

We acknowledge that we are currently situated on the traditional lands of the Massachuset and the Wampanoag Tribes. Furthermore, we would like to thank the cleaning and maintenance staff of this building and all research facilities, without whose labor this work could not be conducted.

Community Guidelines

- Intent ≠ Impact
- Lean into discomfort
- Admitting ignorance
- Share the air
- Step up/step back
- Actively listen
- Be patient
- Give credit (props)
- What's learned here leaves here; what's said here stays here
- Oops/ouch
- Assume good intentions
- Beware of overgeneralizing (~be precise; define terms)

Asian Americans and Affirmative Action: A Need for Data Disaggregation

Tanveer Karim,
Harvard University

Equity and Inclusion Journal Club, Center for Astrophysics | Harvard & Smithsonian

21 February 2020

Who do you think are the
Asian Americans?

When did the first Asian
Americans move to what is now
known as the United States?

Based on media portrayal of
Asian Americans, what
adjectives come to mind?

Write down names of five Asian
American celebrities/well-
known figures

Who are Asian-Americans?

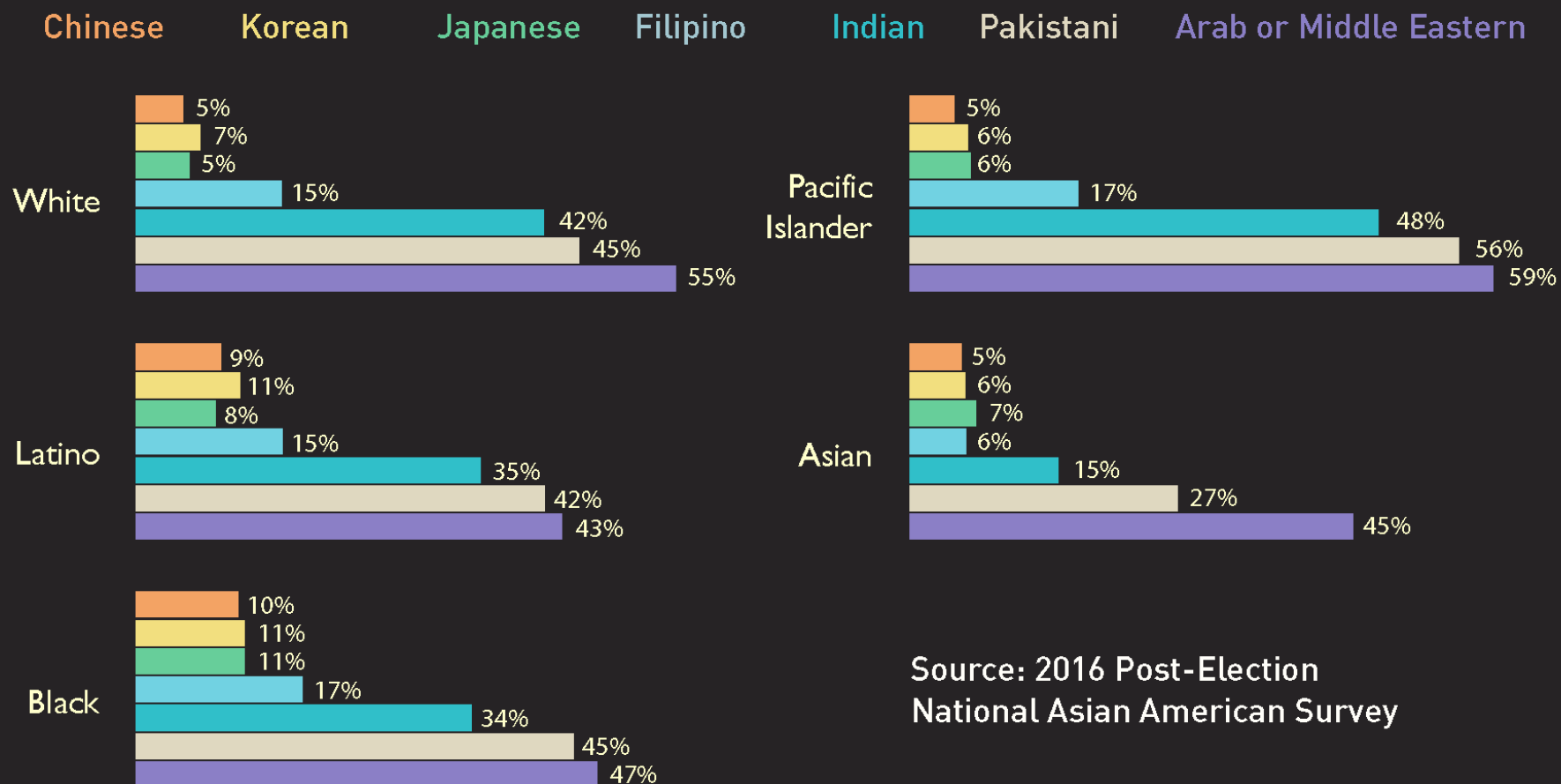
“A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.” – *US Census Bureau*





Data Bits

Proportion Indicating That the Reference Group is Not Likely to be Asian or Asian American



Source: 2016 Post-Election National Asian American Survey

History of Asian Americans



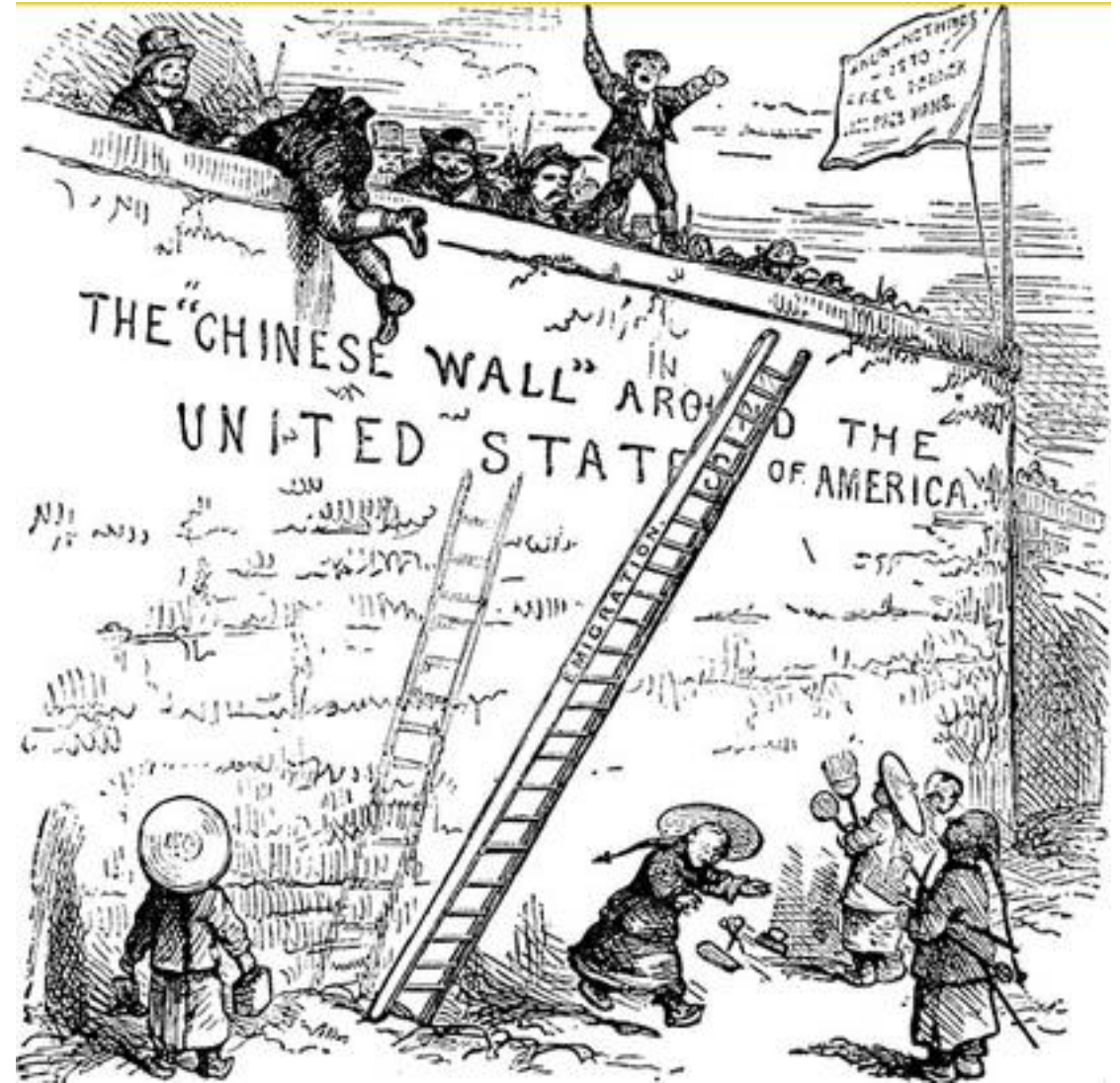
"CHINESE STRAP LABOR" IN GUINIA, CHINA, AT WORK IN THE RUBBER PLANTATION. SOURCE: J. DAVIS

abagond.wordpress.com



Museumca.org

Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882



*United States v.
Bhagat Singh Thind*



Internment of Japanese Americans



California

California formally apologizes to Japanese Americans for internment camps

Effort comes 78 years after US forced more than 120,000 people of Japanese descent from their homes during the second world war

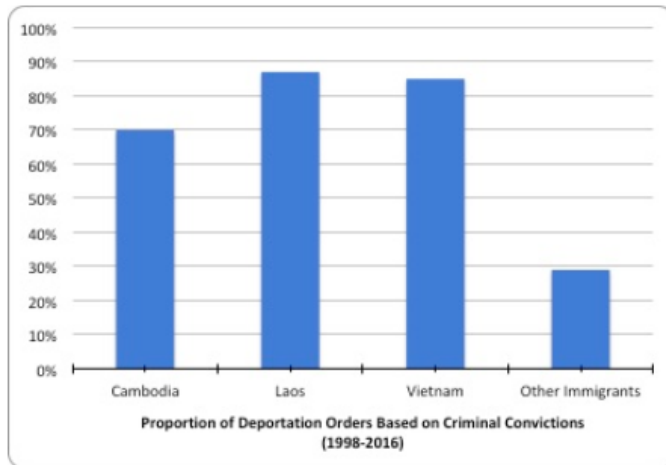


▲ A monument honoring the dead is seen against the background of the eastern Sierra mountains at the Manzanar internment camp. Photograph: Robyn Beck/AFP via Getty Images

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965

"Asians represent six-tenths of 1 percent of the population of the United States ... with respect to Japan, we estimate that there will be a total for the first 5 years of some 5,391 ... the people from that part of the world will never reach 1 percent of the population .. .Our cultural pattern will never be changed as far as America is concerned." (U.S. Senate, Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization of the Committee on the Judiciary, Washington, D.C., Feb. 10, 1965, pp.71, 119.)

Present Day



- Deportation one of the number one issues today
 - Deportation of immigrants with no criminal record: 174% in 2017
 - Cambodian American refugee community: 279% from 2017 to 2018
 - While escalated under current administration, NOT unique
 - Detention increased seven-folds since 1994 due to Clinton-era laws: (~6800/daily to ~46,000/daily)
 - Bangladeshi detainees punished with solitary confinement for refusing to work for \$1/day

What is Model Minority?

**Family
values**

Creative

Hard-working

Leader

Intelligent

Vocal

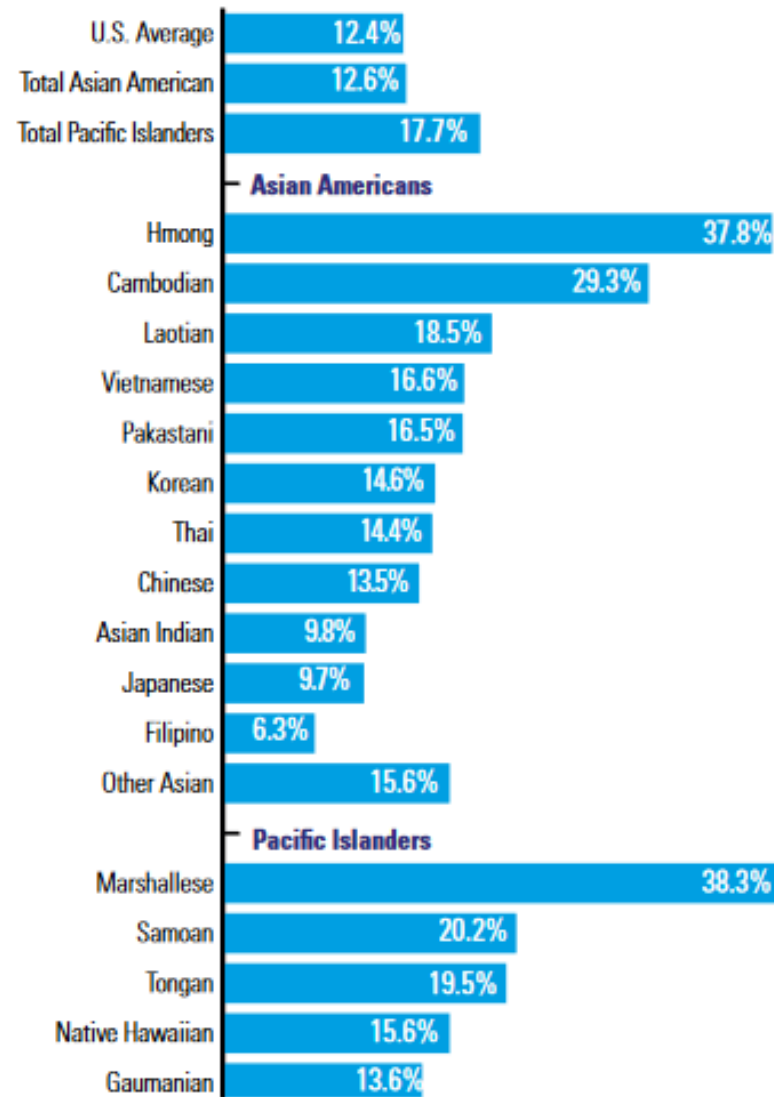
**Respect for
elders**

Assertive

Why the model-minority stereotype?

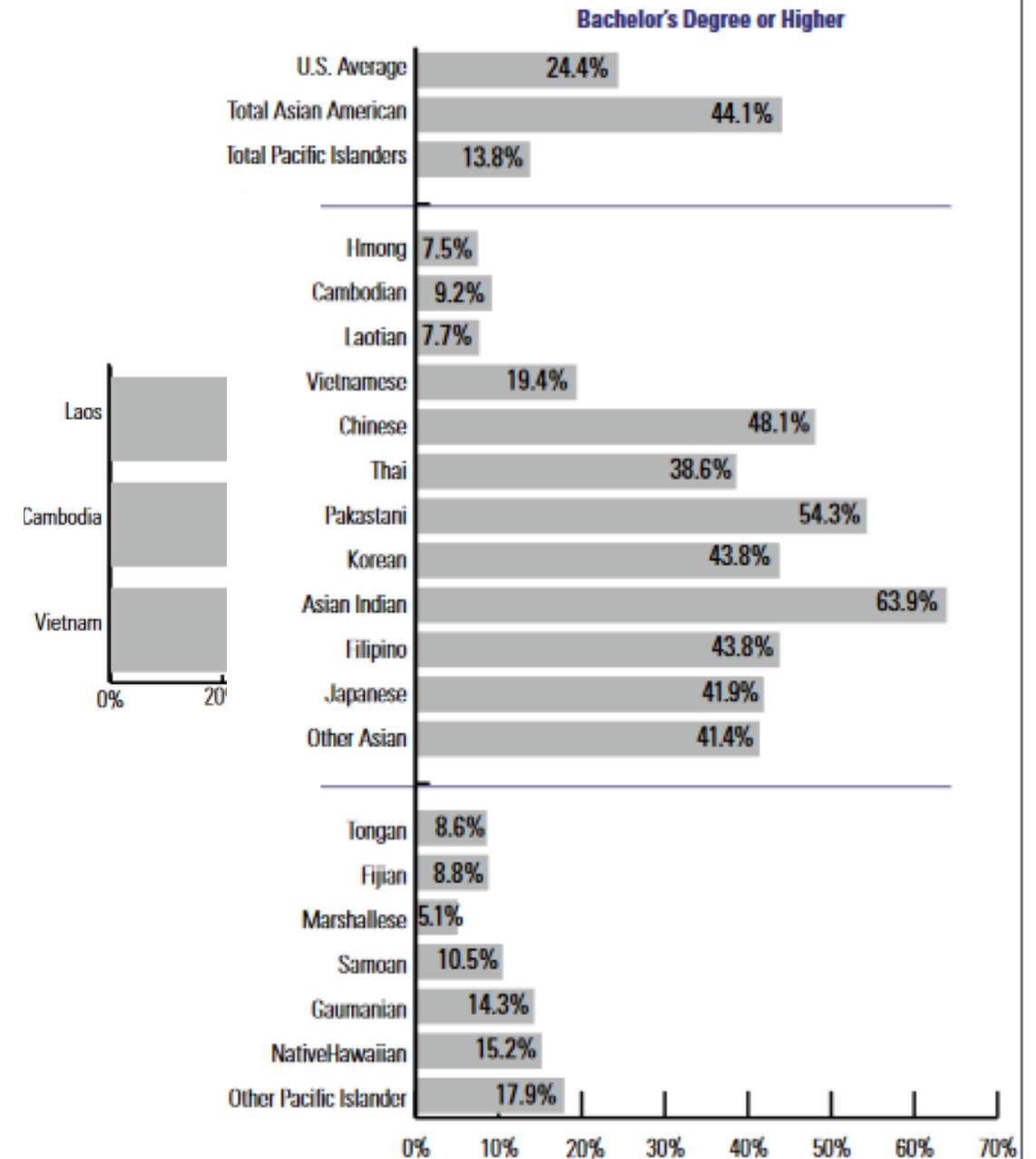
- 1960s Civil Rights Movement and the Immigration and Nationality Acts Amendment of 1965 – Karthick Ramakrishnan
- Reframing of Asian-Americans by the media – Ellen Wu
 - “Success Story, Japanese-American Style” - William Petersen, NYT 1966

Figure 13: Percentage of AAPIs Below Poverty, 1999



Note: Poverty status does not include individuals in institutions, military quarters, or college dormitories.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 1, 2000.



Effects of MM Stereotyping

- Mental health
 - Overburdened with expectation
- Erosion of identities due to stereotyping
- Only the most dominant voices are heard
- Discrimination within the Asian American Community

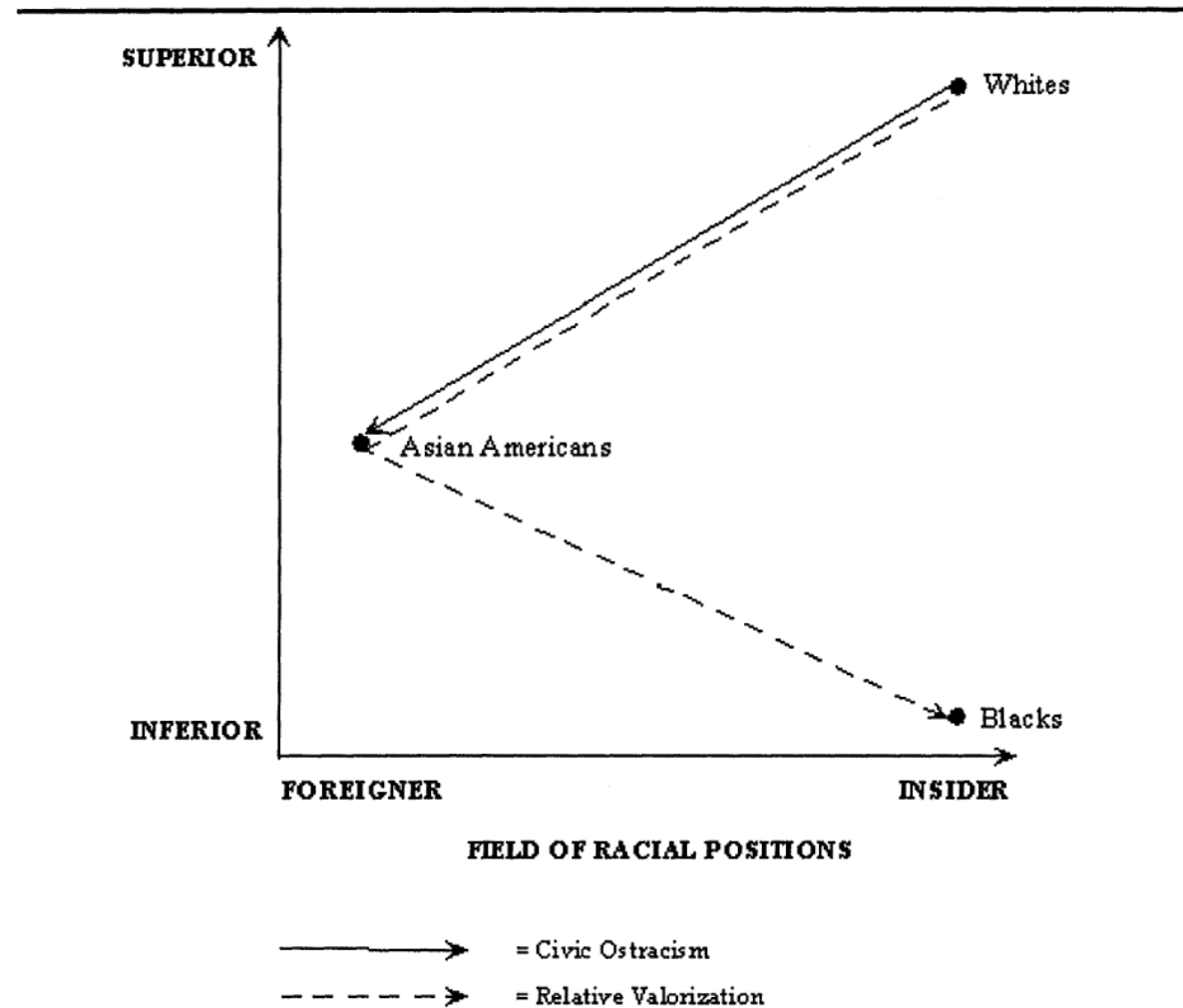


Figure 1. Racial triangulation.

Affirmative Action

What is Affirmative Action (AA)?

Affirmative action is a term used in the USA to depict a set of laws, policies, guidelines, and government-mandated and government-sanctioned administrative practices, including those of private institutions, **intended to end and correct the effects of a specific form of discrimination**. It seeks to end the effects of discriminatory practices that violate the inherent equality of persons who, because they share certain attributes such as sex or skin colour, have been denied opportunities on the grounds ***that they are inferior or different***.

- The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Practices

Caveat of Affirmative Action

- NOT a proxy for racial quota
 - Definition struck down *Bakke 1978*
- AA related to *diversity* according to Justice Powell (*Bakke 1978*)
 - Diversity has different axes, e.g. socioeconomic status, geographic location
- Rationale:
 - Diversity-based, race-conscious policies require highly individualized assessment RATHER than clumping students
 - Tidbit: Traditional metrics such as GPA DO clump students into categories

Asian-American Relationship with AA

AAPIs have become “racial mascots” to camouflage an agenda that, if presented by Whites on their own behalf, would look too much like self-interest. – Frank Wu and William Kidder



Advantages by Race and Class on the SAT and ACT at Selective Colleges, Fall 1997

Group	Public Institutions (on ACT scale of 36)	Private Institutions (on SAT scale of 1,600)
Race		
--White	--	--
--Black	+3.8	+310
--Hispanic	+0.3	+130
--Asian	-3.4	-140
Class		
--Lower	-0.1	+130
--Working	+0.0	+70
--Middle	--	--
--Upper-Middle	+0.3	+50
--Upper	+0.4	-30

Negative Action vs Affirmative Action

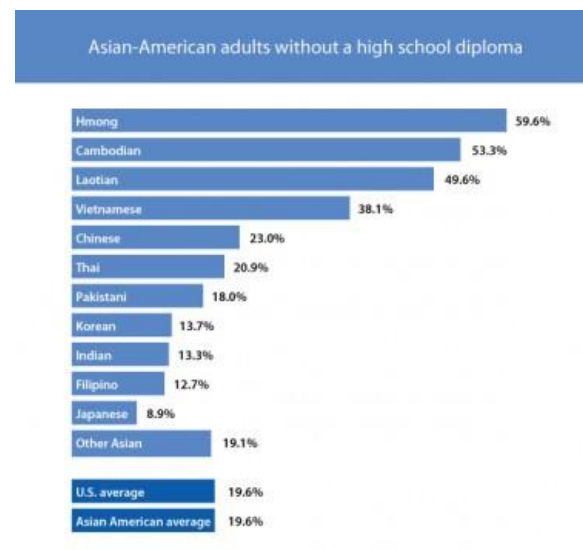
- Asian Americans **ARE** disadvantaged in relation to White peers but they are penalized
 - Legacies and athletes (Harvard Class of 2020 ~45% White students are legacy and/or athletes compared to 16% minorities)
 - Arcidiacono et al. 2019 shows that 3/4th of White ALDC admits would be rejected if they had been treated as white non-ALDCs
 - *the fact that Asian American students are less likely to be admitted than equally-qualified Whites suggests that there are existing biases in the system that are race-based.* – Liu 2008
 - *If both groups were being disadvantaged in the same way by affirmative action, there should not be a discrepancy between their admission rates.* – Liu 2008

Harvard and Negative Action

- Harvard admissions issue is not recent
 - 1990 Harvard sued due to stereotyping Asian American students
 - Harvard admissions officers used stereotypical descriptions of Asian applicants such as "he's quiet and, of course, wants to be a doctor." **Interestingly, Harvard was eventually cleared of discrimination charges because its exclusion of Asian Americans was found to be because of preferences for legacy students and recruited athletes.** Apparently, this was not viewed as a problem. – Karen De Witt 1990
- Empirical evidence supports the notion that negative action is not an inevitable consequence of affirmative action
 - CA striking down AA in 1990s resulted in 1% increase of Asian admittance vs 12% increase of White admittance

Data Disaggregation

Data Disaggregation



Note: Data are for adults, ages 18 to 64.

Source: Asians in the Ivory Tower (2010), Robert T. Teranishi; Analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), Summary File 3

- Data Disaggregation allows to measure not only *average* but also *variance*
 - Highlights issues that different ethnicities face
 - After passing of the bill in California, found that 14% AA are uninsured, but by ethnicity, 8% Japanese Americans and 27% Korean Americans
 - Affects not only Asian Americans but also Arab Americans who are lumped as White under the US definition and are ineligible for many policies geared towards underrepresented minorities
- Concerns of profiling

What Can You Do as a Citizen/Resident?

- Currently MA is considering data disaggregation
 - Let your State Reps and Senators know that you care
- Ask your Funding Agencies to consider data disaggregation
- Volunteer with your local refugee and immigration non-profits

What Can You Do as an Academic?

- Study the nuanced arguments in the Affirmative Action debate
- Recognize the difference between Affirmative Action and Negative Action and talk about it with your fellow committee members
- Make yourself aware and consider applicant's background story rather than simply seeing the box *Asian*
- Recognize that many Asian American ethnicities AND Arab Americans (defined as White Americans by the US Government) also faced and face systemic racism and oppression and many ARE underrepresented minorities
- Most importantly, recognize that not all Asian Americans are overrepresented minorities and not all Asian Americans are anti Affirmative Action

Resources

- <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/04/19/524571669/model-minority-myth-again-used-as-a-racial-wedge-between-asians-and-blacks>
- <http://pzacad.pitzer.edu/~mma/teaching/MS80/readings/lee.pdf>
- <https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2017/11/13/asian-group-tells-common-application-stop-disaggregating-asian-groups>
- http://care.gseis.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/2008_CARE_Report.pdf
- <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/notyourmodelminority-asian-americans-affirmative-action-debate>
- <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/06/asian-americans-and-the-future-of-affirmative-action/489023/>
- <http://media.asian-nation.org/Kidder-Negative-Action.pdf>
- <https://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1144&context=aalj>
- <http://www.law.uci.edu/lawreview/vol3/no4/Chang.pdf>
- <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0032329299027001005>