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) 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., Meseus, 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 (Meseus & Chang, 2009). However, such racial comparisons are commonly used to justify such racial 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.
The growth of the general Asian American population is far outpacing the general U.S. population. While the U.S. population grew by 5.7 million from 2000 to 2009, the Asian American population grew by 9.3 million. This 64% increase is nearly double the 35% increase of the general U.S. population.

Asian Americans are concentrated in the West and Growing

As the population of the United States has become more diverse, so too has the Asian American population. Today, over 60% of Asian Americans live in the West. This large concentration in the West is due partly to the large proportion of Asian Americans who were born in the West, and partly to the fact that many Asian Americans have chosen to settle in the West.

Rapidly Growing Asian American and Pacific Islander Populations Are

Asian Americans are the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States, and their population is expected to continue growing at a rapid rate.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Asian American population is projected to grow by 56% from 2010 to 2030, which is more than double the projected growth of the general U.S. population.

However, despite their rapid growth, Asian Americans still face many challenges. Discrimination and prejudice against Asian Americans remain prevalent, and many Asian Americans struggle to find affordable housing and access to quality education.

Asian Americans are also facing a growing gap in income and education. Although Asian Americans have higher median incomes and higher levels of education than the general U.S. population, they still face significant disparities in income and education.

As the Asian American population continues to grow, it is essential to address these challenges and ensure that Asian Americans have equal opportunities to succeed.

In conclusion, the rapid growth of the Asian American population is a testament to the resilience and determination of Asian Americans. While they face many challenges, they continue to make significant contributions to our nation and our society.

For more information on Asian Americans, visit the Asian American Studies Center at UC Berkeley.

Note: All numbers and statistics are based on the latest available data from the U.S. Census Bureau.
Asian and Pacific Islanders, it is important to understand the implications these trends within the Asian and Pacific Islander population.

Although the number of individuals belonging to Pacific Islander

[Image: Map showing population trends for Asian and Pacific Islanders.]

**Figure 1.4** Population of Pacific Islanders by Region, 2000 and 2010

**Figure 1.7** Rate of Growth of Asian Americans in Percentages by Year, 2000-2010

[Map showing population trends for Asian and Pacific Islanders.]
about the vast diversity that exists within the AAPI population. 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 largest Pacific Islander group, followed by Samoans (15%), Guamanians or Chamorros (12%), Tongans (5%), Fijians (3%), and Other Micronesians (2%).

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.
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.

**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 as 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 (13%) 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%),
Tongans (11%), Fijians (11%), Samoans (10%), and Other Micronesian (4%) all hold bachelor's degrees at less than half the rate of the national population (23%).

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 Lao-Asian-Americans) having higher unemployment rates than the total national average (7.9%) and others being well under the national rate. Moreover, Lao and Hmong (9%) Americans are three times as likely and Cambodian Americans (8%) are more than twice as likely to be unemployed than 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 (13%) and Samoans (11%) significantly more likely to be unemployed than Guamanians and Other Micronesian (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 25% of Taiwanese and 22% of Japanese Americans have careers in business and management, and fewer than 8% of Cambodian, Hmong, and Lao 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, Lao, and Hmong populations. In
FIGURE 1.15
Percent of Pacific Islanders Without High School Diploma by Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>National Population</th>
<th>Chamorro</th>
<th>Hawaiian</th>
<th>Guamanian</th>
<th>Samoan</th>
<th>Micronesian</th>
<th>Tongan</th>
<th>Fijian</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent With No High School Diploma

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>National Population</th>
<th>Chamorro</th>
<th>Hawaiian</th>
<th>Guamanian</th>
<th>Samoan</th>
<th>Micronesian</th>
<th>Tongan</th>
<th>Fijian</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent Attained Bachelor’s Degree or Higher

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 (44%) and Guamanian (33%) 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Population</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongan</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoan</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamorro</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guamanian</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micronesian</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Indian</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Lankan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lankan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Okinawan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hmong</td>
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<td>Laotian</td>
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<td>Cambodian</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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 ($92,488) 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...
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 ($12,385). 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 illustrate 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%), 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.
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 who seek to enroll in and graduate from higher education are not represented in higher education research and discourse, and knowledge of these groups is critical to educators’ ability to meet their needs. Indeed, college educators who might be working with Pacific Islander undergraduates in Washington, Hawaii 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, 2012c, 2012d).

2. Two types of census racial categorization are used in this analysis. The (i) “Asian American alone” and “Pacific Islander alone” categories encompass those who only identify with the focal racial group, and (ii) 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.


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 than those presented herein.

5. For purposes of this chapter, the categories “Other Micronesian” and “Micronesians” 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, Paluan, Chukchke).

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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