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SPECIAL FOCUS ON STUDENTS: RACE, CLASS, AND CHOICE

The College-Choice Process for Asian Pacific Americans: Ethnicity and SocioEconomic Class in Context

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Research on access and equity in higher education for different racial and ethnic populations frequently excludes Asian Pacific Americans (APAs)¹ from the discourse or misrepresents them. In general, research, policy, and political debates about college access have primarily focused on the educa-

¹We use Asian Pacific American (APA) and Asian American interchangeably.

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tional attainment of African American and Latino students compared to White students without the consideration of APAs (Nakanishi, 1995; Teranishi, 2002a). When APAs are included in the debate over access and equity in higher education, there is a common assumption that APAs are a successful minority group, even “outwhiting the Whites.” This assumption may help to explain the lack of attention paid to the college-going experiences of APA students.

While there exists a limited amount of research on the educational experiences of Asian Americans as a whole, even less is known about the educational experiences of ethnic subgroups within the population (Nakanishi, 1995; Ong, 2000; Sue & Okazaki, 1990; Takagi, 1992). Rather, the Asian American population has been misrepresented through being categorized and treated as a single, homogeneous racial group (Hune & Chan, 1997; Teranishi, 2002a). A closer examination of APAs reveals a population that is actually quite diverse, with subgroups that encounter different social and institutional experiences (Teranishi, 2002b).

This study examines the diversity among the Asian Pacific American student population relative to postsecondary opportunities and outcomes. Our goal was to examine the extent to which the Asian American population is, in fact, a homogeneous “model minority” in their college destinations and educational experiences. More specifically, given the importance of where students go to college, this study examines the postsecondary decisions, opportunities, and destinations of APA students from different ethnic and socioeconomic class backgrounds.

THE “INVISIBLE AMERICANS”

Some scholars have described Asian Americans as the “invisible Americans,” when in fact they constitute the third largest racial-minority group in the United States after Latina/os and African Americans. In 1999, there were more than 10 million APAs in the United States, representing 3.8% of the total population (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2000). The number of APAs has increased nearly 50% since 1990 and doubled since 1980. While it is difficult to project actual demographic changes in populations because of myriad unforeseeable factors, the potential growth of APAs represents a remarkable shift in the population. It is clearly one that U.S. higher education should plan for in the future. For example, the growth of the APA population is expected to continue with an increase of more than 25 million by 2050, representing almost a 250% increase from 1999. (See Table 1.) The proportion of APAs is projected to be 9% of the total U.S. population by 2050.

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TABLE 1
U.S. POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY RACE, 1999 AND 2050

<i>Ethnic Group</i>	<i>1999</i>		<i>2050</i>		<i>1999–2050</i>	
	<i>Millions</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Millions</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Change in Millions</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>
Total U.S. Population	272.8	100.0	403.7	100.0	130.9	48.0
White (non-Hispanic)	196.1	71.9	213.0	52.8	16.9	8.6
American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut	2.0	0.7	3.2	0.8	1.2	60.2
Black	33.1	12.1	53.5	13.2	20.4	61.5
Hispanic (of any race)	31.4	11.5	98.2	24.3	66.9	213.3
Asian and Pacific Islanders	10.3	3.8	35.8	8.9	25.5	248.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2000), Population Projections Program, Population Division,

In addition to their growing numbers in the United States, the APA population is also extremely diverse. According to classifications by the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), the APA population includes 34 ethnic groups who speak more than 300 languages. A large majority, 73.3%, do not speak English as their first language, compared with 13.8% of the total U.S. population. Some are multilingual, bilingual, and/or speak more than one Asian dialect. Great variations exist among individuals, families, and communities in immigration, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment both before and after migration. This internal diversity warrants closer study and deeper understanding of their educational experiences and outcomes relative to postsecondary education.

APA COLLEGE-GOING TRENDS AND ACHIEVEMENT

In recent decades, the APA population has become the fastest-growing, college-going racial group in the nation. Don Nakanishi (1995) found that, in the fall of 1976, 150,000 APA undergraduate and graduate students were attending institutions of higher education in the United States. A decade later in 1986, their participation rates tripled to 448,000. In 1992, there were 637,000 APAs in American higher education. Most APAs (82%) attend public institutions. A large proportion of these students enroll in public, two-year colleges (39%) (Escueta & O'Brien, 1991). In California, New Jersey, New York State, and Massachusetts, colleges and universities have seen even more pronounced increases in the APA population in higher education. For example, in California, Asian Americans comprised 39% of the total enrollment in the University of California system of nine research universities in 1998, an increase of 73% since 1988 (Allen, Bonous-Hammoth, & Teranishi, 2001).

Asian American enrollment in reputable postsecondary institutions provides a telling story of their educational achievement, Researchers have been challenged to understand fully these educational experiences and outcomes. While much of the research on race and educational achievement has left unanswered questions about what factors, or relationships among factors, affect the Asian American student population (Hurtado et al., 1995; Teranishi, 2002a), there exist some theoretical perspectives that should be noted.

One perspective on Asian American educational achievement has been the study of immigrant settlement and adaptation in American society (Ogbu, 1974, 1989; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). John Ogbu (1974) attributes Asian Americans' educational achievement to their social status as an immigrant minority who arrived in the United States by choice, in contrast to caste-like minorities who have been incorporated into U.S. society against their free will due to slavery, conquest, or colonization. Ogbu (1989) found that, in spite of cultural and language differences and relatively low economic status, Chinese American students were able to achieve high grade point averages. Their academic success was attributed to the high values that Chinese families and communities placed on education and the generally positive attitudes they had toward public schools. Other studies have found that immigrant families and communities provide the isolation necessary for success (Caplan, Whitmore, & Choy, 1989; Gibson, 1989). These studies have credited academic achievement to cultural values and practices unique to ethnic-immigrant families.

A theory of "relative functionalism" has also been postulated as an explanation for Asian American students' high academic performance (Sue & Okazaki, 1990). According to this model, educational success is derived from parents' perceptions of blocked mobility (i.e., limited economic and/or occupational opportunities). As a result, the parents encourage their children to succeed in school as a means to mobility. This theoretical explanation has been criticized because it fails to explain why other minority groups, who also experience blocked mobility, fail to react similarly (Zhou & Bankston, 1998).

Recently, Claude Steele (1995) has proposed a theory of "stereotype threat" as a possible explanation for the academic underachievement of different student populations. According to Steele, African Americans students fear being viewed in terms of negative stereotypes; the resultant anxiety impairs their intellectual performance. Zhou and Bankston (1998) argue that Vietnamese Americans may benefit from positive stereotypes of Asian Americans as high achievers; this stereotype helps students adjust to school. As a result, Asian Americans are positively influenced by how they are perceived and received by American society.

Theories of educational achievement among Asian Americans are useful in providing a context for the study of college opportunity; but they have not differentiated degrees of APA success, when measured by who goes where to college.

COLLEGE CHOICE FRAMEWORK

Considerable study has been given to the college choice process in an effort to understand how students make decisions about their college opportunities. Important factors include student ability; parental educational levels, expectation, and encouragement; encouragement from high school teachers and counselors; race/ethnicity; socioeconomic status; and gender (Hearn, 1991; Hossler & Stage, 1992; McDonough, 1997). Researchers have developed models that attempt to explain the stages in students' college decision-making process (Chapman, 1981; Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). The prevailing model among these researchers identifies three stages of college choice: predisposition, search, and choice (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). This model is particularly useful in considering the sequencing of factors that impact the decision-making process for students and parents and the role of school agents and external resources. This study is the first that attempts to conceptualize the college-choice process specifically for Asian Pacific American students by using their disaggregated freshmen data. More specifically, we examined how class and ethnicity impact the college decision-making process and destinations for various subpopulations.

RESEARCH AGENDA

Our purpose in this exploratory study was to demonstrate and describe the diversity in the Asian American population by examining college destinations and choice processes among different ethnic and socioeconomic classes of APA students. Our first goal was to determine the extent to which the Asian American population is, in fact, a homogeneous "model minority" in regard to college destinations. Therefore, we explored the degree to which ethnic and socioeconomic class differences correlated with college destination for APA students. Second, we examined how various college-choice factors impacted the different destinations for APA subpopulations.

Three research questions guided this study:

1. Are there differences in the college-choice processes and destinations of Asian American ethnic subpopulations?
2. What role, if any, do socioeconomic class and other background characteristics play in the college choice processes and destinations of Asian Americans from different ethnic subpopulations?
3. If there are observed ethnic and socioeconomic class differences in the college-choice process and destinations among Asian Americans, what are the research and policy implications for this population?

METHODOLOGY

From a methodological perspective, data available to study the APA population have primarily been racially aggregated, masking ethnic subgroup differences (Teranishi, 2002b). Our data base consisted of a national representative sample of Asian American first-year, first-time freshmen drawn from the 1997 Freshman Survey, the 32nd annual Survey of College Freshmen. The survey is sponsored by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the University of California, Los Angeles. Asian American students represented 10% of all respondents in the 1997 freshman survey: 18,106 first-time, full-time APA freshmen (5,089 Chinese Americans; 2,580 Filipino Americans; 1,559 Japanese Americans; 2,937 Korean Americans; 1,975 Southeast Asian Americans; and 5,139 students who self-identified as "Other Asian") attending 469 colleges and universities across the United States.

In addition to coming from different ethnic groups, students came from different socioeconomic classes. Southeast Asians (43.3%) and Chinese Americans (29.0%) had the greatest proportion of respondents from families with a combined income of less than \$24,999 per year. Japanese Americans (45.8%), Other Asians (38.5%), and Filipino Americans (38.1%) had the greatest proportion of students whose parents made more than \$75,000 per year. Korean Americans had a fairly even distribution of students across different socioeconomic backgrounds.

The students in the sample also varied by citizenship status. The ethnic groups with the highest rates of citizenship or permanent residency status were Filipino (98.2%) and Chinese (94.5%). Southeast Asians had the lowest rate of citizenship (58.4%) but the highest rate of permanent residency (37.1%). The rate of permanent residency among Southeast Asians in our sample is characteristic of the larger U.S. Southeast Asian population. Japanese had a high rate of U.S. citizenship (excluding permanent residency), a trend that is characteristic of the Japanese American population, which has had very little new immigration to the United States since World War II.

Measures

The dependent variable measures institutional prestige. Borrowing from recent work by McDonough and Antonio (1997), we conceptualized institutional prestige as depending on the prestige (social value) assigned to a particular school. We hypothesized college prestige by its selectivity of admissions, operationalizing this factor as the average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores for the freshmen class reported by each institutions attended by the respondents.

The independent variables are divided into three blocks. The appendix contains information about the blocking of variables as well as a descrip-

TABLE 2
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY ETHNICITY

<i>Ethnic Group</i>	<i>Number*</i>	<i>Percentage of Total**</i>
Chinese American	5,089	28.1
Filipino American	2,580	14.2
Japanese American	1,559	8.6
Korean American	2,937	16.2
Southeast Asian American	1,975	10.9
Other Asian American	5,139	28.4
Total***	18,106	100.0

* Unweighted sample
 ** Percentage sign (percent) has been eliminated.
 *** "Total Asian American" includes respondents to all Asian ethnic categories.

tion of each variable and their scales. All of the variables described below were significant for at least one of the five ethnic groups in preliminary regression analyses and were therefore included in final analyses. The first block includes five student demographic characteristics: parental income, highest level of father's and mother's education, student citizenship status, and whether the student is a native English speaker.

The second block includes four variables measuring high school experiences and activities. Self-reported high school grades are measured on an eight-point scale from "D" to "A or A+." A second variable measured whether a student took an SAT preparation course. The third variable, hours per week spent studying, is measured on an eight-point scale ranging from "none" to "over 20 hours." The final variable in this block included a measure of students' self-reported degree aspirations.

The final block included ten variables measuring students' reasons for going to college. These variables are measured on a three-point scale from "not important" to "very important." These measures include "relative's wish," "teacher's advice," "high school counselor's advice," "friend's advice," "private counselor's advice," "academic reputation of college," "college has low tuition," "wanted to live near home," "college rankings in national magazines," and the belief that this college's "graduates go to top graduate schools."

Data Analyses Procedure

Since very little is known about the college choice process and college destinations of different Asian ethnic groups, we first examined descriptive statistics to provide a profile of each of the five Asian ethnic groups accord-

ing to several demographic variables. This step allowed us to see how the different Asian ethnic populations compare in socioeconomic terms. Descriptive statistics also illustrate the distribution of the different Asian ethnic groups across various types of institutions (e.g., private university, public four-year). Furthermore, to better estimate the unique role of ethnicity on a number of college choice variables, we examined differences by ethnicity while controlling for parental income. We used available sample weights for this stage of the analysis to approximate the national populations of each subgroup. For a more comprehensive description of the weighting procedures used with CIRP data, see Sax et al. (1997).

Next, we conducted multivariate analyses in three stages to examine the relationship between specific high school experiences, reasons for going to college, key socioeconomic factors, and the prestige of the college attended. First, we conducted exploratory regression analyses using a broad array of 45 independent variables from the Freshman Survey for the entire Asian American student population, examining the effects of ethnicity and other key socioeconomic factors on attending a selective institution. Second, we conducted regression analyses separately for each of the five Asian ethnic groups to examine how attendance at selective institutions might be influenced differently for each group. Based on the results of these exploratory regressions, we conducted a final set of regression analyses using only the independent variables that significantly predicted that at least one Asian ethnic group would attend a selective institution. For purposes of making comparisons across the five samples, these analyses included identical blocks of independent variables that we force-entered into the regression equations for each group.

RESULTS

Our presentation of analysis begins by showing the distribution of students from different ethnicities in different types of postsecondary institutions. Next, we present factors that demonstrate the college-choice behavior of different APA student populations. Finally, we regressed students' demographic characteristics (ethnicity and socioeconomic class) and college decision-making factors to determine which factors predicted that different APA ethnic student populations would attend more selective institutions. We considered the selectivity of institutions that different ethnic groups attended as a sufficient indicator of differential access to higher education opportunities (Astin, 1985; Bowen, 1977).

Ethnicity, Socioeconomic Class, and College Destination

Our first level of analysis was to demonstrate the ethnic distribution of Asian Pacific Americans across different types of institutions. The institu-

TABLE 3
DISTRIBUTION OF SELECTED INSTITUTIONAL
CHARACTERISTICS BY ETHNICITY

	<i>Percentage Among</i>				
	<i>Chinese Americans</i>	<i>Filipino Americans</i>	<i>Japanese Americans</i>	<i>Korean Americans</i>	<i>Southeast Asians</i>
Low selectivity	65.4	81.5	74.0	62.0	75.4
High selectivity	34.6	18.5	26.0	38.1	24.6
4-year public college	26.7	43.6	30.5	27.3	32.0
4-year private college	14.8	15.9	29.8	19.0	15.9
4-year public univ.	35.8	27.8	21.4	36.5	38.4
4-year private univ.	22.7	12.7	18.3	17.2	13.7

Note: Weighted N = 66,561 (16,178 Chinese Americans, 10,783 Filipino Americans, 5,222 Japanese Americans; 9,524 Korean Americans, 7,889 Southeast Asians, and 16,965 other Asians).

tional factors were selectivity, whether the institution was public or private, and whether the institution was a university or four-year college (either public or private). We found distinct differences among APA ethnic groups in the type of institutions they attended. For example, larger proportions of Chinese (34.6%) and Koreans (38.1%) attended highly selective colleges than Filipinos (18.5%) and Southeast Asians (24.6%). (See Table 3.) Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans were also more likely to attend private institutions and universities, while Filipinos and Southeast Asians were more likely to attend four-year public colleges.

In our next level of analysis, we examined how socioeconomic class impacts the distribution of different ethnic groups across different types of institutions. An interesting pattern emerged showing that parental income played a different role among different ethnic groups in terms of the types of colleges that students attended. Chinese (24.5%) and Korean Americans (29.5%) whose parents made less than \$25,000 a year had greater representation in highly selective institutions than Japanese (19.4%) and Southeast Asians (15.2%) from the same income levels. Also among students from the lowest income bracket, Chinese (36.5%) and Koreans (38.3%) were more likely to attend public universities than Filipinos (28.4%) and Japanese (22.5%). Southeast Asians (43.0%) and Filipinos (40.6%) had the greatest proportion of students from the lowest income bracket who attended four-year public colleges (See Table 4.)

TABLE 4
DISTRIBUTION OF SELECTED INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS
BY ETHNICITY AND PARENTAL INCOME

<i>Institutional Characteristic</i>	<i>Percentage Among</i>									
	<i>Chinese Americans</i>		<i>Filipino Americans</i>		<i>Japanese Americans</i>		<i>Korean Americans</i>		<i>Southeast Asians</i>	
	<\$25k	>\$75k	<\$25k	>\$75k	<\$25k	>\$75k	<\$25k	>\$75k	<\$25k	>\$75k
Low selectivity	75.5	50.5	88.8	75.4	80.6	68.7	70.5	52.7	84.3	56.6
High selectivity	24.5	49.5	21.2	24.6	19.4	31.3	29.5	47.3	15.2	43.4
4-year public college	39.5	15.0	40.6	36.0	27.6	25.7	35.2	21.6	43.0	17.1
4-year private college	11.4	15.5	21.6	14.6	37.7	27.7	14.7	22.1	14.5	20.3
4-year public university	36.5	33.7	28.4	32.6	22.5	22.1	38.3	32.7	31.3	38.4
4-year private university	12.5	35.8	9.4	16.8	12.2	24.5	11.8	23.7	11.2	24.2

Note: Weighted N = 66,561 (16,178 Chinese Americans, 10,783 Filipino Americans, 5,222 Japanese Americans; 9,524 Korean Americans, 7,889 Southeast Asians, and 16,965 other Asians).

Chinese (49.5%) and Korean Americans (47.3%) from the highest income brackets were more likely to attend the most selective institutions than Filipinos (24.6%). Among APAs from the highest income bracket, more students who were Japanese American (52.2%) and Chinese Americans (51.3%) attended private institutions than Southeast Asians (44.5%) and Filipino Americans (31.4%). Interestingly, Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, and Southeast Asian American students at the highest income brackets were approximately two to three times more likely to attend private universities than the students at the lowest income bracket.

Ethnicity, SES, and College Decision-Making Processes

The next level of analysis aimed to examine more closely the differential postsecondary enrollment of APAs by investigating college-choice factors for different APA ethnic populations. We narrowed our analysis to a select group of factors that the research literature identifies as influencing students' college decisions. In our findings, factors that impacted where students attended college included information and guidance resources, the influence of cost and financial aid, and the prestige and reputation of

TABLE 5
ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN COLLEGE DECISION-MAKING FACTORS

	<i>Percentage Among</i>				
	<i>Chinese Americans</i>	<i>Filipino Americans</i>	<i>Japanese Americans</i>	<i>Korean Americans</i>	<i>Southeast Asians</i>
<i>Information and Guidance</i>					
Relative's wish	8.2	11.5	9.5	9.1	12.6
Wanted to live near home	15.4	23.1	12.8	12.6	23.6
Teacher	4.4	4.8	5.9	3.7	6.7
High school counselor	7.3	9.1	8.3	7.7	11.3
Private counselor	2.6	3.5	2.8	2.4	2.8
SAT preparation course	44.3	38.8	35.1	52.4	34.1
<i>Influences of Cost and Aid</i>					
Major financial concerns	17.5	21.0	16.3	17.2	28.5
Offered financial aid	31.2	34.7	30.0	34.8	43.2
Low tuition	26.0	33.3	22.7	29.0	29.5
<i>Influence of Prestige/Reputation</i>					
Academic reputation	58.0	59.5	55.6	56.2	58.0
Social reputation	22.4	27.1	26.0	21.2	24.5
Grads get good jobs	53.3	57.0	44.6	50.6	55.5
Grads go to top grad schools	37.8	37.6	30.7	38.9	40.5
Ranking in national magazine	19.6	14.7	12.2	17.5	16.5
<i>College Applications and Choices</i>					
Applied to only one school	11.8	17.4	18.7	12.5	22.3
Applied to 5 or more schools	54.6	37.3	40.9	50.2	30.7

Note: Weighted N = 66,561 (16,178 Chinese Americans, 10,783 Filipino Americans, 5,222 Japanese Americans; 9,524 Korean Americans, 7,889 Southeast Asians, and 16,965 other Asians).

postsecondary institutions. These factors are associated with attending different types of institutions (e.g., public, private, selective, nonselective) (Hurtado et al., 1994; McDonough, 1997).

In the college-choice process (see Table 5), we found differences in patterns of using information and guidance resources among the different ethnic groups. Filipinos (32.1%) and Southeast Asians (23.6%) had higher rates of being influenced by relatives and wanting to live near home than their Japanese (12.8%) and Korean (12.6%) counterparts. Filipinos and Southeast Asians from the lowest income bracket were most likely to choose a college because it was close to home. Living near home is an important variable to examine because attending a more selective college often involves moving away from home, living on campus, and being a full-time student.

Scoring well on such standardized exams as the SAT is frequently highly influential in whether a student is admitted to a selective college. Chinese

Americans (44.3%) and Korean Americans (52.4%) had the highest rates of taking SAT preparation courses, with Chinese and Koreans from the highest income bracket being most likely to take these preparation courses. In the competitive environment of admissions to the most selective campuses, students would have an advantage in the admissions process if taking the courses improved their scores. Since there was no way to determine what their scores would have been if they had not taken the courses, this point remains conjectural, though logical.

Another important set of factors that may affect a student's college decisions is the affordability of a particular school. This decision is influenced by tuition and living expenses, offset by the amount of financial aid that a student receives. The impact of cost and aid are important because they can determine the type of institution a student attends. Private and more selective institutions, on average, cost more than public, nonselective institutions. Southeast Asians and Filipinos, especially from the lowest income bracket, were more likely to indicate that they had major financial concerns about college than Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans. Filipinos (33.3%) and Southeast Asians (29.5%) were also most likely to choose a college because of low tuition, a trend that was true across all income levels for these ethnic groups. Filipino, Southeast Asians, and Koreans were most likely to select colleges based on the amount of financial aid that was offered to them.

Previous research has found a strong relationship between the reputation of institutions and the quality of their resources and students (Astin, 1985; Bowen, 1977). Recent studies have confirmed that institutional rankings also influence students' choice of the colleges to which they apply (McDonough, 1994). Therefore, students' perceptions of institutional reputation or ranking can provide insight into influences on their college-choice process. Among all ethnic groups, more than half of all students indicated that the academic reputation of a campus was important in determining their choices. Chinese, Filipinos, and Koreans had slightly higher rates of indicating that rankings were important in their decisions. Across all ethnic groups, students felt that being able to get a good job or going to a good graduate program were also important to consider when selecting a college.

Recent studies on college choice have also examined the rate in which students submit applications for admissions to college (Hurtado et al., 1995; McDonough, 1997). These studies have found that applying to more colleges was associated with attending more selective colleges. In addition, submitting more applications broadened students' options. However, Filipinos (17.4%), Japanese (18.7%), and Southeast Asians (22.3%) were nearly twice as likely to apply to only one campus than Chinese (11.8%) or Korean Americans (12.5%). Inversely, Chinese (54.6%) and Korean Americans (50.2%) were most likely to apply to five or more campuses.

TABLE 6
ETHNIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS DIFFERENCES IN COLLEGE DECISION-MAKING FACTORS

Factors	Percentage Among									
	Chinese Americans		Filipino Americans		Japanese Americans		Korean Americans		Southeast Asians	
	<\$25k	>\$75k	<\$25k	>\$75k	<\$25k	>\$75k	<\$25k	>\$75k	<\$25k	>\$75k
Information and Guidance										
Relative's wish	7.8	9.9	12.5	13.2	13.2	8.2	10.8	9.1	14.2	14.6
Wanted to live near home	20.7	10.4	27.5	20.5	21.3	11.0	14.8	13.8	31.0	15.6
Teacher	5.9	3.9	7.8	5.6	9.2	5.2	3.9	4.0	7.5	9.6
High school counselor	10.5	5.3	14.7	9.1	17.1	8.7	10.0	7.5	11.9	11.2
Private counselor	4.9	1.5	8.1	3.4	10.4	2.5	3.7	2.8	4.4	2.7
SAT preparation course	33.6	52.2	38.4	42.6	25.4	38.1	49.1	56.2	32.0	38.2
Influences of cost and aid										
Major financial concerns	28.4	5.9	41.4	11.6	32.3	7.1	29.6	6.3	35.0	10.0
Offered financial aid	44.0	16.0	57.9	24.9	50.1	19.8	51.6	17.3	50.4	20.5
Low tuition	36.8	16.1	38.9	29.9	34.4	20.3	43.4	18.1	30.7	21.4
Influences of Prestige/ Reputation										
Academic reputation	55.9	64.2	60.2	63.3	59.0	57.5	55.2	61.7	56.1	68.8
Social reputation	24.1	24.3	33.3	26.1	28.9	26.6	24.6	20.8	25.5	24.2
Grads get good jobs	51.1	58.0	59.1	58.6	42.5	47.9	51.3	53.2	58.6	62.6
Grads go to top grad schools	35.3	44.1	41.0	41.5	24.4	34.0	40.4	42.1	42.5	43.5
Rankings in magazine	19.0	22.0	15.7	17.8	21.0	15.3	19.0	17.6	13.5	20.5
College applications										
Applied to only one school	11.3	19.3	22.0	32.8	26.5	13.9	10.9	11.1	24.4	6.7
Applied to 5 or more schools	49.7	67.1	11.8	48.7	35.7	49.5	50.9	58.4	26.1	53.2

Note: Weighted N = 66,561 (16,178 Chinese Americans, 10,783 Filipino Americans, 5,222 Japanese Americans; 9,524 Korean Americans; 7,889 Southeast Asians, and 16,965 other Asians).

We also identified socioeconomic class differences for the different ethnic subpopulations in the type of institutions they attended. (See Table 6.) Southeast Asians and Filipinos from lower-income families were the most likely to choose a school near home. Interestingly, Southeast Asians and Filipinos in the highest income bracket were also most likely to indicate that living near home was very important. In addition, the gap between the high- and low-income Southeast Asians and Filipinos was fairly small compared to that of other ethnic groups. Thus, socioeconomic class was less a factor in living near home than ethnicity.

Another interesting pattern that emerged about the impact of socioeconomic class among different ethnic groups was in students' rates of taking SAT preparation courses. Chinese Americans and Korean American students from higher-income backgrounds had much higher rates of taking these courses than students from lower-income backgrounds. Chinese Americans had the largest gaps between the high and low SES students regarding these courses. However, among Filipino Americans and Southeast Asian Americans, lower-income students had a slightly higher rate of taking these courses than higher-income students. Lower-income Filipinos were also more likely to apply to a greater number of colleges.

Filipino Americans and Southeast Asians Americans from low SES backgrounds were most likely to indicate that they had major concerns about cost. However, students in the same groups but in the highest income brackets were also most likely to be concerned about cost. The groups with the largest gap between the high and low SES students were Chinese Americans and Korean Americans. Among low SES Filipino and Korean American students, low tuition was more important in their college destination than it was for low SES Chinese Americans and Southeast Asian Americans. Among the same groups, students from high SES backgrounds also had the highest rates of indicating that low tuition was important. For Chinese Americans and Southeast Asians, the cost of tuition presented the largest gaps between the high and low SES students, indicating a larger impact of socioeconomic class where the cost of tuition is concerned.

Chinese Americans and Southeast Asian Americans also had the largest gaps between their high and low SES students in how influential magazine rankings were on their college destinations. Korean Americans had the smallest gap across the different income levels. High SES students among Chinese and Southeast Asians may share an advantage over low SES students in terms of pursuing more selective colleges.

The cross-tabulations presented important distinctions among different APA ethnic subpopulations according to their college destinations and decision-making processes. The differential role of socioeconomic class within the APA ethnic subpopulations was also a significant finding that required further investigation. We examined the impact of the college decision-making processes on college destination, controlling more precisely for the re-

spondents' ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Using a regression model enabled us to examine ethnic differences in predicting attendance at selective institutions.

Predictors of College Destination

Our first regression model included all APA students with ethnicity and SES indicators as independent variables. For our second step, we conducted separate regression analyses on each APA ethnic group to examine predictors of attending a more selective institution. Overall, these analyses enabled us to look more closely at the role of ethnicity and socioeconomic status across and within different APA ethnic groups, with regard to college destination.

Table 7 reveals the results of the regression analyses, predicting attendance at more selective colleges for all Asian Pacific American students and selected ethnic subpopulations. This table includes both unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients to facilitate discussion across and within groups. In most cases, our discussion of results is limited to findings significant at the .001 level because of differences in sample size. The full regression model accounts for 41% of the variance in the dependent measure for all APA students. We examined standardized regression coefficients for the impact of ethnicity and other demographic background characteristics, high school achievement and activities, and college choice factors on predicting college attendance at selective institutions.

When appraising the role of background characteristics on college destination among all APAs, we found that being either Chinese Americans or Korean Americans was positively associated with attending a more selective institution, after controlling for all other variables in the equation. Inversely, being Filipino or Japanese was negatively associated with attending a more selective institution at the final step. Being Southeast Asian was not a significant predictor of attending a more selective institution after controlling for all other variables in the equation.

Among all APA students in the full sample, parental income and parental educational levels were significant positive predictors for attending more selective colleges. Father's education level was a slightly higher predictor than mother's education level. Whether students were native English speakers was insignificant in the model; however, being a U.S. citizen or permanent resident was negatively associated with attending a more selective college. These findings suggest that, indeed, the influence of background characteristics on college destination varies among the APA student population as demonstrated earlier in the cross-tabulations.

High school achievement and experiences played a significant role in determining attendance at a more selective college. High school GPA was very strongly associated with attending a selective college, almost certainly

TABLE 7

PREDICTING ATTENDANCE AT MORE SELECTIVE INSTITUTIONS BY ETHNICITY

Variable	All Asian Americans (n = 17,835)		Chinese Americans (n = 5,016)		Filipino Americans (n = 2,549)		Japanese Americans (n = 1,527)		Korean Americans (n = 2,906)		Southeast Asians (n = 1,934)	
	b.	β	b.	β	b.	β	b.	β	b.	β	b.	β
Background Characteristics												
Chinese American	29.27	10 ***										
Filipino American	-34.11	-09 ***										
Japanese American	-11.64	-02 ***										
Korean American	29.09	08 ***										
Southeast Asian American	0.45	01										
Parental income	3.20	09 ***	2.22	06 ***	4.36	11 ***	4.00	08 **	1.72	04 *	4.04	12 ***
Father's education level	2.83	05 ***	2.30	04 *	5.82	09 ***	8.07	10 ***	5.28	08 ***	2.62	05
Mother's education level	3.39	06 ***	3.44	06 **	-1.69	-02	-1.84	-02	1.29	02	1.74	03
U.S. citizen/perm. Resident	-11.43	-02 **	-0.72	-01	-9.21	-01	39.30	10 **	9.85	02	-59.57	-13 ***
Native English speaker	3.05	01	-2.99	-01	15.87	06 **	-44.88	-14 ***	-8.05	-03	19.11	07 **
High School Experiences												
High school GPA	23.19	25 ***	24.67	26 ***	21.10	26 ***	22.83	24 ***	27.76	30 ***	15.11	17 ***
Took SAT preparation course	-4.94	-02 **	-6.17	-02 *	-4.91	-02	-22.42	-08 **	8.12	03 *	-12.39	-05 *
More time spent on homework	2.62	03 ***	2.79	04 **	0.98	01	4.35	06 *	1.78	02	0.46	01
High degree aspirations	15.01	09 ***	17.02	10 ***	10.91	08 ***	21.38	13 ***	15.50	09 ***	20.02	13 ***
College Choice Factors												
Relative's wish	1.32	01	4.60	02 *	-1.77	-01	0.10	00	3.77	02 *	-0.44	-01
Teacher's advice	1.14	01	-0.27	-01	12.96	07 **	0.24	00	-3.72	-02	5.71	03
Academic reputation	25.87	11 ***	23.23	10 ***	19.64	10 ***	33.02	14 ***	23.21	11 ***	29.19	13 ***
Low tuition	-40.80	-25 ***	-44.97	-28 ***	-27.15	-19 ***	-46.96	-25 ***	-40.32	-25 ***	-27.38	-18 ***
High school counselor's advice	6.45	03 ***	11.62	06 ***	0.40	00	7.43	03	6.92	03	-3.34	-02
Private counselor's advice	-3.75	-01	-5.77	-02	-17.18	-06 **	-10.43	-03	12.99	04 *	-2.60	-01

Wanted to live near home	-21.24	-12	***	-28.71	-16	***	-18.52	-13	***	-25.90	-13	***	-15.99	-09	***	-16.76	-10	***
Friend's advice	-5.90	-03	***	-8.25	-04	**	-7.76	-05	*	-9.75	-04		-6.31	-03	*	-14.95	-08	***
Grads go to top grad schools	4.88	03	***	5.10	03	*	4.89	03		5.14	03		8.86	05	**	-2.61	-02	
Rankings in national magazines	28.64	17	***	27.28	15	***	28.71	19	***	28.21	15	***	23.74	14	***	36.39	22	***
(Adjusted R ²)		(41)			(41)			(32)			(39)			(37)			(39)	

* p<.05

** p<.0

*** p<.001 at the final step

because of the high correlation between GPA and SAT scores, which are often the primary criteria for selecting students at the most selective colleges. Interestingly, students who used for-profit resources, such as SAT preparation courses, were less likely to attend more selective institutions, an interesting finding since previous college choice researchers found a positive association between attending these activities during high school and attending selective colleges (McDonough, 1997). Students who identified their college-going motivation as “to make more money” or “to get a better job” were less likely to attend selective institutions. We hypothesized that these students might prefer to pursue a technical education, rather than the liberal arts curriculum which characterizes more selective colleges.

Among factors that determined the type of college a student attended, the academic reputation of the institutions was very important for those who attended more selective colleges. However, students’ financial concerns and desire to live near home were associated more with students who attended less selective colleges. The influence of counselors or teachers was insignificant in predicting attendance at a more prestigious college. However, taking advice from friends was associated more with attending a less selective college.

The regression results for the separate ethnic groups showed that distinct factors influenced college destinations. These regressions accounted for between 32% of the variance in the dependent variable for Filipino Americans and 41% for Chinese Americans. In regard to the role of background characteristics, parental income was a stronger predictor for attending a selective college among Filipinos and Southeast Asians. However, the role of father’s education level had the most influence for Koreans, Filipinos, and Japanese while mother’s education level was significant only among Chinese Americans. These findings suggested that different SES factors had different influence on the separate ethnic groups.

In terms of citizenship and residency, Japanese U.S. citizens or permanent residents were more likely to attend a selective college, while Southeast Asians who were citizens or permanent residents were more likely to attend less selective colleges. Being a native English speaker was a significant positive predictor only for Filipinos and Southeast Asians, and was a negative predictor for Japanese Americans.

Where high school achievement and experiences were concerned, academic performance was more highly correlated with selective college attendance for Korean Americans, Chinese Americans, and Filipino Americans but had less impact among Southeast Asian Americans. Interestingly, Korean students’ use of for-profit resources (e.g., SAT preparation courses) was a significant and positive predictor of attending a selective college, even though for all other groups, it was either negative or insignificant. This finding suggests that students from different ethnic groups either had differen-

tial access to such resources or used them for different reasons. Along the same lines, Filipinos and Japanese—but not other groups—were more likely to attend a selective college if they spent more time on homework.

Among other differences between ethnic groups in their college-choice processes, Chinese Americans and Korean Americans were more likely to attend more selective colleges because graduates from these colleges attended top graduate schools. However, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans who reported greater concerns about tuition costs were most likely to attend a less selective college. Only Chinese and Koreans showed a positive association between the influence of their relatives and attending a more selective college, while Filipinos who attended more selective colleges were more likely to be influenced by teachers. Chinese students were the only group to be positively influenced by a high school counselor's advice. In terms of attending a more selective college, Chinese, Japanese, and Southeast Asians were more likely to be adversely affected by wanting to live near home or being influenced by close friends than Filipinos or Korean Americans.

DISCUSSION

Our findings indicate that students from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds attend college at differential rates. In regard to ethnicity, Chinese and Korean Americans had greater representation in selective institutions, private institutions, and four-year universities than Filipinos and Southeast Asians. Filipinos, Japanese, and Southeast Asians had their highest representation at public institutions with less stringent admission requirements. The attendance of APA ethnic subpopulations across different types of higher education institutions points to the need to examine Asian Americans beyond the context of the most selective universities, which tends to be the focus of most discussions that includes them.

Among different ethnic groups, socioeconomic class impacted the destination of APA students at differential rates. For example, although Chinese Americans had the highest rates of attending private institutions, this finding holds only for high-SES Chinese students because low-SES Chinese Americans had the lowest rates of enrollment in private institutions among all low-income students from other ethnic backgrounds. Inversely, the gap between socioeconomic class groups within some ethnic groups was very small in terms of their college destination. For example, Southeast Asians and Koreans showed almost equal rates of attending public universities for students from high- and low-SES backgrounds. Therefore, while some groups had a larger gap in representation in more selective colleges, indicating a larger impact of socioeconomic class, other groups had smaller differences, indicating a stronger impact of ethnicity rather than socioeconomic class. These findings were further supported by the regression analyses.

The destinations of different APA student populations were also impacted by differences in their college-choice processes. We determined that the college decision-making processes varied by the ethnic and socioeconomic class backgrounds of students. This general finding was true among such specific factors as the influence of social networks, the impact of cost and financial aid availability, numbers of college applications submitted, and perceptions of the prestige and reputation of different colleges. In the regression analyses, we found that these college-choice factors, after controlling for background characteristics and academic achievement, had differential effects on the selectivity of the college a student attended. Our findings suggest that APA students from different ethnic backgrounds were not always similar in their college-choice process nor were APA ethnic subpopulations similar in the factors that impacted their eventual college destinations.

RESEARCH AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The results from this study have implications for how we think about access to higher education for Asian American students. Common stereotypes, assumptions, and myths about the APA population often claim that they are not “problematic” compared to other ethnic minorities and hence do not require research and policy attention on the issue of access. On the contrary, our research demonstrates the importance of considering the context of the specific APA population being examined. For example, this study demonstrates important findings related to the differential rates in which APA students from different ethnic and socioeconomic class backgrounds attend college. In addition, we identified the differential impact of socioeconomic class within and across the separate ethnic groups, indicating that race/ethnicity should not be separated from SES and vice versa.

In general, our findings suggest that some ethnic groups among the APA population had a greater likelihood of attending more selective and prestigious colleges and that certain resources and behavior increased their chances of being admitted. In contrast, some APA ethnic groups, namely Filipino Americans and Southeast Asian Americans were more likely to attend less selective colleges because of wanting to live near home, choosing a college because of low tuition, etc.

Although we satisfied our goal of demonstrating the diversity of college-choice behaviors among college-bound Asian Americans, more research is needed to examine specifically why these differences exist. Future research should examine the impact of culture, generational status, immigration history, and other factors that differentially impact different communities of APA subpopulations. Especially imperative is the community influence on APAs, given the patterns of residential segregation still found among

certain ethnic subpopulations (e.g., Chinatowns, Japantowns, Koreatowns, etc.).

It is also important to consider that the lack of research on this population is confounded by the limitations of conventional research perspectives and methodological approaches. For example, if differences exist between APA ethnic subpopulations with regard to college-choice behavior and destination, what differences also exist in students' preparation for, adjustment to, and success during college? Given the range of institutional types, it is important to consider the differential experiences of APA subpopulations in each setting. Our results suggest a very high likelihood of differential college experiences and outcomes for APA students, a question that should be pursued in future research.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When we began this study, the annual Freshman Survey sponsored by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program at the University of California, Los Angeles, interested us as a potential data set for some of the issues that interested us. Data collected in 1997 was of particular significance because it was the only year that the Freshman Survey disaggregated the Asian American category into distinct ethnic subcategories. However, the data is constrained by two main limitations.

First, although the APA students in the sample were offered different ethnic categories with which to self-identify, the possible choices were still broad and contain tremendous diversity among them. For example, the "Southeast Asian" category can include Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, Hmongs, Miens, and many other ethnic groups who might speak different languages, live according to different values and beliefs, have different immigration patterns, and have different experiences in their native country as well as in the United States. This statement also holds for each of the ethnic groups in the data set.

Similar limitations exist in measuring socioeconomic class among the APA population. Traditionally, APAs have exhibited high rates of educational attainment, yet few studies have disaggregated whether these degrees were obtained in the United States or in another country. Furthermore, the interpretation of socioeconomic class among Asian Americans can vary across ethnic groups because of differences in how these ethnic groups define their household and household income. However, variability in income-definition was not the issue we examined. Rather, we controlled for different socioeconomic class levels as a common denominator across APA ethnic groups to examine similarities and differences within the APA population in regard to postsecondary experiences and outcomes.

Second, as we explored college choice issues, we learned that the data and its variables could address only part of that process. This limitation was only natural, since the survey was not designed with our study in mind. Still its data enabled us to take a first look at the relationship between APA ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and college choice processes and their influence on attendance at selective institutions. What we found establishes interesting insights about the college-choice process for different Asian ethnic groups and strongly indicates the value of further investigation to better understand the complexity and diversity among this population. However, insight into the APA population and their educational processes and experiences could benefit greatly from different methodological (i.e., qualitative measures), conceptual (i.e., institutional or state level approaches), and theoretical approaches (i.e., disciplinary or grounded). We hope that this study offers a sturdy beginning toward such future research.

APPENDIX

Descriptions of Variables

Ethnicity	Five dummy variables indicating student's race (Chinese American, Filipino American, Korean American, Southeast Asian American, and Japanese American). Coded 1 = no; 2 = yes.
Income	Measured on a 14-point scale from less than \$6,000 to \$200,000 or more and collapsed into a four-point scale: 1 = less than \$24,999; 2 = \$25,000–\$49,999; 3 = \$50,000–\$74,999; 4 = greater than \$75,000.
Father's education	Measured on an eight-point scale from grammar school or less to graduate degree. Recoded into a five-point scale: 1 = less than high school graduate, 2 = high school graduate, 3 = some college, 4 = college graduate, 5 = graduate degree.
Mother's education	Measured on an eight-point scale from grammar school or less to graduate degree. Recoded into a five-point scale reflecting the highest education attainment: 1 = less than high school graduate, 2 = high school graduate, 3 = some college, 4 = college graduate, 5 = graduate degree.
Citizenship	1 = not U.S. citizen; 2 = U.S. citizen.
Native English speaker	1 = no; 2 = yes.

Dependent variable: Institutional selectivity, measured as the average combined SAT

GPA	High school grade point average measured on an 8-point scale: 1 = D, 2 = C, 3 = C+, 4 = B-, 5 = B, 6 = B+, 7 = A-, 8 = A or A+.
Took SAT prep. course	1 = no; 2 = yes.
Time spent on homework	Measured on an eight-point scale: 1 = none, 2 = 1–3, 3 = 4–7, 4 = 8–10, 5 = 11–13, 6 = 14–16, 7 = 17–19, 8 = over 20 hours.
Degree aspirations	Measured on a 10-point scale. Collapsed into a five-point scale: 1 = none, 2 = associate/other, 3 = bachelor's, 4 = master's, 5 = professional/graduate degree.

scores of incoming freshmen; range = 400–1600.

Block 1. Demographics

Relative's wish	1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = very important.
Teacher's advice	1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = very important.
Academic reputation	1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = very important.
Low tuition	1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = very important.
High school counselor's advice	1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = very important.
Private counselor's advice	1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = very important.
Wanted to live near home	1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = very important.
Friend's advice	1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = very important.
Graduates go to top grad schools	1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = very important.
Rankings in national magazines	1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = very important.

Block 2. High School Experience**Block 3. College Choice Factors:
Reasons for Going to College on a Three-Point Scale****REFERENCES**

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