In this chapter we explain the changing distributions of Southern Californians whose identity is American in a broader sense than is used by most residents of the United States—people from all of the Americas. We look at American Indians and at the Spanish-speaking nationalities of Mexico, Central America, the West Indies, and South America.

**American Indians**

With more than 87,000 American Indians counted in 1990, the five-county Southern California area had a larger Indian population than did any other metropolitan area of the United States. It far surpassed the next largest metropolitan centers—Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and New York City, each of which had fewer than 50,000 Indians.

Indians in Southern California have origins in well over a hundred different ethnic groups (or tribes or nations), and many are substantially mixed in their heritage. Only a relative few of these Indians are indigenous to Southern California. This is because nearly all the Indians near the Spanish missions and other white settlements, such as the Gabrielino and the Chumash, were killed, died of disease, or escaped and joined other groups. The Luiseño, Serrano, Cahuilla, and other Indians to the east in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties are few in number, despite their several reservations. The highest percentage-Indian tract in Southern California is part of the Morongo Reservation, near Banning in Riverside County, but it is only 12 percent American Indian (Fig. 4.1). Only three other tracts (none of which is shown in Fig. 4.1) were more than four percent American Indian in 1990. All of them represent indigenous tribes, on or near reservations in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. Thus, almost all Southern California Indians are migrants or descendants of migrants from other parts of the United States (Table 4.1).

**Identities.** Because of historic mixing between Indians and Spanish and Mexican in the southwestern United States, 32 percent of the Southern Californians who identified themselves on the census race question as American Indian also reported that they were of Hispanic origin. Similar racial mixing across the country has long occurred between American Indians and both whites and blacks, so that the number of people who wrote in “American Indian” as their first-listed or only ancestry was almost twice the number of those who reported their race as Indian. This appears to reflect more a pride in Indian heritage than a primary social and cultural identity as Indian. At least 68,000 non-Hispanic whites and 7,700 blacks in Southern California listed American Indian as their ancestry.

Specific tribal or ethnic identity is probably less important to Indians in urban Southern California than in the rural and reservation areas of origin, and Indians increasingly have chosen to marry other Indians outside their tribal group. In addition, 60 percent of married Indians in Southern California have white spouses (Fig. 9.17). Thus, multiracial and multiracial backgrounds are common.

Although Indians sometimes prefer not to discuss their tribal affiliation with whites, among Indians the tribal identity or identities remains important. Most social gatherings, however, are not exclusive to certain tribes. This is exemplified in the pan-Indian character of Saturday powwows, the traditional dances and festivities held weekly in one place or another around Southern
California. Powwows, begun in Los Angeles in the 1950s, confirm and display the Indian heritage of participants and provide opportunities to develop intertribal friendships. Furthermore, membership in specific Christian denominations and attendance at worship services are also open to all, although in practice they are largely related to past mission activities in various regions. For example, Oklahoma Indians are typically Baptists, Methodists, or other Protestants, whereas many Navajo and Hopi are Mormons. Whatever the Indian social setting, most participants will readily make known their tribal heritage with pride.

**Migrants from reservations.** Virtually all the families represented in Figure 4.1 migrated from distant, rural Indian homelands, usually officially designated reservations in widely scattered parts of the country. The first arrivals came in the 1930s from Oklahoma, and during World War II and the late 1940s others migrated from varied parts of the country.5

Prompted by a Bureau of Indian Affairs program under which Indians were encouraged to leave their reservations and migrate to cities in order to find jobs, Indian migration to Los Angeles increased greatly during the mid-1950s and 1960s.6 This relocation program was designed to provide vocational training and job placement in urban areas, to reduce unemployment on reservations, and to aid in the general cultural and structural assimilation of Indians into white society. The program was the impetus for other Indians to migrate even without federal subsidies, so that by 1977 only half of a sample of Indians in Los Angeles had received federal assistance in making the move.

Since then many who came to Southern California have been trained, often at community colleges, as welders, diesel mechanics, licensed vocational nurses, or aircraft-assembly-line workers. Many have landed blue-collar jobs in the aircraft, petroleum, and construction industries, and some have built on those experiences to advance themselves educationally and occupationally, but many others have had great difficulty finding stable employment. Most Indians were not prepared for the pace, complexity, and cultural adaptation required in urban life; and adjustment was more difficult than white government officials had imagined. These problems and loneliness in cities and suburbs have prompted frequent visits and return migrations to the reservations. Elderly Indians have been particularly likely to return to the reservations after they retire.7 Although federal subsidies for migration to cities were mostly eliminated in the 1980s, a shortage of work on reservations continues to drive many young Indians to Southern California.

**Table 4.1 American Indian Populations, 1990**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apache</td>
<td>5,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackfoot</td>
<td>1,868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherokee</td>
<td>17,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickasaw</td>
<td>1,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa</td>
<td>1,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choctaw</td>
<td>3,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comanche</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creek</td>
<td>1,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iroquois</td>
<td>1,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo</td>
<td>5,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osage</td>
<td>752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paiute</td>
<td>761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pima</td>
<td>703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potawatomi</td>
<td>748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pueblo</td>
<td>1,908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminole</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sioux</td>
<td>2,991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tohono O’odham</td>
<td>1,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other tribes</td>
<td>21,617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribe not specified</td>
<td>16,735</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes: Indians often identify with more specific subgroups of these tribes. Tohono O’odham were formerly called Papago.
tion of both Indians and “Okies” was in small cities like Bell, Bell Gardens, Cudahy, Huntington Park, and Lynwood. There, thousands of families settled into urban life in bungalows while the men toiled in nearby glass, meat-packing, aluminum, steel, tire, and automobile factories. These industrial suburbs, as they have been called, thus became the focus of settlement among the Oklahoma-based Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and Seminole migrants to Los Angeles during those decades. 8

Since that early period, the concentration of Indians in the older industrial suburbs has steadily diminished. 9 This is partly because housing and jobs found through the government’s relocation program tended to be dispersed across many lower-income areas of Los Angeles. In addition, the varied origins of Indian migrants to Los Angeles have minimized the migration chains that might lead toward tribal or Indian concentrations. Most important, however, cultural assimilation and employment success have made it possible for many Indians to leave low-income areas and move to the suburbs. In 1990 almost 500 Indians still lived in Bell Gardens, which was once known for its Indian concentration and Indian Revival Center (Assembly of God). With the large influx of people of Mexican origin, mostly immigrants, into Bell Gardens, however, that city is hardly distinguishable in Figure 4.1.

By 1990 Indians were widely scattered within a large number of older urban and suburban areas where housing costs were low or moderate. There is no urban Indian enclave in Southern California, but numerous communities have slightly higher than average Indian proportions. As of 1990 the dispersed Indian community received its news and notices of powwows and other events primarily through the Southern California Indian Center, with four branch offices and a headquarters in Garden Grove.

Suburbanization and modest upward occupational mobility are not, however, the whole story. Indian percentages in three tracts are indirect evidence of the adjustment problems that many of them face. In Downtown the tract that stands out as having 3 percent American Indians is Skid Row, where the homeless and jobless try to survive in run-down apartment buildings, in shelters, and on sidewalks. Indians are also somewhat overrepresented in the Los Angeles County Central Jail, located in the adjacent tract, and in the federal prison on Terminal Island in Los Angeles Harbor.

Mexican and Central American Indians are also included by the U.S. census race data as American Indian. It is likely that the Indians shown in the two very small tracts west of Downtown and Interstate 110 are Mexican or Guatemalan Indians (Fig. 4.1). This is because that Westlake area is home to a large Spanish-speaking immigrant population and because Kanjobal Indians from Guatemala are known to live in other tracts in the same general area, as we discuss later in this chapter. In addition, many Mixtec and Zapotec Indians from Oaxaca, Mexico, migrated during the 1980s into Ventura County, where they have jobs as farmworkers in Oxnard and Camarillo and as landscapers and day laborers in Moorpark and Thousand Oaks. 10

Like several other ethnic groups in Southern California, Indians retain a strong sense of identity and community, one which is not dependent on residential proximity or the existence of a geographical enclave. Among other ethnic groups, residential dispersal and an absence of enclaves are associated with higher incomes and with life in the newer and better suburbs. Indians remain unusual in that these residential patterns have developed without relatively high levels of education, occupational status, or income.

**People of Mexican Origin**

Spanish sailors explored the coast of California as early as 1542, and Southern California was part of the settled northern frontier of New Spain from the late 1700s until 1821. At that time Mexicans asserted their independence and this area became Mexican territory. An influx of American adventurers and merchants plus new trade links with the United States led to a growing American recognition of the potential value of California and other parts of Mexico. By the 1840s Mexico’s weak military hold on the area made California even more tempting. The United States began the American-Mexican War to take by force the land it coveted.

Only after a contingent of American troops had advanced to the outskirts of Mexico City did Mexico capitulate. In the 1848
treaty, Mexico had to sell the entire northern half of its claimed national territory for $15 million. This included California, from which word of the gold discovery at Sutter’s Mill had not yet spread outside the region.

Despite this wrenching of California and other northern territories from Mexican control, the old ties between Mexico and Southern California were never completely severed. Moreover, in the minds of many Mexicans, Southern California has remained an extension of Mexican territory and society. Southern California is geographically close to Mexico, and for most of the twentieth century the United States has not effectively controlled that border. Thus, migration to Southern California has not seemed to Mexicans as drastic and disruptive a step as many Americans believe it should be.

For these reasons, as well as for the more general reasons explained in chapter 2, migration flows from Mexico into Southern California have been and still are far larger than from any other country. The three and three-quarter million people of Mexican origin counted in Southern California in 1990 represented 26 percent of all the region’s residents.

Of no less importance than the numbers, however, has been the cleavage between the Mexican and the white communities during most of the twentieth century. In the words of someone raised during the 1950s in the rural Mexican community of Moorpark in eastern Ventura County, Southern California society was “fundamentally structured along ‘white’ and ‘Mexican’ lines, determining where one lived and worked as well as one’s social status.”

**Basic geographical patterns.** The development of Mexican ethnic concentrations can be explained primarily by the cumulative and inertial effects of population growth and location near employment and in low-cost housing areas. With respect to employment, irrigation agriculture was particularly important during the first half of the twentieth century. In Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties the historic association of Mexican immigrants with irrigation farmwork explains most of the ethnic concentrations as of 1990—in cities like Corona, Riverside, Ontario, Cucamunga, and Oxnard and in numerous smaller places. Employment in traditional sectors of manufacturing has also been very common among people of Mexican origin, which helps explain the concentration of Latinos near industrial areas. In addition, the low average income of people of Mexican origin has meant that those who are employed in service industries and construction also tend, like those in agriculture and manufacturing, to live in areas of less-expensive housing.

Two additional factors have reshaped the distribution of people of Mexican origin in certain areas. First, suburbanization since World War II has redistributed Mexican Americans more widely—a geographical shift which illustrates a widely observed pattern among ethnic populations. The suburban shift has been most prominent in a sector that extends eastward from East Los Angeles into the San Gabriel Valley and beyond. Second, as immigration from Mexico increased in the 1970s and swelled during the 1980s, poor immigrants frequently moved into the lowest-cost housing available, which was in nearby communities that had mostly black populations. The Mexican influx to the east side of South Central was nothing new because Mexican barrios had existed in Watts and Willowbrook since the 1920s. However, by 1990 the leading population had changed from black to Latino, and Latinos had enlarged their areas of settlement. In the process Latinos displaced some of the blacks from their settlement concentrations in South Central, Pasadena, Pacoima, Monrovia, Pomona, Long Beach, and Santa Ana. Such ethnic neighborhood changes have been a common occurrence in American cities, but displacement of low-income blacks by new immigrants is unusual.

The interpretation that follows focuses on the origins of many of the ethnic communities as well as various changes that together explain most features of the distribution (Fig. 4.2).

**Early concentration near the plaza.** After its founding in 1781 the pueblo of Los Angeles grew slowly during the Spanish and Mexican periods. Its center was the plaza, located adjacent to the modern El Pueblo Historic Park and Olvera Street and just north of Downtown. After California was formally taken over by the United States in 1848, more English-speaking Americans began to arrive. By 1880 they had wrested economic and social
dominance away from the Mexican landowning families. With this change of power, nearly all Southern Californians of Mexican origin lost status. Most were relegated by the Anglos to an underclass of laborers together with some artisans—an underclass augmented, especially in the twentieth century, by immigration from Mexico.

Before 1910 newly arrived Mexican immigrants were most likely to settle within a mile of the plaza. This central area also housed most immigrants from Europe and Asia, and the park at the plaza was a center for the hiring of day laborers. Just to the north (in present-day Chinatown) was Sonoratown, the largest Mexican concentration, named for miners from Sonora who came looking for California’s gold but settled in Los Angeles instead. To the east of Alameda Street many people of Mexican origin lived on the lower ground of the floodplain of the Los Angeles River.

Beginning about 1910 an increasing number of Mexicans arrived. Most were fleeing economic pressures and the Mexican Revolution or seeking employment in industries that were growing as a result of World War I. Tremendous overcrowding occurred in the plaza area. Many families lived in 300-square-foot houses, sharing toilet facilities and water supplies with up to thirty other renter families. In contrast, those members of the old Mexican land-owning families (called Californios) who had substantially assimilated into the Anglo population moved out of the Mexican district and into the Westside.

In recent decades the plaza and Olvera Street remain important sites for both tourists and locals. Next to the plaza is the oldest Catholic church in the city, Our Lady the Queen of the Angels, affectionately known as La Placita. The plaza church holds a special place in the hearts of many Mexican American families, as shown by its popularity for use in weddings, baptisms, and other celebrations.

**Railroads and industry in outlying colonias.** Small Mexican villages, usually called colonias, grew up close to industrial, railway, or construction work in all parts of Southern California. Little colonias appeared, for example, in Maywood, Bell, and Torrance near steel mills and in Harbor City and Lomita next to the oil refineries. In many such settlements Mexicans were living close to or somewhat intermixed with immigrants from Europe or with blacks, Japanese, or Chinese. Pockets of such multiethnic neighborhoods were quite common in poorer areas and were usually distinct from neighborhoods in which U.S.-born whites lived.

Because the railroad and interurban lines were constructed and maintained primarily by Mexican workers, colonias also appeared at junction points, terminals, and freight yards. Railroad companies and the Pacific Electric Company made small amounts of land and shacks, boxcars, or small houses available for Mexican workers, but what little was provided and the workers’ low pay meant that housing for these workers was always shabby. The Mexican settlements in Pasadena, Santa Monica, Long Beach, San Bernardino, and Watts all began in this way; and smaller colonias appeared along Pacific Electric line in Alhambra, San Gabriel, El Monte, La Verne, and Colton.

In the decades after 1910, Los Angeles became the most important California center for labor recruitment, as the massive number of arriving immigrants gave it a surplus of unskilled laborers. Wages were often higher for temporary work in railroad construction and in agriculture elsewhere around the state. The net effect was continued net immigration from Mexico but frequent moves in and out of Los Angeles.

**The Mexican Eastside.** After about 1910 many Mexicans left the plaza area and moved east of the Los Angeles River. This change, together with population growth and geographical consolidation, led ultimately to the creation of the largest and best-known Mexican barrio, the Eastside. The core of the Mexican Eastside is the Boyle Heights part of Los Angeles and East Los Angeles, a portion of county territory (Fig. 3.1).

This shift eastward was due partly to urban renewal and commercial and industrial development in the extremely crowded, more central section near the plaza, but the growing number of Mexicans had to be accommodated somewhere. A sixfold increase in the Mexican population of Los Angeles in the decade after 1910 was followed by a tripling of the city’s Mexican residents during the 1920s. Despite repatriation of thousands of Mexicans
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during the Great Depression, others who had been migrant farm-workers in the Central Valley began to settle permanently in Los Angeles during the 1930s when they were displaced by poor rural whites fleeing the ravages of the Dust Bowl. In addition, the Mexican American population grew from natural increase.

Between 1910 and 1930 the development of new areas for arriving immigrants across the river was aided by the expansion of street railways and interurban lines, opening potential areas of housing for poor people. Italian immigrants were moving northeast into Lincoln Heights, and Boyle Heights was becoming the major center for Eastern European Jews, as well as for Christian Russians (Molokans) and many Armenians, blacks, Japanese, and Mexicans.

At the same time, to the east of Boyle Heights, vacant lots and farmland were being built up into what would later become the large Mexican concentration of East Los Angeles. Low prices on lots and small, single-family houses made this Belvedere area exceptionally desirable for many Mexicans, and it was especially convenient for those who worked at nearby Japanese-run vegetable farms. Without controls on construction and sanitation, Belvedere became a crowded village of small homes and shacks, but at least by 1930, 45 percent of Belvedere’s families of Mexican origin were homeowners.

In the 1930s residents of Boyle Heights who were not ethnically Mexican began to depart. Jews had outnumbered other groups there during most of the 1920s, but many successful Jewish professionals and business people were creating new neighborhoods on the Westside and beckoning their friends and relatives east of the river to join them. Those who left found their homes eagerly bought or rented by either Mexican immigrants or their children. By the 1950s people of Mexican origin had expanded their settlement from original villages of Belvedere and El Hoyo Maravilla into all parts of East Los Angeles and into Boyle Heights and nearby City Terrace. By the 1970s, all that remained of the Jewish settlement were one or two kosher shops on Brooklyn Avenue, a home for elderly Jews, and the almost abandoned Breed Street synagogue. The Boyle Heights–East Los Angeles area had coalesced into a single ethnic community. Since then, the Eastside has become more homogeneously Mexican.

The exodus of whites, blacks, and some Japanese has continued, and their homes have been eagerly taken by young families and new immigrants from Mexico.

The growing Mexican concentration on the Eastside has reflected the social and economic gulf between whites and “others.” After about 1915, when more Mexicans and blacks were arriving in Los Angeles, whites became more concerned with preserving their neighborhoods against encroachment by these groups. Most of the new homes built for whites after 1920 were west of Downtown or, like Glendale and Pasadena, clearly beyond the Eastside. Some cities, like El Segundo and Lynwood, even advertised themselves as excluding Mexicans and other nonwhites. For the vast number of Angelenos the residential areas of whites and Mexicans were coalescing into two very large communities, socially and geographically separate and unequal (Fig. 3.2).

South Central. Between the white Westside concentration and the Mexican Eastside was South Central, an area which has sometimes been thought to be almost all black. In fact, a large Mexican minority has long existed in South Central. Housing there has been low-cost compared with other areas in Los Angeles County, and for Mexicans it offered more individual freedom and less supervision than did the more restrictive Mexican Eastside. In the 1920s and 1930s many intermarried couples and single women of Mexican origin were living in South Central. By 1950 the section north of Slauson Avenue was mostly black, but to the south thousands of Latinos were intermingled with whites and blacks. Far to the south, Watts itself contained more than 7,000 Latinos compared with 26,000 blacks (Figs. 3.1, 3.2).

Altogether, blacks and people of Mexican origin have lived in the same neighborhoods for a considerable time—a situation insufficiently stressed in efforts to identify areas in terms of their leading group.

Industrial employment. Living either west of Alameda Street in South Central or in the Eastside provided good access to jobs in industry for Mexican workers (and for blacks). The largest industrial concentration in Southern California was creat-
ed in the 1920s just between these two minority residential areas—along Alameda Street in Los Angeles and in the neighboring cities of Vernon and Commerce south to South Gate and Lynwood. In this area were large automobile-tire factories, as well as work in auto assembly, steel and aluminum production, meat packing, brickyards, furniture making, food processing, bakeries, printing, the garment industry, street paving, railroad maintenance, and warehousing.

The strong linkages that developed between Mexican residents and nearby industrial employment have been significant for both workers and employers (Fig. 2.3). Together they have shaped the foremost industrial area in Southern California. At the same time, those workers who were becoming skilled cement finishers or stone and tile workers, plumbers, framers, or roofers were employed more widely in Los Angeles, though many of them still lived in the Eastside or in South Central. However, most families have suffered since the mid-1970s from the replacement of most high-wage, unionized manufacturing jobs by low-wage work in the garment industry, the service sector, and the informal economy.  

Farmworker colonias in the San Fernando and Santa Clara Valleys. A geographical continuity between early Mexican settlements and details of the 1990 ethnic distribution is often evident where community origins were more exclusively tied to work in irrigation agriculture. This can be found in parts of the valleys northwest of Los Angeles and in Orange County. Despite a radical shift in occupation away from agriculture and an encroachment of suburban housing, warehouses, and shopping centers, many of the same farmworker colonias remain as barrios—a demonstration of ethnic residential stability amid the swirling currents of urbanization.

Mexican settlement in the San Fernando Valley is as old as Mission San Fernando, founded in 1797. The mission was located a mile west of present-day San Fernando, but neither the town nor the surrounding ranch lands developed a large Mexican-origin population until the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The current ethnic concentration originated with Mexicans working on local fruit and vegetable farms and in the associated packing houses. This agricultural development was based on San Fernando’s position on the main rail line from Los Angeles to San Francisco and on its source of water independent from that of Los Angeles. Since mission days San Fernando had been tapping well water and had diverted additional supplies from behind the low hills to its north. Thus in 1913 the residents did not feel compelled to join Los Angeles in order to share in the bounty of that city’s new aqueduct water.

After 1913 irrigated farming rapidly expanded in the lands surrounding San Fernando. Mexican laborers worked in the fields of lettuce, carrots, cabbages, onions, and beans as well as in groves of lemons and oranges. Wives and daughters were commonly employed in the four new citrus-packing houses and in the canneries. Most Mexicans lived in a clearly defined Mexican district in San Fernando southwest of the railroad tracks and not far from the fields and packing sheds.

Over the decades workers and their families spilled over into nearby areas like Pacoima, the next stop to the south on the railroad. Since about 1960 many more successful families have moved northward into what had been the strictly Anglo section of San Fernando and into the Mission Hills and Sylmar areas, with their better homes. Agricultural jobs were typically replaced by urban work—construction, manufacturing, trucking, and warehousing. The fact that these sorts of industries were typically located in the eastern San Fernando Valley, often near the railroad tracks, tended to accentuate even more the locational advantages of the east valley for renting and home buying. Moreover, little urban renewal or construction of expensive housing occurred, so the Mexican concentration was not obliterated or diminished.

In the west San Fernando Valley the Canoga Park barrio also had farmworker origins. Soon after aqueduct water from the Sierra Nevada appeared, some growers planted sugar beets but found few Chinese and Japanese laborers to help them. After the United States entered World War I in 1917, demand for farm products increased. The ensuing labor shortage led to widespread recruitment of Mexican farmworkers, who usually camped under tents near the fields. In Canoga Park (then called Owensmouth), in 1918 the American Beet Sugar Company constructed eight adobe houses on Hart Street.
The houses, between Deering and Eaton Avenues, were built to discourage workers from deserting for better wages and conditions elsewhere. The move was effective in that their workers stayed. These homes became the nucleus of a barrio which has persisted and grown for more than seventy years, despite the fact that Latino residents did virtually no farmwork in 1990.

This same locational continuity between irrigation agriculture and a strongly Mexican-origin population in 1990 is even more evident in areas that have retained a rural character, such as the Santa Clara Valley west of Santa Clarita. North of the San Fernando Valley and separated from it by rugged mountains, this valley extends from the ocean at Ventura inland twenty miles to the section shown in Figure 4.2, which includes tiny Piru and the larger town of Fillmore. After the railroad connection between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara was built through this valley in 1887 and control of the flatland passed into the hands of whites, the new landowners experimented with a range of crops and irrigation techniques. By the 1920s citrus had come to dominate the Santa Clara Valley, with picking and packing done mostly by Mexican families who had replaced the earlier Japanese workers. Fillmore was an important packing center for oranges, and to its west was the largest lemon ranch in the world (Limoneira), which for decades was essentially a company town. Agriculture was less intensive in the upper end of the valley, but the Fillmore area had miles of orange groves as well as a variety of field crops, like beans and carrots, worked mostly by Mexican labor.

By 1970 other opportunities had developed, so that few people of Mexican origin continued to be farmworkers. Low and moderate incomes still characterize people in the upper Santa Clara Valley, including the whites, many of whose families had originally migrated from Oklahoma during the 1930s. The Santa Clara Valley’s rural setting and its little towns have remained attractive to both Latinos and whites, most of whom commute to Santa Clarita, the San Fernando Valley, Oxnard, or the Ventura area for jobs. In Santa Paula the old labor camps were replaced in the 1980s with attractive new homes, and the incomes of whites and Latinos overlap a great deal, so that any Mexican–white distinction is not primarily economic. Nevertheless, in 1991 the white and Mexican communities in Santa Paula remained socially and residentially separate. Even membership in the various Protestant and Catholic churches was generally defined by ethnicity.

Farmworker colonias in Orange County. This county’s name reflects its heritage in the production of Valencia oranges. These were particularly significant for the development of Mexican farmworker settlements because the season of harvesting and packing lasted between six months and a year and because the growers wanted a large and year-round workforce. Most citrus development occurred in the northern half of the county, and by 1930 more than a dozen Mexican farmworker settlements had appeared close to the packing sheds on the many branch railroad lines built to serve the growers. In addition, Orange County has been important in the production of sugar beets, lima beans, walnuts, and grapes, with Mexican farmworkers primarily responsible for working these crops.

The city of Santa Ana, which appears on the 1990 map as a single, large Mexican-origin concentration, represents the historic expansion and the coalescing of what began as three separate colonias: Delhi (in the southeast, south of Delhi Park), Artesia (in the northwest, centered around Salvador Park), and Logan (in the northeast, west of Logan Park). These colonias, like some others, had not been formally set up for workers but simply represented poor neighborhoods near tracks and packing sheds. In 1960 the Mexican-origin population was substantially segregated. However, the barrios do not appear as ethnic concentrations on Figure 3.2 because of the random placement of dots within census tracts. Although Artesia is now called the 5th Street Barrio, the other two barrios are still known by their original names.

North and west of Santa Ana was Orange County’s main citrus-production area. In both Stanton and the city of Orange, tracts with higher Mexican-origin percentage in 1990 identify the local barrios, which are in the same location as the old Stanton and Orange colonias. The most strongly Mexican tracts in north-central Anaheim represent an enlargement of another farmworker colonia, Independencia. Farther north in La Habra, near the Los Angeles County boundary, the three tracts with highest Mexican-origin proportions are in the same area as Campo
Colorado, a virtual company town, and its neighbor, Campo Corona. Although the original housing of both colonias was torn down, the modern barrio remains focused on the Guadalupe Church and park.

Colonias frequently originated as temporary tent camps near citrus-packing houses. They became permanent when landowners later sold house lots to Mexican families, who then built their own homes. In what is now Fountain Valley, Colonia Juarez was created in 1923 in this way—as a residential subdivision restricted to Spanish-speaking people. The modern barrio is in the same location (directly south of the Mile Square Golf Course and west of Ward Street). Suburban development in the large census tract hides the presence of that barrio (Fig. 4.2). Placentia’s La Jolla barrio (in the southwestern corner of the city east of the 57 Freeway) also takes its name from the former colonia located in the same place.

Thus, the locations of places which are relatively high in percentage-Mexican origin in 1990 still reflect very much the distribution of Mexican farmworker settlements of the pre-World War II period, despite ubiquitous urbanization. This continuity would not have occurred if entire colonias had been demolished to make room for more expensive housing, as might well have happened if they had been located in areas of much higher urban land values. Equally significant was that the people in most colonias owned their homes and, over the decades, upgraded and embellished them. That there were fewer people of Mexican origin south of Santa Ana in 1990 is due partly to the absence of colonias in that area and partly to the high prices of new housing in Irvine and nearly all the southern half of Orange County.

Low-cost housing. Apart from the large Eastside barrio, which has long been accessible to industrial jobs, and the smaller barrios that originated as farmworker colonias, high percentages of people of Mexican origin are found in areas of low-cost housing. Over the twentieth century landowners and developers have frequently sold land parcels or built modest houses specifically for low-income would-be homeowners. Mexicans immediately occupied some of these, and their large families and the arrival of their friends and relatives added to the numerous Mexican enclaves.

For example, in Compton inexpensive and undeveloped lots in the Walton Villa subdivision went on sale in 1917. Buyers, mostly Mexican, built low-cost, single-family houses in this tract just west of the Pacific Electric line (the modern-day Blue Line) to Long Beach. For three decades this was Compton’s only barrio. By 1950 it was consolidating with an adjacent barrio in Willowbrook, and in 1990 the area is still recognizable for its higher Mexican-origin percentage, compared with surrounding neighborhoods.

More clearly evident in Figure 4.2 is the southern half of the city of Hawaiian Gardens. There, low home prices have resulted in a radical ethnic change, from white to Latino. That area—next to Coyote Creek, which approximates the boundary between Los Angeles and Orange Counties—was long prone to flooding. The land remained cheap, with only scattered farms, when no oil was found in this area during the drilling sprees of the 1920s.

After World War II homes were built on very small lots in the section south of Carson Street, but residential streets remained unpaved until Hawaiian Gardens was incorporated in 1964. Although nearly all of the first residents were whites, the low prices steadily attracted more people of Mexican origin. In 1960 the area was only 20 percent Hispanic, but by 1990 Hispanics represented 76 percent of the same tracts’ populations. In Norwalk and adjacent Artesia a large barrio is similarly located in an area of older, modest, single-family houses.

In general, throughout Los Angeles County Latinos in various census tracts tend live in individual blocks with cheaper housing, whether it is single-family houses or apartments. For example, in the central San Fernando Valley the higher Mexican-origin percentage about a mile to the northeast of the Canoga Park barrio is best explained by the presence in that tract of a huge, federally subsidized apartment complex for low-income people.

Other industrial zones. Because low-cost housing is often located close to industry and rail yards, cost of housing and employment location are often interrelated. Both help explain
Figure 4.1

American Indian
Percent of Population
1990

Statistics and percents are for the Los Angeles CMSA (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura Counties), 1990.
Figure 4.2
Mexican Origin
Percent of Population 1990

Number of Tracts  Percent Mexican
1025  0 - 3.5
766  3.6 - 15.8
255  15.9 - 39.9
128  40.0 - 60.7
132  60.8 - 73.0
   73.1 - 93.4

Statistics and percents are for the Los Angeles CMSA (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura Counties), 1990.
Figure 4.3
Guatemalan Origin
Percent of Population
1990

Statistics and percents are for the Los Angeles CMSA (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura Counties), 1990.
### Salvadoran Origin

**Percent of Population 1990**

**Statistics and percents are for the Los Angeles CMSA (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura Counties), 1990.**

**Number of Tracts**

- 1306
- 750
- 245
- 131
- 104
- 28

**Percent Salvadoran**

- 0 - 0.4
- 0.5 - 2.4
- 2.5 - 4.9
- 5.0 - 8.5
- 8.5 - 20.0
- 20.0 - 36.1

**Salvadoran**

- 274,788 Persons
- 26 Median Age
- $22,200 Median Household Income
- $8,000 Median Personal Income of the US-born
- $9,600 Median Personal Income of the foreign-born
- 99.0 Percent of persons 25 yrs+ who are foreign-born
- 64.6 Percent of foreign-born persons 25 yrs+ who immigrated 1980-90
- 22.9 Percent of persons 18 yrs+ who speak English only or very well
- 3.0 Percent of persons 25 yrs+ who are four-year college graduates
- 5.7 Percent of employed in managerial and professional occupations
- 14.7 Percent of occupied homes which are occupied by owner

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**Figure 4.4**

Map showing the Salvadoran Origin percent of population in 1990.
Figure 4.5
Cuban Origin
Percent of Population 1990

Statistics and percents are for the Los Angeles CMSA (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura Counties), 1990.
Figure 4.6
Puerto Rican Origin
Percent of Population
1990

Statistics and percents are for the Los Angeles CMSA (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura Counties), 1990.
Figure 4.7
Other Central American Origins
Percent of Population
1990

Number of Tracts Percent Other Central American
1682
386 0 - 0.5
244 0.6 - 1.0
124 1.1 - 1.6
120 1.7 - 2.3
8 2.4 - 5.0
8 5.1 - 9.9

Central American
86,215 Persons
28 Median Age
$28,000 Median Household Income
$12,000 Median Personal Income of the US-born
$11,000 Median Personal Income of the foreign-born
94.5% Percent of persons 25 yrs+ who are foreign-born
50.1% Percent of foreign-born persons 25 yrs+ who immigrated 1980-90
42.6% Percent of persons 18 yrs+ who speak English only or very well
11.3% Percent of persons 25 yrs+ who are four-year college graduates
15.8% Percent of employed in managerial and professional occupations
28.8% Percent of occupied homes which are occupied by owner

Other Central American origins include Costa Rican, Honduran, Nicaraguan, and Panamanian origins.
Statistics and percents are for the Los Angeles CMSA (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties), 1990.
Hispanic South American Origins
Percent of Population
1990

Hispanic South American origins include Argentinian, Bolivian, Chilean, Colombian, Ecuadorian, and Peruvian origins.

Statistics and percents are for the Los Angeles CMSA (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura Counties), 1990.
Figure 4.9
Hispanic Origin Household Income
1989

Median Household Income in Dollars
0 - 15,000
15,001 - 25,000
25,001 - 35,000
35,001 - 50,000
50,001 - 75,000
> 75,000

Number of Tracts
100
557
799
671
342
95

County Boundary
City Boundary
the distribution of people of Mexican origin. This can be seen most dramatically in the high Mexican-origin percentages frequently found in or near the manufacturing and warehousing corridors that follow the rail lines (Figs. 2.3 and 4.2).

The Alameda Corridor links the central rail yards in Los Angeles and industrial cities like Vernon and South Gate with the massive oil refineries near Wilmington and the joint Los Angeles–Long Beach port facilities. Mexican proportions are highest near the two largest industrial concentrations at either end. Between 1930 and 1950 a sharp racial boundary existed along the broad swath of Alameda Street and the adjacent tracks. To the west were blacks and pockets of Mexicans near Alameda. To the east were whites. In the broad belt of industrial suburbs that stretches south from Huntington Park, Maywood, and Bell Gardens to Lynwood, the few small colonias were hardly evident amid the homes of white industrial workers, many of whom had come from Texas and Oklahoma.

A massive exodus of whites occurred after the mid-1960s, when the large companies began to close operations. Latinos, often immigrants directly from Mexico, eagerly bought or rented the vacated houses. In the 1980s housing became so crowded that the burgeoning Latino population spread west across the tracks, linking up geographically with old barrios in Willowbrook, Watts, and Florence.

The net effect is that the entire area between Downtown and Lynwood and Willowbrook is home to more than 400,000 people of Mexican origin, a high proportion of whom are recent immigrants. As of 1990 the residents of this area outnumbered those of the traditional Eastside, and Huntington Park’s popular Latino shopping district along Pacific Boulevard is far larger than any such area on the Eastside or the Latino shopping strip along Broadway in Downtown.

Other industrial zones extend through the flatter lands east and southeast of Los Angeles (Fig. 2.3). One follows the Union Pacific route through the cities of Commerce and Industry. It then swings to the southeast, as both the railroad and a corridor of manufacturing and warehousing follow the valley of San Jose Creek up toward Pomona. A second industrial zone extends southeast through Montebello and Pico Rivera to the oil-refining and ceramic-manufacturing center of Santa Fe Springs. The association between industry, railroad, and Mexican-origin population can also be seen near the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks which trend northwest from Downtown. An industrial corridor follows the railroad’s straight course into the city of San Fernando and beyond, having replaced the earlier agriculture in that area.

**Suburbanization in the San Gabriel Valley.** During the last fifty years new subdivisions were created again and again out of once-thriving orange and walnut groves, vegetable farms, and ranch land. With the passage of time, acculturation, and improved economic status, many people could afford modest tract homes in many parts of Southern California, but the relatively nearby San Gabriel Valley suburbs were favored. Many thousands of better-educated and often white-collar Mexican American families have moved eastward to new homes in places like Baldwin Park, Covina, Azusa, and Walnut in the San Gabriel Valley. Others have sought lower house prices farther east in the new subdivisions of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties—the Inland Empire.

Even before 1940 some more middle-class Mexican American communities were established in Duarte, El Monte, Irwindale, and La Puente—contrasting with the somewhat poorer and less-educated population in Boyle Heights and Belvedere. After World War II Mexican American servicemen typically returned to Los Angeles with improved English-language skills and a stronger pride in being U.S. citizens. Because of the postwar economic boom and government efforts to overcome discrimination in employment, they often could find more skilled and better-paying jobs than could their parents. However, these jobs were still usually blue collar in nature, as exemplified by work at the Ford automobile factory in Pico Rivera or the Kaiser steel mill in Fontana. Moreover, with the assistance of the G.I. bill, many families could now afford homes in the many subdivisions being created in the San Gabriel Valley and farther east in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

Housing discrimination against Mexican Americans slowly diminished after the war, but it was still present after the enforce-
Within the fan-shaped sector of Mexican American settlement which extends eastward from its Eastside base, however, there are surprisingly low proportions of Latinos on the north and east sides of East Los Angeles, not far from Downtown (Fig. 4.2). This is Monterey Park, a mostly hilly and nonindustrial area. Because the city once prided itself on being restricted to whites, Mexican Americans settled in this city later and represented smaller proportions than in cities farther east. In addition, the Latino population in Monterey Park declined in the 1980s as a result of displacement by thousands of Chinese immigrants, who eagerly sought space in the city’s apartments or bought homes from Latinos and others.

**People of Guatemalan and Salvadoran Origins**

Next to people of Mexican origin, those with roots in Guatemala and El Salvador easily constitute the second- and third-largest Hispanic populations in Southern California. More than 400,000 people from these two countries together were counted by the U.S. census. In fact, a substantial undercount is likely because so many arrived here illegally and as of 1990 still had an extremely insecure status. Because even census figures show that these two nationalities constituted 80 percent of all Central Americans in the region, our maps and analyses distinguish these two groups from others.

Guatemalans and Salvadorans differ primarily in that some Guatemalans in Los Angeles are Indians, which is not the case with Salvadorans. Nevertheless, their similarity in settlement and employment patterns and in socioeconomic status justifies treating them together (Figs. 4.3 and 4.4; Tables 8.4 and 8.6). Both nationalities include many people who entered the United States illegally, as well as many political refugees. These groups, as well as Nicaraguans, include people of opposing political allegiances in their countries of origin, but shifts in short-term U.S. government refugee policies have made the position of Salvadorans here particularly uncertain.

There are two keys to understanding the general features of the distribution of these two groups: their low average educational and income levels and the recency of their arrival. No ethnic
groups in Southern California have higher proportions of immigrants among their adults. Almost two-thirds of Guatemalan and Salvadoran immigrants arrived in this country during the ten years previous to the census. Both low status and recency of arrival relate to low average ability in English, and all three factors explain their concentrated settlement in declining neighborhoods with housing that costs less than it does in other parts of Los Angeles.

**Pico-Union and Westlake.** By far the most important area for Guatemalans and Salvadorans is an area just west of Downtown. Since the 1920s, when local whites began to leave for more distant suburbs, it has been an area of initial settlement for Latino immigrants. Many recent arrivals from Mexico have also settled there because it has more apartments and large houses carved into apartments than does the larger traditional barrio of the Eastside (Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles). Compared to the Mexican Eastside, it is also more accessible by bus to jobs serving affluent Westside residents.

The southern part of this area is known as “Pico-Union,” for the intersection of Pico Boulevard and Union Street. However, MacArthur Park, with its small lake, is more centrally located within the larger Central American settlement, and the historic name “Westlake” for MacArthur Park has been resurrected as a label for the larger area including Pico-Union. To the northwest of Westlake one wedge of Central American settlement extends into the eastern part of Hollywood; another extends westward from Pico-Union and the University of Southern California into an area known as West Adams. These two westward thrusts of Central American neighborhoods are separated and, to a large extent, blocked by Koreatown.

The main focus of Westlake is along Alvarado Street near the park—a bustling walkway where independent discount shopkeepers, travel agents, courier-service operators, restaurant and bar owners, street vendors, drug dealers and addicts, sellers of phony identity cards, and panhandlers compete for the meager earnings of recent immigrants. Although whites and Koreans own some of the apartment buildings and businesses, most of the entrepreneurs are Latino. To the north, on Hollywood Boulevard, the dance clubs that used to swing for whites have become centers of Central American music and entertainment. From cramped, overcrowded apartments in Westlake, men and women make their way westward by bus to their jobs as maids, nannies, and handymen for affluent whites in places like Beverly Hills and Brentwood, or eastward to sewing work in the garment factories and janitorial jobs in Downtown office buildings. As with other immigrant groups, remittances sent home to Guatemala and El Salvador provide important support for relatives.

First developed more than a century ago as an attractive residential area close to Downtown, Westlake has deteriorated for the same general reasons most inner cities decline—the physical aging of houses and the replacement of middle-class families by poorer people. The absence of whites and the crowding of Central Americans in Westlake has been such that in Los Angeles County as of 1990 these two groups were as segregated residentially from whites as were blacks.

A few thousand Mayan Indians from Guatemala also live in Westlake. The chain migration of the largest group, the Kanjobal, and their association with the garment industry in Los Angeles probably began in 1976, when one Indian was persuaded to come and work in a factory here. At first all of the migrants were men, but then women and children began to follow. By the mid-1980s thousands of Mayan Indians had arrived in the Westlake section of Los Angeles, almost all of them illegally. The main concentration of the Kanjobal developed between 3d and 6th Streets not far west of the Harbor Freeway, and most Indians live near each other in a few apartment buildings, partly because of their inability to speak much Spanish. In this case, Indian linguistic acculturation has been primarily toward Spanish, a process begun in Guatemala.

**Other locations.** Many Salvadorans and Guatemalans have scattered far beyond Westlake, but this is a function less of assimilation than of the need to be close to the dispersed locations of potential employment—construction and various day-labor jobs, painting, auto repair, and working in car washes and restaurant kitchens (Tables 8.4 and 8.6). Because almost two-thirds of these immigrants arrived in the 1980s and because few came from middle- and upper-class families, not many are living in the better
homes and tracts in Southern California. The few Salvadorans who are found in high-income areas like Malibu and tracts in the Santa Monica Mountains between Santa Monica and the San Fernando Valley are typically live-in maids, nannies, or handymen.

Guatemalans and Salvadorans are proportionately strong in the San Fernando Valley, where they are found mostly in the same general areas as people of Mexican origin. These are areas of lower-cost housing, both apartments and older tract homes, much of which is near old industrial areas. In contrast, few are found in the western, northwestern, or southwestern parts of the San Fernando Valley, where homes are newer and larger. The same general association of these groups with lower-income areas near industry is found in many parts of Southern California. This is illustrated by the modest houses of Lennox just east of LAX and by the Atwater Village strip north of Downtown and next to the Southern Pacific railroad yards.

The fact that Guatemalans and Salvadorans differ in which specific tracts contain higher proportions of them is probably due to differences in chain migration—the social networks of relatives and villagers that direct newcomers to specific apartment buildings and neighborhoods where they know people. For example, in the city of Orange the different tracts that are emphasized on the two maps do not reflect differences in housing costs or other features of the tracts. It is simply that the cumulative effect of separate migration chains has resulted in slightly different locations for the two groups.

**People of Cuban Origin**

In 1960 the U.S. census reported 4,144 Cubans living in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, but at that time there were no significant concentrations of Cubans and no established Cuban community in Los Angeles. The rapid growth of the Cuban population occurred after 1960, when refugees from Fidel Castro’s regime began to settle in Los Angeles. However, as of 1990 approximately 3,800 pre-Castro Cuban emigrants—those who had immigrated to the United States before 1960—were living in the five-county area. These constituted 9 percent of the Cuban immigrants in Southern California.

During the 1960s Cuban refugees flooded into Miami, Florida, and the U.S. government began a program to encourage refugees to disperse outside Miami. The first of several waves arrived in Los Angeles in 1962, and various Catholic and other voluntary service agencies assisted many Cubans who wished to resettle here. Cubans choosing to leave Miami for Los Angeles or elsewhere were often looking for better employment, moving to be close to family, or desirous of a less Cuban-centered environment. Most Cubans in Southern California are not recent immigrants: 58 percent of foreign-born Cubans arrived in the United States between 1960 and 1975, and the last refugee wave occurred in the early 1980s.

**Enclaves.** As a result of refugee resettlement, the Cuban population in Southern California grew rapidly, to a 1970 total of 40,376 Cubans, and enclaves developed in parts of Los Angeles County. Cuban enclaves appeared to result both from the refugee settlement efforts of the U.S. government and the voluntary agencies and from chain migration. Initially, the location of jobs and housing arranged by the early sponsors of refugees was probably of greatest importance in shaping the Cuban distribution. During and after the 1970s, a family member or friend often sponsored a Cuban being relocated to Los Angeles, which also tended to accentuate the earlier established pattern of settlement.

In 1970 three enclaves held the largest numbers of Cubans. The first extended from Echo Park to East Hollywood and was focused between Sunset and Beverly Boulevards. The second and third concentrations were in the Bell–Huntington Park area and in the Inglewood-Hawthorne-Lennox area. Each of these three Cuban concentrations had more than 2,700 Cubans in 1970. At that time there were also more than 1,700 Cubans in Glendale, plus more than 500 each in Pasadena, Burbank, Culver City, and Long Beach, as well as in the Palms–Mar Vista and Beverly Boulevard–Vermont Avenue sections of Los Angeles City. Other areas with concentrations of Cubans in 1970 included the southeastern San Fernando Valley, the Atwater Village area east of Interstate 5, and the Harbor Gateway area just south of Interstate 405. Some of these concentrations first appeared when Cubans arriving in the 1960s searched for and moved into areas of less
expensive housing but still wished to live near other Cubans. However, the Cuban cluster in the Lennox and Inglewood area also reflected the early employment of many Cuban refugees at LAX, often in the food-service industries. In more expensive areas like Pasadena, Cuban residents are frequently the successful architects, engineers, and business people who were some of the first refugees after Castro’s takeover and who today are owners of important Southern California companies.

Nearly all the Cuban concentrations that appear in Figure 4.5 were significant in the distribution of 1970, despite a large new wave of Cubans in the early 1980s. The newcomers—less political refugees than economic migrants—were part of the approximately 125,000 Cubans who fled to Florida from the port of Mariel between late April and September 1980 and have been dubbed the “Marielitos.” In Southern California these refugees did not form separate settlements because their sponsors were mostly fellow Cubans who had arrived earlier.

Although Marielitos were living in many parts of Southern California in 1990, they have tended to locate in Cuban enclaves with lower-cost housing. The 5,400 Marielitos represented 9 percent of the 1990 Cuban population total in Southern California. However, within the large Bell–Huntington Park enclave this cohort constituted 15 percent of the enclave’s Cubans. In that enclave are popular Cuban restaurants, and the Casa Cuba provided shelter and assistance for Marielitos and other refugees. Similarly, Marielitos made up 20 percent of all Cubans in the southeastern San Fernando Valley and in the Echo Park–East Hollywood area. In contrast, only 4 percent of Glendale’s Cubans in 1990 were Marielitos, and Marielitos have been much less likely than other Cubans to live in the newer sections of Orange, Ventura, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties. Among Cubans the more concentrated settlement pattern of the Marielitos is expected as a result of their later arrival and presumed lower level of acculturation.

None of the Cuban concentrations has been located in a predominantly black area. This is consistent with the fact that only 2 percent of Cubans living in Southern California in 1990 identified their race as black (Table 3.2).

Over the past two decades the Cuban population has grown slowly and the distribution has shifted little. Cubans, like so many Koreans and Central Americans, have tended to leave the older and poorer area between East Hollywood and Silver Lake, and other immigrants have crowded into these neighborhoods. Cubans also extended their settlement into Downey, where the newer homes may have been especially attractive to Cubans who had been living in the Huntington Park area.

Cubans have dispersed widely. This deconcentration reflects their increasing cultural, social, and economic assimilation into the larger society. Although this change is hardly evident in Figure 4.5 (because the map is based on percentages), some Cubans have moved to the newer suburbs of Los Angeles County, and even more have relocated in Orange and the other surrounding counties. Whereas in 1970 Los Angeles County contained 92 percent of Southern California’s Cubans, by 1990 only 79 percent lived in the county.

Many Cubans who settled in Los Angeles in the late 1960s have since returned to Miami, where the very large Cuban community permits them to live their lives completely enveloped by a transplanted Cuban culture.

**People of Puerto Rican Origin**

Puerto Ricans have their origins outside the U.S. mainland, but they are different from immigrant groups in that they are not immigrants in the legal sense. The United States took possession of the island of Puerto Rico in 1898, after the defeat of Spain in the Spanish-American War, and it has remained a U.S. territory. Since 1917 Puerto Ricans have been U.S. citizens, and, as such, they need no visa or other permission to travel to or live in any of the fifty states.

Because Puerto Rico is politically affiliated with the United States, people born in Puerto Rico are not considered foreign-born in the U.S. census. The 3.5 percent of adult Puerto Ricans in Southern California who are considered foreign-born were born in some other country. In many cases these foreign-born are the children of Puerto Rican servicemen in the U.S. military on duty in Germany, Japan, or Korea.
Puerto Ricans arrived in Los Angeles a few years after the United States took over their island. Recruited for work on Hawaii’s sugar plantations as early as 1900, they were shipped across the United States by rail and then sent by boat to Hawaii.\textsuperscript{56} En route to the West Coast, some laborers decided they had made a mistake. Presumably, these men who jumped the train in Los Angeles or San Francisco either returned home or settled in California. Also, some Puerto Rican plantation laborers came to Los Angeles to live after completing their labor contracts in Hawaii.

By 1910 eight Puerto Ricans (including two women) were living in Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{57} At least a few of these may have remained in Los Angeles and acted as magnets for the Puerto Rican migrants who arrived over the following decades. Indeed, both Los Angeles and San Francisco have old, established Puerto Rican populations.\textsuperscript{58} Compared with Puerto Ricans in the northeastern and Midwestern United States, those in California were unusual, in that as early as 1970 fewer than half of them had been born in Puerto Rico. In addition to having greater proportions born in one of the fifty states, Puerto Ricans in Los Angeles have had higher socioeconomic status than have Puerto Ricans living elsewhere on the mainland. A clear reflection of their greater mainland experience and higher status is the fact that in 1990 the percentage of Puerto Ricans over the age of 18 who spoke English only or very well was unusually high (77 percent), compared with other Hispanic groups in Southern California.\textsuperscript{59}

The high level of cultural and economic assimilation compared with Mexican and Central American Latinos is reflected in the dispersal of most Puerto Ricans across Southern California (Fig. 4.6). In all except nine tracts they represent less than 2 percent of the total population. For example, in the large tract that stands out most in Figure 4.6 (Sun Valley in the eastern San Fernando Valley) there were only 66 Puerto Ricans out of a total tract population of 3,540.

Although Puerto Ricans in general show a great range of racial characteristics, those in Southern California tend to be lighter skinned. With only 3 percent of Puerto Ricans in this area identifying their race as black (Table 3.2), few Puerto Ricans have chosen to live in predominantly black areas.

Weak multitract clustering of Puerto Ricans may be related to the locations of Spanish-speaking areas and employment. Puerto Ricans who live in Highland Park and some of the same localities as Cubans (the Lennox-Hawthorne and South Gate-Huntington Park areas) have chosen less expensive housing in ethnically diverse areas where Spanish is widely spoken. Because so many Puerto Ricans have worked in hospitals and in aerospace manufacturing, they show a very slight tendency to locate near sources of employment. This is the case among Puerto Ricans in the San Bernardino area, where unusually high percentages of them work at the Loma Linda University Medical Center and in other hospitals.\textsuperscript{60}

However, the Puerto Ricans in neighborhoods that appear in Figure 4.6 as clusters are outnumbered by those who are more widely dispersed in Southern California. For example, Puerto Ricans living in the area between El Segundo and the Palos Verdes Peninsula are particularly likely to be employed in aerospace manufacturing, but most of them do not live in a Puerto Rican cluster.\textsuperscript{61} This geographical scattering is consistent with the complete lack of distinctive Puerto Rican landmarks, neighborhoods, community organizations, and restaurants in Southern California.\textsuperscript{62} Although individual and family identity as Puerto Ricans remains important for many, they appear to have little desire or need to create a more formal ethnic community. This lack of community development is presumably related to their high level of assimilation and their secure status as U.S. citizens.

\textbf{People of Other Central American Origins}

In addition to the Hispanic nationalities already discussed, Southern California has attracted people from other countries in Central America and from South America. For purposes of displaying distributions, these populations have been combined into two groups: those with origins in Spanish-speaking Central American countries other than El Salvador and Guatemala; and those from Spanish-speaking countries in South America.

Figure 4.7 includes people who reported the following origins, listed here with their total 1990 populations in Southern California: Costa Ricans (13,619), Hondurans (25,109),
Nicaraguans (39, 110), and Panamanians (7,014).

Three decades ago the total number of all Central Americans in Southern California was only about 6,000. In contrast to the predominance of Guatemalans and Salvadorans among recent immigrants, about half of the Central Americans at that time were Nicaraguans. In one 1960s study most of the fifty-one Nicaraguans interviewed—probably typical of Central American immigrants to Los Angeles at that time—came from larger cities and were literate in Spanish. Although the majority had not attended school and had come to Los Angeles partly to go to school, three women had completed university studies. Some Nicaraguans were clerical workers or professionals, but most had poor skills in English and worked in factories.

After 1960, other Central Americans in Southern California came to include both the wealthy and the poor, as well as political refugees. As people fled abrupt shifts of power during the 1970s and 1980s, Hispanic nationalities in Southern California became somewhat divided politically.

**Distribution.** The locations of these Central Americans resemble in some ways that of specific groups already covered (Fig. 4.7). The concentration in Huntington Park–South Gate is shared by Cubans and Puerto Ricans, as well as Mexican immigrants, and the varied Hispanic nationalities is reflected in the range of restaurants in the area. Those who live in Lennox and Westchester and in the southeast San Fernando Valley also share those general areas with Cubans and Puerto Ricans. It is likely that some of the residents of these clusters are employed at LAX or Burbank Airport. This is because both Cuban and Puerto Rican men are slightly overrepresented in the air-transportation industry. Costa Rican men are employed in that industry at seven times the rate expected for their population size.

However, other Central Americans who live west of Downtown are not likely to be in the heart of the Westlake and Pico-Union barrio, where Guatemalans and Salvadorans are so concentrated. Rather, Hondurans, Nicaraguans, and others are more typically found farther west—in Koreatown, in Hollywood north of Beverly Boulevard, and in the Country Club Park and Mid-City areas. Some Central Americans living in and near Country Club Park are live-in housekeepers and nannies, but most Central Americans in the area west of Westlake and Hoover Street are immigrants who can afford the somewhat higher rents and better neighborhoods compared with Westlake but who enjoy having Central American markets, restaurants, and shops not far away.

Central Americans are often located in areas that are in transition between black and Latino. The largest such area is south of Interstate 10. Over the previous two decades blacks tended to move westward, as large numbers of Latino immigrants arrived. As of 1990 this zone of greatest black-Latino residential mixing was located on either side of Western Avenue north of Slauson Avenue, but by the late 1990s it may have shifted westward with the continued greater influx of Latinos. The same situation has been occurring in Pasadena and Pacoima; in 1990 the percentage of other Central Americans is particularly high in tracts where Latinos have been replacing black residents.

It is possible that many of the Latinos who led these ethnic residential shifts are Central Americans with darker skins, particularly the one-third of Panamanians who identified their race as black (Table 3.2). In fact, those Panamanians who lived in Inglewood, Pasadena, San Bernardino, and the Crenshaw area were especially likely to have identified their race as black in the census. However, Panamanians living in the southwestern San Fernando Valley, where few blacks live, were also likely to report themselves as black, suggesting that such Central Americans may also be pioneers of black settlement in areas that are mostly white and Latino.

Other tracts with relatively high percentages of Central Americans are evident as isolated neighborhoods in such places as Pomona, Alhambra, Reseda, and Culver City. This pattern may result primarily from varied chain migrations of immigrants, some perhaps focused on only a few apartment buildings in certain tracts. Another tract that stands out is in Orange County (Fig. 4.7). The tract lies within the U.S. Naval Weapons Station, a weapons and ammunition storage facility, and many of its residents are in the Navy.

**People of Hispanic South American Origins**
The nationalities in this aggregation are: Argentinean (23,298), Bolivian (5,650), Chilean (11,590), Colombian (31,790), Ecuadorian (22,961), and Peruvian (27,458). Because South American immigrants have to travel great distances by air, they generally have higher occupational status and incomes than do people from Central America. Thus, they can avoid poor areas like Westlake and South Central.

Many South Americans are well educated and fluent in English. Highly acculturated immigrants have little reason to concentrate geographically, and the map correctly shows South Americans as widely dispersed in Southern California (Fig. 4.8). Nevertheless, areas where South Americans do settle together tend to command moderate or higher home and apartment prices. A few clusters appear in more expensive areas, like the hills of Glendora and Rolling Hills Estates and Toluca Lake, Tarzana, and Northridge in the San Fernando Valley.

South Americans overlap in distribution to some extent with Central Americans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans. A concentration of South Americans shows up in South Gate, where the other groups are also found, and in nearby Downey, where so many Cubans settled.

To some extent the map legend, showing percentages ranging up to 22.5 percent, is misleading because of the small populations in some tracts. The two tracts with the highest percentages of South Americans had total populations of only 119 and 216. However, the eastern San Fernando Valley does contain two tracts that are important because each tract numbers over 140 South Americans.

South Americans are also overrepresented in the federal prison at the western end of Terminal Island in Los Angeles Harbor. Anyone can speculate as to the crimes for which they were convicted.

**Hispanic Median Household Income**

Figure 4.9 shows areal variations in the median of total income earned by members of those households in which the householder (or head of household) is of Hispanic origin. As we have observed elsewhere, lower incomes tend to characterize areas of older housing, which are found most commonly in the more central parts of long-established places like Los Angeles, Long Beach, Wilmington, Santa Ana, and Ontario. Incomes of residents tend to increase in areas where homes and apartments are newer and more expensive, with highest incomes typically found in the more distant suburbs.

Areal differences in age and cost of housing explain Hispanic income variations better than does an association between traditional barrios and very low income. With the large influx and widespread settlement of Latino immigrants during the 1980s, historic barrios established in the early twentieth century have diminished in significance and are less distinctive in their poverty. Hispanic household incomes average less than $25,000 in traditional barrios in Wilmington, Long Beach, Ontario, and in the older part of the Mexican Eastside, which comprises Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles. However, to the west and south of Downtown—as far south as Compton—Latinos average similarly very low incomes. These are areas in which the Latino population has been built up since 1970, particularly by the arrival of poor immigrants who found the cheapest housing available without regard to location in a traditional barrio.

The very low income of Latino immigrant areas is illustrated by a large square tract in Willowbrook, an area east of Interstate 110 and just south of Watts. What is unusual about this tract is the large income differential between its ethnic groups. Black households, which constitute about two-thirds of the tract’s residents, have a median income of more than $25,000. Other characteristics of the populations help explain the income differences and are a reminder that a single tract or neighborhood may contain ethnic populations which differ substantially in socioeconomic status. Most of the Latinos in the tract are immigrants, typically employed as machine operators in manufacturing, and only 25 percent have graduated from high school. In contrast, the typical black resident of the tract works in a clerical or administrative-support occupation, and 71 percent of black residents are high-school graduates.

Older, traditional barrios are often not the poorest Hispanic areas. Both the Mexican Eastside and the eastern San Fernando
Valley illustrate this point. The city of San Fernando and adjacent Pacoima, to the south, constitute the oldest barrio in the San Fernando Valley. Yet the map shows that Hispanic incomes were higher in all tracts of this area than in some more distant low-rent and industrial areas.

In general, Latino professionals and business people—whether third-generation residents of Southern California or new immigrants from South America—find newer homes in suburban areas, where many of them assimilate partly into the larger white society and are sometimes not recognized as Latino. The most affluent Latinos are found in parts of Manhattan Beach, Westlake Village, Laguna Niguel, Yorba Linda, Anaheim Hills, and La Habra Heights, where the median Latino income is more than $75,000.

Downtown. The lowest incomes of all are found in the industrial and warehousing area just east of Downtown. This zone is sometimes called “The Flats” because its low, flat surface represents the floodplain of the Los Angeles River before its channel was encased in concrete. The low-income area extends right into the older section of Downtown, where buildings date from the early twentieth century. The southern and eastern sides of the Downtown area include Skid Row, the sweatshops on the upper floors of old, run-down office buildings, and dilapidated old apartment buildings. The poor people in this area are ethnically diverse, but Latinos are most numerous.

Downtown property owners and other members of the social and political elite (usually Anglo) have tried to set up various indirect barriers to retard the westward spread of this low-income population, to prevent its intrusion into the zone of much-newer banks, modern hotels, and office buildings. This geographical competition for control of different Downtown zones is not just a matter of rich and poor, because white-Latino differences accentuate the class contrast.

Hill and Grand Streets represent the zone of especially intense conflict—over space, land use, and the types of people who dominate the sidewalks and public spaces during the day. A one-block walk up Bunker Hill from Hill Street or Pershing Square brings the pedestrian to Grand Avenue and entry into the “the Hill”—the middle-class zone of secretaries, attorneys, bankers, and other business people. Farther east, the Ronald Reagan Office Building represents an attempt to reclaim for middle-class workers the daytime space at least to Spring Street. The ethnic and income contrasts continue after the workday ends, as 80 percent of the residents of the new apartment buildings on Bunker Hill are non-Hispanic whites and their median household income is over $40,000.

Notes

1. The diversity of tribes, subgroups, and intermarriage among Indian groups in Southern California is much greater than is indicated in Table 4.1. Details of identities and change in Los Angeles are discussed in Weibel-Orlando (1991), chapter 3.
5. Price (1968), 169.
12. The historic association between the Mexican population and industry is less likely to apply to industry based on post-1960 technology. For example, in the northwestern corner of the San Fernando Valley is the large, modern Chatsworth industrial park. Because its high-tech manufacturing is unobtrusive and kept within areas zoned for industry, the surrounding residential areas are still expensive residential areas in which few people of Mexican origin can afford to live.
13. If the ethnic distribution is examined historically and in greater detail than is shown on these maps, displacements connected with freeway construction and urban renewal are evident. Several freeways have been cut through the Mexican Eastside. The city’s clearance of poor people also created displacements. The mostly Mexican inhabitants of Chavez Ravine were cleared in the 1950s to make room for Dodger Stadium, and the ethnically mixed population of Bunker Hill was forced out in the early 1960s. See Gottlieb and Wolt (1977) and
Acuña (1984) for details. In the 1980s the people evicted from the poor Temple-Beaudry neighborhood west of L.A.’s Downtown in anticipation of the new Central City West development were mostly Latinos.

14. For the general tendency, see Allen and Turner (1996b).

15. For a vivid demonstration of these changes, see the map of black population change, 1980–1990, in Turner and Allen (1991).

16. Settlement concentrations are based on distribution maps of both U.S.-born and Mexican-born Hispanics as of 1910. These maps were produced by Christopher Bruce of the Department of Geography, California State University, Northridge, from the residents enumerated in the manuscript schedules of the U.S. census. In addition, McEuen (1914) and Sánchez (1993) are useful in understanding early Mexican settlements.


20. Examples of colonias connected with industry and the Pacific Electric Railway are from Garcia (1994), 69–70.


24. McWilliams (1973), 316.


27. Ethnic proportions are based on 1950 census data reported in Frank (1955), Table 9. More detailed distributions in 1940, based on unpublished tract-level data for both blacks and Mexican immigrants, can be found in Hanson and Beckett (1944).

28. Economic and social trends in the Mexican Eastside, including the gang situation, are clearly presented in Moore and Vigil (1993).

29. Our discussion of the origins of the San Fernando Mexican community is based on Zierer (1934).


32. Comments on Piru and Fillmore by Martha Menchaca at the University of Texas at Austin were helpful. Details on the limited interaction of the Mexican and white communities in Santa Paula are from her anthropological study (Menchaca 1995).

33. Details of the origins of many barrios in Orange County as farmworker colonias are based on Gilbert Gonzalez’s studies (1989–1990, 1994) and discussion with Professor Gonzalez.


37. Shevky and Williams (1949), 70.


41. Rios-Bustamante and Castillo (1986), 144.

42. Peñalosa (1963).

43. The best description of Westlake is provided in Chinchilla, Hamilton, and Loucky (1993).


45. Peñalosa (1986). See also Hernandez (1984). Anthropologist James Loucky identified the location of Kanjobal Indians within the Westlake area. It is likely that the undercount of Mayan Indians in Los Angeles in the 1990 census was unusually large.

46. Gil (1976), 54; Agustin Prado, one of California’s commissioners for refugees and a Cuban who settled in Los Angeles in 1960, interviewed April 1996.

47. These figures, as well as others concerning the 1980–1981 refugee cohort (Marielitos), are based on analysis of PUMS data on Cubans in Southern California.

48. Details of resettlement under the Cuban Refugee Program can be found in Boswell and Curtis (1984).

49. Clark (1963); Gil (1976), 52.

50. Gill (1976), 55.

51. Gil (1976), 72, 75, 76.

52. U.S. Bureau of the Census (1972), Table P-2.

53. Agustin Prado, interviewed April 1996.


56. Souza (1984), Maldonado (1979). One man who jumped the train in Los Angeles when he heard that pay and
working conditions in Hawaii would be less than promised. He watched his belongings go on to Hawaii without him. He lived a hand-to-mouth existence for months in Los Angeles, hoping somehow to make enough money to return to his home in Puerto Rico (Contract Slave’s Pathetic Craving, 1903).

57. In 1910 three of the Puerto Ricans were unemployed; the others worked as a laborer, a cigar maker, a seamstress, a teamster, and a cook. Puerto Ricans in Los Angeles as listed in manuscript census schedules were analyzed by Christopher Bruce, a graduate student in geography at California State University, Northridge.


59. This figure is based on PUMS data that are discussed in chapter 9.

60. This employment specialization is evident from analysis of PUMS data.

61. The employment specialization in that area is based on analysis of PUMS data.


65. The smaller nationalities in Southern California, based on PUMS estimates, are not included: 486 Paraguayans; 1,901 Uruguayans; 2,794 Venezuelans; and the 812 who listed “South American.” Also, we do not treat the 54,877 who identified their origin as “Spaniard” because they are of direct European origin. Brazilians speak Portuguese and do not consider themselves Hispanic.

66. These conflicts over space in Downtown have been effectively analyzed by Mike Davis (1990), 228–36, (1992).