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U.S. Demographic Diversity and the Achievement Gap: Grappling with Nuances

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In this article, the authors examine various nuances relating to demographics on race, ethnicity, gender and income in the United States, and ways in which they relate to educational access, participation and achievement. These nuances persistently remain below the surface of our national consciousness, schooling experiences at all levels, and everyday discourse. Thus, it is necessary to make them explicit and, depending on their positive or negative influence, integrate them into our policies and practices or challenge and discard them. This obligatory culling of the wheat from the chaff is required if our attempts to move forward progressively and steadily in educational, societal and national reforms—meant to refine and strengthen our democracy, character, unity, capital and global competitive standing—are to have any hope of becoming a reality.

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Increasing Amounts of Minority Students in Schools and Colleges

In *The Condition of Education, 2010*, Aud and her colleagues (Aud, Hussar, Planty, Snyder, Bianco, Fox, Frohlich, Kemp, & Drake, 2010, p. iii), investigated our nation's complex, uneven public educational landscape and identified four major categories within which 49 indicators of "important developments and trends in U.S. education" were placed. The categories were: (1) participation and persistence in education; (2) student performance and other measures of achievement; (3) the environment for learning; and (4) resources for education. Student enrollment is projected to continue to grow over the next two decades. Thus, the nature and extent of the problems we face today will still be in place then—intensely exacerbated, of course—unless we focus on approaches to solve them in effective and generalizable ways that we have not yet discovered or have prejudged as untenable.

The Pre-K through 12 Context. By the academic year (AY) 2019-2020, public school enrollment is predicted to reach 52.3 million students, a 6 percent increase from the 2007-2008 enrollment of 49.3 million; 37.2 million (71%) of this projected total will reflect prekindergarten through grade 8 enrollments. Grades 9 through 12 enrollments are projected to be 15.1 (29%) million students. In AY 2007-2008, private school enrollments accounted for 5.9 million students, or 11 percent of all elementary and secondary students; this figure represented a decline of 6 percent from the previous academic year. During the period 1995 to 2008, the largest enrollment share of private schools was in Roman Catholic schools, although nonsectarian and Conservative Christian schools increased their enrollments from 20 percent to 22 percent and 13 percent to 15 percent, respectively.

During the 30-year period, 1979-2008, the number of school-age children ranging in age from 5 to 17 years old who spoke a language other than English at home increased from 3.8 million to 10.9 million, which, in percentage terms, translated into a corresponding increase of 9 percent to 21 percent. Within this group, school-age children who had difficulty speaking English represented slightly more than 2.7 million school-age children, or 25 percent of the 10.9 million. Two million, or 75 percent, of the school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home and who experienced difficulty in speaking English spoke Spanish, as has been the case for decades. The overall percentage of school-age children experiencing difficulty in speaking English hovers around 5 percent, which has been the case in 11 of the 14 years being compared from 1979 to 2008; the remaining three years demonstrated percentages of 3 percent (1979), 4 percent (1989), and 6 percent (2000). The relationship of performance to income holds up in the case of language proficiency in English. The lower the income level, the higher the percentage of students experiencing difficulty in speaking English. More school-age children who were poor (10 percent) or near-poor (8 percent) were classified as speaking English with difficulty than school-age children who were not poor (3 percent).

The Postsecondary Context. In AY 2007-2008, our national undergraduate enrollment totaled 16.4 million students, a substantive increase from the 7.4 million enrolled in 1970 and the 13.2 million in 2000. Undergraduate enrollments are projected to increase to 19

million students by 2019. Female students continue their upward demographic trajectory, accounting for 57 percent of enrollments in 2008, and projected to reach 59 percent by 2019. Public institutions account for 77 percent (12.6 million) of total undergraduate enrollments, a 19 percent increase from 2000. All undergraduate institutions, private, public, 4-year and 2-year, continue to experience increased growth rates, although enrollments at private for-profit 4-year institutions "more than quadrupled, from 0.2 million to 0.9 million" between 2000 and 2008 (Aud et al., 2010, p. 36). Approximately 80 percent of students at 4-year institutions are enrolled full-time, a percentage figure that is expected to remain stable. In 2008, enrollments at 2-year colleges—96 percent are public institutions—totaled 7 million, of which 2.8 million (40%) were full-time students.

Women account for 4 million, or 57 percent, of the enrollment figures. As in the case of elementary and secondary schools and undergraduate institutions, 2-year institutions are projected to increase their enrollments—specifically, to 8 million by 2019, a 14 percent increase. Similarly, graduate degree enrollments (including first-professional programs) have increased, rising from 1.6 million in 1976, to 2.7 million in 2008, a 69 percent increase. Graduate degree enrollments are projected to reach 3.4 million by 2019, a 26 percent increase. Female graduate student enrollment overtook male graduate student enrollment in 1988 and consistently has maintained its superior numbers, which in 2008 accounted for 59 percent of total enrollment. Female graduate student enrollment is slated to reach 2.1 million, and account for 61 percent of total graduate student enrollment (3.4 million) in 2019. In 1976, more part-time graduate students were enrolled than full-time graduate students; by 2008, these two categories were evenly distributed, and predicted to remain so through 2019.

Racial distribution in graduate enrollments has experienced a shift, as the proportion of White student enrollment has declined from 85 percent (1.3 million) in 1976, to 69 percent (1.5 million) in 2000, and to 64 percent (1.7 million) in 2008. The corresponding percentages for African American graduate enrollment were: 6 percent (90,000) in 1976, 8 percent (181,000) in 2000, and 12 percent (315,000) in 2008. Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islanders graduate students increased from 2 percent in 1976 to 5 percent and 6 percent, respectively, in 2008. The American Indian/Alaska Native represented 18,000 graduate students in 2008, which was less than 1 percent of the total. Nonresident aliens accounted for 5 percent of total graduate student enrollment in 1976 and 11 percent in 2008.

Hispanic American and Asian American Demographic Profiles

Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander educational figures merit further mention, particularly by way of contrast. Hispanic graduate student enrollment increased from 31,000 in 1976, to 111,000 in 2000, to 169,000 in 2008. This latter figure is 10 percent of total White graduate student 2008 enrollment and 54 percent of African American graduate student 2008 enrollment. Asian/Pacific Islander graduate student enrollment increased from 29,000 in 1976, to 133,000 in 2000, to 185,000 in 2008. Asian/Pacific Islander graduate student enrollment for 2008 was 11 percent of total White graduate student enrollment and 59

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percent of African American graduate student enrollment. Hispanic Americans are the largest ethnic/racial group in our nation, comprising 16 percent (48.4 million) of our nation's population (with an additional population of 4 million U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory). Asian/Pacific Islander Americans, in contrast, comprise 5 percent (15.5 million) of our nation's population. Both groups are contributing significantly to the nation's population growth; their growth rates, in fact, are higher than any other racial or ethnic group, and present a stark contrast to them in that other groups' contribution to population growth is tending to stabilize or move toward zero.

Language and Ethnic Categories. Demographics regarding Hispanic American differ significantly from that of Asia/Pacific Islander Americans (figures cited below are from U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a & 2010b). In those cases where Hispanic Americans speak or are exposed to a language at home that accompanies English, it will be Spanish in the vast majority of cases. This language phenomenon, complemented by cultural traces of centuries of Spanish colonialism and the general presence of Roman Catholicism, again, to varying degrees of practice, collectively lend a statistical degree of cultural cohesion, on paper if not in actuality. In contrast, Asian/Pacific Islander American demographics with respect to language and cultural background are starkly different. Our nation, in 2010, for example, provided Census Language Assistance Guides in 18 Asian languages: Bengali, Burmese, Cebuano, Chinese (Traditional and Simplified), Hindi, Hmong, Ilocano, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Laotian, Malayalam, Tagalog, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Urdu and Vietnamese. The Census Guides also were made available in Native Hawaiian and the following Pacific Islander languages: Chamorro, Chuukese, Marshallese, Samoan and Tongan.

Americans of Chinese descent number 3.62 million, and represent 23 percent of the total Asian/Pacific Islander population classification; other American ethnic groupings of Asian descent include, in descending rank relative to population numbers: Filipino Americans (3.1 million, or 20%); Asian Indian Americans (2.7 million, or 17%); Vietnamese Americans (1.7 million, or 11%); Korean Americans (1.6 million, or 10%); and Japanese Americans (1.3 million, or 8%). The Asian American-related demographics cited above include respondents who identified either as belonging to one particular ethnic group or the one selected in combination with another Asian-descent group.

Religious Affiliation among Asian Americans. With respect to religious preference and attendance, a recent Gallup Poll (Jones, 2010) found that the "percentage of Asians who attend church on a weekly basis also is lower than for other U.S. racial or ethnic groups [including White]. A slim majority [52%] of Asian-Americans say they seldom or never attend religious services." Survey results from the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) and Pew Research Institute Forum on Religion & Public Life: Asian Americans (Le, 2010) provide insight into the religious denominations with which Asian Americans, as a generic group, identify, although, as stated above, the majority tend not to attend with any degree of regular frequency. In the ARIS survey, the religious-identification category with the highest percentage (27%) of Asian Americans was None/Agnostic; followed, in descending order, by Eastern Religions (seven different religions), representing

21 percent of the respondents; Catholic, 17 percent; Christian Generic, 10 percent; Mainline Christian, 6 percent; Baptist, 3 percent; and Pentecostal & Protestant, 2 percent; Muslim, 8 percent; and New Religious Movements, 2 percent. The Pew survey mentioned above "largely confirmed" the survey results of the ARIS survey (Le, 2010).

Ethnicity, Economics and Education. Differences between the two groups are evident in business receipts generated by Asian American-owned and Hispanic American-owned enterprises in 2007: $513.9 billion by Asian American business proprietors compared to $345.2 billion by Hispanic American business proprietors; figures for African American-owned and White-owned enterprises were, respectively, $137.4 billion and $10.3 trillion—total national business receipts were $30.2 trillion (Kilkenny, 2010, citing figures from *Preliminary Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race and Veteran Status: 2007 published by the U. S. Census Bureau's 2007 Survey of Business Owners*). The respective educational and income profiles of Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans also differ substantially. In 2008, the educational attainment figures for Asian Americans ("single race"), 25 years and older, showed that more than 50 percent held at least a bachelor's degree—twice the percentage for all Americans within the same age group; eighty-five percent (85%) had at least a high school diploma; and twenty percent (20%) held a graduate or professional degree. In 2008, 13 percent of Hispanic Americans 25 years or older held at least a bachelor's degree and 62 percent had earned at least a high school diploma (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010). Bachelor degree and high school diploma figures for African Americans in 2008 were respectively, 18 percent and 82 percent; and, for White Americans, 31 percent and 90 percent, respectively. Nearly 40 percent (39%) of Hispanic Americans 25 years or older did not complete high school—over 10 million adults, as compared to 15 percent, or approximately 1,350,000, of Asian American adults; 19 percent, or approximately 4,253,000, of African American adults; and 10 percent, or approximately13,825,000, of White American adults.

Disaggregating the Term "Hispanic American" and its Policy Implications

In 2008, the Hispanic American population totaled 46.9 million, of which more than six of ten (62%) were native-born U.S. citizens (Terrazas & Batalova, 2009). The remaining 17,822,000, or thirty-eight percent (38%), were immigrants of Hispanic origin, who comprised nearly fifty percent (46.9%) of the total U.S. immigrant population of 38 million people (MPI Data Hub, 2010). In the same year, of the nearly 47 million Hispanic Americans, 25,550,793 (55%) were 25 years or older. Fifty-seven percent (57%), or 14,591,671, were foreign-born and forty-three percent (43%), or 10,959,122, were native-born. Thus, K-16 schooling cycle completion rates for Americans of Hispanic heritage are divided into the two major categories of Native born and Foreign born for survey purposes. Non-completion rate figures differ substantially between them. Foreign-born Americans of Hispanic heritage account for 7,538,566, or 75 percent, of the 10,011,431 adults who did not complete high school, while 2,472,865 (25%) native-born Americans of Hispanic heritage did not complete high school. This latter figure, once divided by total number of U.S. Hispanics, 25 years or older (25,550,793) yields a percentage of 9.7.

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The Pew Hispanic Center's (Fry, 2010) recent analysis using data from the U. S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey on "young adult" Hispanic Americans, those between 20 to 29 years old, found that, in the aggregate, "about one-third" were high school dropouts. Once disaggregated to distinguish between native-born and foreign-born Hispanic Americans, however, the high school dropout rate for the native-born was 20 percent. This rate was dramatically lower than the 47 percent dropout rate of foreign-born Hispanic Americans. It was still higher than that of African Americans, Asian/Pacific Islander Americans or White Americans. Specifically, the native-born Hispanic American high school dropout rate paralleled that of African American counterparts (19%) of the same age range and was substantially higher, by 67 percent, than dropout rate of White Americans (12%) and 3.3 times higher (233%) than the 6 percent dropout rate of Asian/Pacific Islander Americans.

The definition of high school dropout includes that percentage of students, of any race or ethnicity, who did not complete the regular high school curriculum or receive a high school diploma. In 2008, there were 41 million high school dropouts in our nation. Those students, therefore, who received a General Educational Development credential, a GED, were categorized and counted as dropouts, even though, with a GED credential, they may enroll in postsecondary educational institutions and pursue degree programs and are eligible for Pell grants to support their postsecondary studies. The percentage of students who obtain their GED credential, including those who are incarcerated, is relatively low: 1 in 10 (10%) Hispanic American students who drop out obtain their GED credential; 2 in 10 (20%) in the case of African Americans high school dropouts; and 3 in 10 (30%) White American high school dropouts (Fry, 2010). Also, forty percent (40%) of young adults who received their GED credential took advantage of further training and education versus only ten percent (10%) of students who dropped out of high school and did not receive their GED certificate.

Policy Implication 1. Teasing out the two Hispanic American categories—foreign born vs. native born—enables us to (1) understand more clearly the two-fold nature of the drop-out problem within the K-12 schooling cycle, (2) distinguish between its differentiated levels of severity, (3) devise specific and differentiated methods as to how to approach it, and (4) identify and implement policies regarding the type, degree and extent of resource allocation needed for each category.

Hispanic American Students and the College Experience

It is worth noting that, although the numerical base for each group differs, foreign-born and native-born Hispanic Americans, 25 years or older, graduate from high school at similar *numerical* levels, 3,444,897 (52%) and 3,191,910 (48%), respectively, but more native-born go on to attain some college or graduate from college than do their foreign-born counterparts. In 2008, only about 1 in 4 (24%) foreign-born Hispanic Americans, 25 years or older, actually had graduated from high school and 1 in 10 had graduated from college; in contrast, in 2008, twenty-nine percent (29%) of native-born Hispanic Americans in the same age range had graduated from high school and seventeen percent (17%) had graduated

from college. The college-graduation rate of native-born White Americans was 31 percent, or 86 percent higher than that of native-born Hispanic Americans.

Percentages regarding the distribution of doctorates in particular fields by race or ethnicity, from the 2008 Survey of Earned Doctorates, were published in *Diverse* magazine (Just The Stats, 2010, p. 18). Nearly one-third (31%) of all doctorate degrees earned by Asian/Pacific Islander Americans were in the field of Life Sciences; the percentage in this same field for White Americans was 23 percent; Hispanic Americans, 22 percent; and African Americans, 16 percent. Similarly, in the fields of Physical Sciences and Engineering, of the total percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander Americans receiving doctorates in 2008, 16 percent were in Physical Sciences and 19 percent in Engineering. The percentages were higher than any of the other racial or ethnic groups represented. The percentage of White Americans receiving doctorates in either Physical Sciences or Engineering was, respectively, 14 percent and 8 percent; Hispanic Americans, 9 percent and 7 percent; and African American, 6 percent and 5 percent.

Clustering the categories of life sciences, physical sciences, and engineering by race or ethnicity, we arrive at the relative percentages for each group: Asian/Pacific Islander American, 66 percent; White American, 45 percent; Hispanic American, 38 percent; and African American, 27 percent. More than one-third (37%) of African Americans who received doctorates in 2008 earned them in the field of education, virtually twice the percentage of the next highest percentage group in education, Hispanic American (19%). Nearly one-quarter (24%) of Hispanic Americans who received doctorates in 2008 earned them in the area of social sciences, which was approximately the percentage of Hispanic Americans earning doctorates in life sciences (22%). Most of our doctoral recipients, except for Asian/ Pacific Islanders, are distributed among the social sciences, education, humanities or other. In terms of comparative absolute numbers, however, the White American category remains far and above the dominant presence in general doctoral degree attainment .

Referring once again to the 2008 data available in the Pew Hispanic Center report (2010), of the 5,600,794 Hispanic Americans, 25 years or older, who had some college, 62 percent (3,487,098) were native born; foreign-born Hispanic Americans, of course, comprised the remaining 38 percent (2,113,696) who had some college. In the case of college graduates, the figures were less disparate and, when combined, yielded a 13 percent college graduation rate, which remains well below the college graduation rates of White Americans (31%), Asian Americans (50%), our national average (28%), and the category of “Other, not Hispanic” (22%). The African American college graduation rate of 18 percent (17.5%) is higher than that of the overall Hispanic American rate of 13 percent, and a percentage point higher than the native-born Hispanic American rate of 17 percent (16.5%). This latter native-born Hispanic American figure, while higher than the 10 percent college graduation rate of the foreign-born Hispanic American, remains below the college graduation rates of all other groups.

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Policy Implication 2. The above figures, then, generate a second area of policy focus with respect to Hispanic Americans: As the rate of native-born Americans of Hispanic heritage that have some college is at least the same as that of White Americans, the problem rests in their respective college completion rates. Thus, effective policies and practices regarding retention strategies and enhanced graduation rates for Hispanic American college students are paramount.

Postsecondary Faculty, Administration and Staff Representation. . Currently, White, non-Hispanic, Americans account for 64% of the total U.S. population. Figures summarizing percentages of faculty and staff in degree-granting institutions, as of fall 2007, by race or ethnicity, were published in *Diverse* (Just The Stats, 2010, p. 18). The designation "White" included " Other" in this analysis by the magazine. White faculty comprised 82 percent of all faculty; African American faculty comprised 7 percent; Asian American faculty, 6 percent; Hispanic American faculty, 4 percent; and American Indian faculty, 1 percent. Nonprofessional staff percentages indicated that White staff comprised 67 percent; African American staff, 18 percent; Hispanic, 10 percent; Asian American, 4 percent; and American Indian, 1 percent. The category for executives, administrators and managers contained the following percentage breakdowns: White, 81 percent; African American, 10 percent; Hispanic, 5 percent; Asian, 3 percent; and American Indian, 1 percent. Thus, nearly 60 years after the Supreme Court decision to desegregate our nation's schools (*Brown v Board of Education*, 1954), and nearly 50 years after our nation's Civil Rights Act legislation of 1964, 8 of 10 faculty and executives in our postsecondary institutions throughout the nation are White Americans, as are nearly 7 of 10 of postsecondary institutions' nonprofessional staff

High School Dropout Trajectories across Racial and Ethnic Groups

Aggregate figures for high school dropout rates relative to students within the 16-through-24-years-old range demonstrate a downward trend among all groups, which signals that fewer students are dropping out prior to obtaining a high school diploma. The overall high school dropout rate, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (Aud et al., 2010), has declined from 14.1 percent in 1980 to 8.0 percent in 2008. Asian/Pacific Islander Americans had the lowest dropout rate, at 4.4 percent; White Americans, 4.8 percent; African Americans, 9.9 percent; American Indians/Alaskan Natives, 14.6 percent, and Hispanic Americans, 18.3 percent. Asian/Pacific Islander Americans' high school dropout rate has remained fairly steady, between 3.9 percent and 4.4 percent, except for a spike in 2007 to 6.1 percent. White American high school dropout rates fell from 11.4 percent in 1980 to 4.8 percent in 2008; African American high school dropout rates in that same period fell from 35.2 (more than 1 of 3 African American students) to 9.9 percent (approximately 1 of 10 students). American Indian/Alaska Native high school dropout rates have not demonstrated an appreciable decline since figures were first available in 1990, fluctuating between a low of 11.8 percent and a high of 17.0 percent, with a spike in 2007 of 19.3 percent; seven (58%) of the twelve years represented in the NCES table, were below 14.8 percent for this group. Once again, in aggregate form, Hispanic American 16-to-24-

year-olds had the highest high school dropout at the onset in 1980, 35.2 percent, and, although it declined to 18.3 percent by 2008, remained the highest by far among the major numerical racial/ethnic groups. The one positive sign is that the decline from 2007 to 2008, from 21.4 percent to 18.3 percent, is the first percentage rate below 20 reported in the data set.

Event dropout rates, as characterized by the National Center for Education Statistics (2009), "measure the percentage of public high school students in grades 9 through 12 who dropped out of school between one October and the next." The majority of states within our nation collect, tabulate and report data at the individual state level, although five do not present data on White American students and four do not on the other racial/ethnic groups identified in this section. The U.S. Department of Education ultimately receives and compiles the data in aggregate form, those made available here were published in November 2009. This particular data set reveals that, in the vast majority of cases (41 states, or 89%), the event public high school dropout rate for White Americans clustered around the less-than-3-percent-to-4.9-percent range, with the remainder of White American high school dropouts falling within the 5.0 percent-to-6.9 percent range. Thus, no state reported that White American students were dropping out of high school in percentages greater than 6.9 percent.

In the case of Asian/Pacific Islander Americans, 41 states (89 percent) reported that dropouts did not exceed 6.9 percent, and that in 34 states (72%) dropouts did not exceed 3 percent. Hispanic Americans, African Americans, and American Indians/Alaska Native Americans demonstrated an opposite trend: The majority of states (78%, 72%, and 53%, respectively) reported that Hispanic American, African American, and American Indian/Alaska Native American dropouts tended to cluster within the 5.0 percent-to-11 percent-plus.

Comparing Educational Attainment and Household Incomes

As is evident, the high school dropout pattern is nationwide and regular in its design: White and Asian/Pacific Islander Americans generally cluster at the lower levels of dropout counts and percentages, while Hispanic Americans, African Americans, and American Indians/Alaska Natives generally cluster at the higher levels of dropout counts and percentages. There are a variety of variables that influence the attainment of a high school diploma or a college degree; two of the more salient and interrelated factors, to varying degrees, are associated with an individual's characteristics (e.g., type and degree of self-determined expectations, amount and quality of choices made and directions taken; amount and quality of effort expended; consistency and competitiveness of performance outcomes) and family background (e.g., parents' educational attainment; family income; degree of parental and immediate family's involvement and support relative to the individual's expectations, choices, directions, efforts and outcomes).

The percentage of foreign-born members of a racial or ethnic group, of course, will not by itself explain students' educational attainment. Asian Americans born outside the United

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States, for example, accounted for 64 percent of the total Asian American population in 2008, which is an even greater percentage than the 57 percent of foreign-born associated with the Hispanic American population, who were 25 years or older—yet these two populations differed markedly in both income and educational attainment. A majority (57%) of Asian Americans who were foreign born were naturalized American citizens. To place this percentage in context, it can be compared to the percentage of total immigrants—16,329,909, or 43 percent—who became naturalized American citizens. It is important to disaggregate this figure in relationship to the particular decade in which the immigrants entered our nation.

The vast majority, 78.6 percent, of *all* foreign-born immigrants who immigrated to our nation prior to 1980 became naturalized American citizens; similarly, but to a much lesser degree, the majority (59.6%) of those who immigrated during the 1980s also became naturalized American citizens; the percentage decreased to less than forty percent (38.1%) in the decade of the 1990s and to ten percent (10.2%) of immigrants arriving in or after the year 2000 (MPI Data Hub, 2010). In 2008, more than 8 out of 10 (85.6%) of the 13,922,833 children—defined as 18 years or younger—with at least one immigrant parent were born in the United States. Thus, immigrant families are overwhelmingly comprised of children who are native-born U.S. citizens (MPI Data Hub, 2010). Children of immigrant parents comprise nearly 30 percent (29.9%, or 8,088,584 children) of the 27,052,121 children in poverty in our nation. Another way of reading this dismal statistic is that 70 percent of all children in poverty in our nation have native-born parents. Children in poverty—meaning that the families are at 200 percent or more below the federal poverty threshold—represent virtually 9 percent (8.9%) of our nation's total population (304,059,728).

In 2008, Asian Americans had the highest median household income in the nation, $70,069; in contrast, the median household income for Hispanic Americans was $37,913, or 54 percent of the median Asian American household income. Asian Americans also had the highest percentage of individuals 25 years or older with at least a bachelor's degree: 53 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010c). Within this 53 percent, twenty-one percent (21%) had advanced degrees. Asian American males with a bachelor's degree or an advanced degree represented 31 percent and 25 percent, respectively, of the Asian American population, that was 25 years or older. Asian American females with a bachelor's degree or an advanced degree represented 33 percent and 17 percent, respectively. White Americans, the second highest in educational attainment, reported 33 percent with a bachelor's degree or higher (62% that of Asian Americans), and 12 percent (57% that of Asian Americans) having advanced degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010c). Within-group comparisons demonstrate that Asian American males generated 41 percent more bachelor's degrees and more than double the percentage amount (108%) of advanced degrees than did the White male American group. Female White Americans with a bachelor's degree or an advanced degree accounted for 21 percent and 11 percent, respectively, of the White female population, 25 years or older—virtually identical to the White male population. Similarly, within-group comparisons for females demonstrate that Asian American females held 57 percent more

bachelor degrees and 42 percent more advanced degrees than did the White American female group.

A third group reported by the U. S. Census (2010c) relative to educational attainment was designated as Other and defined as "American Indian and Alaska Native alone; Black alone; Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone; White alone, Hispanic; and Two or More Races." The percentage of individuals within this cluster of racial and ethnic groups who had a bachelor's degree was 12 percent; those with an advanced degree represented 5 percent of the cluster. The male-female percentages relative to bachelor's and advanced degrees were similar: 11 percent and 5 percent, respectively, for males; and 12 percent and 5 percent, respectively, for females. Asian American males generated nearly three times (2.82) the percentage of bachelor's degree than did the Other male group and five times the percentage of advanced degrees. The contrast between Asian American females and females in the Other category was equally as stark, as Asian American females produced nearly three times (2.75) the percentage of bachelor's degrees than did females within the Other group and nearly three and a half times (3.4) the percentage of advanced degrees. In general, moreover, in 2007, the percentage of Asian American students earning their undergraduate college degree within a six-year period was higher than any other race or ethnic category: Asian American/Pacific Islander, 65.5%; White American, 59.4%; Hispanic American, 46.8%; African American, 40.5%; and American Indian/Alaska Native, 38.6%; the overall average for the United States was 56.1 percent (Lee & Rawls, 2010).

Asian Americans are differentiated, as are Hispanic Americans, by substantive cultural, language, and geo-political points of origin. Thus, monolithic labels such as Asian American and Hispanic American do not capture the economic and educational variation within the groups associated with either term. Americans of Asian Indian origin, for example, in 2008 reported a median household income of $90,528, while that of Vietnamese Americans was $55,667. Nevertheless, at the aggregate level, in 2008, there was a higher percentage (45%) of Asian Americans who generated household income above $50,000 than within the White American (42%) or Other American (22%). The percentage of male Asian Americans identified within the income brackets of $50,000 and $75,000—23 percent and 12 percent, respectively—was comparable to the percentage shared by White American males, 25 percent and 12 percent, respectively. The percentage of Asian American males within the $100,000 and over income bracket, 17 percent, was slightly higher than that of White Americans, whose percentage in this same bracket was 15 percent (U.S. Census, 2010c). Asian American women, on the other hand, tended to generate higher earnings than White American women, as 37 percent of Asian American women generated income of $50,000 or more, as compared to 30 percent of White American women. Twenty-two percent (22%) within the Other American group earned $50,000 or more; twenty-six percent (26%) of the males in this category generated $50,000 or more as compared to 18 percent of women in this same category.

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Asian Americans also tend to have a higher percentage (52.4%) of larger households—those with 3 or more members—than either White Americans (35%) or Other Americans (49%). The family household designation refers to households where one or more of the household members are related to the resident owner or renter. In this case, Asian American households had a higher percentage of family households (69.4%) when compared to White American households (52%) and a virtually identical percentage when compared to Other American households (69%) (U.S. Census, 2010c). Hispanic family households with three or more members comprised nearly seventy-three percent (72.6%) of the total Hispanic households; of the total 9,669,643 Hispanic American family households, the percentage of foreign-born (56.5%) was substantially higher than that of native-born (43.5%) (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010). Also, native-born Hispanic family households had a much lower percentage (29%) of households with three or more members than did foreign-born Hispanic family households (44%).

The Irony of Asian American Success. The household income and academic performance statistics of Asian/Pacific Islander Americans place them, as a group, at the forefront of race and ethnic rankings in our nation, and the trend line for continued growth in these areas is positive, both in terms of direction and speed. Ironically, their competitively-based and honestly-arrived at success was deemed excessive and in need of curtailment by mainstream institutions, both public and private—particularly to make room for White American students. Asian Americans themselves became aware in the Affirmative Action era of the possibility that they were being admitted in fewer numbers than would be predicted by the competitiveness of their application-for-admission portfolios, including their high school course loads, grade point averages, and SAT scores. The thought was that they were, so to speak, admitted more as quota-driven applicants rather than on the general admissions competitive basis that reflected their academically rigorous preparation and performance. As quotas and, in some cases, gender, race or ethnicity were removed as factors that could be considered for public university admission criteria (such as California's Proposition 209 passed in November 1996), the number of Asian American students eligible to be admitted increased, but not necessarily to the point proportionate to their competitiveness. An article in *The Economist* (Unintended Consequences, 2006) framed the complex and interrelated effects—which were state-based but reverberated nationally—of the demise of Affirmative Action-based quotas this way:

In 1995, the University of California's eight undergraduate colleges enrolled 945 black students. In 1998, the first year when the colour-blind regime was fully enforced, they enrolled 739—a drop of 22% in a period when the number of new students rose by more than a tenth. In the two most prestigious colleges, Berkeley and UCLA, the number of blacks fell by 47%. The proportion of black students has never returned to the level of the mid-1990s. But the University of California's campuses have become more diverse anyway. Last year, 15% of newly admitted students were Hispanic and an astonishing 41% were Asian. Whites, who were supposed to benefit most from the demise of affirmative action, comprised 34% of the new intake—a smaller proportion than in 1995, and less than their

share of California's high-school graduates. Asians are packing California's lecture halls partly because they do so well in tests, and partly because they are less welcome elsewhere. Elite universities on the east coast continue to favour black and Hispanic candidates. They also favour the children of donors and alumni, most of whom are white. Last year, 47% of whites and 46% of blacks who were offered a place at the University of California took it up, compared with 65% of Asians.

As postsecondary admissions processes moved toward eliminating race-, ethnicity- or gender-based factors, alternative criteria were selected that enabled universities, public and private, to evaluate candidates on factors that included grades, but not exclusively. A comment by Princeton University spokesperson Emily Aronson illustrates how vague selection criteria may be (Miller, 2010):

> [T]he university does not admit student in categories. In the admission process, no particular factor is assigned a fixed weight and there is no formula for weighing the various aspects of the application.

Comparative SAT scores demonstrate that the White American average score of 1,581 is about 3 percent lower than that of the Asian American average score of 1,623, while the Hispanic Americans' average of 1,364 is 16 percent lower, and the average of 1,276 by African Americans is 21 percent lower. Nevertheless, Princeton sociologist Thomas Espenshade and his co-author Alexandria Walton Radford assert, in their formidably researched-based book, *No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal* (2009), that Asian American students require an additional 140 points to compete against White American students for admission at select universities (Miller, 2010). Espenshade and Walton Radford analyzed admissions results of 9,000 students based on data from the National Survey of College Experience and followed up with campus-life choices upon students' enrollment at 10 selective colleges. When compared with White American students' average SAT score, African Americans receive an "admissions boost worth" 310 SAT points and Hispanics, one of 130 points (Kahlenberg, 2010). An Asian American student, Jian Li, who was not selected for admission at Princeton, filed a civil rights complaint against the university for supposed discrimination (Chen, 2007). As Chen reports, Li's complaint and Li himself were ridiculed, perhaps more for the act of complaining—seen as unnecessary as he had been admitted to Yale—than for standing up to what he thought was discriminatory practice in the admissions process:

This general ambivalence towards Li's case was reflected in an op-ed published in the Daily Princetonian, the school's student newspaper. The op-ed mocked Li's complaint against the university, stating, "I so good at math and science. Perfect 2400 SAT score. Ring bells? Just in cases, let me refresh your memories. I the super smart Asian. Princeton the super dumb college, not accept me."

<u>The Influence of Income and Geography on Postsecondary Admission</u>. A related finding in the Espenshade and Walton Radford work reinforces the fact that education in our nation has been designed for students who were traditionally White Americans and represented our

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nation's solid middle class and above income group: Kahlenberg (2010) reports that the authors found that, once "controlling for academic ability, low income Whites are three times *less* likely than upper middle class Whites to be admitted." This finding regarding the lower status of poor White Americans, many of whom were from rural America, surprised reporters within the mainstream liberal and conservative media. The finding, moreover, was picked up and disseminated, viral-like, within the blogosphere. The phenomenon of picking up and passing it on to diverse media sites and forms is itself telling, as this fact regarding poverty transcends race or ethnicity is anything but new and has informed the research and advocacy of equity-oriented scholars and activists in the United States for decades. DeVillar (1977, p. 6) reported that research conducted by the first quarter of the twentieth century (Burt, 1921; Russ, 1922; Phillips, 1922; among others) that involved other-than-standard English speakers as well as standard English speakers, generally concluded that the test-language and content were significant variables in test results, and worked generally to the advantage of the upper-middle class and to the detriment of the middle-to-poor class. Asher's (1935, in DeVillar, 1977, p. i) statement *cum* admonishment regarding the inadequacy of the then-prevailing intelligence tests for Kentucky Mountain children addresses the effect of differential contexts on students' thought and expression:

> No one will deny that this environment lacks many of the material things considered essential in better rural and urban communities. It lacks opportunities for social intercourse, and for education of the sort considered essential by outsiders. Different knowledge and skills are needed for successful adjustment to an environment where the spinning wheel is still used, where some of the inhabitants are still weaving fine woolen blankets and coverlets and making their own furniture; where churning, canning, butchering, etc., are routines in every home, where axes, plows, and mules, etc., are many times as important as books, papers, and pencils. All of these facts indicate that the mountaineers live in an environment that *differs* [original emphasis] from an urban environment or even from other rural environments. In view of these facts, one can hardly conclude that these mountain children are mentally deficient because they make low scores on intelligence tests which were constructed for and standardized on children living in another kind of environment. It is impossible to say…what their true intelligence is.

Discrimination, again, favors a particular segment of our population—White students from suburban and metropolitan areas in this case—as it opens the full gamut of opportunities to them, while decreasing access to other Americans, and international students. The phenomenon of discrimination is complex in its manifestations, but always the same in principle: to exclude others for one's self-advantage, in this case a particular group. Discrimination may rest on the basis of a group's lack of a middle-class income, or on residing within our rural sector, or being categorized as a member of a non-White racial or ethnic group, or some other criterion, regardless of actual eligibility. The emotional outcry by the public, lay and professional, regarding this modern-day revelation of a very old reality based on income and geography should remind us once more of the resonating

substance of Dewey's words (1919-1921, quoted in DeVillar, 2000, p. 331) regarding democracy: "We must teach ourselves one inescapable fact: any real advantage to one group is shared by all groups; and when one group suffers disadvantage, all are hurt." DeVillar and Jiang (2007, pp. 98-99), in their analysis of persistent differential educational disadvantages and outcomes in the U.S. generally, and specifically in the U.S. South, and, in particular, the state of Georgia, made the following recommendations:

> The provision of appropriate services, in the form of language and subject matter content, to Hispanic and other students whose English language proficiency is insufficient to participate in regular classroom instruction, is compromised by persistent budget cuts. Institutions of higher education must take the lead in preparing preK-12 teachers by restructuring their curricula to integrate and address the needs of Hispanic and other immigrant groups, both from other states and other countries. IHEs must also focus research on the problems of education in Georgia [and throughout the nation], and disseminate widely their findings. Finally, hiring of university professors whose field of expertise—both research and curricular—is in area studies (e.g., education of language minority students, bilingual/second language education) is immediately required. Elementary and secondary school teachers must engage in long term professional development that enables them to become competent professionals in successfully teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Immigration has historically made a positive contribution to U.S. culture in all its forms, including economically, artistically, socially, academically, spiritually, and philosophically. In today's extended economic culture of globalization, there is even a clearer and more urgent need for an educated citizenry if Georgia, and the U.S., are to develop and prosper.

Conclusion

We have addressed various nuances relating to demographics on race, ethnicity, gender and income in the United States, and ways in which they relate to educational access, participation and achievement. It is important to *differentiate among and within* categories of racial and ethnic groups, as Hispanic Americans differ substantively depending on the foreign-born or native-born status, as do Asian Americans along educational, income, and religious parameters. It is important to understand that meeting and exceeding entry criteria to our nation's most highly- prized universities has not been sufficient grounds for acceptance and that organized struggle and challenge is always required for discrimination to be identified, acknowledged and overturned. It is also valuable to underscore that voices of discrimination that reinforce the status quo at those same institutions will be raised, published, disseminated and echoed as forces at the service of equity threaten the existence of undeserved privilege. And, finally, it is noteworthy to point out that if competition is too great within the context of privilege, the notion of *equal* is subjected to distinct criteria favoring those who are privileged. Thus, to be counted as equal, as has been the case of Asian American students, one must outscore non-Asian American peers, to include White students, along the various but significant competitive criteria. In contrary fashion, when

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students from non-privileged groups—such as Africa Americans and Hispanic Americans—apply to elite institutions, their numbers are relatively insignificant, as is their growth trajectory, and, as they do not threaten the status quo, their applications may actually be accorded additional points to increase the chances of their admittance. DeVillar and Jiang (2011) address more fully the origins, extent, strength and durability of these nuances, presenting a framework in their book *Transforming America: Cultural Cohesion, Educational Achievement, and Global Competitiveness*, that exposes the contradictions that persist between our nation's founding rhetoric of democratic universalism and our continuing practices that betray the rhetoric, incite conflict and thwart national cohesion and development, as well as global competitiveness.

These nuances are neither benign nor random, although they do remain unwisely below the surface of our national consciousness, schooling experiences at all levels, and everyday discourse. Thus, it is necessary to make them explicit and, depending on their positive or negative influence, integrate them into our policies and practices or challenge and discard them. This obligatory culling of the wheat from the chaff is required if our attempts to move forward progressively and steadily in educational, societal and national reforms—that are meant to refine and strengthen our democracy, character, unity, capital and global competitive standing—are to have any hope of becoming a reality.

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