 counties spread over 12,600 miles across parts of New York State, New Jersey, and Connecticut. When immigrants arrive in a new place, they change themselves and influence the city in diverse ways.
“As immigrants play a role in transforming New York City, this ‘new’ New York, in turn, influences them” (Foner, 2013:2). The adaptation process is twofold: while immigrants change their neighborhood, the neighborhood affects their adjustment and acculturation, providing a platform for assimilation into society. Although initially, many post-1965 immigrants headed for New York, over time, many left the city for suburban towns. Some immigrants would also bypass the city altogether and move directly to the suburbs of the New York metropolitan area (Li, 2009; Lobo & Salvo, 2013; Rodriguez, 2017). One such suburban town is Palisades Park, a renowned Koreatown in the area. The physical proximity to NYC and the convenient commute have always made the town an attractive settlement and community for various immigrant groups (Fig. 1).

This article draws on ethnographic field research conducted between 2019 and 2020 (interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic) in Palisades Park and explores immigrants’ contributions to the renewal of the suburban landscape, which I call immigrantrification — gentrification by immigrants. I intend to highlight the difference between the neighborhood’s revitalization, which goes hand in hand with the establishment of an ethnoburb, and gentrification. Revitalization is usually brought about by economic and population growth and the expansion of amenities (Johnson, 2017). Gentrification by immigrants results in more luxurious amenities and costly real estate, inadvertently leading to the voluntary departure of White residents, who are replaced with middle-class entrepreneurial immigrants, and displacement of less prosperous minorities being priced out of the neighborhood. Premised on participant observation (lived experience), 67 interviews, and secondary data analysis, this study intends to shed light on the process of immigrantrification, showcasing the agency of immigrants, and the residents’ perception of the social and physical changes taking place in their town in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. The findings indicate the residents’
dissatisfaction with gentrification, revealing issues such as land-use intensity, parking problems, and the lack of greenery in the immigrantrified town.

From Achkinckeshacky Land to Koreatown

The landscape of Palisades Park, located approximately 10 miles west of Manhattan, has changed along with people inhabiting the area. Before European colonizers, who began to populate the area in the seventeenth century, the people who occupied the land were the Achkinckeshacky Native Americans, a subgroup of the Unami, or the turtle clan of the Lenni-Lenape Native Americans (Beck, 2009). Before long, the Dutch, English, and others expanded their settlements, pushing the Native Americans farther west. Until the War for Independence, the place was mostly inhabited by the descendants of the first European colonizers (Duffy, 1977). Gradually, Palisades Park’s population increased from 644 in 1899 to almost 15,000 in 1977; traditional farms were replaced with family and apartment houses, while greater cultural diversity emerged, enhancing the municipal infrastructure. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, Croat, German, Irish, Greek, and Jewish immigrants, among others, joined the sizable Italian and Polish communities and adjusted to and modified the neighborhood (Beck, 2009). In 1985, the area was still predominantly inhabited by White ethnic groups. Many shops, eateries, and taverns owned by the residents dotted Broad Avenue, a classic US main street (Malinconico, 1985). However, in the 1980s, the recession and fierce competition from malls erected nearby brought the established rhythm of life to a halt. Many shops were forced to close, while the Park Lane Theater that attracted crowds from other towns was boarded up in 1986, attracting graffiti and empty beer bottles (Llorente, 1998a, 1998b).

It took 25 years for a complete makeover of the neighborhood as Korean immigrants moved into the area. In 2010, 66% of the population was foreign-born, 44% of whom were Korean immigrants, and it now had a well-established reputation as Koreatown (Perez-Pena, 2010). The influx of Korean entrepreneurs led to the town’s revitalization, and the takeover of businesses was frequently supplemented by a building’s complete demolition and the erection of a new structure suitable for a recently founded enterprise. Thus, by 1998, Gino’s eatery was supplanted by the thriving Keum Ho Restaurant, while various Korean businesses appeared on the spots previously occupied by Introna’s, the Gascony bowling shop, and Palisades Pizza. The old Park Lane Theater boarded up in 1986 was converted into a mini mall of Asian shops (Llorente, 1998a, 1998b) (Fig. 2). The Korean-language businesses occupying storefronts on Broad Avenue and the sizable Korean population metamorphosed the old White town into a booming revitalized ethnoburb.

However, Palisades Park’s new trajectory materialized as more affluent, middle-class Koreans moved into the neighborhood. They envisaged it as their permanent dwelling place and initiated a colossal gentrification process by investing in the business and residential sectors, upscaling the town. Before long, many old houses were demolished to be replaced with luxurious duplexes, which also served as the means for profit-generating enterprise (Fig. 3). In
2015–2019, only 36.7% of the housing units were occupied by owners. The median value of owner-occupied housing units was $558,400, while the median gross rent was $1,520 (U.S. Census Data: QuickFacts). Thus, almost two-thirds of the housing units in the town have been rented, pointing to its residents’ profit-seeking strategies, whereby the Korean middle class utilizes real estate as an income-yielding opportunity. Once Palisades Park’s status as Koreatown had been fortified through a robust property market, it made headlines as a conspicuously glamorous area with unique services to the metro community. Hence, on 2 January 2017, an article appeared in The New York Times featuring King’s Spa in Palisades Park, offering a Korean spa (jjimjilbang, a traditional gender-segregated public bathhouse), saunas, bibimbap, and a taste of home (South Korea) in New Jersey (Morgan, 2017). While the glamorous jjimjilbang has put the neighborhood on the national map, a monument to the memory of “comfort women” erected in 2010 and strongly condemned by the Japanese government, has placed Palisades Park on the international map (Semple, 2012).

In 2019, 20,604 people resided in Palisades Park, 63.7% of whom were foreign-born (The U.S. Census, 2021). Asians accounted for 59%, Whites made up 32%, and Hispanics of any race comprised 22% of the total population (Table 1).
Changing the Landscape of an American Town: Immigrantrification…

Ethnic Enclaves Headstart

Many immigrant neighborhoods in cities and suburbs in the USA have transformed the country’s social and cultural landscape. The changes have been captured and analyzed by many researchers, including Li (2009), Zhou (2009), Foner (2000, 2013), and Smith (2006), among others. Park (1997), Min (2013), and Flanigan (2018) provide a detailed analysis of Korean immigrant clusters, emphasizing their residents’ entrepreneurial skills. To gain a better insight into the settlement patterns and spatial mobility of newly arrived immigrants, we need to go back in time and look at the previous movements of immigrants, whose lives were shaped by proximity, recruitment, and ethnic enclaves (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). The latter, providing a secure buffer against anxiety caused by unknown perilous experiences, became magnets for other waves.

Throughout history, ethnic enclaves have been attractive and have become safe havens for recent immigrants in their new milieu. While highly educated and established immigrants find employment opportunities in cities, community infrastructure offers unique opportunities that are appealing to those who have limited resources and little familiarity with the host-country language (Foner, 2000, 2013; Lemekh, 2010; Orleck, 2001; Torres-Saillant & Hernandez, 2013). “Immigrant communities can be seen as collections of resources that facilitate informal production or distribution of certain activities” (Sassen, 2001: 296). Those whose legal status is unresolved and opportunities are restricted may secure employment in immigrant communities.

In an effort to determine the role of ethnic neighborhoods, Alba and Foner (2015) distinguish between the terms “way stations” as temporary areas of immigrant concentration and “intensifiers of disadvantage” that block the mobility prospects of the second generation and become their long-term dwellings. However, even though Spanish-speaking areas with a high poverty level, typically referred to as barrios, may seem like “intensifiers of disadvantage,” on the whole, the scholars hypothesize, they are not. For many immigrant families, such neighborhoods are “way stations” that provide newcomers with the comfort of their native language and initial support, assistance, and security during the transition. Zhou (2009) notes that the

Table 1  The composition of Palisades Park’s population by race and Hispanic origin (of any race)

| Year | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2019 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|      | N    | %    | N    | %    | N    | %    |
| Total population | 13,732 | 100% | 14,536 | 100% | 17,073 | 100% | 19,065 | 100% | 20,604 | 100% |
| White | 12,804 | 93%  | 11,016 | 76%  | 6,645  | 39%  | 7,129  | 37%  | 6,613  | 32%  |
| Asian | 779  | 5.7% | 2,910  | 20%  | 7,207  | 42%  | 10,451 | 55%  | 12,115 | 59%  |
| Black | 39   | 0.3% | 165   | 1.1% | 234   | 1.3% | 338   | 2%   | 399   | 1.9% |
| Hispanic of any race | 584 | 4.2% | 1,618 | 11.1% | 2,813 | 16.5% | 4,016 | 22% | 4,453 | 22% |

Source: The United States Census Bureau

https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980a_njAB-01.pdf
https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1990/cp-1/cp-1-32-2.pdf
https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=1600000US3455770&y=2000&tid=DECENNIALDPF42000.DP1
classical assimilation perspective examines ethnic enclaves either as springboards to the mainstream society’s assimilation or traps that prevent successful integration. However, in the scholar’s words, neighborhoods and enclaves — the concepts often used interchangeably — are two analytically distinct concepts. An ethnic enclave refers to residential clusters of one immigrant group, while an immigrant neighborhood comprises several ethnic enclaves (Zhou, 2013). This explains why neighborhoods cannot be easily pigeonholed into either springboards or traps. Ethnic enclaves, on the other hand, provide immigrants with both economic opportunities and ways to sustain the social networks disrupted by their relocation (Zhou, 2009). Portes and Rumbaut (2014:75) contend that the ethnic enclave may serve as a platform for selective acculturation. The retention of the cultural heritage and traditions, access to social networks, and co-ethnic social capital may be a platform for successful acculturation, especially for the immigrant entrepreneurial class. In contrast to a traditional ethnic enclave that offers residential and employment opportunities, Kim (2018) describes Manhattan’s Koreatown as “transclave” — a commercialized ethnic place explicitly established for consumption, entertainment, and leisure.

While traditional ethnic enclaves are mainly concentrated in the inner-city, ethnoburbs are defined by Li (2009:29) as “suburban ethnic clusters of residential and business districts within larger metropolitan areas.” Ethnoburbs have emerged due to international geopolitical and global economic restructuring, changes in migration, and trade policies, and they inevitably fit into particular local demographic, economic, and political frameworks (Li, 2009). Zhou (2009) analyzes ethnic capital formation in new Chinese ethnoburbs, underlying distinct features, such as interpersonal relations built on common socioeconomic status or other economic and professional attributes, economic organizations’ link to the mainstream and global economies, and the involvement of interethnic cooperation. Further emphasizing the economic advantages and possibilities of upward social mobility, Alba and Foner (2015: 71) define ethnoburbs as “concentrations of socio-economically well-off co-ethnic immigrant families in advantaged suburbs, where the immigrants frequently mix with native families of similar status.” Such ethnic clusters in the suburbs usually comprise decent high-quality living accommodations and amenities that become appealing for a permanent dwelling. Given that Koreatown incorporates characteristics of an ethnic enclave, immigrant neighborhood, and ethnoburb, these concepts are used interchangeably in this article.

Immigrant Revitalization and Modified Gentrification

To date, researchers have mainly focused on the immigrant revitalization of communities in terms of population and economic growth. For example, the cultural and architectural transformations in Koreatown, Los Angeles, have been documented by Eui-Young (1985), who notes that even though business property values of Koreatown strikingly increased, residential scenes remained the same, rendering Koreatown an unattractive residential area at the time. Johnson (2017) shows how an ample supply of affordable housing has triggered the immigrant revitalization of three older suburbs in Boston and suggests that regional and statewide planning
should incorporate new immigrant communities into broader metropolitan economies. Katz and Ginsburg (2017) explore immigrant-led urban revitalization, which has been preceded by nearly 50 years of devitalization in three immigrant cities—Paterson and Passaic, New Jersey, and Bridgeport, Connecticut. Many immigrants have been attracted to these cities as they provide inexpensive housing, an ethnic neighborhood, proximity to jobs, and possible mobility for their children, needed to realize the American Dream (Katz & Ginsburg, 2017). This study, on the contrary, examines how Palisades Park was revitalized by Korean immigrants and turned into an ethnoburb, is being gentrified and transformed into an affluent, upscale neighborhood. In contrast to the gentrification of Schenectady by Guyanese immigrants whom Mayor Albert P. Jurczynski invited to revitalize the city (Jain, 2011; Kershaw, 2002), the gentrification of Koreatown ensued from the strategic, profitable investments of Korean immigrants.

The term gentrification — introduced by Glass in 1964 — refers to upscale urban transformations encompassing the revitalization of old housing stock, tenurial changes from renting to owning, increases in property values, and the displacement of working-class inhabitants by the incoming affluent middle-class people (Lees et al., 2008). During the 1970s, new residential trends that contradicted the long-term decline of their inner core emerged in many urban settings. As Zukin (1987) notes, these urban “renaissance” and a new urban “gentry,” many of whom hold white-collar occupations and lead non-traditional lifestyles, have attracted the sociologists who, in line with positivism and empirical tradition, mainly focus on a process of neighborhood change and displacement of the population. With time, though, the study on gentrification has expanded to include the underlying dynamic of economic restructuring, shifting the focus from demographic structure and individual choice to production and consumption and speculating about reversing the process of suburbanization and inner-city dilapidation (Zukin, 1987). It has also been noted that even though gentrification is first and foremost a privately financed process, as it is commonly held, the favorable government policies expedite the process. Neil Smith (1979) observes that gentrifiers’ actions alone do not accurately explain gentrification. One should also consider the role of builders, landlords, developers, government agencies, mortgage lenders, and tenants to obtain a comprehensive account of the process. After all, the need for production, especially the need to make profits, has a more significant impact on gentrification initiatives than consumer preferences (Smith, 1979).

Atkinson and Bridge (2005) flesh out colonial aspects of gentrification, including the “White privilege” of the new middle-class gentrifiers, and argue that gentrification must be analyzed in the context of globalization, international migration, and neighborhood change. Sassen (2018) emphasizes the importance of the availability of a supply of low-wage workers in a high-income gentrification process. Immigrants from Global South often join the pool of such workers. In the mid-1990s, many countries in the Global South, facing financial collapse, introduced harsh structural adjustment policies, which contributed to the drastic impoverishment of the population and striking social inequality (Mavroudil & Nagel, 2016). One of the solutions to the problem was migration to high-income countries of the Global North and sending remittances to the countries of origin.
Since 2000, remittances have outpaced both foreign aid and direct investment in many countries in the Global South (Mavroud & Nagel, 2016). In the countries of the Global North, such immigrants join the ranks of low-wage workers whose labor is in high demand in the construction and service sectors accompanying gentrification.

Many scholars have focused on various dimensions of gentrification, its connection to broader social and economic developments, and the displacement of lower-income residents in the process (Krase & DeSena, 2016; Lees et al., 2008; Maurrasse, 2014; Smith & Williams, 2013). Some researchers have portrayed gentrifiers as middle- and upper-middle-class White people who move into a dilapidated minority neighborhood unhesitatingly, giving preference to integrated rather than homogeneous communities (Hwang & Sampson, 2014). Still others have stressed the diversity of gentrifiers. Thus, Moore (2009) explores the pattern of Black middle-class gentrifiers who have relocated to Black lower-class neighborhoods to make investments, consequently upscaling the area. Similarly, Taylor (1992) illustrates the cultural dimensions of gentrification by middle-class African Americans in Harlem. Rucks-Ahidiana (2021) argues that class is not the only component defining the process of gentrification, suggesting that the racial capitalism perspective defined as a racialized economic system with race determining value and profit accumulation should be applied to the analysis of gentrification. The scholar explores how racial composition contributes to different kinds of gentrification, distinguishing between income gentrification, super-gentrification, and marginal gentrification (Rucks-Ahidiana, 2020). Boyd (2008) presents African Americans as gentrifiers engaged in defensive development, which incorporates economic revitalization strategies tailored to keep White residents and developers at bay. Zukin (2016) contends that the first gentrifiers, unconcerned about amenities such as fresh food markets and high-performing schools, choose to reside in a disadvantaged area of their choice. The initial gentrification paves the way for zoning laws, transportation systems, tax credits, direct subsidies to developers, and favorable policing policies, enticing higher-income gentrifiers into the neighborhood (Zukin, 2016). Lees (2000) elaborates on the concepts of “financification” and “super-gentrification” in global cities, such as New York and London, where affluent employers in the financial services industry have regentrified neighborhoods initially gentrified in the 1970s. The scholar pays close attention to race and financial services — the two factors that influence spatial variations in the gentrification process.

In his analysis of studentification, Smith (2004) emphasizes the distinction between conventional gentrifiers and students involved in modified gentrification. Koreans’ entrepreneurial skills have been examined by many scholars who underscore this immigrant group’s role in transforming the architectural and cultural landscapes of American towns and cities by portraying them as gentrifiers (DeVerteuil et al., 2019; Kim, 2018; Park & Kim, 2008). Vo and Danico (2004) have documented Korean immigrants’ and Vietnamese refugees’ transformation of American communities and institutions as well as the establishment of mini Little Saigons and mini Koreatowns throughout Orange County. Seeking evidence of the East Asian gentrification model (via Seoul) in a gentrified Korean-American enclave in Los Angeles, DeVerteuil and Yun (2020) have found a distinctly hybrid, LA-style model.
of gentrification — a mix of explicit emulation of the Seoul gentrification model (density and new-build) and no emulation at all (bounded and parochial) in terms of scale, scope, and pace.

The research presented here contributes to the discussion on gentrification, modifying the term by applying it to the upscaling processes in a Korean ethnoburb and highlighting the agency of immigrants. It explores immigrantrification, which refers to the gentrification of an ethnic enclave by middle-class entrepreneurial immigrants driven by profit-generating enticements, who make considerable investments in the real estate and business sectors. The term joins the chorus of neologisms coined to highlight the peculiarities of gentrification, including “greentrification” introduced by Smith and Phillips, “financification” used by Lees, “studentification” first termed by Darren Smith, and “boutiqueification,” among others (Lees et al., 2008).

**Methods and Data**

This research aims to grasp the social and architectural changes in Palisades Park and provide a detailed account of gentrification in the town. In an effort to grasp the reality of the gentrification process, which is socially constructed through the perceptions and interactions of social agents, this study employs qualitative methods, such as interviewing and ethnography. Interviewing involved face-to-face interaction in which answers to the questions (Appendix) often initiated a conversation during which the respondents eagerly shared their stories and concerns, provided piquant details, and sought understanding and support. Since the social reality is constructed in people’s interactions, such face-to-face interactions with my respondents helped me penetrate and unfold the social fabric of reality and elucidate gentrification through the eyes of gentrifiers and those affected by the process.

Hence, this research mainly draws on data collected from ethnographic field research conducted in 2019–2020, involving 67 interviews, participant observation based on lived experience, and secondary data analysis. The two methodological pillars of ethnography are interviewing and participant observation, which involve both listening and practicing (Daynes & Williams, 2018). As a town resident, I have the unique knowledge of an insider in the community, acquired from 9 years of close observation and participation in community affairs. “Participant observation is immersion in a culture. …[It] can also help clarify the results of more refined instruments by providing a baseline of meaning and a way to reenter the field to explore the context for those (often unexpected) results” (Fetterman, 2019:48). Thus, when strolling along Brinkerhoff or Roff Avenues during my field trips, I could see the blanket of single-family or two-family houses, townhouses, and recently erected luxurious duplexes, all of which were in pristine condition with thoroughly swept lawns, sidewalks, and lush gardens filled with colorful flowers and lovely exotic plants. While the well-maintained single-family houses and townhouses are vestiges of the past polyethnic suburban town, the new lavish duplexes and businesses are attributes of the current immigrantrification engulfing the neighborhood shared by Korean and Guatemalan immigrants (Fig. 4).
Korean and Guatemalan residents pursue different occupational paths. Even though only 26.6% of the residents work outside New Jersey (Table 6), most people who commute to New York City are Koreans. One can see long lines of commuters, mostly Korean residents, waiting for 166 T express buses taking them straight to New York City in the morning. 166 (local) buses also head to New York City, but they make multiple stops along the route and are usually filled with Central Americans who work in a neighboring town. In the morning, one can see Central American men patiently standing on the corners of the main street in hopes of securing a temporary job. Some of my respondents revealed their astonishment at how easily they could find a job in the vicinity. Women are usually employed at nail and hair salons and restaurants, while men are employed at construction and restaurants in Palisades Park and neighboring towns.

The public library, where many students congregate after school, is situated at the heart of the town. The library offers various programs and after-school activities, including study buddies, where students can get assistance with their home assignments and socialize with peers. It is located near the Lindbergh Elementary School and Notre Dame Academy (a Catholic grammar school). Across the street, down a block, one can find the MEK Review, “a leading private learning academy dedicated to transforming students into top performers” (MEK Review n.d.) and catering to Korean immigrants’ high educational aspirations (Table 5) engendered by “education fever” (Gielen & Kim, 2019) in Korea. Guatemalan students who cannot afford to enroll in the MEK Review tutoring services go to the library seeking help from volunteers and librarians.

The library visits resulted in interviews with the librarians and patrons, many of whom, unhesitatingly, conveyed their outlook on the town’s recent architectural transformation. I attended various community gatherings and visited small shops, businesses, churches, restaurants, and hair salons. I used snowball sampling to

![Fig. 4 The new constructions surpass the old family houses not only in length and width but also in height](image-url)
recruit respondents by asking the informants for referrals from their personal networks at the end of the interview. This way, several people could be interviewed during scheduled interviews. My identity (an immigrant woman) seemed advantageous, helping me establish a rapport with my respondents, most of whom were immigrants too. This bears witness to the “fictive co-ethnicity” defined by Smith (2006) as a sense of solidarity between fellow immigrants who set themselves apart from those born in the USA.

My sample comprised 34 male and 33 female respondents, their ages ranging from 18 to 80 years old. Most of the interviewees were in their 30s (27%), 40s (15%), and 50s (15%). The sample included 33 Hispanic (49%), 18 Asian (27%), and 16 White (24%) respondents (Table 7). The 67 respondents were provided with an informed consent document explaining the research purpose. They were given an option to check a box in the document indicating their consent or render it verbally. This choice was necessitated because some of the immigrants’ legal status could be unresolved, and thus they might be distrustful of formal documents. As most Koreans and other immigrants spoke English fluently, the interviews were conducted in English. Few Guatemalan respondents spoke English fluently, and they were eager to render their assistance as translators to their co-patriots with limited command of English. However, most Guatemalan immigrants’ rudimentary knowledge of English, while sufficient to secure employment at construction sites, restaurants, or nail salons, was insufficient to provide comprehensive answers to the questions included in my questionnaire. Therefore, their interviews were conducted with an interpreter’s assistance. Most interviews were recorded; if the respondents objected to recording, their responses were captured as field notes. To protect the respondents’ identities, their names have been changed, and their exact age is not provided. A distinctive aspect of social research is its “objects” agency in the sense that they provide accounts of themselves, their experiences, and their environment (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019:102). Their narratives, regardless of subjectivity, weave the fabrics of the social reality, which is constructed and reconstructed by people who live in and impose meaning onto that society. Therefore, this article presents a detailed description of the neighborhood’s gentrification initiated by the immigrants and their perception and interpretation of the process and its effect on the community.

Findings

Two Major Ethnic Groups of Palisades Park: Koreans and Guatemalans

Palisades Park’s immiгранtrification can be partly explained by the Korean immigrant population’s high socioeconomic status, engendered by a gradual shift from the Korean family-based immigration pattern to that of high-status occupations. Most of today’s Korean population in the NYC metropolitan area are post-1965 immigrants and their children. Fed by American cultural colonialism, some Koreans were inflicted with what was known in Korea as American fever, which was contagious and had spread throughout the country. They were sanguine about their prospects in America, which they envisioned as a fabulous country, full of gold,
and a paradise in this world (Park, 1997). Hence, in 2010, over 1.7 million Koreans resided in the USA, and 221,705 people with Korean ancestry lived in the New York-New Jersey Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area, making it the second-largest Korean population center in the USA (Min, 2013). By 2019, a Korean enclave had been established in Palisades Park, with Koreans comprising 49% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau). From 1965 to 1985, Koreans arrived in the USA based on their labor skills and chain migration (family reunification). Many newly arrived Korean immigrants are well educated, but due to their limited command of English, or educational attainments’ devaluation in the USA, they have been forced to pursue different careers. Since entrepreneurial pursuits are a better alternative to low-level service jobs, NYC, in general, and Palisades Park, in particular, are replete with small businesses run by Korean immigrants.

Bergen County in New Jersey has become Korean immigrants’ favorite destination since the 1990s. In 1990, 16,000 Koreans resided in Bergen County. In 2000, their numbers increased by 130% to 37,000 and then by 61% to 58,000 in 2010. Due to overcrowding and escalating commercial rents, Manhattan-based branches of Korean firms and wholesale stores moved to Bergen County in the 1990s. Naturally, Korean employees and business owners who worked in New Jersey decided to settle close to their workplaces. Many other Koreans relocated from New York City to Korean enclaves in Bergen County due to better-performing public schools and a safer suburban environment. After Korean enclaves had been formed there in the mid-1990s, they became a magnet for many Koreans because of their suburban amenities and authentic Korean cultural aspects (Min, 2013:154). Palisades Park’s population growth was insignificant until 2000. In 1970, 13,351 people resided in the town. This number grew only to 13,732 in 1980 and 14,536 in 1990. However, in 2000, 17,073 people called Palisades Park home. We can also trace the positive correlation between the population growth and the median household income, which increased from $36,019 in 1989 to $48,015 in 1999 (U.S. Census). While only 136 Koreans resided in Palisades Park according to the 1980 Census, in 2000, that number increased to 5,902 (U.S. Census; DP1). Hence, the number of Koreans has been expanding in the town, transforming Palisades Park into a stronghold of the Korean community.

Palisades Park is also home to Guatemalans, an immigrant group from Central America. The Guatemalans’ living conditions are markedly different from those of their neighbors. Many share apartments or overcrowded houses, and they form the readily available, cheap labor force for the Korean entrepreneurial class (James, 2003). Most businesses in the area rely on these immigrants who work in restaurants, delis, bakeries, and construction sites.

The Maya, many of whom come from impoverished rural areas in the western highlands of Guatemala, occupy a distinct position within the immigrant population in the USA (Brown & Odem, 2011). They are considered the most oppressed part of the population in Guatemala, enduring chronic unemployment, as 200,000 people annually enter the labor market with 50,000 available jobs; wages are substandard: $15 a day in the city and $8 in rural areas (LaJeunesse, 2019). It is common for Maya families to instill in their children a firm belief that they must contribute to the economic well-being of their family of orientation (Gielen & Kim, 2019:}
Therefore, some Maya people make every effort to emigrate to the USA and send remittances to their family members. Hence, by 2008, $4.3 billion in remittances, accounting for 11% of the Guatemalan GDP, was transferred to Guatemala by migrants in the USA. In 2011, after taking a dip during the recession, remittances sent to Guatemala from the USA rose to $4.4 billion (Jonas & Rodriguez, 2014: 62).

In the late 1980s, “Palisades Park,” the name of the town concomitant with employment and a “dreams-come-true” haven for Guatemalans, whose sending country’s per capita income was $900 and life expectancy about 50 years, penetrated Guatemalan rural areas. While there were fewer than ten Guatemalans residing in Palisades Park in 1988, their numbers grew steadily in the early 1990s (Llorente, 1998a, 1998b). In 2010, 1,078 Guatemalans resided in Palisades Park, making up 5.6% of the total population. In 2015, their numbers increased to 1,265, or 6.2% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau: TableID B05002). Used to lives characterized by poverty, crime, and violence, many Guatemalan Maya immigrants regard emigration to the USA as an enhancement of their life chances and a survival strategy. The suburbia undergoing gentrification is in constant need of labor for construction, improvement, and maintenance. The construction boom is one reason that Guatemalans who find employment as day laborers have established a residential sub-enclave in Koreatown.

**Changing the Landscape: the Korean Gentrifiers**

The traditional concept of gentrification implies the renovation of a neighborhood that has experienced stagnation, deterioration, and economic decline. Gentrifiers are typically depicted as risk-taking middle- or upper-middle-class investors who embrace diversity and are attracted to bohemian-like settings to remodel the area. The current process of remodeling taking place in Palisades Park can be referred to as immigrantrification (gentrification by immigrants) of the neighborhood. Many Koreans residing in the area are affluent middle-class professionals or business owners who invest money in real estate, and this has helped to revitalize Palisades Park, establish the Korean ethnoburb, and launch gentrification. Over time, next to a variety of Korean small businesses situated along Broad Avenue, extravagant duplexes began to supplant old houses in the neighborhood. According to the Borough of Palisades Park General Legislation/Zoning ordinance added in 2000, a duplex refers to “a building designed for or intended to contain no more than two dwelling units arranged side by side with a common party wall, with no dwelling units being above or below each other, and each dwelling unit having its own front and rear or side access to the outside” [Added 12–19-2000 by Ord. No. 1361; amended 3–16-2004 by Ord. No. 1426; 4–19-2005 by Ord. No. 1443]. Duplexes are allowed to be built on a lot area of a minimum of 5,000 square feet. Both the minimum front yard and rear yard setbacks should be no less than 25 feet. Hence, regardless of the 2,500 square feet limit set on the foundation footprint (Borough of Palisades Park General Legislation/Zoning), the colossal size of the building is projected from its inception.

Large two-family, two-story buildings usually occupy an entire lot, leaving little for the front lawn or the backyard. At first glance, the neighborhood’s architecture...
reflects the social inequality of its population, with the large duplexes and triplexes targeting high-income clientele. However, this impression may be misleading, given that large duplexes, the sphinxes of modern architecture replacing demure single-family or two-family houses, are not only manifestations of their occupants’ prosperity but also profit-generating strategic investments rendering the possibility of rent-collection for many Korean proprietors. Thus, according to some of my respondents:

I think Koreans see Palisades Park as a location close to New York City. Many young people can live here in order to commute to New York City. Duplexes are probably very convenient. Korean people use the duplex rent to service their mortgage. They can also rent different rooms to other people. For example, they can rent rooms in the basements. So, people also see duplexes as an opportunity for investment. (A Korean immigrant man in his 40s)

Subsequently, the property is usually bought with the prospect of renting and earning an income from the investment, which is possible because the Korean ethnoburb is attractive to not only newly arrived Korean immigrants and students who tenaciously hew to their culture while adjusting to the new social milieu but also commuters of other ethno-racial groups. For those who cannot afford to rent a unit, some renters sublet rooms; the demand for the rooms is so high that they often do not last longer than 24 h on the market. The neighborhood’s popularity has transformed the subletting business into a lucrative enterprise and a survival strategy for many dwellers. According to Jennifer, a 33-year-old Caucasian woman born in Oklahoma who relocated to Palisades Park in 2016 for employment prospects:

The one thing I don’t like about living in Palisades Park is the duplexes. I know that at one point, I will be priced out of my apartment, and will probably have to leave and find a new job at that point. I don’t anticipate ever owning property in Palisades Park. I love working in this town, but I expect that I will have to leave the town when the price of my apartment becomes too high. Then I will have to think about whether buying a car and traveling to Palisades Park is worth it. My one entire paycheck is basically my rent in my apartment because I live alone. I see duplexes as investment properties. I worry about that. When I first moved here, I lived in the basement of one of the duplexes for a few months. It was a very shady, cash-only kind of thing. It’s huge, though. I’ve heard a rumor that people divide the duplexes into almost illegal apartments and rooms. I don’t know if that is true. But I live in a legit apartment.

Jennifer’s concerns mirror those of many other renters who are afraid that eventually they may be priced out of the gentrified neighborhood. Inevitably, the replacement of old houses with duplexes has resulted in exorbitant rent prices and renters’ fear of being priced out of their abode. Such fears are not groundless since the median rent increased from $649 in 1990 to $1638 in 2020 (Table 4). Ironically, the second-largest immigrant group in the neighborhood are Guatemalan immigrants who cannot afford prohibitive rent, and therefore take advantage of subletting and sharing the units with co-ethnics. Thus, according to Jenny, an immigrant Salvadoran woman in her 40 s:
I help the Hispanic community, and what I see are some people getting paid a
good amount of money. So, they come together as a family or group and agree
that they will live in one place and all pay a fair share. But when they go to the
owner, they only say that they are just two adults. Afterward, they bring other
people and sneak them into their homes. I don’t think that people will leave,
even when the duplexes raise the price of everything. They find ways to out-
smart the system.

Such arrangements are beneficial both for rent-collecting property owners and
those residents who have secured stable employment and have settled in the com-
munity indefinitely, enjoying the amenities of the middle-class neighborhood.
However, regardless of the neighborhood’s gentrification and beautification, some
Korean residents question the benefits of duplexes, complaining about pollution and
overcrowding. Thus, according to Jane, a Korean female ex-business owner in her
60 s, the duplexes and the current gentrification have a detrimental effect on the
neighborhood:

I think the duplexes are more than enough. There are way too many duplexes
here. It’s a small town, and there is no space here. There used to be so many
trees here, and now they are all gone. I think they should stop. I don’t agree
with the financial benefits that the duplexes bring either…. I came here for
freedom; the duplexes are just concrete boxes. Lots of people like them, but I
don’t like them. I don’t care if the money goes up or down. Here, in Palisades
Park, they should stop making the duplexes.

Her anti-duplex sentiments resonate with many other respondents who argue that
the town is becoming a city. Usually, duplexes devour an entire land lot on which the
old house had been erected. Both the front lawn and the backyard are consumed to
enhance the square footage of the property so that it can be more financially rational.
The new constructions surpass the old family houses not only in length and width
but also in height (Fig. 4). The traditional front lawn is replaced with a driveway,
both sides of which are lined up with narrow strips of land used for plants, while the
façade of the neighborhood is impeccable, and the process of gentrification/immi-
grantrification is obvious; obscured to the naked eye might be the deprivation of
some of its inhabitants.

The Guatemalan Sub-enclave in the Immigrantrified Town

The demand for duplexes is so high that often the building is sold before the con-
struction is complete. According to the U.S. Census Data, 1958 housing units were
built between 2000 and 2019, the number of old structures (i.e., those built between
1940 and 1969) decreased by 896 units — from 3,828 in 2000 to 2,932 in 2019
(Table 2). Consequently, there are less traditional, inexpensive detached houses in
the neighborhood, displacing those who cannot afford the prohibitive rents. According
to Maria, an immigrant Guatemalan woman in her 40 s:
I do sometimes think about whether the rent will increase and whether I will be able to live here anymore. I live in a house and occupy half of the first floor. It is $3600 for the entire house, but I live with another family that lives above me. A few months ago, many families had to leave the apartments because they couldn’t pay. A lot of those people went to Fairview. (A Guatemalan woman)

Although many of the Guatemalan respondents arrived in the country to earn money and send remittances to relatives in their country of origin, many have settled down, secured gainful employment, and established a sub-enclave in the town. They are married, raise children, and regard Palisades Park as their permanent residence in the new homeland. Hence, many of the respondents shared their concern about the increasing rent and dreaded the possibility of relocation:

I rent here. Every year the rent goes up. I am scared that if the rent keeps growing, I will have to leave. I have bad credit, so it’s hard to find an apartment. But the owner is very nice to me right now. I pay $1,500 rent, and it goes up every year by 100 dollars. (A Guatemalan man in his 30s)

My rent was raised a little bit. It is harder to rent a place now. It is harder to move in now. If they raise my rent too much, I won’t be able to live here. (A Guatemalan man in his 20s)

The neighborhood also contains less alluring three- or four-story apartment buildings labeled by real estate agents “for the poor” (Fig. 5). A one-bedroom apartment in such a building can be rented for $1200–$1400 and is often occupied by Guatemalan immigrants. From this research, the respondents demonstrated that the families who have remained in the country for several years are less likely to share their apartments with other co-ethnics than those who have arrived recently. The latter follow the proverbial “any port in a storm will do” and settle close to work, sharing accommodation with other co-ethnics. In John’s words,

I live with five people in the apartment. They are not a part of my family. The apartment is about $1,500, but I pay $300. It is a two-bedroom apartment. I
was looking for an apartment for myself, but it is too expensive. (A Guatemalan man in his 20s)

Such arrangements are necessary to surmount the unaffordable cost of living in the town undergoing gentrification and are prevalent among recent Guatemalan arrivals. During my field trips to the working-class apartment buildings sandwiched between the duplexes, I noted cleanliness, proper management, and maintenance of the inexpensive properties in the costly neighborhood. Thus, two major immigrant communities are actively involved in the gentrification of the area. While Koreans are the driving force of the process, investing in real estate, Guatemalan immigrants provide cheap manual labor and diligent maintenance of the neighborhood. Most of my respondents, comparing their living and economic conditions in the USA with those in Guatemala, expressed gratitude for the ample employment opportunities available in the town being gentrified. Thus, according to Jose, a Guatemalan man in his 30s who has been in the USA for only 9 months by the time of the interview:

It was worse in Guatemala because I worked harder there but was paid very little. I would cut trees and wood, I would work at construction and a coffee farm, I would work for about seven, eight hours. They did not give me enough money there. I would make about $10 per day. Here, in America, I make almost $500 a week. It was very hard for me to come here... Korean people like us because we do what we’re told and we work a lot. My employer is Korean.

The influx of Guatemalan immigrants positively correlates with immigrantrification and its job-generating tendencies. The high cost of living is balanced against an abundance of jobs in the neighborhood undergoing gentrification and the high demand for manual labor. The employment opportunities are a magnet for many immigrants, whose families need remittances to fight poverty and enhance their
children’s and siblings’ life chances in Guatemala. Although most of the Guatemalan respondents stressed the significance of remittances and their intention to return to their country of origin, many do not rule out the possibility of permanently staying in the USA. Thus, according to Joan,

Yes, it is more comfortable here, even though I don’t have family here. I work here and send money to Guatemala. I wash dishes in restaurants. I do plan to go back home. I want to work now, build a house, help the family, save some money, and then go back home. First, I want to build a house. It costs $20,000 to build a good house with many rooms. But I hope to stay here if I find a husband.

Hence, in contrast to the Korean immigrants, most of whom make considerable investments in business, real estate, and their children’s education and are sanguine about their prospects in the USA, the Guatemalans’ primary objective is to convert their labor to remittances needed by their family in Guatemala. Nevertheless, in the meantime, they have established their immigrant sub-enclave in Koreatown, weaving the fabric of their community. Through chain migration, the number of Guatemalan immigrants is increasing, and they outnumber the White residents in the town.

The White Exodus

This article illustrates that immigrants’ gentrification follows a revitalization of the neighborhood that often accompanies the establishment of an ethnic enclave or an ethnoburb. While the revitalization caused a White exodus, immigrantrification intensified the process. In 2019, 89% of the town’s total residents settled in the town after 1989, and only 11% moved into units before 1989 (Table 3). According to Victor, a White man in his 40s, the White exodus accompanied the development of the Korean enclave:

| Year householder moved into unit | Occupied housing units |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Moved in 2017 to 2019            | 891                    |
| Moved in 2015 to 2016            | 1,079                  |
| Moved in 2010 to 2014            | 2,390                  |
| Moved in 2000 to 2009            | 1,720                  |
| Moved in 1990 to 1999            | 663                    |
| Moved in 1989 and earlier        | 660                    |

Source: The United States Census Bureau: Selected Housing Characteristics (Table DP04)
https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Palisades%20Park,%20NJ%202019%20DP04&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04
It happened very fast. It started in ‘88, ‘89… It all changed in a matter of a few years. The Koreans came with a lot of money. Because the property went up, they all [residents of Palisades Park] started selling here for profit. Some moved up to North Jersey. Others went to South Jersey after making a profit. What ended up happening was they [Koreans] started buying houses, but everyone loved the fact that they were paying more than what the average American was offering for a house… So, Koreans came with buckets of money and threw them all over this town. After about two years, a lot of businesses felt like they had to get out of here, and that’s when everyone took off.

Several respondents confirmed that the changes took place rapidly, and many White residents left the town in response to Koreans moving into the neighborhood. The businesses losing their clientele “felt like they had to get out of here” and were replaced by Korean businesses. Some White respondents noted that Koreans revitalized the community, which had been dilapidating before their arrival. Thus, according to Robert, a 40-year-old White male respondent,

The families just grew out of it. The older groups of the communities stick together, but the children didn’t want to be sucked into the groups. They wanted to become more independent. I’m sure that’s what happened. A lot of families, as the parents got older, ended up selling or moving out, or even moving to the children’s place. One of the families left this town to go to the town where their son lived with his wife.

In this manner, Robert describes the change in the neighborhood, whose residents moved out for reasons unrelated to the upcoming population turnover. Robert also admits that when the town was turning into a Korean ethnoburb, the anti-immigrant sentiments were salient: “There was the sense of ‘I need to get out of here’, because everything here is becoming Korean.” Robert’s contention is confirmed by Isabel, a woman in her 80s:

I was born here. My parents were born here. My grandparents were born on the other side. My grandparents came from Italy, Ireland, Germany, and England. I consider myself just American. I have lived in Palisades Park for 55 years and have seen all the changes in the town. When I first moved here, it was not Korean at all. Now, it’s become completely Korean. Would I choose to live in Palisades Park now? No. Not because I have anything against Koreans, I would not want to live in a community where the majority of people are not similar to myself.

Isabel explains that she does not feel comfortable living in the ethnoburb, expressing nostalgia for the old Palisades Park. Even though she still resides in the town, she is dissatisfied with the changes occurring in the community (Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7).

Hence, both the revitalization and gentrification of this immigrant neighborhood were accompanied by a voluntary relocation of White residents or the White exodus. In 2000, most of the householders were White (2,939), followed by Asians (2,254).
and Hispanics (845). In 2019, there were more Asian and Hispanic householders — 4,261 and 1,417, respectively, while the number of White householders dropped to 1,519 (U.S. Census Data: Table S2502 (https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Palisades%20Park,%20NJ%202019%20race%20householder)).

Furthermore, there are few businesses owned by White residents in the neighborhood. Most of the small businesses are owned by Koreans who cater to other Koreans. The numerous Korean and some Chinese restaurants lined up along Broad Avenue are never empty. Delicatessens, restaurants, barbershops, pharmacies, and beauty salons are prime illustrations of the entrepreneurial skills of Korean residents. These businesses and the recently erected duplexes showcase the immigrantification of the neighborhood. Some White residents think negatively of the duplex construction, reviling them as monstrosities without gardens, backyards, or front lawns, and complaining of Palisades Park being converted into a city. Thus, according to Rachael, a White woman in her 50s, who moved out of the town in 2012, When we first moved here, it was mostly American people living in Palisades Park. It wasn’t until the late 1990s that the Koreans began moving in. The most distressing thing that I think about the town is the rebuilding of new homes. They rip out homes, build up duplexes edge to edge. They started doing that

| Year | Rent   |
|------|--------|
| 1990 | $649   |
| 2000 | $903   |
| 2011 | $1397  |
| 2020 | $1638  |

Source: The United States Census Bureau: Selected Housing Characteristics (Table DP04)
https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Palisades%20Park,%20NJ%202019%20DP04&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP04

| Race | Bachelor’s degree or higher |
|------|----------------------------|
| White| 89.4%                      |
| Black| 80.6%                      |
| Asian| 93.3%                      |
| Hispanic| 19.7%                   |

Source: The United States Census Bureau: Selected Housing Characteristics (Table S1501)
https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Palisades%20Park,%20NJ%202020%20race%20householder
https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Palisades%20Park,%20NJ%202020%20S1501
Table 6 Palisades Park’s population in 2020 — households, families, and commuting characteristics

| Characteristics                                      | Count | Percent |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Total population                                     | 20,693|         |
| Male                                                 | 48.1% |         |
| Female                                               | 51.9% |         |
| Median age                                           | 38.5% |         |
| Total households                                     | 7,291 |         |
| Average household size                               | 2.84  |         |
| Total families                                       | 5,568 |         |
| Average family size                                  | 3.16  |         |
| Population 15 years and over                         | 18,172|         |
| Married (population 15 years and over)               | 49.8% |         |
| Worked in state of residence (NJ)                    | 73.4% |         |
| Worked in county of residence (Bergen County)        | 56.4% |         |
| Worked outside county of residence                   | 26.6% |         |
| Worked in place of residence                         | 18.2% |         |
| Worked outside place of residence                    | 81.8% |         |
| Mean travel time to work (minutes)                   | 34.8  |         |
| No vehicle available                                 | 16%   |         |
| 1 vehicle available                                  | 27.5% |         |
| 2 vehicles available                                 | 30%   |         |
| 3 or more vehicles available                         | 26.5% |         |

Source: The United States Census Bureau

https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Palisades%20Park%20NJ&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1101

https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Families%20palisades%20Park%20nj

https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Families%20palisades%20Park%20nj%20worked%20in&tid=ACSDT5Y2020.B08134

Table 7 Respondent characteristics (N=67)

|                          | Count | Percent |
|--------------------------|-------|---------|
| Race                     |       |         |
| Hispanic                 | 33    | 49%     |
| Asian                    | 18    | 27%     |
| White                    | 16    | 24%     |
| Gender                   |       |         |
| Female                   | 33    | 49%     |
| Male                     | 34    | 51%     |
| Age                      |       |         |
| 18–19                    | 2     | 3%      |
| 20–29                    | 14    | 21%     |
| 30–39                    | 18    | 27%     |
| 40–49                    | 10    | 15%     |
| 50–59                    | 10    | 15%     |
| 60–69                    | 8     | 12%     |
| 70–79                    | 3     | 4%      |
| 80–89                    | 2     | 3%      |
20 years ago and said they would stop, but they never did. In my opinion, they destroyed the town just by doing that. Now there’s no parking; they doubled and tripled the population. That is the downfall of the town. It is very disheartening because it used to be family orientated.

Rachael left the neighborhood in 2012 because of the sweeping physical changes, which she describes as “the downfall of the town.” In her view, immigrantrification has destroyed Palisades Park because the size of the population has increased, and the duplexes built from “edge to edge” have turned the town into a city-like place with no parking space. Gentrification by immigrants has also changed the composition of the population, which used to be “family-oriented” but now comprises students, youth, and Guatemalan immigrant men standing on the corners of the streets to find prospective employers.

Hence, the White exodus initiated by Korean immigrants’ arrival persists due to the White residents’ dissatisfaction with the problems arising in the town undergoing immigrantrification. For example, according to Susan, a White woman in her 50s,

I feel comfortable here, but I do plan on leaving because I am tired of the tickets and all of the little things. It’s not worth it… I think every family is Korean on my block… Old settlers moved and sold their houses. Overall, Palisades Park is not that friendly. Everywhere you turn, there is somebody’s hand in your pocket. Never in my life have I heard of needing a parking sticker to park your car on the streets but here…. As for the shopping, they don’t sell anything that appeals to me. I do miss that there isn’t a neighborhood area where I can buy things I actually like anymore, besides Shoprite.

Echoing Rachael’s complaint about the town’s overcrowding and lack of parking space due to immigrantrification, Susan justifies her decision to relocate with the unreasonable parking tickets and other “little things.” Although she feels comfortable in Palisades Park, she wishes that there were areas in the neighborhood where she could buy things appealing to her. Thus, the exodus of the White residents that began in the late 1990s when the town was being transformed into a Korean ethnoburb is ongoing. While in the late 1990s, Korean immigrants offset the dwindling numbers of White residents, the more recent White exodus has been supplanted by the arrival of Guatemalan immigrants establishing their ethnic sub-enclave in the gentrified Korean ethnoburb (Table 1).

Discussion and Conclusion

This article has foregrounded the sweeping changes encompassing Palisades Park in the past 30 years, providing a detailed account of the processes that accompanied the conversion of a typical suburban White town into a prosperous gentrified Korean ethnoburb. The study addresses two issues underrepresented in the discussion on gentrification — third-world immigration and ethnic minority gentrification (Lees, 2000), by highlighting the agency of immigrants who invest in real estate, upscaling
and beautifying the ethnoburb. To emphasize the role of immigrants as gentrifiers and their substantial contributions to the upscaling of the ethnoburb, gentrification by immigrants is referred to as immigrantrification. One of the peculiarities of the immigrantrification process is “duplexification” — the erection of duplexes that replace the old single- and two-family houses. This peculiarity of gentrification mirrors “brownstoning” in New York — the term that goes back to the Brownstone Revival Committee, founded in New York City in 1968 by Everett Ortner, a pioneer gentrifier in Park Slope (Lees et al., 2008), and “boutiquing,” an aspect of gentrification in New York City heralding commercial investments, leading to upgraded amenities and increasing rents (Zukin et al., 2009). However, many Palisades Park’s residents are dissatisfied with “duplexification,” contending that the process turns the suburban town into a city-like place.

One of the outcomes of gentrification is the displacement of working-class residents from an upscale neighborhood. However, as this research has shown, the labor-intensive process of immigrantrification has lured many Central American immigrants who established their residential sub-enclave in the immigrant neighborhood. The cultural changes in the neighborhood have also triggered “White flight,” or a voluntary relocation of old-term residents. Voluntary relocation of residents is to be distinguished from the involuntary displacement of working-class inhabitants prompted by prohibitive costs of real estate and soaring rents. While some Central American immigrants have been displaced by the rising costs in the immigrant neighborhood, others have adjusted by sharing the household and expenses with compatriots. Such arrangements are temporary, though, and Guatemalan immigrants live in constant fear of stoking rents and the possibility of displacement. Therefore, immigrantrification, a modified version of gentrification by immigrants, reflects aspects of globalization and international migration, which have become an integral part of the American suburban landscape.

This study has also expanded the research on Korean gentrifiers (DeVerteuil et al., 2019; Kim, 2018; Park & Kim, 2008; Vo & Danico, 2004), identifying gentrification as the outcome of immigrants’ profit-seeking strategies, whereby investments in real estate are made for revenue-generating purposes, and distinguishing it from the process of revitalization, which usually accompanies the settlement of immigrants in a neighborhood. The sharing of Koreans’ enclaves with the Latino population has been noted in the immigration scholarship (DeVerteuil & Yun, 2020; Lee & Park, 2008; Park, 1997); however, this study presents a more detailed account of the cooperative relationships between Korean gentrifiers and Guatemalan immigrants, who benefit from and partake in the physical transformation of the town. By portraying Guatemalan immigrants as active participants in the gentrification initiated by Korean immigrants, this research has shown that the issues pertaining to race/ethnicity are more complicated than Black/Latino displacees versus White gentrifiers (Lees, 2000). This study has also illustrated distinct trajectories of Korean and Guatemalan immigrants’ integration into American society and their roles in the town’s gentrification. Regrettably, the active participants in immigrantrification, Guatemalans live in overcrowded apartments due to the soaring living costs in the gentrified town where luxurious duplexes and triplexes gradually replace more affordable old single-family houses. Thus, immigrantrification, while being
beneficial for prosperous Korean immigrants, is disadvantageous for lower-income Guatemalan immigrants threatened with displacement.

This study has also highlighted the demographic changes in the neighborhood, foregrounding the White exodus, a process similar to the departure of many non-Chinese residents in Monterey Park, California, and Flushing, New York, as described by Zhou (2009). The Chicago sociologists used the invasion-succession model to explain the population change in a neighborhood, emphasizing conflict, competition, and accommodation accompanying the process (Schwirian, 1983). The White exodus documented in this research has illustrated that the establishment of a Korean ethnoburb ensued from such “invasion” and “succession” was met with resistance and withdrawal of the long-term residents. The White exodus in Palisades Park is a multilayered process taking place for four reasons: (1) as a result of devitalization of the community, which preceded the establishment of an ethnic enclave; (2) as a result of monetary enticement or selling-for-profit provided that Korean immigrants paid an above-the-market price; (3) in search of cultural homogeneity when the town was being converted into a Korean ethnoburb; and (4) as a result of immgrantrification. The White exodus that started when Korean immigrants moved into the town in the 1990s has been intensified by gentrification and the physical changes taking place in the neighborhood, echoing the findings of the research on the residents of Halifax who perceived changes to the built environment but did not perceive economic and cultural changes in their neighborhood (Gosse et al., 2016). The residents of Palisades Park are dissatisfied with the transformation of their town, pointing to pollution, overcrowding, the lack of parking space, land-use intensity, and the lack of greenery. While some residents complain about the town turning into a city, others are concerned about being priced out of the upscaling ethnoburb.

Palisades Park, an American town gentrified by immigrants, is a perfect laboratory for researching different immigrant groups’ adjustments to their new social milieu and their contribution to the social and architectural landscapes. However, the findings of this micro-level research may be too limited and not generalizable to other immigrant communities. Therefore, future qualitative and quantitative research and comparative analytical studies could shed more light on immgrantrification and immigrants’ contributions to the changing landscapes of American towns and cities and their far-reaching implications.

Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How long have you resided in the U.S.?
2. Why did you come to the U.S.? What is the purpose of your immigration?
3. How often do you visit your home country?
4. Is your life more comfortable in the U.S.? Do you plan to go back home?
5. Why do so many Koreans/Guatemalans/other immigrant groups/ come to the U.S.?
6. What is the relationship between Asians and Hispanics/White Americans?
7. Have you ever encountered prejudice and discrimination?
8. Why did you come to Palisades Park?
9. Do you live in an extended family? Are your parents/grandparents fluent in English?
10. Do you own a property in Palisades Park?
11. Do you have a property in Korea/Guatemala? Do you rent it?
12. What do you think about current immigration policies? What do you think about the wall on the Southern border?
13. Have you noticed the changes in Palisades Park (gentrification)? What do you think about these changes?
14. Do you enjoy living in this town? Why?
15. Do you plan to leave Palisades Park? Why?

Funding St. Francis College — $1500.

Declarations
This manuscript has not been published or presented elsewhere in part or in entirety and is not under consideration by another journal. All study participants provided informed consent, and the study design was approved by the St. Francis College ethics review board. I have read and understood your journal’s policies and believe that neither the manuscript nor the study violates any of these. There is no conflict of interest to declare.

References
Alba, R., & Foner, N. (2015). Strangers no more: Immigration and the challenges of integration in North America and Western Europe. Princeton University Press.
Atkinson, R., & Bridge G. (2005). Gentrification in a global context: The New Urban Colonialism. Routledge
Beck, G. M., Jr. (2009). Images of America: Palisades Park. Arcadia Publishing.
Boyd, M. (2008). Defensive development: The role of racial conflict in gentrification. Urban Affairs Review, 43(6), 751–776.
Brown, W. & Odem, M. (2011). Living across borders: Guatemala Maya immigrants in the U.S. South. Southern Spaces. February 16. Retrieved November 20, 2021, from https://southernspaces.org/2011/living-across-borders-guatemala-maya-immigrants-us-south/
Daynes, S. & Williams, T. (2018). On ethnography. Polity Press.
DeVerteuil, G., & Yun, O. (2020). Reversing the dominant directionality: Evidence of the East Asian model of gentrification in L.A.’s Koreatown. Area, 52(2), 306–313.
DeVerteuil, G., Yun, O., & Choi, C. (2019). Between the cosmopolitan and the parochial: The immigrant gentrifier in Koreatown Los Angeles. Social & Cultural Geography, 20(1), 64–86.
Duffy, T. (1977). Looking back at Palisades Park 1668–1976. Garden State.
Eui-Young, Y. (1985). “Koreatown” Los Angeles: Emergence of a new inner-city ethnic community. Bulletin of the Population and Development Studies Center, 14, 29–44.
Fetterman, D. M. (2019) Ethnography, 4th Edition, SAGE Publications, Inc. (US). Available from: VitalSource Bookshelf.
Flanigan, J. (2018). *The Korean-American dream: Portraits of a successful immigrant community*. University of Nevada Press.

Foner, N. (2000). *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York’s two great waves of immigration*. Yale University Press.

Foner, N. (2013). *One out of three: Immigrant New York in the twenty-first century*. Columbia University Press.

Gielen, U. P., & Kim, S. (2019). *Global changes in children’s lives*. Cambridge University Press.

Gosse, M., Ramos, H., Radice, M., Grant, J., & Pritchard, P. (2016). What affects perception of neighbourhood change? *The Canadian Geographer*, 60(4), 530–540.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2019). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. Routledge.

Hwang, J., & Sampson, R. J. (2014). Divergent pathway of gentrification: Racial inequality and the social order of renewal in Chicago neighborhoods. *American Sociological Review*, 79(4), 726–751.

Jain, A. (2011). *How to be South Asian in America: Narratives of ambivalence and belonging*. Temple University Press.

James, G. (2003). *On the street, looking for work*. The New York Times. February 2. [https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/02/nyregion/on-the-street-looking-for-work.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/02/nyregion/on-the-street-looking-for-work.html)

Johnson, M. S. (2017). Revitalizing the suburbs. Immigrants in Greater Boston since the 1980s. In D. Vitello & T. J. Sugrue (Eds.), *Immigration and metropolitan revitalization in the United States* (pp. 67–80). University of Pennsylvania Press.

Jonas, S., & Rodriguez, N. (2014). *Guatemala-U.S. migration: Transforming regions*. University of Texas Press.

Katz, B. M., & Ginsburg, K. (2017). Immigrant cities as reservations for low-wage labor. In D. Vitello & T. J. Sugrue (Eds.), *Immigration and metropolitan revitalization in the United States* (pp. 80–95). University of Pennsylvania Press.

Kershaw, S. (2002). For Schenectady, a Guyanese strategy; mayor goes all out to encourage a wave of hardworking immigrants. *The New York Times*, July 26.

Kim, J. (2018). Manhattan’s Koreatown as a transclave: The emergence of a new ethnic enclave in a global city. *City & Community*, 17(1), 276–295.

Krase, J., & DeSena, J. J. (2016). *Race, class, and gentrification in Brooklyn*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.

LaJeunesse, W. (2019). Guatemalan migrants vow to keep trying to reach U.S. border after Mexico ramps up pressure. *Fox News*, June 17. Retrieved June 8, 2021, from [https://www.foxnews.com/world/immigration-guatemala-border-mexico/print](https://www.foxnews.com/world/immigration-guatemala-border-mexico/print)

Lee, Y., & Park, K. (2008). Negotiating hybridity: Transnational reconstruction of migrant subjectivity in Koreatown. *Cultural Geography*, 25, 245–262.

Lees, L. (2000). A reappraisal of gentrification: Towards a geography of gentrification. *Progress in Human Geography*, 24(3), 389–408.

Lees, L., Slater, T., & Wylly, E. (2008). *Gentrification*. Routledge Taylor & Francis.

Lemekh, H. (2010). *Ukrainian immigrants in New York: Collision of two worlds*. LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC.

Li, W. (2009). *Ethnoburb: The new ethnic community in urban America*. University of Hawai‘i Press.

Llorente, E. (1998a). As familiarity grows, fears ebb. *Today’s News*. Retrieved September 25, 2021, from [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/journalism/isaacs/client_edit/guats1998a0824.htm](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/journalism/isaacs/client_edit/guats1998a0824.htm)

Llorente, E. (1998b). A tale of two cultures. *Today’s News*. Retrieved September 25, 2021, from [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/journalism/isaacs/client_edit/newkorea1998b08231.htm](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/journalism/isaacs/client_edit/newkorea1998b08231.htm)

Lobo, A. P., & Salvo, J. J. (2013). A portrait of New York’s immigrant melange. In N. Foner (Ed.), *One out of three: Immigrant New York in the twenty-first century* (pp. 35–64). Columbia University Press.

Malinconico, J. (1985). If you’re thinking of living in Palisades Park. *The New York Times*. Retrieved September 25, 2021 from [https://www.nytimes.com/1985/04/28/realestate/if-you-re-thinking-of-living-in-palisades-park.html](https://www.nytimes.com/1985/04/28/realestate/if-you-re-thinking-of-living-in-palisades-park.html)

Maurrasse, D. J. (2014). *Listening to Harlem*. Taylor & Francis.

Mavroudis, E., & Nagel, C. (2016). *Global Migration: Patterns, Processes, and Politics*. Routledge.

MEK Review (n.d.) Retrieved September 20 from [https://mekreview.com/about-us/](https://mekreview.com/about-us/)

Min, P. G. (2013). Koreans: Changes in New York in the twenty-first century. In N. Foner (Ed.), *One out of three: Immigrant New York in the twenty-first century* (pp. 148–176). Columbia University Press.

Moore, K. S. (2009). Gentrification in black face? The return of the Black middle class to urban neighbourhoods. *Urban Geography*, 30(2), 118–142.
Morgan, R. (2017). A Korean spa offers saunas, bibimbap and a taste of home in New Jersey. The New York Times.

Orleck, A. (2001). The Soviet Jewish Americans. Brandeis University Press.

Park, K., & Kim, J. (2008). The contested nexus of Los Angeles Koreatown: Capital restructuring, gentrification, and displacement. *Amerasia Journal, 34*(3), 126–150.

Park, K. (1997). *The Korean American Dream: Immigrants and small business in New York City*. Cornell University Press.

Perez-Pena, R. (2010). As Koreans pour in, a town is remade. The New York Times.

Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2014). *Immigrant America: A portrait*. University of California Press.

Rodriguez, R. M. (2017). In Lady Liberty's shadow: The politic of race and immigration in New Jersey. Rutgers University Press.

Rucks-Ahidiana, Z. (2020). Racial composition and trajectories of gentrification in the United States. *Urban Studies, 58*(13), 2721–2741.

Rucks-Ahidiana, Z. (2021). Theorizing gentrification as a process of racial capitalism. *City & Community*. Retrieved January 10, 2022. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/15356841211054790

Sassen, S. (2018). *Cities in a world economy*. Sage Publication.

Sassen, S. (2001). *The global city: New York, London*. Princeton University Press.

Schwirian, K. P. (1983). Models of neighborhood change. *Annual Review of Sociology, 9*, 83–102.

Semple, K. (2012). In New Jersey, memorial for ‘comfort women’ deepens old animosity. *The New York Times*. Retrieved September 25, 2021, from https://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/19/nyregion/monument-in-palisades-park-nj-irritates-japanese-officials.html

Smith, D. P. (2004). ‘Studentification ication’: The gentrification factory. In R. Atkinson & G. Bridge (Eds.), *Gentrification in a global context* (pp. 73–91). Routledge.

Smith, N. (1979). Toward a theory of gentrification a back to the city movement by capital, not people. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 45*(4), 538–548.

Smith, N., & Williams, P. (2013). *Gentrification of the city*. Taylor & Francis.

Smith, R. C. (2006). *Mexican New York: Transnational lives of new immigrants*. University of California Press.

Taylor, M. M. (1992). Can you go home again? Black gentrification and the dilemma of difference. *Berkley Journal of Sociology, 37*, 101–128.

Torres-Saillant, S., & Hernandez, R. (2013). Dominicans: Community, culture, and collective identity. In N. Foner (Ed.), *One out of three: Immigrant New York in the twenty-first century* (pp. 223–246). Columbia University Press.

The United States Census Bureau (2021) American Community Survey, ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates; Table ID: DP05. Retrieved July 30, 2021, from https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Palisades%20Park%20NJ&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05

Vo, L. T., & Danico, M. Y. (2004). The formation of post-suburban communities: Koreatown and Little Saigon, Orange County. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, 24*(7/8), 15–45.

Zhou, M. (2013). Ethnic enclaves and niches. *The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. Retrieved September 23 from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9781444351071.wbghm201

Zhou, M. (2009). *Contemporary Chinese America: Immigration, ethnicity, and community transformation*. Temple University Press.

Zukin, S. (2016). Gentrification in three paradoxes. *City and Community, 15*(3), 202–207.

Zukin, S. (1987). Gentrification: Culture and capital in the urban core. *Annual Review of Sociology, 13*, 129–147.

Zukin, S., Trujillo, V., Frase, P., Jackson, D., Recuber, T., & Walker, A. (2009). New retail capital and neighborhood change: Boutiques and gentrification in New York City. *City & Community, 8*(1), 47–64.

**Publisher’s Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Springer Nature or its licensor holds exclusive rights to this article under a publishing agreement with the author(s) or other rightsholder(s); author self-archiving of the accepted manuscript version of this article is solely governed by the terms of such publishing agreement and applicable law.