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Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders: A national portrait of growth, diversity, and inequality

Samuel D Museus, *University of Denver*

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I

ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

A National Portrait of Growth, Diversity, and Inequality

Samuel D. Museus

In 1859, Charles Dickens first wrote, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times . . . it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair" (Dickens, 2008, p. 1). When Dickens constructed this quote, it is unlikely that he was thinking about Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs)[1] in the twenty-first century. Yet, in many ways, this paradoxical quotation accurately explains the context in which scholars, policy makers, and practitioners who are concerned about AAPIs in higher education find themselves today. On one hand, recent publications that underscore the need to pay attention to AAPIs in postsecondary education and new advances in policy that signify a growing interest in understanding and serving this community have reinvigorated many of us and engendered new hopes of greater AAPI visibility and voice in higher education arenas (see the introduction of this volume for discussion of these advances). On the other hand, racial stereotypes of AAPIs as model minorities who achieve universal and unparalleled academic and occupational success continue to lead to widespread misconceptions about an unprecedented and increasing number of AAPI students entering college, as well as the common dismissal of their needs and interests (Museus, 2009a, 2009b; Museus, Antonio, & Kiang, 2012; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Osajima, 1995; Pendakur & Pendakur, 2012; Suzuki, 2002).

When people dismiss the needs and interests of AAPIs in higher education research and discourse on the basis of race, it is symbolic of larger systemic racial exclusion. My colleagues and I have underscored that several factors have contributed to the historical exclusion of AAPIs from postsecondary education, including the model minority myth; absence of sufficient data for developing more complex and authentic understandings of this population; and overemphasis on degree completion as the primary, and sometimes only, measure of success by researchers and policy makers (Museus, 2009b; Museus & Kiang, 2009).

It is important to note at least two other factors that have contributed to the exclusion of AAPIs from higher education research and discourse: (1) the disciplinary expectation to justify higher education research, policy, and practice efforts with well-founded educational problems and (2) the overreliance on one-dimensional analyses of race to understand equity issues. As for the first point, whereas the assumption that AAPIs are model minorities who do not encounter salient challenges has, at least in part, prevented the exploration necessary to substantiate problems within the AAPI community, the problem-based orientation of higher education requires a developed understanding of validated problems to justify work on this population. These interconnected realities create a cycle of exclusion, whereby there is a limited number of empirically validated problems to justify important work on AAPIs, even though such problems do exist (Museus & Kiang, 2009), and there is also an insufficient foundation of scholarship on AAPIs in the field to thoroughly elucidate the range of problems that exist within the AAPI community.

Regarding the second point, the overreliance on one-dimensional analyses of race to understand equity issues is problematic for those aiming to do work with AAPIs in higher education because, as the following discussion demonstrates, such one-dimensional analyses of racial inequalities mask the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity within racial groups. Such analyses typically suggest that AAPI populations do better than other racial groups and, therefore, do not face challenges or need attention and support (Museus & Kiang, 2009). Moreover, when these race-based analyses do not consider the ethnic, socioeconomic, and other forms of diversity that exist within the AAPI population, higher education scholars, policy makers, and practitioners often incorrectly and negligently conclude that they have a right to render the millions of AAPIs in higher education irrelevant.

Indeed, despite previous advances in diversity in higher education research, policy, and practice, work that focuses on the general population or the White racial majority remains the norm (see Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). When college students of color are the primary focus of analyses, scholars and policy makers underscore one-dimensional racial inequalities to contextualize and problematize their work (e.g., Museus, 2011). The underlying rationale is that if Black, Latino, and Native American students are achieving at rates lower than White students then they are worthy of empirical inquiry or advocacy. Unfortunately, this rationale also suggests that if AAPIs are attaining college degrees at rates higher than other racial groups they can easily be dismissed and forgotten. Yet, as Mitchell Chang and I have pointed out, if anyone was to suggest that White students were not worthy of attention or energy because they attain college degrees at higher rates than Black, Latino, and Native American students, it would be considered offensive by many (Museus & Chang, 2009). However, such racial comparisons are commonly used to justify such racist dismissals of AAPI realities and experiences.

Owing to the aforementioned racial realities, those of us who are concerned about AAPIs must be equipped to justify the need for research, policies, and programs that are aimed at better understanding and serving the AAPI population in compelling ways. The primary purpose of this chapter is to use multidimensional analyses of some of the most current national data available on AAPI communities to offer up-to-date empirical support for the importance of work on this population. A secondary purpose of the chapter is to provide the context for the following chapters of this volume. Yet another purpose of this chapter is to take stock of the current social conditions within the AAPI community and use this information as a foundation for envisioning future directions for research on AAPIs in higher education.

In the following sections, I use census, American Community Survey, and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS) data to examine the growth, diversity, and inequality that characterize AAPI communities today and clarify the need to study and advocate for these communities. In the next section, I discuss the recent and rapid growth of AAPI populations. The subsequent section provides a brief overview of the ethnic diversity that exists within the AAPI community. The third section focuses on an examination of the intersections among ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational achievement, and occupational attainment. The chapter concludes with some implications for higher education research.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Populations Are Rapidly Growing

Asian Americans are the fastest growing racial group in the nation, and Pacific Islanders are the second most rapidly expanding racial population. In fact, between 2000 and 2010, the Asian American community grew at a rate that was four times faster than the national population, and Pacific Islander communities expanded at a rate three times faster than the overall national populace (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011, 2012a, 2012b). Specifically, between 2000 and 2010, Asian Americans grew at a rate of 43% and Pacific Islanders expanded at a rate of more than one-third. In regard to raw numbers, between 2000 and 2010, the Asian American alone population grew from 10.2 million to 14.7 million people, and the Asian American alone or in combination with other racial groups population increased in size from 11.9 million in 2000 to 17.3 million in 2010.[2] During that same period, the Pacific Islander alone population expanded from 398,835 to 540,013 people, and the Pacific Islander alone or in combination with other racial groups population increased from 874,414 in 2000 to 1,225,195 in 2010. And, in terms of their share of the national population, AAPIs alone or in combination with other racial groups represented approximately 4.5% of the nation in 2000 and 6% of the national population in 2010. Not surprisingly, the number of AAPIs enrolling in institutions of higher education has also increased. Figure 1.1 shows the actual (1999–2009) and projected (2010–2019) enrollments of AAPI undergraduate and graduate students. Between 1999 and 2009, the number of AAPI undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in higher education increased from approximately 0.91 million to about 1.34 million—an increase of approximately 430,000 students.

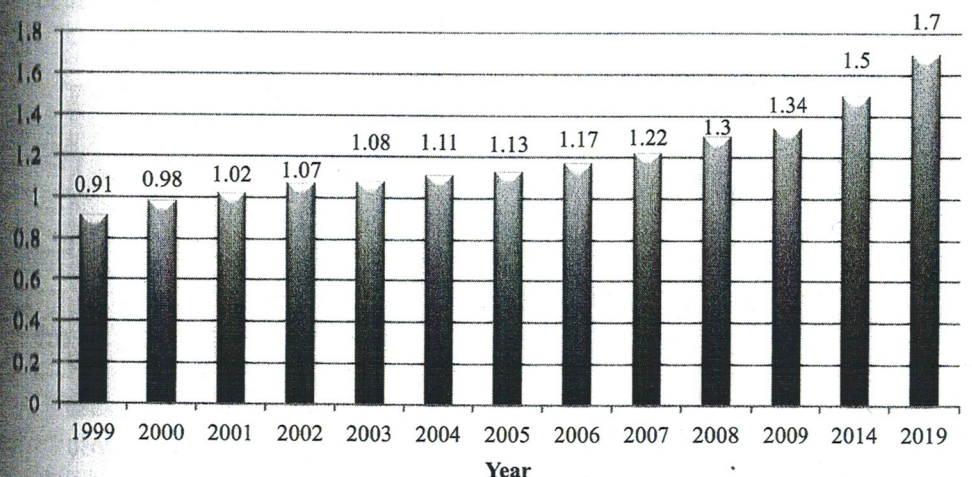
Moving forward, it is also important to note that the AAPI population will likely continue to grow rapidly. Indeed, although the Census Bureau has not released growth projections for Pacific Islanders, population projections for Asian Americans show rapid expected growth. Figure 1.2 displays the projected growth of the Asian American alone population in millions and suggests that the Asian American community will more than double in size over the next 40 years, increasing from 14.7 million in 2010 to approximately 33 million in 2050. Figure 1.3 shows population projections in the form of the percentage of the total U.S. population composed of Asian Americans and indicates that about 1 out of every 10 U.S. citizens will be of Asian descent by the year 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). In addition, reflecting the growth of the general AAPI population is the fact that, between

the years 2008 and 2019, AAPI undergraduate and graduate enrollments are projected to grow by 30%, which is an estimated increase of about 395,000 students, bringing expected AAPI enrollments in 2019 to 1.7 million (figure 1.1).

Asian Americans Are Concentrated in the West and Growing Fastest in the South

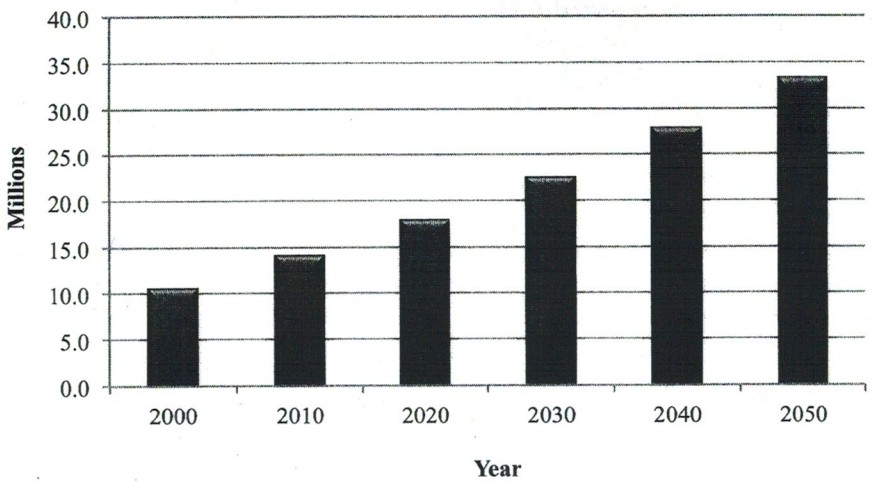
Most Asian Americans reside in the West.[3] Indeed, figure 1.4 shows the percentage of the Asian American population that was located in the four major geographic regions of the country in 2000 and 2010, and these figures indicate that they are heavily concentrated in the Western states. In fact, almost half of the Asian American alone or in combination with other racial groups population was located in the West (46.2%). These statistics also suggest that the proportion of the Asian American alone or in combination with other races population that was located in the West (49.3% to 46.2%) and Northeast (19.9% to 19.8%) regions of the nation declined between 2000 and 2010, whereas the proportion of the Asian American alone or in combination with other racial groups population living in the Midwest (11.7%

FIGURE 1.1
Actual and Projected Asian American and Pacific Islander Undergraduate and Graduate Enrollment in Postsecondary Institutions



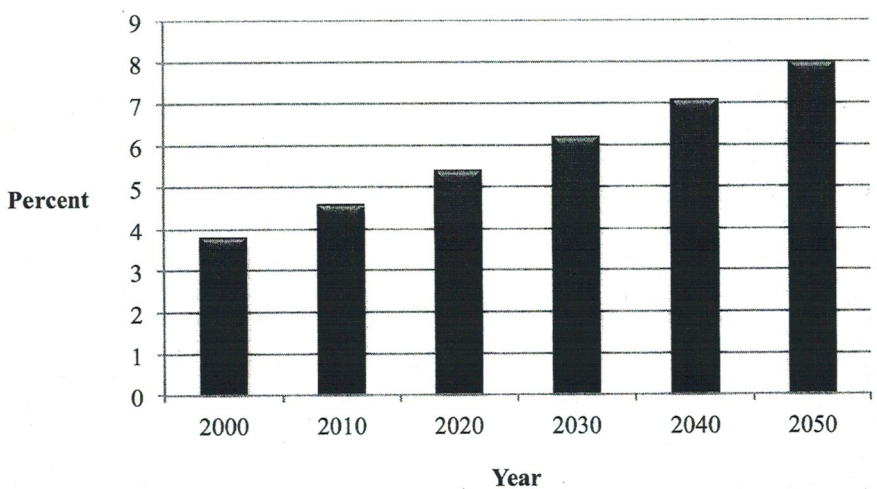
Note: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 1999–2000. Figures are expressed in millions.

FIGURE 1.2
Projected Number of Asian Americans, 2000–2050



Note: Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2004). Figures expressed in millions.

FIGURE 1.3
Projected Proportion of Population Identifying as Asian American, 2000–2050



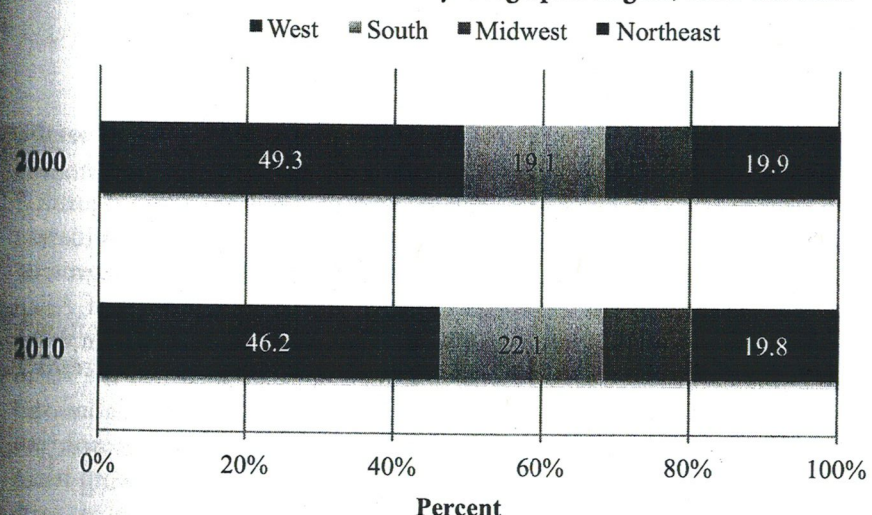
Note: Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2004).

to 11.9%) and South (19.1% to 22.1%) increased, with the Southern states experiencing the greatest increase in their share of the Asian American community.

Figure 1.5 displays the representation of Asian Americans alone or in combination with other racial groups in each state by raw numbers, and figure 1.6 shows the percentage of each state composed of Asian Americans alone or in combination with other racial groups. Darker states are those in which Asian Americans alone or in combination with other racial groups represented larger proportions of the state population. Regarding raw numbers, California had the largest Asian American alone or in combination with other racial groups population (over 4 million), followed by New York (over 1 million), Hawaii (over 700,000), Texas (over 640,000), New Jersey (over 520,000), and Illinois (over 470,000). In regard to the share of state population, those who identified as Asian American alone or in combination with other racial groups composed the largest percentage of the total state in Hawaii (57%), California (15%), Nevada (9%), New Jersey (9%), Washington (9%), and New York (8%).

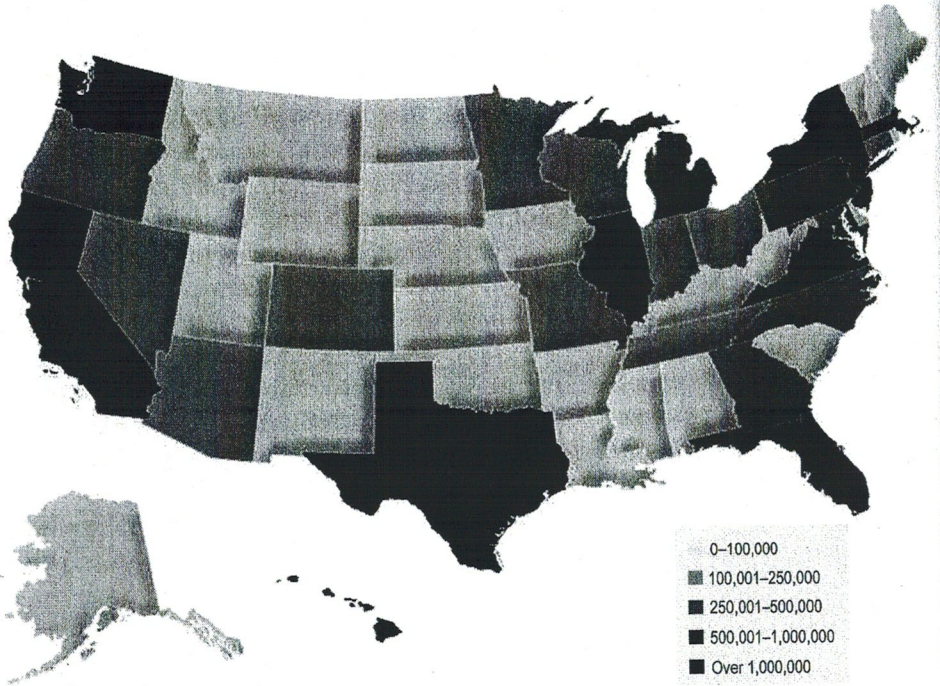
Although the number of Asian Americans alone or in combination with other racial groups is growing in all parts of the country, the fastest growth

FIGURE 1.4
Representation of Asian Americans by Geographic Region, 2000 and 2010



Note: Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2011).

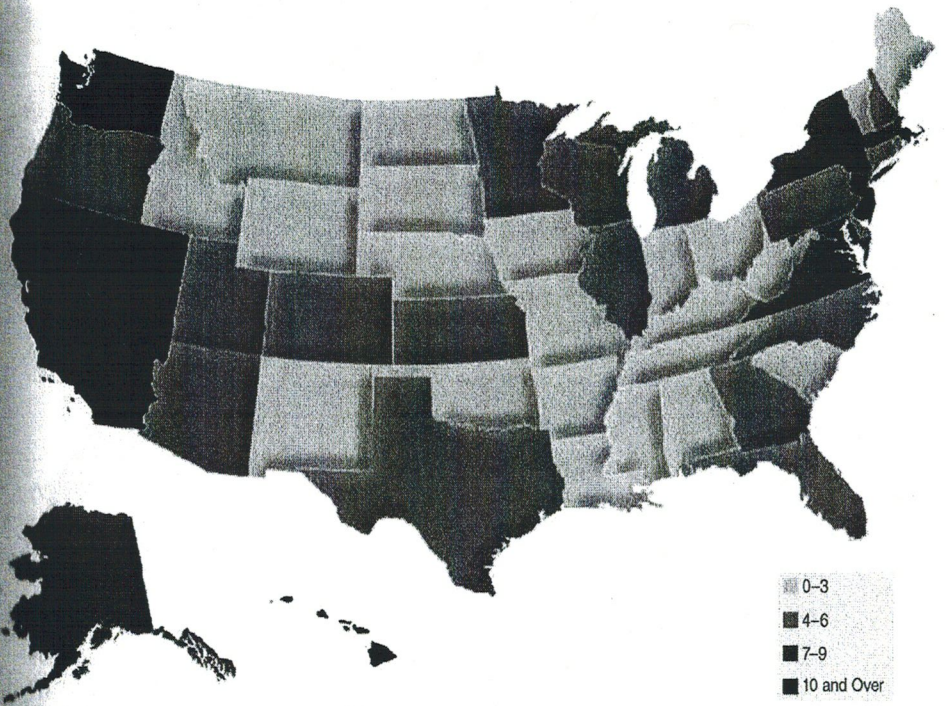
FIGURE 1.5
Representation of Asian Americans in Raw Numbers by State



Note: Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2012a).

is occurring in the Southern states. The Asian American alone or in combination with other racial groups population grew by 69% in the South, 48% in the Midwest, 45% in the Northeast, and 36% in the West. Figure 1.7 shows the rates of growth of the Asian American alone or in combination with other races population by state. Darker states signify faster growth. Between 2000 and 2010, the share of the population composed of Asian Americans alone or in combination with other racial groups grew in every state in the country. In fact, Hawaii was the only state in which the Asian American alone or in combination with other racial groups population did not grow by at least 25%. However, as mentioned, the fastest growth occurred in the South. In fact, 5 of the 10 states with the fastest growing Asian American alone or in combination with other racial groups populations were in the South (i.e., North Carolina, Delaware, Arkansas, Florida, and Texas),

FIGURE 1.6
Representation of Asian Americans in Percentages by State



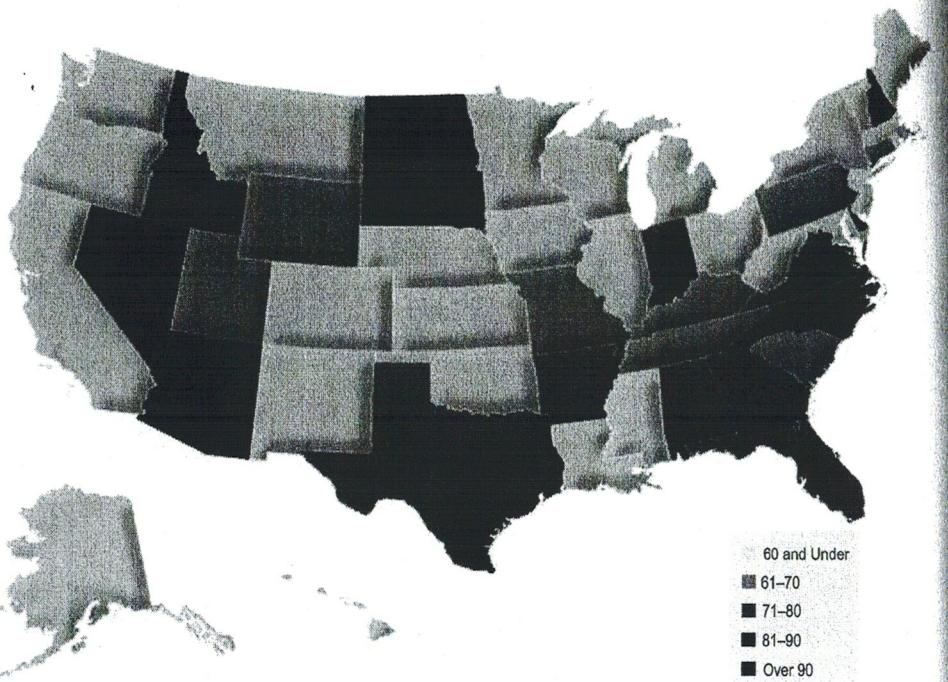
Note: Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2012a).

2 were in the West (Nevada and Arizona), 2 were in the Midwest (North Dakota and Indiana), and 1 was in the Northeast (New Hampshire). The fastest growth occurred in Nevada (116%), Arizona (95%), North Carolina (85%), North Dakota (85%), New Hampshire (80%), Delaware (78%), Arkansas (77%), Indiana (74%), Florida (72%), and Texas (72%).

Pacific Islanders Are Concentrated in the West and Growing Fastest in the South

Pacific Islanders are also largely concentrated in the West. Figure 1.8 shows the proportion of the Pacific Islander alone or in combination with other racial groups population located in the four major geographic regions of the country in 2000 and 2010. These figures illustrate that more than two-thirds of the Pacific Islander alone or in combination with other racial groups'

FIGURE 1.7
Rate of Growth of Asian Americans in Percentages by State, 2000–2010

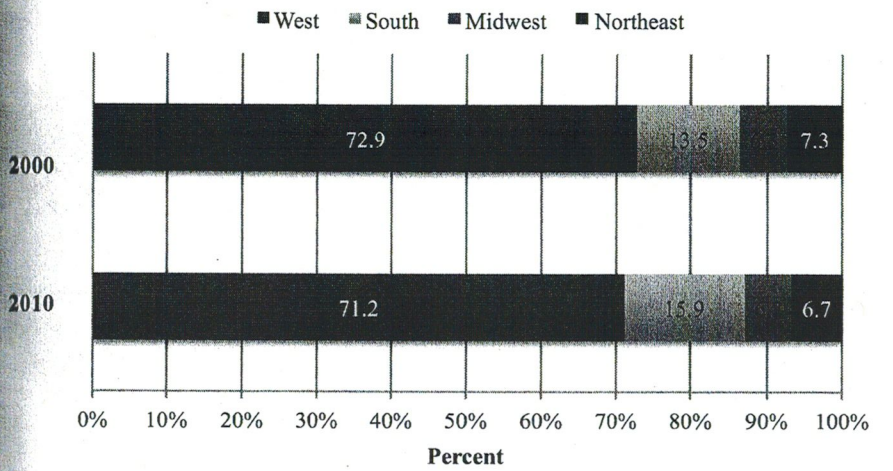


Note: Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2012a).

population reside in Western states. Because Pacific Islanders make up such a small proportion of the national population, their share of each state's population is not presented here. However, figure 1.9 shows the representation of Pacific Islanders alone or in combination with other racial groups in raw numbers by state. Four of the eight states with the largest Pacific Islander populations are located in the West. Specifically, the states with the largest Pacific Islander alone or in combination with other racial groups populations were Hawaii (more than 280,000), California (more than 220,000), Washington (more than 42,000), Texas (more than 29,000), New York (more than 28,000), Florida (just under 24,000), and Utah (more than 21,000).

Although the number of individuals identifying as Pacific Islanders alone or in combination with other races grew at the second fastest rate of all racial groups, similar to Asian Americans, much of this growth took place in the

FIGURE 1.8
Representation of Pacific Islanders by Geographic Region, 2000 and 2010



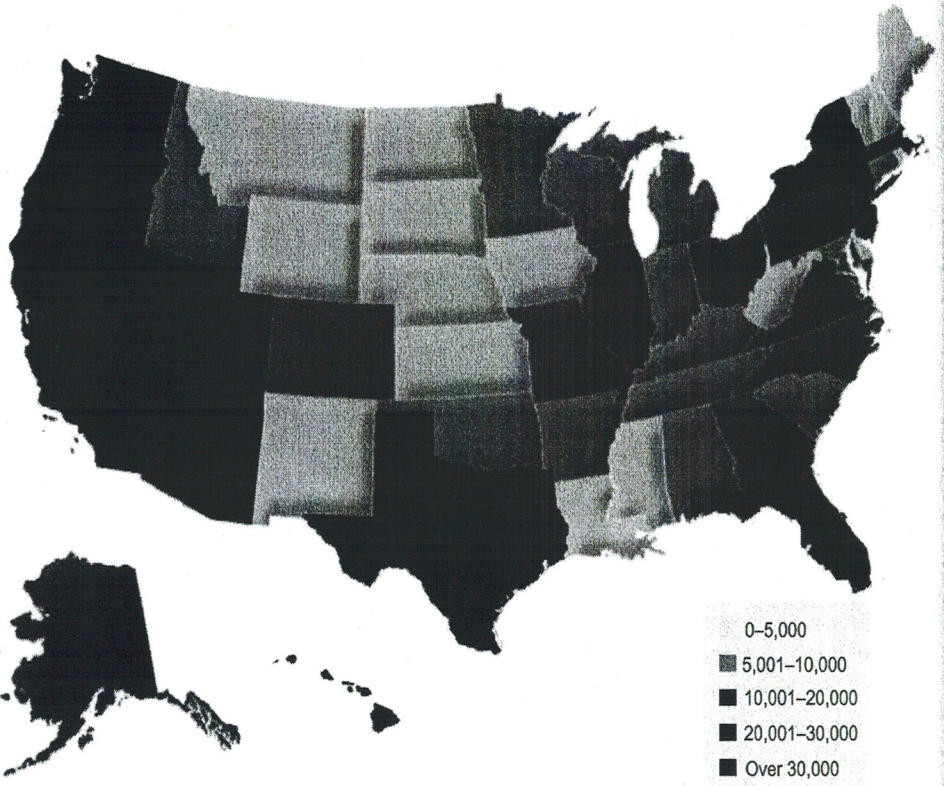
Note: Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2012b).

South. The proportion of Pacific Islanders alone or in combination with other racial groups who lived in the South increased from 2000 to 2010 (13.5 to 15.9), whereas the proportion residing in the other three regions declined in that same time frame. Between 2000 and 2010, the Pacific Islander alone or in combination with other racial groups population grew by 66% in the South, 37% in the West and Midwest, and 29% in the Northeast. Figure 1.10 shows the rate of growth in percentages by state, between 2000 and 2010, and indicates that 4 of the 10 states with the fastest growth were located in the South (Arkansas, Alabama, Delaware, and North Carolina), and 5 were in the West (Nevada, Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, and Wyoming), and 1 was located in the Midwest (Iowa). The 10 states with the fastest growth rates among Pacific Islanders were Arkansas (150%), Nevada (102%), Alaska (102%), Alabama (87%), Arizona (87%), Delaware (81%), Idaho (79%), Iowa (75%), Wyoming (73%), and North Carolina (72%).

Diversity of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Population

Before moving forward to discuss the inequalities that exist within the Asian American and Pacific Islander populations, it is important to include a word

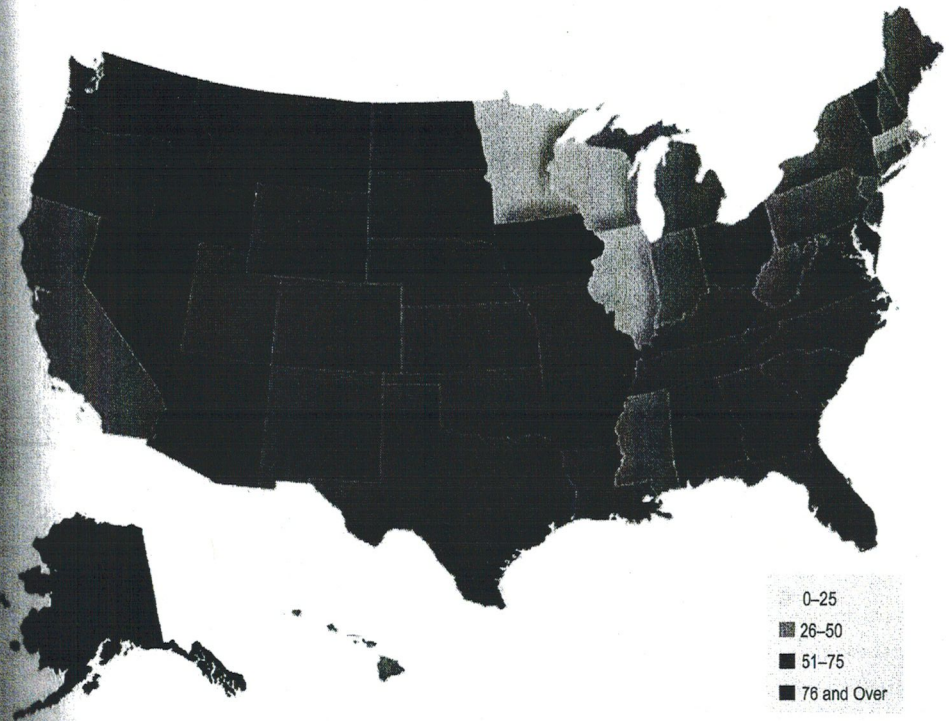
FIGURE 1.9
Representation of Pacific Islanders in Raw Numbers by State



Note: Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2012b).

about the vast diversity that exists within the AAPI population.[4] The 2010 census identified 25 distinct Asian American ethnic groups and 24 distinct Pacific Islander ethnic categories. The 10 largest Asian American groups composed the vast majority of the total Asian American population in 2010 and are displayed in figure 1.11. Specifically, Chinese Americans were the largest population, and they made up 22% of the Asian American population, followed by Filipino (20%), Asian Indian (18%), Vietnamese (10%), Korean (10%), Japanese (8%), Pakistani (2%), Cambodian (2%), Hmong (2%), and Thai (1%) Americans. In addition, the six largest Pacific Islander groups in 2010 are shown in figure 1.12. Native Hawaiians (43%) were the

FIGURE 1.10
Rate of Growth of Pacific Islanders in Percentages by State, 2000–2010



Note: Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2012b).

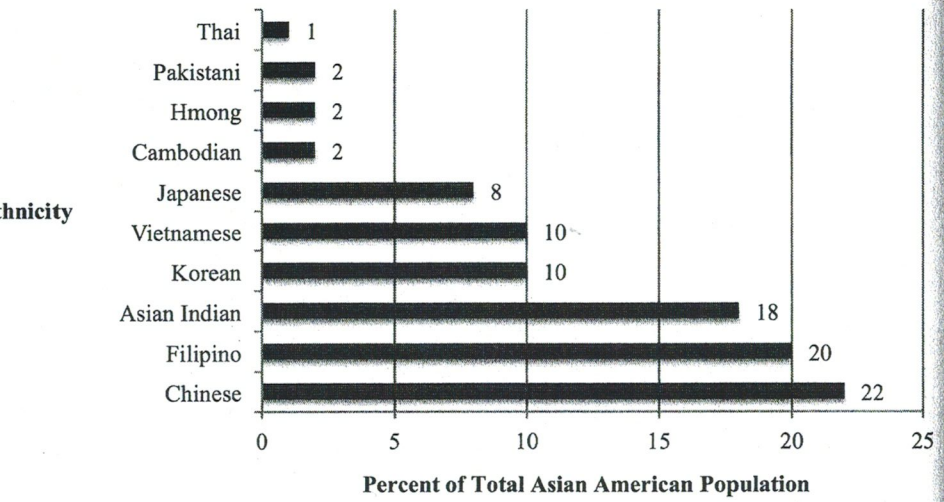
largest Pacific Islander group, followed by Samoans (15%), Guamanians or Chamorros (12%), Tongans (5%), Fijians (3%), and Other Micronesians (2%).[5]

As is shown in the following section, when this diversity is taken into account, some of the most recent and comprehensive national statistics on ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment reveal drastic inequalities. It is to these inequalities that I now turn.

Inequalities in the Asian American and Pacific Islander Population

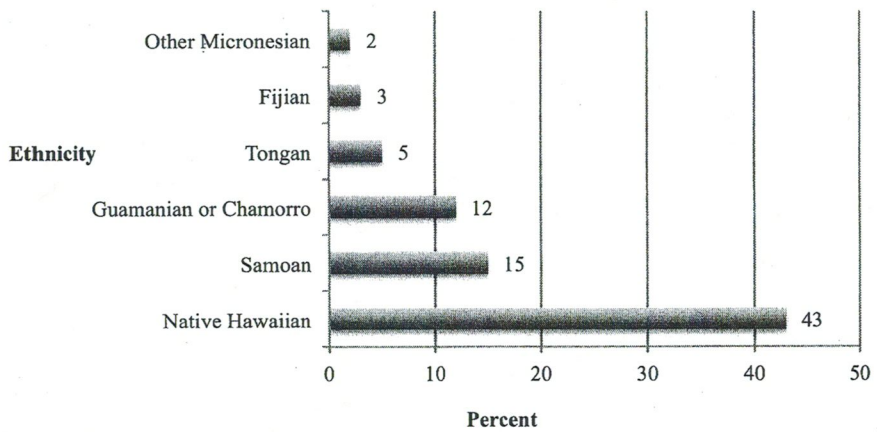
The many different ethnic groups mentioned in the previous section live within unique social contexts and exhibit varying rates of degree attainment

FIGURE 1.11
Ten Largest Asian American Ethnic Groups and Their Share of the Total Asian American Population



Note: Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2011).

FIGURE 1.12
Six Largest Pacific Islander Ethnic Groups and Their Share of the Total Pacific Islander Population



Note: Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2012b).

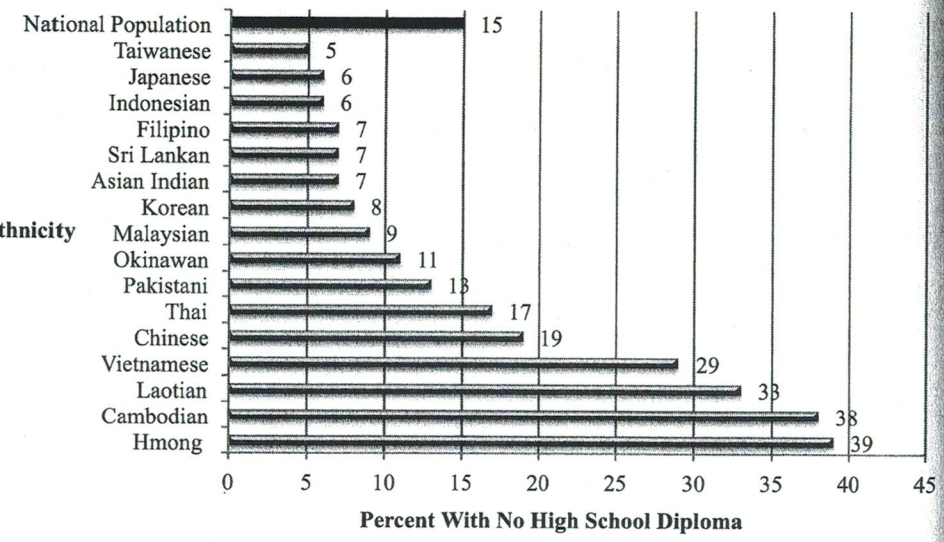
and wealth. Data from the American Community Survey were used to estimate and analyze these disparities. In this section, I provide an overview of ethnic disparities in educational attainment, occupational attainment, and socioeconomic status, as well as socioeconomic disparities in educational attainment.[6]

Ethnic Inequalities in Educational Attainment

Recent national data on educational attainment rates indicate that several Asian American groups lag behind the national population. Figures 1.13 and 1.14 include data by ethnicity on the percentage of Asian Americans (25 years old and over) who have not earned a high school diploma and who have earned a bachelor's degree, respectively. Of the 16 Asian American ethnic groups in figure 1.13, 6 are more likely to have dropped out of school before earning a high school diploma than the overall national population. In contrast, Hmong (39%), Cambodian (38%), Laotian (33%), and Vietnamese (29%) Americans are about or more than twice as likely than the national population (15%) and as much as five times more likely than other Asian American ethnic groups (e.g., Taiwanese at 5%) to have dropped out of school before earning a high school diploma. When Asian American bachelor's degree completion rates are disaggregated, they also reveal drastic ethnic disparities (see figure 1.14). Whereas Asian Indian (76%) and Taiwanese (72%) Americans hold baccalaureate degrees at more than twice the rate of the national population, Hmong (14%), Cambodian (13%), and Laotian (12%) Americans hold bachelor's degrees at less than half the rate of the overall population (28%).

Figures 1.15 and 1.16 display the percentages of Pacific Islanders (25 years of age or older) who have not earned a high school diploma and who have attained a bachelor's degree, respectively. When national data on Pacific Islanders are disaggregated, they reveal ethnic disparities in educational attainment as well. Indeed, some Pacific Islander groups suffer from both racial and ethnic disparities when compared with the overall national population and from ethnic disparities within the Pacific Islander category. Other Micronesians (20%), Tongans (21%), and Fijians (24%) are all more likely than the overall national population and more than twice as likely as some other Pacific Islanders to have dropped out before earning a high school diploma (figure 1.15). When examining college completion, all seven of the largest Pacific Islander groups are less likely to hold a bachelor's degree than the overall national population (figure 1.16). In fact, Guamanians (13%),

FIGURE 1.13
Percent of Asian Americans Without High School Diploma by Ethnicity



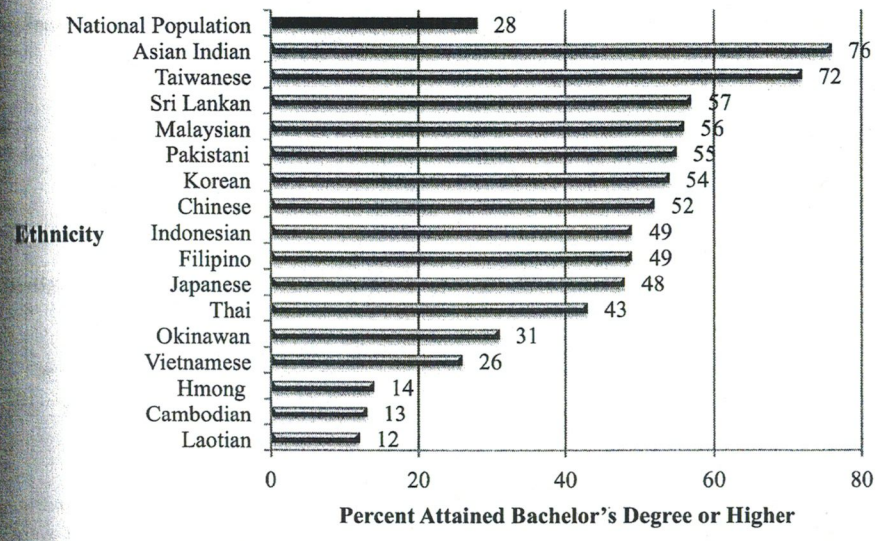
Note: Data Source: Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS): 2006–2010, 5-year estimates. Appropriate sample weights were applied, and individuals 25 and over were included in the analysis.

Tongans (11%), Fijians (11%), Samoans (10%), and Other Micronesians (4%) all hold bachelor's degrees at less than half the rate of the national population (28%).

Ethnic Inequalities in Occupational Attainment

Just as the disaggregation of national data reveals that ethnic disparities exist in educational attainment, such disaggregated analyses illuminate inequalities in the attainment of jobs and disparities in the acquisition of jobs in various professions. Regarding the former, figures 1.17 and 1.18 show the average unemployment rate for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (25 years old or over). Among Asian Americans, there are significant disparities in unemployment, with some groups (e.g., Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian Americans) having higher unemployment rates than the total national average (7.9%) and others being well under the national rate. Moreover, Laotian and Hmong (9%) Americans are three times as likely and Cambodian Americans (8%) are more than twice as likely to be unemployed than

FIGURE 1.14
Percent of Asian Americans With Bachelor's Degree by Ethnicity

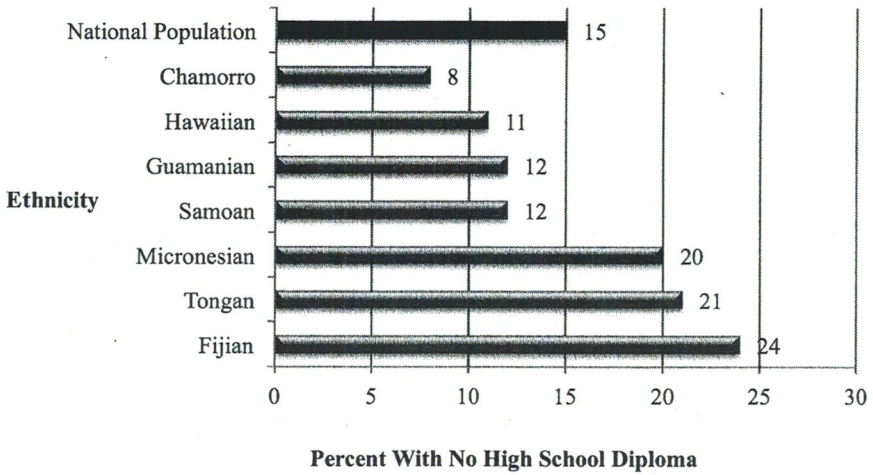


Note: Data Source: Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS): 2006–2010, 5-year estimates. Appropriate sample weights were applied, and individuals 25 and over were included in the analysis.

Japanese and Okinawan persons (3%). Pacific Islanders exhibit relatively high unemployment rates, with four out of the seven Pacific Islander ethnic groups included in figure 1.18 exhibiting rates above the overall national average: Tongans (12.3), Samoans (11.2), Fijians (8.7), and Chamorros (8.3). Moreover, there are differences across ethnic groups in this population as well, with Tongans (12%) and Samoans (11%) significantly more likely to be unemployed than Guamanians and Other Micronesians (7%).

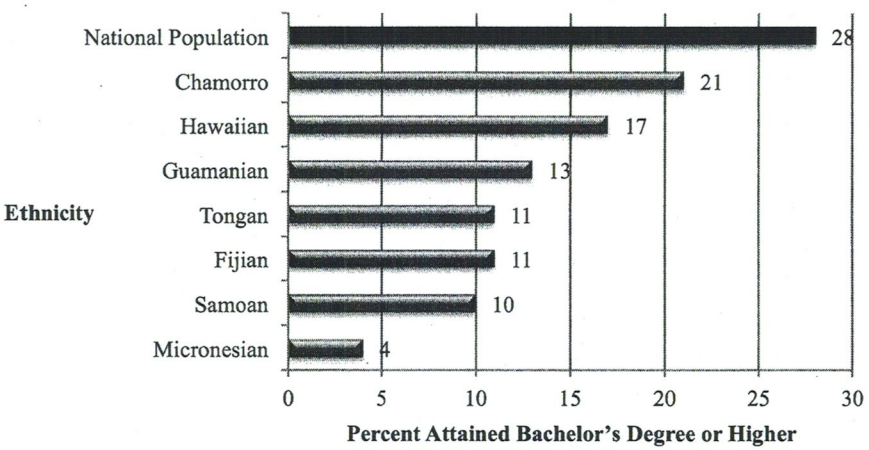
Regarding career types, there are significant disparities across professions among Asian Americans 25 years of age or older (figure 1.19). Specifically, several East and South Asian American groups are highly represented in business and management, as well as health and science fields, compared with Southeast Asian Americans. For example, approximately 23% of Taiwanese and 22% of Japanese Americans have careers in business and management, and fewer than 8% of Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian populations have careers in this area. Similarly, more than 20% of Asian Indian and Filipino Americans have careers in the health and science fields, compared with fewer than 7% of Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong populations. In

FIGURE 1.15
Percent of Pacific Islanders Without High School Diploma by Ethnicity



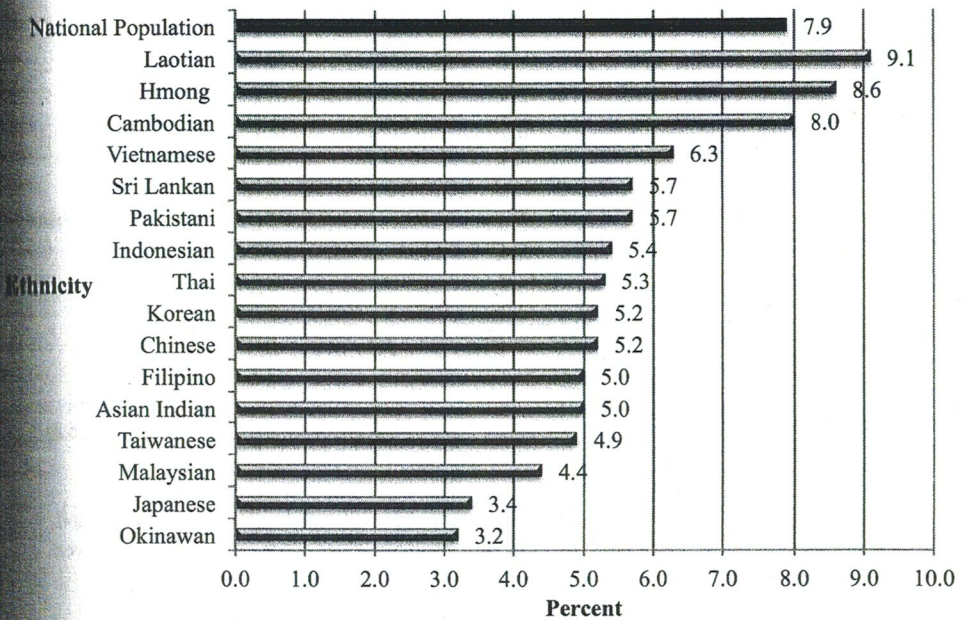
Note: Data Source: Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS): 2006–2010, 5-year estimates. Appropriate sample weights were applied, and individuals 25 years of age and over were included in the analysis.

FIGURE 1.16
Percent of Pacific Islanders With Bachelor's Degree by Ethnicity



Note: Data Source: Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS): 2006–2010, 5-year estimates. Appropriate sample weights were applied, and individuals 25 years of age and over were included in the analysis.

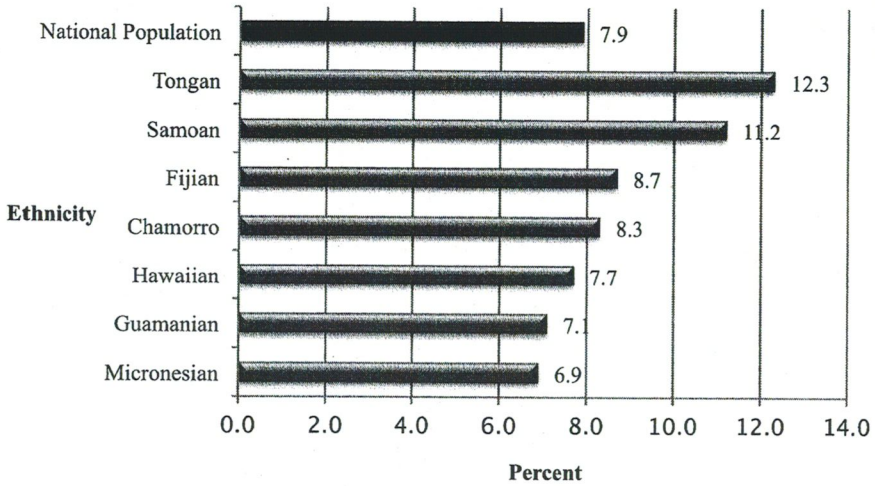
FIGURE 1.17
Unemployment Among Asian Americans by Ethnicity



Note: Data Source: Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS): 2006–2010, 5-year estimates. Appropriate sample weights were applied, and individuals 25 years of age and over were included in the analysis.

contrast, 46% of Laotian, 43% of Hmong, and 38% of Cambodian Americans have careers in production and transportation. Data on Pacific Islanders show that all ethnic groups within this category are more likely to be in the production and transportation industry than in business and management or health and science (figure 1.20). However, again, ethnic disparities exist within the Pacific Islander population, with Chamorro (14%) and Guamanian (13%) groups more likely than Hawaiians (9%), Fijians (8%), Samoans (7%), Tongans (7%), and Other Micronesians (3%) to be in business and management. In addition, Fijians (11%) and Tongans (10%) are more likely to be in health and science fields than Samoans (7%), Hawaiians (7%), Guamanians (6%), Chamorro Islanders (6%), or Other Micronesians (4%). Other Micronesians are the most likely to be in production and transportation positions (24%), followed by Fijians and Samoans (23%), Guamanians

FIGURE 1.18
Unemployment Among Pacific Islanders by Ethnicity



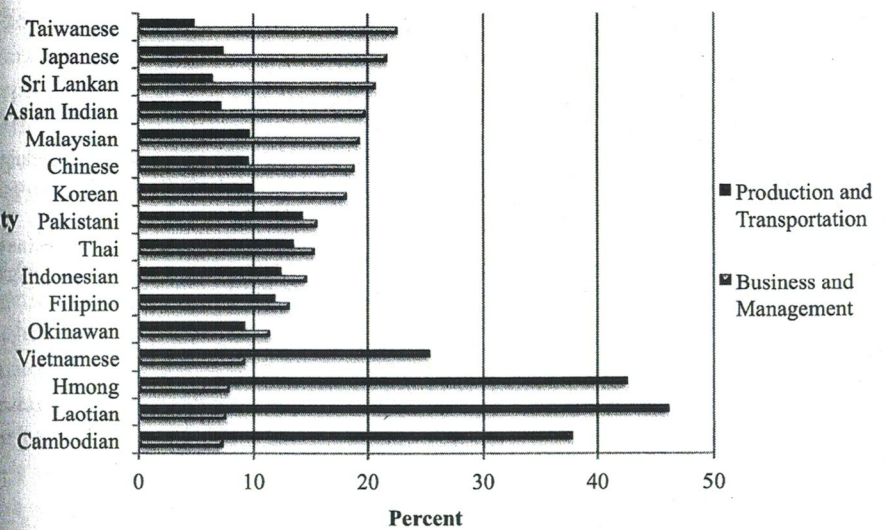
Note: Data Source: Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS): 2006–2010, 5-year estimates. Appropriate sample weights were applied, and individuals 25 years of age and over were included in the analysis.

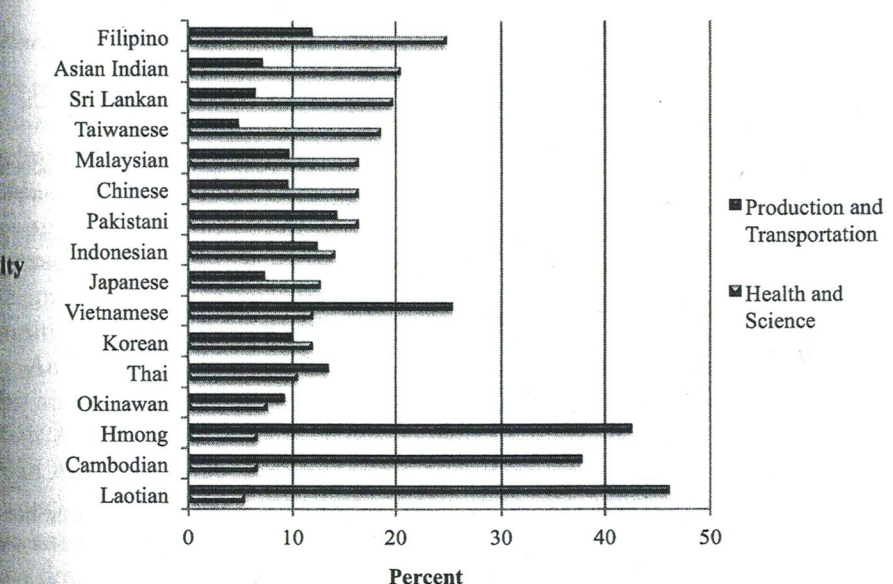
and Tongans (17%), and Chamorro Islanders and Hawaiians (16%). Of course, the significance of these disparities in part lies in the fact that East and South Asian American groups are more likely to be in professions that are much more lucrative and associated with higher levels of socioeconomic status, which is the focus of the next section.

Ethnic Inequalities in Socioeconomic Status

Just as ethnic disparities in educational and occupational attainment exist within the AAPI population, a critical examination of this group also reveals that ethnic inequalities in socioeconomic status are also evident. Indeed, different ethnic populations also vary drastically in socioeconomic status, with some reporting annual individual earnings that are far above the national average and others facing significant economic disparities. Figures 1.21 and 1.22 show the mean earnings of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (25 years of age or over) by ethnic group, between 2006 and 2010, when adjusted for inflation. On average, Asian Indians ($50,988) and Sri Lankans ($43,283) report earnings that are approximately $22,000 and $15,000 above

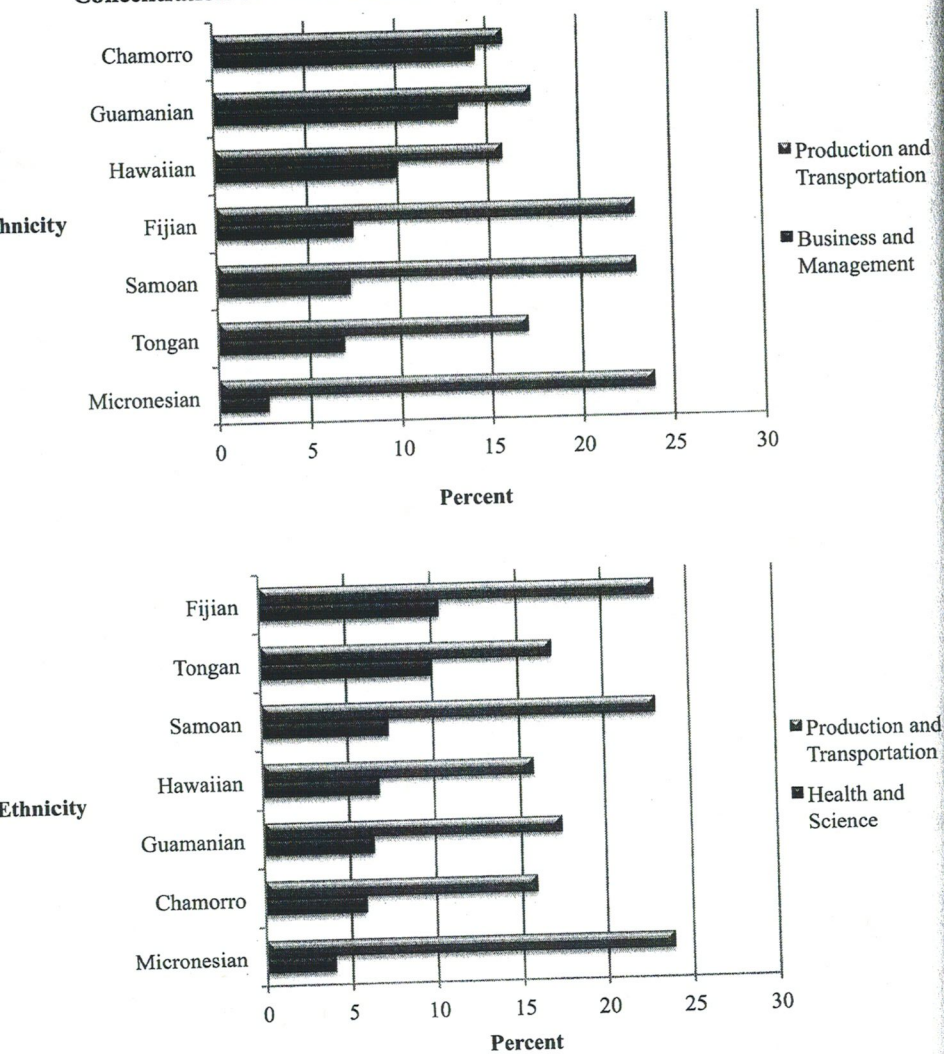
FIGURE 1.19
Concentration of Asian Americans in Professional Fields by Ethnicity





Note: Data Source: Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS): 2006–2010, 5-year estimates. Appropriate sample weights were applied, and individuals 25 years of age and over were included in the analysis.

FIGURE 1.20
Concentration of Pacific Islanders in Professional Fields by Ethnicity



Note: Data Source: Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS): 2006–2010, 5-year estimates. Appropriate sample weights were applied, and individuals 25 years of age and over were included in the analysis.

the national average ($28,452), respectively. In contrast, Hmong ($19,053), Cambodian ($20,737), Laotian ($22,111), Thai ($24,509), Vietnamese ($26,352), Okinawan ($27,162), and Indonesian ($28,251) Americans all have average annual earnings that are below the national average. Moreover, these disparities are quite substantial for some groups. For example, Hmong and Cambodian Americans report average annual earnings of approximately $19,000 (67% of the national average) and $21,000 (73% of the national average), respectively.

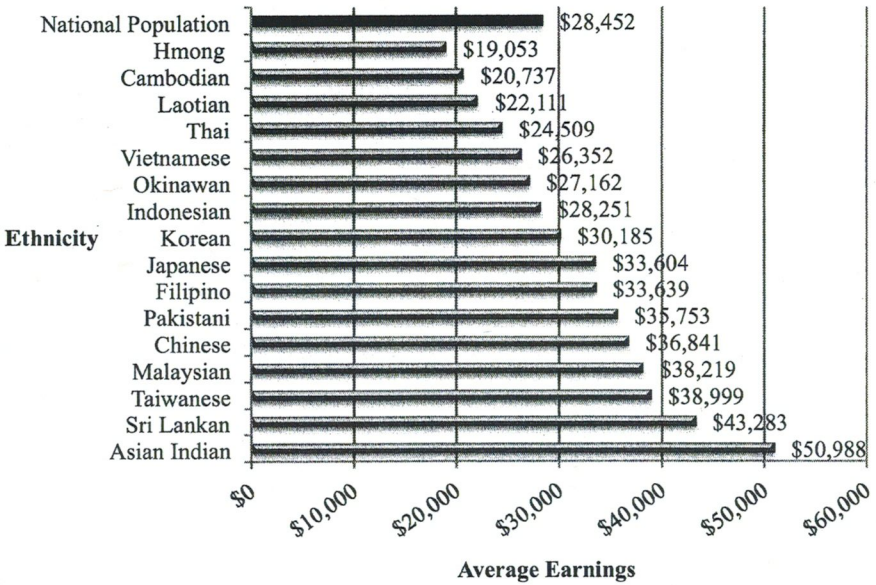
Some Pacific Islanders have average earnings higher than the national average as well, although those differences are minimal (figure 1.22). Guamanians ($28,995) and Chamorro Islanders ($29,919) have earnings slightly higher than the national average. In contrast, Native Hawaiians ($26,826), Samoans ($23,402), Fijians ($23,383), Tongans ($18,392), and Other Micronesians ($15,492) have average annual earnings that are well below the national average. Other Micronesians exhibit the lowest average annual earnings of all Asian American or Pacific Islander populations—amounting to just 54% of the average earnings reported by all populations across the nation.

Educational Inequalities in Socioeconomic Status

It is relatively common knowledge that those who have higher levels of educational attainment have higher earning potential in the job market. Nevertheless, examining economic earnings by varying levels of educational attainment can help us understand the extent of the impact that education has on future earnings. Moreover, such analyses among AAPIs can further demystify the belief that they are all economically successful and highlight the importance of considering the needs of individuals within these communities.

An analysis of average annual earnings by education level among those who are at or above the age of 25 also reveals drastic disparities within both Asian American and Pacific Islander populations (figure 1.23). On average, Asian Americans with a professional degree ($92,188) earn more than twice as much annually as those with a bachelor's degree ($40,622), more than five times as much as those with a high school diploma ($16,486), and more than nine times more than those with no high school diploma ($8,935). On average, Asian Americans with a bachelor's degree earn approximately 2.5 times as much as those with a high school diploma and 4.5 times as much as those with no high school diploma. Among Pacific Islanders, those with a doctoral

FIGURE 1.21
Asian Americans' Average Annual Earnings by Ethnicity

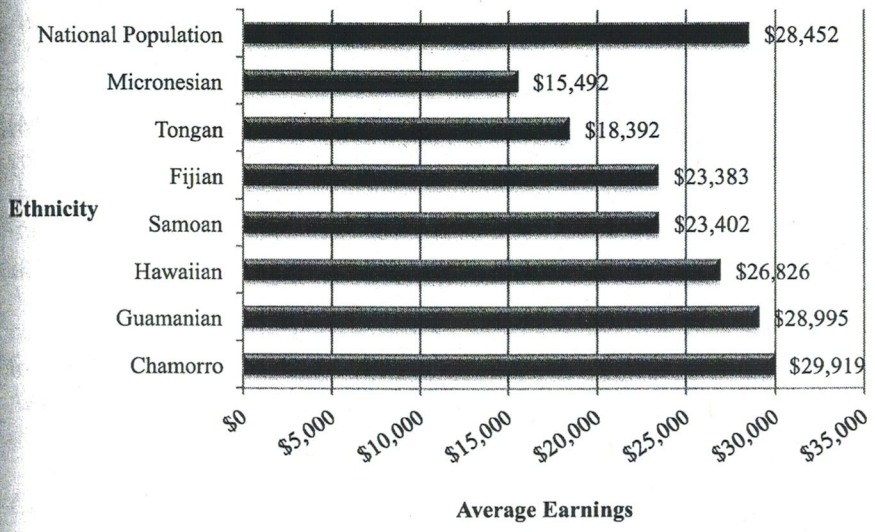


Note: Data Source: Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS): 2006–2010, 5-year estimates. Appropriate sample weights were applied, and individuals 25 and over were included in the analysis. Earnings were adjusted for inflation and are expressed in 2010 dollars.

degree ($64,688) have average annual earnings that are 61% more than those with a bachelor's degree ($39,748), more than three times as much as those with a high school diploma ($20,513), and more than five times as much as those without a high school diploma ($12,383). In addition, on average, Pacific Islanders who have attained a bachelor's degree report earnings that are almost twice as much as those reported by Pacific Islanders with a high school diploma and more than three times as much as those with no high school diploma.

It is important to note that ethnic and socioeconomic inequalities within the AAPI population are geographically context-specific. That is, although the preceding statistics illuminate disparities nationally, the nature of these inequalities might vary across specific geographic regions within the United States. We can examine disparities in Hawaii, for example, to demonstrate this geographic region-specificity. Among Southeast Asian Americans in Hawaii, disaggregated data show that Cambodian (27%), Laotian (14%),

FIGURE 1.22
Pacific Islanders' Average Annual Earnings by Ethnicity



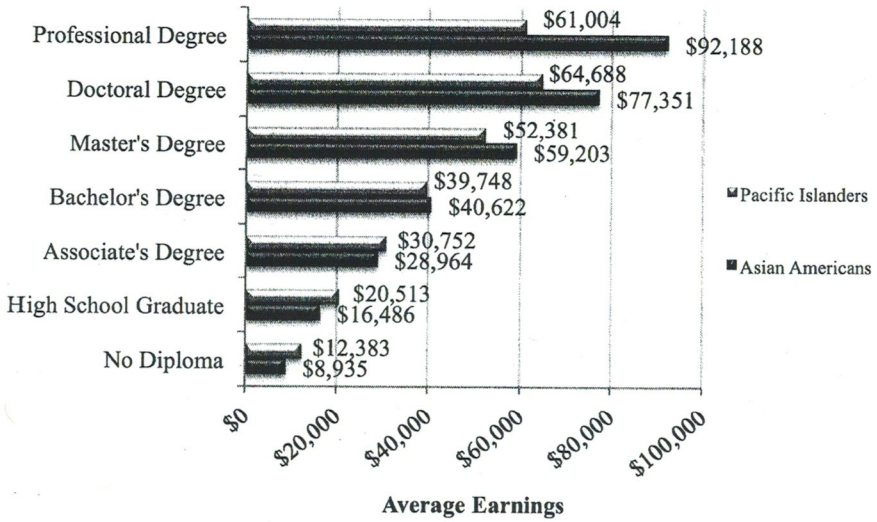
Note: Data Source: Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS): 2006–2010, 5-year estimates. Appropriate sample weights were applied, and individuals 25 and over were included in the analysis. Earnings were adjusted for inflation and are expressed in 2010 dollars.

and Vietnamese (12%) Americans earn baccalaureate degrees at rates below the national average. These inequalities are congruent with the national figures just discussed, although the rate of bachelor's degree attainment among Cambodians is much higher in Hawaii than across the nation. Among Pacific Islanders in Hawaii, Fijians (18%), Guamanians (15%), Native Hawaiians (14%), Chamorro Islanders (11%), Samoans (8%), Tongans (8%), and Other Micronesians (5%) also exhibit bachelor's degree attainment rates below the national average. These inequalities are slightly different from, but consistent with, national statistics as well. However, inconsistent with the national figures previously discussed is the fact that in Hawaii, Filipino (18%) and Sri Lankan (17%) Americans also attain degrees at rates well below the national average.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis makes one reality clear: It is no longer acceptable to racially exclude AAPIs from higher education research, policy, and practice.

FIGURE 1.23
Asian American and Pacific Islanders' Average Annual Earnings by Degree



Note: Data Source: Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS): 2006–2010, 5-year estimates. Appropriate sample weights were applied, and individuals 25 and over were included in the analysis. Earnings were adjusted for inflation and are expressed in 2010 dollars.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the fastest growing racial groups in the nation and, as such, will be enrolling in colleges and universities in increasing numbers in the years to come. Moreover, many AAPI subgroups suffer from disparities in educational attainment and wealth. Thus, it is the social and moral obligation of higher education scholars to advance knowledge on these populations and the responsibility of postsecondary education policy makers and practitioners to help better understand and serve these communities. Accordingly, I conclude this chapter with a few implications for advancing research to inform policy and practice focused on AAPIs.

Foster and Pursue a National Research Agenda

It is imperative that higher education scholars, policy makers, and practitioners clarify the research needs of the AAPI education community and establish and organize around an agenda to meet these needs. Although the AAPI research community has historically lacked a collective agenda, in October 2012, more than a dozen AAPI scholars participated in an AAPI

educational research summit in Honolulu, Hawaii, that was aimed at establishing a national research-focused coalition of AAPIs in education called the Asian American and Pacific Islander Research Coalition (ARC) and crafting a national research agenda that is designed to reflect and respond to the voices and needs of geographically and ethnically diverse AAPI communities (Museus et al., forthcoming). This national agenda is the first step in the collective mobilization of the AAPI research community in education and the collaborative declaration of future critical directions for advancing knowledge on these communities. However, although ARC's national agenda can provide an important initial direction for future work on the AAPI population, it is important to continue such conversations about the research needs of AAPIs in education to maintain a clear and evolving vision for how scholars can pursue work that informs the larger knowledge base on AAPIs in education, as well as policy and practice that are aimed at serving this population.

Collect Large-Scale and High-Quality Disaggregated Data

Although the U.S. Census Bureau now collects data that can be disaggregated and analyzed in the preceding ways, the utility of such analyses in understanding a wide array of educational experiences and outcomes is limited. Most large-scale national education data sets that can be used to understand such experiences and outcomes currently are inadequate for disaggregating and analyzing AAPIs in complex ways. However, in a very positive development, the U.S. Department of Education has recently requested information on challenges and promising practices related to collecting data on AAPIs. If the department is able to craft an effective plan to disaggregate and analyze large-scale data on AAPIs, such efforts could have an enormously positive impact on advancing knowledge of AAPI needs and experiences. And, if other research institutions that collect national data in postsecondary education, such as the University of California–Los Angeles's Higher Education Research Institute and the National Survey of Student Engagement, can eventually engage in similar efforts, many opportunities for advancing knowledge on AAPIs could be realized.

Indeed, there is a need for large-scale data that permits the analysis of specific ethnic populations. Similarly, there is a desperate need for data that allow researchers to disaggregate by nativity and citizenship (i.e., foreign-born) and socioeconomic status. Until higher education researchers are able to conduct such disaggregated analyses, we will only have a partial picture of

AAPI students' access to college, experiences in higher education, or actual rates of success.

Conduct Research on Underserved Populations

It is critical for higher education scholars to advance knowledge of the most underserved AAPI populations in postsecondary education. Despite the fact that the preceding analyses show that Southeast Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders suffer from drastic inequalities—disparities greater than those faced by other ethnic groups—there is scant literature for higher education policy makers and practitioners to use as resources to help them understand how they can better serve these populations. Similarly, the large numbers of low-income AAPIs that seek to enroll in and graduate from higher education are not represented in higher education research and discourse, and knowledge of these groups is also critical to educators' ability to meet their needs. Indeed, college educators who might be working with Pacific Islander undergraduates in Washington, Hmong college students in Minnesota, or low-income Chinese Americans in Boston have few resources to which they can turn to help them better understand the needs of these diverse communities. Therefore, it is critical that higher education researchers generate a knowledge base that can help advance current levels of understanding regarding how to serve these populations effectively.

Broaden Focus to Examine Diverse Outcomes

One of the many factors that have contributed to the dismissal of AAPIs from higher education research and discourse is the disproportionate emphasis on college degree completion as the primary, and sometimes the only, worthy measure of success (Museus, 2009b; Museus & Kiang, 2009). In my own work, AAPI students have clarified that the attainment of a degree is only one of many measures of success. Among other measures that they note as being important are health and well-being, learning and development, the acquisition of leadership skills, the ability to graduate and find a job in a professional field that will make them happy, and the ability to acquire the tools to accomplish goals that have a positive impact on their communities. There are few available data that can help us measure these diverse educational outcomes. Yet, if we are to truly and authentically understand whether higher education is serving AAPI populations effectively, then research that refocuses college success discourse on these varied measures of achievement and examines these outcomes is absolutely essential.

As increasing numbers of AAPIs enter institutions of higher education, it is indeed the best of times and the worst of times. Given recent developments and growing interest in understanding AAPIs, it is a time full of promise. However, given the lack of authentic understandings of AAPIs and the fact that college educators are ill equipped to serve these communities, it is a time full of uncertainty. Higher education scholars, policy makers, and practitioners must strategically develop an agenda for addressing these significant problems and engage in an endeavor to generate a substantial and informative knowledge base on this population.

Notes

1. The term *Asian American* refers to people with origins in Asia, including Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. The *Pacific Islander* category includes individuals with origins in the Pacific, including Hawaii, Fiji, Guam, Samoa, Tahiti, Tonga, and other Pacific Islands (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011, 2012a, 2012b).

2. Two types of census racial categorization are used in this analysis. The (1) "Asian American alone" and "Pacific Islander alone" categories encompass those who only identify with the focal racial group, and (2) the "Asian alone or in combination" and "Pacific Islander alone or in combination" labels are used to refer to both individuals who only identified with the focal racial group and those who identified with the focal racial group and one or more additional racial groups.

3. The Northeast census region encompasses Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The Midwest region encompasses Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The South region refers to Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. The West census region encompasses Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011, 2012a, 2012b).

4. When interpreting statistics in the "Diversity of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Population" section, it is important to note that these figures include those who selected the focal ethnicity "alone or in combination" with another racial or ethnic group. If researchers analyze those who identified only as the focal ethnicity, then they could generate different results from those presented herein.

5. For purposes of this chapter, the categories "Other Micronesian" and "Micronesian" are used interchangeably, to refer to those who identified as "Micronesian," but did not specify a major ethnic subgroup within that category (e.g., Chamorro, Marshallese, Palauan, Chuukese).

6. When interpreting statistics in the "Inequalities in the Asian American and Pacific Islander Population" section, it is important to note that these figures include

those who selected only the focal ethnicity. If researchers analyze those who identified as the focal ethnicity "alone or in combination" with another racial or ethnic group, then they could generate different results from those presented herein.

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