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Separate but Equal:

Asian Nationalities in the U.S.

John R. Logan and Weiwei Zhang

Department of Sociology, Brown University

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Summary

Six distinct Asian national origin groups now number more than a million in the United States. This report points out the substantial differences among them and draws out some of their implications. Their share of immigrants ranges from under half to over three quarters; their share below poverty is as low as 6% and as high as 15%; some are especially concentrated in Los Angeles and others in New York. As the Asian population grows in size and diversity, it becomes less useful to think about Asian Americans as a single category. It is more accurate to study Chinese and Indians, Filipinos and Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese.

Doing so leads to two main findings. First, every Asian nationality except Japanese is more segregated from whites than are Asians as a broad category. In fact, two of the largest nationalities (Chinese and Indians) are about as segregated as Hispanics, Vietnamese are as segregated as African Americans, and there has been little change in the last two decades. Second, quite unlike the case of Hispanics and African Americans, Asian national origin groups live in neighborhoods that are generally comparable to those of whites, and in some respects markedly better. The Asian pattern is separate but equal (or even more than equal), raising questions about the prospect or value of their residential assimilation in the future.

Main findings

The Asian presence in this country was once symbolized by Chinatowns in major cities; there are now six distinct Asian national origin groups with more than a million residents. And whereas Asians have often been thought of uniformly as a single "model minority," it is time to recognize the very large differences that exist between the Chinese, Filipinos, Indians, and other major Asian groups. We will argue that these differences are important enough that use of the census category of Asians is misleading, even though the concept of Asian is in common usage in public discourse. Each Asian nationality group is distinctive enough to be treated as a separate ethnicity. It is premature to assume that a pan-ethnic identity has eclipsed the ethnic boundaries among Asians in the United States.

This report summarizes what we know now about America's several Asian minorities: their origins and growth, trends in their location within the country, their heterogeneity in social background and economic achievement, and their pattern of neighborhood settlement.

1. The total Asian population more than doubled in two decades, reaching nearly 18 million. It is now almost as large as the Hispanic population was in 1990. The Indian population has grown fastest, now nearly four times its size in 1990.

2. Most Asian nationalities remain predominantly foreign-born, as the pace of immigration keeps up with the growth of second and later generations in the U.S. The exception is Japanese, who are only 40.5% immigrant.

3. Asians' socioeconomic status was generally on a par with non-Hispanic whites (and therefore higher than Hispanics or African Americans). Indians and Japanese are the more advantaged nationalities, while Vietnamese have the highest unemployment, lowest income, and least education among these groups.

4. Though a majority of Hawaiian residents are Asian, the largest numbers of most Asian groups are found in California (especially the Los Angeles metro and San Francisco Bay Area) and New York. Los Angeles's Asian population has significantly greater shares of Filipinos, Japanese and Koreans, while New York is tilted toward Chinese and Indians.

5. Although residential segregation of Asians within metropolitan areas has repeatedly been reported to be considerably lower than that of other minorities, the Chinese and Indian levels of segregation are as high as Hispanics and Vietnamese segregation is almost as high as that of African Americans. Segregation of Asian nationalities in Los Angeles and New York is even higher than the national metro average.

6. Despite high segregation, every Asian nationality except Vietnamese lives on average in neighborhoods with higher income and share of college educated residents than do non-Hispanic whites. Vietnamese are nearly on par with the average white's neighborhood.

7. The Asian neighborhood advantage is most pronounced in the suburbs, supporting the characterization of Asian "ethnoburbs" in metropolitan regions with large Asian minorities.

Data sources

In 1990, 2000, and 2010 the decennial census included a question about race. Several specific Asian origins were listed as specific races. These changed slightly over time; in 2010 they included Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Other Asian, and Other Pacific Islander. Rather than refer to these as races, we will refer to "Asian nationalities" or "Asian national origins" or more simply "Asian groups." In this analysis we include Hispanic Asians (about 3% of the Asian total), as well as people who identify (in 2000 and 2010) as Asian and another race. We use data for states, metropolitan regions (as defined in 2010), and census tracts (to represent neighborhoods).

To measure the social and economic characteristics of group members we rely on the 1990 and 2000 PUMS microdata samples, which provide detailed information for a sample of 5% of Americans. For 2010 we draw on the one-year American Community Survey (ACS). In Table 2 a small number of people who listed two different Asian nationalities are included in the estimates for both of the Asian categories that they listed.

We also describe the average characteristics of neighborhoods where different Asian groups lived, including the median household income, percent homeowners, and percent college-educated among residents of their census tract. These census tract data (and the population counts on which the weightings are based) are from the 1990 and 2000 decennial census tract data and the 2006-2010 five-year pooled ACS data.

Size and Growth

Census 2010 (Hoeffel et al 2012) documents a growth of the Asian population in the United States of almost 250% since 1990, up to about 17.9 million persons. The Asian share of the total population doubled from 2.9% to 5.8%, still much smaller than the country's African American or Hispanic minorities, but a much more considerable presence today than in the past, and very prominent in some states and metro areas.

Table 1 shows that the Chinese remain the largest single national-origin group, now over 4 million and nearly a quarter of the Asian total. They are followed by Filipinos (who maintained close to a 20% share), now 3.4 million. Asian Indians are the fastest growing nationality – fourth largest in 1990 but now third, almost quadrupling in number since 1990, and reaching 3.2 million in 2010.

Three other groups have more than a million residents, and each represents about a tenth of Asians. Of these, the Japanese have the longest history in the country, but their growth has been relatively modest (although greater than the U.S. population as a whole). The other two are Koreans and Vietnamese, both of whom now outnumber the Japanese.

Table 1. Growth of Asian populations, 1990-2010							
	1990 Population	% of Asians	2000 Population	% of Asians	2010 Population	% of Asians	Growth 1990-2010
U.S. total	248,709,873		281,421,906		308,745,538		24%
Asian total	6,908,638		11,898,828		17,320,856		151%
Chinese	1,645,472	23.8%	2,879,636	24.2%	4,025,055	23.2%	145%
Filipino	1,406,770	20.4%	2,364,815	19.9%	3,416,840	19.7%	143%
Indian	815,447	11.8%	1,899,599	16.0%	3,183,063	18.4%	290%
Vietnamese	614,547	8.9%	1,223,736	10.3%	1,737,433	10.0%	183%
Korean	798,849	11.6%	1,228,427	10.3%	1,706,822	9.9%	114%
Japanese	847,562	12.3%	1,148,932	9.7%	1,304,286	7.5%	54%

Differences in social and economic composition

Distinguishing Asian Americans of different origins is meaningful not only because group members often speak different languages and have different cultures in their countries of origin, but also because they have such different social and economic composition. Table 2 summarizes what we know about several background factors (for additional comparisons see Pew Research Center 2013).

One important characteristic of these largely immigrant groups is their nativity. A majority of Asians in every decade are foreign-born, even though sufficient time has passed for a second and third generation to emerge. The one exception is Japanese, of whom only 35.2% were born abroad in 1990. The Japanese case reflects the very early settlement of Japanese in the United States, especially on the West Coast, and the subsequent barriers to Japanese immigration through much of the 20th Century. Note, however, that the share of Japanese foreign-born is rising, not declining. Among the Vietnamese and Koreans, who were above 80% immigrant in 1990 (and also Indians, who were the next most foreign born), that share has been declining. But it has held steady for Chinese and Filipinos, and for Asians overall, as very high rates of immigration combine with relatively low fertility.

One indicator of socioeconomic status is education. Asians have had very high average levels of education in every decade, led by Indians (15.5 years, or almost the equivalent of a college degree, for the average member in 2010). Every Asian nationality except Vietnamese has a higher level of education than non-Hispanic whites.

Other indicators confirm the weaker economic position of the Vietnamese. One is their high unemployment. They show the highest rates of poverty and receipt of public assistance (though currently no Asian group is very dependent on public assistance). And they along with Koreans have the lowest income levels (though their median household income is only slightly below that of non-Hispanic whites). Many Vietnamese, it should be remembered, were resettled in the United States as refugees and were unable to reestablish their pre-immigration economic position.

Table 2. Social and economic characteristics of Asian groups, 1990-2010									
		Non-Hispanic white	Asian	Chinese	Indian	Filipino	Japanese	Korean	Vietnamese
% Foreign Born									
	1990	3.9	66.8	70.4	77.0	68.5	35.2	82.2	81.8
	2000	4.2	69.0	71.9	75.7	70.2	41.4	79.1	77.0
	2010	4.5	67.2	70.2	72.0	69.0	40.5	76.6	69.7
% Unemployed									
	1990	4.9	5.3	4.7	5.6	4.9	2.6	5.1	8.3
	2000	4.3	5.3	4.5	4.8	5.1	3.9	5.5	5.8
	2010	9.0	8.8	7.9	8.1	8.2	4.7	8.4	10.6
% Public Assistance									
	1990	3.0	4.7	4.1	2.1	3.9	1.4	3.3	10.7
	2000	1.3	1.9	1.5	0.7	1.3	0.7	1.2	4.3
	2010	1.2	1.3	1.1	0.8	1.2	0.6	1.0	1.8
Median Household Income									
	1990	$51,860	$60,484	$59,113	$73,480	$73,146	$67,969	$50,100	$49,819
	2000	$57,150	$65,151	$64,770	$80,645	$76,218	$66,040	$49,784	$57,976
	2010	$54,000	$66,300	$65,000	$89,600	$77,010	$65,000	$50,000	$52,830
% Below Poverty									
	1990	8.9	13.6	13.9	9.6	5.7	6.9	13.9	24.4
	2000	8.1	12.6	13.1	10.0	6.1	9.4	14.7	15.4
	2010	10.7	12.5	13.7	8.6	6.0	7.8	15.6	15.5
Mean Years of Education									
	1990	13.1	13.5	13.6	15.1	14.0	13.8	13.5	11.7
	2000	13.2	13.4	13.5	15.0	13.7	14.0	13.8	11.4
	2010	13.6	13.9	13.9	15.5	14.1	14.4	14.5	11.8

Indians' high educational level translates into very high household incomes, about $35,000 above the median for non-Hispanic whites. Filipinos also have remarkably high median income, with Chinese and Japanese in between the level of Indians and Filipinos on the one hand and Koreans and Vietnamese on the other.

Location: states, metropolitan regions, and neighborhoods

In addition to disparities in background and socioeconomic status, we find considerable differences among Asian nationalities in their geographic location. There are some broad similarities, such as the concentration of all Asian groups in states like California and New York. But a closer look also reveals important variations.

1. Distribution across states

Asian nationalities are spread very unequally around the country. Table 3 lists their 1990-2010 populations in the nine states where they number more than 500,000.

One state, California, by itself accounts for 32% of all Asians (5.7 million), and California also has the largest number of each of the six main national-origin groups – more than 40% of the

Filipinos. Indians are the group that is least concentrated here, but even so nearly one in five Indians in the U.S. is Californian.

California's 14.9% Asian minority is unusually high, but it is not the highest in the country. More than half of the Hawaiian population is Asian. This is the state where the largest shares of Asians are Filipinos or Japanese (each over 33% of the Asian total in Hawaii).

The other two states with more than a million Asian residents are New York and Texas. New York is distinctive in having such a large share of Chinese in its Asian population (nearly 40%), while Texas is the state with the highest share of Vietnamese among its Asian residents (20%).

Five states have between 500,000 and 1 million Asian residents. These are New Jersey, Illinois, Washington, Florida, and Virginia.

Table 3. States with more than 500,000 Asians in 2010

States		Population	All Asians	% Asian	Chinese	Indians	Filipinos	Koreans	Japanese	Vietnamese
California	1990	29,760,021	2,735,060	9.2%	704,850	731,685	312,989	159,973	259,941	280,223
	2000	33,871,648	4,155,685	12.3%	1,122,187	360,392	1,098,321	394,896	375,571	484,023
	2010	37,253,956	5,556,592	14.9%	1,459,039	590,445	1,474,707	428,014	505,225	647,589
New York	1990	17,990,455	689,303	3.8%	284,144	62,259	35,281	140,985	95,648	15,555
	2000	18,976,456	1,169,200	6.2%	451,859	296,056	95,144	45,237	127,068	27,105
	2010	19,378,102	1,579,494	8.2%	617,465	368,767	126,129	51,781	153,609	34,510
Texas	1990	16,986,510	311,918	1.8%	63,232	34,350	14,795	55,795	31,775	69,634
	2000	20,851,820	644,193	3.1%	121,588	142,689	75,226	28,060	54,300	143,352
	2010	25,145,560	1,110,666	4.4%	183,392	269,327	137,713	37,715	85,332	227,968
New Jersey	1990	7,730,188	270,839	3.5%	59,084	53,146	17,253	79,440	38,540	7,330
	2000	8,414,350	524,356	6.2%	110,263	180,957	95,063	18,830	68,990	16,707
	2010	8,791,894	795,163	9.0%	150,016	311,310	126,793	19,710	100,334	23,535
Hawaii	1990	1,108,229	522,967	47.2%	68,804	168,682	247,486	1,015	24,454	5,468
	2000	1,211,537	703,232	58.0%	170,803	3,145	275,728	296,674	41,352	10,040
	2010	1,360,301	780,968	57.4%	199,872	4,737	342,095	312,292	48,699	13,266
Illinois	1990	11,430,602	282,569	2.5%	49,936	64,224	21,831	64,200	41,506	10,309
	2000	12,419,293	473,649	3.8%	86,095	133,978	100,338	27,702	56,021	21,212
	2010	12,830,632	668,694	5.2%	119,656	203,669	139,090	28,623	70,263	29,101
Washington	1990	4,866,692	195,918	4.0%	33,962	43,799	34,366	8,205	29,697	18,696
	2000	5,894,121	395,741	6.7%	75,884	28,614	91,765	56,210	56,438	50,697
	2010	6,724,540	604,251	9.0%	121,274	68,978	137,083	67,597	80,049	75,843
Florida	1990	12,937,926	149,856	1.2%	30,737	31,945	8,505	31,457	12,404	16,346
	2000	15,982,378	333,013	2.1%	59,280	84,527	71,282	18,002	23,790	37,086
	2010	18,801,310	573,083	3.0%	94,599	151,438	122,691	25,747	35,629	65,772
Virginia	1990	6,187,358	156,036	2.5%	21,238	35,067	7,931	20,494	30,164	20,693
	2000	7,078,515	304,559	4.3%	43,532	54,781	59,374	14,613	50,468	40,500
	2010	8,001,024	522,199	6.5%	72,837	114,471	90,493	20,138	82,006	59,984

2. Metropolitan regions with the largest Asian population in 2010

The majority of Asians are similarly concentrated in a relatively small number of metro areas, listed in Table 4. This table provides data for 1990, 2000, and 2010 for metro areas (MSAs) as they were defined geographically in 2010.

The extreme concentration in Los Angeles and New York (nearly 1.5 million Asians in each of these large metros) places them in an entirely different scale than other metros. In fact each of these two regions by itself has more Asian residents than any state other than California and New York. Their composition is quite different, however. Los Angeles's Asian population has significantly greater shares of Filipinos, Japanese, and Koreans, while New York is tilted toward Chinese and Indians.

Table 4. Metropolitan regions (MSAs) with more than 400,000 Asians in 2010

		Total	Asian	% Asian	Chinese	Indians	Filipinos	Japanese	Koreans	Vietnamese
Los Angeles-Long Beach	**1990**	8,855,476	925,147	10.4%	245,007	43,825	219,334	129,723	145,422	62,566
	2000	9,519,043	1,245,018	13.1%	377,293	71,266	296,709	138,081	195,154	89,081
	2010	9,818,605	1,497,960	15.3%	449,538	92,179	374,285	138,983	230,876	104,024
New York--No. New Jersey-Long Island	**1990**	10,373,536	656,419	6.3%	262,183	132,909	72,333	37,431	94,446	10,609
	2000	11,296,377	1,121,603	9.9%	418,305	279,324	112,326	44,299	139,125	16,741
	2010	11,576,251	1,479,848	12.8%	565,949	339,500	139,975	48,639	177,400	21,020
Oakland	**1990**	2,074,720	258,780	12.5%	90,683	21,630	77,033	21,466	13,471	16,716
	2000	2,392,554	448,917	18.8%	157,531	60,570	123,705	30,516	21,985	32,186
	2010	2,559,296	621,642	24.3%	212,939	103,024	160,826	33,411	30,492	43,764
San Jose	**1990**	1,534,345	255,561	16.7%	65,080	20,189	61,929	26,701	15,599	54,229
	2000	1,735,822	464,216	26.7%	129,292	70,263	88,834	35,476	23,777	105,335
	2010	1,836,911	620,507	33.8%	174,016	123,326	105,403	36,760	31,715	134,638
Santa Ana-Anaheim-Irvine	**1990**	2,410,551	240,700	10.0%	41,403	15,211	30,357	29,702	35,917	71,822
	2000	2,846,301	423,904	14.9%	72,440	30,462	60,000	41,764	58,559	141,163
	2010	3,010,232	597,748	19.9%	98,840	45,044	89,341	48,226	93,710	194,423
Honolulu	**1990**	831,526	413,190	49.7%	63,261	861	119,921	195,127	22,638	5,225
	2000	876,156	539,384	61.6%	136,446	2,390	191,393	230,044	36,069	9,358
	2010	953,207	590,926	62.0%	156,733	3,497	234,894	241,290	41,689	11,985
Chicago	**1990**	6,894,440	238,950	3.5%	41,610	56,127	56,524	17,813	34,603	7,871
	2000	7,628,412	393,957	5.2%	70,364	116,522	84,613	21,244	44,316	16,762
	2010	7,883,147	538,294	6.8%	94,741	168,630	114,225	21,651	51,775	22,786
San Francisco	**1990**	1,603,070	316,729	19.8%	162,636	8,531	88,547	23,681	10,416	12,446
	2000	1,731,183	424,345	24.5%	220,323	20,800	114,433	30,243	15,377	17,035
	2010	1,776,095	506,573	28.5%	264,917	29,915	127,053	31,539	20,375	22,356
Washington	**1990**	3,210,172	137,942	4.3%	21,410	21,876	22,228	6,514	28,617	18,175
	2000	3,727,623	259,913	7.0%	39,372	53,179	37,790	11,185	44,119	35,939
	2010	4,377,008	434,509	9.9%	62,583	102,369	59,160	15,221	69,762	50,895
Houston	**1990**	3,767,145	131,090	3.5%	30,091	26,611	14,361	3,999	7,429	34,784
	2000	4,715,373	252,328	5.4%	54,257	57,191	26,641	6,484	11,846	67,416
	2010	5,946,800	429,689	7.2%	81,414	100,125	47,926	8,672	18,043	110,492
San Diego	**1990**	2,476,568	183,559	7.4%	19,641	5,023	95,161	17,827	6,685	21,054
	2000	2,813,833	295,346	10.5%	39,278	12,145	145,132	29,028	14,404	36,512
	2010	3,095,313	407,984	13.2%	63,684	27,854	182,248	34,574	25,387	49,764
Seattle	**1990**	1,972,305	128,643	6.5%	27,490	5,914	27,884	22,835	16,313	12,617
	2000	2,343,440	259,892	11.1%	59,978	21,404	54,168	34,728	31,388	35,668
	2010	2,644,584	407,758	15.4%	95,266	55,574	78,498	41,355	47,828	54,705

Three of the metros with the largest Asian populations are in the San Francisco Bay Area. But although San Francisco is famous for its historic Chinatown, there are more Asians in the East Bay (the Oakland metro) and South Bay (San Jose). This area stands out for the large share of Asians in the total population: almost 34% in San Jose, 29% in San Francisco, and 24% in Oakland. These figures are about twice as large as any other metro in Table 4, with the exception of Honolulu (nearly three quarters Asian). Even within the Bay Area there is variation in the location of specific groups. San Francisco's Asian population is half Chinese, in Oakland and San Jose it is 15-20% Indian, in San Jose it is over 20% Vietnamese.

There is nevertheless a tendency for Asians to spread out to a larger range of places. In 1990 if we combine the three SF Bay Area metros, New York-Northern New Jersey, Los Angeles-Long Beach and Santa Ana-Anaheim-Irvine, these areas comprised 38.4% of all Asians in the United States. By 2000 this share had dropped to 34.7%, and in 2010 it was only 30.7%.

3. Concentration at the neighborhood level

We turn now to neighborhoods within metropolitan regions. Concentration of a group at the level of neighborhoods within metropolitan regions is typically summarized with a measure of segregation. The most common measure is the Index of Dissimilarity (D), which reflects how differently two groups are distributed across neighborhoods. As applied here it would have a value of 0 if every neighborhood had the same proportion of whites and Asians, and a value of 1 if whites and Asians were completely separated into different neighborhoods. Other measures used here are measures of exposure: exposure to whites (the percent non-Hispanic white in the neighborhood where the average Asian lives), exposure to own group (the percent of the average person's specific Asian subgroup), and exposure to Asians (the neighborhood percent Asian). The latter two overlap; for example, the average Chinese person's exposure to Asians includes exposure to Chinese. All of these exposure measures are affected by the relative size of groups in a metropolitan region. For example, in a metro with a larger Asian population, exposure to Asians in the average person's neighborhood will naturally tend to be greater.

Table 5 reports the average metropolitan segregation for each Asian nationality, where metropolitan regions with a larger number of group members count more heavily in the average. As a point of comparison, the average segregation (D) of blacks from whites was .673 in 1990, .638 in 2000, and .591 in 2010. The average segregation of Hispanics from whites was .500 in 1990, .508 in 2000, and .485 in 2010. The first column in Table 5 reveals a well-known comparison between groups: Asian segregation has been considerably lower than segregation of other minorities in the last two decades. It has been consistently about 10 points below that of Hispanics, and it has not changed in this period.

The usual interpretation of this result is that Asians likely face less discrimination than Hispanics. They include a larger share of first generation immigrants than do Hispanics, which would be expected to result in greater segregation. But they have the advantage of generally higher education and economic standing.

Measures for specific Asian groups reveal some very different results:

- Though the overall Asian segregation from whites is .407 in 2010, several specific Asian groups are considerably more segregated. The highest value is for Vietnamese with a value of .558, above the average for Hispanics and only slightly below that of blacks. Vietnamese segregation was .580 in 1990, at a time when many Vietnamese were war refugees, and it has barely changed in twenty years. This exceptionally high segregation might be associated with other socioeconomic characteristics of this group (low income and education, compared to other Asian nationalities).

- Yet the next highest levels of segregation are for Indians (.492) and Chinese (.487), whose socioeconomic position is substantially higher than that of Hispanics. Koreans (.458) also are more segregated than the broader category of Asians.

- Only one nationality, Japanese, stands out for a low segregation level (.336). This group is unique in having a majority of members born in the United States, which might account for its residential assimilation.

Table 5. Metropolitan Averages Weighted by the Metro Group Counts

		Asian	Chinese	Indians	Filipinos	Japanese	Koreans	Vietnamese
Segregation (D) from whites	1990	0.416	0.509	0.476	0.497	0.409	0.466	0.580
	2000	0.416	0.498	0.480	0.457	0.359	0.468	0.588
	2010	0.407	0.487	0.492	0.421	0.336	0.458	0.558
Exposure to whites	1990	0.584	0.572	0.685	0.520	0.568	0.655	0.568
	2000	0.522	0.508	0.591	0.463	0.527	0.585	0.473
	2010	0.487	0.471	0.541	0.436	0.495	0.543	0.432
Exposure to own nationality	1990	0.171	0.115	0.022	0.091	0.107	0.038	0.043
	2000	0.200	0.134	0.046	0.098	0.095	0.050	0.068
	2010	0.220	0.142	0.073	0.092	0.085	0.058	0.075
Exposure to Asians	1990	0.171	0.211	0.091	0.190	0.240	0.135	0.140
	2000	0.200	0.260	0.141	0.217	0.258	0.181	0.185
	2010	0.220	0.287	0.190	0.220	0.266	0.212	0.209

We believe that researchers have been misled by the use of an artificial category of Asians that does not correspond well to the reality of very diverse Asian-origin ethnic groups in the United States. If a pan-ethnic Asian category were realistic, we should observe two phenomena. First, different Asian nationality groups should tend to have fairly low levels of segregation from one another. In fact a recent study of segregation among ethnic groups within the same "pan-ethnic" category (Kim and White 2010) found that Asian groups were more separated from one another at the neighborhood level than were different Hispanic, black, or white ethnicities. Our own analyses of segregation between Asian groups, not shown here, finds values of D that range between .40 and .60 – Asian nationalities are as segregated from one another as they are from whites. Second, each group's segregation from whites should vary around the average Asian level. But Table 5 confirms that most specific groups are more highly segregated.

If the largest Asian nationalities are as segregated from whites as are Hispanics, attention should shift from the question of "Why are they less segregated?" to "Why are both of these minorities as segregated as they are, and why is there so little change in their residential separation over time?" More pointedly, why are Japanese the only Asian group that has reduced segregation substantially since 1990?

Table 5 also offers information about the composition of the average group member's neighborhood. In 1990 the average member of every Asian nationality group lived in a neighborhood that was majority white, ranging from 52% for Filipinos to as high as 68% for Indians. Since that time exposure to whites has declined for every group by ten points or more.

One reason for the decline is that the white population has been diminishing, especially in metropolitan regions where most Asians live. Another reason is that exposure to one's own nationality group (referred to by social scientists as "isolation") and to other Asians is increasing as the Asian population expands. The level of isolation depends partly on the size of the nationality, ranging from 5% to 14%. At the same time there is some overlap between neighborhoods where different Asian nationalities live, so the overall growth of Asian population tends to reduce exposure to non-Asians.

Comparing the exposure measures in Table 5 to each group's share of the total metropolitan population is a concise way to summarize the extent to which Asian nationalities are concentrated in particular metropolitan areas and neighborhoods within them. The national metro population is 5.6% Asian but the average Asian's neighborhood is 22% Asian. Chinese are 1.5% of the metropolitan total but the average Chinese person's neighborhood is 14% Chinese and 29% Asian. Comparable figures for Indians (1.2% of the metro total) are 7.3% Indian and 19% Asian; for Filipinos (1.2%), 9.2% Filipino and 22% Asian; for Japanese (0.5%), 8.5% Japanese and 26.6% Asian; for Koreans (0.6%), 5.8% Korean and 21.2% Asian; for Vietnamese (0.7%), 7.5% Vietnamese and 20.9% Asian.

Asian national origin groups are more highly segregated from whites than is generally believed based on analyses of the census's "Asian" race category. Most are about as segregated from whites as are Hispanics, and Vietnamese are almost as segregated as African Americans. Each Asian group lives on average in residential enclaves where their own nationality is greatly over-represented and about 20% (in some cases approaching 30%) of neighbors are Asian.

These measures are averages across all metropolitan areas in the nation. The US2010 Project webpages provide these data for individual metros at the following link: http://www.s4.brown.edu/us2010/DDhab/Default.aspx. Because they are such important centers of Asian population, we review here the specific cases of Los Angeles and New York, both of which diverge in some ways from the national averages.

- The Los Angeles-Long Beach MSA is home to over 2 million Asians. Here the segregation from whites for the broad Asian category is higher than nationally, .453. Three nationalities have values of D over .50: Vietnamese with a startling high of .669, Chinese at .597, and Koreans at .554. The average exposure to whites is quite low, 31.5% for Asians and ranging from 25.1% for Vietnamese to 41.3% for Japanese.

Exposure to Asians is correspondingly high, 32% for Asians and ranging from 23.9% for Filipinos to 41.4% for Chinese.

- The New York-Northern NJ-Long Island MSA includes almost 2 million Asians, led by Chinese and Indians. Segregation of Asians from whites is even higher than in Los Angeles at .503. Values range from .475 for Filipinos to .598 for Chinese. Compared to the national average, Japanese, a relatively small nationality in New York, are unusually highly segregated (.544). Exposure to whites (43.2% for Asians) is higher than in Los Angeles, however, because non-Hispanic whites are a larger share of the total population in New York, and exposure to Asians (27.6%) is somewhat lower.

Separate but equal?

A recurrent theme in the literature on minorities in the U.S. is that residential segregation typically results in being concentrated in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Does our finding of unexpectedly high segregation for Asian nationalities mean that they, too, are disadvantaged by their residential location? Some previous studies (Logan 2012, De la Roca, Ellen and O'Regan 2012) suggest that Asians as a pan-ethnic category fare nearly as well as non-Hispanic whites. Here we look more closely at the variations among Asian nationalities.

We analyze this question using the same class of exposure measures described above for segregation, but referring now to the socioeconomic characteristics of neighborhoods. We ask specifically what is the median household income, the percent homeowners, and the percent of neighbors with a college education in the neighborhood where the average group member lived. These data are shown in Table 6 for the decades 1990-2010. The source for 1990 and 2000 is the decennial census in those years (Summary File 3); the source for 2010 is the five-year pooled data at the tract level from the American Community Survey (ACS) in 2006-2010. Dollar figures are for constant 2010 dollars.

Table 6 reports on the neighborhood as a whole, including the incomes, homeownership, or education level of all residents, not only of the Asians in the area. The comparison of Asians to non-Hispanic whites in the first two rows of the table reveals the main pattern. Whites live in neighborhoods with a higher share of homeowners, and this disparity has remained stable through the last two decades. This finding reflects the much higher share of whites who own homes in the U.S., estimated by Rosenbaum (2012) for 2011 at 75.2% for whites but only 59.8% for Asians (and below 50% for Hispanics and African Americans). In terms of median income and educational level of neighbors, however, Asians lived in higher status neighborhoods than whites already in 1990 and maintained their advantage in 2010.

In short, Asians live separately but in some respects they live in *better than equal* neighborhoods compared to whites. Although there are variations among the Asian national origin groups (with Vietnamese living generally in the least affluent neighborhoods, and Japanese, Koreans and Indians in the more affluent areas) the findings are similar for all groups. In the worst case in 2010, Vietnamese fall only $300 below whites in neighborhood median income, and only 2 points behind in college educated share – *separate and nearly equal*.

Table 6. Neighborhood characteristics of the average group member, national metro averages									
	Neighborhood Median Household Income			Neighborhood % Homeowners			Neighborhood % College		
	1990	2000	2010	1990	2000	2010	1990	2000	2010
Non-Hispanic Whites	$60,722	$66,198	$65,460	67.7	70.8	70.0	23.5	28.6	32.9
Asian	$64,601	$69,131	$71,405	54.4	57.9	59.7	27.0	32.3	38.1
Chinese	$65,894	$72,931	$74,340	51.7	56.4	57.6	30.6	37.0	42.4
Indians	$68,561	$72,684	$77,032	57.4	58.3	61.0	30.3	36.2	44.0
Filipinos	$64,708	$68,345	$69,697	56.9	60.9	61.8	22.7	26.9	31.7
Japanese	$72,825	$74,790	$75,416	59.6	61.5	61.8	30.7	35.9	40.1
Koreans	$67,279	$71,331	$75,241	54.2	57.2	59.3	30.2	37.0	43.9
Vietnamese	$58,284	$62,818	$65,166	53.9	58.0	61.5	21.5	24.9	30.7

These are again national averages, and it turns out that the pattern is less beneficial to Asian groups in Los Angeles and New York where we also found that segregation is more intense (data are available on the same webpage as noted above for all metropolitan regions). Possibly in these largest areas of concentration there is greater heterogeneity in the Asian populations, so the average outcomes are somewhat less advantageous.

- In Los Angeles whites live in neighborhoods with considerably higher median income than do Asians ($81,660 vs. $69,550), a higher share of homeowners (58.8% vs. 54.1%), and higher shares of college educated residents (42.6% vs. 35.7%). No Asian nationality group matches whites in terms of neighborhood income (Japanese and Indians are highest, Vietnamese lowest), homeownership (Indians are close, Koreans are lowest), or education (though Indians, Japanese and Koreans are almost at the same level, while Vietnamese lag far behind).

- In New York we find a similar pattern. Japanese come closest to matching whites' neighborhood income level; in this case it is Chinese who are lowest. No Asian nationality is within even ten points of the 65.7% share of homeowners in whites' neighborhoods. There are exceptions on neighborhood education level, however – Japanese and Koreans both surpass the college educated share in white neighborhoods.

Asians in Cities and Suburbs

One possible source of Asians' neighborhood-level advantages is that they have increasingly been locating to suburban communities, sometimes clustering in what Li (2009) refers to as "ethnoburbs." As shown in Table 7, though Asians lag behind non-Hispanic whites in the share of metropolitan residents who live in suburbs (68.7% for whites vs. 50.6% for Asians in 2010), the share of suburban Asians has risen from only 42.2% in 1990. Indians are the most suburban (56.5%), and Chinese the least (44.5%). To construct this table we used consistent metropolitan and central city boundaries as designated by the Census Bureau in 2010.

Table 7. Percentage of Asians Living in Suburbs[1]			
	1990	2000	2010
Non-Hispanic white	64.1	67.1	68.7
Asian	42.2	46.0	50.6
Chinese	36.0	41.6	44.5
Indians	51.8	51.8	56.5
Filipinos	44.6	49.1	53.7
Japanese	46.1	49.5	51.6
Koreans	46.5	49.8	53.6
Vietnamese	38.6	42.7	50.1

[1] Of those living in metropolitan regions, 2010 boundaries

Because suburbia has historically drawn more affluent residents, we would naturally expect to find members of any group in the suburbs living in relatively advantaged neighborhoods on any socioeconomic criterion. This expectation is borne out in Table 8, where we use the neighborhoods of non-Hispanic whites as a standard for comparison. In 2010, for example, white suburbanites lived on average in neighborhoods with a median income of nearly $70,000, about $10,000 higher than central city white residents. The gap in homeownership was even greater (75.8% in the suburbs compared to 57.2% in cities). The differential in college education was in the opposite direction: whites lived in city neighborhoods where 36.7% of neighbors had a college degree, compared to only 31.2% in the suburbs. This pattern reflects the strong preference of young educated adults to locate in cities until the point when they are raising families.

The city-suburb differences in neighborhood home ownership are similar for whites and Asians. We don't find much difference in education levels – except for the Japanese, Asians in cities and suburbs have neighbors with similar education. But there is a very large gap in neighborhood income levels between city and suburban Asians. For the broad Asian category the difference is over $15,000 – highest among Chinese and Koreans (about $20,000) and lowest among Vietnamese ($9200).

The patterns in Tables 6 and 8 are complex, and to interpret them requires that we also take into account groups' levels of suburbanization:

- With respect to neighborhood home ownership, the more than 10-point advantage of whites over Asians is partly due to whites' higher suburban share. Within cities the difference is just over 7 points and in suburbs it is less than 7 points. Filipinos and Vietnamese in cities live in neighborhoods with almost the same level of homeownership as whites.

- With respect to education, the 5 point differential favoring Asians (shown in Table 6) diminishes to just one point in cities. It is specifically a phenomenon of the suburbs, where the Asian advantage averages over 7 points. Although we cannot be sure of the

reasons without analyzing individual-level data, we suspect that college-educated Asians themselves have a suburban preference, which is distinct from the city preference of college-educated white young adults.

Table 8. Neighborhood characteristics of the average group member, cities and suburbs

	Neighborhood Median Household Income			Neighborhood % Homeowners			Neighborhood % College		
	1990	2000	2010	1990	2000	2010	1990	2000	2010
City									
Non-Hispanic Whites	$55,209	$59,679	$58,825	56.7	58.8	57.2	26.3	31.9	36.7
Asian	$57,011	$61,688	$63,348	46.0	49.1	49.9	26.2	31.7	37.9
Chinese	$57,430	$64,543	$65,344	42.7	46.9	47.4	29.2	36.1	41.8
Indians	$58,837	$64,009	$68,303	46.3	47.8	49.8	29.4	35.6	44.1
Filipinos	$59,799	$63,331	$63,916	51.0	54.1	54.1	22.5	26.8	32.0
Japanese	$65,500	$67,526	$68,653	51.2	52.2	52.2	31.6	37.6	42.6
Koreans	$57,977	$61,087	$64,752	42.8	45.3	46.5	29.5	36.6	44.3
Vietnamese	$54,065	$59,176	$60,545	48.7	52.8	55.3	21.1	24.4	30.4
Suburb									
Non-Hispanic Whites	$63,805	$69,400	$68,474	73.9	76.6	75.8	22.0	27.1	31.2
Asian	$74,986	$77,853	$79,267	66.1	68.1	69.2	28.1	33.0	38.4
Chinese	$80,917	$84,709	$85,561	67.7	69.7	70.4	32.9	38.3	43.2
Indians	$77,622	$80,755	$83,756	67.8	68.0	69.6	31.2	36.8	43.9
Filipinos	$70,810	$73,534	$74,680	64.3	67.8	68.4	22.9	27.0	31.5
Japanese	$81,372	$82,212	$81,744	69.3	71.0	70.8	29.7	34.1	37.6
Koreans	$77,982	$81,641	$84,298	67.3	69.2	70.3	31.0	37.4	43.6
Vietnamese	$64,986	$67,710	$69,761	62.2	64.9	67.6	22.2	25.6	31.0

- The most important result of looking separately at cities and suburbs is for neighborhood median income. Table 6 showed an average $6000 advantage for Asians. Table 8 reveals that the differential in cities is about $4500. But in the suburbs it is much larger: nearly $11,000 for Asians as a whole, $17,000 for Chinese, over $15,000 for Indians and Koreans, and over $13,000 for Japanese. Only suburban Vietnamese are close to suburban whites in the median income of their neighbors.

This last result has particular relevance to understanding the phenomenon of the "Asian suburb" or "ethnoburb." We have described the situation of most Asian nationality groups in the U.S. as "separate but equal." It is especially in neighborhood median income that Asians' neighborhoods are not only equal but actually advantaged. And this advantage is most strongly pronounced in the suburbs, very likely because higher income and better educated Asians have a stronger suburban preference than whites. The consequence is that the suburban communities with a larger Asian presence are also unusually affluent. This is, of course, the opposite of the pattern for suburban blacks and Hispanics, who are found predominantly in more mixed income, older, and inner ring suburbs.

Conclusion: Assimilation or Separation?

A major motivation of this report is the recognition that Asians are a diverse population category that includes newer and older, as well as relatively affluent and relatively impoverished groups. Diversity also is increasing as a result of the especially rapid growth of Indians and Vietnamese – perhaps the two most dissimilar Asian national origin categories, found in very different parts of the country. We should expect, therefore, that Asians will become incorporated into American society in different ways and at different rates, reflecting these differences in each group's experiences and social location.

An important payoff of dealing separately with each nationality is the discovery that segregation of all but the Japanese is considerably higher than found for the broad Asian race category. Since these nationalities are in fact moderately segregated from one another, the relative absence of one nationality from a given neighborhood is often counterbalanced by the presence of another, and the result is that it appears that "Asians" are most everywhere. We find that Vietnamese and Chinese, Filipinos and Koreans and Indians are about as concentrated into ethnic residential enclaves as Hispanics. And their segregation is not diminishing across decades.

At the same time we notice that living in separate neighborhoods does not result in living in worse ones. The opposite is the case for most Asian nationalities in the average metropolis, though not in Los Angeles or New York. It is well documented that African Americans and Hispanics are segregated into zones of disadvantage. Asians show a different process at work.

One potential explanation is that despite their relatively high socioeconomic standing in the U.S., a majority of most Asian groups is foreign-born. Whether or not they speak English well, as most Filipinos and many Indians do, they are perceived by others as being a different social category. This social boundary then translates into living separately, but they have the resources to ensure that they locate in desirable neighborhoods.

Another explanation is that these immigrant groups assign more value to living in an ethnic community than in assimilating into mainstream areas. Logan et al (2002) argued this point based on the finding that the most affluent Filipinos, Indians, Koreans and Japanese in New York and Los Angeles were the group members most likely to live in an ethnic enclave. In this interpretation social boundaries also play a role, but their origin is in group members' own cultural evaluations and segregation responds to a preference for ethnic contexts.

We suspect that both explanations are valid. An implication of the first, for those who believe that American society is eventually welcoming to newcomer groups, is that separation should fall over time. Up to now there is evidence of such a trend only for Japanese. An implication of the latter is that there may be no motivation for spatial assimilation of these immigrant groups, that the current residential enclaves fully meet their needs in a way that could become self-reinforcing.

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