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JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY REVIEW

VOLUME 22, 2011–2012
AN HKS STUDENT PUBLICATION

INSIDE

AAPIs in Higher Education

Impact of the Affordable Care Act
on our Communities

U.S. Immigration Policy and South
Asian Women

FEATURE INTERVIEWS WITH:

Ambassador Gary Locke

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HARVARD JOURNAL OF ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY

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ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY REVIEW
ANNOUNCES THE RELEASE OF

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The 2011–2012 *Asian American Policy Review* staff is proud to present the twenty-second edition of our journal. Founded in 1989, *AAPR* is the first nonpartisan academic journal in the country dedicated to analyzing public policy issues facing the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

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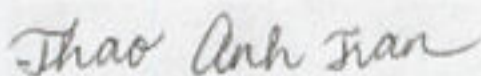
The twenty-second volume of the Asian American Policy Review (AAPR) seeks to introduce various voices within the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community including academics, policy advocates, and key policy makers in the U.S. government. The different perspectives presented in this edition demonstrate how diverse our community and its interests can be.

In this volume, we examine how the Affordable Care Act (ACA) impacts AAPI women and Southeast Asian Americans. While our authors agree that the ACA can benefit underserved communities, they differ in how the act might impact different subgroups within the AAPI community. The theme of gendered perspectives continues with an examination of U.S. immigration policy as it pertains to South Asian Americans; author Maneesha Kelkar presents a voice that may often be absent from Asian American policy discussions.

In our interviews, we present voices from the Obama administration who are preserving our history and serving as a bridge between Asia and Asian America. We are very grateful to the interviewees for taking their precious time to share their perspectives with us.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the people who made this publication possible. Thank you to Fred Wang and our organizational sponsors, whose generosity sustains this edition and the future of AAPR. Compliments to Martha Foley, our publisher, and Richard Parker, our faculty advisor, for their dedication to the journals at the Harvard Kennedy School. To our staff and extended AAPR family, thanks for the hard work you have all put in this year and your unwavering commitment. From tracking down ambassadors to soliciting articles, we feel fortunate to have worked with such a dedicated group.

Sincerely,



Thao Anh Tran
Editor-in-Chief



Francis Choi
Editor-in-Chief

HARVARD JOURNAL OF ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY

Call for Papers

Deadline: November 30, 2012

The *Asian American Policy Review (AAPR)* at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government is now accepting submissions for its twenty-third edition, to be published in the spring of 2013. Founded in 1989, AAPR is the first nonpartisan academic journal in the country dedicated to analyzing public policy issues facing the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community.

We seek papers exploring 1) the social, economic, and political factors impacting the AAPI community and 2) the role of AAPI individuals and communities in analyzing, shaping, and implementing public policy. We strongly encourage submissions from writers of all backgrounds, including scholars, policy makers, civil servants, advocates, and organizers.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The *AAPR* will select papers for publication based on the following criteria:

- Relevance of topic to AAPI issues and timeliness to current debates
- Originality of ideas and depth of research
- Sophistication and style of argument
- Contribution to scholarship and debates on AAPI issues

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- All submissions must be *previously unpublished* and based on *original work*.
- All submissions must be *formatted according to The Chicago Manual of Style* (please see attachment for citation examples).
- Authors are required to *cooperate with editing and fact-checking* and to comply with *AAPR's* mandated deadlines. Authors who fail to meet these requirements may not be published.
- All submissions must include a cover letter with (1) author's name, (2) mailing address, (3) e-mail address, (4) phone number, and (5) a brief biography of no more than 300 words.
- *Research articles should be 4,000 to 7,000 words* in length and include a 100-word abstract.
- *Commentaries should be 1,500 to 3,000 words* in length.
- All figures, tables, and charts must be clear, easy to understand, and submitted as separate files.

E-mail submissions to: aapr@hks.harvard.edu

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Asian American Policy Review.

Sincerely,
AAPR Editorial Staff

Health Equity for API Women Through the Affordable Care Act

by Keely Monroe and Christine Soyong Harley

When President Barack Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) into law on 23 March 2010, it was a momentous achievement for medically underserved communities. Although the controversial new law quickly came under attack from its detractors, it has already done much to improve access to quality health care for Asian and Pacific Islander (API) women, especially those who cannot afford health insurance coverage or are limited English proficient (LEP).

In general, women experience inequities in obtaining comprehensive, quality health care or must endure discriminatory insurance practices such as denied coverage for having had a baby, having had a cesarean, or having survived domestic violence. Women of color, including API women, face additional burdens and experience health services differently than White women due to higher poverty levels, language barriers, specific cultural norms, and a history of reproductive coercion. As a result, a reproductive justice approach would allow the health care community to form a more holistic view of women's health care. Such an approach empowers women and girls to make healthy decisions about their own bodies, sexuality, and reproduction, while acknowledging differences in culture, social conditions, or racial and ethnic risk factors. Using a reproductive justice framework to understand the ACA finds that the new law is a significant legislative advancement in quality health care for women.

API WOMEN AND HEALTH DISPARITIES

API women often face disproportionate barriers to quality, comprehensive medical care and treatment. Barriers such as unaffordable health insurance, lack of culturally competent or linguistically appropriate services, inadequate community education, and incomplete health research are just some of the impediments to quality health care for API women and girls. As a result, API women experience disproportionate rates of hepatitis, mental illness, and gestational diabetes as well as an underutilization of essential health services like preventive care.

The high cost of health care insurance is a tremendous barrier to care for API women. The API community is disproportionately underinsured compared to other racial groups. For example, among people below the federal poverty level, 39 percent of API individuals are uninsured compared to 25 percent of non-Latino Whites (Families USA 2006). These high rates continue for individual subgroups. For example, 31 percent of

non-elderly Korean Americans and 21 percent of non-elderly Vietnamese Americans are forced to forego health coverage compared to 12 percent of the general population (National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum 2008b). API women who are unable to obtain coverage are then forced to choose between their health and financial stability. One study reported that one-third of women had to decide between accessing health care and giving up basic necessities, taking on debt, or using up their savings (Healthreform.gov n.d.).

The sacrifice of self-care by API women is particularly evident in their low rates of accessing preventive care services. For example, approximately 68 percent of API women reported having had a pap smear within the past three years compared to 80 percent of White women. Moreover, 53 percent of Vietnamese American women and 22 percent of Korean

women (National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum 2009). API women also report low rates of mammograms, with 29.2 percent not having had a mammogram in the past two years, as well as low numbers for breast cancer screenings among all women (National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum 2010). In addition, while transmission rates of sexually transmitted diseases are decreasing for the overall population, chlamydia and gonorrhea rates for the API community are on the rise, with API women experiencing a higher rate of transmission compared to API men (National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum 2008a).

API women experience health disparities due to a lack of culturally appropriate and linguistically competent health care services and professionals. More than four million APIs, about one-third of the API population, are limited English proficient, severely hindering effective

❖❖❖ *API women experience health disparities due to a lack of culturally appropriate and linguistically competent health care services and professionals.*

American women reported never having obtained a pap smear compared to 6 percent of women in the general population (National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum 2009). This lack of access to preventive care is a major contributing factor to high rates of cervical cancer for API women.

Vietnamese American women suffer from the highest cervical cancer rate of any ethnic group, and Korean American women have incidence rates of cervical cancer that are twice that of White

communication between patient and provider (Downer 2009, 10-11). Thus, some API women are unable to fully communicate the extent of their health issues. They are forced to rely on family members and friends to interpret private and often complex health information on their behalf. Discussing sex or sexuality with your doctor is already difficult, adding cultural taboos or language barriers makes it nearly impossible for API women to feel comfortable talking

❖ *Fifty-three percent of Vietnamese American women and 22 percent of Korean American women reported never having obtained a pap smear compared to 6 percent of women in the general population.*

about and accessing reproductive health services (Bridges 2007).

API women also face cultural stereotypes that mask potential health risks. Health care research often lumps API populations together without considering differences in health risk for the more than thirty diverse ethnic subpopulations and variations in national origin, language, culture, citizenship, immigration status, and economic status (National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, 2008b). This creates skewed statistical data that can erase high health disparity rates for specific ethnic groups, emphasizing the need for disaggregated gender, race, and ethnicity data for medical providers. One example is API teen pregnancy rates. Although in aggregate API teens report the lowest levels of sexual activity and pregnancy rates nationally when compared to other racial categories, further analysis of disaggregated data by ethnicity found that Laotian teens in California have the highest teen birth rate in the state (Bridges 2007). This pattern of masked health disparities repeats for other health conditions as well, leaving some ethnic groups at risk of not receiving necessary screenings for diseases for which they have a high risk. Clearly, it is important for health care professionals to be aware of disparities that impact their patients' well-being, yet the lack of disaggregated data for API subpopulations prevents this from

happening. Fortunately, the ACA is making a change.

THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

There is no doubt that the current health care system fails API women. The ACA will not solve all the issues API women face in accessing health care services, but if fully implemented, it demonstrates a real commitment to eliminating health inequities and reducing economic, gender, and racial barriers. There are several important provisions of the law that can improve the way API women access health care.

Beginning in 2014, the ACA expands Medicaid to individuals at or below 133 percent of the federal poverty level, without adding additional eligibility requirements like disability or family size. This will increase access to vital health care services to the most vulnerable and underserved women in our country and will reach more women struggling to afford the health care services they need. Approximately 70 percent of Medicaid beneficiaries over the age of fourteen are women and 54 percent are people of color, meaning that women of color are the predominant benefactors of an expanded Medicaid program (National Institute for Reproductive Health n.d., Statehealthfacts.org n.d.). Its broad expansion is expected to cover an additional 16 million individuals by 2019. In 2010, 40 percent of all immigrant business owners were women (Pearce et

al. 2011); there are more than 1.5 million businesses owned by APIs, and 3 million people employed by API businesses (Asian Pacific American Legal Center and Asian American Justice Center 2011). Thus, as the Great Recession of 2008 continues to thwart a full recovery, API women, many of whom are small business owners or employed by small businesses that struggle to provide health coverage for their employees, will immediately benefit.

The ACA also provides women with comprehensive preventive care, building on the law's requirements for coverage of certain proven preventive care services and screenings. That provision of the law directed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to identify specific preventive health services for women that would be covered without any extra charges or co-pays. In August 2011, HHS announced a robust set of reproductive health services that insurers will be required to cover including contraception, screening and counseling for intimate partner violence and sexually transmitted diseases, mammograms, and cervical cancer screenings. Some consider this one of the most significant advances for women's access to reproductive health services, honoring the essence of the law's goal of giving people access to affordable and comprehensive health services.

Access to these important preventive services without co-pays has the potential to significantly improve the health outcomes of API women. Studies show that even small co-pays can dramatically reduce the use of essential preventive care services; not surprisingly, this is especially true for people with lower incomes or living in poverty. For this reason, eliminating co-pays for contraception, pap tests, and other preventive care is a critical

step toward addressing disparities in utilization of preventive care services for API women.

The law shows a strong commitment to providing health care in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. On 31 October 2011, HHS announced final standards for data collection and reporting on race, ethnicity, sex, primary language, and disability status. Standardized collection of disaggregated data will significantly improve the ability of health care providers, researchers, and advocates to identify and reduce health disparities, especially disparities that impact smaller API subpopulations. This marks the first time that primary language spoken by a person or in a household will be collected in a standardized way. Provisions to provide culturally competent care include providing financial support to develop and distribute model cultural competence training and education as well as training for primary care providers and home care aides (Andrulis et al. 2010). In addition, the state-based exchanges where individuals will go to purchase health care insurance will include "navigators," or individuals required to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information. These navigators will be tasked with helping individuals understand and choose an appropriate health care plan.

Finally, the law does much to address gender discrimination by preventing insurers from denying coverage on the basis of preexisting conditions as well as eliminating gender rating by private insurance companies. These companies can no longer charge women more than men for identical policies or deny women coverage for common medical conditions. With the full implementation of these provisions, the ACA truly aims to provide

❖ *The way it was: a broken system that was too expensive, covered too few people, and discriminated against women of color.*

its promise of quality affordable access and culturally and linguistically competent care.

WE NEED TO SUPPORT THE ACA TO SUPPORT API WOMEN

When the ACA was signed into law, it was the first step to creating a health care system that actually works for women and other medically underserved populations. Since that time, we have seen more advances for communities of color, women, and limited English speakers' health than ever before, but these are marred with continuing setbacks. Opponents to the law continue to pursue legal challenges all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. They are also attempting to bar funding for implementation of the law or to undermine the agencies responsible for implementing its key components.

In addition, the ACA has been a flashpoint for opponents of comprehensive reproductive health for women. The 20 January 2012 announcement by HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius that most employers would be required to cover preventive health care for women, including contraception, met extreme opposition from religious conservatives. Even after President Obama revised the rule on contraception in February 2012 to allow faith-based organizations to have a third-party insurer pay for the coverage, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and other conservatives continued to oppose family planning for women as part of ACA implementation. Given the

importance of reproductive health and family planning services for maternal and child health and well-being, we must continue to ensure that all women, no matter their employer, receive the full benefits of ACA.

As more of the benefits of the ACA are put into place, it is easy to see its vast improvements to quality, affordable health care for API women and impossible to imagine going back to the way it was: a broken system that was too expensive, covered too few people, and discriminated against women of color. It is important that all reproductive justice advocates pushing for comprehensive health care that benefits all women and girls continue to support the important and historic Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

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The No Wrong Door Policy:

Keys to Implementing the Affordable Care Act for Uninsured and Underinsured Asian Americans

by Jonathan Tran

Although the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) was signed into law two years ago, many provisions of the new health care reform law require state and federal action for full implementation. The most critical of these actions includes preparing for expanded coverage through existing public health programs like Medicaid and establishing the Health Benefit Exchange, a regulated, state-operated marketplace for consumers to purchase private health insurance. California has taken significant steps in implementing the ACA. For instance, it was the first state to create a decision-making body to establish an exchange. The state also established policies to help limited English proficient individuals navigate through the new health care reform law. In addition, California is a pilot state for the establishment of a “Bridge to Reform” program that will empower local counties to expand coverage for low-income individuals prior to the 2014 ACA implementation deadline.

This article will analyze the establishment of a “no wrong door” policy that has helped the Southeast Asian American (SEAA) population without insurance in California. The article will also provide policy recommendations on how California and other states may continue to move forward to improve access to care for historically medically underserved populations.

THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN CALIFORNIA

Nearly one-third of the 2.26 million refugees who have arrived in the United States since 1983 have been individuals escaping war and persecution in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the surrounding atrocities (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2008). As a result, Southeast Asian refugees constitute the largest group of refugees in the United States (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2007). Today, California is home to the largest Southeast Asian American population in the nation, numbering more than 900,000 individuals concentrated in communities throughout the state (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.).

As one of the more recent immigrant populations to resettle in the United States, SEAs face significant struggles that are often overlooked due to the prevalence of the model minority myth, the belief that all Asian Americans unfailingly succeed and

encounter no obstacles. As refugees, many came to the United States with little or no financial capital, few marketable job skills, and limited English language proficiency. In California, the impact of these barriers has resulted in:

- Lower educational attainment, with nearly 28.3 percent of Vietnamese, 36.8 percent of Laotians, 39.3 percent of Cambodians, and 42.7 percent of Hmong Californians having less than a high school diploma
- Higher percentages of the community living below the federal poverty line (FPL), with rates of 15.2 percent for Vietnamese, 17.3 percent for Laotians, 25.3 percent for Cambodians, and 33.2 percent for Hmong (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.)
- Lower levels of language proficiency as exemplified by the fact that 41 percent of Cambodian Americans speak English less than “very well” compared to only 8.7 percent of all Americans (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.; Southeast Asia Resource Action Center 2011)

These low levels of educational attainment, high levels of poverty, and limited English proficiency constrain employment options. This leads many SEAs into low-wage work that lacks benefits, especially health care. Consequently, nearly one in five SEAs is uninsured (Kaiser Family Foundation 2008) and a higher percentage of SEAs utilizes public health coverage than any other racial or ethnic group (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.).

As such, SEAs also represent a significant proportion of individuals who are eligible for California’s State Medicaid program (Medi-Cal) and the Children Health Insurance Program (Healthy Families). However, because of a lack of

information, language barriers, and unfamiliarity with existing enrollment structures, there are many who are not enrolled in these public health insurance programs. This type of under enrollment increases the amount of uncompensated care and reliance on expensive emergency care (Kaiser Commission on Key Facts 2008). Ultimately, the lack of coverage causes community members to delay necessary medical care and forego preventative care, which exacerbates the many health disparities and negative health outcomes that plague the SEAA community.

Many of the challenges that SEAs face are similar to the challenges that exist for other immigrant and low-income communities in California. Soon to be the country’s first “majority-minority” state (Anderson n.d.), California policy makers will encounter systemic challenges in trying to address the needs of a diverse population struggling with a multitude of structural, cultural, and linguistic barriers.

LOW-INCOME HEALTH PROGRAMS AS THE BRIDGE TO EXPANDED COVERAGE UNDER THE ACA

The ACA significantly expands coverage through existing public health programs. Beginning in 2014, more than two million non-elderly individuals in California will become eligible for the Medi-Cal program through the ACA (Pourat et al. 2011). Medicare benefits, previously applicable only to multiple-person households that earned below 100 percent of the poverty line, are extended under the ACA to include citizens and legal permanent residents who have lived in the United States for at least five years who earn less than 134 percent of the FPL. The significant expansion in

individuals eligible for coverage will allow low-income individuals to access basic health care, in turn lowering overall medical costs, reducing health disparities, and improving wellness. Although a large number of SEAs resettled in the United States as refugees nearly thirty years ago, continued immigration of family members since has resulted in newer immigrants, many of whom will not meet Medicaid's requirement of having lived in the United States for five years.

The potential to improve access to care is significant, but without purposeful and coordinated administrative changes to the enrollment and outreach processes, the SEA and other historically underserved communities will continue to under enroll in public health insurance programs.

In 2011, California began to prepare for the expansion of Medicaid coverage by integrating much of the "2014 newly eligible" population into the county-based Low-Income Health Program (LIHP) under the state's Medicaid 1115 waiver. Under a Medicaid waiver, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grants states flexibility in the implementation of their Medicaid program, allowing states to test new models and strategies to improve care. California's Medicaid 1115 waiver, entitled the "California Bridge to Reform," allows California counties to draw federal matching dollars to provide basic health coverage prior to 2014 to citizens and qualified immigrants within the 100 percent-to-133 percent range of the FPL who are presently ineligible for Medi-Cal (Western Center on Law & Poverty 2011). In a unique opportunity for participating counties, LIHP offers future eligible individuals a "bridge" to Medi-Cal before

the ACA's full implementation begins in 2014.

Participating counties are able to receive federal reimbursement for serving individuals who are already utilizing expensive, county-funded emergency care due to their lack of health insurance. By enrolling individuals well before the 2014 ACA implementation start date, LIHP could significantly increase access to care and help counties develop strategies for penetrating hard-to-reach communities. For SEA individuals and families without health insurance and near the FPL cutoff for eligibility, LIHP provides immediate relief.

Counties with large SEA populations including Orange, Los Angeles, and Santa Clara have moved forward with implementing the LIHP. In Los Angeles County, with the second-largest SEA population in the country (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.), the LIHP has been integrated into the county's existing "Healthy Way LA" program, which expands health coverage for Los Angeles County residents. The program began on 1 July 2011. In the course of only seven months, 28,481 new individuals had enrolled in the LIHP (Katz 2012).

Furthermore, Los Angeles engaged in a multilingual outreach campaign in Spanish, Mandarin, Korean, Tagalog, and Armenian that helped quadruple the rate of enrollment (Katz 2011). While outreach strategies would have been more effective if they were informed by community stakeholders, it is evident that coordinated efforts to engage eligible individuals can result in a significant impact. In addition to increased enrollment and coverage, the University of California Berkeley Labor Center reported that the implementation of

LIHP in Los Angeles County could “yield 3,200 jobs including 2,100 direct jobs in health care, 400 indirect jobs among suppliers, and 700 induced jobs among the local businesses where health care workers shop” (Lucia 2011).

Meanwhile, on 20 September 2011, Fresno County became the first county in California to withdraw its application for an LIHP. This decision by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors resulted in delaying implementation of the ACA until 2014 and bypassed an estimated \$56 million of matching federal funds over two years (Central California Legal Services 2011). Fresno remains the only county in California to refuse participation in an LIHP. This decision will not reduce the difficulties that the 31,000 Hmong in the county face in accessing care (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.); many will be forced to utilize emergency care as a primary source of medical care. Failure to develop a concrete plan to enroll eligible individuals into expanded Medi-Cal coverage will significantly hinder Fresno County’s ability to reach medically underserved populations.

To maximize the effectiveness of the ACA, early enrollment through programs such as the LIHP must be an integral part of the implementation strategy; such programs will afford policy makers with the time necessary to develop streamlined enrollment processes and outreach plans to ensure hard-to-reach communities are enrolled in the programs for which they are eligible.

THE EXCHANGE AND THE NO WRONG DOOR POLICY

The ACA also requires the establishment of a state-operated Health Benefit Exchange to serve as a centralized and regulated marketplace through which

consumers can enroll in existing public health insurance and purchase private health insurance. Starting in 2014, millions of individual Americans, families, and small businesses will use the Exchange as their primary entry point for obtaining affordable health insurance coverage. While the Exchanges will present a new way for Americans to access high-quality, affordable care, their success will depend on the degree to which families and individuals are able to enroll in coverage that meets their unique needs.

As mentioned earlier, California became the first state in the country to establish a decision-making body to create the California Health Benefit Exchange. With the Exchanges set to go online by 2014, California’s Exchange has adopted a consumer-focused approach that promises to be “accessible to all Californians, recognizing the diverse cultural, language, economic, educational and health status needs.” Despite being in its early stages of implementation, the California Exchange, in conjunction with several new policies, has made important strides in making health insurance accessible for hard-to-reach communities like those of SEAs.

The following sections profile issues that serve as measurements for the effective implementation of the ACA. It is important to note that even in a state like California additional steps must be taken to ensure that the Exchange is well-equipped to serve diverse communities.

Language Access and Consumer Assistance

With a strong emphasis on Internet technology, the California Exchange will be mostly online. This will present significant challenges for communities with limited English proficiency and with limited access to or skills in technology. In

California, language access is of great concern within the SEAA community: 41 percent of Cambodian Americans speak English less than “very well” with the number being 51 percent for Vietnamese Americans (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.).

Sufficient materials and support for limited English proficient community members are crucial to ensure that the Exchanges are accessible. If limited English proficient individuals cannot communicate with Exchanges and insurers, they likely will not receive crucial information about eligibility and enrollment or about how to access services or exercise their right to file complaints or appeals. This communication with Exchanges and insurers—prior to an individual even getting to a health care provider—is essential to ensuring that limited English proficient individuals can enroll and benefit from health care reform. To be truly effective, the Exchange must go beyond written materials and include oral communication as a vital part of reaching communities like SEAs since many community members are not literate even in their own language.

Additionally, Exchanges must provide consumer assistance tools and programs to allow consumers to find and enroll in coverage that meets their needs. The populations served will be diverse in terms of age, disability status, language spoken, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and geography. Certain groups, such as mixed-immigration status families and those with children, will be navigating multiple enrollment requirements in multiple programs. As such, many of these eligible persons and families will need significant assistance to ensure they are educated about their coverage options.

As a model for effective consumer assistance and language access, California moved forward with the establishment of an Office of the Patient Advocate (OPA) as required by California AB 922 in 2011. Prior to AB 922, consumers in California had multiple agencies charged with regulating health plans and accordingly taking consumer feedback and offering consumer assistance. This maze of government agencies made it difficult for consumers to issue complaints and seek out help in enrolling in health insurance plans. By creating a one-stop shop, OPA will play a vital role in developing educational materials about health coverage and consumers’ rights, collecting data on consumer complaints from relevant state agencies and analyzing that data for systemic problems, and producing training and referral protocols for local county and state offices.

Furthermore, AB 922 pays particular attention to the inclusion of community-based organizations (CBOs) in consumer assistance. Specifically, OPA will contract with local health consumer centers to provide on-the-ground assistance by culturally and linguistically skilled advocates to help consumers understand their options. Ethnic CBOs are uniquely equipped to meet the needs and demands of diverse populations as they have long-standing trust in the community. By investing in these CBOs to be partners in patient advocacy, policy makers can strategically utilize resources for coordinated outreach and assistance for historically medically underserved communities.

Enrollment

Making the Exchange the single entry point presents an opportunity to create an enrollment system with a “no wrong

door” approach so that even individuals and families without existing knowledge of the eligibility and enrollment mechanisms can gain access to the health insurance coverage that is most beneficial. For SEAA, this is important as it reduces the confusion and cumbersome process of filling out similar questions on multiple forms for multiple programs.

In the fall of 2011, California Governor Jerry Brown signed into law the Health Care Eligibility, Enrollment, and Retention Act (HCEERA) authored by Assemblymember Susan Bonilla. In an effort to create a no wrong door policy, this new law establishes a framework for coordination between health care service plans, consumer advocates, community stakeholders, and state and county public health coverage programs including Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, and the Exchange to create a singular streamlined application and enrollment process.

The new law requires that this application and enrollment process: (1) be standardized in paper, electronic, and telephone form; (2) include simple, user-friendly language and instruction; (3) be available in alternative formats and translations, including, but not limited to, Braille, large-font print, CD, audio recordings, and threshold languages, defined as languages spoken by at least 20,000 or more limited English proficient health consumers in California; and (4) include questions that are voluntary for applicants to answer regarding demographic data categories such as race, ethnicity, sex, primary language, and disability status (California State Senate Health Committee 2011). Beyond streamlining the traditionally difficult enrollment process, the HCEERA will significantly improve California’s ability to collect disaggregated ethnic health data on

smaller ethnic communities including many SEAA populations.

CONCLUSION

In their report published by the Public Policy Institute of California, Helen Lee and Shannon McConville (2011) refer to the “culture of coverage,” a new social norm in “which insurance is expected, maintained, and ultimately valued,” as a key element to the success of the ACA. California has taken significant strides to ensure that its policies are reflective of its diverse communities. These policies, if used as a model, will go a long way in ensuring that communities like the SEAA, which have endured health inequities and disparate access to care, have health coverage. However, policy and regulation changes alone cannot create this “culture of coverage.” Community members across the country must continue to serve as stakeholders in the implementation of the ACA.

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Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders: The Changing Demography of the United States and Implications for Education Policy

by Robert T. Teranishi and Tu-Lien Kim Nguyen

ABSTRACT:

As the nation's population grows and the demographic shifts, institutions of higher education must be more conscious of and responsive to these new realities relative to setting goals, priorities, and strategies for achieving higher rates of college participation and completion for all Americans. In order for the United States to adequately respond to the demands of the global economy and to maintain its standing as a global leader, it must increase opportunities for all Americans to pursue higher education. Focusing on the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) student population, this article highlights key findings from recent research by the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education. Specifically, we describe the growth and uniqueness of the AAPI population (nationally and in different sectors of education), discuss the need to expand opportunities and remove barriers at institutions that serve AAPI students, and provide recommendations for change in the education policy arena.

Targeted investments in higher education by policy makers are being coupled with the expectation that colleges and universities will educate and train skilled workers for the jobs of tomorrow (Goldrick-Rab et al. 2009). With a focus on making college more affordable and investing in institutions that disproportionately serve high concentrations of low-income students and students of color (e.g., community colleges and minority-serving institutions), a major policy strategy is to decrease long-standing disparities in college access and degree attainment. The participation of all Americans, including underrepresented racial minority groups, low-income students, immigrants, and language minorities, is essential to ensuring that the United States can lead the world in creativity, productivity, and achievement.

Within the context of expanding higher education opportunities, we draw attention to the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) student population and its role in meeting national priorities. Unfortunately, a considerable amount of what is known about the AAPI student population has been heavily influenced by stereotypes and false perceptions rather than by empirical evidence (Goldrick-Rab et al. 2009). The dominant narrative about AAPIs in higher education is that they are a model

••• *A considerable amount of what is known about the AAPI student population has been heavily influenced by stereotypes and false perceptions rather than by empirical evidence.*

minority—a racial group with disproportionately high levels of educational attainment—attending only the most selective four-year colleges and institutions and facing no challenges in attaining degrees. When referring to underrepresented or disadvantaged students, much of the policy and academic literature focuses largely on “non-Asian” minorities, often omitting AAPI students altogether. As a result, there is a dearth of knowledge about the demography of AAPI students, their educational trajectories, or their postsecondary outcomes. AAPIs are, in many ways, invisible in policy considerations not only at the federal, state, and local levels but in the development of campus services and programs as well (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2007; Lee and Kumashiro 2005).

The purpose of this article is to highlight key findings from recent research by the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE). This research demonstrates the needs, challenges, and experiences of AAPI students, particularly with regard to the wide range of social and institutional contexts in which they pursue their educational aspirations. Specifically, this article discusses the following trends relative to higher education:

- The growth and uniqueness of the AAPI population, nationally and within different sectors of education

- The need to expand opportunities and remove barriers at institutions that serve AAPI students
- Recommendations for change in the education policy arena

This article demonstrates the potential of a more accessible and equitable system of education, the importance of diversity as a major factor in our ability to compete in a global society, and the need for greater investment in institutions that serve low-income minority populations to expand opportunities and remove barriers.

EQUITY AND THE COLLEGE COMPLETION AGENDA

The college completion agenda is a response to the declining position in degree attainment among Americans relative to that of other nations. This decline occurs in the United States while every other developed nation shows increases in such attainment. As a result, the United States has fallen from first to tenth in international postsecondary completion rate rankings (Lumina Foundation for Education 2009). President Barack Obama has committed to ensuring that all Americans have the ability to pursue college and that the United States “regain its lost ground” and have the highest proportion of young adults with college degrees compared to other developed nations by 2020. The Lumina Foundation has its “Big Goal” of increasing the proportion of Americans

❖ *The dominant narrative about AAPIs in higher education is that they are a model minority—a racial group with disproportionately high levels of educational attainment—attending only the most selective four-year colleges and institutions.*

with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by the year 2025. The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems prepared a report in 2010 stating that, adjusting for population growth and educational attainment, the United States needs an additional eight million college degrees to close the gap for young adults aged twenty-five to thirty-four (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2007; Lee and Kumashiro 2005).

Improving educational attainment has benefits for both individuals and society as a whole (Lumina Foundation for Education 2009). For individuals, a postsecondary credential has become

continues to face many challenges associated with its historical vestiges of inequality and the demand for greater diversity. Thus, it is important to recognize the ways in which equity and diversity in higher education are confounding issues associated with the college completion agenda. The changing demography of our nation, which has as its fastest-growing groups people of color, immigrants, and English language learners, must be at the forefront of how we think about higher education and our nation's future more broadly. Making this poignant argument is U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who frequently describes education as “the Civil Rights

❖ *There is a dearth of knowledge about the demography of AAPI students, their educational trajectories, or their postsecondary outcomes.*

increasingly important in the labor market. Low-skilled jobs that historically did not require a postsecondary degree are disappearing and in their place are jobs requiring some postsecondary education; this is estimated to increase to 63 percent of jobs in this country over the next decade (Carnevale et al. 2010).

In addition to the college completion agenda, American higher education

issue of our generation.” Put another way, equity and social justice in education are an unfinished agenda, yet to be fully achieved.

Indeed, systemic political, social, and economic divisions have led to disproportionate gaps in educational attainment and workforce participation and ultimately to intergenerational patterns of poverty. A 2007 report prepared by the

Educational Testing Service suggests that inequalities linked to education could worsen with time, and “a looming question is whether we will continue to grow apart or, as a nation, we will invest in policies that will help us to grow together” (Kirsch et al. 2007). Building

Table 1 — Asian American Population Change, 1890 to 2010 (in thousands)

Year	Number	Percentage Change
1890	109	—
1930	265	143%
1970	1,539	481%
2010	15,214	889%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division.

on this point, we assert that the college completion agenda needs to be viewed in the context of a broader commitment by the higher education community to mitigate disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes for marginalized and vulnerable populations. What we do to rectify inequality in higher education is an essential and necessary component of the democratic mission of higher education as the nation’s demographics rapidly shift.

AAPIS AND THE CHANGING FACE OF THE UNITED STATES

AAPIs, along with other minority student populations, reflect the future of our nation. Our ability to realize a better, more effective system of higher education is dependent on how we integrate AAPIs and other minority populations into the college completion agenda. While the historical trends in the demography of the nation have been a remarkable story, the reshaping of the nation is projected to continue at a fast pace for decades to

come and will be a fundamentally different story than in the past. The release of the 2010 Census data demonstrates significant changes in the U.S. population. The total U.S. population more than doubled between 1950 and 2010, from 151 million to 309 million, which is a faster rate of growth than any other industrialized nation in the world.

Trends in actual and projected data on the AAPI population demonstrate that this group is a significant contributor to the growth of the United States as a whole. While the AAPI population was relatively small up to 1960, when the AAPI population was less than one million persons, it has been doubling in size nearly every decade since then. Growing at an exponential rate, the AAPI population reached more than fifteen million persons by 2010 (see Table 1). The growth in the population is anticipated to continue at a significant pace. Based on projections to 2050, this group is estimated to reach nearly forty million persons.

The remarkable growth of the AAPI population has been well-documented (Barringer et al. 1993), particularly following changes to immigration policy in 1965 and refugee policy in 1975 and 1980, which vastly increased the growth, diversity, and complexity of the AAPI population (Teranishi 2010). The AAPI population is unlike any major racial group with regard to its heterogeneity. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the AAPI racial category consists of forty-eight different ethnic groups that occupy positions along the full range of the socioeconomic spectrum, from the poor and underprivileged to the affluent and highly skilled. AAPIs also vary demographically with regard to language background, immigration history, culture, and religion.

Table 2 — AAPI Public K–12 and Undergraduate Enrollment, 1979–2019

Year	AAPI Public K–12 Enrollment	AAPI Undergraduate Enrollment
1979	650,000	235,000
1989	1,267,000	550,000
1999	1,892,000	913,000
2009	2,523,000	1,332,000
2019	3,140,000	1,698,000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division.

Consider that while a significant proportion of immigrants from Asia come to the United States already highly educated, others enter from countries that have provided only limited opportunities for educational and social mobility. Pacific Islanders, defined as people whose origins are from Polynesia, Micronesia, or Melanesia, are a diverse pan-ethnic group in themselves, whose histories include such challenges as the struggle for sovereignty. Yet, these and other very unique circumstances are often overshadowed by being grouped with Asian Americans. Thus, while the AAPI population represents a single entity in certain contexts, such as for interracial group comparisons, it is integral to understand the ways in which the demography of the population is made up of a complex set of social realities for individuals and communities that fall within this category.

Among the most significant trends in public K–12 enrollment is that students are increasingly diverse and non-White, which has profound implications for our education system. Between 1989 and 2009, for example, the share of the K–12 enrollment that was White decreased from 68 percent to 55 percent (Aud et al. 2011). These shifting demographics can

be attributed to significant increases among AAPIs and Latinos, who are also largely immigrants and English language learners. Public K–12 enrollment of AAPIs, for example, grew fourfold in the thirty-year period between 1979 and 2009 from 600,000 to 2.5 million (see Table 2). Enrollment projections show that this trend will continue through 2019. While the proportional representation of Whites and Blacks is projected to decrease by 4 percent each, Hispanics are projected to increase by 36 percent, AAPIs by 31 percent, and Native Americans by 13 percent (Hussar and Bailey 2011).

AAPI college enrollment grew fivefold between 1979 and 2009 from 235,000 to 1.3 million (U.S. Department of Education n.d.). And, while college enrollment is projected to increase for all racial groups, AAPIs will experience a particularly high proportional increase of 30 percent between 2009 and 2019. Given these trends, we assert that equity and diversity need to be at the heart of reform efforts in higher education.

AAPI COLLEGE PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

In this section, we deconstruct AAPI educational attainment, which is one of the most misunderstood education trends in the AAPI community. With the number of AAPI college students at its highest ever, and growing at one of the fastest rates of any major racial population in American higher education, it is necessary to dissect this student population (Teranishi 2010). We examine the trends, focusing on the differential rates of college participation that vary significantly among the population.

Access to higher education remains a significant challenge for many marginalized and vulnerable populations in

Table 3 – Educational Attainment Rates of AAPI Adults (25 Years or Older), 2006–2008

	Percentage Among College Attendees				
	Have Not Attended College	Some College, No Degree	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Advanced Degree
Asian American					
Asian Indian	20.4%	8.2%	5.0%	40.5%	46.3%
Filipino	23.8%	26.6%	15.4%	46.9%	11.1%
Japanese	27.8%	21.5%	14.4%	43.9%	20.2%
Korean	29.3%	18.1%	9.4%	46.8%	25.8%
Pakistani	30.2%	12.7%	8.1%	42.6%	36.5%
Chinese	34.5%	12.5%	8.5%	39.2%	39.7%
Thai	36.0%	20.7%	14.3%	40.9%	24.1%
Vietnamese	51.1%	33.7%	15.7%	34.3%	16.3%
Hmong	63.2%	47.5%	22.1%	25.2%	5.1%
Laotian	65.5%	46.5%	19.7%	26.6%	7.2%
Cambodian	65.8%	42.9%	20.7%	28.8%	7.6%
Pacific Islander					
Native Hawaiian	49.3%	50.0%	17.2%	22.7%	10.1%
Guamanian	53.0%	47.0%	20.6%	25.0%	7.5%
Samoan	56.8%	58.1%	20.2%	14.3%	7.4%
Tongan	57.9%	54.0%	15.0%	24.8%	6.2%

Source: American Community Survey, 3-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).

Table 4 – AAPI Undergraduate Enrollment, 1979–2019

	Public Two-Year		Public Four-Year	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1985	184,792	41.7%	185,421	41.8%
1995	345,303	44.6%	310,650	40.1%
2005	471,299	47.3%	383,166	38.4%

Source: IPEDS, U.S. Department of Education, Fall Enrollment Survey.

America. Consider the statistics for AAPI subgroups: 51.1 percent of Vietnamese, 63.2 percent of Hmong, 65.5 percent of Laotian, and 65.8 percent of Cambodian adults (twenty-five years or older) have not enrolled in or completed any postsecondary education (see Table 3). Similar trends can be found among Pacific Islanders with 49.3 percent of Native Hawaiian, 53 percent of Guamanian, 56.8 percent of Samoan, and 57.9 percent of Tongan adults not having enrolled in any form of postsecondary education.

In the context of the poor pipeline to higher education, there is a large sector of the AAPI population with very low rates of educational attainment at the levels of elementary and secondary education. For example, 34.3 percent of Laotian, 38.5 percent of Cambodian, and 39.6 percent of Hmong adults do not even have a high school diploma or equivalent (Teranishi 2010). In the Hmong community, nearly a third of the adults have less than a fourth-grade education. This data demonstrates that access is, indeed, an important issue for many AAPI subpopulations.

Among AAPI students who do attend college, it is important to note that they attend a range of postsecondary institutions, which presents a complex set of challenges to which higher education must respond (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education 2010). Research by CARE, for example, has found that the largest sector of AAPI college enrollment, at 47.3 percent, was in the community college sector in 2005 (see Table 4). While AAPIs made up less than five percent of the national population in 2007, they represented nearly 7 percent of all community college students. These trends are projected to continue with AAPI

enrollment at community colleges outpacing growth in all other sectors of higher education. Between 1990 and 2000, for example, AAPI community college enrollment increased by 73.3 percent, compared to an increase of 42.2 percent in the public four-year institutions (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education 2010).

AAPI community college students are also characteristically different from AAPI students in four-year institutions. Analysis of recent data on AAPI community college students shows that 62.9 percent enrolled as part-time students and 31.7 percent delayed matriculation by two years or more (from author analysis of data on National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education Web site). With an average age of 27.3 years, AAPI community college students also tend to be older than their AAPI counterparts at four-year institutions. These differences suggest that AAPIs at community colleges, compared to AAPI students at four-year institutions, are more likely to fit the characteristics of “nontraditional” students.

Compared to AAPIs at four-year institutions, AAPI community college students are also more likely to enter college with lower levels of academic preparation in English and mathematics. In 2003, 55.2 percent of AAPI students entering two-year colleges had never taken a math course beyond Algebra II in high school, compared to 12.7 percent of AAPI students entering four-year institutions in that same year (from author analysis of data on National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education Web site). With one in five needing remediation in English (Chang et al.

2007), AAPI students are also particularly vulnerable to policies and practices that relegate remedial English courses to two-year institutions. This data demonstrates that AAPI students in community colleges carry many “risk factors” that are correlated with lower rates of persistence and completion among two-year college students. This includes delayed enrollment, lack of a high school diploma (including GED recipients), part-time enrollment, having dependents other than spouse, single parent status, and working full time while enrolled (thirty-five hours or more per week).

Differential access to different types of institutions has a number of implications for the likelihood of degree attainment. Consider that less than one-third of all students who enter community college with the intention of earning a degree accomplish this goal in a six-year period (Berkner 2002). Significantly underfunded compared to their public four-year college counterparts, community colleges often lack the resources they need to support their student population, which is heavily made up of those who lack the academic skills needed to succeed in college, those without the resources to finance a college education, working adults, parents, English language learners, and first-generation college-goers.

Because some AAPI subgroups are more likely to enroll in community colleges and less selective institutions, there are significant differences in degree attainment rates within the AAPI student population. Consider, for example, that while more than four out of five East Asians (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) and South Asians (Asian Indian and Pakistani) who entered college earned at least a bachelor’s degree, large proportions of other AAPI subgroups are

attending college but not earning a degree. Among Southeast Asians, 33.7 percent of Vietnamese, 42.9 percent of Cambodians, 46.5 percent of Laotians, and 47.5 percent of Hmong adults (twenty-five years or older) reported having attended college but not earning a degree. Similar to Southeast Asians, Pacific Islanders have a very high proportion of attrition during college. Among Pacific Islanders, 47 percent of Guamanians, 50 percent of Native Hawaiians, 54 percent of Tongans, and 58.1 percent of Samoans entered college but left without earning a degree. Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders also had a higher proportion of their college attendees who had an associate’s degree as their highest level of education, while East Asians and South Asians were more likely to have a bachelor’s degree or advanced degree (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

This data represents the significant challenges that exist among marginalized and vulnerable groups of AAPI students and demonstrates why AAPIs are relevant to the college completion agenda. These populations need to be targeted in the institutions they attend, and these institutions need to be responsive to their unique needs and challenges that are contributing to their high rates of attrition and low completion rates during college. The Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) federal program, initially authorized by the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007, is structured as a competitive grant process for institutions with at least a 10 percent enrollment of AAPI students, a minimum threshold of low-income students, and lower than average educational and general expenditures per student (similar

to requirements for Hispanic-serving institutions (Santiago 2006). As of 2011, there were fifty-two institutions with the AANAPISI designation, twenty-one of which have received funding. The AANAPISI program, one of the most significant investments ever made for the AAPI college student population by the federal government, is notable for at least three reasons: First, it acknowledges the unique challenges facing AAPI students in college access and completion. Second, the AANAPISI designation represents a significant commitment of much-needed resources to improving the postsecondary completion rates among AAPI and low-income students. Third, it acknowledges how campus settings can be mutable points of intervention—sites of possibilities for responding to the impediments AAPI students encounter.

Analysis of Title IV degree-granting institutions reveals that the first fifteen funded AANAPISIs had a large range of proportional representation of AAPI undergraduate enrollment (11.5 percent to 90.9 percent) in 2009, and together they enrolled nearly one in ten AAPI undergraduates nationally. This is in sharp contrast to their enrollment of 1.5 percent of the nation's total undergraduate population. In sheer numbers, AANAPISIs are enrolling and conferring degrees to a significant number of AAPI students. In 2009, for example, these fifteen institutions enrolled nearly 89,000 AAPI undergraduates and awarded nearly 9,500 associate's and bachelor's degrees to AAPI students (U.S. Department of Education n.d.).

AANAPISIs are able to target much-needed resources to respond to the unique needs and challenges of AAPI students attending these institutions. The 2010 CARE report on analysis of the 2008

American Community Survey data found that the neighborhoods served by the University of Hawai'i at Hilo had an average poverty rate for Pacific Islanders that was 20.1 percent—nearly twice the national poverty rate of 12.4 percent. In the neighborhoods served by South Seattle Community College, 57.8 percent of Asian Americans and 70.8 percent of Pacific Islanders had a high school diploma or less. These results are consistent with other research that has found that the institutions that met the criteria for AANAPISI funding enrolled 75 percent of the low-income AAPI students in U.S. higher education in 2007 (Dortch 2009).

Other analysis conducted by CARE has found that large proportions of AAPI students attending AANAPISIs are arriving on campuses underprepared for college-level work, often as a result of growing up in poverty, attending low-performing schools, and being the first in their families to attend college (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education 2008; Olsen 1997; Um 2003). At De Anza Community College, for example, AAPI students account for more than half of students enrolled in remedial English and other basic skills classes. At Guam Community College, more than 80 percent of the students were eligible for financial aid, and 58 percent of the students were older than the traditional college age (eighteen to twenty-two years old). The AANAPISI program not only represents a significant commitment to the AAPI community, it also provides much-needed resources to respond to specific needs that impact college access and success for AAPI students.

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

The changing demography of our nation means that our system of higher education must realize a fundamentally different approach to teaching, learning, and student support. This article demonstrates the relevance of AAPI students to America's college completion agenda and acknowledges the urgency to ensure that AAPI students have an opportunity to fully participate in the twenty-first century workplace. While the national college completion agenda is largely focused on reaching a numerical goal, which is important in the context of the growing AAPI student population, we believe that there are additional higher education priorities that should not fall by the wayside. To further a college completion agenda that keeps the needs of AAPI students in mind and brings our national higher education priorities into the twenty-first century, higher education policy makers and practitioners need to be mindful of the significant disparities that exist with regard to educational access and attainment. For AAPI students, gaps in college participation and degree attainment are often concealed by comparisons between AAPIs and other racial groups and more of an issue between AAPI subgroups, many of which are being overlooked and underserved.

We believe that there is a great deal of untapped potential in higher education; this is true of AAPI students and minority student populations as a whole. While working toward degree attainment goals, colleges and universities should be more mindful of and responsive to the needs of their diverse student populations. This is particularly an issue for institutions serving large concentrations of AAPIs and other students of color but also for

institutions with lower representation of minority student populations.

Finally, with globalization as a mantra in the college completion agenda, it is important to look at the advantages of diversity in American society, a demographic reality unique to the United States. Working toward a diverse democracy is critical in the context of the changing demography of our nation. We need to realize the potential of diversity and recognize it as an asset as opposed to a deficit.

A critical step toward broadening awareness about and being more responsive to these goals is having more applied research. This is not only important to the AAPI community but also to higher education as a whole as the demography of our nation continues to evolve. While research in itself cannot fulfill this goal, it is an essential and necessary first step toward expanding knowledge and broadening awareness about the needs and challenges of the emerging minority-majority. Future research can advance new perspectives on AAPI students in the higher education field and further demonstrate the importance of targeted investments in the community.

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Asian Americans, Glass Ceilings, and PhDs

by Linus Yamane

ABSTRACT:

Analyzing 2000 U.S. Census Public Use Microdata Sample data, East/Southeast Asian American men with PhDs are estimated to earn 3 percent to 5 percent less than comparable non-Hispanic White American men with PhDs and appear to be 32.7 percent less likely to be promoted into managerial positions. Asian American women with PhDs have earnings that are comparable to those of non-Hispanic White American women with PhDs but earn significantly less than non-Hispanic White American men with PhDs. East/Southeast Asian American women appear to be 31 percent less likely to be promoted into managerial positions than comparable non-Hispanic White American women and 41.2 percent less likely than non-Hispanic White American men. Controls were included for weeks and hours worked, experience, occupation, industry, language ability, age of immigration, disability status, marital status, and region of residence.

Wen Chen¹ was born in China but grew up in Taiwan. He did his undergraduate work at National Cheng Kung University and went to Canada to complete his doctorate in electrical engineering at the University of Manitoba. After teaching at Columbia University for several years, he became a research staff member at the IBM Watson Research Center. While at IBM, Chen designed 1 GB RAM chips before people had 1 GB hard drives. He published more than a hundred technical papers and held more than a hundred international patents. But after eighteen years at IBM, he felt himself bumping against a glass ceiling. So he returned to Taiwan and joined the faculty of National Chiao Tung University. There he quickly became senior vice president and then acting president of the university.

The example of Wen Chen informs this study of Asian Americans and labor market discrimination. The article will examine the experiences of Asian Americans, not by looking at all Asian Americans but by focusing on Asian Americans with PhDs. Asian Americans are known to value education, but only 3 percent of Asian Americans go so far as to obtain doctorates. These Asian Americans end up at an extreme end of the labor market. The factors that affect all Asian Americans may become magnified at the extreme ends of the labor market, particularly if there are glass-ceiling issues.

Some geologists have observed that we can learn more about earthquakes by studying one large earthquake rather than a dozen small ones (Aki 1981). As well, economists have advised that we can learn more about business cycles by studying the Great

Depression rather than a dozen small recessions (Bernanke 2000; Temin 1989). Both groups believe that the nature of various phenomena can become magnified in extreme cases. Thus, we will try to learn something about all Asian Americans by looking at the most highly educated Asian Americans.

These findings show that Asian American men with PhDs earn less than comparable non-Hispanic White men with PhDs. The study makes a distinction between South Asians and East/Southeast Asians and finds that East/Southeast Asians experience more discrimination. The evidence also shows that Asian Americans are much less likely to hold managerial positions than comparable non-Hispanic Whites. Being Asian will reduce the chance of holding a managerial position by 26 percent to 29 percent. The estimates of this study may be biased downward by the effect of return migration to Asia. These results are broadly consistent with previous results published in literature by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1988) and Marlene Kim and Don Mar (2007), suggesting very little has changed over the past two decades.

BACKGROUND

While Asian Americans are known for valuing education,² the actual levels of educational attainment are quite varied. The community tends to be overrepresented at the extremes. While Asian Americans are more likely than non-Hispanic White Americans to have a bachelor's degree or higher (44.1 percent versus 26.1 percent), they are also more likely to have less than a high school education (19.6 percent versus 16.4 percent) (Bauman and Graf 2003). At the doctorate level, approximately 1 percent

of non-Hispanic Whites and 3 percent of Asian Americans have PhDs.

Using 2000 U.S. Census Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data, Asian Americans are disaggregated across ethnic groups and levels of higher education in Table 1. The table is limited to the twelve Asian American ethnic groups with populations of more than 100,000 because of sample-size issues. Despite combining the 5 percent and 1 percent PUMS files from the 2000 Census, the sample sizes for other Asian ethnic groups were too small, as was the number of individuals who seek PhDs, to make precise estimates regarding these smaller ethnic groups.

The percentage of Asian Americans in each ethnic group between the ages of twenty-five and sixty-four who have a bachelor's degree, master's degree, professional degree (PRO), or doctorate appears in Table 1. A professional degree might be from a law, medical, business, art, architecture, seminary, or social work school. These degrees prepare the individual for a particular career or profession, not scholarly research or academic activity.

Even though many Asian Americans obtain significant levels of education, the data in Table 1 shows that there is an enormous range in the educational attainment of specific ethnic groups. While almost 70 percent of Taiwanese have at least a bachelor's degree, more than 90 percent of Laotians have less than a bachelor's degree. In the Asian American community, the Taiwanese and the Indians are most likely to have at least a BA. Eight of the twelve Asian ethnic groups are more educated than non-Hispanic White Americans, however, the Vietnamese, Cambodians, Hmong,

Table 1 — Asian Americans and Higher Education

Table 1 — Asian Americans and Higher Education															
%	BA+			PhD			PRO			MA			BA		
	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F
Taiwanese	69.5	78.7	61.4	7.6	13.5	2.5	5.8	8.5	3.6	24.3	28.2	20.9	31.7	28.5	34.5
Indian	65.8	70.9	59.8	4.9	6.8	2.7	8.0	8.7	7.1	22.4	26.1	18.0	30.6	29.3	32.1
Pakistani	54.8	59.6	48.1	2.0	2.6	1.2	9.6	11.3	7.1	14.3	17.0	10.6	28.9	28.7	29.2
Chinese	51.4	55.0	48.1	5.6	8.7	2.9	3.7	4.3	3.3	16.1	18.2	14.3	25.9	23.8	27.7
Japanese	50.7	56.2	46.2	2.3	3.6	1.2	3.4	4.6	2.4	10.0	11.0	9.2	35.0	37.0	33.4
Korean	46.3	55.6	39.6	2.4	4.3	1.1	3.3	4.7	2.2	9.6	13.3	6.9	31.0	33.3	29.4
Filipino	45.9	41.9	48.8	0.6	0.6	0.5	3.5	3.8	3.3	3.7	3.5	3.8	38.2	34.0	41.2
Thai	38.2	47.8	33.2	1.1	1.9	0.7	3.1	4.7	2.3	11.2	13.8	9.8	22.8	27.4	20.4
NHW	28.0	28.8	27.2	1.0	1.4	0.7	2.1	2.7	1.6	6.9	6.6	7.0	18.0	18.1	17.9
Vietnamese	20.3	23.3	17.4	0.5	0.7	0.4	1.8	2.0	1.6	2.8	3.5	2.0	15.3	17.1	13.4
Cambodian	9.6	12.3	7.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.7	0.2	1.9	2.3	1.5	7.2	9.1	5.5
Hmong	8.3	10.5	6.0	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.8	1.0	0.6	6.9	8.7	5.1
Laotian	7.0	7.1	7.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.8	0.9	0.8	5.8	5.7	5.9

The figures are percentages for each group between the ages of 25 and 64.

“All” means men and women, “M” means males, and “F” means females.

NHW means “Non-Hispanic White.”

“BA+” means bachelor’s degree or more.

The Asian American percentages were estimated from the combined 5% and 1% PUMS files from the 2000 Census. The NHW percentages were estimated from the 5% PUMS files from the 2000 Census.

and Laotians lag behind non-Hispanic White Americans and other Asian Americans in their level of educational attainment.

Koreans and Filipinos are almost equally likely to have at least a BA, but Koreans are much more likely to continue with their education and to have an MA or a PhD than Filipinos. On the other hand, Filipinos have an edge on professional degrees. This can be accounted for by the immigration of Filipino health care workers. More than 50 percent of Filipinos with professional degrees are foreign-born Filipinos who work in health care.

Educational attainment figures are also separated for men and women. There are significant gender differences in educational attainment for the Asian ethnic groups, much more so than for non-Hispanic White men and women. Among the Asian ethnic groups, the men are generally more educated than the women. In the one exception, Filipina women are more educated than Filipino men.

The study notes that all ethnic groups, both males and females, have more professional degrees than PhDs except for Chinese and Taiwanese males. An astonishing 20 percent of thirty-six-year-old foreign-born Chinese American males

had doctorates in 1999, along with 20 percent of Taiwanese American men in their 50s.³ The Chinese and Taiwanese are more likely to have PhDs than any other Asian American ethnic group.

ASIAN AMERICAN PHDS

The 2000 Census PUMS indicates approximately 154,000 Asian Americans between the ages of twenty-five and sixty-four have PhDs. The Chinese and Indians make up the lion's share—72.4 percent—of Asian Americans with PhDs. Adding in the Koreans and the Japanese brings the number to 87.7 percent. Including the Filipinos and Taiwanese, the number is more than 94.8 percent. And adding in the Vietnamese and Pakistanis will bring the number to more than 97.8 percent. For an earlier analysis of Asian American scientists and engineers, see work by Paul Ong and Evelyn Blumenberg (1994).

Some summary statistics on Asian Americans with doctorates are presented in Table 2. According to the data, men are earning approximately 60 percent more than women overall. The average male PhD earns about \$72,000, and the average female PhD earns about \$44,000. On an hourly basis, men earn approximately 40 percent more than women overall. White PhDs earn more than the Asian PhDs by 6 percent for men and 10 percent for women. It should be noted that these averages are for all PhDs, including those who are only working part time and/or just part of the year.

Several possible explanations for the differences immediately come to mind. Asian American PhDs reported working fewer hours and fewer weeks during the year than the White PhDs. As such, the hourly wage for Asian men is 3.9 percent less than for White men, yet the hourly

wage for Asian women is 2.2 percent higher than for White women. The Asian American PhDs, who are generally foreign-born and nonnative English speakers, are about six years younger than the White PhDs. About a third of all Asian Americans are native-born, but only 7 percent of Asian Americans with PhDs are native-born. The Asian Americans are also more likely to be married and to have more kids. It's worth noting that Asian Americans are much less likely to hold managerial positions and more likely to hold professional positions. This issue will be addressed more carefully later.

The distribution of Asian and White PhDs across industries is somewhat similar with a majority of the degree holders working in education services and professional services.⁴ Asians, however, are disproportionately overrepresented in durables manufacturing (computer, peripheral equipment, electronic component, and product manufacturing), nondurables manufacturing (pharmaceuticals and medicine manufacturing), information (wired telecommunications carriers), and professional services (scientific research and development services). Asians are underrepresented in education services (colleges and universities, including junior colleges) and public administration.

The regional distribution is also somewhat similar. In 2000, all Asian Americans were most likely to live in the states of California (36.1 percent), New York (10.2 percent), Texas (5.5 percent), and Hawaii (4.9 percent). However, Asian Americans with PhDs were most likely to live in California (25 percent), New Jersey (7.7 percent), New York (7.3 percent), and Texas (6.1 percent). Only 1 percent of Asian Americans with PhDs lived in Hawaii. Thus, the distribution of Asian

Table 2 — Summary Statistics for PhDs by Race and Gender

2000	Asian Men	White Men	Asian Women	White Women
Income	\$68,296	\$72,387	\$41,066	\$44,992
	(61424)	(70496)	(39142)	(44103)
Hourly Wage	\$34.45	\$35.79	\$26.18	\$25.62
	(34.82)	(62.15)	(30.41)	(35.32)
Hours	42.59	44.62	36.19	38.92
Weeks	46.09	46.31	39.74	42.53
Manager %	14.01	18.95	8.91	15.67
Professional %	79.33	72.41	76.61	74.31
Age	42.97	48.607	40.01	46.48
	(9.63)	(9.54)	(8.91)	(9.53)
Native-Born %	6.05	85.52	10.07	87.33
Age at	25.56	3.92	23.43	3.22
Immigration*	(10.16)	(10.61)	(11.65)	(9.48)
Lang. Ability†	1.16	0.16	1.07	0.16
	(0.65)	(0.46)	(0.72)	(0.45)
Married %	86.69	78.47	75.63	63.64
Kids	0.86	0.70	0.72	0.55
NOBS	6,615	42,381	2,471	20,877

Standard deviations are in parentheses.

* Age at immigration is 0 if native-born.

†Lang. ability: 0 means only speaks English, 5 means does not speak English at all.

Manager is defined as three-digit census occupation codes 001–099.

NOBS includes all observations.

Americans with PhDs is not as skewed to a few states as the distribution of all Asian Americans.

LABOR MARKET DISCRIMINATION

Labor market discrimination exists when workers who have identical productive characteristics are treated differently because of their race or gender. The two prominent forms of current labor market discrimination are wage discrimination and occupational discrimination. Wage discrimination occurs when two equally skilled groups of workers doing exactly

the same job under the same working conditions are paid different wages. Occupational discrimination occurs when two equally skilled groups of workers are given different access to certain higher-paying positions.

Wage Discrimination

Asian American men earn about 6 percent less annually and 3.9 percent less hourly than non-Hispanic White men. The differences may be caused by discrimination and/or differences in average levels of productive

characteristics. Asian women earn less on average than White women, approximately 10 percent less. Furthermore, Asian women earn 60 percent less than White men.

To investigate racial and gender discrimination, this study uses the Oaxaca decomposition, which is the standard tool of economists when analyzing similar topics.⁵ First, the study examines the data on human capital and other characteristics that are theoretically relevant to the determination of wages. These include age, education, experience, hours of work, region of residence, industry, occupation, age at immigration, language ability, number of children, and marital status for both Asian Americans and non-Hispanic White Americans. Then, empirical estimates are made on how each of these characteristics contributes to the earnings of non-Hispanic White Americans. Having measured the levels of the productive characteristics typically possessed by Asian Americans, and having estimated how these characteristics contribute to the earnings of non-Hispanic White Americans, estimates can be made on how much Asian Americans would earn if they were treated in the labor market like non-Hispanic White Americans. The difference between their predicted earnings if White and their actual earnings as Asian is this study's measure of current labor market discrimination.⁶

For estimating the wage functions, the sample was restricted to people working full time (thirty-five hours or more per week) for more than half of 1999. It is assumed that this sample group has strong attachments to the labor force. Individuals included were between the ages of twenty-five and sixty-four who were not self-employed and reported

earnings of at least \$4,500 in 1999. Since the minimum wage in 1999 was \$5.15, everyone in the sample should have earned at least this much.

These restrictions yielded a smaller sample size with 5,407 Asian men, 1,665 Asian women, 31,812 non-Hispanic White men, and 13,662 non-Hispanic White women. These new subsamples contain about 81.7 percent of the Asian men and 75.1 percent of the White men, but only 67.4 percent of the Asian women and 65.4 percent of the White women in the data set. The data shows that Asians with PhDs are more strongly attached to the labor market than Whites with PhDs.

If the decision to work full time is not random with respect to the stochastic error in the wage equation, ordinary least squares regression will give biased estimates of the wage function coefficients. Since this is likely to be a problem with the female wage equations, the James Heckman (1979) selectivity bias correction is used on the female wage equations. A probit equation is estimated to model whether or not an individual is in the sample, and the inverse Mills ratio is included in the wage equation. When the estimates are controlled for selectivity bias, the average wage differential can be decomposed into a portion due to differences in average selectivity bias, a portion due to differences in average skills, and a portion due to discrimination. The differences in average selectivity bias may also be decomposed further, a part of which may be interpreted as due to discrimination. Since the appropriate interpretation is unclear, this article will not try to interpret the selectivity bias differences.

The dependent variable in these regressions is the log of annual wages and

salaries. All the coefficient estimates were of the expected sign, and most were statistically significant at the 5 percent level. People who work more weeks and longer hours earn more. There are positive returns to experience (age). There is a penalty for being disabled, having language difficulty,⁷ and living in a rural area. Asians who immigrated at a younger age tend to have higher earnings. Married men and married White women have higher earnings.⁸ Having more children is associated with higher earnings for everyone. These regressions were run with controls for class of worker, six regions of residence, seventeen industries, and thirteen occupations.

In this analysis, all doctorates were treated as equivalent in terms of earnings potential, regardless of the field of the degree or the quality of the university from which the degree was granted. However, the potential earnings are probably higher for people with doctorates in life sciences, physical sciences, and engineering. And almost 70 percent of doctorates earned by Asian Americans are in the life sciences, physical sciences, and engineering, far above the average for other ethnic groups (Woo 2000). One-fifth of all U.S. doctorates awarded in these fields goes to persons of Asian heritage, and Asian Americans are three times more likely to be scientists or engineers than the average American (Lawler 2000). By using industry controls in the regressions, the study captures some of these differences, however, the study likely biases results against finding any discrimination by treating all doctorates as equivalent.

Using the wage regression estimates, the study can then estimate the amount of current labor market wage discrimination faced by Asian Americans. The estimates

appear in Table 3. From the regression results, Asian American men earn 2 percent less than comparable non-Hispanic White men. These differences were significant at the 5 percent level. For Asian women, their earnings are comparable to White women,⁹ although they are found to earn 15 percent less than comparable White men.

One partial explanation for the earnings gap may be the measure of labor market experience. The study assumes that individuals acquire the same amount of labor force experience each year after completing their education and that they complete their education at roughly the same age. But since Asian women have labor force participation rates¹⁰ around 67.4 percent and White men have labor force participation rates around 75.1 percent, the study may be overestimating the amount of labor force experience Asian women have relative to the White men. Assuming that all White men are in the labor force 75.1 percent of the time and that all Asian women are in the labor force 67.4 percent of the time, then in an average year, the typical working White man would get 11.4 percent¹¹ more labor market experience than the typical working Asian woman. Therefore, the study reduced all the experience measures for the Asian women by 11.4 percent and reestimated the wage gaps. Doing so reduces all the wage gaps by approximately 2 percentage points. Thus, rather than earning 15 percent less than comparable White men, Asian women earn 13.3 percent less than comparable White men.

It is worth noting that labor force participation rates are higher for Asian men than White men, 81.7 percent versus 75.1 percent. Applying the same rationale from above, Asian men gain approximately 8.8 percent more labor market

Table 3 — Wage Discrimination

All Asians	Asian Men/ White Men	Asian Women/ White Women	Asian Women/ White Men
Actual Annual Wage	\$62,140	\$46,627	\$46,627
Predicted Annual Wage	\$63,325	\$46,205	\$55,161
Relative Wage	98.11¢	100.91¢	84.53¢
East/Southeast Asians	East Asian Men/ White Men	East Asian Women/ White Women	East Asian Women/ White Men
Actual Annual Wage	\$59,548	\$46,993	\$46,993
Predicted Annual Wage	\$61,572	\$46,499	\$55,185
Relative Wage	96.66¢	101.06¢	85.16¢
South Asians	South Asian Men/ White Men	South Asian Women/ White Women	South Asian Women/ White Men
Actual Annual Wage	\$68,465	\$45,548	\$45,548
Predicted Annual Wage	\$67,501	\$45,338	\$55,091
Relative Wage	101.42¢	100.46¢	82.68¢

The dollar figures are anti-logs of the predicted values.

experience each year than White men. After adjusting for this factor, the amount of discrimination faced by Asian men increases from 2 percent to 4 percent.

This study explores the issue of wage discrimination further by separating out the different Asian ethnic groups; this surfaced a difference in the experience of East/Southeast Asians and South Asians. While East/Southeast Asian men earn 3 percent less than comparable White men, the earnings of South Asian men are comparable to those of White men. Both East Asian and South Asian women have earnings that are comparable to that of White women. But they earn 14.8 percent and 17.3 percent less than comparable White men, respectively. After adjusting for differences in labor force participation rates, the earnings gap with respect to White men falls by about 2 percentage points. The gaps become 12.6 percent and

15.6 percent, respectively. Thus most of the gaps remain.

GLASS CEILINGS

In addition to being paid less for doing the same work, Asian Americans may be less likely to be promoted on the job. Asian Americans may be denied equal access to the higher rungs of the managerial or corporate ladder. To the extent that such discrimination exists, Asian Americans may be excluded from spheres of power and influence along with the associated money earnings.

Probit¹² models were estimated to explain the factors that affect the probability of someone being a manager. The study included controls for years of experience (age), disability status, marital status, rural area, language ability, age at immigration, number of kids, and whether or not the person is Asian. Furthermore, controls for industry and

Table 4 — Probability of Being a Manager

Asian Men/White Men	Asian Women/White Women	Asian Women/White Men
12.04% (16.30%)	7.39% (10.36%)	7.39% (12.08%)
South Asian Men/White Men	South Asian Women/ White Women	South Asian Women/ White Men
14.96% (17.37%)	7.69% (9.45%)	7.69% (11.56%)
East Asian Men/White Men	East Asian Women/ White Women	East Asian Women/ White Men
10.76% (15.98%)	7.29% (10.56%)	7.29% (12.40%)

Shows the actual percentage who are managers (census three-digit occupation codes 001–049) and the predicted percentage if the Asians were treated as White and/or male in parentheses.

All differences are statistically significant at the 5% level except for South Asian women relative to White women.

East Asian includes East Asians and Southeast Asians.

region of residence were included because the percentage of the labor force in managerial positions may differ by industry and region for reasons independent of race.

For Asian women and White women, probit models were estimated with sample selection.¹³ All the coefficients were generally of the expected sign and statistically significant. A woman is less likely to be a manager if she is younger, is disabled, is not married, or has limited language ability. Having more kids decreases the probability that a man will be a manager but seems not to impact women. Being Asian also decreases the probability of being a manager.

If Asian men were White, their probability of being a manager would increase by 4.26¹⁴ percentage points, increasing the overall probability of being a manager by about 35.4 percent. If Asian women were White, their probability of being a manager would increase by about 3 percentage points, increasing the overall probability of being a manager by 40.2 percent. And if Asian women were White and male, their probability of being a

manager would increase by 4.7 percentage points, increasing the overall probability of being a manager by 63.5 percent. Thus Asian men and Asian women are much less likely to hold managerial positions than non-Hispanic White PhDs with similar characteristics. See Table 4.

The study tested to see if South Asians had the same experience with the glass ceiling as East/Southeast Asians and found the glass ceiling for East/Southeast Asians to be stronger. East Asian men see about a 5.2 percentage point drop in the probability of being a manager relative to White men, reducing the overall probability by 32.7 percent. South Asian men see about a 2.4 percentage point drop in the probability of being a manager, reducing the overall probability by 13.9 percent. South Asian women and White women have similar probabilities of being a manager. But East/Southeast Asian women see a 3.3 percentage point drop in the probability of being a manager relative to similar White women, a decline in the probability of approximately 31 percent. Relative to White men, South Asian women were 3.9 percentage points, or 33.5 percent, less likely to be a

manager. And East/Southeast Asian women were 5.1 percentage points, or 41.2 percent, less likely to be a manager than similar White men. Thus while all Asians seem to encounter a glass ceiling, East/Southeast Asians seem to encounter a stronger glass ceiling than South Asians.

RETURN MIGRATION

The final issue to be considered is that of return migration. Masao Suzuki (1995) raised this issue in his discussion of the economic status of Japanese Americans in the 1920s. He found that Japanese Americans who were not doing well economically were more likely to return to Japan. Thus, an examination of the economic status of Japanese who remained in the United States gives us a biased measure of the actual experience of Japanese Americans.

Similarly, many foreign-born Asian Americans with PhDs return to Asia. Of all the temporary residents from Asia who received doctorates in science¹⁵ and engineering in the United States in 1998, 32 percent had returned to Asia within five years (Finn 2005). There were significant differences by country of origin. Immigrants from Japan and South Korea were much more likely to return than immigrants from China and India.

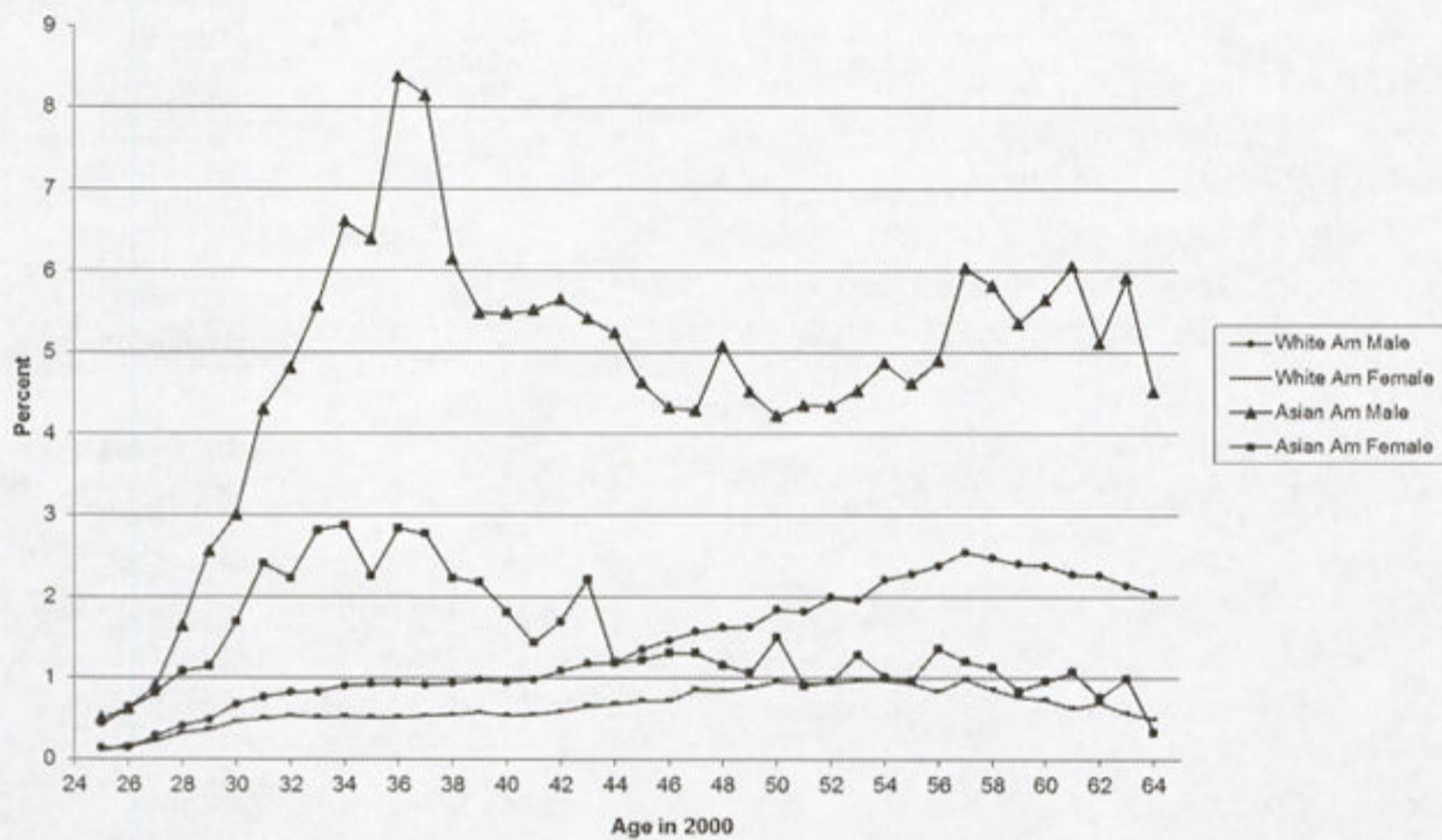
Consequently, the age profile of Asian American PhDs looks very different from the age profile of non-Hispanic White PhDs (see Figure 1). Data on the percentage of PhDs for every age from twenty-five to sixty-four in 1999 shows that Asian Americans are three times more likely to have a PhD than non-Hispanic Whites. The percentage of Whites with PhDs rises with age until the age of fifty-seven. The older a person is, the more time he or she has had to complete the dissertation. And since education is something that cannot

be taken away from a person, the peak in the number of PhDs at the age of fifty-seven is probably the result of the 1944 G.I. Bill, which sent increasing numbers of Americans into higher education. The percentage of Asian Americans with PhDs rises dramatically with age, but after the age of thirty-five or so, there is a sharp decline. This may be partly the result of increasing numbers of Asian Americans pursuing doctorates over time. But it is also the result of Asian Americans returning to Asia later in their careers.

There is also an unusual pattern for middle-aged Asian Americans. The percentage of Asian males with PhDs between the ages of thirty-eight and fifty-seven is lower than expected given the percentages of Asian males with PhDs at age thirty-five and at age sixty. The same is true, though to a smaller extent, for Asian females with PhDs. This gap can be accounted for by the Great Cultural Revolution in China from 1966 to 1976. There was a purging of “imperialistic intellectuals,” university presidents, and other prominent intellectuals during this period. So the percentage of Chinese immigrants who would obtain doctorates declined rapidly after 1966 and did not fully recover until about 1986. The number of Asian American doctorates “lost” to the Cultural Revolution appears to be around 15,000 to 20,000.¹⁶ This is 10 percent to 13 percent of all Asian Americans with PhDs.

Since the census data provides information on the Asian Americans who did not return to Asia and nothing about those who did return, the estimates of discrimination may be biased. The direction of the bias depends on the nature of the differences between the Asian Americans

Figure 1 — Percent Holding Ph.D.s by Age



who remain in the United States and those who return to Asia.

The very best scholars and researchers may hesitate to return to Asia. The research culture in the United States may be more conducive for doing first-rate scholarship. For example, the number of Nobel prizes (outside of peace and literature) won by the United States dwarfs the number won by Asian countries. Furthermore, the majority of the Nobel prizes won by Asian countries are actually for research done in the United States. Thus, the top scientists might prefer to stay in the United States and those who are less likely to find decent, permanent positions or tenure here in the United States may be more likely to return to Asia early in their careers. The most qualified scholars and researchers may return to Asia closer to the end of their careers to take senior administrative positions as was the case for Wen Chen, the example individual with whom this article opened. This would bias our estimates of discrimination downward.

CONCLUSION

Using 2000 Census PUMS data, the evidence on labor market discrimination is very consistent with the experience of Wen Chen and the earlier literature. This data allows the study to control for age, language ability, and the age at immigration if the person is not native-born. The evidence shows that East/Southeast Asian men earn 3 percent to 5 percent less than comparable White men with PhDs and are 32.7 percent less likely to be promoted into managerial positions. Asian American women have earnings that are comparable to those of White women but earn significantly less than White men. East/Southeast Asian women are 31 percent less likely to be promoted into managerial positions than comparable White women and 41.2 percent less likely than comparable White men. All of these estimates may be biased downward because the study does not fully control for the field of the doctorate and because of the theory that the less qualified Asian

American PhDs return more quickly to Asia during the course of their career.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Wen Chen’s real name and background have been changed to protect his anonymity.
- ² Compiled from information on the college Web sites regarding undergraduates, in 2010, Asian American students accounted for 17 percent of the students at Harvard University, 23 percent of the students at Stanford University, and 43 percent of the students at the University of California, Berkeley, but 4.8 percent of the U.S. population.
- ³ Author estimates from the 2000 Census PUMS.
- ⁴ The actual distribution across industries and regions is available from the author.
- ⁵ See Ronald Oaxaca’s work for details (1973).
- ⁶ This assumes that the wage offer function in a nondiscriminatory world would be the same as the non-Hispanic White wage offer function. This seems reasonable because the number of non-Hispanic Whites in the labor force outnumber Asian Americans by 7 to 1 in the PhD labor market.
- ⁷ Language ability is measured by five dummy variables. Lang1 means “only speaks English.” Lang2 means speaks English “very well.” Lang3 means speaks English “well.” Lang4 means speaks English “not well.” And Lang5 means speaks English “not at all.”
- ⁸ Higher earnings for married men is a standard result in the literature but not for married women. The experience of married women with PhDs may be different from women in general.
- ⁹ The female regression estimates are much less precise than the male regression estimates because of the sample-selection issue.

¹⁰ “Labor force participation rate” is defined here as working at least thirty-five hours a week for at least half the year. This is not the standard definition of “labor force participation,” which includes part-time workers.

¹¹ $11.4\% = (75.1/67.4) - 1$

¹² Logit models were also estimated. The results were almost identical, so only the probit results are presented. The probit model is theoretically more appealing than the logit.

¹³ See Wynand Van de Ven and Bernard Van Praag (1981). A dummy variable for children at home under the age of six was used in the selection equation while the number of children ever born was used in the managerial probit equation.

¹⁴ These percentages are evaluated from the probit coefficient estimates and the mean values of all the variables for Asian Americans using a table for the cumulative normal distribution.

¹⁵ Science includes the social sciences.

¹⁶ Without the Cultural Revolution, the percentage of Chinese immigrants with a PhD is assumed to have increased smoothly from the actual values in 1966 to the actual values in 1986 to arrive at these estimates.

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Bridging the Pacific Divide, One Mile at a Time:

An Interview with Ambassador Gary Locke

Interviewed by Ray Rivera and Thao Anh Tran



Prior to assuming duty as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the People's Republic of China on 13 August 2011, Ambassador Gary Locke served as the Secretary of Commerce. As the Obama administration's point person for achieving the president's National Export Initiative, he presided over a 17 percent increase in exports from 2009 to 2010, while exports to China saw a 32 percent increase. Ambassador Locke also oversaw a significant first step in the president's export

control reform effort that strengthens national security while making U.S. companies more competitive by easing their licensing burden for exports to partners and allies. As both governor of Washington State and commerce secretary, Locke's innovations in government efficiency, customer focus, and priority-based budgeting have won him acclaim by nationally recognized authors and organizations, including the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Ambassador Locke is the first Chinese American in the United States to serve as ambassador to China, as secretary of commerce, and as governor.

AAPR

Since assuming your role as the U.S. ambassador to China, you have left a deep impression in the minds of Chinese citizens through the level of humility you have exhibited in public settings. What message do you hope to convey to the Chinese people and government?

LOCKE

It all started with our first flight from Seattle to Beijing when we were unwittingly photographed buying some Starbucks coffee at Seattle-Tacoma airport. Someone took a photo of me with my backpack on and then posted it to the Internet. I had no idea this would be so intriguing to the Chinese people and stand as a sign of American humility. But it is certainly the case that Americans are not only easygoing but tolerant and appreciative of openness and diversity. Our openness towards physical diversity as well as diversity of thought is a great strength.

As for my strategic goals in China, I want to help double U.S. exports within five years. The U.S. can provide high-quality products and services to China that can meet the needs of the Chinese people and can help China to modernize. Now that China sees that it must shift to more of a consumer-driven economy if it wishes to continue its rapid path of development, there is no better time to make this case. At the same time, I'd like to see Chinese investment in the United States increase by opening offices and factories in America. The U.S. is very much open for business, and one of my tasks in China is to make sure that is communicated to Chinese investors.

Of course, to do these things—to double U.S. exports to China and to substantially increase Chinese investment in the U.S.—we need to ensure that U.S. and Chinese companies have a level playing field upon which to compete. A big part of my job is to see that competition is truly fair and vigorous in China and does not artificially exclude American and other foreign businesses from using their talents and skills to provide Chinese consumers with the best products and services available. My view on doing business with China is very much that whether we are talking about American companies or Chinese companies, the mark of a successful business should be skill in the marketplace, not government support.

AAPR

How would you assess the current bilateral relations between the United States and China? In what areas have you noticed the most improvements in the bilateral relations since your arrival in China? What aspects of the bilateral relations have concerned you most? What actions should the U.S. government take to alleviate these concerns?

LOCKE

I can say unequivocally that bilateral relations between the U.S. and China are stronger and more complex than ever before. Our economic ties have never been stronger. Our mutual respect has never been stronger. And our potential for solving world problems together as partners has never been greater. That's a good thing, because the world is counting on us. In these tough times, both the U.S. and China must step up and provide leadership.

Fortunately, it is in the mutual self-interests of the U.S. and China to cooperate. With the two largest economies in the world, we have one of the most important bilateral relationships. Millions of jobs are sustained in China and the United States by the trade we do with one another. American consumers benefit from the goods made in China, and daily, the Chinese people rely on high-quality U.S. products and services. And, as our companies make investments in each other's countries, we are creating jobs for our peoples. Every year, the comprehensive Strategic and Economic Dialogue brings together policy makers from across both governments to discuss topics ranging from breaking down trade barriers to economic cooperation to collaborating on pressing regional and global issues. To meet the challenge of global climate change, the U.S. and China can build on a legacy of over thirty years of cooperation on science and technology issues. Similarly, the United States and China share an interest in maintaining peace and prosperity around the world. If there is one area we continue to have persistent disagreements, it is probably human rights. Our goal of building a cooperative partnership with China includes regular dialogue on human rights issues. U.S. support for a strong, prosperous, and successful China reflects

our belief that respect for the rule of law and protection of the universal freedoms of expression, belief, and assembly are critical to securing the growth, prosperity, and long-term stability that China seeks and to realizing the full potential of its people.

While China has undoubtedly made great strides in developing its economy, the imprisonment of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo and restrictions on the freedoms of his spouse Liu Xia, the illegal “disappearing” of Gao Zhisheng, the unlawful detention of Chinese citizens such as lawyer Chen Guangcheng, and constraints on the religious freedom and practices of Tibetan, Uighur, and Christian communities do not bring China closer to achieving its stated goals.

AAPR

Why did you choose a career in public service? How did your heritage influence this decision?

LOCKE

Actually, I never thought I would go into public service. It was not until well after I graduated from law school that I entered into public life. I went into law with the idea that I would perhaps work as an immigration or community lawyer. But then during one of my first stints as an intern halfway through law school, I worked in a prosecutor’s office and I just loved trial work. So after I graduated from law school, I got an offer to work in the prosecutor’s office, prosecuting suspects of major felonies and homicides, including death penalty cases. Then I started just helping out and volunteering on people’s campaigns. I very much enjoyed it. I stuffed envelopes and knocked on doors. It was a great way to get out and discover the different neigh-

borhoods. But then gradually I got more and more involved. People said, “Gary, you should run.” So that’s how it first started.

As far as my heritage is concerned, if anything, this career path probably happened in spite of my Asian American background. My dad, of course, like a lot of Asian parents, wanted me to be an engineer or a doctor and never could understand why I would want to be a lawyer. Then when I first said I wanted to run for office, he thought that was absolutely insane. He never really did understand what I did as a member of the state legislature. My mom on the other hand would always say, why commute over an hour to the state capitol when you can work right in Seattle for the city council? She said I should run for city council, that way I could get married in Seattle and settle down, she thought. Then once I became governor, of course, both my parents were very, very proud and felt I had made the right career decisions.

AAPR

What are some obstacles that you have encountered as a public servant of Asian descent through your various roles as governor of Washington, secretary of commerce, and, currently, ambassador to China? What strategies have you used to overcome these obstacles?

LOCKE

I can honestly say that most of the hard work in overcoming obstacles from my Asian descent was done by my ancestors. A hundred years ago my grandfather left China on a steamboat to go to the United States. And all through the years I’ve been able to reflect on it, and it’s really hard to believe. My grandfather worked as a

houseboy for a family in the Washington state capitol, washing dishes and sweeping floors, in exchange for English lessons. Eventually he went back to China, got married, and started a family. He returned to the U.S. to work and sent money back to the village to support his family. He eventually brought the whole family over. Then, in 1997, I was sworn in as the governor of the State of Washington and moved into the governor's mansion. We joked—and I threw out a line in my inaugural speech—that it took our family a hundred years to travel one mile. Then, of course, I became commerce secretary, and my dad was so proud to be there at the swearing-in ceremony presided over by President Obama. But I believe he would have been more proud to know that his son was returning to our ancestral homeland, representing the United States as the U.S. ambassador to China.

AAPR

What role do you think Asian Americans can play in helping facilitate U.S.-China bilateral relations?

LOCKE

The short answer is that I am still learning about the pros and cons of this. But if my own experience is any indication, Asian Americans can contribute a unique role in bridging the gap between the U.S. and China by virtue of breaking down us/them barriers. If you stay in China long enough as an Asian American, especially one who doesn't speak native-level Mandarin, you start to notice that it really opens people's minds. When the average Chinese person is presented with what looks to be a Chinese face but who then speaks English and carries him or herself as an American, it defies simple categorization. It also presents a certain familiarity that chips away at the notion

of easily putting the foreigner into the alien category.

We have many Asian Americans working in the State Department and at our mission in China. We are a very diverse group in the State Department and at our embassies and consulates abroad. Asian Americans engage in diplomacy every day of the week, not only in Asia, but all around the world. This is a sign of how far Asians have come in America and sends a very positive signal to the rest of the world that America is a diverse place and stronger for it.

AAPR

There has been a lot of discussion about the growing diversity in America. What do you think the role of Asian Americans will be in a more diverse country?

LOCKE

It is not easy to speculate about American society since societal trends are changing in a country as dynamic as ours. I firmly believe that Asian Americans will play an increasing role in all aspects of American life. The United States is a very racially and ethnically diverse place. We also have a plurality of religious and cultural traditions. What is nice to see these days is the emphasis on diversity as a positive force. The notion is not that America is strong despite its diversity but rather America is strong because of its diversity. The United States is truly a land of opportunity, and Asian Americans can decide for themselves what fields they want to go into and pursue those paths with the confidence that if they apply themselves and develop skills that are in demand, they will succeed. In sum, I expect to see Asian Americans in the twenty-first century go beyond the sectors of American life in which they have traditionally remained. Just as I have succeeded in public service, we will see

more Asian Americans making their way into politics and other areas beyond the traditionally preferred domains. And I hope Asian Americans continue to carry forward strong traditions of family and honor no matter what they choose to do in a diverse country.

AAPR

You have had an amazing career in public service thus far. What was your favorite job and why?

LOCKE

Every job I've had has been so unique and rewarding during each stage of my life so far. I have been so fortunate to be a state legislator, a state governor, a cabinet member, and now an ambassador for one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world. I feel very blessed to have had all of these jobs and to have worked with very talented and dedicated individuals. My current job is certainly my most unique and perhaps most challenging job. I was very flattered when President Obama personally asked me to be his ambassador to China, telling me specifically "it's a big deal" to be ambassador for the most important bilateral relationship in the world.

In my job as ambassador to China, I get to work with impressive professionals from all the major U.S. agencies reflected on our country team. We have over forty different U.S. agencies represented here in our embassy, including State Department, Defense Department, Centers for Disease Control [CDC], Energy, Agriculture, Commerce, Treasury, USTR, FDA, USAID, etc. I engage in a very wide range of issues. For example, CDC is very concerned about monitoring health conditions and working with China on health issues, including HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

AAPR

What do you think of the increasing trade gap with China?

LOCKE

It's a solvable problem. The Chinese leadership recognizes that China is now too large relative to the world economy for it to continue to rely on exports for its economic growth. In China's latest five-year plan it has adopted a comprehensive program of reforms to shift towards a more consumption-led growth. Back in the United States we're refining our policies to improve the long-term sustainability and strength of our economy. My number one priority in China is to work with Chinese people and the American business community throughout China to support President Obama's job-creating efforts.

First, we will help double U.S. exports by 2015, which is the goal of the president's National Export Initiative, because we know that the more American companies export their "Made in USA" goods and services, the more they produce; the more they produce, the more workers they need. That means jobs, badly needed jobs for the American people.

And, of course, American companies offer great high-quality products and services that are in great demand and highly valued in China. So, over the next year, I'm committed to leading numerous trade and investment missions to China's emerging cities. These will supplement all the different trade missions that the Commerce Department from DC or the Energy Department and states and governors and cities will be leading. We at the embassy intend to build on the recent growth of U.S. exports, which grew by 17 percent in 2010 while U.S. exports to China grew by almost 32 percent. The

2011 results are on track to match the 2010 results. We are indeed on track to meet the president's goal of doubling U.S. exports over the next five years.

AAPR

What do you think of China's investments in renewable energy that seem to be far outpacing the efforts here in the United States?

LOCKE

Renewable energy will be important for all of our futures, particularly given the issue of climate change that we are all facing and the value of energy independence. We applaud China for its admirable efforts and investments in this area. Clean energy also remains a key priority for the Obama administration. China is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gasses, while the U.S. produces the most per capita. The challenges posed by climate change cannot be met without the cooperation and leadership of both the U.S. and China.

AAPR

How does our increased reliance on China financing our debt impact our relationship and the growth of our economy here at home?

LOCKE

Well, first of all, we need to keep things in perspective. There is a lot of talk these days about China "owning" America's debt. As Vice President Joe Biden said, the truth is that Americans own America's debt. The gross domestic product (GDP) of the United States is almost \$15 trillion. That's more than twice as large as China's. At over \$47,000, our per-capita GDP is actually eleven times that of China's. While it is true that America has significant debts, China holds just 8 percent of

our outstanding Treasury securities. By comparison, Americans hold nearly 70 percent. So, I reject the assumption that China's financing part of our debt has any major impact on the growth of our economy. If anything, China's holding of American debt should remind China that strong U.S. economic growth is in China's economic self-interest.

AAPR

Many of AAPR's readers are interested in pursuing a career in diplomacy after graduation. Do you have any advice for them, especially those who grew up in bicultural households?

LOCKE

For AAPR readers interested in working in these challenging settings, I strongly recommend taking a look at our State Department careers Web site and see if work as a foreign service officer or specialist would be a good fit. Our ranks are full of diverse kinds of people with a variety of talents and skills. If you go to <http://careers.state.gov>, you will get a quick idea of just how challenging and rewarding our work is in the State Department and in the U.S. Foreign Service.

Asian Americans can of course play a unique role in the State Department not only because they represent a significant swath of the United States, but also because they often have much sought-after language skills like Mandarin, Japanese, and Korean. We offer paid training in foreign languages, depending on one's assignment. Yet frequently we find that the best learners of foreign languages are those individuals who come from ethnic backgrounds where different languages were spoken growing up.

Chronicling Asian America:

An Interview with Konrad Ng

Interviewed by Ray Rivera and Thao Anh Tran



Konrad Ng is the Director of the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program. As director, Ng is responsible for providing vision, leadership, and support for Asian and Pacific Islander American initiatives at the largest museum and research complex in the world. Prior to joining the Smithsonian Institution, Ng was a professor in the University of Hawai'i at Manoa's Academy for Creative Media. From 2007 to 2008, Ng played a key role in constituency outreach to Asian and Pacific

Islander Americans as well as new media initiatives for the Barack Obama presidential campaign. Ng earned a PhD in political science from the University of Hawai'i, an MA in cultural, social, and political thought from the University of Victoria, and a BA in philosophy and ethnic studies from McGill University. Ng is married to President Obama's younger sister, Maya Soetoro.

AAPR

Under your leadership, the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American (APA) Program developed an Asian American portrait exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery. Could you please share with us how this exhibition was conceived and what message you hope to convey to the general public about the Asian American community through this exhibition?

NG

Our mission is to ensure that the dynamism of Asia, the Pacific, and their intersections in American history, art, and culture are represented at the largest museum and research complex in the world. One of the artists featured in the *Asian American Portraits of Encounter* exhibition, Cyjo, approached the APA Program about exhibiting her *Kyopo* project, a photographic show of Koreans living in America. We thought that Cyjo's work offered a terrific opportunity for us to collaborate with the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery (NPG). The NPG hosts a contemporary art series called *Portraiture Now*, and both the APA Program and NPG thought it would be great if the theme for 2010–2011 could address the Asian American experience. We found funders, and the show moved forward. We selected the artists based on the

caliber of their work and how their art would create a thought-provoking dialogue. I wanted the show to be a series of “encounters,” that is, curating a cacophony of imagery that challenged popular perceptions of Asian America, including views held by Asian Americans. Even the artists held different attitudes towards being part of a show that addressed the Asian American experience. All of them expressed a tension between being called Asian American and feeling that they were atypical of that identity. This tension, between identity and self-identity—that we may be rooted in a particular identity but not limited by it—underlies the notion of *Asian American Portraits of Encounter*. However, the goal of the show was not to be conclusive or academic about contemporary identity but to suggest a way to have a more complex conversation about what that means; portraiture is a perfect medium for this important exercise. Our next major projects are *HomeSpun: Smithsonian Indian American Heritage Project* and a traveling exhibition on Asian American history, art, and culture.

AAPR

Also, under your tenure, a program called *Asian Pacific Americans: Local Lives, Global Ties* was featured at the 2010 Smithsonian Folklife Festival Program. What did you hope to accomplish with the program?

NG

The Folklife Festival is hosted by the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (CFCH). For decades, the festival has been the premier opportunity to highlight a way of life or tradition on the National Mall, a space with great symbolic value. Similar to our work with the NPG, the APA Program and CFCH saw an opportunity to highlight the Asian

Pacific American experience as it is lived and interpreted, and as I noted earlier, this is an important story that is often put in simplistic terms. We thought it would make a meaningful statement by showcasing Asian Pacific America through the lives of the more than 350,000 Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian (AAPINH) people in the DC area who have been there for decades; thus, the title *Local Lives, Global Ties*. Again, we received enough support and funding, and the festival theme was a “go.” The APA Program hired longtime Asian American activist and advocate Phil Nash to curate *Asian Pacific Americans: Local Lives, Global Ties*. Phil brought the program to life. Hundreds of thousands of people walked through the ten-day festival of performances, demonstrations, displays, conversations, and food. It was breathtaking to be at the festival during the Fourth of July weekend when the masses streamed through our stations and stages.

AAPR

Through your work, it is evident that you are very interested in exploring the Asian American identity. How would you define the Asian American identity? How has this identity evolved in recent years? What, if any, implications does this evolving identity have on how the Asian American constituency engages in American politics? Also, as a Chinese Canadian, we are interested in whether you feel any connections to the Asian American diaspora.

NG

“Asian American” describes an increasingly complex set of experiences that are central to understanding today’s cultural dynamics. For example, in terms of my own research, I am fascinated by the large number of Asian American cultural

producers on new media platforms such as YouTube, a major life activity. I am curious about how this phenomenon came to be and how some YouTubers make claims to Asian America yet express a degree of irrelevance about the usefulness of the identification. Overall, “Asian American” describes a very diverse, fast-growing, increasingly influential set of communities who have ties to a region of the world that is the focus of international affairs. “Asian American” describes a lived experience that finds meaning through discussions about diaspora, transnationalism, hybridity, refugees, poverty, affluence, civil rights, immigration, gangs, labor, culture, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, dialects, accents, etc.; these are our issues. This lived experience represents the larger forces of cultural change occurring in American society and drives our participation in American politics. However, at root, what we value—things like fairness, opportunity, and prosperity—are common values. I often see the difference between “Asian American” and “Asian Canadian” as an academic distinction, albeit sometimes people wait to hear if I will say “eh.” More seriously, here and now is where I find my life and community. I am a proud U.S. citizen.

AAPR

During President Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign, you played an active role in conducting outreach to the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. In what ways did those efforts help contribute to President Obama’s success in capturing 76 percent of the AAPI votes in the general election?

NG

The campaign empowered people at the grassroots level to run the campaign,

essentially crowdsourcing elements of campaigning and campaign operations. We had volunteers on the ground organizing their networks in support of Obama. Central to this form of engagement was the recognition that AAPINHs have a stake in this country; indeed, we are central to American society, politics, and success. We surveyed AAPINHs concerns and made sure that they were heard and represented in the campaign. At the time, the idea of calibrating outreach to sync with ways that people actually see themselves was novel. For Asian Americans, the recognition that we are part of the citizenry carries weight. This may sound like an obvious approach to constituency outreach, but I have found that a lot of work still needs to be done in terms of recognizing AAPINHs as a critical demographic and contributing member of our nation.

AAPR

With respect to the impending 2012 presidential election, what obstacles do you envision regarding the AAPI community securing a more prominent voice in the electoral process? How can the community as a whole overcome these obstacles to make an impact in American politics?

NG

Overall, I think the lives of and opportunities for Asian Americans are improving, though we must remain concerned about apathy; we cannot and should not be apathetic. Being active means more than voting, we must see ourselves as caretakers of a participatory civic culture and culture of service. We have to be invested in the electoral process, guard ourselves against being cynical about American politics, and carry a sense of entitlement—that we belong, that this is our

country, and that we are responsible to/for it. There are very real challenges in this world, but let us not have our attitude be one of them.

AAPR

Given the diverse cultural and geopolitical differences within the AAPI community, how do you think this has affected and will affect the way politicians court this community as a voting bloc?

NG

I think that it is fair to say that there is a growing sophistication to campaigning, governing, and politics prompted by, in part, the dynamics of a rapidly changing demography. Basically, more public officials and candidates are beginning to recognize that Asian American communities vote, and cultural awareness and sensitivity has to be part of a successful campaign and governance. Across the country, there is a growing number of candidates, public officials, community leaders, campaign workers, and politicians of Asian descent who are not bound by geography or culture. It is an exciting time to be engaged in politics because the conventional wisdom about AAPINHs and politics has yet to be established.

AAPR

Some would argue that President Obama's campaign team's strategic use of new media helped defeat other Democratic candidates in the primary and ultimately allowed him to differentiate himself from Senator John McCain in the general election. As someone who worked on new media initiatives for the Obama campaign, can you comment on the role of new media in persuading the AAPI community to show up at the polls in 2008 and whether you'd

expect this effect to be further magnified during the upcoming election?

NG

2008 meant that it is now impossible to run a campaign without a new media staff member. During the 2008 presidential primaries and campaign, new media allowed us to conduct real-time, interactive, viral forms of communications and crowdsource needs in areas and dimensions where we did not already serve. So, we were able to cultivate vibrant grassroots support from AAPINH communities because we recognized their importance to the political process and empowered them to be part of the campaign. For AAPINH communities, it was grassroots supporters who knew how to communicate the issues of their communities to the campaign and how to deliver campaign messages in ways that could be understood by their communities. For 2012, new media will continue to be a critical tool for communication, coordination, outreach, and GOTV (get out the vote), but since we are engaged in a reelection campaign, as opposed to a primary and general election, some of what you will see will be more focused. Also, I think that the impact of new media in 2012 will be improvements to internal campaign coordination and information management. While new media is now essential to politics, ultimately the candidate and a solid electoral ground game closes the deal. Obviously, I think Obama was, and continues to be, the best and only choice for president.

AAPR

Do you have any advice for Asian Americans interested in working in your area of

expertise? Any guidance in general for the next generation of Asian American leaders?

NG

In politics, life, and work, I have been inspired by many young Asian Americans. So, I believe in an attitude that fosters feelings of hope and empowerment: We are more powerful than we realize. We have the capacity to change the world. We must think progressively. This beautiful world can be as we wish it to be.

Admittedly, those words tend to sound Pollyannaish, but the attitude behind them is crucial to improving the lives and opportunities of our communities. And, by repeating them, the hope is that they will become true, and that is a good thing.

AAPR

Additional thoughts or insights?

NG

I hope people will continue to support our president and the celebration of the Asian American experience at our nation's museums. Mahalo and aloha for this opportunity to be part of the Harvard Kennedy School *Asian American Policy Review* journal; I admire and appreciate the work that you do.

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South Asian Immigration in the United States:

A Gendered Perspective

by *Maneesha Kelkar*

At the best of times, immigrants are viewed with suspicion by host societies. In recent years, however, public discourse on immigration has acquired particularly negative undertones, with surveillance as the central narrative. Leaning heavily on identification and deportation of undocumented immigrants, U.S. policy has held a significant anti-immigrant bias over the last decade. In the midst of this divisive rhetoric, it is easy to lose track of the strengths of immigration and its contribution to nation building.

Migrants, by definition, move “to another country or region to better their material or social conditions and improve prospects for themselves or their family” (International Organization for Migration 2011a). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that there were 214 million international migrants worldwide in 2011, up from an estimated 150 million in 2001 (International Organization for Migration n.d.). Although there are numerous reasons for these heightened levels of human migration, a major one is globalization and the resulting incentives and ease of mobility of labor from lower- to higher-wage countries.

This article presents an analysis of South Asian immigration as it impacts women. Comprised of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, South Asia encompasses a diverse landscape of language, religion, race, and a multitude of other identity lines. Despite these differences, social and cultural similarities bring the people of this region together as a unified whole and allow U.S. public policy to treat this region as a bloc. Yet, men and women experience immigration in very different ways. Women face unique challenges that are often exacerbated by unintended consequences of immigration policies and practices. Activist organizations like Manavi have grown to address these imbalances, and landmark legislation like the United States’ Violence Against Women Act have helped restore some rights to women immigrants. What is critically needed, however, is a reframing of the conversation. Women need to be viewed as primary immigrants in the same way as men, not as dependents or derivatives of men.

SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

According to the 2010 Census, there are 3.4 million South Asians living in the United States today (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Although South Asian immigration into the United States began around the turn of the twentieth century, the major waves of South Asian immigrants came after the passage of the U.S.

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, or the Hart-Cellar Act. This legislation brought in a cadre of highly skilled South Asian laborers to meet shortages of certain professions in the United States. The Hart-Cellar Act replaced the previous quota system based on national origin preferences with a new system based on the principles of family reunification and special occupational skills. This legislation allowed a large influx of South Asian professionals such as engineers and doctors. These were mainly male immigrants who were given entry on temporary professional visas called H1B. They could sponsor their spouses and children on dependent visas called H4. Even today, a large number of South Asians enter the United States on these visas.

IMPACT OF U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY ON WOMEN

Immigration policy in the United States has historically been male-centric, built upon primary entry for males and secondary entry for females, who are generally wives and fiancées. Before the mid-nineteenth century, a woman's legal status in the United States was generally based on the principle of coverture, under which a married woman's legal rights were merged into those of her husband. Her rights were not seen as separate from those of her husband. She could not own property or sign contracts. Much to the contrary, "the husband was granted all

power over his wife and children" (Abraham 2000). Although the legal system's gender imbalance has gradually been addressed with women's activism, immigration law still remains profoundly influenced by the principle of coverture (Abraham 2000). The structure of immigration policy reflects this influence; the principle of coverture embedded in immigration law forces women into dependency and places complete control of their lives in the hands of their spouses.

With the H1B visa resulting from the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, a typically male immigrant could sponsor his spouse on the H4 derivative visa. Yet the H4 visa places enormous restrictions on its holder, usually a woman. The H4 visa does not permit the holder to work, and it does not assign the individual a Social Security number. Consequently, the individual is restricted not only from earning money but from leading a normal life in ways that most people take for granted. The individual is barred from opening or operating a bank account and even getting a driver's license without additional paperwork initiated by the individual holding the H1B visa. A woman holding such a dependent H4 visa is constrained by the visa's policy implications in profound ways. Not only is the woman's quality of life negatively impacted, but in the event that she finds herself in an abusive relationship, she has little redress. Keeping in mind that immigration often imposes additional barriers on women, including limited English proficiency and cultural differences, the dependency on men created by the visa structure often reduces women to being little more than prisoners in their own homes.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 also enables a citizen or legal

permanent resident (LPR) to sponsor his or her spouse for LPR status. However, this law also provides abusive husbands with an effective tool to use to exercise control over their wives. Community-based organizations and others serving battered immigrant women, including Manavi, have seen an increasing pattern of legal abuse. Lawfully married women often report their husbands unwilling to sponsor them for LPR status, resulting in the wife falling out of status and becoming completely dependent on the whims of her husband (Abraham 2000). This phenomenon continues to this day.

Severely constrained by this legislation, women's challenges are further compounded if their marriage breaks up and if children are involved. Custody issues arising from divorce typically place immigrant women in extremely vulnerable situations. Child custody judgments tend to favor the income-earning, financially stable parent who is Westernized, fluent in English, and able to communicate clearly. Thus, typically, judgments tend to favor the husband. If these women have children born in the United States, even returning to their home country with their children is often not an option due to complications arising from removing children who are citizens of the United States without approval of the other parent. Manavi has encountered innumerable cases of women on dependent visas who have faced the above challenges chiefly due to their inability to earn money and the cultural gap created by recent immigration.

Another peculiar problem created by dependent status is the transnational abandonment of women in their home countries. For a number of years, advocates at Manavi and other South Asian women's organizations have been getting

requests for assistance from wives abandoned abroad by abusive spouses. Although there are several different scenarios under which this occurs, a common one unfolds as follows. The male immigrant, who is either a citizen, an LPR, or on an H1B visa and living in the United States with his wife, goes back to his home country with his female spouse, ostensibly on a visit, and abandons her there after taking away her passport and immigration paperwork. She is left stranded, often with children, and with no recourse to return to the United States since she is without immigration papers. Often, her visa is nearing its expiry date or her LPR process has not yet been initiated. The husband then returns to the United States and proceeds to obtain an ex parte divorce in her absence and often without her knowledge (Dasgupta and Rudra 2009).

Globalization has served the world well in relaxing national boundaries and enabling the mobility of labor, allowing labor to flow toward the demand for it and increasing the level of economic activity worldwide. However, the juxtaposition of globalization with a male-centric immigration system in the United States has created untold misery for countless immigrant women.

EMERGENCE OF SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS: THE PIONEERING ROLE OF MANAVI

As noted above, the immigration legislation of 1965 brought in a wave of educated and skilled professionals and their families. These immigrants worked white-collar jobs, earned good salaries, and were able to create and maintain a "model minority" image. However, social problems like domestic violence, although kept under the surface, were gradually

becoming visible. When six South Asian women from New Jersey formed a group to raise consciousness and examine the hidden issue of violence against women in the community in 1985, Manavi was born.

Meaning “primal woman” in Sanskrit, Manavi is a community-based organization dedicated to ending violence against South Asian women. Each year, the women’s rights group assists more than 350 South Asian women facing many forms of violence, including domestic and sexual assault. Language- and culture-specific services include counseling, legal clinics, court and medical accompaniments, employment assistance, and language interpretation. Importantly, operating a safe home where South Asian women fleeing violence may live in a culturally familiar environment with other women in similar situations, Manavi helps immigrant women gain security, strength, and solidarity as a first step in their journey toward independence.

Although Manavi provides women with critical assistance to break the cycle of violence, the organization is aware that service provisions alone cannot prevent or address the root cause of violence against women. The dominant position accorded to men in society allows them to control women and leads to women being oppressed. Thus, Manavi deems it essential to create social change aimed at dismantling this gender-based power structure. To change community attitudes, Manavi has placed outreach and community organizing at the center of its work. Since 2005, Manavi’s signature annual event has been a Silent March through crowded thoroughfares in downtown areas thickly populated with South Asians. Large groups of volunteers,

staff, and community members walk together carrying antiviolenence signs and banners, distributing organizational materials, and talking to people on the street, encouraging them to break the silence around this taboo topic.

Since Manavi’s inception, more than twenty-five similar organizations have emerged around the United States to serve battered South Asian women. Creating a veritable movement with strong linkages among each other and with mainstream social justice organizations, Manavi continues to provide capacity-building assistance to many of them, enabling a shared platform on issues, advocacy, and joint initiatives. Manavi has also organized five conferences over the last decade, bringing together all these entities and enabling conversations to carry the movement forward.

THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Authorized in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is a legislative milestone aimed at protecting women from violent crime, helping to create stronger criminal justice and community-based responses to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

Advocacy by Manavi and other organizations contributed to the inclusion of important immigrant provisions in the act; such provisions help battered immigrant women seek redress and self-petition for permanent legal status (Legal Momentum n.d.). Manavi routinely assists abused South Asian women in seeking their rights in this manner.

Although VAWA provided relief for women dependent on citizen or LPR spouses to apply for their permanent legal

status, it did not adequately address the needs of those women dependent on spouses who were H1B visa holders. Once again, a number of women's rights, community-based, and immigrant organizations, including Manavi, advocated on behalf of immigrant women holding H4 visas. As a result, on reauthorization in 2005, VAWA included employment relief for battered spouses on H4 visas. However, this provision has yet to be translated into regulations. VAWA was introduced for reauthorization once again in 2011, and advocates are working to ensure its passage includes and refines protections for immigrant women.

Although VAWA is able to provide the types of relief described above, the legal system is still far from resolving the enormity of the problem. VAWA can only assist women who have been battered. The root of the problem, however, lies in the fact that restrictive legal structures, such as those described earlier, create an environment of dependency and fear that make women extremely vulnerable to abuse. By placing immigrant women's destinies in the hands of their husbands, immigration law places women in helpless situations where they cannot control their own lives. Why has immigration law not kept up with the overall modernization that the U.S. legal system has undergone over the last one-hundred years? Are immigrants not worthy of being treated in the same manner as U.S. citizens, who were most likely immigrants themselves once or the descendants of immigrants?

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The above analysis outlines the pitfalls of an immigration system that is designed to serve men as primary immigrants while unintentionally reducing women to a

vulnerable, dependent status. The policy recommendations suggested below are based on approaching immigration from a different lens, one that places the needs of women at the center.

The principle underlying the derivative visa, particularly the H4 derivative of the primary H1B visa, needs critical rethinking. The derivative visa is structured such that it takes away the agency of the holder, usually the wife, where she is treated as a secondary entity, without rights or privileges. To restore her agency, it is essential to restructure this visa to include the same privileges awarded to the primary visa holder, including the provision of a Social Security number and the right to seek employment, as allowed by the L2 derivative of the primary L1 visa. When the rights of a derivative female immigrant are contingent on the whim of the primary male immigrant, transnational abandonment of wives is possible. It will be much harder to abandon a wife overseas if she has more control over her immigration status. Derivative immigration status therefore needs to be disengaged from dependence on the primary immigrant.

There needs to be an escalated effort to minimize the time between the passage of immigration law and the development of appropriate regulations emanating from the law. The immigrant provisions under the 2005 VAWA must be translated into regulations immediately to enable battered women holding H4 visas in specific situations to seek temporary employment.

The entire area of international immigration law needs to be reexamined from a gendered perspective. Men and women must be treated equally as migrants. Since families often migrate together, there is a

need to protect the best interests of more than just the primary income earner, who is most often the man. The best interests of women and children must also be protected. All family members must have access to primary immigration status.

CLOSING REMARKS

Globalization has opened the door to the migration of labor across national borders on an unprecedented scale. Along with the numbers, the face of immigration has changed, with more women crossing national boundaries than ever before (United Nations Development Fund for Women 2008). The U.S. immigration system no longer has the appropriate framework for handling the myriad new dimensions created by the new waves of immigration. A fresh look at immigration law from a gendered perspective is urgently necessary to address the ramifications of a changing world order.

The IOM's "World Migration Report 2011" states unequivocally, "migrants' voices must be heard in today's all too often biased, polarized, and negative debate on migration" (International Organization for Migration 2011b). In keeping with the spirit of the IOM's recommendation, it is critical that, as we go forward with immigration reform in the United States, we listen to the voices of immigrant women, voices that have so far gone largely unheard in national discourse.

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Since 2004, **Maneesha Kelkar** has been the Executive Director of Manavi, a women's rights organization committed to ending violence against South Asian women. Kelkar, an activist, advocate, educator, trainer, and social justice organizer, has a master's degree in economic development from American University. She has consulted for the World Bank, taught economics, and held management positions at various corporations in addition to working for nonprofit organizations. Kelkar currently serves on the Prevention and Public Education Committee of the New Jersey Governor's Council against Sexual Violence, the Public Policy Committee of the New Jersey Immigration Policy Network, and the New Jersey Advisory Committee for South Asian Americans Leading Together. In 2008, Kelkar was named a Fellow of the Women's Policy Institute at the Women's Fund of New Jersey to conduct collaborative work in reproductive justice. Since 2009, she has represented Manavi on the faculty of the Advocacy Learning Center, an ongoing nationwide training project conducted in partnership with Praxis International. Since 2010, she has been serving on the New Jersey Commission for New Americans, established to integrate the immigrant population in New Jersey.



Keely Monroe currently serves as the 2012 National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum DC Board Membership Co-Chair. She is also the reproductive justice fellow at the National Women's Health Network, an organization focused on improving the health of all women by developing and promoting a critical analysis of health issues. Keely's work centers on access to reproductive health services and health equity. She holds a law degree from the University of California at Hastings College of the Law and earned her undergraduate degree in communication at Fordham University.



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Thao Anh Tran, a second-year master in public policy student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, is a Pickering Fellow. She previously worked on the China desk at the U.S. State Department and at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and Phnom Penh. During the 2009-2010 academic year, Tran conducted research on the Korean Chinese community in Yanji, China, as a Fulbright Fellow. Tran currently cochairs the HKS Diversity Committee and Dean's Ambassadors Program. Tran received her BA in international affairs and Asian studies from George Washington University and will join the U.S. Foreign Service upon graduation.



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