



RACIAL AND  
ETHNIC GROUPS  
IN AMERICA

JUAN L. GONZALES, JR.

**Third Edition**

# Racial and Ethnic Groups in America

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**Juan L. Gonzales, Jr.**

*California State University, Hayward*



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*DEDICATION*  
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# Preface

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As we enter the final years of the twentieth century we have to wonder what the future of race relations will be in the United States. Some are of the opinion that conditions for ethnic and racial groups have improved over the past decade and that race relations will improve by the turn of the century. But others are quick to point to some of the disturbing acts of racial violence and urban unrest that have occurred during the first half of the 1990's. These events have caused great consternation and concern in the American public. As a result many Americans are troubled by the future of race relations in the United States.

One of the primary objectives of this book is to provide an academic background for understanding the history, culture, and social relationships that constitute the day-to-day life in ethnic communities. The hope is that with an exposure to some basic facts about American ethnic groups that people will arrive at a new level of understanding and cooperation. It is my belief that education can provide the key to understanding ethnic and racial diversity in American society and that such an understanding will promote greater tolerance and acceptance of cultural diversity.

While the genesis of this book is the sociological tradition, and therefore sociological theory and methodology serves as its academic superstructure, the scope and orientation of this book is based on the multicultural perspective and therefore reflects a strong interdisciplinary approach. Consequently our survey of American ethnic groups has a strong historical orientation but also relies on the sociological method to examine the social issues of the day, the economic conditions, and the political life of American minorities.

As a result of the interdisciplinary approach of this book the reader will learn to appreciate the work and the research findings of scholars from a diversity of academic backgrounds. For this reason racial and ethnic groups are studied from the perspective of the sociologist, historian, economist, demographer, political scientist, and psychologist.

The first section of the book provides an overview of the major theories of race relations. While the focus is on prejudice and discrimination, the complexities of assimilation of both established minorities and recent immigrants are examined. Assimilation is viewed as a long term process and is considered one of the many options available to American ethnic groups today.

With an emphasis on the immigration experiences and historical circumstances of minorities as a backdrop, each chapter in this book captures the unique social, economic, and political experiences of each group. Five major ethnic groups are the focus of study, the Asian Americans, Latinos, white ethnics, Native Americans and African Americans. In addition one chapter is devoted to minority women and women as minorities in American society.

I am certain that students will appreciate the clear writing style of the book and the systematic presentation of ideas and information in each chapter. As students read about the lives of ethnic and racial minorities they will gain an appreciation for their struggle to survive in American society. Each chapter provides a wealth of demographic and economic data to help students understand the past and current socio-economic position of ethnic and racial groups in a highly complex society. Tables and graphs are used extensively in each chapter and box readings and chronological overviews serve to highlight specific characteristics of each group.

Instructors will find the multicultural-interdisciplinary approach of the book refreshing. The organization and presentation of materials in each chapter is based on years of teaching experience at the community college level, the university, and at the graduate level. Instructors will discover that they can key their lectures to the topics presented in each chapter and still emphasize the theories or topics that they feel are most important for their students to learn and absorb.

Many instructors will find that this book can serve as the primary text for their race relations course in either the quarter or semester systems. In addition the cultural diversity of the groups that are examined in the book will give instructors the option of spending more time on certain groups and less time on others.

Instructors will find the extensive reference list at the end of each chapter particularly useful, as these references can serve as a working bibliography for student papers and research projects. The list of important names and key terms found at the end of each chapter will help students focus on the important concepts and ideas presented in each chapter. In addition the sample test questions provided at the end of each chapter can serve as the basis for mid-term and final examination questions. These sample test questions will also reduce the concerns and anxieties that students typically have regarding the type of questions that will be asked on tests. In fact some instructors may even decide to select their test questions from the list of sample test questions provided at the end of each chapter.

In addition to the clear academic orientation of the book, the general reader will discover a distinct ethnic feeling in the presentation of facts and information. This strong cultural sensitivity and awareness derives from my personal knowledge of and feeling for ethnic and racial groups. For it should be clear that this book is not only the result of many years of formal education, research, and teaching, but also derives from the life experiences of an individual who has lived the culture.

Juan L. Gonzales Jr.



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