

The Ethnic Quilt
Population Diversity in Southern California

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Preface and Acknowledgments

In this book we try to help the reader better understand the varied racial and ethnic populations of Southern California. Our perspective differs from that of some authors who deal with these important and sometimes sensitive matters. This is because our book is not written to support a particular viewpoint or policy regarding multiculturalism, assimilation, or the treatment of certain ethnic groups. Nor is the book a polemic about racism or the need to either eliminate or preserve race- and ethnic-based preferences. On the contrary, our descriptions of thirty-four racial and ethnic populations in Southern California are designed to provide a broad foundation of knowledge about the people and places of this region.

Our most important primary source for this book is the 1990 U.S. census. Although the census is not perfect, as we explain in chapter 1, it is the standard by which other statistics on the American people are judged. No other source equals the detail and quality of its data.

We hope that the availability of the factual base represented by this book will help local residents see how their own lives and those of their neighbors and friends fit into the larger society, economy, and places of this region. Some of our results may also be useful in providing a common ground for policy discussion and future research.

Some people stress a distinction between race and ethnicity, racial groups being those with memberships mostly defined by aspects of physical appearance, such as skin color, as interpreted by the dominant group. In contrast, ethnic groups are those not visibly different from the general white population. Both racial and ethnic groups stress their distinctive cultures and identities. With the intermixing of populations, it is not surprising that a

distinction between racial and ethnic groups must be blurred and unsatisfactory. Although we recognize that an individual's physical appearance is a significant factor in how he or she is assessed and treated by others, we do not attempt to make a racial-ethnic distinction. We consider all people as belonging in varying degrees to ethnic groups—whether defined by physical appearance, language, religion, national origin, or some other criterion.

The Importance of Ethnic Identities

There would be no point in writing this book unless we acknowledged what most Southern Californians already know from their daily experiences—that Southern California is substantially fragmented by ethnicity, by social class, and by locality. In this book we study especially the ethnic dimension of that fragmentation, and we also examine how ethnic groups intersect with class and place. At the end of the book we look at intermarriage rates between groups to determine how much the walls between ethnic groups have broken down and the extent to which various groups have come together socially.

Some people believe that ethnic groups are no longer important in our nation, that we are all simply Americans. We share the belief that America is richer to the extent that friends, employees, and political and business leaders are chosen and people judged as individuals without regard to physical appearance, religion, language heritage, or national origin. However, in both Southern California and the United States ethnic cultural differences and various prejudices make many people most comfortable with members of their own ethnic group and sometimes unfavorably disposed to certain other groups.

Even if no one were evaluated for employment or housing opportunities or in other public situations lower or higher than other people because of his or her perceived ethnic identity, ethnicity would continue to affect our private lives. Racial and ethnic identity would still make a difference in our choice of close friends, marriage partners, and where we lived.

In recent decades ethnic identities in the United States have been particularly emphasized. This is partly because government policy at various levels has accentuated certain racial and ethnic identities in the collection of statistics and in contracting, hiring, and promotion. Statistics on minority populations provide a basis for measuring progress toward overcoming discrimination.

Another major reason has been the resurgence of immigration. Most immigrants are more strongly tied to the culture and society from which they emigrated and their corresponding ethnic group in the United States than to the broader American culture and society. Although most of these immigrants and their descendants become much more integrated into American society as the years pass, their relatively recent arrival as of the 1990s accentuates ethnic pluralism.

Understanding Southern California and Its People

Many people have never heard of some of the ethnic groups who are living in their midst, and most people have glimpsed the various cities of Southern California only from freeways. Most of us are acquainted only with our small worlds, connected by freeway travel. The populated part of Southern California appears undifferentiated and uninteresting because we know little of it and because single-family houses and apartments in one area look so much like those in another. However, this book demonstrates that ethnic and other differences between areas which appear superficially similar are often real and important.

Swelling especially during the 1980s, immigration has grown so large that by 1990 a fifth of all foreign-born people in the United States lived in Southern California. Many of the international transplants are highly educated, cosmopolitan, and wealthy. At the other extreme are many who attended only a

few grades of school in their home country. The flood of new arrivals has transformed Southern California in ways that are often observable but not well understood, and these recent changes have partially masked underlying tensions among established white, black, Mexican American, and some Asian communities.

Americans often know nothing of the backgrounds from which immigrants have come. Older residents may be friendly toward their new neighbors, but beneath a veneer of welcoming acceptance lie anxieties about these strangers and their potential impact here. Immigrants themselves are often so overwhelmed by the difficulties of daily survival that they make little attempt to understand the larger multiethnic society of Southern California. Societal tensions may also result from suspicions about other groups with respect to appearances of great wealth or poverty as well as the somewhat distinctive occupations and business activities of some groups. People's concerns about all these matters are seldom stated in public because Americans are uncomfortable with such differences in a society that is ostensibly democratic and is symbolized, some believe, by a "melting pot."

We try to confront the reality of Southern California's new ethnic pluralism head-on by measuring, analyzing, and interpreting the region's varied ethnic groups and their characteristics. This is a step toward understanding the reality of life in Southern California—a reality which is sometimes distorted by images and rhetoric but which nonetheless undergirds interethnic relations and the functioning of society as a whole. Lack of knowledge about the similarities and differences among groups opens the way to unfounded rumors and feelings of deep resentment. If people can better grasp what has been happening around them, they will be better able to cope with the changes. Enhanced mutual understanding may help to alleviate mistrust.

Although this book describes and analyzes several basic characteristics of the various racial and ethnic populations, it does not attempt to cover everything. We do not treat the interrelations of ethnicity with politics and power, with religion, or with values, lifestyles, health, or crime.

An Urban Geography

The themes of our book link it strongly to urban geography, urban sociology, and urban history. The discipline of geography is usually defined by its special viewpoint or perspective on the world, rather than by any specific subject matter or content area. The perspective of geography emphasizes the characteristics and relative locations of places. Geographers investigate and explain the spatial or areal patterns of things and people, as well as the interrelationships of these. Urban geography simply applies this perspective to cities and suburbs. Sociology's focus on social groups and history's emphasis on change over time and on interconnections between phenomena in time mean that those disciplines are complementary to and intimately related to any geographical study of ethnic groups. We have tried to interweave research from all three disciplines because they all investigate the same real world.

With our emphasis on both the socioeconomic status and location of ethnic populations, we continue a tradition of research on intraurban differentiation that began in the early twentieth century. In recent decades, however, much urban research has neglected localities or treated them perfunctorily. This book may better balance the status and geographical aspects of urban differentiation. Also, most research in sociology and much in geography has stressed theory and generalizations, but some of the most fascinating and provocative aspects of a region lie in its specifics. Because we think that details are at least as interesting as broad generalizations, our book is distinctive in its wealth of detail about places and ethnic groups.

About the Chapters

Chapter 1 explains the basic concepts underlying our analyses of ethnic groups. We view Southern California as having a social structure with three primary dimensions—ethnic identity, socioeconomic status, and geographical distribution. The book explores these dimensions and how they intersect and interrelate with each other.

In chapter 2 we explain how and why the region's basic urban spatial patterns developed. This provides a background for

interpreting the distributions of ethnic populations in subsequent chapters. The chapter also explains the several factors that have resulted in the increased ethnic diversity in Southern California since about 1960.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 describe and explain the distributions of thirty-four ethnic groups. Our treatment is thoroughly historical as well as geographical, providing rich details on specific groups and places that we hope will make their presence here more real and understandable.

Chapter 6 examines the relative socioeconomic status of minorities compared with whites and compares minority positions in 1960 with those of 1990. Our finding that the income gap between whites and both blacks and Hispanics is no narrower in 1990 than it was in 1960 prompted chapter 7, which explores the reasons for this lack of income convergence.

Chapter 8 focuses on ethnic differences in particular occupations and industries, and it measures the extent of ethnic-group specializations at work. We also look at how such specializations have changed over the past few decades. The chapter is very specific in its coverage of ethnic groups and types of work and in its explanations for the likely reasons behind many of the specializations.

In chapter 9 we bring the ethnic groups together for several additional analyses. These concern the degree of residential differences among groups, the ethnic diversity of places, and the comparative socioeconomic status and acculturation of different groups. Then, rates of intermarriage between ethnic groups are used as indicators of the degree to which ethnic groups are integrating socially. This last analysis shows clearly the extent to which Southern California has become a multiethnic society and the relative importance of social linkages among the various groups.

Chapter 10 presents our major conclusions.

Group and Area Coverage

We especially want to portray those populations that have partially transformed Southern California's ethnic composition over the last several decades. Thus, we concentrate on people of color and ethnic groups with high proportions of immigrants. We

attempt to be comprehensive with respect to ethnic groups of African, Middle Eastern, Asian, Pacific Island, West Indian, and Latin American origins. The book includes all such ethnic groups numbering more than 5,000 persons in Southern California, according to the 1990 U.S. census. For practical reasons the maps and text do not treat smaller groups, although their total populations are listed in the notes.¹ However, whites are considered a major ethnic group, and they are often the standard for socioeconomic comparisons among groups. Also included are the English- and Russian-ancestry populations because of their size and special importance.

This book deals only with residents of the five counties—Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura—that constitute the heart of Southern California. This is the area that the Bureau of the Census calls the Los Angeles Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA). In 1990 the 14.5 million residents of the Los Angeles CMSA represented 49 percent of California's population. Moreover, this massive Southern California megalopolis contains one-fifth of all the foreign-born population of the United States and more than the comparable New York CMSA. The somewhat separate and peripheral portions of Southern California—Santa Barbara, San Diego, and the large areas of desert to the east—are not treated.

About the Maps

Within this large area, our maps focus on that portion which contains the greatest ethnic diversity. That diversity is concentrated in the more densely populated sections of Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Because more distant suburbs are still closely connected socially and by daily commuting to these counties, our map coverage extends to nearby parts of Ventura, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties. However, the area represented on maps does not extend into the heart of the three outlying counties because the required decrease in map scale would result in too great a loss of detail in the more intricately patterned areas. Only whites, blacks, American Indians, Filipinos, and people of Mexican origin have ethnic concentrations outside the area mapped in this book.

Most of our maps show spatial patterns in terms of small, neighborhood-sized areal units called census tracts. Census tracts average only 4,000 inhabitants and have long been the most common areal units for examining neighborhood characteristics and mapping within a metropolitan area. In contrast, the sets of quarter-page maps show much larger areal units called PUMAs or Public Use Microdata Areas. PUMAs have a minimum population of 100,000 and are typically composed of entire cities. Although the PUMA-based maps lack the locational detail of the tract-based maps, they make possible the mapping of highly specific data that are not even available for census tracts. To orient the reader geographically, maps label many places referred to in accompanying sections of text as well as other distinctive locations visible on map patterns. Also, details on maps can be located and identified quite precisely because most maps show freeways in red, municipal boundaries in bluish green, and census tract boundaries in white.

Nearly all of our maps are of the choropleth type, in which areal units are colored according to percentages or median values. There has been considerable discussion concerning how data distributions should be aggregated into a limited number of classes: no approach seems to satisfy both statistical and perceptual needs. Unfortunately, most systematic procedures result in a large range in the highest category, where values are few and differences large. Our strategy was to break data distributions into percentiles: the 95th, 90th, 80th, and the bottom 10th or 20th. In some cases the top 5 percent category was further subdivided to isolate the locations of extremely high percentages. In this way we have attempted to reveal where a particular group is absent and where concentrations are particularly strong. In maps of household income those census tracts with fewer than 100 households in each ethnic group are masked. This was done to counter sampling error and to help the reader focus on those areas which are especially important in each group's distribution.

The legend of each choropleth map indicates the number of tracts or PUMAs within each category by numbered bars whose length is proportional to that number. The bar length and number are based on the number of PUMAs or tracts in the entire five-county area (not just the portion shown on the map), and on

income maps they include the tracts that are masked as having fewer than 100 households.

In interpreting maps based on PUMAs as areal units, it is important to note that PUMAs are usually composed of contiguous areas. However, a few were defined by the Census Bureau to include noncontiguous places. Three such PUMAs involve well-known places. In the San Fernando Valley, the cities of San Fernando and Burbank are combined in this way. Maps showing PUMAs must also treat Beverly Hills, Culver City, Ladera Heights, Marina Del Rey, View Park, and West Hollywood as one unit. Lastly, the independent cities of the Palos Verdes Peninsula are included with El Segundo and the three “Beach” cities of the South Bay in a single PUMA.

On dot distribution maps the dots are located randomly within census tracts. However, in very large rural tracts, we moved dots out of unpopulated areas.

Maps were created on a Macintosh 8500 computer using AtlasPro and ArcView 2.1 software. Map finishing was accomplished with Deneba Canvas 3.5 and Adobe Illustrator 6.0. Boundary files for tracts came from GDT Inc., Wessex Inc., and Strategic Mapping Inc. Additional geographical features were produced from TIGER files using TIGER Massage software. PUMA boundary files were created by merging place and tract boundaries in Adobe Illustrator. A resulting postscript file then was converted to a boundary file for AtlasPro.

Most of the population totals which lead off the statistics on the maps of ethnic groups are from complete-count (non-sample) data; however, totals for ancestry groups are based on a 12.7 percent sample. These are the best census measures of the sizes of the groups. All other statistics on those maps represent a 5 percent sample from the special Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) file, which we explain in chapter 1.

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Photographs on the front cover are of Southern Californians at the time they became new U.S. citizens in 1996. The pictures, taken just after an official naturalization ceremony, were graciously provided by Elliott Barkan.

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Notes

1. The table lists ethnic groups numbering between 1,000 and 5,000 persons in the five-county Southern California area.

Table A Small Ethnic Groups in Southern California, 1990

Ethnic Group	Population
Aleuts	1,447
Afghans	4,171
Assyrians	3,521
Bangladeshi	1,083
Brazilians	4,112
Burmese	1,465
Eskimos	1,036
Ethiopians	3,613
Guyanese	1,609
Haitians	2,253
Hmong	1,557
South Africans	2,330
Sri Lankans	2,673
Tongans	3,220
Trinidadians ^a	2,315
West Indians	4,500

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1991, 1993d). We used race (complete-count) data whenever they were available; when they were not, we used sample ancestry figures.

^a Includes Tobagonians.