

ETHNIC RESIDENTIAL CONCENTRATIONS IN UNITED STATES METROPOLITAN AREAS

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ABSTRACT. Although residential concentrations of immigrant ethnic groups in cities were common a century ago, it is not clear to what extent members of more recently arrived groups live near each other. We attempt to determine how common such clustered settlement is today, using 2000 census data to measure concentrations of Asians, Hispanics, and their larger ethnic subgroups in fifteen large metropolitan areas. The percentage of an ethnic group that is residentially concentrated correlated significantly with the group's proportion in an area. With metropolitan areas weighted equally, 38 percent of Hispanics and 13 percent of Asians were concentrated. However, when we analyzed eight specific nationality groups, the residentially concentrated proportion ranged from 14 to 59 percent. Level of cultural assimilation appears to explain group differences in level of concentration. Although ethnic concentrations were more pronounced in the largest metropolitan areas, important concentrations were also found in many of the smaller areas in our study. *Keywords: enclaves, ethnic groups, immigrants, metropolitan areas, residential concentrations.*

Around 1970, metropolitan areas in the United States began to receive increasing numbers of immigrants. However, little is known about the extent to which these immigrants, their U.S.-born children and grandchildren, and others with the same ethnic identity have clustered together to form neighborhood residential concentrations. We explore the extent to which ethnic groups are concentrated residentially in metropolitan areas and how groups and places vary in their levels of concentration.

Identifying and understanding such concentrations is important for three reasons. First, both assimilation theory and recent research suggest that the proportion of an ethnic group living in a concentrated settlement is an indicator of the group's relative cultural assimilation in the United States and, perhaps, its economic status (Massey 1985; Allen and Turner 1996; Alba and Nee 1999). The greater the proportion of the group that is residentially concentrated, the weaker the group's presumed assimilation. We probe this relationship by examining group differences in level of residential concentration and how they relate to the percentage of the group that is foreign-born and to the percentage that is proficient in English.

Thus, a group's settlement pattern can give a clue as to how its members are adapting to life in the United States. As phrased by other scholars studying immigrant suburbanization, "One important set of questions concerns the settlement patterns of immigrant groups within suburbia and, more specifically, the degree to which suburban settlement will result in ethnic concentrations . . . or dispersal in largely white communities" (Alba and others 1999, 458).

Second, a theoretical disagreement exists as to whether ethnic residential concentrations should even be found in modern metropolitan areas. If traditional as-

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