

8. *Ethnic Niches at Work*

When an ethnic group is represented much more strongly than the average of all ethnic groups in a specific occupation or industry, the work is often referred to as an occupational or industrial niche for that group. If members of a group are self-employed or employed by the government to an unusual degree, such tendencies can also be described as niches. If an ethnic group is overrepresented in certain niches, it must be correspondingly underrepresented in other types of work.

Niches demonstrate the influence of ethnic-group networks of mutual support in the inherently competitive world of work. Ethnic work niches often arise when immigrants discover and pursue a specialization as a means of adapting to life in this country, but others result from the differential status and power of racial and ethnic groups, with poorer and weaker groups relegated to the least desirable jobs.¹ Niches change, however, and a group which is leaving a niche for better opportunities is often replaced by another group. For example, as technologically advanced and high-paying industries appeared over the past century and as whites moved into those new niches, their departure from older, stagnating, and lower-paying types of works made it possible for blacks to enter those types of work in substantial numbers.² However, many niches are stable over decades and provide specific avenues of somewhat protected employment for the group for generations.

Many of the ethnic groups in Southern California have found distinct niches. These are important because they represent an underlying but half-hidden aspect of the region's employment structure. Because they are difficult to pin down and often the subject of speculation and stereotyping, we measure the main features of ethnic work specialization and attempt to explain the reasons for their development.

Like chapter 7, this chapter comprises several analyses. First we look at changes in some specific niches over the past several decades, with particular attention paid to 1960 and 1990. As in chapter 6, our attempt to keep the geographical area comparable required us to restrict this historical analysis to Los Angeles and Orange Counties. This is followed by the chapter's primary focus—comparative ethnic niches in 1990. For this we measure ethnic-group differences in self-employment and government employment and in specific occupations and industries in the five-county Southern California region. Lastly, a case study of the evolving Chinese niches over the past century and a quarter illustrates how certain conditions lead to a radical transformation of ethnic niches.

Selected Changes in Occupational Niches, 1960–1990

The growth of Los Angeles and Orange Counties since 1960 has meant that the actual numbers of people in nearly all non-farm occupations has increased. The greatest growth occurred in professional, managerial, and sales occupations, and most dramatic of all has been a tripling of the proportion of female managers and administrators. The area also had more private-household workers and machine operatives in 1990 than in 1960. Under conditions of general job growth, specific ethnic niches often expand but not always is this the case. A niche may diminish because some other ethnic group is getting most of the jobs or because new technology is eliminating certain jobs.

In order to highlight unusually strong or weak niches, many of the tables in this chapter are set up in the form of ratios for

easy comparison with the white population, as was done in chapters 6 and 7. A value of 1.0 for an occupation (Table 8.1, for example) means that the percentage of an ethnic group employed in that occupation is the same as the percentage of non-Hispanic whites employed in that occupation. Those occupations with values much higher than one show distinctive minority overrepresentation (or niches), often because whites have tended to avoid them.

Agriculture. The greatest contrast with the white occupational structure in 1960 is that of the Japanese, where men were forty times more likely and women almost twenty times more likely than whites to be farmers or gardeners. For Japanese, farming was a family enterprise, so the high ratio of Japanese women as farm laborers was due to their work on family farms, where the husband was owner or manager.

Many Japanese immigrants in the early twentieth century had origins in Japan as independent farmers.³ They found vegetable gardening a practical means of advancing in this country. A horticultural specialty was still evident before World War II, when

Japanese farmers grew almost all the celery, peppers, and strawberries in Los Angeles County and raised more than half the cauliflower, cucumbers, tomatoes, spinach, and garlic.

The California Alien Land Laws of 1913, 1920, and 1923, which restricted the right of Japanese to own land, began the shift of Japanese from farming into other lines of work, particularly maintaining gardens and landscapes around the homes of the wealthy. This sort of work provided a good income all year long but did not require a large initial investment. After World War II the rapid suburbanization of Southern California resulted in a continued exodus of Japanese from farming. However, taking care of the gardens of well-to-do Southern Californians remained an important specialty, and new immigrants in the early 1950s often served as apprentices to older gardeners and so continued the trade.⁴

By 1990 the Japanese in Los Angeles and Orange Counties were much less likely to be involved in some type of agriculture. Japanese men were still more prevalent in farming than were white men, but this was primarily due to the estimated 3,244

Table 8.1 Selected Occupational Niches, 1960 and 1990

Occupation	Men						Women					
	Black	Japanese	Chinese	Filipino	Mexican Origin		Black	Japanese	Chinese	Filipino	Mexican Origin	
					U.S.-born	Mex.-born					U.S.-born	Mex.-born
Total employed, 1960	99,777	23,833	13,269	4,310	93,280	37,236	68,130	13,802	3,600	1,164	41,024	13,764
Total employed, 1990	283,453	57,624	86,530	76,416	281,322	605,602	292,725	51,724	80,071	87,179	257,903	338,722
Private household worker, 1960	7.3	6.0	10.4	20.6	.7	1.4	6.3	1.9	.4	.7	.6	2.0
Private household worker, 1990	2.4	2.2	4.6	3.4	1.9	2.9	2.7	1.1	1.9	2.2	1.6	9.8
Other service worker, 1960	3.2	.6	7.0	7.4	1.1	1.7	1.7	.6	.6	1.0	.6	.2
Other service worker, 1990	2.5	1.3	2.6	2.1	1.9	3.6	1.6	.9	.9	1.1	1.3	2.1
Farm manager, 1960	.8	40.9	.1	4.9	1.1	3.2	.2	19.5	.00	11.1	.1	.4
Farm manager, 1990	1.0	5.5	.5	1.1	.8	1.8	.4	1.7	.7	.3	.2	1.1
Farm laborer, 1960	.5	9.8	.2	9.3	3.1	24.8	.2	36.4	.00	8.3	6.2	13.4
Farm laborer, 1990	2.2	9.0	.5	1.0	2.9	9.6	.9	1.1	.6	1.1	1.2	3.6

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1962b, 1963a, 1963b, 1992).

Note: Data are for Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

Japanese men who were maintenance gardeners and groundskeepers. The ratio of Japanese women in farming in 1990 was only slightly above that of non-Hispanic white women because maintenance gardening is viewed as man's work, not as a family operation. Japanese who worked in retail nursery operations are not included because that is considered a sales occupation rather than an agricultural one.

Whereas Japanese traditionally had family farms, Mexicans have been the major source of labor in larger farm operations. When the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1908 sharply reduced the emigration of male laborers from Japan and the disruptions during and after the Mexican Revolution of 1910 prompted many thousands of Mexicans to move northward, immigrants from Mexico began to replace the traditional Asian sources of farm labor. Although thousands were forced back to Mexico during the Great Depression, those who returned to Southern California, plus new arrivals, meant that Mexican immigrants continued to provide farm labor in Southern California from the 1940s to the present.

Mexican immigrants far outnumbered those born in the United States—the Mexican Americans—in the farm-labor niche (Table 8.1). The contrast regarding country of birth remained for 1990, but by this time the decline of agriculture in Los Angeles and Orange Counties meant that the farm-laborer category included more than twice as many groundskeepers as farmworkers.

Although eighty years earlier Chinese immigrants in Los Angeles had been the leading suppliers of fresh vegetables, by 1960 almost all of them had left farming. Filipinos, the last of the Asian nationalities hired for farmwork in California, supplemented the Mexican workforce in some areas after about 1925. In 1960 Filipino men were still nine times more likely than whites to be farmworkers in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, but by 1990 they were as unlikely as whites to be doing that work.

Private-household workers. In 1960 Chinese and Filipino men were, respectively, ten and twenty times more likely than white men to be employed as private-household workers. They were houseboys, cooks, general servants, and maintenance

workers, usually in the homes of well-to-do whites. Among women, however, blacks stood out for their greater representation in this occupation (Table 8.1). In fact, 23 percent of black women in Los Angeles and Orange Counties in 1960 were maids or servants in private homes—cooking meals, washing dishes and clothes, and scrubbing floors. However, this proportion was much lower than it had been in 1930, when 87 percent of working black women in Los Angeles City were so employed.⁵

Over the past three decades a major shift in the ethnic composition of private-household workers has taken place. By 1990 more than half of all female private-household workers were of Mexican origin, and 89 percent of these women had been born in Mexico. This is an example of an ethnic occupational shift which has been very common in Southern California—the replacement of most whites, blacks, and Asians in low-status positions by workers from Mexico. It is difficult to believe that many others were not essentially displaced from their jobs by the arrival of so many immigrants who were willing to do housework in other people's homes for lower wages.

Other service occupations. This category includes such jobs as waiters, kitchen workers, dental assistants, janitors, barbers, hairdressers, ushers, and welfare-service aides. The high proportion of Chinese men in such services in 1960 was probably related to the presence of Chinese laundrymen, one of the few businesses that the Chinese were permitted to open in the early part of the twentieth century.⁶ Filipinos in service occupations in 1960 were more apt to be working as dishwashers, kitchen helpers, busboys, or porters in hotels and restaurants because thirty years earlier these constituted most of the few jobs open to them. By 1990 neither Chinese nor Filipinos were so strongly overrepresented, but men in all the groups worked in these occupations more than white men.

Because ethnic specializations are often tied to very specific occupations, we include similar ratios for a number of such occupations for 1960 and 1990 (Table 8.2). As before, the number represents the proportionate representation of the ethnic group in the occupation compared with the proportion of whites in the occupation.

Self-employment. Self-employed workers include those who work with or for a family member (Table 8.2). Percentages indicate the importance of entrepreneurship in the ethnic group.

Over the past thirty years the rate of self-employment in Los Angeles and Orange Counties has more than tripled. This trend is linked to entrepreneurship among immigrants.

Table 8.2 Ethnic Representation in Detailed Occupations, 1960 and 1990

Occupation	Black Men		Black Women		Asian Men		Asian Women	
	1960	1990	1960	1990	1960	1990	1960	1990
<i>Self-employed</i>	.29	.42	.38	.42	1.08	.91	1.37	1.00
Accountant	.15	.47	.20	.61	.97	1.55	.85	1.78
Engineer, aeronautical	.14	.27	–	1.01	1.10	.86	–	1.22
Nurse, professional	–	1.68	1.02	1.03	–	1.99	1.00	1.63
Physician or surgeon	.33	.28	.30	.59	1.05	1.32	.89	2.11
Teacher, elementary or secondary	.56	.70	.59	.81	.58	.51	.74	.47
Mail carrier	3.36	2.95	–	3.75	.30	1.97	–	.74
Insurance or real-estate agent	.30	.50	.35	.49	.42	.72	.31	.72
Retail trade clerk	.31	.89	.21	.98	1.33	1.45	.60	1.25
Carpenter	.58	.75	–	1.04	.32	.36	–	.32
Painter, glazier, paperhanger	.96	1.08	–	.47	.25	.96	–	1.39
Automobile mechanic	1.00	1.01	–	1.93	1.53	1.19	–	.31
Truck driver or delivery person	1.51	1.88	–	1.12	.54	.57	–	.44
Assembler	1.56	2.12	.72	2.59	1.00	2.44	.63	4.64
Janitor, porter	9.17	3.04	7.59	3.42	1.05	1.16	1.02	1.25
Laborer, construction	2.33	1.64	1.89	.89	1.17	.47	1.13	.51
Machine operator, durable goods	1.20	1.56	.60	1.41	.55	1.14	.66	1.01
Machine operator, nondurable goods	1.50	1.23	2.36	2.10	.72	2.02	1.85	7.72
Cook (except private household)	2.06	2.56	1.62	2.22	6.14	4.11	.82	2.38
Waiter, counterperson	1.91	.54	.50	.36	2.81	1.33	.49	.85
Fireman	.17	1.10	–	–	.03	.17	–	–
Police, sheriff, marshal	.51	1.33	–	2.59	.13	.35	–	.31

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1962b, 1992).

Notes: In 1960 this detail is available only for blacks and other non-whites. Ratios for 1960 are based on all whites; ratios for 1990 are based on non-Hispanic whites. The Asian category for both years includes a very small percentage of American Indians. Dashes indicate lack of employment by group or by whites. Data are for Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

Janitors, porters, and cleaning ladies. In 1960 the employment of black men as janitors and porters was what set them off occupationally most from whites.⁷ Although in absolute numbers most janitors were white, this occupation was represented among black workers at more than nine times the rate found among whites. At that time black men also worked as garbage-men, elevator operators, mechanics, truck drivers, or in the skilled building trades; others were cooks, waiters, busboys, or Pullman car porters on railroad trains.

Occupations open to black women were greatly restricted in the first half of the twentieth century. This is reflected in the fact that in 1960 black women were still three times as likely as white women to be cleaning ladies or janitors.

Mail carriers. In 1960 black men were employed as mail carriers at three times the rate of whites. This work was an early and very popular avenue for blacks who sought economic and social advancement. Postal work was first opened to a few blacks in the 1880s, when the federal government began to use civil-service examinations as a basis for hiring.⁸ By the early 1940s black mail carriers had become common in many places. Promotions, based especially on seniority and experience, had moved many blacks into the post office's bureaucracy, and in 1942 the first black man was appointed superintendent of a post-office station in Los Angeles. Between 1960 and 1990, black women showed dramatic gains in employment as mail carriers, the niche into which black men had moved decades earlier.

Fire fighting and police work. The extremely low ratio for firemen in 1960 is largely due to the efforts of white officials in the Los Angeles City Fire Department to bypass the role of civil service examinations in the hiring of blacks and to maintain segregated engine companies, only two of which were black.⁹ The situation was not as bad in police work, for black men were represented as policemen at about half the rate of white men. By 1990 a major shift had occurred, however, in that black men were slightly overrepresented in work as both policemen and firemen. The movement of black women into police work has also been very significant.

Nurses and physicians. Black female professionals were particularly likely to be in nursing, which in 1960 provided employment proportionately equal to that for white women—a striking anomaly at the time (Table 8.2). Aspiring black women had long directed their efforts for advancement in those occupations that required education and training yet provided security, but discrimination in hiring had thwarted most of these efforts. In Los Angeles, however, local political pressure from black leaders and their allies, in combination with a high demand for nurses after World War II, opened up nursing to black women.

The struggle against discrimination in the hiring of nurses began in 1911. Black attendants were employed, and nurses and student nurses were later hired at Los Angeles County General Hospital.¹⁰ In 1950 some black leaders in Los Angeles launched a major effort to document and fight discrimination in other local hospitals, most of which were still discriminating against blacks and Mexican Americans in patient care and staff hiring. Their report may have goaded hospital administrators into making major changes. At least as important, however, was the shortage of nurses in Los Angeles during the 1950s and 1960s as a result of rapid population growth and the need to staff new federal facilities for World War II veterans. By the early 1960s virtually all black women in Los Angeles who had been trained as nurses were employed as nurses.¹¹ Although racial barriers to nursing-management positions in hospitals were still an issue, an important victory in the struggle against discrimination had been achieved for professional nurses in Los Angeles.

Black men were physicians and surgeons at only one-third the rate of whites, and in 1950 they were generally not permitted to practice, even as interns, in local hospitals. A report by the End-Discrimination Committee may have improved opportunities for these men. To a white observer, the many younger, well-trained black physicians who had moved to Los Angeles after World War II and the lack of any predominantly black hospital in the area seemed to auger well for the professional advancement of black physicians in this area.¹²

Cooks. Among Asian men, the highest ratio involved cooks. This specialty among Chinese men had its origins in the

demand for cooks during the Gold Rush days, and since the early twentieth century many Chinese across the country found a niche as cooks and part-owners of Chinese restaurants.¹³ By 1920, mostly due to restrictions and pressure from whites, 58 percent of Chinese men in the United States were employed in services, most frequently in the restaurant or laundry businesses.

Manufacturing workers. The many thousands of white migrants to Los Angeles during the 1920s meant that even local automobile and tire manufacturers saw no need to hire black workers as of the early 1930s. Even with labor demands in defense industries during and after World War II, black community organizations in Los Angeles had to struggle almost constantly against white-controlled companies and government agencies to open up employment to qualified blacks.¹⁴

Employment as machine operators in the manufacture of durable goods is a category which symbolizes blue-collar work in traditional manufacturing. In Los Angeles in 1960 most such jobs were stable, unionized, and relatively high-paying.¹⁵ Work was particularly associated with large operations of major corporations, producing steel, automobiles, tires, aircraft, and guided missiles. Since the 1960s nearly all large-scale, durable-goods factories in industries that are not high-tech have closed.

The statistics show that between 1960 and 1990 the proportions of black men and women working as machine operators in durable-goods manufacturing increased relative to whites. However, such figures are somewhat misleading. In fact, the proportion of blacks in this type of manufacturing has probably declined slightly in relation to total employment in this occupation as a result of both a drop in the number of whites and changes in ethnic categories between censuses. We explain in detail. In the 1960 data Hispanics were included with whites in these specific tabulations. Thus, blacks were somewhat better represented in this work than were whites and Hispanics combined at that time (Table 8.2). What erroneously appears as an increase in black proportions between 1960 and 1990 in relation to white workers is due both to the massive departure of white workers and the fact that the Hispanics who replaced them were not counted as whites in 1990.

The decrease in black proportions among nondurable-goods workers between 1960 and 1990 is also probably greater than that shown in Table 8.2 for the same reason. Moreover, chapter 7 makes it clear that the drop is due primarily to competition with Mexican immigrants. Less-educated, U.S.-born blacks (and whites) in Los Angeles who have the lowest manufacturing wages tend to work in those industries and services that have higher proportions of Mexican immigrants.¹⁶ This effect is substantial in several nondurable-goods manufacturing industries (food, apparel, paper, chemicals, rubber, and plastics) in Los Angeles but is not found nationally. Thus, it is not surprising that many local U.S.-born workers in Southern California have left jobs in those industries.

Self-Employment and Government Employment in 1990

Here we begin our detailed examination of employment niches in 1990. Because comparisons with 1960 are not being made, we use the entire five-county Southern California area and are able to measure niches for a much larger number of ethnic groups. The change in areal coverage from the previous section's focus on Los Angeles and Orange Counties has no significant effect on niche measurement because outlying counties contain both older central cities and newer suburbs and are home to relatively few members of most ethnic groups.

In this first section we focus on differences in class of employment.¹⁷ Because most people work for employers in the private sector (companies or businesses), we examine variations in terms of the alternative classes: self-employment and government employment. With all workers fitting into only three possible categories for class of employment, the numbers in each class are sufficiently large that we can look in more detail at ethnic populations, including ethnic subgroups (Table 8.3).

Immigrants generally take one of two main pathways toward economic success. Most aim to improve of their skills through formal education and take jobs in American companies or government. Alternatively, opening a small business is an option for all but the poorest adults, regardless of their education and language skills. Compared with other countries and metropolitan areas, the

United States and Southern California are viewed particularly favorably by potential immigrants who consider opening up a business here, partly because nonentrepreneurial ethnic groups appear to constitute a large portion of the inhabitants of Los Angeles.¹⁸

Although many Southern Californians associate Asians with self-employment, the fact that Asians and Pacific Islanders are no more likely to be self-employed than are whites was already demonstrated (Table 8.2). The inclusive category of "Asian" clearly disguises the reality of large variations in self-employment rates among different Asian groups.

In nearly all ethnic groups, men are more apt to be self-employed than are women (Table 8.3). Exceptions exist, however, and gender disparity varies a great deal among groups. For Vietnamese, for example, the greater rate of entrepreneurship among women continues a cultural tradition of women taking responsibility for a family's business and financial matters.¹⁹ On the other hand, the 10 percent of Asian Indian women who are self-employed (or helping without pay in a family business) represent a new adaptation, because in India women rarely work as managers or clerks in businesses.²⁰

Cultural predisposition toward self-employment.

Ethnic differences in self-employment are sometimes the result of cultural backgrounds which predispose some groups more than others to entrepreneurship.²¹ The importance of cultural differences is indirectly evident in the fact that a father's self-employment has an important influence in the likelihood of his son following that path. Explanation of entrepreneurship based on cultural tradition is exemplified by Jews and Armenians. Both groups have long-standing traditions of commerce and trading in many countries.²² Many ethnic groups which have high rates of self-employment share special ethnic resources not available to outsiders, such as information and training about specific business operations, start-up funds from their extended family or from a rotating-credit organization, and personal connections for supplying imported goods.²³

The self-employment rate of Armenians is slightly lower for those who migrated from what is now independent Armenia but at the time of the census was the Armenian Republic in the Soviet

Union. This is probably because they were not permitted to take much money with them when they left the Soviet Union and because entrepreneurship was strongly discouraged during the Soviet period.²⁴ However, rates for Armenians from the Soviet Union are still higher than those for most non-Armenian groups. This suggests that influences of the Soviet period are less important in adapting here than are their Armenian heritage and the new social and financial support networks developed in Southern California.

Among Latinos, the fact that Cuban and South American men have higher rates of self-employment than do Mexicans and Central Americans points to what are probably real differences in social class and traditions between these groups. However, it is not clear whether the Cubans reflect an entrepreneurial heritage from pre-Castro Cuba or were particularly responsive to the special assistance provided to refugees when they opened a business. Whether or not the self-employed Argentineans in Southern California carry on a business tradition brought by German immigrant families to Argentina is also unknown.²⁵

Although a continuity of cultural traditions may appear to explain why some ethnic groups are much more predisposed to self-employment than others, the next section shows many exceptions to this notion.

Self-employment as a new adaptation. The decision of many immigrants to open businesses has nothing to do with any ethnic cultural predisposition. Rather, people frequently choose to become entrepreneurs after finding themselves unsuccessful in the general job market. Many Asians, for instance, who are well educated or were in high-status occupations in their home country have been unable to reach a similar position in this country as long as they worked for a typical American company. Such disappointment and downward mobility often occurs when language skills are insufficient or when degrees and certifications earned in their home country are not recognized here. Discrimination may also play a role.

For example, recently arrived Russian Jewish refugees and Vietnamese have often reported that they opened their own business to avoid taking poor jobs in the general job market.²⁶ In

Table 8.3 Class of Employment, 1990

Ethnic Group	Men			Women		
	Private ^a	Government ^b	Self ^c	Private ^a	Government ^b	Self ^c
Non-Hispanic White	71.7	12.2	16.2	76.3	13.9	9.8
English ancestry	71.5	12.2	16.3	73.3	15.9	10.7
Russian ancestry	61.6	10.1	28.4	69.7	14.3	16.0
Israeli ancestry	62.2	3.6	34.2	77.2	8.6	14.3
Armenian ancestry	61.7	9.6	28.7	74.6	12.7	12.7
Armenian ancestry born in Iran	65.0	8.5	26.5	76.2	10.3	13.4
Armenian ancestry born in the Soviet Union	63.3	12.0	24.7	70.3	20.7	9.0
Armenian ancestry born in Lebanon	59.4	5.8	34.7	77.0	10.6	12.3
Iranian ancestry	62.2	7.4	30.4	79.0	7.1	14.0
Egyptian ancestry	69.2	13.8	17.0	70.8	18.1	11.1
Lebanese ancestry	67.7	7.4	24.9	77.0	9.8	13.2
American Indian	77.8	13.1	9.0	75.9	17.0	7.0
Black	69.2	23.7	7.1	68.5	27.3	4.2
Belizean ancestry	77.5	13.5	9.0	85.0	10.2	4.8
Jamaican ancestry	68.1	23.6	8.3	76.3	17.2	6.4
Asian Indian	76.1	9.9	14.1	77.2	13.1	9.7
Cambodian	73.4	16.2	10.3	72.7	12.1	15.2
Chinese	73.0	9.8	17.2	76.4	12.7	10.9
Chinese-Vietnamese	77.5	13.1	9.4	82.4	9.9	7.7
Taiwanese	60.8	9.5	29.8	72.2	9.1	18.7
Filipino	76.4	17.5	6.0	82.3	13.6	4.1
Hawaiian	80.0	14.5	5.6	78.9	15.6	5.5
Indonesian	74.8	9.7	15.5	77.1	14.2	8.7
Japanese	71.9	11.5	16.6	74.7	16.9	8.4
Korean	60.1	4.6	35.3	67.1	8.0	24.9
Samoan	79.5	14.9	5.6	82.7	13.0	4.3
Thai	80.6	5.4	14.1	80.2	7.9	11.9
Vietnamese	80.0	10.1	9.8	76.6	12.1	11.3
Mexican	86.3	7.2	6.5	82.9	12.2	4.9
Puerto Rican	74.9	18.1	7.0	80.7	15.6	3.7
Cuban	72.5	10.3	17.2	76.5	15.3	8.3
Guatemalan	90.4	2.8	6.7	85.5	4.5	9.9
Salvadoran	90.9	3.0	6.1	88.3	3.8	7.8
Nicaraguan	87.8	5.3	6.8	83.9	9.0	7.0
Argentinian	72.3	5.6	22.0	71.1	17.1	11.8
Colombian	75.9	7.7	16.4	79.7	9.3	10.9

Notes: The table shows the percentages of workers in each ethnic group employed in each of these classes. All groups and subgroups listed are represented by more than 2,000 employed men or women.

^aEmployed by a private company or organization or by an individual.

^bEmployed by a local, state, or federal government.

^cSelf-employed or working without pay in a family business.

many cases the ethnic group lacks a cultural tradition of business activities. Similarly, entrepreneurship among Koreans developed only since World War II; it is a means of adapting to the United States that reflects no essential component of Korean culture.²⁷ For middle- and upper-class Iranian women, the appearance of entrepreneurship is even more recent.²⁸ In the 1970s some women began to sell goods and services from their homes in Teheran and simply expanded such activities after they arrived in Los Angeles. Selling flowers, pastries, clothing, and beauty services to other Iranian women from their homes reduces business costs and is socially satisfying while being economically profitable.

Variations among subgroups. The ethnic categories for which the census tabulated data may have obscured important differences in self-employment among the religious, social, and regional subgroups within any country. For instance, among immigrant Israelis, who average a high rate of self-employment, the Oriental (Middle Eastern) and Sephardic Jews are much more likely to be entrepreneurs than are the Westernized, often college-educated Ashkenazic Jews, whose orientation toward the professions is greater.²⁹ Another example of the significance of religious-group differences involves Iranian men, who average a relatively high rate of self-employment in Southern California. A sample survey during 1987–1988 found that Iranian Jews had a rate of self-employment that was more than 80 percent higher than the rates for Iranian Muslims and Armenians from Iran.³⁰

Asian Indian immigrants who belong to one of the business-oriented castes in India can be expected to continue to be self-employed in the United States. Nevertheless, subgroup specializations are not necessarily perpetuated. The Patels from Gujarat, who are the leading motel owners among Asian Indians, are not from a business caste, and those Sikhs who operate convenience stores represent a shift from tradition because most Sikh immigrants had their origins in farming or craft castes.³¹

Chinese immigrants, particularly those from Vietnam, have been described as highly entrepreneurial, but such a characterization does not appear to apply to the average Chinese or Chinese-Vietnamese in Southern California.³² Our data show the

Chinese to be only slightly more entrepreneurial than are people of English ancestry (Table 8.3). Despite the impressive international business activities of some Chinese from Vietnam, as a group they have a low rate of self-employment. Among the Chinese, it is those from Taiwan who are especially likely to be self-employed.

Government employment. An alternative to self-employment is government, or public-sector, employment. This has long been a desirable type of employment among blacks, and it has become important for many immigrants, especially those with clerical skills.³³ Among blacks, this preference is well justified by their better economic treatment by the government than in the private sector. Blacks entered this class of employment earlier than did most immigrants. In their quest for government positions, many blacks are helped by being native English speakers or by having been veterans of the armed forces, which gives preference in civil-service hiring.

Thus, it is not surprising that government employment is more common among blacks than among any other ethnic group and that a quarter of employed blacks work for the government (Table 8.3). Although the post office, the armed forces, and various federal programs spearheaded employment opportunities and better pay for a wide range of blacks, black employment has also come to characterize government at the municipal, county, and state levels.

The most recent immigrants often have lower proportions employed by government unless they represent a minority aided by affirmative action or other programs. Many immigrants are unable to qualify for government jobs because of insufficient ability in English. Although legal status as an immigrant (a permanent resident) is sufficient for employment at the state and local levels of government, most federal-government jobs require U.S. citizenship. Thus, ethnic differences in rates of government employment are related to differences in citizenship, veteran status, education, and occupation.³⁴ However, these factors only partly explain group differences, leaving unknown some important influences on government employment. Immigrant professionals have usually preferred to work for the government, and, like blacks, tend to

alert members of their own group to new job openings when they appear.³⁵ Because of such personal-contact networks, ethnic groups are often clustered in particular government agencies.

A Closer Look at Selected Occupations in 1990

In this section we present ethnic occupational specializations for fifteen ethnic groups. The fact that a total of 501 occupational categories were tabulated means that smaller ethnic groups and subgroups had very few persons employed in most occupations. For this reason we selected only larger ethnic groups and occupations (Table 8.4).

Understanding Table 8.4. The values in Table 8.4 represent percentages of people employed in the five-county region. The extent of disproportionate representation of an ethnic group can be calculated by dividing the group's total percentage of workers in all occupations (top line) into the percentage of an ethnic group working in a specific occupation. For example, white women represent 55.3 percent of all employed women but only 13.3 percent of all women working as private-household servants. This means that white women are found in that occupation at less than a quarter of the average rate of all Southern California women.

Table 8.4 emphasizes both niches and underrepresentation. Boldface numbers show a substantial overrepresentation of the group in any occupation; regular type indicates a pronounced underrepresentation. Where the ethnic group is not very different from the average in the percentage of its people employed in a particular occupation, no number appears.

Ethnic groups are ordered by median household income, from the highest, on the left side of the table, to the lowest, on the right. The order of occupations follows that of the U.S. census: higher-status occupations are listed first; those at the bottom require less education and provide much lower incomes. This design makes it possible to see general patterns of disproportionate representation. The frequent overrepresentation of high-income groups in more prestigious occupations is evident on the

upper left-hand side of the table; the niches of some low-income groups can be compared on the lower right-hand side.

Blacks and Hispanics. The large size and relatively low status of the black and Mexican origin groups suggest comparisons. Both men and women of Mexican origin are underrepresented in almost all listed professional and managerial occupations, but among blacks only men are underrepresented in most of those positions. This indicates that the generally higher occupational status of black women compared with men (chapters 6 and 7) is based on their positions in a wide range of specific occupations.

Table 8.4 shows that black and Mexican workers have very different occupational niches. The only overrepresentation of both groups is among women who are janitors and cleaners. Nevertheless, the fact that the table shows neither underrepresentation nor overrepresentation in many occupations indicates that members of the two groups still frequently hold the same occupations, implying continued job competition. These data cannot show the extent of black occupational displacement prior to 1990 as a result of competition with Mexican immigrants. Nor is it possible to estimate how many more blacks would be working in these occupations if there had been no increase in the number of available Hispanic workers. Thus, the table should not be interpreted as indicating that blacks and Mexicans hold such different occupations that the groups do not compete directly.³⁶

Although Table 8.4 demonstrates some dramatic cases of ethnic occupational specialization, in reality some low-status groups may be even more strongly overrepresented than is shown. Percentages of workers from Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala in low-level jobs are understated by the census data. This is because many workers from these countries are living in the United States illegally and chose not to complete the census questionnaires. The effect must have been a substantial undercount of illegal or undocumented immigrants, many of whom work in low-status niches.

Among women who are household servants and cleaners, Salvadorans are overrepresented by ten times the expected proportion. They and women from Guatemala constitute one-third of all

Table 8.4 Disproportionate Representation of Ethnic Groups in Selected Occupations, 1990

Men	Employed Men	Russian	Filipino	Asian Indian	Japanese	English ^a	White ^b	Iranian	Chinese	Vietnam	American Indian	Korean	Armenian	Mexican ^b	Black ^b	Guatemalan	Salvadoran	
Pct. of all employed men, aged 16+	1.6	1.9	0.5	1.3	7.1	53.3	0.6	1.9	0.9	0.6	1.2	0.7	24.3	7.2	1.0	1.8		
Executive, Administrative, Managerial																		
Financial manager	22,426	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1	-	-	-	4.8	3	0.1	0.6	
Marketing, advertising	31,322	-	-	-	-	-	83.5	-	-	0.3	0.2	-	-	4.5	3	0	0.2	
Food service, lodging manager	38,646	-	-	2.2	-	-	-	-	5.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Manager, administrator, n.e.c.	283,871	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.3	-	-	-	7.8	3.2	-	0.4	
Accountant	52,742	-	7	1.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	-	-	5.3	-	0.1	0.5	
Professional Specialty																		
Engineer, aerospace	38,524	-	-	1.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1	-	-	3.7	3.4	0	0	
Engineer, civil	19,860	-	-	3.9	-	-	-	3.4	-	-	-	-	2.5	5.4	3	0.3	0.1	
Engineer, electrical, electronic	37,365	-	-	1.9	3.8	-	-	-	7.1	-	-	-	-	3.6	3.2	0	0.1	
Physician	30,831	7.7	-	2.7	-	-	-	2	6.2	-	-	-	-	2.5	3.2	0	0.1	
Lawyer	39,486	10.0	0.6	-	-	-	88.5	-	-	0.1	0.2	-	-	3.1	3.1	0	0.1	
Actor, director	18,523	8.6	0	0	0.3	-	86.1	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	-	3	-	0.1	0.1	
Technical, Sales, Administrative Support																		
Clinical laboratory technician	6,039	-	16.2	-	3.6	-	-	-	5.9	3.3	0	-	-	10	-	0	-	
Electronic technician	23,900	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.3	-	-	-	11.7	-	-	-	
Cashier	58,528	-	-	2.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	
Computer operator	18,139	-	6.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Bookkeeper, accounting clerk	18,834	-	6.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Postal clerk	12,750	-	7.4	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	0.1	-	0.1	-	28.4	0.2	0	
Mail carrier	14,860	-	6.1	0.1	-	-	-	0	-	0.3	-	-	-	-	16.4	0.2	0.1	
General office clerk	23,996	-	6.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14.3	-	-	
Firefighter	13,339	0.1	0.1	-	-	-	-	0	0.2	0.2	-	0	-	-	-	0	0	
Police (public service)	23,440	-	-	0	-	-	-	0	0.6	0.2	-	0.2	0.1	-	-	0.1	0.1	
Guard, police (private)	57,596	-	-	-	0.4	-	-	0.1	0.4	-	-	0.4	-	-	21.5	-	-	
Cook	88,040	0.5	-	0.1	-	2.5	20.3	-	5.9	-	-	-	0.1	52.0	-	-	-	
Busboy, kitchen assistant	50,538	0.2	-	-	0.3	2.8	21	0.2	-	-	-	-	0.2	57.0	-	2.7	-	
Nursing aid, orderly	15,610	-	8.4	-	0.4	-	-	-	-	0.3	-	0.4	-	-	19.3	-	-	
Farming																		
Groundskeeper	75,097	0.2	0.5	-	4.3	2.3	19.8	0	0.4	-	-	-	-	60.3	-	-	-	
Precision Production, Repair																		
Painter	50,112	0.4	0.4	-	0.3	-	-	0	0.5	0.1	-	4.5	-	-	-	4.6	5.8	
Electronic equipment assembler	11,336	0	-	-	-	3	20.6	0	-	8.1	-	-	-	43.9	-	-	0	
Operator, Laborer																		
Textile sewing machine operator	23,288	0.1	0.2	0	0.1	0.1	3.2	0.1	-	-	0	-	-	68.4	0.5	8.3	9.2	
Assembler	70,203	0.2	-	-	-	3.3	22.3	0.1	-	3.2	-	-	-	52.2	-	-	-	
Bus driver	12,016	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	0	-	-	-	33.5	-	-	
Construction laborer	102,045	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.2	-	-	-	0.3	0.4	0	0.3	-	49.8	-	-	-	

Notes: The figure for an ethnic group in an occupation indicates the percentage of all workers in that occupation who are in the ethnic group. For smaller groups, percentages are shown only where the group's representation is greater than 3 times or less than 0.33 the percentage of all workers in that occupation. Bold type indicates disproportionately higher representation in the occupation; regular type indicates underrepresentation.

Table 8.4 Disproportionate Representation of Ethnic Groups in Selected Occupations, 1990 (continued)

Women	Employed Women	Russian	Filipino	Asian Indian	Japanese	English ^a	White ^b	Iranian	Chinese	Vietnam	American Indian	Korean	Armenian	Mexican ^b	Black ^b	Guatemalan	Salvadoran	
Percent of all employed women, aged 16+		1.7	2.5	0.4	1.4	7.8	55.3	0.4	2.1	0.8	0.6	1.3	0.6	19.7	8.7	1.0	1.9	
Executive, Administrative, Managerial																		
Financial manager	24,100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	0.3	-	-	6.9	-	0	0.2	
Marketing, advertising, p.r. manager	15,913	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1	-	0.1	-	-	-	5.9	3.6	0.1	0	
Manager, administrator, n.e.c.	104,649	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8.5	-	0.2	0.2	
Accountant	65,476	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.8	-	-	-	-	6.8	-	0.1	0.2	
Professional Specialty																		
Engineer, aerospace	3,605	-	0.7	1.2	-	-	-	0	8.4	0.1	-	0.4	0	5	-	-	0	
Engineer, electrical	3,969	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	11.7	4.2	0	0	0	5.5	-	0	0	
Computer systems analyst	9,916	0.3	-	-	-	-	-	0	8.2	-	0	-	0.2	8.6	-	0	0	
Physician	8,909	5.4	7.7	5	-	-	-	1.3	-	-	0.3	-	0.2	4.3	-	0	0.2	
Registered nurse	98,239	-	11.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.3	-	0.1	0.4	
Pharmacist	3,345	-	-	-	4.5	-	-	-	18.2	5.6	0	8.3	-	4.1	-	0	0	
Social worker	22,731	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20.9	-	0.4	
Lawyer	15,000	8.2	0.6	-	-	-	-	0	-	0.1	0.2	-	-	5	-	0	0.3	
Designer	30,291	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	-	-	-	2.2	-	-	
Actor, director	12,925	10.1	-	-	-	-	85.1	-	0.5	0.2	-	-	-	2.2	-	-	0	
Technical, Sales, Administrative Support																		
Clinical laboratory technician	11,296	-	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	6.7	-	0.2	-	
Licensed vocational nurse	17,007	-	10.1	-	-	-	-	0	0.5	0.2	-	-	0	-	22.5	-	-	
Electronic technician	4,595	-	-	0	-	-	-	0	-	11.2	-	-	0	-	-	-	0	
Computer programmer	12,599	-	-	1.3	-	-	-	1.6	14.6	-	0	-	-	6.2	-	-	0.2	
Computer operator	24,411	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13.2	-	-	
Bookkeeper, accounting clerk	118,788	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	0.4-	
Postal clerk	11,040	0.3	-	-	0.2	3.4	24.7	0.1	6.4	-	0.3	4.3	0.1	-	40.3	0.3	0.1	
Child care worker, household	16,031	-	-	-	0.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.4	-	9.5	3.6	9.5	11.3	
Private household servant	51,644	0	-	-	-	1.7	13.3	0	-	0	-	-	0.2	35.2	-	12.1	20.8	
Guard, police (private)	11,685	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0.7	-	-	0.2	0	-	23.7	0	-	
Nursing aid, orderly	81,361	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.4	-	-	-	-	22.3	-	-	
Janitor, cleaner	49,390	0.1	-	0.1	0.4	2.4	22.4	0	-	-	0.3	-	0.2	38	13.2	5	9.7	
Hairdresser, cosmetologist	48,018	-	-	0.1	-	-	-	1.5	-	6.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Farming																		
Farm worker	10,649	0.5	0.1	0	0	1.3	11.6	0	0.1	0	-	0	0	78.4	2.7	0.3	-	
Precision Production, Repair																		
Electronic equipment assembler	24,731	0.2	-	-	-	1.8	19.3	0.1	-	5.9	-	-	-	41.9	-	-	-	
Operator, Laborer																		
Textile sewing machine operator	69,102	0.1	-	-	-	0.6	4.5	0.1	7.1	-	0.3	-	-	56.7	2.3	3.8	11.4	
Assembler	59,373	0.2	-	-	-	1.7	18.6	0	-	3.2	0.3	-	-	51.6	-	-	-	
Bus driver	8,280	0.4	0.3	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0.4	0.2	-	35.6	0	0		

^aEnglish ancestry is shown only where greater than two times or less than 0.5 the percentage of all workers in that occupation.

^bNon-Hispanic white, Mexican origin, and black percentages are shown only where greater than 1.5 times or less than 0.5 the percentage of all workers in that occupation.

household servants in Southern California, with Mexican women making up another third. The similar niches of Salvadorans and Guatemalans suggest communication and networks which interlink these groups, and their shared cultural background, recent migration history, and residential location focused in the Westlake section of Los Angeles make this highly likely. The proximity of this main Salvadoran and Guatemalan concentration to the well-to-do white families on the Westside of Los Angeles is evident on various maps.

Jews. Two other extreme cases of ethnic overrepresentation involve people of Russian-ancestry as lawyers and as actors and directors. Although white men in general are also overrepresented as lawyers, Jewish men are represented at six times the expected rate and Jewish women at nearly five times the expected rate. Among women, overrepresentation as actors and directors is almost as great as the men's niche as lawyers. Acting reflects the cultural heritage of the Yiddish theater in Eastern Europe and America in the late nineteenth century: a Jewish tradition expressive of both a people's ambition and their marginal social position.³⁷ Although Jewish scholars have long been concerned with both secular and Jewish law, the overrepresentation of Jews among lawyers has probably more to do with the general long-standing Jewish value placed on the intellect and education, combined with changes in twentieth-century America that opened more opportunities in the law for Jews. These changes were the decline of anti-Jewish discrimination in the professions and the growth of both Jewish-owned businesses and an affluent Jewry.³⁸

Filipinos. This group's strongest niche occurs among clinical laboratory technicians, where Filipino men and women constitute one-sixth of all such workers in Southern California (Table 8.4). However, among the women, Filipino registered nurses are more widely recognized because they have much greater contact with the public and because the number of nurses is much greater. The niche in nursing is not surprising, considering the 1948 inauguration of a nursing exchange program with the Philippines, the proliferation of nursing schools in the Philippines during the next two decades, the chronic shortage of

nurses in the United States, and the willingness of Filipina nurses to work long hours in some of the more difficult positions in American hospitals.³⁹

Half of the immigrant nurses who entered the United States between 1965 and 1988 were Filipinos, and 90 percent of the foreign-trained nurses admitted as temporary (nonimmigrant) workers were from the Philippines. Because some nurses have not yet passed their examinations to become registered nurses, they have taken jobs as licensed vocational nurses or nursing aides, which have less demanding requirements. Filipino nurses have higher incomes than do nurses from other ethnic groups because they frequently take evening and night shifts in hospitals or hold positions in two hospitals. The economic independence and advancement represented by these nurses reflect aspects of culture in the Philippine Islands: a greater equality of status between men and women and an encouragement of women who work outside the home.⁴⁰

Filipino men are overrepresented among accountants and in certain clerical occupations. Their good command of English, with special strengths often in reading and writing, makes them well qualified for such work. These language skills also permit those who are citizens to compete well in examinations for federal employment as postal clerks and mail carriers, and veterans of military service (such as from earlier enlistment in the U.S. Navy) are awarded extra points in the competition for such jobs. The tendency of many Filipino men in Los Angeles to work for the U.S. Post Office or in clerical and semiprofessional occupations was noted as early as 1940, although at that time many were aging farmworkers.⁴¹ Thus, the occupational niches found in 1990 are not necessarily new.

In both 1940 and 1990, few Filipinos occupied upper-level management positions. It is said that they lack the advanced degrees, personal contacts, smooth interpersonal skills, and other characteristics needed for such positions.⁴² However, America's heritage of employment discrimination against Asians strains the credibility of this sort of comment.

Other Asians. Occupations held by Asian groups in Southern California vary a great deal as the result of different lev-

els of education and differing social networks among the ethnic groups.

At the upper end of the status ranking are some niche occupations which reflect the high level of education and emphasis on science among many Asians. For instance, in Southern California, Asian Indian men are physicians at five times the expected percentage, and Asian Indian women are ten times more likely to be physicians than is the average woman (Table 8.4). Chinese women are pharmacists at eight times the rate expected, and women from Vietnam and Korea are pharmacists at more than six times the expected frequency. That occupation has the status of being a licensed profession and the advantage, for those who are weak in English-language skills, of requiring little direct speaking with the public.

Asian groups with lower average levels of education or difficulty in learning English frequently have lower-status occupational niches. In 1980, 44 percent of employed Vietnamese in the United States worked as machine operators or in precision production work.⁴³ In Orange County, in particular, a niche in this sort of production is evident in the overrepresentation of Vietnamese as electronic technicians and electrical-equipment assemblers. Vietnamese find that assembling circuit boards or heart valves is similar to weaving and embroidering, with which many are familiar, and assembly pays better than do service jobs. High-tech employers find Vietnamese workers to be reliable and skilled workers and to have good memories. A large amount of aircraft, missile, and electronic-assembly work takes place in Orange County and the southern part of Los Angeles County, not far from the largest Vietnamese concentration in the United States. Vietnamese have many of these jobs.⁴⁴

Mexican origin: U.S.-born compared with foreign-born. The largest number of occupations with disproportionate representation is found among people of Mexican origin. Both men and women are underrepresented in nearly all the listed occupations that are professional and managerial, as well as some technical, sales, and administrative-support occupations (Table 8.4). On the other hand, men of Mexican origin are overrepresented as assembly-line workers, groundskeepers, farmworkers,

cooks, busboys and kitchen assistants, and construction laborers.

Among people of Mexican origin, the overrepresented occupations show much higher proportions of immigrants compared with U.S.-born workers (Table 8.5). Half of Southern California's groundskeepers and kitchen assistants are Mexican immigrants, as are more than half of the people operating sewing machines in the garment industry. Considering the substantial undercount among such workers, such niches must be even stronger in reality than these data indicate.

On the other hand, the reverse situation is not true: higher-status occupations are not dominated as completely by those born in the United States. A separate analysis (not shown) found that immigrants constitute 36 percent of the Mexican-origin men in the managerial, professional, and technical occupations listed in Table 8.4.

Table 8.5 Mexican Immigrants and Mexican Americans in Overrepresented Occupations, 1990

Mexican-origin Men's Niches	Foreign-born Men	U.S.-born Men
Cook	44.8	7.1
Busboy, kitchen assistant	50.1	6.9
Groundskeeper	50.8	9.5
Textile sewing machine operator	65.8	2.6
Assembler	42.2	10.5
Construction laborer	39.1	10.7
Mexican-origin Women's Niches	Foreign-born Women	U.S.-born Women
Private household servant, cleaner	30.8	4.3
Janitor, cleaner	30.4	7.6
Farm worker	70.7	7.7
Electrical equipment assembler	29.4	12.5
Textile sewing machine operator	53.1	3.6
Assembler	39.6	12.0

Notes: This table shows the percentages of U.S.-born and immigrant Mexican workers out of the total employment in each occupation. Occupational percentages in Table 8.5 sum to comparable figures in Table 8.4.

Ethnic Niches in Industries

Understanding Table 8.6. Whereas Table 8.4 focused on only a few occupations, Table 8.6 is particularly useful because it includes all industry categories. For each ethnic group, it lists the five numerically largest employing industries out of the 235 industry categories for which data are available. Also included, in italics below the five leading industries, are any other industries in which the group is concentrated at three or more times the rate for all employed men or women.⁴⁵

The importance of these industries for employment of persons in the ethnic group is also shown (in the middle column). For example, 4.1 percent of men of Iranian ancestry are employed in real estate. (Very similar industry concentrations among Guatemalans and Salvadorans and among the largest Spanish-speaking Central and South American nationalities justified combining these into two groups in the table.)

The “Ratio to Total Employed” (the third column) shows the proportion of the ethnic group employed in that industry compared with the proportion in that industry among all employed men or women. It shows the degree of disproportionate representation by an ethnic group in industry niches much as Table 8.4 did. For example, the ratio of 1 for white men in construction means that they are represented at exactly the same rate as all Southern California men; the ratio for Armenian men in automobile repair (2.7) means that they are overrepresented in that industry at 2.7 times the rate for all employed men.

Among extremely large ethnic groups—whites and people of Mexican origin—the ratios to total employed can reflect an ethnic numerical dominance in an entire industry. For example, in the manufacture of guided missiles and space vehicles, the overrepresentation of Chinese, English-ancestry, Puerto Rican, and white men is not proportionately large and suggests something of the ethnic diversity in that industry. But because 53 percent of all men employed in Southern California are white, the 1.4 ratio for whites means that this group constitutes about 75 percent of the total employment in that industry. Similarly, because Mexican men make up 24.3 percent of all employed men, the 2.5 ratio for

their overrepresentation in landscape and horticultural services means that about 60 percent of all men working in that industry are Mexican (either immigrants or U.S.-born).

Ethnic variations in niche importance. A good indication of the degree of ethnic-group specialization in industry can be obtained by summing the percentages represented by the five most important industries. Although that value is not shown in the table, a standard for a low level of ethnic niches could be the 23 percent of white men who work in the five leading industries for whites. In contrast, industry niches are most strongly developed among Israeli men (at 43 percent in the five leading industries) and Chinese-Vietnamese men (with 37 percent in the five industries). Among women, Thais and Guatemalans–Salvadorans are most strongly specialized in their leading industries.

The large number of industry niches is evident from the fact that nearly all groups have at least one or two industries in which they are represented at twice the rate for the total population, and in many cases groups are working in several industries at more than three times the average.⁴⁶

Relationship to occupational niches. Niches can be indicated by both industry and occupation. However, work requiring advanced training or licensing can be performed in different industries and is usually better characterized by occupation. For the self-employed, niches are better described in terms of industry because business people have often built up their experience over a range of occupations within the same industry. In many instances, both occupation and industry have value as means of identifying niches.

Some niches were previously presented in terms of occupation, but the greater detail in Table 8.6 can illuminate the work specialties even more. For example, Vietnamese women (overrepresented as assemblers of electrical and electronic equipment in Table 8.4) are particularly likely to be making electrical machinery, medical and dental instruments, computers, and various types of communications equipment, such as television sets. Likewise, the occupational overrepresentation of Korean men as cashiers (Table 8.4) presumably refers to the many self-employed Koreans who

Table 8.6 Leading Industries of Employment, 1990

Men	Number of Employed Men	Percent of Ethnic Group	Ratio to Total Employed	Women	Number of Employed Women	Percent of Ethnic Group	Ratio to Total Employed
Industry				Industry			
White (Non-Hispanic)							
Construction	278,755	11.1	1.0	Elementary, secondary schools	186,076	8.6	1.2
Manufacture, missiles, space vehicles	82,241	3.3	1.4	Hospitals	120,523	5.5	.9
Retail, eating, drinking places	75,810	3.0	.6	Retail, eating, drinking places	107,903	5.0	.9
Real estate	70,974	2.8	1.3	Real estate	82,062	3.8	1.4
Theater, motion picture	64,730	2.6	1.5	Insurance	63,651	2.9	1.2
English Ancestry							
Construction	33,385	10.0	.9	Elementary, secondary schools	31,684	10.4	1.4
Manufacture, missiles, space vehicles	12,918	3.9	1.7	Hospitals	16,882	5.5	.9
Real estate	7,824	3.1	1.5	Retail, eating, drinking places	12,362	4.0	.8
Elementary, secondary schools	7,179	3.0	1.3	Real estate	12,354	4.0	1.5
Manufacture, aircraft, parts	9,021	2.7	1.3	Insurance	8,478	2.8	1.1
Russian Ancestry							
Theater, motion picture	4,646	6.2	3.5	Elementary, secondary schools	5,961	9.1	1.2
Legal services	3,738	5.0	5.3	Theater, motion picture	3,570	5.4	4.2
Construction	3,511	4.7	.4	Hospitals	3,344	5.1	.8
Real estate	3,487	4.7	2.2	Legal services	2,956	4.5	2.8
Colleges, universities	1,950	2.6	1.9	Real estate	2,908	4.4	1.6
				<i>Radio, television</i>	596	.9	3.0
Israeli Ancestry							
Construction	1,123	22.2	2.0	Elementary, secondary schools	483	14.3	1.9
Real estate	388	7.7	3.6	Real estate	192	5.7	2.1
Automobile repair	231	4.6	2.8	Retail, eating, drinking places	145	4.3	.8
Miscellaneous entertainment services	225	4.4	3.7	Hospitals	158	4.7	.8
Manufacture, electrical machinery	198	3.9	2.5	Retail, apparel, accessories	116	3.4	.5
Armenian Ancestry							
Construction	3,267	10.1	.9	Banking	1764	8.0	2.9
Automobile repair	1,418	4.4	2.7	Elementary, secondary schools	1544	7.0	.9
Retail, eating, drinking places	1,016	3.1	.7	Insurance	1001	4.5	1.8
Real estate	1,014	3.1	1.5	Hospitals	986	4.5	.7
Manufacture, durable goods, unspecified	1,005	3.1	7.4	Retail, eating, drinking places	817	3.7	.7
<i>Retail, gasoline service stations</i>	859	2.7	5.2				
<i>Retail, jewelry stores</i>	856	2.7	16.6				

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1992).

Notes: This table shows the five industries or lines of business in which the largest numbers of each ethnic group are employed. Additional industries are shown in italics where the ethnic group employed numbers more than 300 and are represented in an industry at more than three times the rate for the total population. Industry labels are from the 242 categories developed for the 1990 census, originally based on the 1987 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). In our tables, "Manufacture, electrical machinery" is an aggregation of industry codes 342 and 350.

Table 8.6 Leading Industries of Employment, 1990 (continued)

Men				Women			
Industry	Number of Employed Men	Percent of Ethnic Group	Ratio to Total Employed	Industry	Number of Employed Women	Percent of Ethnic Group	Ratio to Total Employed
Iranian Ancestry							
Construction	2,084	7.8	.7	Banking	987	7.1	2.6
Retail, eating, drinking places	1,651	6.2	1.3	Retail, eating, drinking places	774	5.6	1.1
Real estate	1,097	4.1	1.9	Retail, department stores	773	5.6	2.4
Engineering, architectural services	978	3.7	4.1	Retail, apparel, accessories	759	5.5	3.8
Retail, gasoline service stations	806	3.0	5.9	Elementary, secondary schools	549	4.0	.5
<i>Retail, furniture, home furnishings</i>	<i>447</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>3.0</i>				
Black							
Construction	25,523	7.6	.7	Hospitals	35,067	10.4	1.7
Elementary, secondary schools	12,955	3.8	1.7	Elementary, secondary schools	30,910	9.1	1.2
Hospitals	12,532	3.7	2.1	Retail, eating, drinking places	12,299	3.6	.7
Retail, eating, drinking places	10,943	3.2	.7	Insurance	10,415	3.1	1.2
Trucking	10,157	3.0	1.6	Banking	10,220	3.0	1.1
<i>U.S. Postal Service</i>	<i>8,616</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>3.3</i>	<i>U.S. Postal Service</i>	<i>7,528</i>	<i>2.2</i>	<i>4.3</i>
<i>Bus service, urban transit</i>	<i>3,852</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>3.2</i>	<i>Bus service, urban transit</i>	<i>3,065</i>	<i>.9</i>	<i>4.1</i>
				<i>Utilities services, electric, gas</i>	<i>1,313</i>	<i>.4</i>	<i>3.2</i>
Belizean Ancestry							
Construction	427	15.5	1.4	Hospitals	440	16.6	2.7
Hospitals	179	6.5	3.7	Private household services	200	7.6	3.7
Elementary, secondary schools	128	4.6	2.1	Banking	181	6.8	2.4
Real estate	115	4.2	2.0	Elementary, secondary schools	145	5.5	.7
Retail, eating, drinking places	96	3.5	.7	Insurance	143	5.4	2.1
				<i>Nursing, personal care facilities</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>5.3</i>	<i>7.4</i>
Jamaican Ancestry							
Construction	212	6.4	.6	Hospitals	535	14.6	2.4
Hospitals	197	5.9	3.3	Elementary, secondary schools	328	8.9	1.2
Automobile repair	148	4.5	2.8	Private household services	204	5.6	2.7
Retail, grocery stores	131	4.0	1.9	Health services, unspecified	186	5.1	3.5
Elementary, secondary schools	129	3.9	1.7	Banking	167	4.5	1.6
American Indian							
Construction	4,654	15.6	1.4	Hospitals	1,539	6.1	1.0
Retail, eating, drinking places	1,391	4.7	1.0	Elementary, secondary schools	1,425	5.7	.8
Trucking	997	3.3	1.7	Retail, eating, drinking places	1,295	5.2	1.0
Retail, grocery stores	594	2.0	1.0	Retail, department stores	802	3.2	1.4
Elementary, secondary schools	587	2.0	.9	Real estate	738	2.9	1.0

Notes: See notes at bottom of first panel of Table 8.6.

Table 8.6 Leading Industries of Employment, 1990 (continued)

Men	Number of Employed Men	Percent of Ethnic Group	Ratio to Total Employed	Women	Number of Employed Women	Percent of Ethnic Group	Ratio to Total Employed
Industry				Industry			
Asian Indian							
Manufacture, electrical machinery	1,306	5.0	3.2	Hospitals	1,759	11.0	1.8
Retail, grocery stores	1,156	4.5	2.2	Retail, eating, drinking places	777	4.8	.9
Construction	1,117	4.3	.4	Banking	682	4.3	1.5
Hospitals	1,017	3.9	2.2	Elementary, secondary schools	674	4.2	.6
Retail, eating, drinking places	982	3.8	.8	Retail, department stores	553	3.4	1.5
<i>Hotels, motels</i>	773	3.0	3.2				
<i>Engineering, architectural services</i>	748	2.9	3.3				
<i>Retail, gasoline service stations</i>	599	2.3	4.5				
<i>Manufacture, computers</i>	514	2.0	3.3				
Cambodian							
Retail, eating, drinking places	424	8.5	1.8	Retail, bakeries	349	8.7	31.6
Retail, bakeries	405	8.1	37.5	Manufacture, apparel, accessories	243	6.1	2.7
Manufacture, apparel, accessories	286	5.7	6.0	Hospitals	208	5.2	2.7
U. S. Postal Service	236	4.7	6.1	Retail, grocery stores	181	4.5	.7
Elementary, secondary schools	234	4.7	2.1	Retail, eating, drinking places	163	4.1	.8
				<i>Manufacture, electrical machinery</i>	146	3.7	4.0
Chinese							
Retail, eating, drinking places	10,065	11.8	2.5	Manufacture, apparel, accessories	6,015	7.6	3.3
Construction	3,119	3.7	.3	Retail, eating, drinking places	5,515	7.0	1.3
Manufacture, missiles, space vehicles	2,894	3.4	1.5	Banking	4,930	6.2	2.2
Colleges, universities	2,872	3.4	2.4	Hospitals	4,085	5.2	.9
Retail, grocery stores	2,519	3.0	1.4	Elementary, secondary schools	2,909	3.7	.5
<i>Manufacture, computers</i>	1,697	2.0	3.3				
<i>Wholesale, prof. communication equip.</i>	927	1.1	5.1				
<i>Wholesale, apparel, fabrics</i>	598	.7	3.3				
Chinese-Vietnamese^a							
Retail, eating, drinking places	650	15.8	3.3	Banking	331	10.2	3.6
Manufacture, electrical machinery	291	7.1	4.6	Retail, eating, drinking places	222	6.8	1.3
Manufacture, durable goods, unspecified	265	6.5	5.0	Manufacture, apparel, accessories	220	6.8	3.0
U. S. Postal Service	196	4.8	6.2	Manufacture, electrical machinery	205	6.3	6.9
Banking	120	2.9	3.1	Manufacture, durable goods, unspecified	169	5.2	5.0
Taiwanese^b							
Real estate	493	7.5	3.5	Retail, eating, drinking places	388	7.2	1.4
Wholesale, nondurable goods, unspecified	375	5.7	9.0	Real estate	350	6.5	2.3
Colleges, universities	297	4.5	3.3	Banking	276	5.1	1.8
Retail, eating, drinking places	273	4.1	.9	Hospitals	258	4.8	.8
Construction	265	4.0	.4	Colleges, universities	199	3.7	2.0

Notes: See notes at bottom of first panel of Table 8.6.

^aIdentity based on combined reported race and ancestry.

^bIncludes only those who reported a Taiwanese as opposed to a Chinese racial identity.

Table 8.6 Leading Industries of Employment, 1990 (continued)

Men	Number of Employed Men	Percent of Ethnic Group	Ratio to Total Employed	Women	Number of Employed Women	Percent of Ethnic Group	Ratio to Total Employed
Industry				Industry			
Filipino							
Hospitals	5,975	6.8	3.8	Hospitals	20,381	20.3	3.4
Construction	4,330	4.9	.4	Banking	4,829	4.8	1.7
Retail, eating, drinking places	3,257	3.7	.8	Insurance	3,807	3.8	1.5
Banking	2,426	2.7	2.9	Elementary, secondary schools	3,287	3.3	.4
Insurance	2,269	2.6	2.0	Retail, eating, drinking places	3,183	3.2	.6
<i>U. S. Postal Service</i>	2,187	2.5	3.2	<i>Nursing, personal care facilities</i>	2,339	2.3	3.3
<i>Armed Forces, navy</i>	1,750	2.0	4.9	<i>Public administration, finance, taxation</i>	696	.7	3.7
<i>Health services, n.e.c.</i>	1,388	1.6	3.3				
<i>Nursing, personal care facilities</i>	584	.7	4.9				
<i>Public administration, finance, taxation</i>	399	.5	3.8				
Hawaiian							
Construction	597	12.1	1.1	Elementary, secondary schools	232	6.3	.9
Retail, eating, drinking places	288	5.8	1.2	Real estate	158	4.3	1.6
Retail, grocery stores	205	4.2	2.0	Hospitals	157	4.3	.7
Business services, unspecified	170	3.4	2.5	Retail, grocery stores	152	4.1	2.2
Landscape, horticultural services	164	3.3	2.1	Retail, eating, drinking places	142	3.9	.7
Indonesian							
Hospitals	268	6.8	3.9	Hospitals	289	9.6	1.6
Construction	232	5.9	.5	Colleges, universities	163	5.4	2.9
Retail, eating, drinking places	202	5.2	1.1	Retail, eating, drinking places	140	4.7	.9
Printing, publishing	140	3.6	2.8	Insurance	138	4.6	1.8
Engineering, architectural services	131	3.3	3.8	Elementary, secondary schools	118	3.9	.5
Japanese							
Landscape, horticultural services	3,700	6.0	3.9	Elementary, secondary schools	5,185	8.6	1.2
Manufacture, missiles, space vehicles	2,643	4.3	1.8	Hospitals	2,567	4.2	.7
Retail, eating, drinking places	2,641	4.3	.9	Retail, eating, drinking places	2,469	3.6	.7
Retail, grocery stores	2,150	3.5	1.7	Banking	1,895	3.1	1.1
Construction	1,947	3.2	.3	Colleges, universities	1,793	2.9	1.5
<i>Wholesale, nondurable goods, unspecif.</i>	427	.7	3.9				

Notes: See notes at bottom of first panel of Table 8.6.

Table 8.6 Leading Industries of Employment, 1990 (continued)

Men	Number of Employed Men	Percent of Ethnic Group	Ratio to Total Employed	Women	Number of Employed Women	Percent of Ethnic Group	Ratio to Total Employed
Industry				Industry			
Korean							
Construction	4,939	8.5	.8	Retail, eating, drinking places	5,683	10.8	2.0
Retail, grocery stores	3,326	5.7	2.8	Manufacture, apparel, accessories	3,631	6.9	3.0
Retail, eating, drinking places	3,161	5.5	1.1	Retail, apparel, accessories	2,609	5.0	3.4
Retail, liquor stores	2,111	3.6	16.9	Hospitals	2,591	4.9	.8
Laundry, cleaning services	1,627	2.8	6.9	Retail, grocery stores	2,555	4.9	2.5
<i>Retail, apparel and accessories</i>	<i>1,098</i>	<i>1.9</i>	<i>4.7</i>	<i>Laundry, cleaning services</i>	<i>1,825</i>	<i>3.5</i>	<i>7.1</i>
<i>Retail, miscellaneous stores</i>	<i>1,086</i>	<i>1.9</i>	<i>3.8</i>	<i>Retail, liquor stores</i>	<i>945</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>16.5</i>
<i>Retail, gasoline service stations</i>	<i>931</i>	<i>1.6</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>Wholesale, apparel, fabrics</i>	<i>460</i>	<i>.9</i>	<i>3.3</i>
<i>Religious organizations</i>	<i>853</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>Retail, jewelry stores</i>	<i>393</i>	<i>.7</i>	<i>3.3</i>
<i>Wholesale, apparel, fabrics</i>	<i>484</i>	<i>.8</i>	<i>4.0</i>				
Samoan							
Trucking	233	7.5	3.9	Hospitals	354	12.9	2.1
Detective, protective services	200	7.7	10.6	Retail, eating, drinking places	196	7.1	1.3
Construction	184	7.1	3.7	Banking	101	3.7	1.3
Retail, eating, drinking places	177	5.2	1.1	Manufacture, furniture, fixtures	97	3.5	9.4
Religious organizations	97	3.7	7.8	Elementary, secondary schools	96	3.5	.5
Thai							
Retail, eating, drinking places	933	13.2	2.7	Retail, eating, drinking places	1,365	18.0	3.4
Retail, grocery stores	231	3.3	1.6	Hospitals	780	10.3	1.7
Business services, unspecified	224	3.2	2.3	Manufacture, apparel, accessories	502	6.6	2.9
Construction	216	3.1	1.6	Retail, grocery stores	308	4.1	2.1
Trucking	198	2.8	1.5	Insurance	250	3.3	1.3
<i>Retail, gasoline service stations</i>	<i>188</i>	<i>2.7</i>	<i>5.2</i>				
Vietnamese							
Manufacture, electrical machinery	3,160	7.6	4.9	Beauty shops	2195	7.4	6.4
Retail, eating, drinking places	2,234	5.4	1.1	Retail, eating, drinking places	1422	4.8	.9
Manufacture, computers	1,931	4.6	7.8	Manufacture, electrical machinery	2360	8.0	5.6
Manufacture, aircraft, parts	1,654	4.0	.8	Banking	1041	3.5	1.3
Social services, unspecified	518	1.2	3.4	Manufacture, apparel, accessories	1059	3.6	1.6
<i>Manufacture, medical, dental equip.</i>	<i>415</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>Manufacture, medical, dental instr.</i>	<i>883</i>	<i>3.0</i>	<i>7.4</i>
<i>Beauty shop</i>	<i>345</i>	<i>.8</i>	<i>4.5</i>	<i>Manufacture, computers</i>	<i>794</i>	<i>2.7</i>	<i>6.3</i>
<i>Manufacture, scientific instruments</i>	<i>332</i>	<i>.8</i>	<i>3.5</i>	<i>Personal services, unspecified</i>	<i>720</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>4.2</i>
				<i>Manufacture, radio, TV, equipment</i>	<i>339</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>3.1</i>

Notes: See notes at bottom of first panel of Table 8.6.

Table 8.6 Leading Industries of Employment, 1990 (continued)

Men	Number of Employed Men	Percent of Ethnic Group	Ratio to Total Employed	Women	Number of Employed Women	Percent of Ethnic Group	Ratio to Total Employed
Industry				Industry			
Mexican							
Construction	156,953	13.7	1.2	Retail, eating, drinking places	51,770	6.7	1.3
Retail, eating, drinking places	94,199	8.2	1.7	Elementary, secondary schools	47,300	6.1	.8
Landscape, horticultural services	44,266	3.9	2.5	Manufacture, apparel, accessories	44,925	5.8	2.5
Manufacture, durable goods, unspec.	27,431	2.4	1.9	Hospitals	33,918	4.4	.7
Manufacture, furniture	24,532	2.1	2.3	Private household services	26,701	3.5	1.7
				<i>Agricultural production, crops</i>	<i>11,213</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>3.3</i>
				<i>Manufacture, canned, frozen veg.</i>	<i>3,015</i>	<i>.4</i>	<i>3.0</i>
				<i>Manufacture, leather products</i>	<i>1,309</i>	<i>.2</i>	<i>3.4</i>
Puerto Rican							
Construction	1,871	8.9	.8	Hospitals	1,445	8.3	1.4
Hospitals	623	3.0	1.7	Elementary, secondary schools	1,202	6.9	.9
Retail, eating, drinking places	589	2.8	.6	Retail, eating, drinking places	868	5.0	.9
Manufacture, missiles, space vehicles	553	2.6	1.1	Retail, department stores	657	3.8	1.6
Manufacture, aircraft, parts	546	2.6	1.2	Banking	592	3.4	1.2
Cuban							
Construction	1,260	6.0	.5	Elementary, secondary schools	1,593	8.8	1.2
Retail, eating, drinking places	727	3.5	.7	Hospitals	748	4.1	.7
Manufacture, durable goods, unspecified	485	2.3	1.8	Manufacture, apparel, accessories	730	4.0	1.8
Hospitals	481	2.3	1.3	Banking	693	3.8	1.4
Retail, grocery stores	464	2.2	1.1	Retail, eating, drinking places	615	3.4	.6
Guatemalan-Salvadoran							
Construction	19,892	14.5	1.3	Private household services	22,568	20.0	9.8
Retail, eating, drinking places	11,932	8.7	1.8	Manufacture, apparel, accessories	11,667	10.3	4.5
Manufacture, apparel, accessories	6,219	4.5	4.8	Retail, eating, drinking places	7,558	6.7	1.3
Automobile repair	5,558	4.1	2.5	Business, repair services to dwellings	6,909	6.1	6.7
Manufacture durable goods, unspecified	4,482	3.3	2.6	Family child care, at homes	2,907	2.6	3.6
<i>Repair services to dwellings</i>	<i>3,531</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>3.2</i>				
<i>Automobile parking, car washes</i>	<i>2,605</i>	<i>1.9</i>	<i>5.3</i>				
<i>Private household services</i>	<i>727</i>	<i>.5</i>	<i>3.5</i>				
Other Central American and South American^c							
Construction	4,996	9.1	.8	Private household services	3,438	6.6	3.2
Retail, eating, drinking places	2,679	4.9	1.0	Retail, eating, drinking places	3,437	6.6	1.2
Automobile repair	1,408	2.6	1.6	Manufacture, apparel, accessories	3,183	6.1	2.7
Business services, unspec.	1,177	2.1	1.6	Elementary, secondary schools	3,079	5.9	.8
Manufacture, aircraft, parts	1,077	2.0	.9	Hospitals	2,717	5.2	.9

Notes: See notes at bottom of first panel of Table 8.6.

^cIncludes Honduran, Nicaraguan, Argentinian, Colombian, Ecuadoran, and Peruvian identities.

operate grocery, liquor, and other retail stores (Table 8.6). Most of the Asian Indian managers of food-service and lodging facilities are in the hotel and motel business, and the Asian Indian men who are overrepresented in the manufacture of computers and electrical machinery are more typically engineers than assemblers.

Relationship to status. Specific industry niches are mostly a function of similar networks of personal contact and guidance, but they may also reflect the group's level of education and acculturation and its cultural predispositions. For instance, the Samoan concentration in private protective services, typically as security guards, is partly related to the group's low level of educational attainment. In contrast, the concentration of Iranian women in banking and in department stores and accessory shops clearly relates to their affluence and their consciousness of fashion, both of which represent a transfer of the lifestyle they knew in Iran before the 1979 revolution.⁴⁷

Movies, rugs, and jewelry. Well known to older generations is the importance of Eastern European Jews in creating the movie business.⁴⁸ Whereas movies seemed vaguely immoral to Protestant sensibilities, a few Jewish immigrants saw their potential. By 1925 immigrant men like Carl Laemmle, William Fox, Louis B. Mayer, Adolph Zukor, Marcus Loew, Cecil B. De Mille, and Jack and Sam Warner had created a new industry, with Hollywood as its unrivaled center. They founded Universal Studios, Columbia Pictures, Paramount Pictures, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and Warner Brothers. Although carpenters, electricians, and other trade workers in the film industry have usually not been Jewish, movies and later television led to employment for countless Jewish writers, actors, directors, production supervisors, actors' agents and press agents, set designers, studio managers, film distributors, theater managers, and lawyers. In the radio and television industry, a Jewish men's niche is only slightly weaker. However, their representation at only 2.7 times the average means that this industry does not qualify as a niche for Russian-ancestry men in Table 8.6.

Some ethnic niches of the past have receded in importance, often replaced by new niches. The historic association of

Armenians with the rug business in Los Angeles and elsewhere was not sufficiently strong in 1990 to qualify for this table. The concentration of Armenian men in the jewelry business contrasts sharply with the situation in 1920, when there were only five jewelers among the 2,000 Armenian men in Los Angeles whose occupations were surveyed.⁴⁹ During the 1980s opportunities in jewelry design, manufacturing, wholesaling, and retailing attracted hundreds of immigrants from both Soviet Armenia and the Middle East, so that by 1989 approximately half the manufacturers in the Jewelry District (6th and Hill Streets) in Downtown were Armenian immigrants.⁵⁰ Some men had been jewelers before they immigrated, but many were taught the trade by fellow Armenians after they arrived in Los Angeles. Proud of their role in design, many Armenians also see Los Angeles as well located for the anticipated growth of jewelry sales in Asia.

Doughnut shops, beauty shops, and motels. The most striking case of an ethnic niche in an industry is that of Cambodians who operate retail bakeries. If the census data identified doughnut shops specifically within the broader category of bakeries, this Cambodian specialty would appear far stronger, because Cambodians clearly dominated the business in Southern California in 1990.

Work in a Winchell's doughnut shop was first arranged for Vietnamese through refugee-resettlement offices in 1975, but other Vietnamese did not follow this lead.⁵¹ Cambodians, however, saw an opportunity, and this business niche began in 1977, when a single Chinese-Cambodian immigrant opened a doughnut shop in La Habra.⁵² The business was successful, relatives trained with the owner and opened their own shops, and word of these opportunities spread widely within the community.⁵³ In Orange County, the majority of Chinese-Cambodians own doughnut shops, and many own more than one. Nearly all Cambodians use the spelling *donut* because of its simplicity and the lower cost of store signs.

Doughnuts are completely alien to the Cambodian culture, and many shop owners do not like doughnuts at all: the business is simply a practical means of economic survival. Both husbands and wives put in long hours at the shops, but not much

English-language ability is needed. Rotating-credit societies within the Cambodian community made many of the loans that supplemented family savings and enabled immigrants to establish doughnut businesses. Before the early 1990s, when the doughnut market became saturated, the financial success of at least some Cambodians was highly visible in the new Mercedes and sporty automobiles that the owners and their families often drove. Because the shops are widely scattered, most proprietors own homes in nearby white areas rather than in the Long Beach enclave.

Vietnamese women are six times more likely to be working in beauty shops than is the average Southern California woman (Table 8.6). Vietnamese women are attracted to this industry because the work does not require a high-school diploma, the hours are usually flexible, and the women can keep their children with them during the day.⁵⁴ Over time they have achieved a reputation as highly skilled manicurists.

Work in a beauty shop provides experience for those who later open their own nail salons, and over time such shops have become widely distributed. In some areas, such as Westwood Boulevard south of Wilshire Boulevard, their proliferation has saturated the market.

The Asian Indian niche in the motel industry is not particularly strong in Southern California compared with many other smaller places, but, as with Cambodians in the doughnut business, the niche appeared when others emulated and received guidance from successful pioneers. It is quite possible that the niche had its origins in 1946 in San Francisco.⁵⁵ During World War II an Asian Indian farmworker who was drafted by the U.S. Army leased a hotel for a friend to operate. While he was away in the Army, the hotel showed a profit. News of this success spread in the homeland, especially among those from the same Patel caste in the Gujarat region, so that over the years many others followed and pursued the same dream.

As with doughnut shops, an entire family can help in the motel's day-to-day operations, which require neither an advanced education nor much English-language ability. Gujaratis living in East Africa were also part of these international social networks, so many Gujaratis who had been in business in East Africa become motel owners or followed other busi-

ness pursuits in California. Running a motel may be similar in many ways to operating a retail grocery business, so the many Asian Indians who manage convenience stores may represent an extension of the motel-industry niche.

Eating and drinking places, apparel, and construction. A group's representation in eating and drinking places and in apparel manufacturing is significant because the former pays the lowest averages wages of any industry and the latter the lowest wages of any type of manufacturing.⁵⁶

The apparel industry provides a niche for women who cannot speak English but can learn to operate a sewing machine with skill. However, the low wages deter many Asians and effectively create more opportunities for Latino immigrants.⁵⁷ Although rates of self-employment in specific industries cannot be determined from this table, the self-employed in this industry are presumably making much higher incomes. For example, garment manufacturing is clearly a niche among Korean and Vietnamese women (Table 8.6). In 1989 there were more than 900 Korean and Vietnamese business owners in that industry in Los Angeles and Orange Counties.⁵⁸

Southern California's construction industry is so massive that it provides employment opportunities for many groups. For example, one-fifth of Israeli men work in construction, and Israelis are more specialized in construction than any other ethnic group listed. Construction work is also much more important to Belizeans and American Indians than it is to Asian Indians or Chinese.

The Chinese: A Case Study of Changing Niches

Changes in the characteristics of the immigrants themselves within any one ethnic group and in employment opportunities in Southern California have expanded the potential for new work niches and less extreme specializations. Examination of one ethnic group's employment niches over the past 125 years in Southern California demonstrates how work specializations can change dramatically despite an overall continuity of cultural heritage. The almost complete reversal in Chinese work niches over

that time was the result of startling changes in the educational and economic characteristics of those who settled in this region and in the potential for opportunities in Southern California.

Historic Chinese niches. In the 1850s and 1860s boatloads of Chinese men left the southeast coast of China and sailed to California. Most found work only as laborers, and those who ventured into Southern California came after having completed railroad and other construction contracts in northern California or elsewhere.

By the 1870s these Chinese men were building or maintaining early railroad lines, irrigation ditches, orange groves, and vineyards.⁵⁹ They lived out of temporary homes in numerous small Chinatowns and rural camps near their farmwork. Until the end of the nineteenth century Chinese in labor gangs, moving around from job to job, supplied most of the cheap labor for construction and farmwork in Southern California. Whites increasingly resented the competition from the efficient and low-cost Chinese and in the 1890s drove many Chinese out of their temporary camps and little Chinatowns, frequently setting the shacks on fire. By 1910 most Chinese had left the small towns and rural camps of Southern California, and newly arrived Japanese and, later, Mexicans replaced the Chinese as laborers.

Many of the Chinese who moved from these rural areas into Los Angeles began to grow vegetables and sell them door to door. By 1880 the 200 Chinese produce farmers constituted 89 percent of all such farmers in Los Angeles County. At the same time Chinese men had commonly worked as washers and ironers in Los Angeles' laundries, and some were later able to pool their savings and enter the laundry business. The larger society of Los Angeles became so highly dependent on Chinese vegetable vendors and laundry workers that anti-Chinese boycotts in the 1880s failed to garner wide support, particularly from local women who recognized that the Chinese freed them from many tasks that their husbands would otherwise expect them to do.

Other Chinese opened small stores, curio shops, and restaurants—another niche in which the Chinese were permitted by white society to operate. Chinese restaurants also became popular with whites. At first some whites had believed that Chinese food

was poisonous, but slowly that notion was overcome. Chinese men were also servants and cooks on ranches and for in-town white families.

In the late 1880s and 1890s the Chinese lost much of the vegetable produce niche to European immigrants. Also, a few years later new railroads linked large San Joaquin Valley farms to eastern cities, thus eroding external markets for local vegetable production.

With restrictions on Chinese immigration since 1882, the Chinese population of Los Angeles slowly declined after 1900. Young Chinese families were replacing the aging, single men whose labor had built so much of California. Because Chinese merchants (but not laborers) were permitted to enter and bring wives into this country, the nucleus of a small, established Chinese community in Los Angeles was built around a few business-oriented families, many of whom had middle-class merchant origins. By 1910 a second generation was growing: 24 percent of the Chinese had been born in the United States. Another twenty-five years later most of the elderly, bachelor laborers had moved elsewhere, returned to China, or died. The younger Chinese who stayed were highly acculturated. However, they still worked mostly in laundries, small food stores, and restaurants—largely because white society continued to restrict access to better opportunities.

Shifts in immigrant characteristics since 1945.

Changes in U.S. immigration policy in the 1940s made possible the entry of many more Chinese women, so that 40 percent of the Chinese in Los Angeles in 1950 were females. The Communist takeover of the mainland in 1949 precipitated the flight of Nationalists to Taiwan and the beginnings of an exodus from China of tens of thousands of refugees, as well as equally large numbers of students.⁶⁰ Many of those who fled were well-educated government officials, former businessmen or businesswomen, or advanced students in the sciences or engineering. A great many of these ended up in Southern California, often having come via Hong Kong.

During the 1950s these Chinese presented a sharp contrast with the descendants of the earlier immigrants. Many had been part of China's elite. Their educational level and skills, including

some English-language ability, made them more employable in higher-level jobs than were the earlier immigrants.

As of 1990 family connections and the legal immigration process remain the major means by which Chinese immigrants settle in Southern California. However, some people with temporary visas to visit the United States as tourists or students have overstayed those visas and have become illegal residents. Also, during the 1990s there has been clear evidence of carefully planned smuggling operations which bring people from China's southeast coast, usually by way of Mexico, into the Los Angeles area.⁶¹

Real estate, banking, and other businesses. The mid-1970s plan of a Chinese immigrant to change Monterey Park into the first suburban Chinatown was successfully sold to thousands of potential Chinese immigrants. Monterey Park became the hub of a massive settlement of Chinese in Southern California. Many new arrivals were business people, and many, especially those from Taiwan, brought a considerable amount of family wealth with them.

As a result of the importation of this money, Southern California bypassed both San Francisco and New York to become the largest center of Chinese business activity in North America. For example, immigrants to Southern California developed toy, clothing, and computer-importing businesses (for example, ABC toys, Bugle Boy clothing, and Acer computers) and innumerable restaurants and grocery stores, including chains like Panda Express and 99 Ranch Markets. By 1992 Chinese owned more than 20 banks and about 900 hotels and motels in Southern California.

Immigrant Chinese entrepreneurs are well educated and have managerial and business experience. Chinese investment in office-building, shopping-center, and high-tech industrial developments in the San Gabriel Valley represents about half of the valley's commercial land transactions in the very late 1980s, and investment continued through the recession of the 1990s. Many U.S. businesses feel unable to compete with Chinese businesses, especially in appeal to Chinese consumers, and some have left the San Gabriel Valley, opening up further opportunities for Chinese immigrants. Computer assembly companies, often closely linked

to Taiwan as a supplier of components, have proliferated in the San Gabriel Valley.⁶² Many have successfully undercut their retail competitors.

All this investment activity contrasts sharply with the Chinese who immigrated to New York City, who have tended to be blue-collar and service workers from Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China and to live in the older Chinatown section of Manhattan.

Chinese from Southeast Asia. The most recent groups of Chinese to arrive in Southern California have come from Southeast Asia, particularly Vietnam. Many of these "overseas" Chinese come from families which have been successful in business and banking in Southeast Asia.

Ethnic Chinese from Vietnam own about a third of the businesses in Little Saigon, the commercial center in the midst of the large ethnic Vietnamese settlement in Orange County.⁶³ The business and social ties of the Chinese-Vietnamese link them frequently to Chinese from other countries, who have also provided them with much capital for investment. For example, Chinese-Vietnamese ownership of large Asian supermarkets is widespread, and in the San Gabriel Valley a garment industry is run mostly by Chinese-Vietnamese.⁶⁴ Stores and homes have been converted into sweatshops, some hidden from view but others visible, in which refugees and illegal immigrants toil long hours but receive welfare payments—in violation of welfare regulations.

Despite the widespread business experience of Chinese-Vietnamese, census data indicate that the percentage of Chinese-Vietnamese engaged in family-operated businesses in Southern California is lower than that for Chinese. The self-employment percentage (9 percent) would be higher if more family members worked without pay and if Latinos were not so readily hired for low-level tasks.

The general profile of Chinese-Vietnamese compared with other Chinese immigrants is more reflective of their lower educational level and language skills, their arrival here without the capital brought by so many Taiwanese, the turmoil resulting from their involuntary migration, and the difficulties of adjustment usually experienced by refugees. Chinese from Vietnam are more

apt to work in manufacturing, particularly the assembly of electrical machinery, or with the post office.

Diversity of work specializations. The variety of work pursued by the Chinese suggests a range of backgrounds, educational levels, and business directions far more diverse than the restricted jobs held by the “old” Chinese—laborers, servants, cooks, laundrymen, vegetable growers, or peddlers.

Some of the work specializations are similar to those of the past. Operating or working in restaurants and grocery stores is still common among men, as in the past, and it is perhaps the most typical work for newly arrived immigrants. Chinese and other Asian grocery stores supply the basic ingredients that Asian immigrants need but cannot obtain in American supermarkets, such as twenty-five-pound bags of rice, low-priced fresh fish, and special herbs and vegetables. And for decades Chinese women have operated the apparel manufacturers’ sewing machines—at home and in the sweatshops of Chinatown and Los Angeles’ Garment District.

Yet most immigrants with skills and motivation do not want to stock goods in grocery stores, wash dishes, or stitch endless piles of garments. Some Chinese, like some Koreans and Vietnamese, have become contractors and manufacturers in the garment industry.⁶⁵ Immigrants with more education have been more apt to work in the aerospace industry (often as engineers) or in colleges and universities (usually as professors), and others have opened up wide range of businesses, the most prominent of which are suggested in Table 8.6.

Altogether, the recent Chinese immigrants to Southern California represent a highly diverse group whose labor, talent, and wealth have breathed life into local economies. Moreover, their contacts with the international world of Chinese business activities may become the most important of Southern California’s growing economic and social ties across the Pacific.

Summary and Interpretation

In this chapter we have measured in much detail ethnic niches in the workplace, as well as ethnic underrepresentation in cer-

tain occupations. For some groups, dramatic changes have been observed over the past three decades. In earlier times the extreme occupational concentrations of blacks, Chinese, and Japanese represented the more physically demanding, low-wage, or servant-type jobs—work that was relegated to minorities. By 1990, however, the weakening of discrimination, the loosening of occupational barriers, and the arrival of immigrants from highly varied cultures have made more complex the patterns of ethnic employment specialization in Southern California.

Self-employment is an adaptation widely practiced by immigrants in Southern California, but its importance varies a great deal among ethnic groups. Although in some cases entrepreneurship can be traced and partly explained through the group’s cultural tradition, in more cases it is innovative. Self-employment for most immigrants is a useful alternative to other types of work in which there were barriers to success, such as language, cultural differences, and discrimination. Rates of government employment also differ from one group to another, and among blacks government work has been especially popular because hiring and promotion has seemed to be more on the basis of merit there than in the private sector.

We have demonstrated that Southern California’s ethnic groups have varied and complex patterns of occupational and industrial niches. Some of the niches show high levels of work specialization, with groups occasionally being represented at seven or more times the rate expected if all people were of similar ethnic heritage. Nevertheless, certain occupation and industry niches may not be as dominated by certain groups as might be expected based on informal observations and estimates.⁶⁶ This is because unsystematic observations of ethnic niches, especially when the focus is a particular ethnic group, can too easily lead to exaggerated claims of the proportionate strength of that group within certain occupations. In contrast, our analysis provides a solid basis for comparative statements concerning the degree of work specialization and underrepresentation.

Our stress on ethnic niches must be balanced by the realization that most workers in most ethnic groups are not employed in the leading niches. The apparent importance of ethnic niches

depends partly on how they are defined. Although we have chosen to present only the strongest cases of ethnic overrepresentation, more niches are evident when the definition is less exacting.⁶⁷

We cannot fully explain the reasons for ethnic niches. In some cases, they can be understood in terms of a cultural background which predisposes some groups toward certain types of work. However, more common have been ethnic niches which began as new and experimental adaptations and ended up providing some success. Part of the reason for this is the fact that so much work in the world of 1990 involves technology that is new within the last century, in which case a niche cannot represent cultural continuity.

Other factors behind the development of ethnic niches at work have been the great areal extent of the region and the large size of its ethnic populations. Major differences in the settlement patterns of ethnic groups mean that groups differ in their access to employment opportunities. A important aspect of this is the tendency for newer and better jobs to be created in outlying suburban areas, whereas poorer people, especially minorities, are more likely to live in older, more central areas. Moreover, the multitude of communication networks—defined mostly by ethnicity, income level, and location—by which people learn of employment opportunities makes implausible the assumption that all ethnic groups compete equally for employment and wages in a single metropolitan labor market.⁶⁸

Some niches weaken over time, and a few disappear over the course of generations. However, employers' preferences for hiring workers of their own ethnic group and not hiring from certain other groups still play a significant role in the job-worker matching process, as they clearly did during earlier decades. Such patterned discrimination is probably a necessary result of the continued importance of ethnic social networks and the essential competitive nature of matching people with jobs. As long as ethnic identities and ethnically-based networks exist, there will be ethnic work niches.

Notes

1. Presumably, ethnic niches result from a combination of factors: the characteristics (human capital) of an ethnic group, the nature of employment opportunities or other unfulfilled demands in a local area, and the process by which potential workers are matched to specific jobs through ethnic social networks. The most thorough coverage is in Waldinger (1996), but in Los Angeles niches are also treated in Waldinger and Bozorgmehr (1996).

2. Hiestand (1964), 112–18.

3. Sources for Japanese occupations in earlier parts of this century are Bonacich and Modell (1980); Tsuchida (1984); and Nishi (1985).

4. The best sources on the Japanese niche in maintenance gardening are Tsukashima (1991, 1995/1996).

5. Bond (1936), 171.

6. Takaki (1989), 240–45, 317.

7. Major sources for the occupations of blacks during the first half of the twentieth century are Bond (1936); Bass (1960); and de Graaf (1962).

8. Krislov (1967).

9. Hartsfield-Mills (1973).

10. This section on black nurses is based on Bass (1960), Martin (1979), and the recollections of two black nurses, Doris Williams and Ruby Lassiter, who began to work in Los Angeles-area hospitals in 1961, interviewed January 1996.

11. No black nurses were out of work at that time, according to Ruby Lassiter, associate chief of nursing service, Department of Veterans Affairs, West Los Angeles Medical Center.

12. Reitzes (1958).

13. Takaki (1989), 240; Chan (1991a). See also the section on changing Chinese niches near the end of this chapter.

14. These struggles against employment discrimination in Los Angeles are described in great detail in Smith (1978).

15. The best source on changes in manufacturing in Southern California since 1960 is Soja, Morales, and Wolff (1989).

16. Hensley (1989).

17. For our measurement of the three classes see chapter 1.

18. Razin (1993).

19. Finnan and Cooperstein (1983).

20. Leonard and Tibrewal (1993).
21. Sources on general aspects of immigrant entrepreneurship are Waldinger, Aldrich, and Ward (1990); Butler and Herring (1991); Gold (1992); and Nee, Sanders, and Sernau (1994).
22. Kotkin (1992).
23. Light and Bonacich (1988); Waldinger, Aldrich, and Ward (1990).
24. Der-Martirosian, Sabagh, and Bozorgmehr (1993).
25. Sowell (1994), 25, 26, 34–36.
26. Gold (1992).
27. Light and Bonacich (1988).
28. Dallalgar (1994).
29. Gold (1994b).
30. Light, Sabagh, Bozorgmehr, and Der-Martirosian (1993), 587.
31. Leonard and Tibrewal (1993); Light, Bhachu, and Karageorgis (1993).
32. For the Chinese in business, see Waldinger, Aldrich, and Ward (1990). The Taiwanese in business are treated by Tseng (1994). Chinese-Vietnamese entrepreneurs, who have faced special difficulties (Desbarats 1986), are emphasized in Gold (1992) and Gold (1994a).
33. Krislov (1967); Carnoy (1994); and Nee, Sanders, and Sernau (1994).
34. Reimers and Chernick (1991).
35. Waldinger (1994, 1996).
36. An analysis of black and Hispanic competition in manufacturing sectors in Southern California in 1980 reached inconclusive results (Scott and Paul 1990), as did we, but both those authors and we caution against assuming that different niches at one time indicate no history of significant competition in the development of those niches.
37. Kotkin (1992).
38. Ben-Sasson (1976).
39. Ong and Azores (1994).
40. Agbayani-Siewert and Revilla (1995).
41. Aquino (1952).
42. Nee, Sanders, and Sernau (1994), 857.
43. Applegate (1984).
44. For a discussion of these industries see Scott (1993).
45. For an industry to be listed for an ethnic group, there must be a ratio to total employed of at least three, with at least

300 persons from the group employed in the industry. Because our coverage of groups is so broad, we made the ratio requirement unusually stringent. As a result, the table does not include the many industries that are overrepresented for some groups at between two and three times the average.

46. Logan, Alba, and McNulty (1994) found that ethnic entrepreneurial niches were more varied and significant in Los Angeles than in the several other large metropolitan areas they examined.

47. Kelley (1993).

48. Vorspan and Gartner (1970), 132–33; Gabler (1988), 5.

49. Yeretizian (1923).

50. Clark (1989).

51. Loc Nguyen, Director of the Immigration and Refugee Department, Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, interviewed April 1996.

52. Akst (1993).

53. Cambodian doughnut businesses are described in the videotape entitled *Cambodian Donut Dreams*, written and directed by Charles Davis in 1989 (School of Cinematography, University of Southern California). The videotape was loaned to us by Pamela Bunte, Department of Anthropology, California State University, Long Beach. Additional information was provided by Sandy Arun San-Blankenship, president of the Cambodian Business Association in Long Beach, interviewed December 1995. A good source on Orange County's Chinese-Cambodians in the doughnut business is Lee (1996).

54. O'Conner (1989); Johnson (1996); Huynh (1996).

55. Jain (1989).

56. Logan, Alba, and McNulty (1994).

57. Kim, Nakamura, and Fong (1992). The best description of the work and home situations of Latina garment workers in Los Angeles is in Soldatenko (1992).

58. Bonacich (1993).

59. Sources for this description of historic Chinese work specializations are Mason (1967); McWilliams (1973); Cheng and Cheng (1984); Chan (1986); and Lin (1989/1990).

60. Sources for the characterization of the new immigrants and their work niches in the San Gabriel Valley are Arax (1987a, 1987c); Waldinger and Tseng (1992); Schoenberger (1993); Fong (1994); and Tseng (1994).

61. Rotella and Romney (1993).

62. Torres (1996b).

63. Gold (1994a).

64. Arax (1987a, 1987c).

65. Bonacich (1993).

66. Much detail regarding immigrant occupational specialization in New York City can be found in Lorch (1992), but the anecdotal nature of the evidence and the reliance on sources within specific groups and occupations suggests that the strength of ethnic niches may be easily overestimated.

67. Other studies have used a less stringent definition of niche, requiring a minimum representation at only 1.5 times the average rate (Logan, Alba, and McNulty 1994; Waldinger 1996; Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996).

68. Galster and Hornburg (1995).

