

ethnographic research program

Special Bonus Section - Compiled by Larry Stucky

Ethnographic Research Program

Introduction

This section shows how much iSpectra values research, which is not an end in itself, but merely a stepping stone towards the vision of embracing multicultural discipleship. Planning that flows from prayerful research should lead to more effective ministry design enabling churches to devise relevant strategies to help church growth. Research will also lead to more prayer and intercession.

iSpectra is launching several new initiatives throughout the San Francisco Bay [SFBay] area. In these few pages we highlight a few fascinating facts, and suggest their importance.

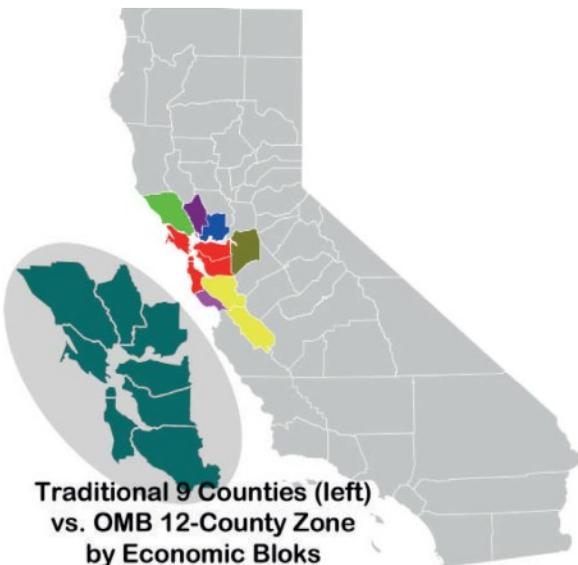
For those who live here, it is no surprise – SFBay is amazingly diverse! By careful use of the social sciences, a picture emerges of a region that stands as one of the most diverse in the whole United States – as well as the entire continent. It will be important to put this in perspective, indicating what makes SFBay so unique. In a real sense this uniqueness is part of what God has sovereignly been doing to bring the nations, i.e., the ethné, or people groups [PGs], to the Western world in general. In fact, it is even more important that we seek to gain God's perspective on our region, no matter how fascinating or compelling from a human standpoint we find the mosaic of cultures around us.

JD Payne, in his excellent book, *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission*, opens our eyes to the reality that the West has been unusually attractive to the rest of the world. This is not exclusive to the United States, by any means. However 20% of the foreign-born of the world, i.e., those who are living permanently outside of the land of their birth, have come to the United States. That's approximately 40,000,000 people. One fourth of those – 10 million people – call California their new home! More than one out of every four people in the state of California were born in another country. This is mind-boggling!

SFBay includes urban areas that top the chart – at least for the United States – in percentages of foreign-born – 36% in some of the communities of Santa Clara County. There are cities of SFBay where over 60% are of Asian descent. On the fringes of our region is the city of Watsonville, with over 80% Latino. Such a high contrast from one part of SFBay to the other ought to alert us to the reality that one size does not fit all, when it comes to ministry design. The fact that there are other cities in North America, like Toronto and Vancouver, BC, New York City and Miami, which are also heavy in foreign-born, makes our findings relevant and helpful for others throughout the Western world.

We need to identify those factors that are exceptionally unusual, compared to other parts of the country. What makes SFBay so unique in comparison to the rest of our state, the rest of our country, our continent, and our world? Every time that we run into such a unique characteristic, we should question whether our approach to ministry is optimized and appropriate to the context.

What do we mean by San Francisco Bay? We will focus on the nine counties which touch the bay geographically, as well as three other counties defined as connected to the traditional group of nine. Wikipedia is a helpful source for each one of these counties individually, and also to give us the broad overview of how they function as a larger unit, economically and in other ways. "Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma" comprise the traditional group, with the three other "counties of San Joaquin, Santa Cruz, and San Benito that do not border San Francisco Bay, but are economically tied to the nine counties that do."



[See following explanation for links to sources in this printed supplement.]

[NB: this version of the supplemental section is a work in progress. As of the iSpectra conference, there will be an updated version available online for download—Findings from the research task force of iSpectra.pdf. It will include links, footnotes, charts and diagrams, visualizations, etc., that space does not allow in this printed supplement. Use the shortened link <http://bit.ly/1jfszUE> to download it to your tablet or computer.]

Guiding Principles – Design and Purpose

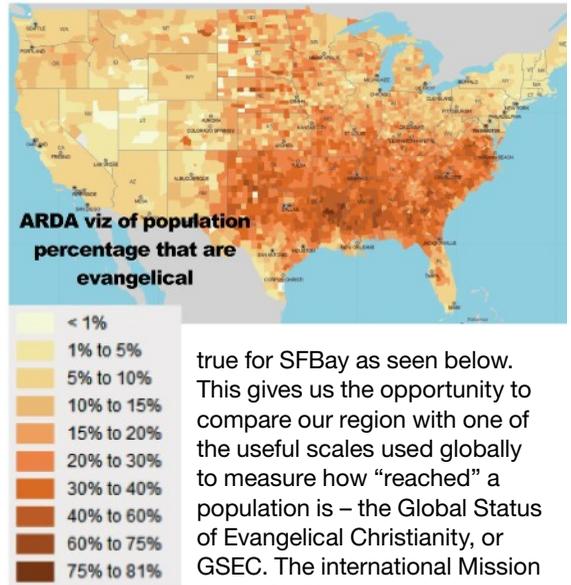
Detailed Description of the scope, methodology and design of research will be presented in the expanded online draft of this document. Besides the questions and concerns that have already emerged during the last several months of preparation and study, we expect the participants at the iSpectra conference to identify additional questions and research tasks that will open our eyes to the opportunities that God has brought to us. Use the twitter hashtag #iSpectraResearch or dm @DrLStucky, or stop by the WorldVenture exhibit to interact about research issues.

Religion as a Vital Research Element

By now it may be obvious, but religion is only one of many components that need to be weighed in the balance. Unlike Canada, which includes religious data in its census, the USA does not officially study religion at all. Fortunately there are non-governmental agencies that have gathered enormous quantities of data. The following charts, maps, and visualizations are based on data downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com.

First, the shaded map of the United States shows the percentage of the population that is evangelical in membership, broken down by county. Many other facts can be highlighted one at a time in this framework, using the social explorer on their site, or massive tables can be downloaded for further analysis.

Notice from the legend that there are huge disparities in the distribution of the evangelical population across the country. Some of the counties in the South include up to 81% of the population as members of evangelical churches. Parts of Utah are less than 1%. California as a whole tends to be on the lower end of the scale, and that is certainly



true for SFBay as seen below. This gives us the opportunity to compare our region with one of the useful scales used globally to measure how “reached” a population is – the Global Status of Evangelical Christianity, or GSEC. The international Mission Board (IMB) has led the charge in this global analysis of the remaining challenges for evangelization of the nations. Check out their resources for understanding this key concept at <http://public.imb.org/GLOBALRESEARCH/Pages/ResearchData.aspx>. Populations that are less than 2% evangelical are considered unreached. (There are other approaches to describing unreached populations, such as the Joshua project, etc.) By the GSEC standard, then, Utah includes many unreached counties.

By contrast California as a whole fits into the category of both reached and well resourced for carrying out the great commission to the frontiers of its population.

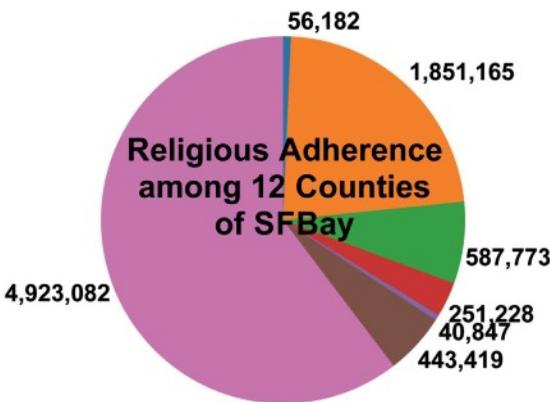
At a county level, this is not true, especially in four of the counties of SFBay. The ARDA maps do not specifically highlight a critical aspect of the religiosity of SFBay, nor of the nation. While it is possible to highlight any one of a number of religious groups



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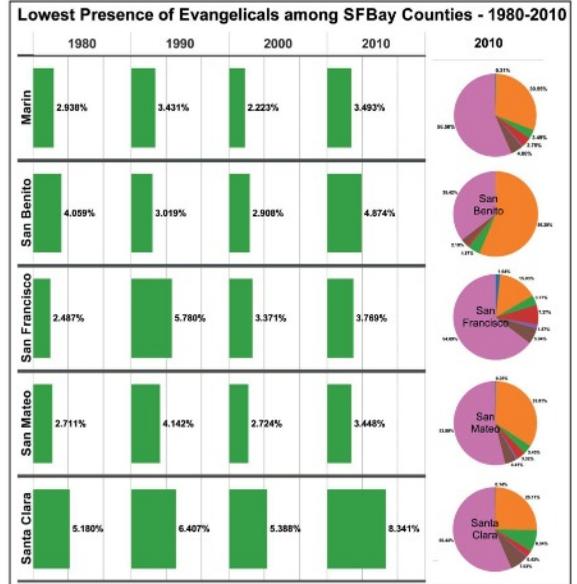
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and see the density of those groups in comparison to the population, the maps do not show those who are not a part of any group. There is another part of the ARDA resources that does show graphically what is taking place in SFBay. The following diagram shows the relative size of the various religious traditions in SFBay as of 2010. The green wedge of the pie represents the percentage of evangelicals as compared to the entire population. With percentages varying from 6.35% in 1980 to 9.4% in 2010, once again it is shown that SFBay, as a whole, is within the “reached” category by the GSEC scale. By global standards the church is expected to disciple to the extremes of this region, without outside help.



In absolute terms the numbers of evangelicals have increased from 1.5 million to 3.5 million over these years. For some reason there was actually a drop that was registered from 1990 to 2000, with a healthy recovery by 2010. It would be wrong to assume that all evangelicals are in the Kingdom of God, just as it would be wrong to assume that all non-evangelicals are outside the Kingdom. This is still a useful grid for our analysis.

However the most compelling part of this chart is the astounding number of people in the categories of “other” and “unclaimed.” These are totally outside of any reference to Christianity. “Other” includes non-Christian religions, such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, etc. Even more striking is the unclaimed segment of the population, which presumably are not a part of any religion. There are disclaimers on the ARDA site buried deeply within their data, as to the lack of reporting by some groups and the room for error.



Tentative Hypotheses

- Evangelism and disciple making are urgent challenges facing SFBay as a whole.
- The region has substantial presence of UPGs, calling for heightened skills, awareness, and preparation on the part of churches and ministries.
- Unless evangelization and disciple making cross ethnic and cultural lines, the divide between the small minority of evangelical followers of Christ and the growing number of followers of other religions or unclaimed by any religion becomes bigger each decade.
- There is a great need for additional workers from the more evangelical segments of the SFBay to invest in the less evangelical parts.
- SFBay also represents a compelling challenge for other areas of the country with high presence of believers to invest by sending workers to speed up the harvest.

Areas for Further Research and Investigation

Several areas of research would help us in the kinds of ministry planning we are envisioning in the near future. Objective facts related to population, such as population growth, race, ethnicity, ancestry, language used in the home, place of origin, immigration status, economic variables, level of education, demographics about the communities where people live, their professions, will help validate the kinds of ministry that are being contemplated. The ubiquity of the use of SARC's (School Accountability Report Card)

makes it possible to identify schools and school districts that have a high incidence of English language learners and minority populations that are at extremes of the performance scale. Asians, including Koreans, Indians, and Chinese, are typically at the extreme highs of performance in education. Nevertheless a ministry design that focuses on recent immigrants can gain credibility in building relationships based on helping the families to achieve their educational goals.

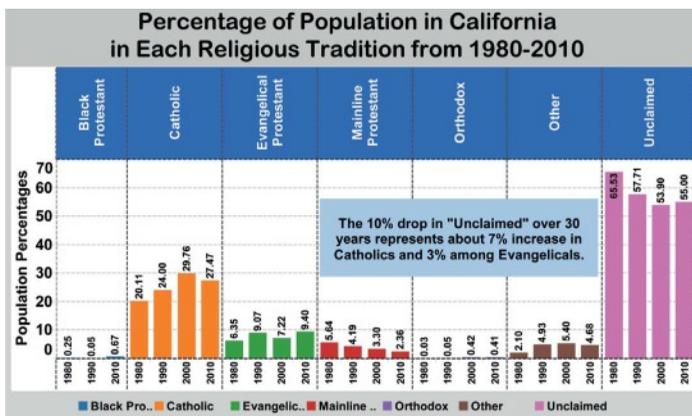
Consider this frequent scenario, related by a PhD from India. Indian families arrive in SFBay, especially Silicon Valley, clustering in high density low-cost housing. Within six years the typical family is well-established in professional life, and they will have moved to the top-rated school districts within the region. Meanwhile their children will have become totally fluent in English and are already at the head of their class. Further research is needed to document and validate this typical sequence. If it is accurate, then an evangelistic ministry focused on recent immigrants from Asia with high educational aspirations might have a six-year window in which to come alongside of such families with tutoring, mentoring, and friendship. Ideally contact will be made with the family within the first week or month upon their arrival. Relationships will go on for as long as they are in the community, and even after they move to more elite neighborhoods.

Take a look at the ministry model of Moveln of Toronto, which, incidentally, scores the highest figures for foreign-born of any place in North America at around 50% of the population of this mega-city. Taking up residence in the same high density low-cost housing as new immigrants is one way to capitalize on God's bringing the nations to our community. The African-American Fresno School of Mission practices a variation on this theme, with tutoring and other services directed to the children of immigrants in a nearby apartment complex. The management of the apartments considers their presence so valuable, that they are given free rent for their office and tutoring center right in the apartments. This type of ministry reaches out to the other end of the educational spectrum, among the chronically underperforming segments of the population. 53% of

school-aged children in the state of California are from immigrant families. Unless literacy is achieved by third grade, according to experts, the predictors for success in high school and in life fall dramatically. Such is the basis for a cutting edge volunteer ministry called Every Neighborhood Partnership in the city of Fresno; churches have adopted a large number of the more challenging schools of the city to bring a variety of services in the name of Christ.

Hindrances to Change in the Church

Research across the country suggests that evangelicals are among the most xenophobic part of the population. Especially in the wake of 9/11, there has been a high index of fear of the unknown, making it that much more difficult to reach out and welcome the immigrants. Consequently many of the churches tend to cater to the same kinds of people who have always been a part of the membership. In the political arena it is wise to remember that there are increasingly volatile issues, and evangelicals are being branded as intolerant and out of touch with the real issues. Research will help us to understand the issues, but it will take a change of worldview and values to impact our lifestyle of welcoming the newcomers into our lives. Consequently there is a need to embrace holistic ministry that is fully engaged in the community, under the banner of the great commandment, fully integrated as well into the aims of fulfilling the great commission. This calls for deliberate ministry among the churches and wherever evangelicals exercise influence, not only in order to change our image in the public's eye, but also to change the underlying reality of



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who we are and what we stand for. In this way the church will be present in every segment of society, touching the powerless refugee as well as impacting society's rich young rulers. Brookings Institute in February wrote about San Francisco as one of the outliers in the area of income inequality. The ratio of people in the 95th percentile of income to those in the 20th percentile is a factor of about 15, because the high earners at the 95th percentile make around \$350,000 a year. Young professionals among Asian-American followers of Christ wrestle with the issue of God's call upon their lives, when their parents are diametrically opposed to their leaving the elite incomes they have achieved during their 20s and 30s. This is the most common problem being discussed by attendees of the World Christian Conference each year, hosted by the Harvest Group, which is also involved with the iSpectra conference.

Taking the time to do the background research will spare us from ill-advised ministry design. On a recent vision trip through downtown Fresno among the homeless, a police officer who works professionally among the homeless, and who has recently come to Christ, highlighted the ineffectiveness and needlessness of church ministries that merely drop off food but have no engagement with the homeless themselves. Ironically there are multiple homeless centers within a few blocks of where the homeless assemble, to the point that a homeless person not only can get three square meals a day, but if he or she is diligent, there are six meals to be eaten on a daily basis!

Importance to Ministries in our Region

iSpectra is well poised to make a contribution to a wide range of ministries throughout SFBay. In addition, in collaboration with global and continental partners, the advances that we are

making in understanding, cataloging, and analyzing our situation can be catalytic for spawning similar kinds of ministry, especially in urban settings across the continent. The pre-conference workshop, sponsored by peoplegroups.info, is an example of the partnerships that are developing. Much of what we are discovering can be incorporated directly into the database of places, people groups, and ministry resources that are available globally for the advance of the kingdom of God. At the same time we are reminded of how much we can gain from the contributions of others, both within the region and outside.

International Student Ministry

International student ministry is a critical area of impacting the nations. This section will eventually be expanded in the downloadable version of the document: <http://bit.ly/1jfszUE>. There will also be links to resources and documentation in that document.

Aftermath: Workshops and Symposiums

Over the coming months there will be several opportunities to reengage with the area of research that contributes to ministry planning. iSpectra leadership will be holding a series of monthly meetings in each of the counties of SFBay. It will be possible to concentrate on research that is focused on the immediate concerns of each location.

In addition we are planning to launch symposiums and workshops to equip ministry leaders to make use of the tools and resources that are being discovered and enhanced. Communicate with Tad Cooper, JP Samuel, or Larry Stucky to be put on a mailing list with announcements about research. Use the twitter hashtag #iSpectraResearch, or dm @DrLStucky, or stop by the WorldVenture exhibit to interact about research issues.



bio: Larry Stucky, D.Min., has served in cross-cultural ministry with WorldVenture for 32 years in 3 continents, along with his wife Dana. Church planter, leadership developer, president of a theological seminary, board member of a humanitarian foundation, and catalyst for a national mission movement are among the roles he has had. He currently serves as a consultant in the area of diaspora mission, based out of California. He also leads the Research Task Force for iSpectra.