

The Changing Ethnic Quilt of Southern California:

**Ethnic Distributions in 2010
and Changes 1990-2010**

by

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Introduction

In a conversation a couple of years ago a local historian mentioned how useful he found our award-winning earlier book *The Ethnic Quilt* – useful enough that he kept one copy in his office and another at home. Because *The Ethnic Quilt's* coverage and precise measurements of 34 ethnic groups were based on 1990 census data, he urged us strongly to update it. His suggestion was the impetus for this online publication, as we thought that other scholars and local residents would also find such a work valuable.

To some extent the maps presented in this online publication represent a 2010 update of two of our earlier works: our 1997 book, *The Ethnic Quilt: Population Diversity in Southern California*, and our 2002 book titled *Changing Faces: Changing Places: Mapping Southern Californians*, based on 2000 data. Both of these works are on pdf files. <http://www.csun.edu/~hfgeg005/eturner/books.html> In those earlier books, as well as here, ethnic groups include those often considered as race groups.

But this online publication is more than an update in that it presents new tables and maps of change between 1990 and 2010. Patterns of change, such as the locations where an ethnic group's numbers are increasing or decreasing and whether those changes occur in older central areas or in newer outlying suburbs, are often suggestive of processes behind the patterns.

Our maps, tables, and graph cover not just the city of L.A., but also the entire counties of Los Angeles and Orange, as well as much of the three other counties that are interconnected strongly with each other and L.A. This five-county area is labeled by the U. S. Census Bureau as the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside Combined Statistical Area, but we refer to it simply as "Southern California."

This area is essentially the same as in *The Ethnic Quilt*, with maps including Los Angeles and Orange counties and the more centrally located and most populated sections of Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties. Most tables and the graph cover all five counties. However, one table treats only Los Angeles County and another is based on ethnic group numbers in the combined area of Los Angeles and Orange counties, which is the Los Angeles metropolitan (metro) area.

After discussing our data source and aspects of map design, we present two tables that set the context for ethnic groups in our region. The first shows the populations of each of the ethnic groups in 1990 and 2010 in each of the five counties. In the second table we identify the five metropolitan areas in the United States that have the largest populations of each ethnic group in our study. This enables a reader to see how any group's numbers in the Los Angeles metro area stack up against those in other metro areas.

Because cities are the most basic terminology with which Southern Californians think and talk about places in our region, we have two tables that show ethnic populations in cities. In one table cities and larger unincorporated places are listed alphabetically by county with the percentages of Whites, Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics shown for each city. The second table combines cities from all five counties and ranks them in four columns according to their percentages in each of the four groups.

Next we present three maps, a graph, and a table that summarize some of the most important features of the ethnic geography of Southern California. There are maps of the largest ethnic group in each tract, ethnic diversity, and poverty as of 2010. The graph depicts for both 1990 and 2010 the relative household income of each ethnic group. This permits a comparison of groups regarding their economic status and it enables the reader to see how any group's relative status has changed since

1990. Last is a table showing for Los Angeles County the level of residential separation, or segregation, between all groups as of 2010, as well as the change in separation between 1990 and 2010. For this we calculated values of the index of dissimilarity, which we refer to as D-scores, between all pairs of ethnic groups.

For all the above tables and graphics there are brief interpretations designed to guide the reader and provide partial explanations of some features. The interpretations are based not only on our own research experience but also on a wide range of scholarly studies and other sources, virtually all of which are identified in *The Ethnic Quilt*. For ethnic populations we provide text interpretations for only Whites, Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics – the four most basic and inclusive ethnic groupings. These interpretations focus on patterns apparent on the three maps presented for each of these groups: patterns of change from 1990 to 2010, the 2010 distribution, and relative household income in 2010. For American Indians and for specific ethnic or nationality groups within the White, Black, Asian, and Hispanic aggregations there are two maps: the pattern of change between 1990 and 2010 and the distribution as of 2010.

Because we do not provide a text interpretation of the maps of American Indians and the numerous specific ethnic groups, readers interested in learning more about specific ethnic groups and their changing concentrations can find detailed coverage in *The Ethnic Quilt*. *Changing Faces, Changing Places* also has text explanations of some groups. For anyone interested in ethnic groups across the United States, also available on the same site is *We the People: An Atlas of America's Diversity*. This award-winning reference book contains maps and detailed explanations of the distributions of 67 ethnic groups by county as of 1980 for the entire United States.

Why do this mapping? The online maps of this project show an important dimension of life within Southern California. Except for people's physical appearance and the tendency of many people to label strangers racially, the ethnic identities of most people are usually hidden from those who do not know them personally. Because a person's ethnic identity is significant in their social connections and especially in their choice of close friends, these findings give a glimpse into the geographic dimension of the more private ethnic social worlds that lie just beneath the surface of public life. Moreover, we believe that there is usually much more ethnic complexity in any one neighborhood than its residents realize.

Although everyone knows in general that neighborhoods in any big city vary a great deal in their ethnic character and income levels, our maps show precise patterns of such variations. They make it possible for residents to see the larger

ethnic and economic contexts of their lives. Members of different ethnic groups can see how widely their group and others are distributed as well as the location of any group concentrations. Such concentrations are often called “ethnic enclaves”.

Our maps of changes in ethnic distributions between 1990 and 2010 portray major residential shifts of groups, the development of new enclaves, and the dispersal of old ones. We think that community leaders, business people, and members of various ethnic groups will be very interested to see where their group is growing and where it is decreasing in numbers. In general, these maps show that the reality of people’s residential patterns is much more complex than can be described by city- or county-wide numbers and trends.

The maps of neighborhood change are so detailed that they raise questions as to what has been happening in various local areas. We hope some students, city planners, or other researchers will be prompted to investigate the demographic, social, cultural, economic, political, and other processes that led to localized change in the areas they are most interested in. Such research could lead to a better scholarly understanding of the processes of urban change and how neighborhoods increase or decline in distinctiveness.

The fact that ethnic groups differ in their average income levels is widely known, but accurate indicators of such group differences are hard to come by. Although in all ethnic groups there are people whose incomes are either much higher or much lower than the average for the group, the income medians we present are accurate measures of the average status of each group. In some cases, these indicators may help counteract stereotypical images – either positive or negative – of various groups.

Explaining the distributions. This book is more concerned with describing ethnic group distributions and change than with explaining them. The causes that have influenced distributions are complex and difficult to unravel, but there are a few major reasons why ethnic groups differ in their residential locations. Much research has investigated why individuals and families move and live where they do; we don’t report on that here. Rather, our brief explanation covers only the situation of many people in the same ethnic group moving to, living in, or leaving the same area -- for whatever reasons – because this cumulative effect shows up in our maps and city tables.

Most people would like to live in a safe and attractive neighborhood with good housing and good schools. Some can afford this at different price levels but others cannot. Whites and Asians generally have a greater choice of residential location than Blacks or Latinos because Whites and Asians average much higher incomes and wealth. But averages don't tell the whole story, as our income maps show many examples of Blacks and Latinos living in more expensive neighborhoods. Also, in one specific type of ethnic change related to income, where upgrading of apartments and resulting rent increases (gentrification) are common in a neighborhood, households that cannot afford the higher rents are forced to move. In Southern California many such movers are Latinos, and many of the new arrivals are Whites or Asians.

Nevertheless, a full explanation of ethnic distributions must involve factors other than money. This is shown by the fact that one of our city tables shows that the highest percentages of Whites and Asians are found in different cities, just as cities with the highest percentages of Blacks are very different from those with the highest percentages of Hispanics. The more cultural factors behind differing ethnic distributions include ethnic differences in the following: historical settlement concentrations, the strength of preference for neighborhoods where one's group is well represented, the importance of specific amenities like excellent schools or a coastal location. Ethnic groups may also differ in their attitudes toward having specific other groups as close neighbors. In addition, some groups were once subjected to widespread restrictions on their residential locations; and some housing discrimination, particularly in the rental market, probably continues to operate. All such influences help us understand, in general, the changing residential patterns of ethnic groups.