THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Census 2000

A Demographic Portrait of Asian Americans

By Yu Xie and Kimberly A. Goyette

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RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION
112 E. 64th St.
New York, NY 10021

POPULATION REFERENCE BUREAU
1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 520
Washington, DC 20009

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Foreword

In December 1862, Abraham Lincoln struggled to maintain support for the Civil War. Several months before, he had signed the Emancipation Proclamation, a key step in transforming a war to save the Union into a war to end slavery. This was a deeply unpopular move among many, even on the Union side. The war itself was becoming a disaster. The president had recently fired the cautious George McClellan, commander of the largest Union army. His replacement, Ambrose Burnside, was in the process of leading that army to its costly and demoralizing defeat at Fredericksburg, just 30 miles away from the White House, where President Lincoln was revising his annual message to Congress.

Not, one would have thought, a moment when the Commander-in-Chief's mind would be on long-range demographic projections. But that 1862 annual message devoted several paragraphs to a summary of the growth of the American population, with tabular data from decennial censuses from 1790 through 1860, calculations of the growth rate, and projections for 70 years into the future. This was not, of course, an academic exercise. Lincoln was concerned to show the feasibility of a major peace proposal, to borrow enough money to compensate Southern slaveholders for the emancipation of the human beings they considered their "property." With the expected growth of the population, Lincoln argued, there would be plenty of prosperous Americans to share the burden of the national debt.

Today, we face dilemmas of our own—in political, social, and economic life; in our families and neighborhoods and workplaces. None of these, certainly, is so great as the agonizing choices faced by Lincoln. But his example is still valid. Now, as then, a deep understanding of the American population, and how it is changing, is an essential underpinning for decisions of all sorts. Now, as then, the first source to consult is the decennial census, our national record of two centuries of growth, transformation, and movement.

This series of reports from the Russell Sage Foundation and the Population Reference Bureau, The American People, sets the results of Census 2000 in context. Growth of the overall population is only one part of the story. The transformation of our experience of race, the growth of new minorities, immigration of millions from Latin America and Asia, the aging of the largest-ever generation (the baby boomers), migration to the West and South, the growth of outlying suburbs, the transformation of family and work, the well-being of children—all these build the national stage on which our dramas of the next few decades will be enacted.

The reports in this series cover all these issues, using the census and other data sources, collectively providing a portrait of the American people in a new century. The first in the series looks at the census itself, a technical triumph of applied social science in an increasingly politicized environment. Subsequent reports in the series investigate the experiences of major racial and ethnic groups, immigrants, and Americans of different generations, the growth of new regions, and changes in household life. Each is written by an author or team of authors selected for their expertise with the data and broad understanding of the implications of demographic trends.

The Russell Sage Foundation and the Population Reference Bureau were both founded in the early decades of the 20th century, closer to Lincoln's time than to our own. Both are dedicated to bringing the results of first-rate social science to those who can use the results for practical improvements in public life. Both institutions, in particular, have a long record of elucidating the results of the decennial censuses.

President Lincoln, by the way, brilliant as he was, did not turn out to be much of a forecaster. He expected an American population in 1930 of 252 million; the number actually enumerated that year was just under half that size. The population of the United States did not exceed the number he expected by 1930 until the 1990 Census. We no longer expect U.S. presidents to do their own demography; that is probably progress.

REYNOLDS FARLEY is professor of sociology at the University of Michigan and a research scientist in its Population Studies Center. As author, editor, adviser to the U.S. Census Bureau, and interviewer, he has been an active participant in each of the last four censuses.

JOHN HAAGA is director of Domestic Programs and director of the Center for Public Information on Population Research at the Population Reference Bureau.

A Demographic Portrait of Asian Americans

By Yu Xie and Kimberly A. Goyette

Asian Americans are a diverse group who either are descendants of immigrants from some part of Asia or are themselves such immigrants. They come from East Asia (China, Japan, and Korea); Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam); and South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan). Cultural heritage, economic conditions, political systems, religious practices, and languages are quite different across these countries and, in some cases, have changed over time. As a result, ethnic differences among Asian Americans are so large that they call into question the use of a single, overarching category to group them.

The broad category of Asian Americans is used for several reasons. Besides the practical need to collapse racial categories in statistical tabulations, there are also many ways in which Asian Americans are distinct from other major racial groups in the United States. First, Asian Americans are physically and culturally distinguishable from whites and other minorities. Second, except for those of Japanese descent, most Asian Americans arrived in the United States recently, as beneficiaries of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (Chinese, Koreans, Filipinos, and Asian Indians) or as refugees (Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians). Finally, again with the exception of Japanese Americans, most Asian Americans speak their native languages at home and maintain their distinct ethnic cultures and values, signaling that they either face difficulties fully assimilating into the American mainstream or purposefully resist full assimilation. As this report will show, Asian Americans have socioeconomic experiences and demographic profiles that are overall distinct from those of whites and blacks.

With available census data and supplemental material, this report documents racial differences in demographic and socioeconomic characteristics between Asian and non-Asian Americans, as well as ethnic differences in these characteristics among Asian Americans. The report begins with an historical review of the immigration history of the major Asian groups. It then examines the educational achievements of Asian Americans relative to whites and blacks and across Asian ethnicities over the past 40 years; the labor force outcomes of Asian Americans relative to whites and blacks and variations across Asian ethnicities over time; Asian Americans' family characteristics and marriage patterns; and spatial distribution and residential patterns in the United States.

The 2000 U.S. Census provided the first opportunity to enumerate individuals of more than one race and/or multiple Asian ethnicities. The option to choose one or more races on the 2000 Census form presents difficulties for comparing Asian populations both over time and across Asian ethnic groups in 2000. In discussing ethnic differences, this report focuses on individuals who reported only one Asian ethnicity.

History of Asian Americans

Although Asian ethnic groups in the United States have had diverse immigration and settlement experiences, these experiences can be divided into two broad historical periods demarcated by the landmark 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (also known as the Hart-Cellar Act). The first, prior to 1965, is characterized by a U.S. economy hungry for low-wage labor and by severe racial conflicts. In this period, Asian Americans faced competition, racial violence, and discrimination. The second period, after 1965, reflects a relatively more tolerant racial environment following the Civil Rights Movement and a growing need in the U.S. economy for an educated, skilled labor force. Since 1965, Asian Americans have been perceived more positively, in the words of some as a "model minority."[1] A brief review of the immigration histories of the most populous Asian ethnic groups in the United States follows, highlighting some of the similarities and differences in immigration experiences by Asian American ethnicity.

YU XIE **holds several faculty appointments at the University of Michigan. He is Frederick G.L. Huetwell Professor of Sociology and Statistics and Research Professor in the Survey Research Center and the Population Studies Center, Institute for Social Research (ISR), where he directs the Quantitative Methodology Program (QMP). He is also a faculty associate at the Center for Chinese Studies. Xie's areas of interest are social stratification, demography, statistical methods, and the sociology of science.**

KIMBERLY A. GOYETTE **is an assistant professor of sociology at Temple University. Her research interests include education, Asian Americans, and stratification. Kim has recently explored the influence of social class on graduate school attendance and major choice. She is beginning a project on how families choose schools through their choice of residences.**

Chinese

Chinese were among the first Asians to settle in the United States.[2] Some Chinese were present in Hawaii as early as 1835, but thousands of Chinese arrived both in Hawaii and on the mainland during the 1840s and 1850s. The 1860 U.S. Census documented almost 35,000 Chinese on the mainland (see Box 1). These Chinese immigrants came to the United States for various reasons. Some sought shelter from wars and rebellions in the mid-1800s. Others sought better economic opportunities. Tremendous social and political turmoil in China during this period led the Imperial Qing Dynasty to levy high taxes, and in trying to pay them, peasants often lost their land. Frequent floods destroyed crops, and the population lived under the threat of starvation.

Early Chinese immigrants were primarily peasants, with little or no formal schooling. Large waves of them came to the United States as manual workers when the rapid development of the West demanded cheap labor. Immigrants were also drawn by the promise of the discovery of gold in California. Most Chinese immigrants to the United States in the 19th century were men. They envisioned making money in the United States and then returning to China at some future date. Married women remained home to care for their children and for their husbands' parents. At the turn of the century, only 5 percent of all Chinese on the mainland, and 14 percent in Hawaii, were female.

Chinese immigrants initially settled in rural areas but soon gravitated toward urban centers: San Francisco, and later New York and Boston. By 1900, 45 percent of Chinese in California lived in the city of San Francisco. Chinese in urban areas were predominantly employed in service-sector jobs—working in laundries, for example—and lived in their ethnic communities. Because Chinese in these communities were isolated from mainstream American society, many children of Chinese immigrants grew up speaking only Chinese and interacting with few whites. Some supplemented their American public school experiences by attending Chinese schools at the end of the day or on weekends.

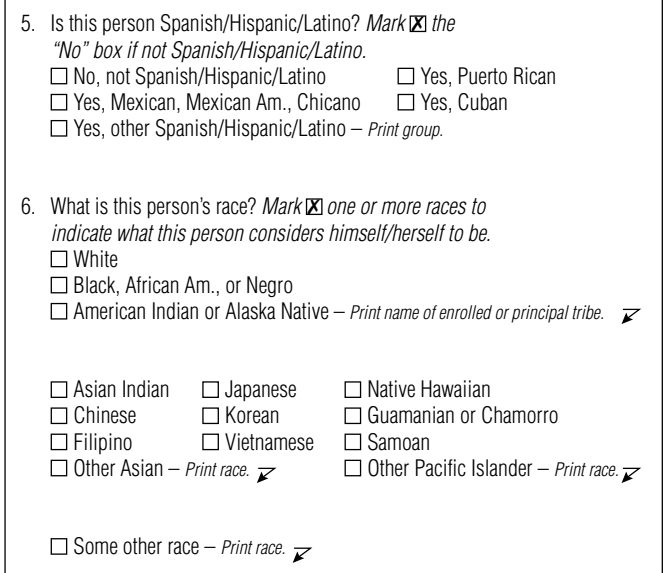
Chinese immigrants found work outside their enclaves in agriculture, in construction, in mining, and as shopkeepers. Chinese laborers represented 90 percent of the workforce responsible for the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad. Chinese workers were often brought into factories after white workers went on strike over labor disputes. Because of this, Chinese in the United States were perceived as a threat to white workers and were often a target of hatred and racial violence. In the late 1870s, federal courts ruled that Chinese immigrants should be barred from naturalization as "aliens ineligible for citizenship." Later, Chinese immigration was legally restricted by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Immigration of all Asians except Filipinos, who were residents of a U.S. territory at that time, was prohibited by the National Origins Act of 1924, which barred the immigration of all "aliens ineligible for citizenship." From a high of over 107,000 in 1890, the Chinese population in the United States dwindled over the following decades. Chinese immigration practically stalled until 1965, when immigration law changed significantly.

Box 1

Asian Americans in the U.S. Census

The U.S. census has counted Asian Americans in different ways since the 1850s. Early Chinese in the United States were first documented through questions on nativity. Later, as more Chinese immigrated and sentiment against them among U.S.-born laborers grew, U.S. state and federal courts struggled with their racial classification and the classification of other immigrants from Asia. In 1870, Chinese were classified as a "race" on the census form, followed by Japanese in 1890. The practice of enumerating Asian ethnicities as separate racial groups has continued to this day, with new major groups (such as Filipino, Korean, Asian Indian, Vietnamese) added to the list as their populations grew in the United States. In the 1990 Census, there was a short-lived attempt to group different ethnicities of Asian Americans along with Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders under a heading "Asians and Pacific Islanders."

In this report, Asians include East Asians, Southeast Asians, and South Asians, but not individuals with ancestry from West Asia, who are identified racially as "white" or "Other." The 2000 Census was the first one that allowed racial identification with more than one race. The race question from the 2000 Census is shown below.



→ NOTE: Please answer BOTH Questions 5 and 6.

5. Is this person Spanish/Hispanic/Latino? *Mark ☒ the "No" box if not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino.*
   - ☐ No, not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
   - ☐ Yes, Puerto Rican
   - ☐ Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
   - ☐ Yes, Cuban
   - ☐ Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino – *Print group.*

6. What is this person's race? *Mark ☒ one or more races to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be.*
   - ☐ White
   - ☐ Black, African Am., or Negro
   - ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native – *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.*
   - ☐ Asian Indian
   - ☐ Japanese
   - ☐ Native Hawaiian
   - ☐ Chinese
   - ☐ Korean
   - ☐ Guamanian or Chamorro
   - ☐ Filipino
   - ☐ Vietnamese
   - ☐ Samoan
   - ☐ Other Asian – *Print race.*
   - ☐ Other Pacific Islander – *Print race.*
   - ☐ Some other race – *Print race.*

Note: For further reading on how the race question is asked in the Census, see M.J. Anderson and S.E. Fienberg, *Who Counts? The Politics of Census-Taking in Contemporary America* (1999); and N. Mezey, "Erasure and Recognition: The Census, Race and the National Imagination," *Northwestern Law Review* 97, no. 4 (2003): 1701-68.

Table 1

Asian American Population by Major Ethnicity: 1980, 1990, and 2000 Censuses

Race/ethnicity	1980 Census Number	1980 Census %	1990 Census Number	1990 Census %	2000 Census Number	2000 Census %
Total U.S. population	226,545,805		248,709,873		281,421,906	
Asian Americans	3,259,519	1.4	6,908,638	2.8	11,070,913	3.9
Chinese	806,040	0.4	1,645,472	0.7	2,633,849	0.9
Japanese	700,974	0.3	847,562	0.3	958,945	0.3
Filipino	774,652	0.3	1,406,770	0.6	2,089,701	0.7
Korean	354,593	0.2	798,849	0.3	1,148,951	0.4
Asian Indian	361,531	0.2	815,447	0.3	1,785,336	0.6
Vietnamese	261,729	0.1	614,547	0.3	1,171,776	0.4
Other Asian	806,040	0.4	2,425,463	1.0	3,916,204	1.4

Note: To be consistent with the 1980 and 1990 censuses, multiracial and multiethnic Asian Americans in the 2000 Census were allocated evenly to their appropriate categories following the 50-percent rule (see Box 3, page 23).

Sources: Summary reports from the 1980 and 1990 U.S. censuses; and calculations based on J.S. Barnes and C.E. Bennett, *The Asian Population: 2000* (2002).

Although small numbers of Chinese people were allowed to immigrate following the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943, immigration of Chinese and other Asians to the United States did not really flourish until the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1965. This act repealed all previous quotas and immigration restrictions, and established preferences for immigrants who wished to reunite with family members or who had skills valued in the U.S. labor market. Following the passage of this landmark legislation, Chinese immigrating to the United States tended to be highly educated, to have professional and technical occupations, and to arrive with their families. Many came from Hong Kong and Taiwan, places where they had taken refuge after the 1949 military defeat of the Nationalists in China. Some of these new immigrants settled in urban ethnic enclaves like Chinatowns, while others, especially those with professional occupations, established themselves in suburban communities. Before 1900, Chinese made up the largest Asian group in the United States, though eventually the Japanese grew larger. Since 1970, Chinese have again been the most populous Asian ethnic group in the United States (see Table 1). Currently, there are more than 2.6 million Americans of Chinese descent in the United States.

Japanese

Japanese first started immigrating to the United States in the 19th century. Like Chinese, they came as agricultural workers. Unlike Chinese, a large proportion of Japanese immigrants became plantation workers in Hawaii. In the 1920s, 43 percent of the Hawaiian population was Japanese. On the mainland, many Japanese who were initially employed as agricultural workers soon became self-employed merchants and farmers. By 1925, 46 percent of Japanese immigrants were involved in agriculture. In cities like San Francisco, they established small enclaves where they could support and socialize with each other, eat familiar food, and speak their native language. After Japanese had established themselves with farms or businesses, they sent for wives, and wives worked with their husbands in businesses and on farms. Japanese, more than other early Asian immigrants, came to the United States to settle and raise families.

Given their intention to settle, Japanese emphasized to their children the importance of learning to be American to avoid discrimination. Japanese sent their children to American public schools and encouraged their children to become fluent in English. They saved money for their children to go to college, believing education would help them overcome discrimination.

Their efforts did not protect them from massive government-sponsored discrimination, however. Because white workers saw the Japanese, as they had the Chinese, as a source of unfair competition, immigration of Japanese was restricted by the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907-1908. Japanese immigration was later completely prohibited in 1924. Further, during World War II, over 100,000 Japanese from California and other states in the Pacific Northwest were placed in internment camps by the U.S. government. Whole families were herded into camps under suspicions that they had colluded or would collude with Japan to attack the mainland United States. Many Japanese families lost their land while residing in these camps. Some Japanese Americans fought in the U.S. Army to show their loyalty to the United States.

Because many Japanese had settled in the United States with their families, their numbers increased through natural population growth. They were the most populous Asian American group from 1910 to 1960 (see Figure 1, page 4). Because Japan's economy was well developed by 1965, relatively few Japanese entered the United States after the major overhaul of immigration laws in 1965. And because of this, many Japanese ethnic enclaves have not been sustained. Greater proportions

of Japanese speak English well, and Japanese tend to be more structurally assimilated—that is, to have attainment in education and occupation that is equal to that of whites—than other ethnic groups such as Chinese and Koreans. Currently, fewer than 1 million people are estimated to be Japanese Americans.

Filipinos

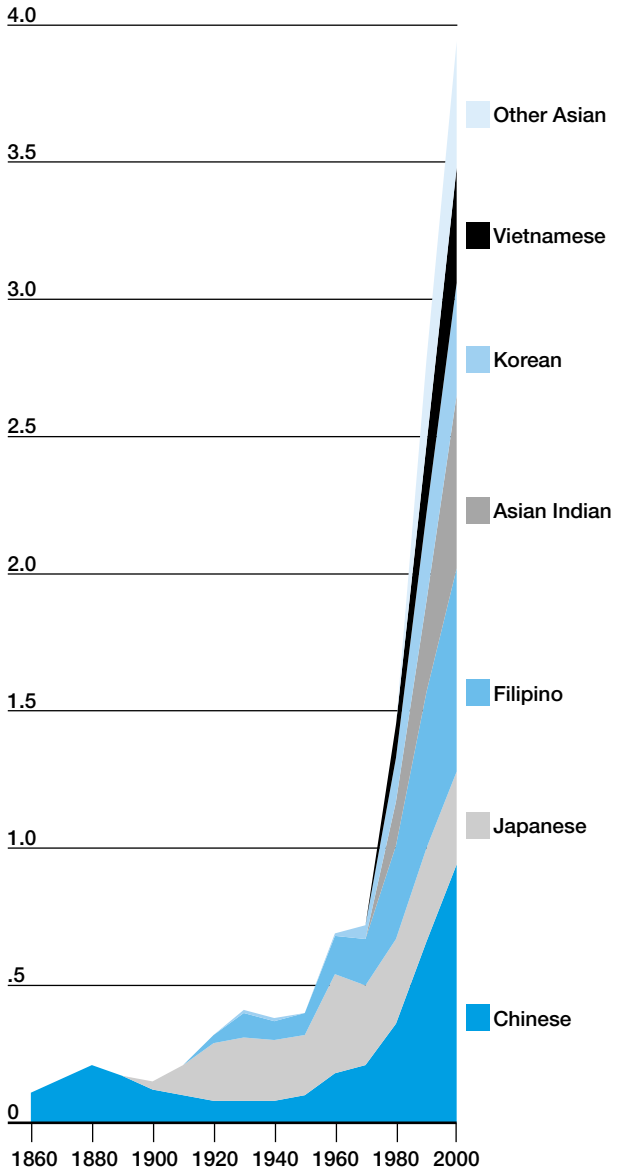
Few Filipinos lived in the United States before the turn of the 20th century. Most of the early Filipino immigrants arrived as American nationals after 1898, the year that the United States acquired the Philippines at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War. Filipinos immigrated to the United States in search of employment on plantations in Hawaii and other agricultural work on the mainland. Filipinos also worked in fisheries in the Pacific Northwest and as domestic and other service workers. Many Filipino workers organized labor unions during the early 20th century, but their efforts to win wage increases were met with hostility not only from their employers but also from white workers who feared competition. More likely to intermarry than Chinese and the Japanese, Filipino men also provoked racial hatred and violence by marrying white women. Because a large portion of the Filipino population worked as plantation or migrant agricultural workers, they did not establish ethnic communities in urban centers. As a result of their geographical dispersion and their propensity to intermarry, Filipinos soon became more structurally assimilated in the United States than Chinese and Japanese.

Filipinos were the only Asian ethnic group not prohibited from immigrating by the 1924 National Origins Act, because they came from an American territory. However, when the Philippines was established as a commonwealth of the United States in 1934, severe restrictions were placed on Filipino immigration. The Filipino population in the United States dropped from about 108,000 to 98,000 in the following decade.

After changes to immigration laws were enacted in 1965, many Filipinos came to the United States fleeing the repressive Marcos regime and seeking better economic opportunities. For example, Filipino doctors, nurses, and pharmacists were better compensated for their skills in the United States than in the Philippines. From 1980 on, Filipinos constituted the second most populous Asian American group in the United States. Currently, Filipino Americans number slightly over 2 million.

Figure 1

ASIAN ETHNIC GROUPS AS PERCENT OF U.S. POPULATION, 1860–2000



Source: Authors' calculations based on U.S. census data.

Koreans

Most early Korean immigrants, both men and women, began their journey to the U.S. mainland working on plantations in Hawaii. Plantation owners in Hawaii capitalized on ethnic enmity, using Korean plantation workers to break strikes by Japanese workers. About 40 percent of Korean immigrants were Christians. They built many churches and formed Christian associations in Hawaii. By 1907, almost 1,000 had left Hawaii for the U.S. mainland.

Other Koreans came to the mainland after Japan annexed Korea in 1910. The 1910 Census counted around 4,500 Koreans. Koreans maintained strong loyalty to Korea and a strong desire to liberate their country from Japanese rule. Korean Christian churches often served to maintain this nationalism, as did Korean language schools, in which second-generation Koreans not only spoke Korean but also learned about the culture and politics of the homeland.

Many Koreans immigrating to the mainland worked in mines and fisheries; others formed gangs of migrant farm workers. Some Koreans also became business owners, running laundries and hotels that served whites. Because they were so few in number, they did not establish ethnic enclaves, though they maintained a distinct sense of Korean identity. Along with Japanese, Koreans were prohibited from immigration by the 1924 National Origins Act.

The majority of the present Korean population in the United States is the result of an immigration wave that began after 1965. Since then, in major metropolitan centers such as New York and Los Angeles, Korean ethnic enclaves have sprung up. Most post-1965 emigrants were middle class and well educated. In the 1960s and 1970s, educational attainment increased in Korea, but there was no corresponding increase in skilled jobs in densely populated cities such as Seoul. Skilled professionals, such as doctors and pharmacists, immigrated to many places, including the United States. Some Koreans arrived with capital and established grocery stores and other small businesses. As a result, Koreans have the highest rate of self-employment among all Asian ethnic groups in the United States. Today there are over 1 million Korean Americans.

Asian Indians

The first Asian Indian immigrants to the United States were recruited to work on plantations in Hawaii. Others came to Washington and California to find agricultural work, and Asian Indian workers were often used as strike breakers in both construction and mining industries. Many early Asian Indian immigrants were from the Punjab, and about 80 percent were of the farming caste. By 1920, about 6,400 Asian Indians were in the United States. The majority of South Asian immigrants to the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were single Sikh men, who kept the Sikh tradition of wearing long hair wrapped in a turban. Unlike Chinese and Japanese, Asian Indians did not concentrate geographically.

Asian Indians in the United States were first classified in court decisions of 1910 and 1913 as Caucasians. These decisions permitted Asian Indians to become naturalized and intermarry with U.S.-born whites. These decisions, however, were reversed in 1923, when Asian Indians were legally classified as nonwhite because their ancestry could not be traced to northern or Western Europe. Asian Indian immigrants, reclassified as "nonwhite," were prevented from becoming citizens and barred from further immigration, as were other Asians, in 1924. Antimiscegenation laws prevented Asian Indians from marrying Caucasian women. However, many Asian Indian men married newly immigrated Mexican women.

Because the initial Asian Indian immigration was small and Asian Indians were not allowed to bring families to the United States, few Asian Indians lived in the United States prior to 1965. Since then, many highly educated professionals from India have immigrated to the United States in search of skilled employment. Most had been exposed to Western culture and education in India and had little trouble finding professions in which their education and skills were needed. Today 1.8 million Asian Indians live in the United States.

Vietnamese

Very few Vietnamese immigrated to the United States prior to 1970. However, U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War resulted in substantial Vietnamese immigration in the 1970s. In 1972, after the United States withdrew all its forces from Vietnam, many Vietnamese left the country. And during the months preceding the collapse of the South Vietnamese government in 1975, over 100,000 people were evacuated or airlifted out of the country. Many Vietnamese who left had prospered under the South Vietnamese government. Others left because they had aided the United States in some way, and the U.S. military made provisions for them. Refugees leaving Vietnam before 1975 were generally better off economically than the overall population of Vietnam.

The communists captured Saigon in 1975 and placed segments of the Vietnamese population in reeducation camps. Fearing political persecution, some Vietnamese left Vietnam as political refugees. Those who left after 1975 tended to be poorer than the earlier wave, often leaving without capital or possessions. Many were Chinese-Vietnamese who were ethnically Chinese but had lived in Vietnam for generations. This group was concentrated in the South and was particularly persecuted by the Vietnamese communists, who were suspicious of their class as merchants. Many escaped by boat, crossing the Mekong River into Thailand or crowding onto boats to cross the South China Sea. These "boat people" were desperate and faced extortion by those helping them escape. Once boat people were spotted on the sea or had made it safely to ports, they were sent to refugee camps in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand, where many spent years waiting to be admitted to the United States. Children in refugee camps were schooled in the English language and Western etiquette but lost years of learning math, science, and other school subjects.

Vietnamese who came as political refugees were originally sponsored by Midwestern churches and other charitable organizations in the United States. They provided refugees with shelter and food and helped them obtain temporary government assistance. Many immigrants got job training, and their children were settled in public schools. After several years in the United States, Vietnamese began to know family members and friends settling in other parts of the United States and initiated a wave of secondary migration, concentrating in com-

munities such as Orange County, Calif.; Houston; and even New Orleans. Vietnamese Americans now number over 1 million.

Other Asians

There are other Asian ethnic groups in the United States. They include Southeast Asians from Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Laos, and Cambodia. Cambodians and Laotians are similar to Vietnamese in that they immigrated to the United States primarily as refugees from the Vietnam War. Other Asians came from South Asian countries such as Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. They are similar to Asian Indians in that they were primarily immigrants seeking better economic opportunities. Like the groups discussed above, other Asians represent a diversity of languages, cultures, national heritages, and immigration and settlement experiences.

Combined Population

After the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, Asia quickly became the second-largest source of immigrants to the United States, and, as a result, the Asian American population has grown rapidly. For example, Asian Americans represented 1.4 percent of the population in 1980 and almost 4 percent in 2000 (see Table 1, page 3). With the exception of Japanese Americans, all Asian ethnic groups have more than doubled in population since 1980. By comparison, the total U.S. population increased by only 24 percent in this period.

Most of the increase in the Asian American population is due to immigration rather than to natural growth, a circumstance reflected in the proportions of foreign-born among Asians in the United States (see Table 2). Although these proportions vary greatly by ethnicity, with Japanese at the low end (41 percent) and Koreans at the high end (79 percent), overall 64 percent of Asians in the United States were born abroad.

Foreign birth and speaking a language other than English at home are crude measures of assimilation into American society. While the highest foreign-born fraction is found among Koreans, the highest percentage of non-English speaking at home is among Vietnamese (at 93 percent). Other than multiracial Asians, the Japanese have the lowest rates of foreign birth and of non-English speaking at home—both below 50 percent. The multiethnic and multiracial Asians are similar to the Japanese in having low rates of both being foreign-born and non-English speaking at home.

Despite a long history of disproportionately male immigration, the sex ratio among Asian Americans overall is either balanced or in favor of women. The only ethnic group with an underrepresentation of women is Asian Indians, at 47 percent female. The age composition varies greatly by ethnicity. The Japanese American population shows signs of aging, with 20 percent at age 65 or older and 12 percent below age 18. Among all the other groups, children constitute a much larger percentage (from 21 percent to 45 percent), and the elderly a much smaller percentage (from 4 percent to 10 percent). The relative youth of the other Asian groups is due to immigration, as immigrants tend to be young people who either bring children to America or rear children soon after immigration.

From Discrimination to Model Minority

For the convenience of statistical reporting, Asian Americans are often treated as a single race and compared with other major racial groups such as whites and blacks. That

Table 2

Population Size and Key Demographic Characteristics by Asian American Ethnicity, 2000

Race/ethnicity	Asian alone or in combination	% Single ethnic group	Single-ethnic classification	% foreign-born	% speaking non-English language at home	% female	% children (ages 0-17)	% elderly (ages 65+)
All Asians	11,898,828	84	10,019,405	64	73	52	27	7
Chinese	2,879,636	84	2,432,585	72	86	52	21	10
Japanese	1,148,932	69	796,700	41	47	57	12	20
Filipino	2,364,815	78	1,850,314	70	71	55	22	9
Korean	1,228,427	88	1,076,872	79	82	56	24	6
Asian Indian	1,899,599	88	1,678,765	76	81	47	25	4
Vietnamese	1,223,736	92	1,122,528	77	93	50	27	5
Other Asians	1,449,087	73	1,061,641	68	87	50	35	3
Multiethnic Asians	223,593	—	223,593	50	61	51	33	4
Multiracial Asians	1,655,830	—	1,655,830	30	35	50	45	4

Note: Percentages for All Asians were based on the total in the "Asian alone or in combination" column; percentages for Asian ethnic groups were based on the "Single-ethnic classification" column.

— Not applicable.

Sources: Authors' calculations using the 5% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) of the 2000 Census; and J.S. Barnes and C.E. Bennett, *The Asian Population: 2000* (2002).

is the practice adopted here. Yet cultural heritage and immigration paths vary greatly by country of origin among Asian Americans. Owing to this diversity, most Asian Americans would not accept the proposition that they belong to a single Asian race. When given a choice, they often would rather identify themselves as part of an Asian ethnic group (such as Chinese, Japanese, or Vietnamese) than as simply Asian American. However, because Asian groups are all numerically small and lacking in political strength, some Asian Americans feel the need to develop a panethnic Asian American identity.

In this context, three distinctions are drawn between race and ethnicity. First, it is commonly accepted that race refers to distinctions drawn from physical appearance, whereas ethnicity refers to distinctions based on cultural markers such as national origin, language, religion, and food. Second, race has serious social consequences for individuals' life chances, whereas ethnicity is for the most part considered optional in contemporary America. Third, individuals' freedom of racial identification is limited, in the sense that racial identification requires external consent from others, whereas ethnic identity can be internal.

Therefore, regardless of their own views concerning whether or not they belong to a single race, Asian Americans face categorization into a single race in America, as they are often defined in contrast to the other racial groups—whites, blacks, and American Indians. This categorization of Asian Americans as a racial minority has differed historically, geographically, and legally. In Hawaii, Asians often adopted the identity of Hawaiian, speaking a dialect of English called pidgin, which mixed elements of English, Portuguese, Native Hawaiian, and Asian languages. In Mississippi, early Chinese immigrants were subject to the same segregation as blacks, though later they would achieve "honorary" white status as they became economically successful. Despite these regional differences, U.S. Supreme Court cases such as People v. Hall (1854) and Saito v. United States (1893) ruled that Asians were either classified as "a lesser caste similar to Indians" (in the case of Chinese) or Mongolian (in the case of the Japanese), but not Caucasian or white. These two court cases, among others, reaffirmed that Asian immigrants could not obtain citizenship, because citizenship was only possible for "free whites" or for those born on U.S. soil. Asian Indians, first considered Caucasian according to two separate court cases in 1910 and 1913, were denied citizenship in 1923 (United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind) because they were not of northern or Western European descent.[3] The restriction on naturalization was lifted for Chinese immigrants in 1943 and for other Asian immigrants in 1952.

How Asian Americans were defined racially affected whether or not they could be citizens of the United States, own land, and hold certain jobs. Because the courts defined Asians as nonwhite, most Asian immigrants in the 19th and early 20th centuries were prevented from becoming citizens of the United States. However, children of Asian immigrants, born on U.S. soil, were citizens. In 1913, alien land law acts prevented Asian immigrants from owning land or leasing land for more than three years. Taxes were levied on "foreign" miners' earnings in California in 1850. Race also determined where Asians lived and whom they could marry. Chinese people attempting to settle in Tacoma, Wash., were prevented from doing so by white residents of the town. Koreans were prohibited from settling in Riverside County, Calif. Antimiscegenation laws forbidding marriage specifically between whites and Mongolians were enacted in some states as early as 1880.

In different places and at various points in U.S. history, Asian Americans have also been subjected to prejudice, hatred, and racial violence. An 1870 poem, entitled "The Heathen Chinee," reflected a negative sentiment toward Chinese at that time. The poem was reprinted and republished across the country, and "its sensational popularity made Bret Harte [its author] the most celebrated literary man in America in 1870." It begins with:

> "Which I wish to remark,
> And my language is plain,
> That for ways that are dark
> And for tricks that are vain,
> The heathen Chinee is peculiar,
> Which the same I would rise to explain."[4]

Mob violence against Asian Americans was first documented in 1871, when European Americans entered neighborhoods in Los Angeles' Chinatown and shot and hanged 21 Chinese people. Settlements of Asians were burned, and Asian residents were forced out of towns. Fear of and prejudice toward Asian immigrants eventually led to the prohibition of all Asian immigration, which was enacted in stages. Chinese immigration was first limited in 1882 with the Chinese Exclusion Act; Japanese immigration was restricted in 1907-1908; and then in 1924 all Asian immigration was prohibited. Changes were not made to these discriminatory immigration laws until 1943 (see Box 2, page 8).

The generally negative image of Asian immigrants in America between the 1860s and 1920s is far from the model minority label widely used to characterize Asian Americans in recent decades.[5] Since the 1960s, Asian Americans' success in education and their high concentration in professional occupations have been widely publicized by the popular press. Asian Americans' values have been declared compatible with the Protestant work ethic of the United States.[6]

Demographic changes in the population of Asian immigrants are in part responsible for the shift in the public's image of them from negative to positive. When the prohibition of Asian immigrants was repealed in

Box 2

Significant Laws, Treaties, and Court Cases Affecting Asian Americans

1790: Naturalization Act. This act established that a candidate for naturalization to the United States had to have resided in the country for two years and be a "free white person."

1878: In re Ah Yup. Chinese were not eligible for citizenship.

1882: The Chinese Exclusion Act. This act prohibited Chinese immigrants from entering the United States for a period of 10 years and prohibited Chinese from becoming U.S. citizens. The exclusionary period became indefinite in 1904 and was repealed in 1943.

1907-8: The Gentleman's Agreement. This agreement between the United States and Japan ended the issuance of new passports for laborers in Japan leaving for the United States.

1913: California Alien Land Law Act. This act, originally passed by California but soon enacted in 14 other states, prohibited "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owning land. These laws were not repealed in some states until 1952.

1923: The United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind. The United States determined that Thind, an immigrant born in the Punjab, was Caucasian but not a white person, and thus was ineligible for citizenship.

1924: The National Origins Act. This act prohibited the immigration of all Asians, with the exception of Filipinos (who were residents of an American territory). Quotas were established for immigrants from European countries.

1934: Tydings-McDuffie Act. This act gave independence to the Philippines by first establishing a commonwealth and then guaranteeing independence 10 years later (achieved by 1946). Immigration from the Philippines to the United States was limited to a maximum of 50 immigrants per year, the smallest quota of any country.

1942: Executive Order 9066. With this presidential order, issued during World War II, the Secretary of War was given authority to remove people of Japanese descent from certain areas, resulting in their internment in camps. Eventually, 120,000 Japanese Americans were interned.

1943: Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act. In consideration of China as an ally in World War II, this act repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act by setting a quota of 105 Chinese immigrants per year and allowed for naturalization of Chinese immigrants.

1945: War Brides Act. This act allowed for admission of foreign women married to servicemen. No quota was set. Approximately 700 Chinese and 2,000 Japanese women were admitted as "war brides."

1952: McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act. This act permitted naturalization of Asians and affirmed the national-origins quota system of 1924.

1965: Immigration and Nationality Act. The most significant change in U.S. immigration law since 1924, this act replaced the national origins system with a system of preferences designed to unite immigrant families and attract skilled immigrants to the United States.

1967: Loving v. Virginia. Laws recognizing intermarriage as criminal were deemed unconstitutional.

1980: Refugee Act. In response to the boat people fleeing Vietnam, this act granted asylum to politically oppressed refugees.

1988: Civil Liberties Act. The U.S. government gave an official apology to Japanese Americans for their internment in World War II and paid $20,000 per internee.

Note: This chronology was drawn from F. Odo, ed., *The Columbia Documentary History of the Asian American Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

1965, immigration priority was given to family members of immigrants and workers with needed skills. Therefore, Asian immigrants to the United States after the 1960s were more likely to be highly skilled workers than those who immigrated during the 19th century, and many had been exposed to the English language and Western culture.

Political refugees formed another major component of immigration to the United States during the 1970s and 1980s. During the 1970s, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Lao, and Hmong refugees who aided the United States in military operations were helped to escape from their countries. Other refugees left Vietnam after 1975, when the communist forces gained control over the South. Citizens of the United States were sympathetic to the plight of these noncommunist refugees, having waged war on behalf of these people against what they perceived to be a communist threat. Many aid organizations and churches organized the immigration and settlement of these groups.

Another popular explanation for the portrayal of Asian Americans as a model minority is that immigrant Asian Americans invest heavily in their children's education. Cultural explanations for this investment stress the compatibility of Confucian cultural values with the Protestant work ethic. Other research adds that anticipation of discrimination and marginalization in the labor force leads Asian Americans to choose education as a viable means to achieve upward mobility.

Despite the overall educational and economic successes of Asian Americans, heterogeneity among them is high. Just as the image of the model minority is an uninformed characterization of Asian Americans, the attribution of all observed disadvantages of Asian Americans to

racial discrimination is too simplistic. Complex by nature, social phenomena routinely defy simple explanations and require nuanced analyses. The experience of Asian Americans is no exception. The remainder of this report focuses on the empirical question of how Asian Americans have fared in terms of measurable indicators of socioeconomic status relative to whites and blacks in this country.

Educational Attainment

One important empirical finding that distinguishes Asian Americans is that they have indeed attained socioeconomic status that is overall comparable with, and in some instances superior to, that of whites. In studying the relatively high socioeconomic status of Asian Americans, scholars have invariably pointed out that Asian Americans have successfully attained high levels of education.[7] Hence, a fruitful examination of the socioeconomic conditions of Asian Americans requires knowledge of their educational experiences.

New Entrants to the Labor Force

Asian educational attainment was higher than that of both blacks and whites as early as 1960, with 70 percent of Asians completing a high school education, compared with 61 percent of whites and 33 percent of blacks (see Table 3). However, the gap in high school completion narrowed over time. In 1990, whites showed slightly higher rates of high school completion than Asians, due to the influx of new refugees from Southeast Asia. In 2000, Asians overall had a slightly higher rate of achieving high school degrees.

The gap between Asians and whites in college completion is far more dramatic. In 1960, 19 percent of Asian Americans had completed college, compared with about 12 percent of whites. This gap increased throughout subsequent decades. In 2000, 53 percent of Asians had completed a college degree, compared with 30 percent of whites.

A substantial portion of the widening gap between Asians and whites in college completion was driven by foreign-born Asian Americans, particularly those who immigrated after 1965. The impact of changes in immi-

Table 3

Percent Completing High School and Attaining College Degrees by Asian Ethnicity and Race, Americans Ages 25–34, 1960–2000

	High school or higher					College degree or higher				
Race/ethnicity	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
All Asians	70	84	87	85	90	19	37	42	43	53
U.S.-born	79	87	95	94	94	19	26	44	43	50
Foreign-born	58	82	84	83	89	19	46	42	44	54
Chinese	62	82	88	85	92	26	44	50	53	67
U.S.-born	80	90	97	97	96	28	32	58	63	73
Foreign-born	48	79	85	83	91	25	48	48	51	65
Japanese	77	90	96	98	97	16	32	45	49	57
U.S.-born	83	93	98	98	96	18	30	48	47	57
Foreign-born	63	84	93	97	98	11	37	40	52	57
Filipino	58	82	88	90	95	18	37	42	37	43
U.S.-born	53	76	87	89	97	11	10	15	23	43
Foreign-born	63	85	89	91	94	25	47	47	42	43
Korean	—	69	83	90	97	—	40	31	42	59
U.S.-born	—	40	91	97	98	—	6	33	57	70
Foreign-born	—	77	83	90	97	—	51	31	42	58
Asian Indian	—	—	90	90	94	—	—	60	60	76
U.S.-born	—	—	81	94	92	—	—	40	67	74
Foreign-born	—	—	90	89	94	—	—	61	60	76
Vietnamese	—	—	69	67	72	—	—	14	22	27
U.S.-born	—	—	—	42	52	—	—	—	8	23
Foreign-born	—	—	69	67	73	—	—	14	22	27
Whites	61	74	87	87	88	12	16	25	25	30
Blacks	33	52	75	77	81	4	6	12	12	15

— Data not available.

Source: Authors' calculations using the 1% Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) from the 1960–2000 censuses.

gration laws, which established preferences for skilled workers, is seen in the dramatic differences in college completion among foreign-born Asian Americans from 1960 to 1970. In 1960, 19 percent of both foreign- and U.S.-born Asian Americans had attained a college degree. In 1970, this percentage jumped to 46 percent for the foreign-born. Although some foreign-born Asian Americans were educated in the United States, the immigration of highly educated Asians is largely responsible for this jump. By comparison, the college completion rate among U.S.-born Asian Americans in 1970 was 26 percent, while whites' college completion rate was at 16 percent.

Variation in Asian Americans' educational attainment is evident not only by nativity but also by ethnicity. In 1960, Japanese had the highest level of high school attainment, but Chinese had the highest level of college attainment. In later decades, Chinese, Koreans, and Asian Indians are among the most educationally successful, with college completion rates of 67 percent, 59 percent, and 76 percent in 2000, respectively. Vietnamese are among the least successful, with rates of high school and college completion below whites, and rates of high school completion below blacks.

The comparison by nativity does not follow the same pattern over time. Among Filipinos, for example, the foreign-born seem to have had an advantage in education even before 1965. Foreign-born Japanese had a lower college completion rate than the U.S.-born in 1960, but this reversed in 1970 and reversed again in later years. Koreans show a different pattern still. While in earlier decades foreign-born Koreans had more education than their U.S.-born counterparts, in 2000, 58 percent of foreign-born Koreans had completed college compared with 70 percent of U.S.-born Koreans. It should be noted that, while some foreign-born Asians came as immigrant children who received all or most of their education in the United States, most foreign-born Asian Americans completed their education before immigrating to the United States.[8]

Children in School

Asian American children were not always educationally advantaged. Data from the 1910 Census, for example, reveal that Chinese and Japanese children ages 7 to 17 were less likely to be enrolled in school than were whites (77 percent for Chinese and 73 percent for Japanese versus 88 percent for whites). In part, this disadvantage was due to segregation laws that prevented Chinese and Japanese children from attending schools with majority whites. In California in the late 1800s, the effect of such laws was to restrict Chinese and Japanese children to segregated schools for "Orientals." In states with smaller Asian populations, like Mississippi, Asian children were required to attend segregated schools with blacks. Asians, like other minorities, fought vehemently for integration and educational opportunity. And, as early as 1930, Chinese and Japanese enrollment in elementary and secondary schools surpassed that of whites, although segregation laws were not removed officially in many states until the 1950s.

In today's elementary and secondary schools, the academic performance of Asian American students is generally high. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in 1999, only 7 percent of Asians in grades K through 12 had ever repeated a grade, compared with 9 percent of whites. Additional results drawn from the 1988-1994 National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), administered by NCES to a nationally representative sample of eighth-graders in 1988, show that Asian Americans scored significantly higher on a standardized math test than whites; differences in verbal scores were statistically insignificant between whites and Asians.

These results are confirmed by scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in the academic year 2000-2001. On the verbal SAT, Asian American students taking the test scored slightly lower than their white peers (501 versus 528) but higher than blacks and Hispanics (at 430 and 460, respectively). On the math SAT during that same year, Asians scored higher than all the other groups, with an average score of 566 compared with whites at an average of 531.

Asian American high school students also earn higher grade point averages than do their white counterparts. Asian American eighth- and 10th-graders in NELS reported grade point averages of 3.2 and 3.0 on a four-point scale, compared with 2.9 and 2.7 for whites.[9] Furthermore, Asian American students take more advanced math and science courses than do students of other race and ethnic groups. In 1998, NCES reported that 74 percent of Asian high school graduates had taken advanced science and that 56 percent of them had taken advanced math. The comparable percentages for whites were 64 percent and 45 percent.

Asian American teenagers seem to have fewer behavioral problems in schools as well. From the 1999 National Household Survey, the NCES reports that the percentages of students in grades 7 to 12 who had ever been expelled or suspended from school were 13 percent for Asians, 15 percent for whites, 20 percent for Hispanics, and 35 percent for blacks. Asian American students are also unlikely to drop out of high school. According to data from the October 2000 Current Population Survey, 4 percent of Asian American 16-to-24-year-olds were considered high school dropouts, while the corresponding percentages were 7 percent among whites, 13 percent among blacks, and 28 percent among Hispanics. The high school completion rates among 18-to-24-year-olds in 2000 were 95 percent among Asians and 92 percent among whites. Similarly, 92 percent of

Asian in the eighth-grade in 1988 received their high school diploma within six years, compared with about 85 percent of whites (see Table 4).

Asian Americans' academic achievement in elementary and secondary schools is related to attitudes and behaviors of both Asian American children and their parents. Asian American parents expect their children to achieve higher levels of education than do parents of other racial groups. For example, data from NELS show that over a third of the mothers and fathers of Asian 10th-graders expect their children to achieve some graduate education, compared with less than a fifth of white parents. Further, Asian American children themselves expect to achieve more education than their white, black, and Hispanic peers. Over 20 percent of Asian 10th-graders in this same study reported the expectation of achieving a doctorate, compared with 14 percent or less among blacks, Hispanics, and whites.[10] It has been suggested that Asian American parents perceive effort rather than ability as the key to children's educational attainment, while white parents believe more in innate ability.[11] To achieve the goals that parents set for them and that they set for themselves, Asian American children also expend more effort on academic matters, doing on average close to one hour more of homework per week than whites.[12]

Postsecondary

Academic success in high school prepares Asian Americans well for entering postsecondary institutions. The NELS data show that Asian Americans of all ethnic groups, except Filipinos, apply for admission to two- and four-year colleges at much higher rates than do whites.[13] Furthermore, detailed analysis of the data reveals that Asian Americans tend to apply to more colleges than do whites, and that these colleges are more likely to be the top-tier schools (as measured by the average SAT scores of entering classes). Whites tend to prefer smaller, less expensive, and less selective schools.

The NELS data also indicate that Asian Americans have rates of acceptance to their first-choice schools that are comparable to those of whites overall. This is significant in light of the fact that, in recent decades, the admission policies concerning Asian American applicants at highly selective schools like Harvard, Princeton, Brown, and Stanford have been closely scrutinized. At issue is whether or not academically qualified Asian applicants are disadvantaged in admission processes that prioritize nonacademic factors such as extracurricular activities and athletic abilities. Despite perceived difficulties, the desire of Asian American applicants, or more precisely their parents, to enroll in these elite universities remains very high. Analysis of the NELS data reveals that Asian Americans do gain admission to and later attend the top tier universities in this country in large numbers.

Table 4

High School Completion and College Enrollment of Asian Ethnic Groups, Whites, and Blacks Within Six Years of Eighth Grade, 1994

	Eighth graders in 1988	
Race/ethnicity	High school graduation by 1994 (%)	Enrollment in postsecondary institution by 1994 (%)
All Asians	92*	80*
Chinese	97*	87*
Japanese	95	80
Filipino	96*	76
Korean	93*	79*
South Asian	99*	87*
Southeast Asian	88	86*
Whites	85	68
Blacks	73*	57*

* Percentages for Asians and blacks were significantly different from percentages for whites.

Source: Authors' calculations based on the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988.

Asian Americans are much more likely to enroll in a postsecondary institution than are whites and other minority groups (see Table 4). Among those who were eighth-graders in 1988 and who later received their high school diplomas, 80 percent of Asian Americans, compared with 68 percent of whites, had enrolled in either a two-year or four-year postsecondary school by 1994. The enrollment rates vary by Asian ethnicity, ranging from 76 percent among Filipinos to between 86 percent and 87 percent among South Asians, Chinese, and Southeast Asians.

Some Asian American ethnic groups are more likely to attend two-year colleges than are whites. For example, Filipinos in the 1988 eighth-grade cohort of NELS were almost twice as likely to be enrolled in two-year colleges as whites. Japanese and Southeast Asians also report higher rates of enrollment in two-year institutions than do whites. Two-year schools may be perceived as less-expensive paths to four-year degrees, with many students who cannot immediately afford tuition at four-year schools receiving their first two years of education at community colleges. These students may later transfer to four-year institutions to complete coursework for a bachelor's degree.

Much media attention has focused on Asian Americans' overrepresentation in America's elite colleges. The NCES found that Asians were over two times more likely than whites to attend "Tier 1" national universities (top 50 national universities

according to *U.S. News and World Report)*.[14] Analysis of the NELS data shows that the proportion attending such universities among Asian students is very high, ranging from 18 percent and 22 percent among Japanese and South Asians to 42 percent and 44 percent among Korean and Chinese students. This can be compared with whites' rate of about 9 percent. However, Asian Americans are not more likely than whites to attend first-tier liberal arts colleges.

Asian American college students differ from white students in the choice of majors. Asians are more likely than whites to major in science, math, and engineering and less likely than whites to choose fields in the humanities and education. Data from the 1993-1994 Baccalaureate and Beyond study indicate that 20 percent of Asian American graduates were granted bachelor's degrees in science or math, compared with 13 percent of whites. By comparison, 9 percent of Asians received degrees in the humanities, compared with 14 percent of whites.

For 1999-2000, the NCES reports that Asian Americans received about 5 percent of all the associate's degrees and 6.5 percent of all the bachelor's degrees conferred in the United States.

Postgraduate

Earlier data from the Educational Testing Service show that Asian Americans' scores on the Graduate Record Examination during the 1980s were close to those of whites, with higher quantitative scores and slightly lower verbal scores. For example, Asian Americans in 1984-1985 scored 479 on verbal, 603 on quantitative, and 533 on the analytic portions of the test, compared with 513, 537, and 550 for whites. Similar Asian-white patterns have been observed in scores for the business, law, and medical school entrance exams.[15]

Asian Americans appear to be about as likely to enroll in master's and doctoral graduate degree programs as whites. However, analysis of data from the Baccalaureate and Beyond study reveals that Asian Americans are more likely than whites to enroll in graduate professional programs even when family background, test performance, and other undergraduate characteristics are taken into account. Among those in professional schools, Asians are more likely to be in medical school, while whites are more likely to be in law school. Similar to the situation for undergraduate majors, Asian Americans in doctoral programs are more likely than whites to be found in science and engineering programs and less likely to be in the liberal arts.

According to the NCES, Asian Americans received 5 percent of the master's degrees, 11 percent of the professional degrees, and about 5 percent of the doctoral degrees conferred between 1999 and 2000.

Explanations

What accounts for Asian Americans' overall high educational achievement? There are five potential explanations.

Socioeconomic background. The socioeconomic explanation highlights the role of family socioeconomic resources in Asian American children's educational success. Many Asian ethnic groups arrive in the United States with high levels of education. Others arrive with financial capital to enable them to set up small businesses. Asian parents may make good use of these socioeconomic resources to facilitate their children's educational achievement. However, it is important to recognize the diverse backgrounds of Asian Americans. Vietnamese and other Southeast Asians immigrated with little human or financial capital, and variation in income within groups like Chinese and Koreans is also very high. Poverty rates among Chinese, Koreans, and Vietnamese are higher than they are among whites. Thus, the socioeconomic explanation is simply not applicable to all Asian Americans.

Ability. The second popular explanation for high Asian American academic achievement focuses on their ability. On various standardized tests, Asian Americans show a greater proficiency in math and only slightly lower verbal aptitude than do whites. Popular attention to racial differences in tested proficiency has led to much speculation about the sources of these differences. While some contend that the differences are biological in nature, others attribute differences in measured proficiency to parents' socioeconomic resources, neighborhood and community environments, immigration selectivity, and perhaps culture.

Community and identity. Another explanation for Asian American educational success considers the community-level support, encouragement, and information that is available to students. Because Asian Americans hold high educational expectations, they serve as examples for each other, encourage and support each other's achievement, and serve as sources of information about colleges and application procedures. For example, Asian American adults who have attended college act as role models for Asian American high school students. Asian Americans may also benefit from peer groups composed predominantly of other Asian Americans. Students in close-knit ethnic communities, like the New Orleans Vietnamese community, benefit from the supervision and support of community members. Children who maintain their ethnic distinctiveness through their native language and ethnic self-identification link themselves to this community. They are then accountable to the community and closely supervised by its members. Children not only learn norms that contribute to their success from this community, but also benefit from the connectedness of its members.[16]

Attitudes, values, and beliefs concerning education. Attitudes, values, and beliefs held by Asian Ameri-

cans that differ from those of whites may have their origins in Asian cultures or in the self-selection of immigrants. Researchers suggest that one legacy of Confucianism in many Asian countries (notably China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam) is the notion that human beings are perfectible if they work hard to improve themselves. Given this cultural heritage, some Asian Americans may be more likely than whites to believe that hard work in school will be rewarded. It is also argued that Asian Americans may presume greater returns to education, both material and symbolic, than do whites and other minorities, based on beliefs originating in Asian home countries. In traditional Confucian societies, individuals of low social origin are encouraged to achieve upward mobility through intensive study. In particular, sought-after civil service jobs are tied to the successful completion of examinations. Because of this culture, Asian American parents and their children may be more likely to view education as a prominent, if not sole, means to greater occupational prestige, social standing, and income. In addition, Asian Americans may be more likely to hold particular values, attitudes, and beliefs because they are voluntary immigrants to the United States. Voluntary immigrants are self-selected in having high motivations to achieve, evidenced by the fact that they chose to immigrate. Therefore, values encouraging success and hard work may be a product of the self-selected immigration process itself rather than of any particular ethnic or cultural heritage.

Blocked opportunities. The blocked opportunities perspective is closely related to the last two explanations. It suggests that Asian Americans use education as a means to overcome obstacles to social mobility.[17] As recent immigrants, Asian Americans lack social networks to help them obtain good jobs in the mainstream economy, although they may have ethnic networks that are conducive to educational attainment. For example, Asian Americans may lack access to social networks that will help them obtain well-paid manufacturing jobs after graduating from high school because few Asian Americans work in such occupations. They also lack population bases for political careers. Thus, Asian parents stress education as a means for their children to overcome their disadvantages in achieving social mobility. In an economy where the demand for knowledge-based skill is high and meritocracy is held as a norm (even if not fully implemented in practice), this strategy for social mobility is quite appealing, especially when accompanied by the Confucian cultural norm that human imperfections can be improved by persistent learning and practice. Asian Americans' strong belief in the connection between hard work and success underlies their heavy investment in education as a means to achieve the social mobility that might otherwise elude them.

The five explanations overlap. Together, they provide plausible explanations of the educational achievement of Asian Americans. Many Asian American youths have highly educated parents and/or high family incomes. Overall, Asian Americans perform better on standardized math tests than do whites. Asian American students may also have highly educated role models and motivated peers, and reside in interconnected ethnic communities. Some Asian Americans, either because they are selective immigrants or because of their cultural backgrounds, may believe hard work is rewarded with success and may perceive high returns to education. Further, these values—coupled with limited opportunities for Asian Americans' social mobility through means other than education—may lead Asian American families to stress education as a means to high social standing and economic success in the United States.

Labor Force Outcomes

Socioeconomic status is multidimensional, with education and labor force outcomes as two of its main components. Thus, racial inequality or ethnic inequality usually refers to racial or ethnic differences in education and labor force outcomes. The last section examined education and found that Asian Americans overall have surpassed whites in key outcomes, despite substantial differences across ethnic groups among Asian Americans. This section focuses on labor force outcomes.

Labor force outcomes are quite different from educational outcomes in some respects. First, labor force outcomes have direct economic consequences for individuals and their families, whereas the consequences of educational outcomes are indirect, mostly mediated by their effects on labor force outcomes. Second, labor force outcomes are not only affected by individuals' own efforts and family resources but also by relationships with others—employers, supervisors, and co-workers. Third, except for slots in prestigious universities, the educational achievement of Asian Americans does not necessarily pose a threat to whites and other minorities. Some workers, however, feel that, as more positions are taken by Asians in the labor market, fewer are available for non-Asians.

Because labor force outcomes are more likely than educational outcomes to be influenced by racial resentment or discrimination, they are more direct indicators of Asian Americans' social status in American society. This section analyzes three dimensions of labor force outcomes—labor supply, earnings, and occupation—and draws comparisons by race and ethnicity as well as by gender. A focus on gender is necessary because work has been traditionally segregated by gender in American society.

Labor Supply

The labor force participation rate refers to the proportion of the adult population that is either employed or actively looking for work. Labor force participation excludes people who are not employed and not seeking employment. If nonparticipation in the labor force reflects not only an individual's own choice but also market forces (such as little hope of finding meaningful employment), labor force participation confounds labor supply with demand.

Here, labor force participation is treated as labor supply. The assumption made is that workers can increase the number of hours worked at will. That is, part-time workers can work full-time if they wish, even if this change requires them to change employment. No results concerning employment are shown, for two reasons. First, employment (or unemployment) measures demand more than supply. Second, preliminary analysis indicates only very small, unsystematic racial differences in employment rates between Asians and non-Asians and across Asian ethnic groups.

An interesting pattern that emerges from examining labor force participation rates is that gender differences vary by race (see Table 5). In the earlier decades, gender differences were much larger for whites than for blacks: A lower fraction of black men than white men, and a higher fraction of black women than white women, participated in the labor force. Black women's higher rates of labor force participation are a reflection of greater economic need—in part because of black men's lower labor force participation rates, and in part because of black women's lower marriage rates. For Asian Americans, both men and women have had relatively high labor force participation rates.

In particular, Japanese and Chinese women had high rates of labor force participation during the period examined. In 1960, for example, the rates were 51 percent for Japanese women and 45 percent for Chinese women, compared with 39 percent for white women and 51 percent for black women. However, unlike the situation for blacks, relatively few Chinese and Japanese women remained unmarried. From these results, it appears that these working Asian women contributed significantly to family income, in part because not many Asian husbands had high incomes.

A clear trend from 1960 onward is the steady increase in women's labor force participation. Although all the racial/ethnic groups experienced the increase, it was sharpest among whites, for whom labor force participation increased rapidly from 39 percent in 1960 to 71 percent in 2000. For Asian women, the rate increased from 48 percent to 68 percent in 1990 and held at 65 percent in 2000—a trend that was very similar to that of black women. By 1990, the rate for white women was slightly higher than blacks' and had surpassed Asians'. Asian men's labor force participation rates declined gradually over the decades, as they did for whites and blacks.

Table 5

Labor Force Participation by Race and Asian Ethnicity, Americans Ages 21–64, 1960-2000

	% in labor force				
Race/ethnicity	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
All Asians					
Men	92	89	87	86	80
Women	48	56	65	68	65
Chinese					
Men	89	85	86	86	81
Women	45	53	67	69	66
Japanese					
Men	94	93	88	88	84
Women	51	57	65	64	65
Filipino					
Men	90	90	92	91	80
Women	39	61	75	80	73
Korean					
Men	—	77	87	83	78
Women	—	36	61	61	59
Asian Indian					
Men	—	—	92	91	85
Women	—	—	57	64	59
Vietnamese					
Men	—	—	74	81	74
Women	—	—	53	63	61
Whites					
Men	93	91	89	88	84
Women	39	48	59	70	71
Blacks					
Men	86	83	79	76	68
Women	51	57	64	70	69

— Data not available.

Source: Authors' calculations using the 1% Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) from the 1960–2000 censuses.

There is also substantial ethnic variation in labor force participation between 1960 and 2000. Among Asian American men, Vietnamese had the lowest participation rates (74 percent to 81 percent between 1980 and 2000). Among Asian American women, both Vietnamese and Koreans had low participation rates (between 36 percent and 63 percent between 1970 and 2000). Because Vietnamese Americans were mostly refugees, they were disadvantaged in the labor market by a lack of both human and financial capital. Korean women's low levels of labor force participation in part reflect a cultural norm that women should stop working outside the home after marriage and childbirth. While this cultural norm is shared to some degree by all the groups (as revealed in the data), its influence on labor force participation is more pronounced among Korean Americans. Low levels of labor force participation among Korean

women may also reflect the underreporting of their participation in family-owned businesses.

In terms of average hours worked per week, Asian men worked slightly less than white men and Asian women worked slightly more than white women (by one to two hours per week overall). The real divergence between Asians and whites is seen in gender differences. While women overall worked fewer hours per week than men, the gender disparity is wider for whites than for Asians—a difference that emerged after 1970, as the gender gap substantially narrowed for Asians but remained at a similar level for whites. In 1980, for example, Asian men worked an average of 43 hours and Asian women worked 38, a gender difference of about five hours. In contrast, white men worked 44 hours and white women worked 36 hours, an eight-hour difference. The gender differences in hours worked were even smaller among blacks: four hours in 1990 and 2000.

The extent to which the gender gap in hours worked is smaller for Asians than for whites varies by ethnicity. The smallest gender gap is found among Vietnamese: two hours in 1980 and 1990, and three hours in 2000. After 1960, the gender gap in hours worked was also very small for Filipinos: two hours in 1970, 1990, and 2000. Vietnamese and Filipinos on average had lower socioeconomic status than the other major Asian ethnic groups. As with blacks, the narrowing gender gap in hours worked among Vietnamese and Filipinos is attributable both to a lower number of hours worked by men and to a higher number of hours worked by women, who needed to compensate for men's lower labor supply and earnings.

Earnings

In contrast to education and labor supply, earnings directly reflect the demand for a worker's skill and productivity in the labor market. If there is discrimination against Asian Americans because of their race or country of origin, it is more likely to be reflected in earnings than in any other indicator.

An analysis comparing Asians' earnings to whites' earnings, separately by gender, appears in Table 6. Because education attained abroad may not be as highly

Table 6

Ratio of Asian Americans' Earnings to Whites' Earnings: Observed and Adjusted for Education and Experience, 1959–1999

Race/ ethnicity	1959		1969		1979		1989		1999	
	Observed	Adjusted*	Observed	Adjusted*	Observed	Adjusted*	Observed	Adjusted*	Observed	Adjusted*
All Asians										
Men	0.98	0.94**	1.04**	0.98	1.01	0.95**	1.09**	1.02	1.14**	1.04**
Women	1.04	1.02	1.13**	1.08**	1.17**	1.09**	1.28**	1.16**	1.32**	1.17**
Chinese										
Men	0.99	0.94	1.01	0.90*	1.03	0.95	1.29**	1.11**	1.35**	1.12**
Women	1.10	1.07	1.18**	1.09	1.31**	1.18**	1.44**	1.24**	1.65**	1.35**
Japanese										
Men	1.00	0.95**	1.08**	1.02	1.08**	0.99	1.13**	1.01	1.19**	1.00
Women	1.04	1.02	1.15**	1.11**	1.17**	1.09**	1.31**	1.17**	1.37**	1.15**
Filipino										
Men	0.79*	0.87**	0.80*	0.89**	0.80**	0.86**	0.87**	0.95**	0.93**	1.00
Women	0.86	0.88	0.94	0.95	0.99	0.98	1.07**	1.07**	1.09**	1.09**
Korean										
Men	—	—	0.97	1.00	0.85	0.86	1.04	1.11	1.15**	1.13**
Women	—	—	0.92	0.91	1.25	1.18	1.28**	1.20**	1.24**	1.20**
Asian Indian										
Men	—	—	—	—	0.74**	0.67**	1.03	0.94	1.10	1.09
Women	—	—	—	—	1.02	0.97	1.33**	1.15	1.34**	1.20**
Vietnamese										
Men	—	—	—	—	0.94	0.97	0.65**	0.77	0.87	1.08
Women	—	—	—	—	1.02	1.12	1.11	1.24	0.83	0.97

*Ratios adjusted for differences in education and experience.

**Asians' earnings were significantly different from those of whites.

— Data not available.

Note: Analysis was restricted to full-time/year-round workers with positive earnings who were ages 21–64.

Source: Authors' calculations using the 1% Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) from the 1960–2000 censuses.

valued in the American labor market as education acquired in the United States, Asian American immigrants who completed their education prior to immigration may suffer an earnings disadvantage.[18]

The entries in Table 6 are the Asian/white earnings ratios, observed and adjusted. An observed earnings ratio is the ratio of Asians' average earnings to whites' average earnings. An adjusted earnings ratio accounts for education and experience. Comparison of the two ratios indicates Asian Americans suffer an earnings disadvantage after adjustment for schooling and years of work experience. (Asians are said by some to achieve economic parity with whites through "overeducation"; this is called the net disadvantage thesis.[19] Since Asian Americans are advantaged relative to whites in education but not in work experience, the difference between observed earnings ratios and adjusted earnings ratios is attributable to Asians' higher educational attainment.

A value of 1.00 in Table 6 means earnings equity. A ratio value less than 1.00 indicates Asians' disadvantage. Likewise, a number greater than 1.00 indicates Asians' advantage. For example, in 1959 all Asian men earned 98 percent as much as white men on average, but the racial difference is not statistically significant (in other words, it could be due to chance). However, after adjusting for human capital, Asians earned 94 percent as much as comparable whites in 1959, and this racial difference is statistically significant (not likely to be due to chance). Thus the apparent equality of observed earnings is the result of Asians' higher levels of educational attainment.

Several findings emerge from the earnings results. First, Asian Americans compared more favorably with whites in observed earnings than in adjusted earnings. Asians' advantage over whites in observed earnings is particularly large in 1989 and 1999, in part reflecting the increased return to higher education in the U.S. labor market during this period. Second, there is a significant and steady trend over the decades in Asians' favor. Without adjustment, Asian men earned about as much as white men between 1959 and 1979, but earned 9 percent more in 1989 and 14 percent more in 1999. After adjustment, Asian men experienced an earnings disadvantage of 6 percent in 1959 and 5 percent in 1979, but a 4 percent advantage in 1999. Similar increases in the Asian/white ratio for the six major ethnicities are also apparent. Third, Asian women have fared well relative to white women. Throughout the period and for all the groups considered, Asian women's earnings were not significantly lower than white women's. In fact, Asian women's observed earnings and adjusted earnings began to surpass those of whites in 1969, and their advantage over whites grew rapidly. By 1999, Asian women earned 32 percent more than whites before adjustment and 17 percent more after adjustment.

Finally, substantial variation occurred across Asian ethnic groups. Of the three major Asian groups that were observed throughout the four-decade period, Filipinos did not do as well as Chinese and Japanese. In 1959, Filipino men earned 79 percent as much as whites before adjustment and 87 percent as much as whites after adjustment. The gap between Filipino men and white men gradually closed by 1999. However, in no year were the earnings of Filipino men higher than those of white men, either observed or adjusted. The Filipina-white gap for women was not statistically significant between 1959 and 1979, after which the gap turned to Filipinas' favor. In fact, in 1999 Filipinas earned 9 percent more than white women, in both observed and adjusted earnings. While Vietnamese overall had relatively low earnings, the only statistically significant disparity between Vietnamese and whites was for observed earnings in 1989. Asian Indians actually had low earnings relative to whites as recently as in 1979, when Indian men earned 74 percent as much as whites before adjustment and merely 67 percent as much after adjustment. After 1989, Asian Indian men reached parity with whites in both observed and adjusted earnings. Asian Indian women had about one-third higher observed earnings than whites in 1989, and about one-fifth higher adjusted earnings in 1999.

These results suggest that the net disadvantage thesis may be a valid characterization of the experiences of Asian American men prior to 1989. However, it does not appear to hold for either Asian American women in general, or for Asian American men since 1989. Due to both their higher educational attainment and higher earnings within levels of education, Asian American women have had an advantage over white women since 1969. Relative earnings of Asian American men also improved dramatically, to the point of surpassing whites, even after adjusting for education and experience. If there is some evidence that Asian American men's lower adjusted earnings relative to white men's earnings reflected racial discrimination from 1959 to 1979, this ceased to be true after 1989.

Occupation

Occupation has been of central interest to those who study inequality for several reasons. First, one's occupation is usually known to friends, relatives, and acquaintances, and it is often considered a shorthand description of social status. In contrast, earnings are customarily private and are seldom used by others to describe a person's social status. Second, occupation is a relatively stable attribute that does not change much over the life cycle or the business cycle. In some ways, occupation can be thought of as a proxy measure of one's permanent income. Third, occupations are concrete social positions that are filled by actual workers. Forces such as technological innovation or economic development change the occupational structure and

generate new positions, which in turn provide opportunities for social mobility. Sociologists have long been interested in who benefits and who loses as a result of such structural changes.

Occupation is significant for another reason that is especially germane to the discussion of inequality among Asian Americans. Some occupations may provide channels of mobility that are less subject to potential discrimination.[20] First, the extent to which objective criteria can be used for performance assessment varies, or is perceived to vary, from occupation to occupation. For example, universalism is a core normative principle in science, where extraneous factors—such as race, gender, nationality, and religion—should not play a role in the evaluation of performance. Similarly, in occupations such as engineering and computer programming, delivery of products and services can be more directly observed and assessed than in other occupations, such as the military, teaching, and clerical work.

Furthermore, there is a direct correspondence between educational credentials and entry into certain occupations. For example, it usually takes a doctoral degree in science to be a scientist, and a medical degree to be a physician. Attaining such credentials is a long and arduous process, and no matter how privileged a person is—either because of family background or race—he/she cannot become a scientist or a physician without the requisite educational credentials. However, regardless of one's social origin (including race), job opportunities in these fields are widely available once one attains the educational credentials. This close link between education and entry into many prestigious occupations makes it reasonable for Asian Americans to use educational attainment as an effective channel of mobility to overcome either real or perceived barriers to some high-status occupations.

Given that Asian Americans have achieved high educational and academic credentials, they may rationally seek to work in occupations in which they can demonstrate their skills and in which objective criteria are used to evaluate performance. One 30-year-old Korean American summed up Asians' motivation in this way:

> "I don't think that Asians prefer the sciences. Sometimes it is the only avenue open to them. In the sciences, empirical results matter more than in the esoteric discussion of humanities. So that at least as an engineer, you know how to put machines in, and you can be a useful bolt and nut. And I think the job opportunities for us lie in this field."[21]

Asians, then, may be concentrated in certain occupations on the basis of their desire to maximize socioeconomic outcomes. However, racial concentration in certain occupations can also occur through other social mechanisms. An historical example illustrates how this can happen. In San Francisco in the late 19th century, a small group of Chinese people began working in the laundry service occupation in response to discrimination and labor competition from whites. Their success demonstrated that they could operate laundries, not necessarily that they were best suited to running laundries relative to other kinds of work. Somehow, through social networks and role modeling, many other Chinese followed suit and started their own laundry businesses, thus creating a concentration of Chinese in the laundry service through the 1920s.[22]

The clustering of Asian workers in certain occupations is presented in Table 7 (page 18). Values in each row should be compared with the corresponding entries in the second row from the bottom, the total percentage of Asian workers in the civilian labor force within each census year. A number greater than the total percentage indicates an overrepresentation of Asians in a particular occupation. Likewise, a number smaller than the total percentage represents an underrepresentation of Asians. The last row of the table presents the index of dissimilarity, measuring the occupational segregation of Asians from non-Asians.

The table supports the notion that Asians may consciously pursue certain occupations, such as life scientists, architects, physicians, and dentists, to maximize their chances for upward social mobility, since these are high-status occupations requiring high educational attainment. Asians' presence in some other occupations, like farmers and textile operators, reflects the labor niches that early Asian immigrants occupied.

As described earlier, the Asian population grew rapidly after 1965. This growth is reflected in the steady increase in the percentage of Asians in the labor force, from 0.5 percent in 1960 to 4.1 percent in 2000—an eightfold increase in four decades. However, the increase in Asian representation was much steeper in some occupational areas than in others. Foremost among these areas were scientific and engineering occupations. For example, the percentage of Asians in physical science jobs jumped from an unremarkable 0.7 percent in 1960 to an astonishingly high 15.3 percent in 2000. The percentage of Asians among computer specialists, an occupation that did not exist in the 1960 census occupation classification, increased from 1.2 percent in 1970 to 13.2 percent in 2000. Also, Asians' representation increased markedly in all other professional jobs except for elementary and preschool teachers, secondary and vocational teachers, lawyers and judges, and social and recreation workers. For example, the percentage of Asians among physicians, dentists, and related occupations increased rapidly from 1.4 percent in 1960 to 13.6 percent in 2000. Third, and surprisingly, Asians rapidly increased their share in skilled manual work, such as textile operators, craftsmen, and other operators (respectively to 10.1 percent, 4.7 percent, and 4.0 percent in

2000). Finally, Asian representation increased among personal service workers and barbers, both in absolute terms (from 0.5 percent in 1960 to 5.1 percent in 2000) and in relation to the increase in the representation of Asian Americans in the labor force (from 0.5 percent in 1960 to 4.1 percent in 2000). Asian Americans' representation among cleaning and food service workers, at 1.1 percent in 1960, increased in absolute terms (to 4.7 percent in 2000) but not in relative terms.

Asians' presence remained small and the group as a whole was underrepresented in several occupations. Although these are all white-collar jobs, they are relatively low-status and low-paying occupations with flat career trajectories, and they tend to be filled predominantly by women. Somehow, Asians have avoided these occupations,[23] a fact that might help explain why Asian women earn more than white women. However, Asian Americans were underrepresented in 2000 in two high-status occupations: lawyers and judges (2.7 percent), and administrators and public officers (2.4 percent). Another group of occupations where Asians' presence is hardly felt is in skilled manual work: carpenters, electricians, and construction workers. One reason for Asians' absence is historical, as competition between whites and minority workers in skilled trades has been fierce, and Asians were discriminated against in dominant trade unions of the 19th and early 20th centuries, such as the American Federation of Labor. Another related reason is a lack of social networks and role models, as few Asians worked in these occupations. Finally, it is interesting to observe that Asians' representation in farming stayed low, although many Asians (especially Japanese) historically were engaged in these occupations. Many Japanese Americans may have left farming after losing land while interned in camps during Word War II, but other Asians, especially new Asian immigrants, may now view the lifestyle associated with farming as undesirable and prefer to work and live in urban settings.

It is important to consider the source of changes in Asians' representation across the census years. There is a great inertia in labor force composition in the sense that the structure of the labor force does not change much within a 10-year window. Aside from job mobility, two demographic factors account for the changes in Asian representation observed earlier—aging and immigration. Older workers (55 and older) in an earlier census left the labor force, and a new cohort of young workers (who were ages 11 to 20 in the previous census) entered the labor force. However, this source of change contributes only a small part to the changes. Most of the changes in occupational patterns are due to the influx of new immigrants and their children into the labor force.

The preceding discussion highlighted occupations in which Asians are either overrepresented or underrepresented. It is important to keep in mind that the overall

Table 7

Percent Asian by Occupation and Index of Dissimilarity, 1960-2000

Occupation	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Life scientists	3.6	4.2	4.4	6.7	14.7
Physical scientist	0.7	2.6	4.8	7.0	15.3
Social scientists	0.3	1.3	2.0	2.4	4.3
Mathematicians	0.6	2.7	2.4	5.6	11.1
Engineers	0.9	1.6	4.5	6.7	9.9
Architects	1.5	2.5	5.1	6.3	6.9
Physicians, dentists, and related practitioners	1.4	3.7	7.9	9.0	13.6
Nurses, dietitians, therapists	0.7	1.4	3.5	4.2	6.2
Elementary and preschool teachers	0.4	0.6	1.1	1.3	1.9
Secondary and vocational teachers	0.5	0.6	1.1	1.7	2.8
Postsecondary teachers	1.7	1.7	3.6	7.0	8.7
Health technicians	0.6	1.7	3.8	4.4	5.4
All other technicians	0.7	1.2	2.6	4.2	4.3
Computer specialists	1.2	4.2	7.0	13.2	—
Writers, artists, and media workers	0.4	1.0	1.9	2.6	4.1
Lawyers and judges	0.3	0.3	0.7	1.3	2.7
Librarians, archivists, curators	0.5	1.8	2.0	3.2	3.5
Social and recreation workers	0.9	0.9	1.3	1.7	2.3
Religious workers	0.2	0.4	1.2	2.9	4.0
Accountants and financial analysts	0.8	1.1	2.9	4.3	6.1
Administrators and public officers	0.5	0.6	1.1	1.8	2.4
Managers and proprietors	0.6	0.7	1.6	2.6	4.1
Sales workers, retail	0.4	0.7	1.4	3.3	4.8
Sales workers, other	0.5	0.5	1.3	2.6	3.8
Clerical workers	0.5	0.8	1.8	2.9	3.8
Bookkeepers	0.5	0.8	1.7	2.9	3.8
Secretaries	0.6	0.7	1.2	1.7	2.3
Mechanical workers	0.5	0.5	1.2	1.8	2.5
Carpenters	0.5	0.6	0.7	1.0	1.3
Electricians	0.3	0.6	1.1	1.5	1.5
Construction workers	0.3	0.4	0.6	1.0	1.0
Craftsmen	0.3	0.4	1.3	3.0	4.7
Textile machine operators	1.1	1.4	3.5	6.7	10.1
Metalworking and transportation operators	0.3	0.3	0.7	1.2	2.3
Other operators	0.3	0.5	1.3	2.5	4.0
Laborers, except farm	0.4	0.7	1.2	1.7	2.1
Farmers and farm laborers	1.1	0.8	1.0	1.2	1.5
Cleaning and food service workers	1.1	1.4	2.7	3.9	4.7
Health service workers	0.2	0.6	1.5	2.3	3.3
Personal service workers and barbers	0.5	0.8	1.6	2.8	5.1
Protective service workers	0.1	0.4	0.6	1.1	1.8
Total	0.5	0.8	1.7	2.8	4.1
Index of dissimilarity	18.6	17.7	19.7	17.8	18.1

— Data not available.

Note: Analysis was restricted to all workers ages 21–64. The index of dissimilarity measures the percent of Asians who would need to change occupations for Asians and non-Asians to have identical occupational distributions.

Sources: Authors' calculations using the 1% Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) from the 1960-2000 censuses; and the Census 2000 5% PUMS.

differences in the distributions of Asians and non-Asians across occupations are small. This is shown in the last row of Table 7, which presents the index of dissimilarity measuring the racial occupational segregation. According to this index, which varies between 18 percent (in 1970, 1990, and 2000) and 20 percent (in 1980), levels of racial segregation are low. The index indicates that only 18 percent to 20 percent of all Asians (or non-Asians) would need to change occupations in order for Asians and non-Asians to have identical distributions across the occupational classifications.

Education and Hard Work

Education is at the core of Asian Americans' social mobility. Their high educational achievement has facilitated their entry into many occupations that require college and advanced degrees. Asian Americans' large presence in science, engineering, and medicine evolved gradually from 1960 to 2000. While part of this transformation is attributable to the influx of new immigrants and their children, who increased the overall share of Asian Americans in the labor force, the main explanation is that a large portion (indeed most by 2000) of Asian Americans, either U.S.-born or foreign-born, attained postsecondary education. High educational credentials facilitated Asian Americans' entry into professional jobs in the labor market.

Asian Americans' high educational attainment is also a major reason for their relatively high earnings. Among U.S.-born workers, Asian American men reached parity in earnings with whites in earlier decades in the 1960s and 1970s through higher educational attainment. Within levels of education, however, Asian American men suffered an earnings disadvantage of 5 percent. That is, education accounted for about a 5 percent difference in observed earnings between Asian Americans and whites between 1960 and 1980. The difference attributable to education increased to 10 percent in 2000. By then Asian American men earned more than white men, not only in observed earnings (by 14 percent) but also in adjusted earnings (by 4 percent). Among women, Asian Americans consistently outperformed whites in earnings throughout the period, in both observed and adjusted earnings. In recent decades, education seems to play a particularly large role in the higher earnings of Asian American women. In 2000, Asian American women's observed earnings were 32 percent greater than those of white women. This premium goes down to 17 percent for adjusted earnings, suggesting that education accounts for almost half of the observed advantage enjoyed by Asian American women. Again, Asian Americans' higher earnings, either observed or adjusted, did not happen instantly. In fact, Asian American men experienced a net disadvantage in the 1960s.

Finally, there are substantial ethnic differences across Asian groups. In both education and earnings, Filipinos and Vietnamese lagged behind the other major Asian groups. Indeed, the Vietnamese (even U.S.-born Vietnamese) are the only Asian group that had a lower rate of college education than whites. However, socioeconomic conditions for Filipinos and Vietnamese have significantly improved over time, and both groups had earnings roughly comparable to whites in 2000.

Marriage and Family

Asian Americans have effectively used education as a vehicle for social mobility. However, educational attainment normally occurs early in the life course, when an individual is still dependent on parents for both financial and emotional support. Because parents' emotional encouragement and financial support facilitate educational attainment, the high levels of education found among Asian American youth reflect the large investment of Asian American parents. Seen in this light, achieving social mobility through education is a family strategy. Thus, knowledge of Asian Americans' situations and experiences in the United States would be incomplete without understanding the Asian American family.

This section looks at family characteristics and marriage patterns of Asian Americans, relative to those of whites and blacks. For simplicity, only the results from the 2000 Census are presented.[24] Tremendous change has occurred in American families in recent decades, such as increases in age of marriage (that is, the postponement of marriage), decreases in marriage, and increases in divorce and premarital cohabitation rates. These trends have affected all racial groups, and analysis of 2000 Census data provides sharp comparisons between Asians and non-Asians, and across different Asian ethnicities.

Another important trend has been the steady increase in women's labor force participation. Some scholars hypothesize that women's growing involvement in the labor force has contributed both to their postponement of marriage and to their disinclination toward marriage, as it has provided financial stability for women outside of marriage. This hypothesis may also explain why marriage rates are lower among blacks than among whites. Historically, black women have been more active than whites in the U.S. labor force; sizable fractions of black men have lacked steady employment, which made them less appealing as marriage partners.

The labor force participation rates of Asian women were historically higher than whites' and close to blacks' prior to 1990. Asian women also tended to work long

hours and to earn more than their white or black counterparts. Thus, all available evidence indicates that Asian American women have been active in economic pursuits, although there is ethnic variation, with Korean women less economically active than other groups. However, this greater economic independence among Asian women has not caused them to avoid marriage. In fact, marriage rates are relatively high and divorce rates relatively low among Asian Americans.

Family Characteristics

Asian Americans are more likely to live in married-couple or husband-wife families than are whites or blacks (see Table 8). As defined here, a husband-wife family is not the same as a nuclear family—which includes solely a married couple and their own children—but it encompasses a nuclear family. For instance, an elderly woman who lives with her daughter and her son-in-law is considered to live in a husband-wife family, as is a child who lives with his or her grandparents. Individuals who live by themselves or in families headed by unmarried adults are not considered to live in a husband-wife family. The husband-wife family is used here as a measure of the stability and support—both emotional and material—of family life that are commonly associated with marriage.

For all people regardless of age, the share living in husband-wife families is 73 percent among Asian Americans, compared with 67 percent among whites and 40 percent among blacks. For children, the percentage is 84 percent among Asians, compared with 78 percent among whites and 40 percent among blacks. There is some cross-ethnic variation among Asian Americans. Most notable is that only 65 percent of all Japanese, the most assimilated Asian group, live in husband-wife families. However, the percentage of Japanese children living in husband-wife families is very high, at 88 percent. The only Asian American group with a significantly lower percentage of children living in husband-wife families is multiracial Asians, whose rate is similar to whites' on this measure. The overall picture that emerges from these numbers is that an overwhelming majority of Asians, especially Asian children, live in families headed by married couples and thus benefit from this living arrangement.

Table 8

Family Characteristics by Race and Asian Ethnic Group, 2000

Race/ethnicity and age	% in husband-wife families	% in multigeneration families	Mean family size	1999 mean family income ($1,000)	1999 median family income ($1,000)	% in poverty, 1999
All persons						
All Asians	73	15	4.2	$77	$61	13
Chinese	73	15	3.9	82	63	13
Japanese	65	5	3.2	91	74	9
Filipino	73	22	4.4	81	70	6
Korean	74	10	3.7	71	53	15
Asian Indian	80	14	4.0	94	70	10
Vietnamese	72	16	4.7	65	52	15
Other Asian	74	19	5.3	56	44	23
Multiethnic Asian	72	13	4.3	78	64	12
Multiracial Asian	66	11	4.1	71	55	13
Whites	67	5	3.5	70	55	9
Blacks	40	14	3.9	45	35	24
Children (ages 0-17)						
All Asians	84	17	4.8	74	57	14
Chinese	88	19	4.5	82	63	13
Japanese	88	7	4.1	98	80	6
Filipino	82	27	5.0	77	67	6
Korean	88	11	4.2	73	56	12
Asian Indian	92	18	4.6	91	66	10
Vietnamese	81	17	5.1	59	45	20
Other Asian	82	21	6.1	49	38	30
Multiethnic Asian	84	15	4.7	80	65	11
Multiracial Asian	77	13	4.4	72	56	11
Whites	78	7	4.4	68	52	11
Blacks	40	18	4.4	39	29	32

Note: Mean family size, mean family income, and median family income were computed for individuals in each group.

Source: Authors' calculations using the Census 2000 1% (for whites and blacks) and 5% (for Asian groups) Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS).

A family household is considered multigenerational if family members living in the same household are related to each other by blood and belong to three or more generations. An example of a multigenerational family consists of children, parents, and grandparents. Marital status is not specified; parents and grandparents in such a multigenerational family can be single, married, divorced, or widowed.

For elderly parents to live with adult married children is a cultural tradition in many Asian societies.[25] While this practice is less prevalent among Asian Americans than among Asians in Asia, it is still evident (see Table 8). Among all Asians, the percentage is 15 percent; among Asian children, the percentage is 17 percent. These numbers are much higher than those among whites (5 percent and 7 percent, respectively) and very similar to those among blacks (14 percent and 18 percent, respectively). However, the seeming similarity between Asians and blacks in percentages living in multigenerational families is misleading. Recall that Asian children live predominantly in husband-wife families. For them, having grandparents living in the same household usually means additional resources. For black children, grandparents often substitute for parents as primary caretakers. Additional analysis of Census 2000 data revealed that two-thirds of black children who live in multigenerational families do not live with two biological parents, whereas this type of family arrangement applies to only a small fraction (about 18 percent) of Asian American children.

Multigenerational living arrangements vary by Asian ethnicity. The prevalence of living in multigenerational families among Japanese is low, both for all people and for children. The rate is very high among Filipinos (22 percent for all people and 27 percent for children), Other Asians (19 percent for all people and 21 percent for children), and Vietnamese (16 percent for all people and 17 percent for children). One reason that a high proportion of Asian Americans live in multigenerational families is cultural, as noted earlier. Another reason is economic, since pooling resources across multiple generations saves money and reduces economic risk. A third reason is related to immigration. Recent immigrants may initially reside with other family members before establishing independent households of their own.

Except for Japanese, Asian Americans live in larger families than do whites and blacks. Note that family size is affected by many factors: the marital status of the household head, the number of children (that is, fertility), and the presence or absence of elderly adults. However, fertility among Asian Americans is relatively low.[26] Thus, the larger family size on average among Asian Americans than among whites and blacks is not due to Asian Americans having more children per family but due to their higher rate of stable marriages and higher rate of elderly people living with married adult children. Thus, it is not surprising that there is a correspondence across Asian ethnicities between the percentage living in multigenerational families and family size, with Filipinos, Vietnamese, and Other Asians at the high end and Japanese at the low end on both measures.

Asian Americans overall have much higher family incomes than do blacks (see Table 8). And except for Vietnamese and Other Asians, Asian Americans have higher family incomes than whites. Since Asian Americans have larger families on average than whites, measuring family income per person would reduce, or for some groups reverse, this advantage over whites.

For example, the mean family income is $77,000 for all Asians, compared with $70,000 for whites. Per capita mean family income is around $18,000 for all Asians, lower than the $20,000 for whites. There is also large ethnic variation in family income across Asian ethnicities. At the high end, Japanese have the highest median family income ($74,000) and the second highest mean family income ($91,000); Asian Indians have the highest mean family income ($94,000) and the second highest median family income ($70,000). At the low end, Vietnamese and Other Asians have mean and median family income at levels substantially lower than those of whites.

Family living arrangements have direct consequences for economic well-being. This is true because the family is usually the basic unit at which both income and consumption are shared. Everything else being equal, it is economically more efficient to live in a larger family due to economies of scale. Like family income, poverty status is a family attribute (although it is computed in Table 8 at the individual level). A person is considered to live in poverty if the combined gross cash income of his/her family falls below the official threshold income determined necessary for subsistence, which adjusts for family size and composition.

Contrary to the model minority image, a larger proportion of Asian Americans than whites live in poverty. Overall, 13 percent of Asians lived in poverty in 2000, compared with 9 percent among whites. Among children, the figures are 14 percent among Asians and 11 percent among whites. However, these poverty rates are much lower than those among blacks (at 24 percent for all people and 32 percent for children). The ethnic variation is also large. The poverty rate is low among the Japanese and Filipinos (in fact, lower among these groups than among whites) and high among Chinese, Koreans, Vietnamese, and Other Asians. The poverty rate is high among Vietnamese because they came to the United States as refugees. However, the average economic conditions for Chinese and Koreans are good—either comparable or superior to those of whites. These results suggest that there is a polarization in the economic conditions of Chinese and Korean Americans:

Whereas a large portion of these groups has realized the American dream by achieving middle-class status, another large portion has been left behind and economically deprived. This economic diversity of Asian Americans within the same ethnic group is often overlooked.

Prevalence and Timing of Marriage

Examining Asian Americans' marriage patterns is not an easy task because census data provide information about current marital status only, not marital history. In particular, for respondents who said they were currently married, it is not known for how long they were married or whether they had previously married and divorced. For those who were divorced, neither the timing of the divorce nor the marital history preceding the divorce is known. The following analysis relies on a crude measure of divorce, calculated as the difference between ever married and currently married, ignoring remarriage and widowhood.

Proportionately more Asian Americans are currently married than are whites and blacks (see Table 9). Among men ages 35 to 44, 78 percent of Asian Americans are currently married, compared with 69 percent of whites and 52 percent of blacks. Among women ages 35 to 44, 80 percent of Asian Americans are currently married, compared with 71 percent of whites and 42 percent of blacks. There is some evidence that, relative to whites, Asians' higher rates of current marriage are attributable to Asians' lower likelihood of divorce.

The rates of ever being married are comparable between Asian Americans and whites (85 percent for men and 90 percent for women). The difference between ever married and currently married for people ages 35 to 44, a crude measure of divorce, is 7 percentage points among Asian men and about 10 percentage points among Asian women. In contrast, the difference stands at 15 percentage points for white men and 18 percentage points for white women. Blacks' rates of being currently married are low for two reasons, both because a lower proportion ever marries (71 percent for men and 69 percent for women) and because a higher percentage of those who were previously married is no longer married (19 percent among men and 27 percent among women).

There are notable ethnic variations in the percentages currently married and ever married. The Japanese have relatively low marriage rates, and Koreans and Asian Indians have the highest marriage rates. Furthermore, multiracial Asians have marriage rates that closely resemble those of whites. In particular, the difference in the two marriage rates, ever married minus currently married, is slightly higher among multiracial Asian women (19 percentage points) than among white women (18 percentage points). This result suggests that multiracial Asians have assimilated to the degree that their marriage patterns resemble more closely those of whites than those of monoracial Asians.

The proportion of first marriages occurring in ages 45 to 54 is twice as high among Asian American men (8 per-

Table 9

Percent Currently Married and Ever-Married and Median Age of Marriage, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2000

Race/ethnicity	% currently married (ages 35-44)	% ever married (ages (35-44)	% currently married (ages (45-54)	% ever married (ages (45-54)	Median age at marriage among all ever-married
All Asians					
Men	78	85	85	93	28
Women	80	90	78	94	25
Chinese					
Men	82	87	87	94	29
Women	82	90	81	94	27
Japanese					
Men	64	72	72	84	30
Women	74	85	75	91	27
Filipino					
Men	76	84	83	92	28
Women	77	89	76	92	25
Korean					
Men	85	91	90	98	30
Women	84	94	81	98	27
Asian Indian					
Men	88	92	92	97	27
Women	90	95	87	97	23
Vietnamese					
Men	75	80	84	93	30
Women	76	87	76	93	26
Other Asian					
Men	79	86	86	95	28
Women	81	92	76	94	24
Multiethnic Asian					
Men	76	82	83	93	—
Women	75	88	78	94	—
Multiracial Asian					
Men	67	80	74	90	28
Women	68	87	65	91	25
Whites					
Men	69	84	74	91	26
Women	71	89	70	93	24
Blacks					
Men	52	71	55	82	27
Women	42	69	43	82	28

— Insufficient data.

Source: Authors' calculations using the Census 2000 1% (for whites and blacks) and 5% (for Asian groups) Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS).

centage points) as it is among Asian American women (4 percentage points). A similar gender difference exists between white men (7 percentage points) and white women (4 percentage points). Overall, the data show that among Asian Americans and whites a very small proportion of people get married for the first time past age 44, because an overwhelming majority of them has already been married before that age. However, the proportion is much higher among blacks (around 12 percent).

Change across age groups in the proportion currently married is an indicator of divorce, remarriage, or new marriage. The difference is a positive 7 percentage points for Asian American men but a negative 2 percentage points among Asian American women. This gender difference probably reflects the fact that a higher proportion of divorced men than divorced women get remarried, presumably to younger women. This gender asymmetry is also true for whites and blacks. In any event, in ages 45 to 54, 85 percent of Asian American men and 78 percent of Asian American women are still married, compared with 74 percent of white men and 70 percent of white women. Thus, the data show that Asian Americans, with the exception of Japanese and multiracial Asians, are still more likely to be married than are whites in this later age range.

The median age of marriage is estimated to be 28 among Asian men and 25 among Asian women. Comparing these numbers to those of whites (26 for white men and 24 for white women) leads to two conclusions: First, Asian Americans marry at later ages than do whites. Second, the age gap between men and women in the median age of marriage is also slightly wider for Asian Americans (three years) than for whites (two years). The late age of marriage for Asian Americans may reflect a traditional expectation that a person (especially a man) needs to be economically established before marriage. The patterns of late marriage and a high gender gap in the age of marriage are true across all Asian American groups. For example, among Japanese Americans, the most assimilated Asian group, the median age of marriage is estimated to be 30 for men and 27 for women. Interestingly, black women have a high median age of marriage, 28.

Data from Census 2000 shed some light on Asian Americans' marriage patterns. Compared with whites and blacks, Asian Americans have relatively high rates of marriage, low rates of divorce, but a high median age of marriage. All of these results seem to suggest that Asian Americans are still influenced by a culture that emphasizes the importance of the family and family responsibility.

Intermarriage

Early Asian immigrants were predominantly male manual workers. There were very few Asian women in America who could be their marriage partners. To make the situation worse, Asian workers were not allowed to bring their wives to the United States. In fear of Asian men marrying U.S.-born white women, many states instituted antimiscegenation laws to prohibit marriages between Asians and whites. This situation lasted until the end of World War II, when U.S. servicemen who fought and were stationed overseas in Asia began to bring home war brides from Asia. This started a new era in which Asian women are accepted, and sometimes even preferred, as wives by white and black men.

However, large-scale immigration from Asia did not occur until the landmark 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. The beginning of this new wave of immigration coincided with the Civil Rights Movement, which resulted in the abolition of antimiscegenation laws in 1967. Intermarriage between Asian Americans and other racial groups began to increase. Whereas American culture has applied a one-drop rule when racially identify-

Box 3

The One-Drop Rule vs. the 50-Percent Rule

The 2000 U.S. Census allowed for the first time the enumeration of people with multiple racial/ethnic affiliations. For comparison with historical data and for simplicity, it is sometimes necessary to reclassify multiracial people in the 2000 Census into single-race categories in statistical tabulations.

There are two possible simple rules for such an objective: the "one-drop rule" and the 50-percent rule. The one-drop rule defines race in reference to the white majority. It specifies that anyone with any minority ancestry is considered nonwhite. The 50-percent rule evenly assigns biracial people to the two racial groups to which they partially belong for statistical purposes. These two rules serve as ideal types, as more rules can be devised to allocate multiracial people based on fourth or eighth fractions according to the mixture of their parents' and grandparents' races.

In much of the U.S. history and culture, a common rule for categorizing multiracial blacks has been the one-drop rule, although it is unclear how rigidly it has been practiced. For multiracial Asians, who are a relatively recent phenomenon, it appears that the 50-percent rule is a close approximation. Prior research has found children of parents who had one Asian and one white parent (the majority of multiracial Asians) were almost equally likely to be identified as Asian or white when forced to choose a single race.

For this report, the 50-percent rule was applied when it was necessary to reclassify multiracial Asians in the 2000 Census into single-race categories. For example, the size of the 2000 Asian American population was estimated at 11,070,913 (3.93 percent of total) if the racial classification system had not been changed (see Table 1, page 3). In most of the analyses reported in the report, rich information pertaining to multiracials in the 2000 Census was preserved by separating multiethnic and multiracial Asians.

ing children from white-black parentage, it does not have a similar norm concerning the race of children from white-Asian parentage (see Box 3, page 23). This may be because these interracial offspring are a relatively recent phenomenon, born after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Further, Asian-white relationships are not complicated by a history of intricate relationships between whites and blacks dating back to slavery. Our earlier study using data from the 1990 Census found that about half of biracial Asian children are identified as Asian, suggesting that how to racially identify this group is fluid and maybe even optional.[27] Out of nearly 12 million Asian Americans in 2000, 1.9 million were reported as mixed Asian—1.7 million being multiracial Asians (those with an Asian race plus a non-Asian race), and 223,593 being multiethnic Asians (those with more than one Asian ethnicity). These mixed Asians are mostly children of interracial or interethnic marriages, as only a small proportion of Asian Americans are born outside of marriage.

Although most Asian Americans still tend to marry other Asian Americans, intermarriage between Asians and non-Asians has become a significant phenomenon in American society today. Twelve percent of all married Asian American men have a non-Asian wife (see Table 10). The percentage of married Asian American women with a non-Asian husband is much higher, at 23 percent.

Interpretation of intermarriage rates is not always straightforward, because their magnitudes are subject to the influences of relative group sizes, also called exposure or "opportunity structure." Suppose that marriage occurs at random so that there is no assortative mating by race or ethnicity. Under this unrealistic ideal situation, the smaller a group, the smaller the probability of marrying a member of the group. Conversely, the larger the size of a group, the higher the probability of marrying someone from that group. Thus, there is a natural tendency for a person in a small group to marry someone outside the group due to the scarcity of supply. Similarly, there is a natural tendency for a person in a large group to marry someone else within the group. Intermarriage rates for non-Asians are not shown in Table 10, since they are not comparable.

One of the most interesting observations from Table 10 is that Asian American women outmarry at higher rates than Asian American men. Among all Asian Americans, the outmarriage rate for women is about twice the rate for men (23 percent versus 12 percent). For Filipinos, the difference is almost threefold (33 percent versus 13 percent). Among Koreans, the contrast is even greater (27 percent versus 4 percent). Of course, part of the gender difference is attributable to the fact that some military men met and married their wives during their service in Asia. However, the gender difference is so large and so consistent across all ethnic groups that it goes beyond this factor alone. Even when the analysis is restricted to U.S.-born Asian Americans, a gender difference emerges: Whereas 38 percent of married U.S.-born Asian American men are married to non-Asians, 49 percent of married U.S.-born Asian American women are married to non-Asians. While it is difficult to pin down precisely the social processes that underlie this gender difference, the social barrier for intermarriage is lower for Asian American women than for Asian American men.

Additional analysis also clearly shows that intermarriage is far more common among U.S.-born Asian Americans than among immigrant Asian Americans.

Table 10

Intermarriage Rates Among Asian Americans by Ethnic Group and Gender, 2000

Race/ethnicity	Spouse's race/ethnicity: Non-Asian (%)	Same Asian ethnicity (%)	Other Asian (%)
All Asians			
Men	12	—	—
Women	23	—	—
Chinese			
Men	6	90	5
Women	13	83	4
Japanese			
Men	20	69	11
Women	41	51	8
Filipino			
Men	13	83	4
Women	33	63	4
Korean			
Men	4	93	3
Women	27	69	4
Asian Indian			
Men	8	90	3
Women	5	92	3
Vietnamese			
Men	3	92	4
Women	10	86	4
Other Asian			
Men	9	—	—
Women	18	—	—
Multiethnic Asian			
Men	13	—	—
Women	26	—	—
Multiracial Asian			
Men	44	—	—
Women	54	—	—

— Data not applicable or not available.

Note: "Other Asian" for spouse's race/ethnicity includes multiethnic and multiracial Asians.

Source: Authors' calculations using the Census 2000 5% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).

Part of the reason, of course, is that a large portion of immigrants were already married before they came to America. This pattern is also reasonable because U.S.-born Asian Americans are more assimilated than new immigrants and have had far more opportunities to get to know non-Asians. The high percentages of intermarriage suggests that second and higher generations of Asian Americans are now well integrated into American society, as a significant proportion of them meet the ultimate criterion of assimilation— "amalgamation" or racial mixing.[28] However, because high rates of intermarriage among U.S.-born Asian Americans are accompanied by high rates of continuing immigration of Asians, it seems unlikely that Asian Americans as a group will be completely assimilated into the mainstream in the near future.

The ethnic differences in intermarriage rates among Asian Americans also reflect their varying degrees of assimilation. Japanese Americans, the most assimilated group, have high outmarriage rates of 20 percent for men and 41 percent for women. Multiracial Asian Americans, who are structurally assimilated because of their mixed parentage, have even higher rates of marrying non-Asians, at 44 percent for men and 54 percent for women. In contrast, Vietnamese Americans have low rates of outmarriage, at 3 percent for men and 10 percent for women. Although Asian Indian Americans have high socioeconomic status, they immigrated to the United States only recently and have maintained their cultural distinction. They also have low rates of outmarriage (8 percent for men and 5 percent for women). Asian Indians are the only major Asian group in which women do not outmarry more often than men.

When an Asian American is married to another Asian American, the husband and the wife are not necessarily of the same ethnicity. If Asians do not marry within their own ethnic group, they are much more likely than members of the general population to marry other Asians than to marry non-Asians. For example, this is clear in the marriage patterns of Japanese men. Of those who do not marry Japanese women, 11 percent marry other Asians (such as Chinese and Koreans), while 20 percent marry non-Asians. This ratio of other Asian (11) to non-Asian (20), 0.56, is far above the ratio of 0.04 recorded for the total population.

Continuity and Change

Asian Americans exhibit continuity and change in terms of their family behaviors. They still maintain certain practices that have had a long tradition in their countries of origin, such as high rates of (ever) marriage, low rates of divorce (especially when children are present), a relatively large gender gap in age of marriage, and multigenerational living arrangements. Furthermore, they tend to marry within their own ethnic groups. When they fail to do so, Asian Americans still prefer to marry members of other Asian ethnic groups rather than non-Asians.

They exhibit change in their assimilation into American society. With respect to divorce, for example, Asian Americans have a nontrivial divorce rate, albeit low relative to the rates of whites and blacks. In childbearing, Asian Americans have low fertility, although recent Asian immigrants have an age distribution with a larger proportion in young, childbearing ages and thus have relatively high birth rates. In residence, most Asians do not live in multigenerational families. The clearest manifestation of assimilation is seen in the variation among Asian Americans by ethnicity and nativity. The Japanese, the most assimilated group, exhibit marriage and family behaviors that closely resemble those of whites. In addition, U.S.-born Asian Americans have much higher intermarriage rates than foreign-born Asian Americans. It seems that more-assimilated Asians are less familial and less traditional in their family behaviors than are less-assimilated Asians.

Asian Americans exhibit a high degree of family orientation. One consequence is that Asian American children overwhelmingly live in two-parent families, sometimes with grandparents, and have fewer siblings. Such family living arrangements undoubtedly benefit Asian children's academic achievement. Asian parents also hold high educational expectations for their children and are willing to invest family resources in them. For these reasons, the family is the driving force behind the social mobility of Asian American youth.

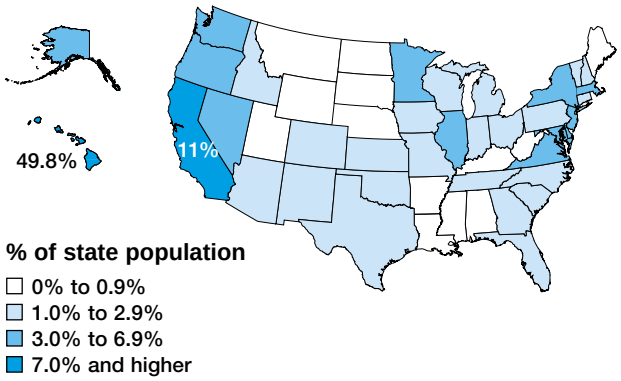
Residence

America is a race-conscious society. Race relations take on particular prominence when individuals interact with each other across racial boundaries in the workplace and in schools, neighborhoods, parks, gyms, and religious gatherings. Despite the rapid development of computer technology and telecommunication, the vast majority of such social settings are spatially situated and constrained. People who live closer to each other are more likely to interact with each other in such social settings than people who live farther apart. In other words, if Asian Americans live close to other Asian Americans, they tend to interact with other Asian Americans in social settings. Conversely, if Asian Americans are surrounded by members of another race (say whites), they are compelled by this configuration to have more interracial interactions.

Put into more concrete terms, residential patterns are an important dimension of race relations, influencing how likely one is to be exposed to people of differ-

Figure 2

ASIAN SHARE OF STATE POPULATIONS, 2000



Source: J.S. Barnes and C.E. Bennett, *The Asian Population: 2000* (2002).

ent races and thus potentially to interact with those of different races. The fact that Asians tend to marry within their own ethnicity and/or among Asians may in part reflect the fact that Asians may be exposed more to other Asians (and particularly those of the same ethnicity) than to non-Asians in residence, schools, interest groups, and/or even work settings.

This section examines the residential patterns of Asian Americans—how they are geographically distributed across states and metropolitan areas, and the residential segregation patterns between Asians and non-Asians within metropolitan areas. The analyses are based on data from the 2000 Census.

Geographic Distribution

First it is important to distinguish between absolute distribution and relative distribution. Absolute distribution refers to the uneven allocation of Asian Americans to different geographic units (such as states and metropolitan areas); relative distribution refers to the differentials between the spatial allocation of Asians versus that of non-Asians. Spatial distribution is measured in relative terms because certain geographic units are larger or denser and thus draw more people, both Asian and non-Asian. The absolute distribution of Asian Americans indicates where they tend to live, whereas the relative distribution shows where Asian Americans are overrepresented relative to other racial groups in the U.S. population.

Again, analysis of the geographic distribution of Asian Americans using 2000 Census data is complicated by the fact that almost 14 percent of all Asians are multiracial. Whether or not to include them changes results significantly. The U.S. Census Bureau reports the percentage of Asian Americans by state, county, and place.[29] However, the figures given by the bureau are not ideal because they do not include multiracial Asians. As discussed, to have a single-number estimate of the 2000 Asian population that is also comparable to historical figures, one simply imputes one-half of multiracial Asians to be Asian and the other half to be non-Asian. This raises the percentage of Asian Americans from 3.6 percent to 3.9 percent for the whole United States. Thus, a percentage greater than 3.9 indicates overrepresentation of Asian Americans in an area. Conversely, a percentage smaller than 3.9 indicates underrepresentation. By this criterion, Asian Americans are overrepresented in only 10 states (see Figure 2): Hawaii (50 percent); California (12 percent); Washington, New Jersey, and New York (all 6 percent); Nevada and Alaska (both 5 percent); and Maryland, Virginia, and Massachusetts (all 4 percent).

To see how concentrated Asian Americans are geographically (as opposed to distributed), one must look at their absolute distribution. Forty-one percent of all Asian Americans live in just two states—California and Hawaii. California alone accounts for 3.9 million, or 36 percent of all Asian Americans in the United States. This is a very high degree of Asian concentration. Only 12 percent of the U.S. population lives in California, and 13 percent lives in California and Hawaii combined. If New Jersey, Washington, and New York are added to the list of states with the highest percentages of Asian Americans, they account for 59 percent of Asian Americans but only 24 percent of the total population. There are several reasons for Asian Americans' unique geographic distribution. One is historical, as Asian immigrants first came to California and Hawaii as laborers. Another is distance, as Hawaii and the West Coast are closer to Asia than to the rest of the country. However, there is also a cultural element to this distribution: Once Asians settled and established their own communities, they began to attract other, especially newly arriving, Asian immigrants. Now, well-entrenched old Chinatowns can be found in almost all the largest cities in the United States, and vibrant new Asian (Chinese, Korean, and sometimes Vietnamese) communities are found in middle-class suburbs in metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York.

Besides their affinity with Hawaii and the West Coast for historical and geographic reasons, Asian Americans now also tend to be concentrated in major metropolitan centers. This is in sharp contrast to the early waves of Asian immigrants, especially Japanese immigrants, a large portion of whom worked on farms. In fact, Asian Americans' presence in farming can still be seen in 1960 occupational data, which showed that their likelihood to be in occupations of "farmers and farm laborers" was twice as high as the average. Asian Americans' concentration in farming declined gradually. By 1980, they were no longer overrepresented in farming occupations. Asian immigrants of the latest waves do not work on farms.

Asian Americans are now concentrated in two types of occupations: high-status professional and technical occupations, and low-skilled service and manual jobs. Given their positions in the occupational structure, it is not surprising that Asian Americans tend to live in major metropolitan areas, which offer such job opportunities. Census tabulations show that Asian Americans with a single ethnicity made up 4.5 percent of all urban residents, compared with a mere 0.5 percent of all rural residents. Between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas, there is a similar gap; the share of Asian Americans was 4.3 percent among all residents in metropolitan areas and 0.8 percent among all residents in nonmetropolitan areas. Not surprisingly, the lowest presence of Asian Americans is found among rural residents in nonmetropolitan areas, at 0.3 percent.

Asian Americans' distributions, both absolute and relative, in the top 10 cities with the largest Asian American population are shown in Table 11. Since the definition of a city varies from place to place, it is not clear how to compare the absolute numbers across cities. However, the numbers reported in Table 11 give a sense of how concentrated Asian Americans are in major cities. New York, the largest city in the United States, also has the largest Asian population at 829,912. The percentage of Asian Americans in New York is 10.4 percent, a level more than twice the national average. Surprisingly, the percentage of Asian Americans in Los Angeles is similar to the share in New York, at 10.5 percent, and in absolute numbers, a large number of Asian Americans live in Los Angeles (388,349). Asian Americans are not well-represented in all large cities. Absent from Table 11, for example, are Dallas, San Antonio, Phoenix, and Detroit. The percentages of Asian Americans in these large cities all fall below the 3.9 percent national average.

Combining the 10 cities, the percentage of Asian Americans is on average 12.2 percent, three times the national level. Describing Asian Americans' concentration in another way, 23 percent of all Asian Americans live in these 10 cities, whereas only 7 percent of all the U.S. population lives in these same cities. Thus, the concentration of Asian Americans is on average three times as high in these cities as the national average.

Table 11

TEN U.S. CITIES WITH LARGEST ASIAN POPULATIONS, 2000

City	Population	Asians	% Asian
Total U.S. population	281,421,906	11,070,913	3.9
Total in 10 cities	20,586,265	2,521,098	12.2
% of U.S. total	7.3	22.8	—
New York, NY	8,008,278	829,912	10.4
Los Angeles, CA	3,694,820	388,349	10.5
San Jose, CA	894,943	248,973	27.8
San Francisco, CA	776,733	246,521	31.7
Honolulu, HI	371,657	229,637	61.8
San Diego, CA	1,223,400	178,191	14.6
Chicago, IL	2,896,016	133,246	4.6
Houston, TX	1,953,631	108,917	5.6
Seattle, WA	563,374	79,280	14.1
Fremont, CA	203,413	78,072	38.4

— Not applicable

Source: Calculated from J.S. Barnes and C.E. Bennett, *The Asian Population: 2000* (2002).

Residential Segregation

Because residential proximity greatly influences the chances of interracial interaction, the analysis now turns to the residential patterns of Asian Americans within cities. Blacks' residential segregation from whites has long been thought to be both an indicator and a cause of racial discrimination in American society, and a major reason for their socioeconomic disadvantage. Earlier Chinese and Japanese immigrants to the United States also suffered severe racial discrimination and were restricted to living in ethnic ghettos.

For two reasons, contemporary Asian Americans are much less segregated from whites than either Asian Americans were in the past or blacks are today. First, Asian Americans have achieved relatively high socioeconomic status that on balance either equals or surpasses that of whites, especially in education. Second, the Asian American population is small in size, and individual Asian ethnic groups are particularly small. Given their small numbers in most places, when Asian Americans move into a white community, they do not pose the threat of soon dominating the community in the way that blacks are sometimes perceived to do. As a result, even though some whites may still prefer to live in neighborhoods without Asian Americans, they are now unlikely to act strongly on their racial preferences for neighbors. Attitude surveys indeed show that whites are not as hostile to the prospect of having Asian neighbors as they are to the prospect of having black neighbors.[30]

Except in a few isolated places, the barriers discouraging Asian Americans from living in white neighborhoods are relatively low, compared with those separating blacks and whites. However, even in the absence of such racial barriers, not all Asian Americans wish to live in integrated neighborhoods. Most Asian Americans are recent immigrants and maintain a strong identity with their home culture, speaking their native languages at home and relying heavily on ethnic communities for a successful transition to American life. Ethnic communities offer many practical resources to immigrants, including ethnic-specific goods and services, cultural events, information in native languages, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Indeed, there are two related theoretical debates in sociology regarding the advantages to immigrants of

Table 12

Residential Segregation Indices in the 10 U.S. Cities With the Largest Asian Populations, 2000

City	Asian and white	Asian and black	White and black
New York, NY	42	63	63
Los Angeles, CA	47	69	73
San Jose, CA	48	31	41
San Francisco, CA	41	58	59
Honolulu, HI	36	58	47
San Diego, CA	50	50	62
Chicago, IL	48	87	86
Houston, TX	45	68	72
Seattle, WA	48	34	60
Fremont, CA	29	26	24

Note: The segregation index measures the percentage of a racial group that would have to move to a different census tract to reach equal distribution across all census tracts.

Source: www.psc.isr.umich.edu/residentialsegregation, accessed June 21, 2004.

living in ethnic communities.[31] The first debate is concerned with the potential economic benefits of working in an ethnic niche—an ethnic enclave economy. Some scholars argue that an enclave economy provides a protective work environment to new immigrant workers where they can derive economic benefits that would not be available in the mainstream economy. These benefits could include pay that reflects their skills, education, and experience; social mobility to supervisory positions; and opportunities to be entrepreneurs. However, other scholars contend that an enclave economy primarily benefits business owners of enclave firms rather than their co-ethnic workers, for whom working in the mainstream economy would facilitate assimilation and thus upward mobility.

The second debate is around segmented assimilation theory, which is concerned with the long-term (particularly educational) benefits for immigrant children of maintaining a strong ethnic identity and social networks among co-ethnics and thus not being fully assimilated into the American mainstream. The basis for this argument is that America is now extremely diverse and segmented, with an underclass residing in central cities where a large portion of new immigrant families first settle upon arrival. Thus, it is argued that there exist divergent assimilation paths for new immigrants. One path is full and direct assimilation into mainstream American society; another possible path of full assimilation, to which new residents of central cities are especially vulnerable, is downward assimilation into the urban underclass. To avoid this, according to the theory, it is better for immigrants to maintain their own culture while acquiring skills for the labor market. This middle path of assimilation is called "selective acculturation."

So far, empirical evidence pertaining to the enclave economy debate and the segmented assimilation debate leaves them unresolved. However, even without the hypothesized benefits, many Asians may still wish to live close together to share a common culture or for the convenience of seeing relatives and friends. Thus, one would expect to see clustering patterns of residence among Asian Americans.

A commonly used segregation index (the index of dissimilarity) appears in Table 12. It measures residential segregation between Asian Americans and whites in the top 10 cities with the largest Asian population.[32] As discussed earlier, close to a quarter of all Asian Americans live in these cities. Measurement of segregation is at the level of census tracts. The index varies between a low of 29 percent in Fremont to a high of 50 percent in San Diego. A dissimilarity index of 29 percent means that either 29 percent of Asian Americans or 29 percent of whites in the city would need to move to different census tracts for the two groups to reach equal distributions across all census tracts. The second column presents the dissimilarity index between Asian Americans and blacks, and the last column gives the dissimilarity index between whites and blacks for comparison. The segregation between Asian Americans and whites and the segregation between Asian Americans and blacks are still substantial. In Los Angeles, for example, the dissimilarity index is 47 percent between Asian Americans and whites and 69 percent between Asian Americans and blacks, although the index between whites and blacks is even higher, at 73 percent. These numbers mean that residential segregation is very high between whites and blacks and between Asian Americans and blacks in Los Angeles. By comparison, residential segregation is moderately high between whites and Asians.

With the exception of Fremont and San Jose, the level of residential segregation between Asian Americans and whites is much lower than that between whites and blacks. Fremont is unusual also for having very low segregation levels between any two of the three groups (29 percent or lower). For six of the 10 cities—New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Honolulu, Chicago, and Houston—the segregation between Asians and whites is much lower than that between Asians and blacks. However, for the remaining cities, the segregation between Asians and blacks is either comparable to that between Asians and whites (San Diego and Fremont) or even smaller (San Jose and Seattle).

The results in Table 12 are crude in the sense that they do not present segregation indices separately by Asian ethnicity. This tends to understate levels of segregation for Asian Americans, if there is a tendency, as is the case, for residential clustering within an ethnicity. Japanese and Filipino Americans are less segregated from whites than are other Asian American groups (such as

Chinese and Vietnamese).[33] Still, one can draw an overall observation that Asian Americans live in somewhat concentrated communities that are separate from whites and blacks on the whole. However, Asian Americans' residential segregation is less pronounced than residential segregation for blacks. The difference is also qualitative, in that at least in contemporary America, Asian Americans do not face the same kind of racial discrimination and prejudice that blacks do in the housing market. To the extent that Asian Americans' residential patterns show signs of concentration, they appear to reflect Asians' own preferences to live near other Asian Americans rather than external constraints limiting their residential choices.

However, culturally based preferences to live with co-ethnics indicate a lack of assimilation into the American mainstream and thus should weaken over time as immigrants become more assimilated. In the literature on immigrants, residence in desirable neighborhoods (such as those in suburbs with a high average family income and a high percentage of non-Hispanic whites) has long been viewed as spatial assimilation or residential assimilation.[34] Given the well-known relationship between assimilation and generation, second- and third-generation Asian Americans (such as most Japanese Americans) are likely to be less segregated residentially from whites than first-generation Asian Americans. One consequence of less segregation is a structural increase in Asian Americans' opportunities for interacting with non-Asians in daily life, thus promoting intermarriage with non-Asians. This partly explains why the Japanese, who are the most assimilated group of Asian Americans, also have the highest rates of outmarriage. In fact, all U.S.-born Asian Americans have high rates of outmarriage.

Close Proximity

For a variety of reasons, Asian Americans tend to live near other Asian Americans. This statement is true at two geographic levels. At the national level, Asian Americans tend to be concentrated in a few states (such as California and Hawaii) and a few metropolitan areas (such as New York and Los Angeles). At the city level, Asians tend to be concentrated in certain neighborhoods or communities, not fully assimilated into white or black neighborhoods. However, in most cities Asian Americans are more residentially integrated with whites than with blacks, and Asian Americans and whites are more integrated than are blacks and whites.

While these empirical findings are clear, theoretical interpretations of them are less so. Do Asian Americans live near other Asian Americans due to their desire to maintain their culture or out of the need to cope with the potential risks of racial discrimination? That is, are the unique residential patterns of Asian Americans really the result of their own choices or of a structural constraint imposed on them? These theoretically interesting questions cannot be answered with census data. But at least compared with blacks, Asians' barriers to living in white neighborhoods are relatively low. And indeed, the level of segregation between Asians and whites is also relatively low. If blacks suffer dire socioeconomic consequences because of residential segregation from whites, Asians do not face similar disadvantages.

Conclusion

Although Asian Americans were first recorded in the U.S. census as early as 1860, their social significance in American society was not widely recognized until the post-1965 waves of immigrants fundamentally changed the demographic composition of the U.S. population. Because post-1965 immigrants are primarily from Asia and Latin America, traditional race relations in America constructed around whites and blacks have been further complicated by the presence of sizable and rapidly growing populations of Asians and Hispanics. Should Asian Americans be treated as a single race in the racial landscape of America? While this question was contemplated well before 1965, it is becoming more and more pressing due to the rapid growth of the Asian American population.

The answer to this question is mixed, depending on one's definition of race.[35] There are four simple bases for deriving a definition of race: psychological, physiological, social, and external. The psychological definition equates race to the self-identification of group membership based on one's ancestral origin. The physiological definition equates race to shared physical appearance. The social definition connects race to a common set of social consequences (such as confronting racial discrimination and residential segregation). The external definition links race to a common perception of a nominal group by people outside the group. Asian Americans are clearly not a race according to the psychological definition, as most of them prefer to be identified as members of their ethnic groups—such as Chinese and Koreans—rather than as Asians. Whether they are a race according to the physiological and social definitions is unclear. There is large variation in physical appearance, especially between South Asians (such as Asian Indians) and East Asians (such as Chinese). Further, social outcomes are similar for some Asians groups (Chinese and Koreans) but quite different for others (Japanese versus Vietnamese). It seems to us that the most plausible definition for Asian Americans is external, as non-Asians may perceive Asian Americans as a homogeneous group and treat them as a race. Indeed, the popular model minority label implicitly treats Asian Americans as a race, with minority meaning a racial minority.

Demographers explore the question of whether Asian Americans exhibit distinct demographic characteristics that differentiate them from whites and other minority groups. Thus, whether Asian Americans should be treated as a race is a question that can be addressed, in part, with demographic data. Based on the results presented in this report, the answer is a cautionary yes. It is yes because some distinct demographic characteristics among Asian Americans set them apart from whites and other minority groups:

- The residential patterns of Asian Americans are distinct. They live in different parts of the country, concentrated in Hawaii, California, and a few large metropolitan areas. Within cities, they also tend to be concentrated in communities that attract other Asian Americans.
- Asian Americans are familial in orientation. They have a high rate of marriage and a low rate of divorce, and they maintain traditional practices such as living in multigenerational family households.
- Asian Americans have high levels of educational attainment.
- Asian Americans have dramatically improved their labor force outcomes, such as earnings and occupation, since 1960.

However, substantial variations across Asian ethnic groups and by nativity have been seen in almost all the demographic dimensions examined in this report. These differences make the characterization of Asian Americans with a simple label like model minority problematic. For example, the earnings of Filipinos and Vietnamese lag behind those of other Asian Americans. The prevalence of multigenerational living arrangements also varies greatly by ethnicity, with the Japanese being less likely to be in multigenerational families than whites. Further, as the education results indicate, ethnic differences are more pronounced among foreign-born Asian Americans than among U.S.-born Asian Americans.[36] Assimilation may exert a homogenizing force, making Asian Americans of different ethnicities appear similar. However, it is also plausible that similarities among Asian Americans of different ethnicities arise because of the common difficulties they face. For example, Asian American families may make exceptional investments in their children's education as a conscious strategy to compensate for disadvantages they believe they face as a racial minority group, such as racial discrimination and a lack of mainstream social capital.

With further assimilation and continuing success in socioeconomic spheres, Asian Americans may more and more constitute part of the American mainstream rather than a racial minority. The finding that intermarriage rates are high among U.S.-born Asian Americans supports this prediction. However, given the constant flow of new immigrants from Asia, it is a demographic impossibility that all Asian Americans will be fully assimilated at any time in the near future. Indeed, a large portion of Asian Americans are, and for the foreseeable future will be, new immigrants. Because of this, it is highly likely that Asian Americans will exhibit certain distinct demographic characteristics (such as residential segregation from non-Asians). At least part of this is attributable to the fact that many Asians are new immigrants.

With today's data, it is difficult to separate race effects from immigration effects, because most Asian Americans are immigrants. With time, however, there should be a steady increase in the share of U.S.-born second- and higher-generation Asian Americans. One possible scenario in the near future is that racial differences between Asians and whites become blurred, but differences between foreign-born Asian Americans and U.S.-born Asian Americans become more pronounced by comparison. Another possible scenario is that the continuous growth of the Asian American population and its gradual assimilation into the American mainstream will heighten the awareness of their racial distinction among second- and higher-generation Asian Americans. Whether or not Asian Americans are considered a single race in the future, one thing is certain: The ever-changing Asian American population and the diversity of Asian Americans' experiences by ethnicity and nativity present constant challenges to the logic of racial categorizations and to the understanding of race relations in the United States.

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