This chapter has two main parts, each distinct from the other. The first sets the geographical context of Southern California for the rest of the book. It does this by introducing some of the most basic processes and spatial patterns that define the region’s urban geography. The focus is on the major patterns of land use, population, housing, social class, and age.1 The general principles and features often interrelate with the other dimension of race and ethnicity and, for this reason, should make the maps and text in chapters 3 through 5 more understandable.

The second part of the chapter explains the basic factors behind the rapid change in Southern California’s ethnic composition since about 1960. It summarizes the reasons for the greatly increased immigration, especially from Asia and Latin America, and it points out how the ethnic transformation is also the result of ethnic differences in both fertility (birth rate) and net migration to Southern California. In this section we bring the people to Southern California, so to speak, so that in later chapters we can discuss what has happened to them here.

**The Creation of Population and Land-Use Patterns**

Initially a home only to Indians, Southern California became part of New Spain and, after 1821, Mexico. During their 79 years of rule, those powers accomplished the region’s first ethnic transformation—from Indian to Mexican.

The second ethnic transformation was initiated in 1848, when California was taken over by the United States after Mexico was defeated in war. By 1880 the Spanish-speaking inhabitants of Southern California were outnumbered by English-speakers from the eastern United States. After the Santa Fe Railroad connected Los Angeles with the Midwest in 1886, the pace of the influx skyrocketed. Americans arrived from all parts of this country to make their new homes here.

From that time on, landowners, developers, and realtors actively promoted Southern California to other Americans. Most of the people who responded by settling here were whites, who were happy to forsake life on Midwestern farms and towns for the warmth and dryness of Southern California. In the first half of the twentieth century these migrants set the dominant cultural tone in Southern California. They also stimulated the growth of various industries designed to capture the market the newcomers represented. For more than a hundred years the character and growth of the region have been controlled by whites, though they have thought of themselves as just ordinary Americans rather than as whites.

Immigrants from China, Japan, Mexico, and Europe also came in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but it was in the 1960s that immigration—migration from other countries—increased substantially. Immigrants of varied backgrounds, together with whites, blacks, American Indians, Mexicans, and Asians already here, have begun a third ethnic transformation. Although only partial in scope compared with the previous two, this most recent transformation has introduced an ethnic diversity unparalleled in the region’s history.

**Mountains and flatlands.** Within Southern California, almost all settlement has taken place in the flatlands, which stretch from the coast to the mountains, and between the various mountain ranges (Fig. 2.1). The high and rugged San Gabriel Mountains, which separate Los Angeles and most of Southern
California from the Mojave Desert to the north, have always been a barrier to transportation and development. The Santa Ana Mountains of eastern Orange County are also steep sloped and composed of hard rock. They lie mostly within a national forest, thus precluding subdivision into lots for homes. However, the Santa Monica Mountains, the foothills of the San Gabriels, and the Palos Verdes Peninsula are much lower and have been much prized as settings for homes, with correspondingly higher prices than homes on the adjacent flatlands. More distant from the major centers of population, the gently sloping San Jose Hills, Puente Hills, and Chino Hills have been developed only more recently. All these areas continue to be associated with higher status and greater wealth.

With those minor exceptions, homes, stores, offices, and industries have been located on the flatlands of Southern California. The largest contiguous flat area stretches south from the Santa Monica and San Gabriel Mountains through Orange County and far east through the San Gabriel Valley to the cities of San Bernardino and Riverside. To the north of the Santa Monica Mountains is the San Fernando Valley, which is connected with the larger basin by a gap in the mountains through which flows the Los Angeles River. The original pueblo of Los Angeles, founded in 1781, was sited by the Spanish in order to easily tap the waters of this once-perennial river for irrigation farming. The downtown part of Los Angeles (hereafter referred to as “Downtown”) developed near this original center, and it is from this area that Los Angeles has been expanding outward since the 1880s.

**Dispersal of population.** Interurban railways were laid out to newly founded towns and villages like Santa Monica, Pasadena, Redondo, Norwalk, Downey, Santa Ana, Monrovia, and Riverside by companies involved in land sales in those areas and along those routes (Fig. 2.2). By the 1920s, as the automobile was replacing the railways, new highways—financed by government—were opening up new areas in all directions for land subdivision. In the 1950s and 1960s a basic grid of freeways was constructed, vastly extending the residential fringe of the metropolitan area. Since that time the metropolitan periphery has continued to expand as new freeways have increased accessibility over a much larger area.

In the first half of the twentieth century much of the flatland between the scattered towns and subdivisions was farmed. Vineyards; fields of grain and hay; rows of irrigated beans, celery, strawberries, melons; and groves of orange and walnut trees seemed to stretch for miles. Fields and orchards, punctuated by occasional poultry houses and dairy barns, occupied most of the better agricultural land, especially in the San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys, southern Los Angeles County, and northern Orange County. Between World War II and 1949 Los Angeles County was the leading county in the United States in the value of agricultural products sold. After about 1950, however, the pace of urbanization increased, leading to the virtual demise of farming in most parts of Los Angeles and Orange Counties by 1990.

The development of affordable housing in an expanding metropolitan periphery, the widespread availability of automobiles, and improved transportation connections between these new suburbs and the older city center made it possible for many whites to move into what they saw as superior housing in the suburbs. A cultural preference for single-family houses surrounded by lawns and gardens gave further impetus to suburbanization. In parts of southern Los Angeles and northern Orange Counties the location of oil fields and refineries stimulated nearby suburban developments before 1930. The demand for homes for oil workers in El Segundo, Torrance, Signal Hill, San Pedro, Huntington Beach, Brea, and Santa Fe Springs led to home construction nearby. The rapid expansion of automobile and other manufacturing also prompted homebuilding for workers’ families. In the early 1940s new planned communities for defense workers were built near aircraft factories, and after World War II other residential developments were designed and located for workers at other large industrial facilities. The net result was a dispersal of industry which gave an economic base and a working-class character to many suburbs.

By the 1960s residential suburbs and industry had already filled much of the flatland near Los Angeles, and new homebuilding became more active in surrounding areas—Orange County, the eastern San Gabriel Valley and western San
Fernando Valley, and the Santa Clarita and Simi Valleys.

The trend of increasing dispersal has continued, so that residents of Southern California are scattered over most of the region—wherever the terrain is not too steep or where nonresidential land uses prohibit housing (Fig. 2.1). Densities of people per square mile tend to be higher in the older settled areas. Because minorities usually had lower incomes than whites and faced discriminatory restrictions on where they could live, they tended to live in those older areas. Minority groups often established enclaves in such neighborhoods, many of which were still significant as of 1990. Streets in the older, more central part of Los Angeles are mapped in some detail, so that the ethnic-group settlements referred to in chapters 3 though 5 can more easily be located (Fig. 2.4).

**Housing development and mobility.** The detailed distribution of people of varied status and identity within any metropolitan region like Los Angeles is limited by the distribution of housing of different types and cost.

The basic process of residential development has been the subdivision of large tracts of land into small parcels and the construction of single-family detached houses on those parcels. Realtors and developers judged future demand and made all the key decisions regarding the location and timing of land purchase and subdivision, the income level of the desired home buyers, and the style and characteristics of the homes they built. After World War II the government helped to simulate further subdivision by subsidizing the cost of new freeways and guaranteeing mortgage loans with good terms for new home buyers, including working-class families and others with low incomes.

Once new housing becomes available, it normally entices residents from other parts of Southern California who can afford that housing. A chain of housing openings appears, as those who move into the new house or apartment leave behind a vacancy, which is then usually filled by others, which then results in another housing vacancy, and so forth. Households insert themselves into these vacancy chains, including the initial one based on new construction. They choose their new residence based on the number and ages of people in their household, their financial resources, and their general areas of preference and avoidance. Ethnic identity and networks play a role in these locational decisions, which in large part determine ethnic distributions.

**Industrial location before 1960.** As hundreds of thousands of migrants poured into Los Angeles in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the oil, movie, apparel, automobile, rubber, and aircraft industries all built facilities and expanded. The oil industry preceded the others, and the location of its larger operations determined much of the dispersed pattern of manufacturing in the region. Other types of manufacturers responded to the opportunities provided by the region’s climate and ample buildable land, its supply of potential workers and consumers, and the weakness of most unions in Southern California.

Railroad lines had already linked Los Angeles with points east by means of three routes through the San Gabriel Valley, with the harbor at Wilmington by way of Alameda Street, and with San Francisco through the San Fernando Valley (Fig. 2.3). These arteries became corridors for the location of those industries that required rail transportation. Certain municipalities like Torrance, Vernon, and Industry were planned to emphasize large industrial operations. Aircraft factories were dispersed in Santa Monica, Inglewood, Downey, Burbank, and Hawthorne; and in 1941 Douglas Aircraft built a large new assembly plant in Long Beach.

Apart from dispersed aircraft factories and narrow industrial corridors along railroad lines, large industrial plants were typically located around Vernon and in the harbor area. In general, the more southern areas of Los Angeles County were preferred for industrial development. This was because they provided easy access to ocean transportation and contained large parcels of former farmland for potential development. This greater concentration of industry in the southern part of Los Angeles County has meant that blue-collar workers have been more strongly represented in that area than in areas to the north. In contrast, professional, managerial, and clerical (white-collar) workers tended to live in the other directions away from Downtown: to the west as far as Santa Monica and in and near Pasadena.
Deconcentration of stores, offices, and industries after 1960. The suburbanization that began with nineteenth-century residential development has gathered steam more recently. Building projects have included single-family houses, as before, but have no longer been restricted to that type of development. Because the more distant areas of Orange County, eastern Ventura County, and the eastern San Gabriel Valley were still mostly small towns and agricultural land until the 1960s and 1970s, this more varied form of deconcentration has especially characterized those areas.

Beginning in the 1960s, modern industrial plants, shopping centers, and residential subdivisions began to replace the fields and orchards. All urban functions have tended to move away from the old downtowns. Massive enclosed shopping centers, industrial parks, corporate and government office buildings, restaurants, and hotels have appeared in various clusters, their locations often close to higher-status neighborhoods and suburbs (Fig. 2.3). New apartment and townhouse complexes have been built, as have many new subdivisions of modern single-family houses. All have been designed not for pedestrians but for people with automobiles.

Because homogeneity of land use in any one area remains important to the people who will use and buy homes and other buildings, distinct functions are each given their own area. A mosaic of land uses describes the urban and suburban patterns of Southern California: agricultural, industrial, office, shopping, and transportation land uses cluster in different places. Even the locations of apartment housing are evident on a detailed land-use map. Altogether, the highly intricate distributions of various land uses are a change from the loose collection of suburbs and vacant land beyond the urban fringe that characterized the early 1960s.

A multinucleated urban pattern. The new malls, the industrial zones, and the clusters of office buildings can all be considered nuclei that attract local residents and outsiders for work, shopping, or other services. Various tracts of new housing are priced to preserve the homogeneity of income level, as in earlier decades. The outer cities are “large conglomerates of technologically advanced industry, services, and information processing. They are sharply differentiated by class, income, and lifestyles.” The post-1960 spatial pattern reflects a high degree of urbanization—but with no clear center. Because new construction is no longer restricted to tracts of single-family houses, this has been called “postsuburban” development.

The business centers that have been built far from the old central business district of Los Angeles have siphoned away much of the business activity that in earlier times was focused on downtown. These new office complexes have been appropriately described as “edge cities.” In Southern California such “suburban downtown” centers include Warner Center in the San Fernando Valley, Century City in the Westside of Los Angeles, the area adjacent to Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), and the redeveloped downtowns of Glendale and Pasadena, Irvine Spectrum, and Newport Center–Fashion Island. The largest of these developments are found on extensive tracts of vacant or former agricultural land that escaped earlier development. In size and scope the city of Irvine in Orange County epitomizes these trends. “By design Irvine has no downtown but is a deconcentrated mosaic of residential villages, small shopping centers, and industrial parks. Irvine’s city hall is not a routine walk from any of the city’s villages.”

When viewed as an entire metropolitan area, including the area of older development, Southern California can be characterized as essentially polycentric or multinucleated (Fig. 2.3). Centers or nuclei can be shopping malls, complexes of business and government offices, industrial areas and warehousing areas, airports, or universities. Between these centers lies a residential mosaic—a set of housing areas each somewhat homogeneous in terms of price and type of dwelling. Some more traditional urban patterns, such as the location of small stores along major highways and industries near railroad tracks, still characterize older sections of the metropolitan area. However, areas developed since about 1970 and the entire built-up area of Southern California are polycentered. This spatial pattern is different from that of the pre-1960 period when Orange County was essentially a bedroom appendage of Los Angeles County. Southern California suburbs were nearly all residential, whereas shopping and office work were much more concentrated in central business districts or downtowns.
This multinucleated mosaic of varying land uses is hidden from most of the maps in this book because the maps are based on only the residential population. Some census tracts have relatively few people because they contain large industrial complexes, commercial districts, or open areas. For instance, the city of Irwindale in the San Gabriel Valley appears on maps as a large tract, but it is mostly empty land with gravel pits and contains only 1,050 people. Only in consultation with the land-use map (Fig. 2.3) can some significant aspects of tracts be identified.

**Patterns of Housing**

**Age of housing.** Of all the housing units (single-family houses, apartments, mobile homes, and so forth) in Southern California in 1990, only 19 percent were constructed prior to 1950. Another 19 percent were built during each of the three decades subsequent to 1950. In the 1980s the pace of construction increased: 22 percent of all Southern California’s housing units were constructed during that decade. Although many buildings dating from before 1950 were later demolished to make room for newer housing or other land uses, in the poorest areas less money has been available for reconstruction and in-filling. As a result, a few tracts, primarily in South Central Los Angeles, contain a majority of houses built before 1940.

Because housing development has not followed an overall plan, the varied timing and location of new subdivisions and the in-filling of buildable spaces have resulted in a somewhat helter-skelter pattern (Fig. 2.5). If the variability in percentage of single-family houses is also considered, the spatial pattern of development is indeed complex (Fig. 2.6).

Nevertheless, a general pattern of age of housing can be discerned. Older houses are found near the centers of cities, because these areas were developed earlier. This is especially evident especially in Los Angeles, which had 1.2 million residents in 1930. Other leading cities of the day—those with populations of about 30,000 or more in 1930—had proportionately smaller areas of old housing, which have been more easily modified by urban renewal. For this reason Long Beach, Pasadena, Glendale, Santa Monica, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Santa Ana have fewer tracts in which the majority of housing was constructed prior to 1951. Old neighborhoods in smaller outlying places, like San Pedro, Torrance, Santa Ana, Burbank, South Gate, and Long Beach can also be seen on the map. In Irvine and scattered other areas of new development, those tracts which show a pre-1951 median year of housing construction have few residents and are essentially office buildings and industry.

The extensive area subdivided in the 1950s is easily visible. Because the single-family houses that typify these areas are not obsolete or decaying, they have experienced only in-filling and little demolition of older housing.

The most recent housing construction tends to be near the outer edges of suburbs—in the urban fringe. Easy access by means of interstate highways and the vast extent of buildable land to the east and west meant that during the 1980s some new subdivisions were located far beyond the bounds of maps in this book. By 1990 many people were commuting from new homes in very distant places, like Lancaster and Palmdale in the Antelope Valley far to the north and Hemet, Lake Elsinore, and Moreno Valley in Riverside County. Houses in such subdivisions were priced lower than were those closer to the core, and the lower prices enabled many families to become first-time home buyers. The drawback of locations on the urban fringe is the long drive required in the commute to work.

There are numerous exceptions to this general pattern of more recent housing near the urban fringe. This is partly because many older houses remain in what were once outlying farm areas, such as in and near Piru, at the top of Figure 2.5. Also, unused parcels within many older subdivisions were built up much later, and older housing has sometimes been destroyed and replaced with modern apartment complexes. Most pockets of new housing on once-vacant land surrounded by older neighborhoods are too small to be evident on maps at the scale of census tracts. In many cases the in-filling is as small as one or two houses or apartment buildings on tiny parcels. Nevertheless, some larger examples of this redevelopment in older areas can be seen on Bunker Hill in Downtown, near Marina del Rey, and in parts of Burbank, Industry, Inglewood, and Torrance (Fig. 2.5).
**Single-unit detached housing.** Single-unit detached houses (including mobile homes) are often referred to as single-family homes. Most people distinguish these from other types of housing such as townhouses and apartment buildings. Single-unit houses constitute 59.5 percent of all housing units in Southern California.\(^{11}\) Despite the importance of this type of residence in this region, it is less frequently found here than in U.S. metropolitan areas in general (62.0 percent). In the older, more densely settled Los Angeles City, single-family housing represents only 45.4 percent of residential units.

Few areas contain very low percentages of single-unit detached houses (Fig. 2.6). These are either the poorer and more central sections of the older cities or newer residential sections of apartment and condominium complexes. Since 1960 many apartment buildings and larger complexes have been constructed, especially for rental housing. Because the number of apartments may represent far less than half the housing units in the entire tract, small pockets of apartment development often do not show up on tract-level maps. Where the developments are larger, however, often with large complexes of several buildings, they are evident and widespread. Such larger apartment and condominium developments characterize parts of Santa Monica, Marina del Rey, Culver City, Redondo Beach, Glendale, Woodland Hills, and Irvine.

Single-unit detached houses constitute more than 97 percent of all housing in some areas. A very large and homogeneous single-family-housing area can be seen most clearly in Lakewood (Fig. 2.6). In the early 1950s old hay and grain fields were covered with tract after tract of houses in what was one of the largest subdivisions ever. Other census tracts that are homogeneous in their single-family housing are home to wealthier families. Those pockets are widespread, but the largest areas with almost entirely single-family housing are in the Santa Monica Mountains and the northern and western parts of the San Fernando Valley.

**Homeownership.** Of the total of 4.9 million households in Southern California, 54.0 percent own the home they are living in—or are considered to, even if most of them still have a mortgage to pay off. Homeownership is less likely in Southern California than in U.S. metropolitan areas as a whole (61.8 percent).\(^{12}\) Homeownership is partly an indicator of wealth, and areas with high percentages of owners are typically areas of moderate to high income (Fig. 2.7). Conversely, people with low incomes are apt to be renters, and housing is more apt to be rented when the structure itself is older. These reasons combine to explain the fact that only 39.4 percent of households in Los Angeles City are homeowners. Older single-family houses and apartment buildings are likely to need remodeling or roofing, plumbing, and electrical repairs. Such older structures are less attractive to buyers.

Some contrasts of wealth within short distances are evident, and this juxtaposition can be a source of neighborhood tension. The Los Feliz section in the hills of Hollywood, with its high percentage of owners, is a different world from that of the renters who live south of Hollywood Boulevard. The same comparison holds for the Cheviot Hills and the adjacent flatlands east of Robertson Boulevard. The wealthiest section of Santa Monica is also easily distinguishable from areas in that city with a high percentage of renters.

However, high rates of homeownership are occasionally found in areas of moderate income: much of the city of Carson, the Avalon section of South Central Los Angeles, and parts of Huntington Beach and Westminster.

**Overcrowded households.** The ratio between the number of people in a household and the number of rooms in their home is called the housing ratio. It can be a useful indicator of relative crowding. A housing unit is usually considered overcrowded if the number of persons living in it is greater than the number of rooms. Most households in Southern California are not overcrowded. However, 6 percent of the households have between 1.01 and 1.50 persons per room, and another 10 percent are severely overcrowded, with more than 1.5 persons per room. Households are overcrowded because of poverty, but the large size of Hispanic immigrant families is part of the reason for the fact that Hispanics constitute 73 percent of all Southern California households that are severely overcrowded.

Thus, overcrowding of between 1 and 3 persons per room shows many areas with high proportions of recent Hispanic immi-
grants (Fig. 2.8). It is not surprising that some of the greatest household crowding occurs in the poorest part of Los Angeles—the area immediately south of Downtown and Little Tokyo, characterized by poorly maintained and sometimes abandoned apartment buildings, wholesale markets, trucking operations, and garment factories. The other area of intense overcrowding is in the Westlake barrio, west of Downtown.

Also overcrowded, but less so, are surrounding areas that received many Latino immigrants during the 1980s, including East Hollywood, Koreatown, Boyle Heights, Pacoima, and Huntington Park. In these and other areas, immigrant families and groups of men have often shared housing units meant for many fewer people. To illustrate, during the 1980s the southeastern part of Los Angeles (adjacent to Vernon and Huntington Park) recorded a gain of more than 47,000 residents but a net increase of only 198 housing units.\(^{13}\) In the case of Long Beach and one part of Santa Ana, some of the overcrowding is due to the presence of Cambodian refugees with many children. Overcrowding in poor areas that are mostly black is not as severe a problem because the birth rate among blacks has been much lower than the birth rate among Hispanics or Cambodians.

**College dormitories, prisons, and residential hospitals.** Housing ratios that are even higher than those that indicate household overcrowding can identify a completely separate phenomenon: large institutions that provide housing for people in group quarters rather than households. All mapped census tracts in which the ratio of persons to rooms is greater than 6 are such places (Fig. 2.8). Because their special character may affect details of some map patterns, institutions that house two-thirds or more of the total tract population are identified in Table 2.1 and in Figure 2.8.

**Patterns of Social Class**

Differentiation of neighborhoods in terms of social class has been an important feature in American cities and suburbs in the twentieth century. Street railways, interurban trolleys, and automobiles led to the opening up of many new housing areas, but any one subdivision was designed and priced for buyers of a specific income level. This was the first step in creating a residential geography defined by income.

Another factor in class differentiation was political. As cities grew and new housing was extended outward, most new subdivisions did not join up with the central city. Many incorporated as separate suburban entities. The government of the suburb could set lower property tax rates, apportion revenues, and create regula-
tions that would have the effect of excluding poor people and minorities. Suburban governments could refuse to provide public housing for low-income families, and they could limit apartment construction, mobile homes, or any other type of housing. For poor people and minorities, such restrictions certainly reduced housing opportunities in those suburbs that had such policies.

Although many people have moved from older housing to newer developments in the suburbs, the location of rich and poor neighborhoods has changed very little over the last thirty years. Despite the aging of all housing, neighborhoods that began as high status have remained higher than neighborhoods that were originally of lesser status. Neighborhoods tend to decline slightly as housing ages and as new housing appears near the urban fringe. This is because some residents leave and buy homes in the new subdivisions. In the older areas the relative status of neighborhoods is usually stable and slower to change than is ethnic composition.

Since 1940 neighborhoods have become more differentiated in terms of status. Between 1940 and 1970 rich and poor families in Los Angeles came to live increasingly in separate areas. Improved transportation, the land-development process, and the separatist politics of suburban governments have increased income and ethnic differences among places. In the 1980s this divergence was accentuated by a growing income polarization (see chapter 7). Differences in values, lifestyles, and social networks among occupational-status groups may be an especially important factor in differentiating neighborhoods. Wider gaps in status between neighborhoods means that the geography of class becomes still more important.

Together, the maps of educational attainment, occupational status, people in specific occupations and industries, and poverty are sufficient to describe the general geography of status in Southern California. Income is another important facet of status, but it is saved for use in maps of income levels for each group—whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians (see Figs. 3.11, 3.16, 4.9, and 5.15).

Educational attainment and occupational status. Whereas poverty focuses on the lower end of the continuum of social class, our maps of education and occupational status are a good means of describing areal patterns at the upper end of that continuum.

In Southern California 22 percent of the people aged 25 and older have graduated from a four-year college or university. Where that percentage is doubled and even tripled, the residents have exceptionally high status in terms of educational attainment (Fig. 2.9). The sharpness of many of the boundaries is striking and shows powerful contrasts between places. More than half of all adults are college graduates in many special places. The higher status of Hancock Park, Belmont Shore, Porter Ranch, and parts of Fullerton, compared with surrounding areas, is clear. Exceptionally low percentages of college graduates are associated with either poverty (Fig. 2.21) or a high percentage of Hispanic residents (Figs. 7.2–7.4).

Twenty-eight percent of all employed Southern Californians are professionals or managers, executives, and administrators. Areal variations in this percentage are pronounced, with many roots in the patterns of development in the early twentieth century. In 1940 people in professional, clerical, domestic, and service occupations tended to live between Downtown and Beverly Hills and south as far as Slauson Boulevard. Within this area the proportion of blacks was particularly high east of Main Street. In contrast, craftsmen, operatives, and laborers were common east of the Los Angeles River, in Santa Monica, and in the entire area between Slauson Boulevard and the harbor. Although the residential location and occupations of blacks have changed radically since 1940, the 1990 occupational pattern confirms the greater percentage of blue-collar or working-class people in the southern and southeastern part of Los Angeles County, compared with the white-collar central and western area.

Some of the same pattern is evident today, although, with the expansion of the metropolitan area, there are more separate areas with high percentages of managers and professionals (Fig. 2.10). Pockets of high percentages of managers and professionals are often clearly differentiated from surrounding areas. In Long Beach this can be seen in Belmont Shore and in Bixby Knolls just east of Interstate 710. Also, over 60 percent of all employed
people living in the gated community of Rancho Los Alamitos are in high-status occupations.

As expected, the pattern is similar to that of educational attainment. The few areas in which men and women are more likely to be professionals or managers than they are to be college graduates are probably not significant. The residential preferences of physicians and lawyers confirm these patterns for general regions within Southern California. However, police officers with lower incomes tend to live in very different areas (Figs. 2.11–2.13). Employment in these three occupations is found widely in Southern California.

On the other hand, the distribution of people who work in certain specific industries is related to both income and employment location. An example is the high-tech industries in southern Los Angeles and northern Orange Counties (Figs. 2.14 and 2.15). Moreover, sometimes ethnic groups are highly represented in certain industries (see chapter 8), so that the location of ethnic concentrations is an additional factor. We demonstrate a Russian-ancestry niche in the theater and motion-picture industry, as well as Guatemalan and Salvadoran overrepresentation in the manufacturing of apparel and in private household services. The distribution of workers in these industries shows special concentrations, with the pattern based on a combination of income level, work location, and ethnicity (Figs. 2.16–2.18). Such distinctive distributions may also characterize other occupations and industries.

**Poverty.** The Census Bureau's definition of the level of income below which people are considered to be in poverty is based on both the total income of the household and the number of people living in it. The actual dollar value is adjusted by means of the national Consumer Price Index, which means that in Los Angeles, where housing prices were extremely high as of 1990, the percentage of people in poverty is understated.

A map of varying percentages of people in poverty portrays a fundamental aspect of the geography of social class, and the details of the pattern show real neighborhood differences (Fig. 2.19). The largest area of poverty extends from Downtown south past Watts, but the percentage in poverty typically decreases fairly abruptly beyond this area.

The pockets of greatest poverty are in the large public-housing projects built in the 1940s and 1950s (Fig. 2.19). Most of the tracts in which more than half the people are in poverty are such places, and some of these are identified on the map. These poverty tracts include Long Beach’s Carmelitos Housing Project, built in 1939, and most of the seventeen projects in Los Angeles. Jordan Downs, Imperial Courts, and Nickerson Gardens in Watts are visible, as are Ramona Gardens in Boyle Heights and Pueblo del Rio in South Central.

Other census tracts contain public-housing projects but are not so completely characterized by them. These include San Fernando Gardens in Pacoima, Rose Hill Courts in Lincoln Heights, Mar Vista Gardens in West Los Angeles, Dana Strand Village in Wilmington, and Rancho San Pedro in San Pedro. Occasionally the newer type of low-income, federally subsidized housing is large enough to be visible on the map. A good example of this is the privately owned Park Parthenia complex in Northridge.

Some focused concentrations of poverty also appear without these types of housing, but the proportions of people in poverty are usually less: the Skid Row southeast of Downtown and the poorest sections in many cities. In the San Fernando Valley the Blythe Street neighborhood just west of the General Motors plant in Van Nuys has long been notorious for poverty, drugs, and crime.

Two tracts easily noticed on Figure 2.19 have so few people that they are not significant. The first, a poverty tract in Santa Fe Springs, is almost all industrial but does contain 27 people. A similar situation occurs in Anaheim, where a modern industrial and warehousing area has completely engulfed the few old, run-down houses that date from the days when Mexicans worked nearby fields along the Santa Ana River floodplain. In 1990 the tract contained only 81 residents, mostly poor Mexican immigrants and their families.

Because this measure of poverty is so dependent on income, some tracts with college students also appear as pockets of poverty: for example, the University of Southern California and a section of Westwood next to the campus of the University of California, Los Angeles.
Figure 2.1
Population Distribution
1990

One Dot Represents 500 Persons

County Boundary

20 Miles

VENTURA COUNTY
LOS ANGELES COUNTY
ORANGE COUNTY
RIVERSIDE COUNTY
BERNARDINO COUNTY
SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

San Fernando Valley
Santa Monica
Palos Verdes Estates
Dana Point
Downtown
San Fernando Valley
Monterey Park
Granada Hills
Diamond Bar
Hacienda Heights
Walnut
Long Beach
Santa Monica
Incorporated cities and unincorporated county places are shown in black type and communities within the City of Los Angeles are shown in italicized blue type.
Figure 2.3
Land Use
1990

Based on data from the Southern California Association of Governments, 1990.
Figure 2.5
Median Year of Housing Construction 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Tracts</th>
<th>Median Year of Construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>857</td>
<td>Before 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>718</td>
<td>1951 - 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>460</td>
<td>1961 - 1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>1971 - 1980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20 Miles
Figure 2.6
Single-Unit Detached Houses
Percent of Housing Units
1990

Percent of Housing Units that are Single, Detached Units

Number of Tracts: 1025

0 - 13.0
13.1 - 56.5
56.6 - 80.9
81.0 - 91.6
91.7 - 97.9
98.0 - 100

0 - 13.0
13.1 - 56.5
56.6 - 80.9
81.0 - 91.6
91.7 - 97.9
98.0 - 100

County Boundary
City Boundary

20 Miles
Figure 2.7
Owner-Occupied Housing
Percent of Housing Units 1990

Number of Tracts

Percent of Housing that is Owner-Occupied

1793

0 - 16.7
168 - 79.2
79.3 - 86.5
86.6 - 90.9
91.0 - 98.5

County Boundary
City Boundary

20 Miles
Figure 2.8
Persons Per Room
in Occupied Housing Units
1990

Number of Tracts
943
1290
272
42
12
0 - 0.5
0.6 - 1.0
1.1 - 1.5
1.6 - 3.0
3.1 - 6.0
6.1 - 710.0

Persons Per Room

County Boundary
City Boundary

20 Miles
Figure 2.9
College Graduates
Percent of Persons Aged 25+
1990

Number of Tracts  Percent of Persons Aged 25+ Graduating from a 4-Yr College
1787
260  0 - 4.3
1787
258  4.4 - 36.0
124  36.1 - 45.1
88  45.2 - 52.2
47  52.3 - 60.0
47  60.1 - 82.9

County Boundary
City Boundary

20 Miles
Figure 2.10
Managers and Professionals
Percent of Employed Persons
1990

Number of Tracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tracts</th>
<th>Percent Employed in Managerial and Professional Occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1784</td>
<td>0 - 9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>261</td>
<td>9.3 - 40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>40.5 - 47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>47.6 - 52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>53.0 - 60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>60.1 - 69.2</td>
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County Boundary
City Boundary

20 Miles
Figure 2.19
Persons in Poverty
Percent of Population 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Tracts</th>
<th>Percent of Persons in Poverty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>251</td>
<td>0 - 2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>256</td>
<td>2.8 - 20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>20.3 - 28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>28.2 - 34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.6 - 50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.1 - 100</td>
</tr>
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</table>

County Boundary
City Boundary

20 Miles
Figure 2.20
Persons Over Age 64
Percent of Persons 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Tracts</th>
<th>Percent of Persons Over Age 64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>508</td>
<td>0 - 5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>5.2 - 15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>15.7 - 18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.3 - 25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.1 - 35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.1 - 70.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

County Boundary
City Boundary

[Map showing the distribution of persons over age 64 across the county boundaries and city boundaries.]
Figure 2.21

Persons Under Age 15
Percent of Population 1990
**Patterns of Age**

We look first at the patterns of older people—the elderly—and then at areas with very youthful populations. Following traditional practice, we have defined elderly people as those over the age of 64, whereas those under 15 are children or youth.

Until the 1970s most older people in American cities were poor. Because they usually had not accompanied their sons and daughters to the suburbs, they remained in familiar housing in the city or moved to nearby small apartments that were sometimes cheaper and certainly easier to maintain. Both factors tended to result in higher proportions of elderly people in the older parts of cities and much lower proportions in the newer suburbs.

In the past two decades, the young couples who moved to the suburbs forty or fifty years ago have aged but have chosen to remain in their old homes or find apartments not far away. As a result, by 1990 the older suburbs were home to many elderly people as well as to younger families.

New suburbs near the urban fringe have relatively few elderly people, as is illustrated in Santa Clarita and the southern half of Orange County (Fig. 2.20). Older suburbs, like the San Fernando Valley, the South Bay cities, and northern Orange County, have higher percentages of elderly people. Even the Crenshaw area is an older suburb. Although blacks predominate, that area’s aging Japanese American population is sufficient for the tract to qualify as being at least one-quarter elderly.

Elderly constitute the highest percentages of tract populations in certain special situations. In Orange County are two planned retirement communities for people aged 55 and older: the Leisure Worlds in Seal Beach and in Laguna Hills. Also, within the city of Mission Viejo is the Casta del Sol retirement community. In Ventura County is Leisure Village, a seniors-only community originally connected with the Leisure Worlds. The two Veterans Administration hospitals in Long Beach and West Los Angeles care for many elderly patients. Large apartment buildings and complexes have often attracted a disproportionate number of elderly residents. The map shows older areas—Park La Brea, dating from the 1940s, and the Fairfax district, home to many elderly Russian Jews. There are newer developments, too—Oakwood Garden Apartments in Woodland Hills, the Rancho Park and Century City area, and the new apartments on Bunker Hill in Downtown.

High percentages of children are most commonly associated with both poverty and highly Latino areas, particularly those in which immigrants are overrepresented (Fig. 2.21). A single large area stands out: the area in South Central that extends south from the Interstate 10 to Carson. That is the area that received the largest numbers of immigrants from Mexico during the 1980s. The population in this area is more youthful than are the populations of Boyle Heights or East Los Angeles, the old traditional barrios. The high percentage of children in an old part of Long Beach is due to the presence of both Latino and Cambodian immigrants. Other tracts with high proportions of children contain public-housing projects, such as Ramona Gardens in Boyle Heights, Dana Strand Village in Wilmington, and Carmelitos in Long Beach.

**Why Has an Ethnic Transformation Taken Place?**

Immigration to Southern California since 1960 is the most important factor behind the region’s ethnic change. However, the departure of many whites and an ethnic differential in birth rate also play significant roles. Essentially, the non-Hispanic white population has been growing slowly in Southern California as a whole, and in Los Angeles County its absolute number has decreased by 25 percent since 1960 (Table 2.2). At the same time, the black population in Southern California has more than doubled, and the much smaller numbers of American Indians have increased sixfold. By far the most important trend, however, has been the sheer growth of the Hispanic and Asian populations.

So many immigrants arrived from Asia and the Pacific Islands that these populations were ten times more numerous in 1990 than in 1960. Increased immigration from Mexico and Central America, as well as the natural increase of families already here, led to the growth of a Latino population which, by 1990, was rivaling non-Hispanic whites numerically. By 1990
non-Hispanic whites constituted only 50 percent of all Southern Californians. Los Angeles and Orange Counties contained 78 percent of the five-county region’s population but were only 46 percent white.

In our explanation of the trend, we provide only general answers. Three of the sections concern the immigration of minorities. These are followed by sections on white out-migration and high Latino fertility. We make no attempt to delve into the details concerning any one country or region of origin. Where particularly significant, such factors are discussed in the treatment of specific groups in chapters 3 through 5.

**Growing Linkages with Other Countries**

Since 1960 Southern California and the United States as a whole have become more strongly linked with other countries in the world than ever before. This greater globalization of the American economy has resulted in a myriad of new contacts and information. As a result, people in other countries seriously consider migration and, in some cases, actually immigrate. American companies search for materials, cheap labor, workers, and markets in countries we had barely heard of three decades ago, and other countries ship goods for sale here. In other cases the economic and personal connections that have grown so rapidly in recent decades were begun more than a century ago. The total amount of foreign investment in the world (money invested in all countries except the country where it originated) increased 1,400 percent between 1960 and 1987. The net effect of these growing economic interconnections has been to stimulate migration in many countries.

The source region for early Chinese immigration to California illustrates the importance of prior contacts in creating migrations. The first Chinese to immigrate to the United States came from the Guangdong region of China. That region’s proximity to Hong Kong, the British colony that had just been taken from China in 1842, meant that they were some of the first Chinese to hear about the 1848 gold strike in California. Because people in that region were being particularly ravaged by a combination of loss of land from inability to pay high taxes, sporadic warfare, and starvation, many men borrowed money for the passage and seized the opportunity that a few years of work in California offered. Connections established in and near Hong Kong were then followed by the brokers who supplied labor for Hawaiian sugar plantations. Later, in order to achieve a linguistically divided labor force, recruiters for Hawaiian and California growers went to Japan, other Asian countries, Puerto Rico, and Mexico. Thus, word of opportunities in the growing U.S. and California economies was spread to many parts of the world.

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**Table 2.2 Ethnic Population Change by County**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Hispanic Whites</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>4,877,150</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>3,618,850</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>641,778</td>
<td>91.2</td>
<td>1,554,501</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside</td>
<td>253,148</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>754,140</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Bernardino</td>
<td>422,018</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>862,113</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura</td>
<td>158,584</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>440,555</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blacks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>461,546</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>992,974</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>3,171</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>42,681</td>
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<tr>
<td>Riverside</td>
<td>12,485</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>63,591</td>
<td>5.4</td>
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<td>17,234</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>114,934</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3,598</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>15,629</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Asians and Pacific Islanders</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>115,250</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>954,485</td>
<td>10.8</td>
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<td>0.8</td>
<td>249,192</td>
<td>10.3</td>
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<td>2,631</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>41,591</td>
<td>3.6</td>
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<td>0.5</td>
<td>59,201</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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<td>Ventura</td>
<td>2,773</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>34,579</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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<td><strong>Hispanics</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>576,716</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>3,351,242</td>
<td>37.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>52,576</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>564,828</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside</td>
<td>36,224</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>307,514</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Bernardino</td>
<td>60,177</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>378,582</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura</td>
<td>33,980</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>176,952</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

21 The net effect of these growing economic interconnections has been to stimulate migration in many countries.

22 Connections established in and near Hong Kong were then followed by the brokers who supplied labor for Hawaiian sugar plantations. Later, in order to achieve a linguistically divided labor force, recruiters for Hawaiian and California growers went to Japan, other Asian countries, Puerto Rico, and Mexico. Thus, word of opportunities in the growing U.S. and California economies was spread to many parts of the world.
After initial contacts had been made and the flow of immigrants had begun, the new migration systems were maintained through networks of friends and relatives by means of letters and money sent home, return visits, and new immigrants traveling along these migration “chains.”

Sometimes initial contact with people who became immigrants was made by Christian mission activities, as was the case in Korea. In other situations, the U.S. government has played a role. Since World War II the U.S. military has been an important stimulus to migration from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Thailand. Friendships and knowledge of the United States resulted from training under American specialists, from contacts established in the daily operations of U.S. military bases overseas, and from ties developing out of the love interests of American troops.

When corporations penetrate the economies of Europe, Latin America, the West Indies, and a great range of Asian countries, traditional economic systems are disrupted. Wholesalers and retailers, craft and clerical workers, and managers and owners can find themselves out of work. Some find employment in the new branch plants and offices. Those who do not get jobs are more likely to consider migration, either within the country or internationally.23

In the tourist industry, for instance, satisfying the demand for safe and comfortable visits to more exotic places opens up opportunities for some citizens of faraway lands and leads to migration toward jobs connected with tourism. At the same time it may put out of business owners of small stores, restaurants, or hotels. Peasants often lose their livelihood when the land they worked is made part of a large farm for the production of fresh vegetables or fruit for American supermarkets; others may migrate toward the farm in hopes of work. Young women from rural Mexico, the Philippines, and Haiti are enticed to work long hours assembling telephones or computers or stitching shirts or shoes for cash wages. Life in the workers’ dormitories may be stressful and restricting, but work is so difficult to find that most of them feel they have little choice.

Directly or indirectly, economic penetration has increased awareness of opportunities in distant places. Although most people probably prefer not to leave their home area, many others think for the first time about migrating to the United States. In some cases the assistance of an American employer can even help people qualify for an immigration visa.

**Superior Earnings in the United States**

People in other countries will not actually wish to migrate unless the sum of good and bad points at the destination positively outweighs that of the area in which they currently live.24 Thus, the old notion of migration as resulting from either “push” or “pull” factors is too simplistic in its dichotomy.

People generally migrate for economic reasons. Although they may express this in terms of “a better life for the children” or other glowing phrases, they usually seek employment, higher pay, better working conditions, greater business or professional opportunities, and the like. This means that most people will not move to another country unless economic prospects are substantially better there. The volume and timing of migration to a richer country is correlated with the size of both wage-rate and unemployment-rate differences between countries.25 For example, for most of this century Mexican workers have earned about four or five times as much per hour in the United States as they could earn in Mexico. Given the proximity and size of the two countries, it is not surprising that the flow from Mexico to the United States is the largest sustained migration of workers in the world. Similarly, the earnings and professional opportunities for engineers, physicians, optometrists, and others are much lower in most Asian and Middle Eastern countries than in the United States, prompting many of them to try to immigrate.

Earnings differentials for migrants can sometimes vary by the migrant’s educational level.26 For example, educated Mexicans have generally migrated toward better positions within their own country because they sensed that middle-class Mexicans would not be rewarded in the United States for their skills. (With the stumbling of the Mexican economy in the mid-1980s, however, some educated Mexicans ventured north of the border.) On the other hand, poorly educated migrants from Mexico have had good opportunities in the United States.
because they fill the menial, physically difficult, and low-paying jobs that most U.S.-born Californians refuse to fill.27

The importance of this earnings differential as a factor behind migration is shown by the fact that most immigrants to Southern California come from countries with incomes that are lower than those in the United States. Between about 1890 and 1924 immigration from Japan and Europe was much greater than it is now because those areas were relatively much poorer than the United States was. Now, prosperity and pay are not very different, so that fewer Japanese and Europeans feel a strong desire to migrate to the United States.

The economic improvement sought through migration is usually for the larger extended family, not just the migrant and his or her spouse and children. Other family members help pay for travel costs, and most migrants send money home to help support their families. These remittances help the families buy things they otherwise could not afford or invest in housing improvements, equipment for family businesses, and so forth. The economic advantages of migration thus become quite visible for everyone in the local area, which tends to encourage further migration. The same basic motivation applies to migrants who plan to work only a few years in another country and to others who intend a permanent change. Both groups have been important, and many who imagined they would not stay long in Southern California later changed their minds.

One underlying reason for the growing earnings differential between countries since about 1950 is the more rapid population growth in developing countries compared with that in the United States and other developed countries. Death rates in those poorer areas have been substantially lowered with the advent of improved medical treatment and public-health measures. Although traditionally high birth rates have dropped somewhat, in many countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia they still remain high enough to produce rapid population growth. Because expansion of the economy in those countries has usually not been as rapid as population growth, jobs and housing are increasingly in short supply. Thus, overcrowding in many developing countries tends to exacerbate the earnings differential over time. It clearly adds to people’s motivation to migrate to the United States or another developed country.

Economic reasons for migrating are sometimes mixed with political reasons, such as a desire for freedom, stability, or the avoidance of war or persecution. Even though it is difficult to separate the various motivations, the earnings differential is very significant for nearly all migrants who come from countries that are much poorer than the United States.

**The Immigration Act of 1965 and Other Changes in Immigrant Selectivity**

As more people have become aware of migration possibilities and the superior earnings they expect to receive after migration, it is not surprising that increasing millions of people have wished to migrate to the United States. In recent decades the large supply of potential immigrants in other countries has meant that U.S. policies and laws have had to be selective regarding potential immigrants.

**Pre-1965 policies.** In the first half-century of our country’s existence, when new land and growing cities needed farmers, workers, and shopkeepers, the president and Congress encouraged immigration from the familiar source—Europe. Unskilled laborers from China and other Asian countries were recruited for some of the most hazardous and demanding jobs. However, the much lower wages they would accept compared with white workers in similar jobs prompted Congress to protect the wages and jobs of white workers by limiting the entry of Asian groups. Such limitations were not applied to Mexico, however, because California farmers believed that cheap, tractable labor was vitally important to their survival and because Mexicans were not far away and eager to oblige.

Immigration from Europe continued strong until World War I. The large numbers of European immigrants crowding into industrial cities and their lack of English skills made many Americans feel that the society was being overwhelmed by foreigners. Although the immigrants were white, they spoke a range of languages and clustered together in enclaves. It seemed at the time that an English-speaking America was being balkanized by the separate communities of Germans, Italians, Greeks, Hungarians, Poles, Russians, and Jews.
In 1924 Congress eliminated nearly all immigration from southern and eastern Europe and Asia. For more than twenty years (the mid-1920s to the mid-1940s) the United States received few immigrants from other countries, although Mexican immigration continued until the Great Depression. During this period, when immigrant communities were not replenished by new arrivals from old countries, much of the cultural and structural assimilation of previous European, Asian, and Mexican immigrants occurred. After the surge of European immigration before World War II, the interlude allowed time for the United States to incorporate the newcomers. World War II continued this process, as European immigrants and their children participated in the common effort.

After the mid-1940s Congress opened up the gates slightly for a few special groups of immigrants, refugees, and students. However, no fine tuning of earlier immigration law was as momentous as that of 1965.

For over a century abrupt shifts in acceptance or denial of different categories of immigrants have affected Asian countries most intensely. Thus, the precise wording of U.S. immigration laws and their judicial interpretation have been major subjects of concern for Asian ethnic communities in Southern California. 28

The Immigration Act of 1965. The Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act ushered in radical changes in immigration policy. Congress eliminated race as a consideration in immigration and scrapped the old system of quotas favoring Western European countries and instituted a single limit of 20,000 immigrants a year for each country in the Eastern Hemisphere. The law favored close relatives or immigrants or citizens already in the United States, but some room was left for people with specific occupational skills who had no close relative here. 29

Although the Immigration Act of 1965 was designed to eliminate the low quotas for Italy and other southern and eastern European countries, its greatest effect over the past thirty years has been to open up immigration from Asian countries. Close relatives of Asians already here could apply for entry, and numerous other Asians entered the United States first as students or refugees and then later became permanent immigrants. That status has enabled them to sponsor their family members.

The great increases in Southern California’s Asian populations are a net cumulative effect of the old and new family-based migration chains made possible by the Immigration Act of 1965. At the same time, most Asians would not have immigrated if there had been no economic differentials between their countries and the United States.

Some changes in immigration law have been made since 1965, but none of them has been as momentous as those of 1965. Until 1976 the annual 20,000 quota was not applicable to countries in the Western Hemisphere. Thus, immigration from Mexico and other Latin American countries was not affected by the new law of 1965. Since 1976 the limit has resulted in a backlog of qualified potential Mexican immigrants, as has been the case in some Asian countries. Other changes involve shifts in the number in various occupations allowed to immigrate because of the changing U.S. demand for certain skills.

Refugee policies. People who are designated by the U.S. government as refugees have been accepted for special entry above and beyond the regular immigration laws. When such people apply to the U.S. embassy for refugee status, they have left their normal country of residence and have not returned because they are justifiably fearful of persecution. (If they enter the United States and then apply to remain in this country, they are called “asylees.”)

After World War II Europeans entered as displaced persons or refugees. Since then the United States has quite willingly accepted people from Communist countries as refugees, and after 1980 the U.S. government gave much greater credence to those fleeing rightist or fascist totalitarian regimes. After the Communists took over China in 1949, refugees from that country found their way to Hong Kong or Taiwan, and some later entered the United States. In the early 1960s the first of several waves of anti-Castro Cuban refugees arrived in Miami. As these refugees later dispersed to places like Los Angeles, the Cuban-born population in Southern California came to mirror the socioeconomic status and timing of these various waves.
With the defeat of American forces in Vietnam and the loss of Saigon in April of 1975, Vietnamese who were closely connected with the U.S. war effort and their families became the first wave of Vietnamese refugees to be accepted into the United States. Many in this first wave were processed and connected with sponsors at Camp Pendleton, the Marine Corps Reservation just south of Orange County.

Two years later a second large exodus occurred, as the Vietnamese government forced thousands of Vietnamese and Chinese-Vietnamese to flee in boats. Most of those who made it to the shores of Thailand and Malaysia were accepted as refugees in some other country, many in the United States. Another year later massacres in Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge forced Cambodians to search for safety across the Mekong River in Thailand. These people were some of the first Cambodians to settle in the Long Beach area.

Because all of Indochina saw the devastation of war, the United States was obligated to help other people, like the Hmong, who had assisted the U.S. war effort. Thus, most Indochinese who came to the United States in late 1970s and early 1980s were refugees. Later arrivals often entered with immigrant visas because by that time their close relatives were either immigrants themselves or U.S. citizens.

When diplomatic relationships with the Soviet Union became less tense, that country often permitted more of its citizens to emigrate. In the late 1970s many Jews and some Armenians were able to leave the Soviet Union; a large proportion settled in Los Angeles. Another similar wave appeared in the late 1980s, to augment the Soviet Armenian and Russian-speaking Jewish populations of Los Angeles.

With the downfall of the U.S.-supported regime of the shah of Iran and the rise to power of an anti-American and antimodernization leader, the United States had little difficulty in according refugee status to those who escaped from Iran during the 1980s. Just the opposite situation characterized Guatemala and El Salvador. Although persecution and massacres have been widespread in those countries over the past twenty years or more, the fact that the United States supported those governments made it seem inconsistent to acknowledge those arriving illegally the United States as asylees. By 1990, however, the United States was modifying laws to accept more Salvadorans, at least temporarily.

Numerous changes in the laws dealing with refugees have been made since 1965, the details of which are not of concern at this point. Some changes have recognized that there are legitimate refugees from non-Communist countries, and some accommodate political events or war in specific countries and subsequent refugee flows.

The significance of changes in selectivity. The main point is that the United States chooses whom it permits to immigrate legally. With the large numbers of potential migrants, the government must devise ways of selecting which and how many immigrants should be approved. Yet because selectivity changes, the number of immigrants in specific occupations and of certain age groups from specific countries has fluctuated. This means that ethnic groups in Southern California with a large proportion of immigrants may differ from each other in characteristics that relate to the timing of their arrival and modifications of U.S. law.

Once the gates to immigration from Asia were opened wide in 1965, old and new networks of personal contact were elaborated, producing a multiplier effect. This has built up the potential number of legal immigrants and, to a lesser extent, the actual flows. This, then, becomes another mechanism by which linkages with immigration source countries have grown.

Illegal immigration. Many thousands of residents of Southern California are not living in the United States legally. Considering the limitations imposed by U.S. law on migration flows previously set up by the globalization of the American economy and by the earnings differential, this is not surprising. Many enter the United States temporarily as students or tourists and simply remain here after their visas expire. Others, mostly Mexicans and Central Americans, cross the U.S.-Mexican border and enter illegally.

No one knows exactly how many people are living illegally in Southern California, but the numbers are substantial. From 1988 through 1991 more than 765,000 formerly illegal (undocumented) residents of this region and another 318,000 special agricultural workers have received legal-immigrant status under the
Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Although the latter group includes some migrant workers, their base was Southern California. The 765,000 figure includes only people who were living in Southern California continually since 1982. If those who arrived after 1982 are included, the total number of illegal residents of Southern California during much of the 1980s must have been at least 1.3 million. Mexico was by far the largest source of these formerly illegal residents, but El Salvador, Guatemala, Iran, China, and the Philippines were also important.

**White Movement out of Los Angeles County**

Although the largest and most dramatic aspects of the change in ethnic composition involved the immigration of Asians and Latinos, patterns of net migration of whites have also furthered ethnic change in Los Angeles County. The earlier immigrations of whites and blacks that had built up Los Angeles’ white and black populations after World War II were much reduced during the 1970s and, especially, the 1980s. In fact, since at least 1970 the net outflow of whites from Los Angeles County has been massive.

Most people, regardless of ethnic affiliation, would rather live in newer, suburban housing than in older units near the city centers. Those who can afford to move into or toward the suburbs are likely to do so. For this reason, residential deconcentration characterizes all ethnic groups to some degree—although the timing and importance of suburbanization have differed among groups. Compared with other groups, whites moved first and in greatest numbers to suburban areas. Movement from Los Angeles County into newer homes in the outlying counties became great in the 1960s and has continued unabated since that time. The percentage of whites in Los Angeles County fell from more than 80 to near 40 between 1960 and 1990, and in absolute numbers the white population of that county declined by 25 percent (Table 2.2). The motivations for this massive deconcentration are varied. They include the desire to purchase a newer house for reasons of investment, a preference for single-family housing, and the desire to escape the higher crime rates of most older, poorer areas. Many people, especially whites, also move to avoid neighborhoods with moderate or increasing proportions of low-income minorities, particularly blacks or Latinos.

In addition to shifts into adjacent counties, many Los Angeles County whites moved out of Southern California altogether. This trend has grown since the early 1970s and became particularly strong in the last half of the 1980s. Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Colorado, and Arizona have been the leading destinations of this large net outflow.

**Ethnic Differentials in Fertility**

The birth rate, or fertility, of ethnic groups in Southern California differs substantially. Like net migration, fertility has affected the changing ethnic composition. By far the most significant differential, however, is the comparatively high birth rate among Latinos compared with non-Hispanic whites (Table 2.3). Latina mothers in Los Angeles County have more than twice the number of children that whites have. Over time Latino immigrants living in the United States and later generations have shown reduced fertility, but that trend will be delayed in Southern California because 64 percent of Mexican-origin adults as of 1990 were immigrants and 37 percent of these had arrived in the United States during the 1980s. Fertility among some groups of Indochinese is also high, but on average Asian groups have sufficiently low fertility that the rate of new births contributes much less than immigration to their ethnic population growth.

The effect of the fertility differential on population growth can be estimated by projecting the 1980 population of Hispanics in Los Angeles County forward to 1990 under an assumption of zero net migration. The percentage of the total 1980–1990 increase that is accounted for by the projected population increase is the proportion of the growth that can be attributed to natural increase.

The projected total for Hispanics was 48 percent of the actual 1990 Hispanic total for the county. In other words, if none of the Hispanics who had been living in Los Angeles County in
1980 moved out and no others moved in during the next ten years, Hispanic growth would have been 48 percent of the actual increase reported.

The fertility differential reinforced the effect of the net migration differential. Because the relative fertility of groups does not vary a great deal among the five counties, both factors are important in explaining the relative decline of whites compared with Latinos in Southern California.

**Establishing the Foundations**

In this chapter we have described and explained some of the basic spatial patterns of Southern California. Although this sketch of the urban geography was brief, it should help make the maps of the various ethnic populations more understandable. Also, we have summarized the general processes that have resulted in the region’s increasing ethnic diversity and its partial ethnic transformation. The latter part of the chapter has, in a sense, brought the new immigrants to Southern California.

These two parts of the chapter constitute the foundations for the rest of the book. We are now ready to look at what has happened to both the newcomers and the old residents. In the next three chapters we examine in detail the thirty-four largest ethnic groups in Southern California and where the people in those groups have lived.
Authority had designed a large, racially and ethnically integrated housing project for the Chavez Ravine area. It was to have been occupied by residents of Bunker Hill, whose deteriorated housing was due to be cleared, and other low-income people. Those plans were killed, Chavez Ravine became the Dodgers’ new home, and future public housing was located in intensely minority areas rather than in mixed areas. This decision heightened subsequent racial segregation and has, in combination with other factors, concentrated poverty more completely in minority areas. See Gottlieb and Wolt (1977), 262–68; Wilkinson (1991).

21. Sassen (1991), 36. There have been many studies of the effects of these expanded connections on various countries, much of them based on world systems theory. That theory assumes that capitalism and capitalist enterprises based in powerful core countries like the United States have a built-in tendency to try to make increasing use of the raw materials, cheap labor, and potential markets in other countries—the periphery.


27. One aspect of the economic motivation is whether migration is influenced primarily by working conditions in the place of origin or by the desire of employers in the country of destination for more, cheaper, or better workers. In other words, is migration driven more by supply or by demand? This is the economic component—the most important one—of the old “push–pull” terminology. Actual recruitment of workers in other countries would clearly demonstrate demand-driven migration, for example, whereas annual fluctuations in migration which follow changing economic conditions in the country of origin indicate that supply-driven forces are paramount. We find it not especially helpful to try to distinguish the supply or demand side or the push or pull side as more important. People considering migration have to try to assess their prospects both at home and at their possible destination.

28. These details are thoroughly covered in Hing (1993).

29. Some categories of immigrants are exempt from annual quota limitations. Spouses, parents, and children of U.S. citizens can immigrate without regard to the annual quota. This is the major reason why annual immigration from the Philippines, Mexico, Korea, and India is greater than 20,000. Also not included in that limit are immigrants originally classified as refugees, which explains why there have been far more than 20,000 immigrants from Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and El Salvador in certain years. The most concise source for data and changes in the law is the annual Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.


34. Ethnic differences in mortality play a minor role in the shift of ethnic composition, tending to reinforce the migration and fertility differentials. Asians and Hispanics in California have lower age-adjusted death rates than do whites; the rate for blacks is higher (California Department of Health Services 1994, Tables 5, 1A–1D).

35. Stephen and Bean (1992); Allen and Turner (1996b), 146.

36. Our cohort-component projection made use of age-specific fertility rates provided by the Department of Health Services for 1986. Interactive Population Statistical System was the projection software.