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# Asian American Demographics and Civil Rights<sup>1</sup>

Paul M. Ong

## Introduction

Demographic trends and patterns shape civil rights issues facing Asian Americans in a fundamental but not deterministic way. This statement does not minimize the fact that demographic characteristics are the outcomes of historical and contemporary forces; nonetheless, it is productive to use demographics as a starting point to explore challenges facing Asian Americans. Without a doubt, the decennial census is the single most important data source. The primary and constitutional purpose of this once-in-every-ten-year enumeration is to ensure equal representation through reapportionment and redistricting in response to a geographic redistribution of the nation's population. Over time, the census has evolved into an instrument for collecting social and economic data. The census informs political discourse, legislation, policy decisions, program implementation, and monitoring. The information gives private firms insights into existing and potential markets. It helps nonprofits determine community needs, profile neighborhoods, and design programs. There are other valuable sources of demographic statistics, but none have the influence of the decennial census, which derives its analytical potential from share size. The basic enumeration is based on an effort to collect core demographic information (e.g., race/ethnicity, age, and sex) from every household, and detailed data are collected from one-in-six households, making it the single largest survey sample in the nation.

The census is not, as many of critics point out, without flaws, including differential undercounts by race, politically motivated questions, a decade-long break between data points, delays in the release of tabulations, restricted access to the raw responses, and no attitudinal data. These limitations, however, should not and

do not distract from mining the census information for insights. The data provide an opportunity to examine small populations and individual neighborhoods, and the relative uniformity of the data facilitates extensive group and geographic comparison. This applies to examining the Asian American population with respect to civil rights.

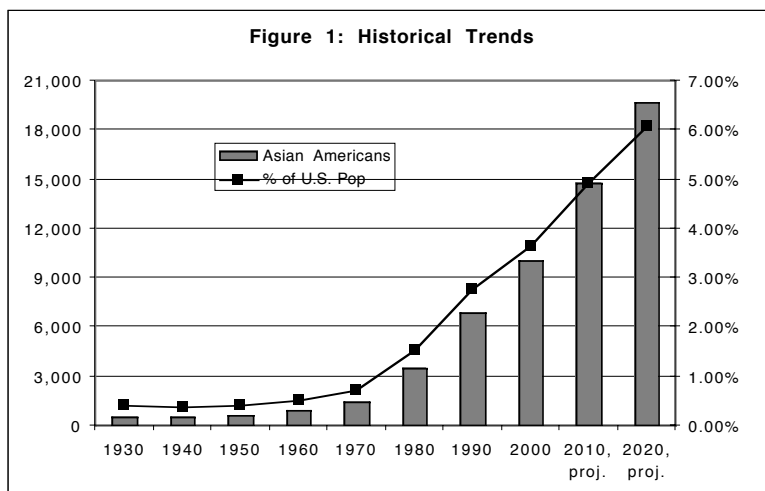
This paper examines currently available data from the 2000 Census and other sources to examine demographic trends and patterns, as well as social and economic indicators. The paper draws from previous and on-going research but is far from being comprehensive given the myriad issues related to civil rights. Part I examines the size and composition of the population. Immigration has driven rapid growth over the last few decades, pushed immigrant issues to the forefront, and increased geographic and ethnic diversity. Part II covers citizenship and voting, which speak to the broader goal of promoting unrestricted political participation. The naturalization rate is up, but there are still barriers to full political participation. Part III examines salient characteristics of primary and secondary students. While school segregation does not appear to be a major problem, linguistic barriers are present. Part IV analyzes employment and housing discrimination against Asian Americans. The evidence based on standard analysis is inconclusive. The analysis of available census data, and other data, yields some key findings.

Immigration shapes many challenges facing Asian Americans. It is difficult to organize this population because of ethnic diversity, and political participation is low because of the lack of citizenship. Limited English language ability remains an issue in public schools and employment. Relative to their income, Asian Americans face housing problems. Given that many issues and challenges are tied to the group's status as immigrants and to ethnic-based differences, there is a need to go beyond the existing race-based paradigm of civil rights.

### Part I: Population Trends and Characteristics<sup>2</sup>

There are four key demographic features for Asian Americans: 1) rapid growth during the latter part of the twentieth century; 2) a significant shift in the composition by nativity toward the foreign-born; 3) increased geographic dispersion away from the West; and 4) greater ethnic diversity. Each feature has implica-

tions. Rapid growth has enabled Asian Americans to move beyond being a numerically insignificant minority group. The recomposition by nativity has pushed immigrant issues to the forefront. Geographic dispersion has transformed the concerns of this population from regional ones to national ones. Greater ethnic diversity complicates the effort to develop a pan-Asian American agenda.



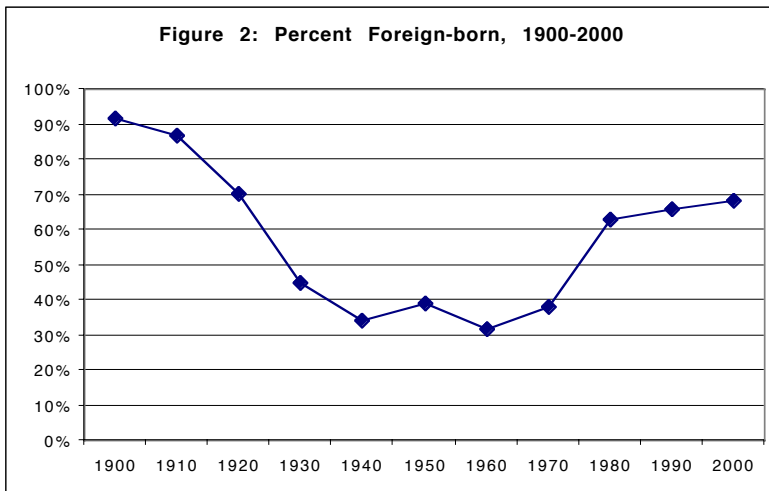
Sources: Herbert R. Barringer et al., *Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995), 39; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Division, Table 8, "Race and Hispanic Origin of the Population by Nativity: 1850-1990" (Internet Release Date: March 9, 1999); Jessica S. Barnes and Claudette E. Bennett, *The Asian Population: 2000* (Washington, DC: Bureau of the Census, 2002); U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Projections Program, Population Division, "Projections of the Resident Population by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Nativity: Middle Series, 2006-2010" (Internet Release Date: January 13, 2000); Paul Ong and Suzanne Hee, "The Growth of the Asian Pacific American Population: Twenty Million in 2020," in *The State of Asian Pacific America: Policy Issues to the Year 2020*, eds. J.D. Hokoyama and Don T. Nakanishi (Los Angeles: LEAP Asian Pacific American Public Policy Institute and UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1994).

The rapid growth over the last few decades can be seen in Figure 1. Asian Americans comprised no more than a half percent of the total U.S. population up to 1960. Since then, the population increased dramatically. Over the last four decades, the absolute number of Asian Americans increased from just under 1 million in 1960 to over 10 million in 2000—a tenfold increase, pushing the

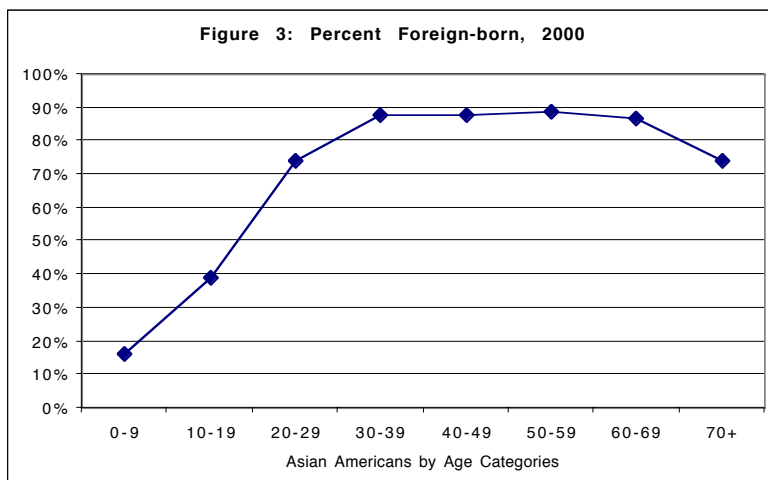
Asian American share of the total population to nearly 4 percent. If those who are part Asian are included, then the total number is nearly 12 million. Growth will continue through the next two decades, with Asian Americans projected to number about 20 million by 2020, an estimated 6 percent of this nation's future population. The driving force behind this growth is renewed immigration after the 1965 Immigration Act, which ended the racially biased quota against Asian immigration.

Contemporary immigration has dramatically altered the composition of the Asian American population by nativity. (See Figure 2.) During the first part of the twentieth century, the relative number of foreign-born Asians declined due to immigration restrictions, while the number of U.S.-born Asians increased through births. By 1930, U.S.-born Asians constituted a majority, which held for the next four decades. A reversal has taken place since 1960 as the share of foreign-born Asians rose from 32 percent to 68 percent in 2000. Projections show that immigration will moderate in the twenty-first century, and U.S.-born Asians will begin to make up a larger proportion of the population over the next twenty years. By 2020, foreign-born Asians will comprise about 55 percent of the population (Ong and Hee 1994).

There are internal differences in composition by nativity. Japanese have the lowest foreign-born share, reflecting their long presence in this country and limited contemporary immigration.

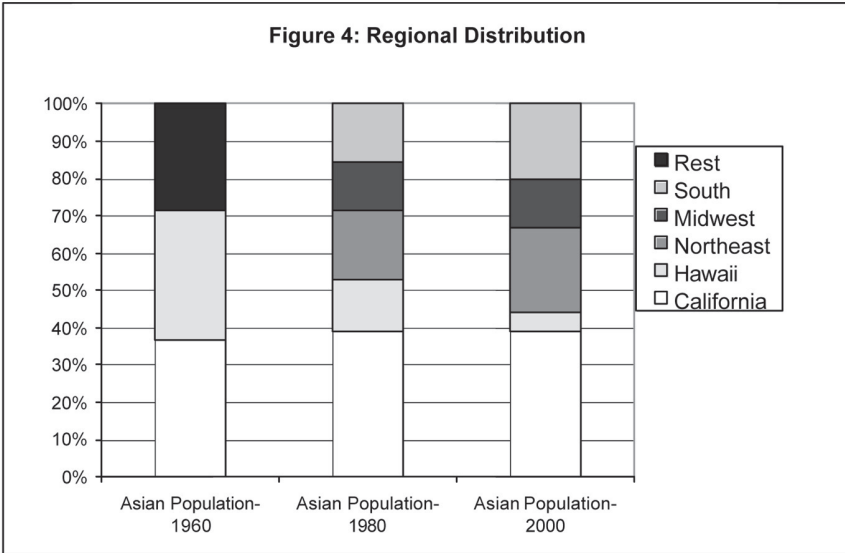


Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian populations have the highest foreign-born shares, reflecting the influx of refugees from these countries since the 1980s. Another important variation is by age groups. (See Figure 3.) Youths are predominantly U.S.-born, while the majority of adults are comprised of foreign-born. One of the consequences of this is a generational gulf accentuated by cultural and linguistics differences.



Post-1965 immigration has had two notable impacts on the distribution of the Asian American population. The first is a greater regional dispersion. Earlier waves of Asian immigrants were concentrated on the West Coast, primarily in California and Hawaii. The West was home to nearly all Asians in 1860. Even a century later, the vast majority lived in the West, with seven out of ten residing in California and Hawaii. By the end of the twentieth century, the majority lived outside these two states. This change has been driven by the decline in Hawaii's share of the Asian American population, while California maintained its relative share. The regions with the greatest gains are the Northeast and the South.

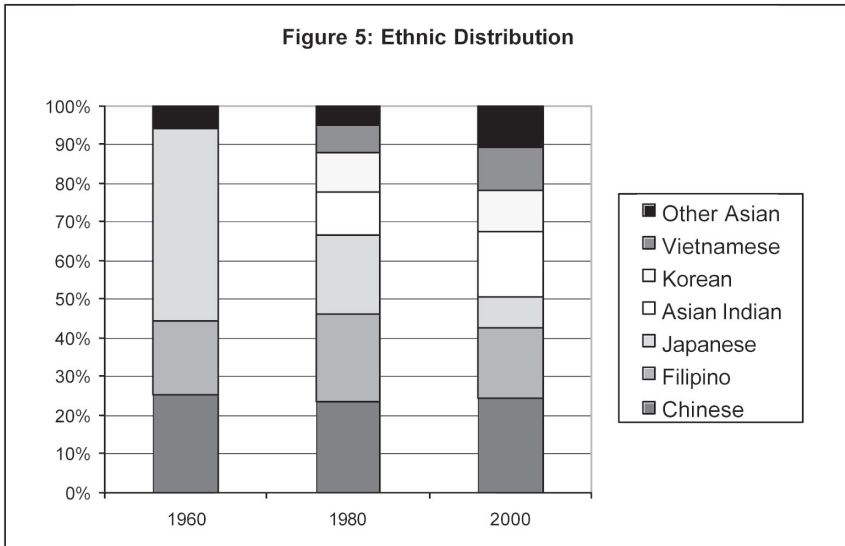
The other major impact of post-1965 immigration is a recomposition by ethnicity. (See Figure 5.) Japanese Americans experienced the largest decline as a share of the Asian American population, dropping from about 50 percent in 1960 to 8 percent in 2000 (797,000 in 2000 in absolute number). The Chinese share has remained relatively stable at roughly a quarter of the total Asian



population (2.4 million). The Filipino share initially increased and then declined, but nevertheless there were nearly 1.9 million in 2000. The most significant growth has occurred in the Southeast Asian and Asian Indian populations. The Asian Indian share of the population has more than tripled since 1980, now totaling nearly 1.7 million and 17 percent of the Asian population. The Vietnamese population has grown to over 1 million people and 11 percent of the Asian population. The Korean population is roughly the same size. The 2000 Census also reports a fair number of Cambodians (172,000), Hmongs (169,000), Laotians (169,000), Bangladeshi (41,000), Pakistani (54,000), Thais (113,000), and Indonesians (40,000).

**Part II: Citizenship and Voting<sup>3</sup>**

As an immigrant-dominated population, Asian Americans have a political participation that is a multi-step process involving the acquisition of citizenship and then involvement in the electoral process. (There are other forms of politics, which are important but not covered here.) Naturalization requires both a change in national allegiance and a level of acculturation (a sufficient command of English and knowledge of U.S. history and political institutions to pass the test). Citizenship opens up the door to full



Sources: Author's estimates from 1960 PUMS data because census reports do not enumerate other Asians; Barringer et al., *Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States*, 110; Barnes and Bennett, *The Asian Population*.

political and social membership—the right to vote and eligibility for some governmental programs. The impact goes beyond the individual because naturalization, registration, and voting rates influence the collective political strength of Asian Americans. There is also a high degree of symbolism because non-Asians interpret acquiring citizenship and voting as proxies for the willingness of Asian Americans to become “American.” The presence of a relatively large number of non-citizens provides fodder for nativist movements.

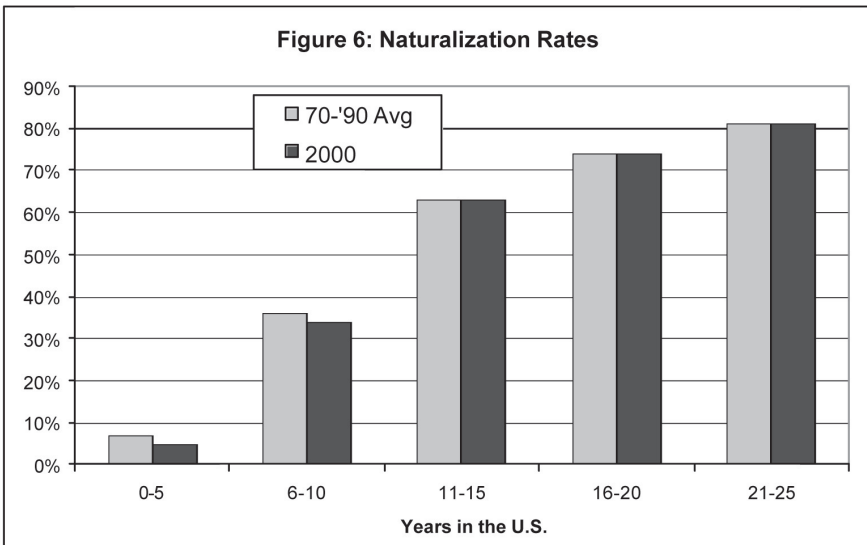
With so much at stake, it is important to update the basic statistics on these rates. This section focuses on naturalization, registration, and voting rates. It also explores whether language is a barrier to participation and whether there is sufficient geographic concentration to create Asian-dominated electoral districts. The latter is included because gerrymandering and redistricting can dilute or enhance the effectiveness of the Asian American vote.

The good news is that the overall naturalization rate has increased over the last three decades.<sup>4</sup> Foreign-born with citizenship went from 36 percent in 1980 to 43 percent in 1990 and then to 52 percent in 2000. Some of the increase may be due to efforts by

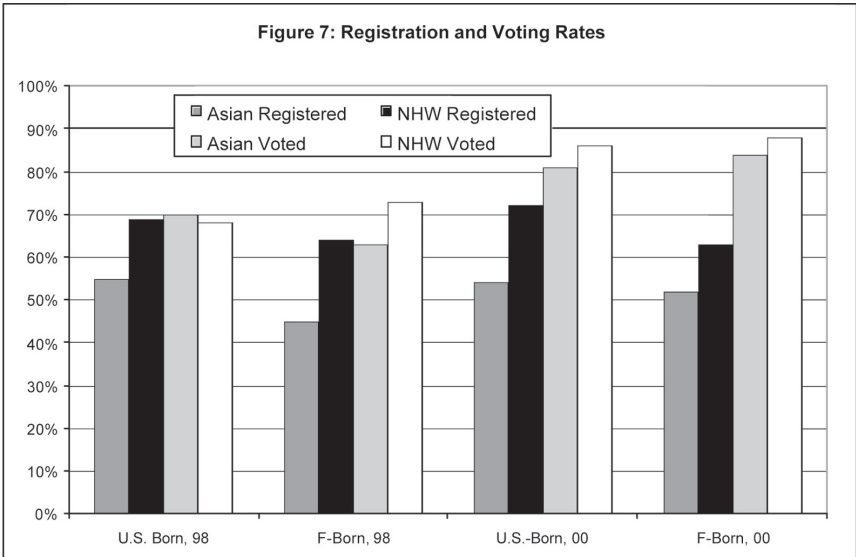


community activists to naturalize Asian immigrants in response to anti-immigrant sentiments, as epitomized by California’s Proposition 187, which restricts public services to illegal immigrants, and by federal restrictions on immigrants to benefits as a part of welfare reform. Other factors also contributed to the increase over the last decade. The single most important factor is length of residency in the U.S. Figure 6 presents the rates for 2000 by years in the U.S., which are very similar to those for previous decades. What has changed is an increase in the relative number of immigrants with over ten years of residency in the country. The rate is very low for those in the country for no more than five years, primarily because most have not met the required minimum years of residency, and after the first five years, the naturalization rate increases steadily with each additional year of residency. In 2000 56.6 percent of foreign-born Asians fell into this category, 12.7 percentage points higher than in the previous decades. Because both the shift in the composition of immigrants by years in the U.S. and the naturalization efforts occurred at the same time, more study is needed to determine the contribution of each factor.

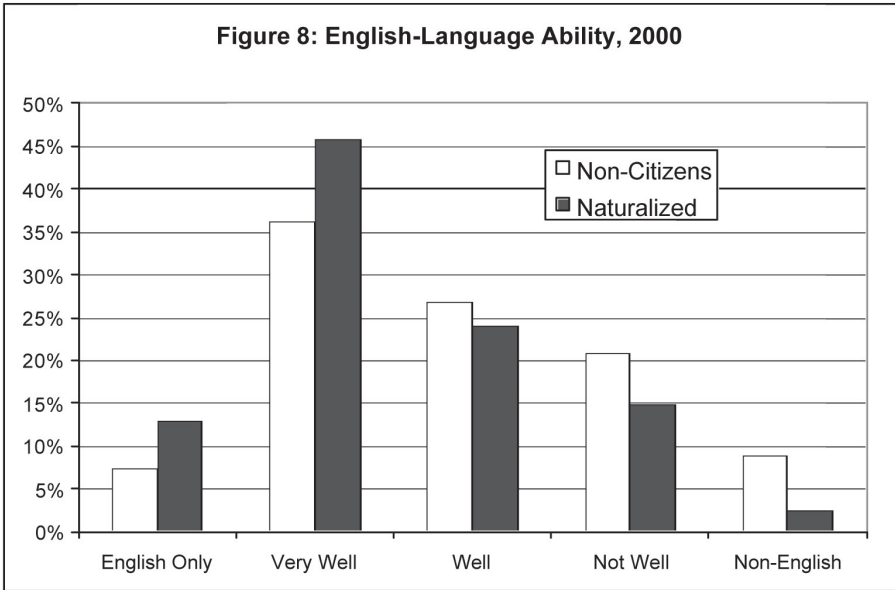
While Asian immigrants are naturalizing in record numbers, they are lagging behind in terms of voter registration and turnout. Figure 7 presents data for the 1998 and 2000 elections for Asian



Americans and non-Hispanic whites broken down by place of birth.<sup>5</sup> The registration rate is the registered population as a percent of the eligible population, and the voter turnout rate is the voting population as a percent of the registered population. In 1998, the registration rate for naturalized Asians was almost 20 percentage points lower than the respective NH-white registration rate. A racial gap was also present among the U.S.-born, although the difference is smaller. For that election, the turnout rate for registered immigrant Asians was the lowest among the four groups. The data indicate progress by the 2000 election in increasing registration and turnout of naturalized Asian immigrants. Nonetheless, this group was disproportionately less likely to register.



A lack of a high level of English-language proficiency may contribute to the lower registration rate for naturalized Asians. Acquiring citizenship requires a rudimentary command of the English language, but this low level of proficiency may be a barrier to becoming a registered voter. Figure 8 shows the distribution of naturalized and non-citizen immigrants by ability to speak English. While those with citizenship are more likely to have a better command of the language, nearly a fifth have limited or no command of spoken English. It is quite likely that a higher pro-



portion includes those with limited or no ability to read and write English.

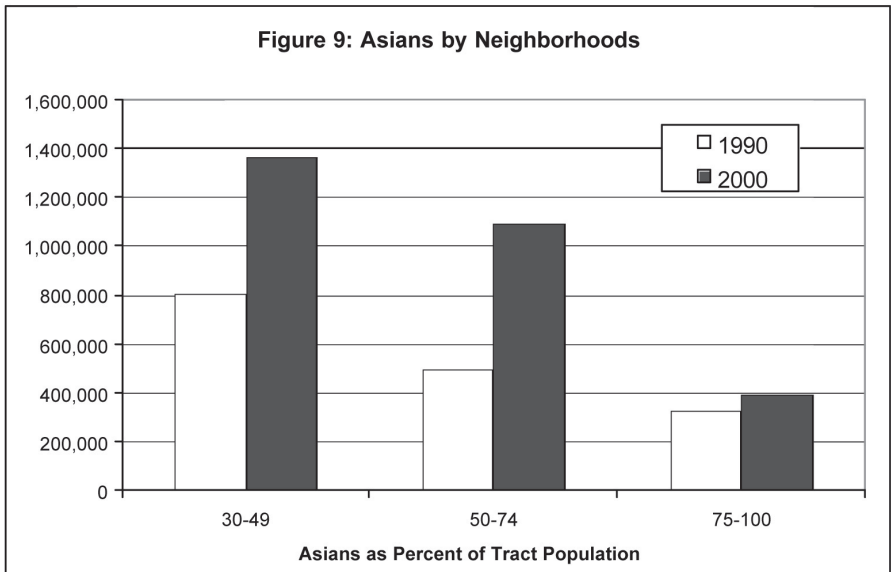
Along with building a voting base, Asian Americans need geographic concentration and favorable electoral-district boundaries as necessary conditions to enhance their political influence. If highly dispersed, Asian Americans would generally constitute an inconsequential minority in any legislative district. When political races are extremely tight, even a small Asian American population can be a critical swing vote. Unfortunately, such events are rare and do not provide a solid nor stable foundation for political empowerment. Given this reality, it is important to look at neighborhoods where Asian Americans are in significant numbers. The level of residential segregation or integration is covered in a later section. Here, I focus on areas where Asian Americans constitute a majority or a minority sufficiently large enough to influence elections.

Tract-level data provide some insights on this point. Unfortunately, at least for creating Asian American dominated districts, only one-eighth of the population reside in tracts where they are the majority. Slightly less than an eighth reside in tracts where they comprise 30 to 49 percent of the population. Despite these low

proportions, the absolute number of Asians in these tracts is sizeable and has been increasing. This can be seen in Figure 9.<sup>6</sup> In 2000, nearly 1.5 million lived in tracts where they were in the majority, up from slightly four-fifths of a million in the previous decade. The statistics for tracts with a significant Asian minority are roughly of the same magnitude. The numbers imply that there is a real potential to draw districts that maximize the ability of some Asian Americans to elect a candidate of their choice. Asian Americans have been able to make gains through redistricting in some areas but not others. Even when successful, having districts with a significant Asian American presence is a necessary but not sufficient condition for political empowerment. Outcomes are not easy to predict because they are affected by factors such as the rate of naturalization, the presence or absence of ethnic-based political institutions, and whether residents share common concerns. Despite the complexities and uncertainties, constructing electoral districts that consolidate rather than split Asian Americans is critical to ensuring that the Asian American vote is not diluted.

Part III: Public-Education Issues<sup>7</sup>

A defining civil rights issue with respect to public education is equal access, and promoting school integration has been funda-



mental to redressing racial disparities in this arena. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision ended the practice of “separate but equal” schools for African Americans, civil rights laws enacted in the 1960s prohibited racial discrimination in education, and subsequent court-ordered integration was imposed on scores of school districts. Unfortunately, school integration was never fully achieved, and worse, there has been a recent trend to re-segregate public education (Orfield 2001); nonetheless, a high level of school segregation is still seen as an indicator of unequal access.

Asian American students are segregated but at a lower level than other minorities. This can be seen in the Dissimilarity Index (DI), a widely used measure of the level of segregation. This index compares two populations, with values ranging from 0 to 100.<sup>8</sup> The value can be roughly interpreted as the percent of students who must be reassigned from over-represented schools to under-represented schools to achieve full school integration. Table 1 reports the results for elementary schools in 329 metropolitan areas. A DI value is calculated separately for each metropolitan area, and the statistical parameters (means, medians, etc.) are based on DI values for all of the metropolitan area. The average value for Asian American segregation relative to non-Hispanic whites is noticeably lower than for African Americans and Latinos.<sup>9</sup> The lower level for Asian Americans is correlated with a lower level of residential segregation of Asian American children.<sup>10</sup>

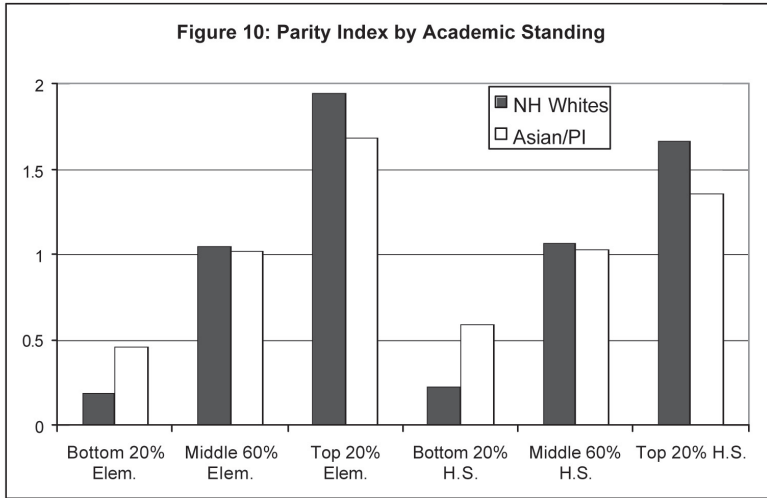
**Table 1. School and Residential Segregation Summary Statistics**

Segregation Type	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum
<b>African American</b>				
Primary School Segregation	66.8	70.0	20.3	89.1
Child Residential Segregation	68.1	69.6	18.6	86.2
Difference in Segregation	-1.3	0.7	-34.3	22.2
<b>Asian American</b>				
Primary School Segregation	47.7	48.4	20.2	93.8
Child Residential Segregation	45.1	46.1	16.0	60.3
Difference in Segregation	2.6	2.5	-12.1	61.3
<b>Hispanic</b>				
Primary School Segregation	59.0	59.7	18.9	81.3
Child Residential Segregation	54.9	55.8	11.7	77.9
Difference in Segregation	4.1	3.5	-16.1	38.1

School segregation, however, should not be automatically associated with over concentration in inferior schools. This assumption holds for most African Americans and Latinos, but not necessarily for other racial groups. After all, white students are segregated, but this is not due to a lack of access to better schools. This pattern appears to apply to Asian Americans. Figure 10 provides data on Asian American and non-Hispanic white attendance in Californian schools ranked by academic performance measured by standardized tests (bottom fifth, the middle three-fifth, and the top one-fifth of all schools).<sup>11</sup> Test score data come from the California Department of Education and can be found at the website for Policy and Evaluation Division, Academic Performance Index, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/api/>. Attendance is normalized into a parity index, where a value less than one denotes under-representation and a value greater than one denotes over-representation. The results indicate that both groups are proportionately less likely to be in the lowest performing schools and disproportionately more likely to be the highest performing schools. Asian Americans are not as unequally distributed as non-Hispanic whites.

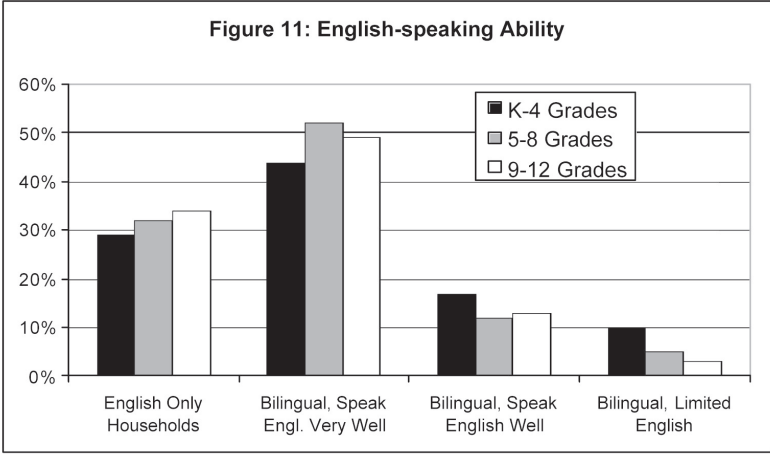
The distribution of Asian Americans in California by the performance level of schools is due to a number of factors and processes. School averages are correlated with racial composition because of racial differences in performance. That is, schools with more non-Hispanic whites and Asian Americans would tend to have higher academic performance because those schools have a disproportionately larger number of students from groups that perform better. School level performance is also related to the composition of the student body by economic class. Those from more affluent backgrounds generally perform better on standardized tests. The bi-modal class distribution of Asian Americans contributes to their presence in high-performance schools. It is beyond the scope of this article to unravel the complex causality of the quality of school, racial composition, and economic class. Moreover, it is not known if the results for California can be extrapolated to the rest of the nation. Despite these limitations, the observed patterns are very suggestive. They indicate that the school segregation faced by many Asian American students is not tied to a lack of access to better schools.

One educational barrier relevant to Asian Americans is a lack of English-language proficiency (Ong and Wong 1996). Two



out of three K-12 students are U.S.-born, but two out of three live in a household where a language other than English is spoken. Figure 11 shows the distribution by grade level. A large majority of students in all grades are bilingual, but an overwhelming majority of bilingual students can speak English well or very well. A small minority has difficulties with speaking English, and the problem is more prevalent in the lower grades. Census-based statistics, however, should be interpreted with caution. Most of the data were reported by parents, many with limited or no command of the English language. Moreover, the data cover only one aspect of English-language proficiency; consequently, some English-speaking students may have problems reading and writing English. An alternative measure comes from school-reported data. According to California, there are over 183 thousand Asian K-12 students with limited English-language proficiency, or over a quarter of all Asian American students. This indicates that a considerably higher proportion of Asian American students face linguistic barriers than indicated by census data.

Regardless of the percent of Asian Americans students with limited-English proficiency, the problem has been a major concern among Asian Americans. They have played a pivotal role in the struggle to ensure that language barriers do not deny students equal access to education. In the 1974 *Lau v. Nichols* case, where non-English-speaking Chinese students sued the San Francisco Uni-



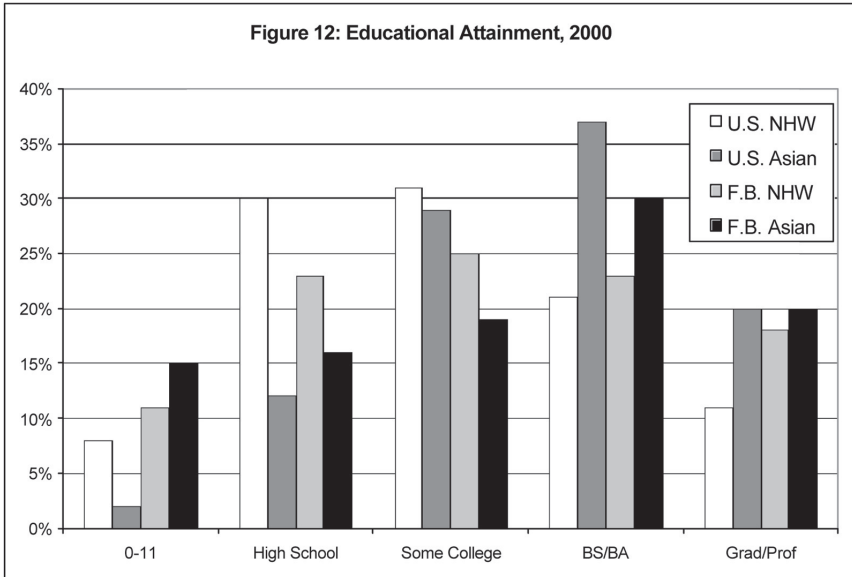
fied School District, the U.S. Supreme Court established the principle that schools have a legal obligation to meet the needs of students with limited English proficiency. Bilingual education has been one approach to the problem, but this approach is, and will continue to be, controversial.

**Part IV: Employment and Housing Discrimination<sup>12</sup>**

Along with fighting for voting rights and school integration (and access to public facilities), the civil rights movement sought to eliminate race-based economic inequality through legislation outlawing employment and housing discrimination, and through affirmative action and housing integration. Census data have been used to examine the nature and magnitude of racial inequality in these two areas. One analytical tool has been to estimate the “cost of being a minority” in the labor market, that is, racial differences in employment outcomes not explained by standard human-capital variables. The “residual” gap has been interpreted as a measure of the adverse impact of discrimination and racism. One widely used measure of unequal housing opportunity is residential segregation. Income differences contribute to observed residential patterns but do not explain most of it. This section examines both of these measures for Asian Americans.

Census data show a very small gap between Asian Americans and NH whites in median annual employment earnings for prime-working age adults (\$31,200 versus \$30,000, respectively).<sup>13</sup> There



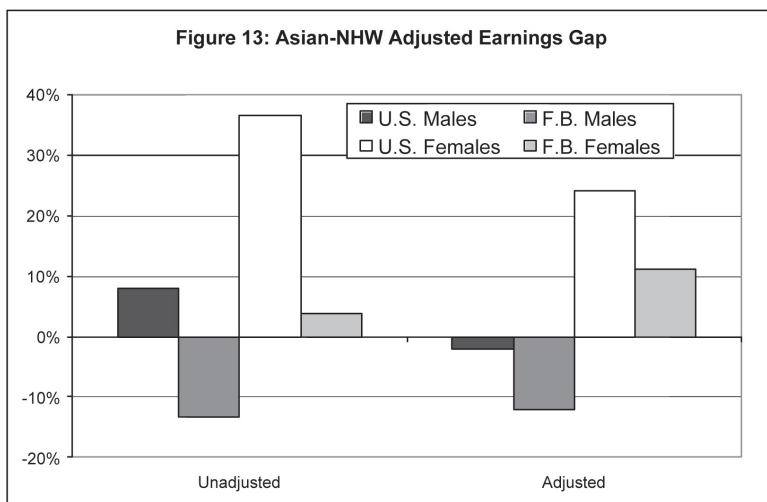


are, however, considerable racial differences within gender-nativity groups. U.S.-born Asian Americans fare better than U.S.-born NH whites, and this is particularly true for Asian American females relative to NH white females. On the other hand, foreign-born Asian males fare worse than their foreign-born NH white counterparts. Foreign-born Asian females were roughly at parity with foreign-born NH white females.

Differences in educational attainment contribute to the observed disparities in earnings. (See Figure 12.) Immigrants show a higher concentration at both ends of the range, with foreign-born Asians having the highest proportion among those without a high school education. Asian Americans are more likely to have at least a four-year college degree. The unusually high percentage of immigrants with a graduate or professional degree is partially a product of the immigration quotas for those with extremely high skill levels, which taps both those educated in U.S. universities and in comparable foreign institutions (Ong and Liu 1994). The census data show that U.S.-born Asian Americans have higher educational attainment than U.S.-born NH whites, but what the data do not show is that U.S.-born Asian Americans have been disproportionately more concentrated in the elite institutions (Ong 2000).

The observed racial disparities in annual earnings are due not only to education but also other factors. A standard human-capital model is used to estimate the racial/ethnic gap after adjusting for educational attainment, employment sector, and experience. For the foreign-born population, the analysis also controls for years in the United States and English language ability.<sup>14</sup> Figure 13 summarizes both the unadjusted gap and adjusted gap in earnings of Asian Americans relative to NH whites. A negative value indicates that Asian Americans earned less, while a positive value indicates that they earned more. The 2000 results are very similar to 1970-1990 results from previous work.

The results do not show a systematic pattern that can be interpreted as overwhelming evidence of racial discrimination against Asian Americans. The adjusted difference among U.S.-born males is not statistically significant. (This result, however, does not control for the quality of education.) Among females, Asian Americans fare considerably better than NH whites. A part of this is due to working more hours, but even after controlling for that, Asian American females do better than their counterparts. The one problematic area is among immigrant males, with Asian Americans faring noticeably worse than their counterparts. Although the results are quite robust, it is difficult to determine the cause of this disparity. Earnings inequality, however, is not the only concern. There may be other forms of discrimination, such as the “glass ceiling” and



language discrimination in hiring and on the job. Previous analysis of those in the technical, engineering, and scientific fields show that Asian Americans are less likely to move into management (Ong and Blumenberg 1994). The lack of upward mobility is an issue that warrants additional analysis using more current census and other data.

An analysis of the census data on residential patterns also paints an ambiguous picture of the status of Asian Americans. The most widely used measure of residential segregation is the Dissimilarity Index, described earlier. The value for Asian Americans is lower than the values for other minorities. (See Table 2 for the DI values for 311 metropolitan areas.) The most segregated areas for Asian American segregation tend to include college/university towns (Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Lafayette, Indiana) or are impacted by Southeast Asian refugees (Wausau, Wisconsin, and Lowell, Massachusetts). The least segregated areas tend to be areas with very few Asian Americans. While Asian American segregation exists in urbanized areas, much of it is associated with immigrant enclaves, where many Asian Americans reside because of cultural and linguistic affinity, access to social institutions, and jobs in the ethnic economy. These phenomena suggest that factors other than discrimination contribute to the residential segregation of Asian Americans. This is not to deny that there are problems associated with residential segregation. Many urban enclaves are low-income neighborhoods facing a myriad of economic problems (Ong and Miller 2002), and a major challenge is conceptualizing how these problems are related to civil rights.

While the analysis of census data is not conclusive with respect to employment and housing discrimination against Asian Americans, other data document that anti-Asian discrimination does exist. A recent report by the Urban Institute finds that Asian Americans (and Pacific Islanders) encounter at least the same level of adverse treatment in the rental and real estate market as African Americans and Hispanics (Turner and Ross 2003). Approximately one in five experiences some form of discriminatory action. Despite these problems, Asian Americans are not likely to file a complaint. For example, Asian Americans filed a very small fraction of the housing complaints (2 percent) with California's Department of Fair Housing and Employment and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This low rate indicates a reluctance to

Table 2: Residential Segregation for African Americans, Latinos, and Asians, 2000

African American Metropolitan Areas	African American Segregation	Latino-NH White Metropolitan Areas	Latino Segregation	Asian-NH White Metropolitan Areas	Asian Segregation
Mean DI	64.4	311 MSAs	51.0	311 MSAs	41.4
Standard Deviation	12.4	311 MSAs	10.5	311 MSAs	6.8
<b>Most Segregated</b>					
Detroit, MI	84.8	Lawrence, MA	75.3	Ann Arbor, MI	58.8
Gary, IN	84.1	Reading, PA	71.6	Lafayette, IN	55.4
Milwaukee, WI	82.1	Providence, RI	67.6	Atlantic-Cape May, NJ	53.2
New York, NY	81.5	Bridgeport, CT	66.4	Wausau, WI	52.8
Newark, NJ	80.3	New York, NY	66.0	Lowell, MA-NH	51.5
<b>Least Segregated</b>					
Bellingham, WA	19.4	Redding, CA	10.6	Billings, MT	12.9
Yolo, CA	21.2	Burlington, VT	14.9	Grand Junction, CO	14.7
Boise City, ID	21.4	Portsmouth, NH	15.4	Boise City, ID	17.6
Boulder, CO	22.0	La Crosse, WI	17.1	El Paso, TX	19.2
Redding, CA	23.9	Lake Charles, LA	17.3	Melbourne, FL	19.2

pursue remedial action, a failure of governmental agency to reach out to Asian Americans, or both.<sup>15</sup>

### Conclusion

The analysis of available census data, and other data, yields some key findings. Immigration-driven growth has made Asian

Americans numerically significant but has also realigned the concerns of this population around immigrant issues. Increased ethnic diversity may be a virtue, but it creates barriers to organizing the population. (Class differences also contribute to this problem.) Political participation is increasing, but there are barriers to voter registration that need to be addressed. Linguistic difficulties hinder access to K-12 education. Asian Americans face employment and housing problems, but it is difficult to determine the role of racial discrimination. Taken together, the results lead to a more fundamental, albeit tentative, conclusion. Most issues and problems facing Asian Americans are not race-based. Instead, the concerns are related to the group's status as immigrants and to ethnic-based differences (e.g., language). Rather than situating Asian Americans within the existing race-based paradigm of civil rights, it would be more productive to reframe the discussion around the demographic realities of Asian Americans.

Clearly, there is a need to conduct more research to achieve a better understanding of the challenges facing this population and to help reframe the civil rights discussion. This includes disaggregating the analysis by ethnicity, refining analytical methods to account for the immigrant process, and integrating census and non-census data.

## Notes

1. A briefing paper commissioned by the Harvard Civil Rights Project and the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. The research is partially supported by the UCLA Ralph and Goldy Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies and the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. I am grateful for assistance from Doug Houston, Doug Miller, Jordan Rickles, Shannon McConville, and Margaret Johnson, and for comments and suggestions from the reviewers. I alone am responsible for any errors.
2. This section is based in part on Paul M. Ong and Loh-Sze Leung, "Diversified Growth—The U.S. Asian Population," unpublished paper, UCLA, 2002.
3. This section is based in part on the following two publications: Paul Ong and Don T. Nakanishi, "Becoming Citizens, Becoming Voters: The Naturalization and Political Participation of Asian Pacific Immigrants," in *Reframing the Immigration Debate*, ed. Bill O. Hing and Ronald Lee (Los Angeles: LEAP Asian Pacific American Public Policy Institute and UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1996), 275-305; Paul Ong and David Lee, "Changing of the Guard? The

Emerging Immigrant Majority in Asian American Politics,” in *Asian Americans and Politics: An Exploration*, ed. Gordon H. Chang (Washington, DC and Stanford: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 2001), 153-172.

4. The naturalization statistics are based on the 1970, 1980, and 1990 Public-use Micro Samples, and the Census 2000 Supplementary Survey micro sample. The census does not distinguish among legal immigrants, undocumented aliens, and some foreign visitors. The census uses five categories to define U.S. citizenship: 1) those born in the United States (citizens by *jus solis*), 2) those who are citizens through birth in a U.S. territory, 3) those born abroad to U.S. citizens (citizens by *jus sanguini*), 4) alien immigrants, and 5) naturalized immigrants. For the purpose of this report, the foreign-born population is comprised of those in the last two categories, and the naturalized population is comprised of those in the last category. Renewal of large-scale immigration initially lowered the naturalization rate from 41 percent in 1970 to 36 percent in 1980 because of the shift the composition of the foreign-born adult population toward the recently arrived immigrants, who had a lower naturalization rate than established immigrants.
5. The estimates are based on tabulations by the author from the November 1998 and November 2000 Current Population surveys.
6. The numbers include Pacific Islanders, which is a relatively small population.
7. Material in this section is partially based on research conducted with Jordan Rickles, some of which are in “Analyzing Variations In School And Residential Segregation,” unpublished paper, UCLA Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, 2002.
8. The DI for two groups is computed using the following equation:

$$DI = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^n abs \left[ \frac{N_i}{N} - \frac{M_i}{M} \right]$$

where N is the metropolitan population for the first group,  $N_i$  is the population of that group in the  $i$ th census tract, and M is the metropolitan population for the second group,  $M_i$  is the population of that group in the  $i$ th census tract. Data for residential segregation come from the 2000 Census Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) Summary File. Data for school segregation come from the 1998-1999 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data Public Elementary / Secondary School Universe Survey and Public Education Agency Survey provides enrollment, school, and district information.

9. The Asian statistics include Pacific Islanders, which is a relatively small group.

10. A majority (59 percent) of AAPI students reside in metropolitan areas where their segregation level is noticeably lower (where the AAPI DI value is at least ten points lower) than that for African American students. A majority (52 percent) of AAPI students also reside in metropolitan areas where their segregation level is noticeably lower than that for Latino. An extremely small minority of AAPI students (2 percent) reside in metropolitan areas where their segregation level is noticeably higher (where the AAPI DI value is at least ten points higher) than that for African American students. A very small minority (6 percent) of AAPI students reside in metropolitan areas where their segregation level is noticeably higher than that for Latino. The rest of the AAPI students are in metropolitan areas where their segregation level is similar (within ten DI points) to that for African Americans and Latinos.
11. Test score data come from the California Department of Education and can be found at the website for Policy and Evaluation Division, Academic Performance Index, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/api>.
12. This is based in part on Paul M. Ong, "Racial/Ethnic Inequality In The U.S.A. Labor Market: Empirical Patterns And Policy Options," unpublished paper, Ralph and Goldy Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, and the Performance and Innovation Unit of the British Cabinet Office, Revised, February 12, 2002; Paul M. Ong and Shannon McConville, "Residential Segregation In Metropolitan United States," unpublished paper, Ralph and Goldy Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, School of Public Policy and Social Research, University of California, Los Angeles, September 11, 2001; and Doug Houston and Paul M. Ong, "Housing Discrimination in California's Rural and Agricultural Counties," Ralph and Goldy Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, prepared for the California Department of Fair Housing and Employment, 2002.
13. Sample is from the public-use micro sample for the Census 2000 Supplementary Survey and includes those between the ages of twenty-five to sixty with a minimum of \$1,000 in income from paid work.
14. The log of earnings is the dependent variable. The set of independent variables includes the years of schooling, sector of employment (private and public), and potential years of labor-market experience (age minus five minus years of schooling). For the foreign-born, the years in the United States and English language ability are included. Dummy variables for racial/ethnic groups are used to capture unexplained group effects. A separate regression is estimated for each gender and nativity combination.
15. On the other hand, Asian Americans filed about one-tenth (9 percent) of the employment complaints. This suggests that employment discrimination is relatively more prevalent.

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