

Southeast Asians, School Segregation, and Postsecondary Outcomes

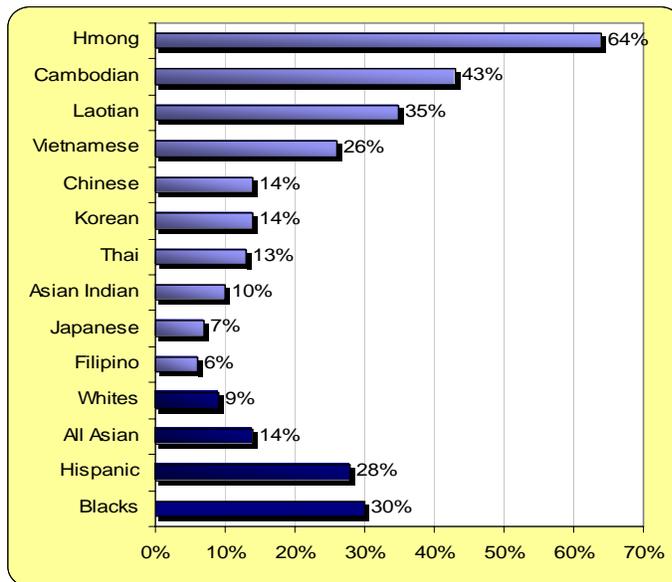
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Overview

Since the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision in 1954, the influx of new immigrant populations has changed the face of America resulting in an increasingly diverse school population. Given the changing demographics of our nation, including emerging Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI)¹ immigrant and refugee populations, it is important to examine the educational experiences and outcomes for various underrepresented populations who have often been overlooked in broader debates on educational equity related to segregation. This brief describes trends in educational inequity related to ethnic segregation among emerging Southeast Asian immigrant and refugee student populations in California.

Social Context: Poverty, Immigration Status, Language, and Residential Segregation

National Poverty Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 2000²



It is important to examine access to higher education in the context of how resources and social networks in schools translate into educational mobility, and how these resources can vary between and among ethnic sub-populations that comprise the larger Asian American racial category.

If you look at the national poverty rates among different Asian American sub-groups, you see dramatic differences among the population, especially when you compare Southeast Asians to other Asian American populations. For many Southeast Asians, the poverty rate is at or above that of African Americans and Latinos.

A recent study found that Southeast Asian high school students were very sympathetic to their family's economic situation and were likely to alter their postsecondary goals accordingly³. Hmong students often made choices about college that placed their familial needs first and their education second. Some planned to attend college close to home, work extra hours to support their family, or chose institutions with lower tuition, such as community colleges. Moreover, many of the Hmong families lacked resources to pay for expenses, such as application fees, books, and transportation.

Another factor that was important to consider among these ethnic groups was the family composition. Immigrant families can take many forms other than the traditional U.S. nuclear construct. This is particularly true of Vietnamese and Hmong families when you look at with whom they live. A recent study found that for Vietnamese students, the average number of persons per student household was 4.9, with one household consisting of 13 persons. Among the Hmong respondents, there was an average of 8.5 persons per household, with one student living in a household with 16 persons. For Hmongs, the high number of people per household can be partially attributed to Hmong culture. In many cases, the households of Hmong students included the immediate nuclear family (parents and children), in addition to grandparents, the wives of the sons in the family, and other relatives.

The social context is particularly compelling when you consider the resources and opportunities available to students in their schools. In essence, the students with the least information, guidance, and opportunities at home or in their communities are also the least likely to attend schools with the fewest resources to address such problems.

Residential Segregation and the Asian American Population in California

California is home to the largest APA population among all states with 4.3 million residents representing 12.5 percent of the state’s population. The sheer volume of Asian Americans has resulted in a sizeable population within the public school sector in California. California, like many other states in the U.S. has seen a reemergence of neighborhood segregation, which has resulted in a number of schools that are highly concentrated with APA students.

Table X. Southeast Asian Population in California and Select Cities, 2000⁴

	Vietnamese	Cambodian	Hmong	Laotian	Total SEA Population	Total APA Population	% of APA Population Comprised of SEAs
California	280,223	68,190	46,892	58,058	453,363	2,845,659	15.9
Fresno	1,724	3,712	16,556	7,751	29,743	44,358	67.1
Long Beach	5,112	17,468	271	841	23,692	58,266	40.7
Westminster	11,376	153	36	166	11,731	17,612	66.6

Driven by the historical residential isolation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, ethnic enclaves have emerged, being fueled by the settlement of newly arrived immigrants as well as the resettlement of migrating Asian Americans. California is now home to the largest concentration in the U.S. of Cambodians (in Long Beach), Hmongs (in Fresno), and Vietnamese (in Westminster) (see Table X). To describe these neighborhoods as “Asian” neighborhoods is only partially accurate. Actually these neighborhoods have their own ethnic identity such as “Little Saigon” or “Little Phnom Penh”, much like the Chinatowns, Koreatowns, and Japantowns throughout the United States.

Many ethnic and racial neighborhoods that are comprised largely of a single ethnic or racial group also have schools that are largely of the same ethnic or racial group. While studies have found that Asian American students are the less likely than Blacks and Latinos to attend racially segregated schools⁵, when the pan-ethnic population is disaggregated by ethnicity, segregation patterns show a growing concentration of poor immigrant Asian American communities from Southeast Asia⁶. Aggregated data on Asian Americans does not capture the emergence of sizeable ethnic groups of low-income Asian students having severe trouble in school⁷.

Asian American Ethnic Enclaves and Access to Postsecondary Opportunities

In 2000, there were 48 high schools in California with a majority of graduates comprised by Asian American students⁸. These schools are primarily located in communities that are highly concentrated with Asian American residents. They include San Francisco, Monterey Park, Alhambra, and San Jose, Westminster, Long Beach, Fresno, and South Sacramento. These schools were different in their demographic composition, resources, and outcomes than schools that were comprised of predominately Black, Latino, or White students. On average, students at schools that were predominately Asian American had very impressive postsecondary outcomes and in the state. However, if you look within the Asian American majority schools, there are important distinctions between schools that need to be considered. Among eight schools located in Southeast Asian neighborhoods there are very different characteristics and opportunities for higher education than eight schools located in Chinese American neighborhoods.

Table X: Indicators for Schools in Southeast Asian and Chinese Neighborhoods⁹

	<u>Schools in SEA Enclaves</u>	<u>Schools in Chinese Enclaves</u>
ELL (%)	31.5	16.9
Less than HS Diploma	33.6	19.2
AFDC (%)	26.1	11.9
APA Grads Eligible for UC (%)	15.5	31.2
APA Grads Applying to UC (%)	15.4	42.5
APA Grads Attending UC (%)	12.5	36.8
APA Grads Attending Comm. Col. (%)	45.6	22.3

Note: Data unavailable for outcomes for specific ethnic groups. However, the majority of Asian American students and graduates of each school is either Southeast Asian Americans or Chinese Americans.

Schools in Southeast Asian neighborhoods had a higher average ELL rate (31.5%), higher proportion of students with parents without a high school diploma (33.6%), and a higher proportion of students receiving AFDC (26.1%) than schools comprised of Chinese Americans.

While there were notable demographic differences that we have identified, the striking contrast between Southeast Asian schools and schools comprised of Chinese American ethnic groups can be found in the postsecondary outcomes. For graduates of Southeast Asian schools, the UC eligibility rate (15.5%) was half that of Asian American schools in general (31.2%). Students at Asian American majority schools were three times more likely to apply to a UC campus than students at Southeast Asian schools (42.5% and 15.4% respectively). Students at Southeast Asian schools were much less likely to enroll at a UC campus (12.5%) than students at Asian American schools (36.8%). Rather, nearly half of the students graduating from Southeast Asian schools attended community colleges (45.6%), compared to only 22.3% of students at Asian American schools generally.

There are also important distinctions and similarities that exist *within* schools with large populations of Southeast Asian students. Table 2 illustrates some postsecondary outcomes for Hmong and Vietnamese graduates from ethnically segregated Southeast Asian schools.

Table X: Postsecondary Outcomes for Schools in Hmong and Vietnamese Neighborhoods¹⁰

<u>School Locale</u>	<u>Hmong Schools</u>		<u>Vietnamese Schools</u>	
	<u>Fresno</u>	<u>Sacramento</u>	<u>Westminster</u>	<u>San Jose</u>
APA Grads Eligible for UC (%)	2.5%	9.2%	19.8%	39.8%
APA Grads Applying to UC (%)	2.5%	10.7%	17.9%	33.7%
APA Grads Attending UC (%)	0.8%	3.8%	12.3%	14.0%
APA Grads Attending CSU (%)	21.7%	21.4%	8.5%	15.4%
APA Grads Attending Comm. Col. (%)	41.7%	32.0%	29.4%	23.1%

Note: Data unavailable for outcomes for specific ethnic groups. However, the majority of Asian American students and graduates of each school is either Hmong or Vietnamese.

In terms of preparation for higher education, students at Hmong and Vietnamese schools had very different behavior regarding the SAT and Advanced Placement exams. Table 3 illustrates school-wide differences in two important college preparation activities: the SAT exam and AP courses. The two Vietnamese schools had a much larger proportion of students who took the SAT exam than the Hmong schools. The average total SAT scores were also higher at the Vietnamese schools. Students at Hmong schools had a much lower number of students taking AP exams and a low number of students enrolled in AP courses. The differences across these schools may be an important factor in the postsecondary outcomes that varied for students attending the different schools.

Table 3: College Preparation Indicators for Schools in Hmong and Vietnamese Neighborhoods¹¹

<u>School Locale</u>	<u>Hmong Schools</u>		<u>Vietnamese Schools</u>	
	<u>Fresno</u>	<u>Sacramento</u>	<u>Westminster</u>	<u>San Jose</u>

Seniors Taking SAT (%)	18.5%	22.6%	44.6%	53.2%
Average SAT Score	829	827	976	952
AP Exams Taken (n)	1	80	294	418
AP Exams with Passing Score (n)	1	14	123	197

Note: Data unavailable for outcomes for specific ethnic groups. However, the majority of Asian American students and graduates of each school is either Hmong or Vietnamese.

Recommendations

While the *Brown* decision recognized and brought to bear considerable attention to racial inequalities in the U.S. educational system, there are disparities, obstacles, and forms of discrimination that impact Asian Americans that need attention. Many of the challenges faced by Asian Americans have gone unnoticed and largely ignored because of the perceptions of the population as a whole. These assumptions have masked the distinctions between Asian American sub-populations. The distinctions *between* populations need to be more carefully considered, especially for emerging immigrant and refugee populations that are characteristically different than other Asian American populations.

Southeast Asian ethnic enclaves are dramatically different from neighborhoods and schools comprised of other APA ethnic populations. The schools that Southeast Asian students attend in ethnic enclaves have very different outcomes and results in a highly stratified system of opportunity that is correlated with both the ethnic composition of schools and the likelihood to be exposed to postsecondary opportunities and resources. For example, while schools with high proportions of Asian Americans have a high rate of going to college overall, the likelihood of Southeast Asians to attend a selective university is much lower than for Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, or South Asians. Moreover, if you look within the Southeast Asian population, there is further stratification that is driven by the locale of different ethnic groups, the likelihood to be exposed to social networks that have experience with more selective college admissions criteria, and the types of school resources that are available for students of different ethnic backgrounds.

The impact of racial and ethnic segregation needs to be examined in the context of language, culture, immigration status, and socio-economic situations that vary for different sub-populations among Asian Americans.

- outreach
- scholarships
- parental workshops (in different languages)
- community-based approaches
- broader inclusiveness of Apas in policy consideration (local, state, and fed)
- In order to best serve these communities, it is necessary to distinguish such distinctions among the APA population. need better data to identify distinctions of populations (ethnic, language, immigration status)

¹ The terms Asian American and Pacific Islander and Asian American are used interchangeably throughout this article to capture the growing complexity and diversity of peoples in the U.S. who trace their heritage to what has been loosely defined as “Asian.”

² Data Source

³ Teranishi, 2004; Teranishi and Mulholland, 2004

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Census, General Population Characteristics (M.G.I. HA 201 2000 A2 v.6), 2000

⁵ Frankenberg, Lee, and Orfield (2003) have shown that

⁶ Massey & Fischer, 1999; Teranishi, 2004; Zhou & Bankston, 1998

⁷ Teranishi, 2003; 2004; Zhou, 1998

⁸ This figure includes Filipinos and Pacific Islanders.

⁹ Data Source

¹⁰ Data Source

¹¹ Data Source