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ABSTRACT

The South Asian population has emerged as a dynamic and affluent cultural minority in the United States. The 1980 Census, which provides the basis for this report, estimates the number of South Asians at around 400,000, and projections suggest that over one million will have joined the U.S. population by the year 2000. South Asian ethnicity is characterized by comparative "invisibility" to other Americans, entailing uncertainty about "race" and "color," and ambiguity among South Asians themselves concerning membership in the group. This report focuses on Asian Indians, who make up the majority of South Asians. The Asian Indian community has the highest income for full-time workers, but not the highest per capita household income, of any of the races recorded in the Census, reflecting a tendency among Asian Indians toward large, single-earner households. High personal incomes correlate largely to advanced educational attainment and concentrations in professional occupations; however, not all occupational groups have high incomes. Asian Indian women have lower labor market participation rates than do women in other Asian groups. Poverty is rare among Asian Indians and stems from different sources from those of the U.S. population overall. The report includes three figures and 23 tables. A list of 36 references is appended. (AF)

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Asian Indians in the United States: A 1980 Census Profile

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The research for this paper was carried out with financial support from the Social Science Research Council's (SSRC) National Committee for Research on the 1980 Census, which is also sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. We are grateful for this support as well as for the guidance and encouragement we have received from the SSRC committee. Further support and encouragement to focus on South Asians has come from Marshall Bouton of the Asia Society. We are also pleased to acknowledge the efforts of the U.S. Bureau of the Census in providing special tabulations. William Liu, director of the Pacific/Asian American Mental Health Research Center, kindly provided his working version of the Census Bureau's 5 percent PUMS ('A' Sample). Finally, we received thoughtful comments from two anonymous reviewers, for which we are grateful.

ABSTRACT South Asians have recently emerged as a dynamic and affluent cultural minority in the U.S. population. The 1980 census estimated the number of South Asians at around 400,000. With immigration continuing at around 30,000 persons per year, projections suggest more than 1 million South Asians will have joined the U.S. population by the year 2000.

Two aspects of this population's ethnicity are noteworthy. First is the group's "invisibility" to other Americans. Though Asian Americans in general have drawn attention in the mass media, South Asians are rarely mentioned. Americans find it difficult to identify South Asians by their "race" or "color." Second is the ambiguity among South Asians themselves about membership in the group. For example, many who in the 1980 census identified themselves as Asian Indian by ancestry also considered themselves to be white by race.

The format of the census tabulations dictates a focus in this paper on Asian Indians, who make up the great majority of South Asians. In socioeconomic terms the Asian Indian community is remarkably affluent, having the highest income for full-time workers in 1979 of any of the races recorded in the census. Yet analysis of household composition in relation to numbers of workers and their incomes reveals that Asian Indians do not have the highest per capita household incomes. This is because Asian Indian households tend to be large, single-earner households. Asian Indians thus differ from most other immigrant groups, for whom large households reflect labor and income pooling to maximize welfare.

The high personal incomes of Asian Indians reflect, as expected, their high educational attainments and proportions concentrated in professional occupations. But a substantial part of their income attainment advantage is not due to their high educational or occupation attainments, and not all occupational groups of Asian Indians have high incomes. Gender differentials in labor market experience among Asian Indians differ from those found in other ethnic groups. In particular, Asian Indian women have lower participation rates than do women in other Asian groups. Much of the personal income advantage of Asian Indians reflects this fact, since it means that a high proportion of Asian Indian income earners are males.

Poverty was rare among Asian Indians in 1979, and the poverty that existed did not reflect family breakdown and resulting female headship of households, in contrast to the U.S. population as a whole. Asian Indian poverty seems instead to result from low labor force participation rates and incomes in households where one or more key adult members are enrolled in school.

The future of the Asian Indian community is likely to involve continued growth in numbers but a gradual erosion of their economic advantage as the immigration of this group increasingly includes the kin of earlier migrants rather than persons immigrating on the basis of professional criteria.

The national perception of Asians living in this country has undergone a remarkable evolution in recent years—no less than a total transformation. An older generation of Asian Americans can recall vividly their being the targets of open racism. Racism certainly remains, but the contemporary public image of Asian Americans is that of responsible adults with substantial earnings reflecting their considerable educational attainments, of families that are stable and successful—unabashed models of what American families are supposed to be—and of children who work and study hard, do well, and succeed. In historical context, the public's positive attitude toward Asian Americans today is really quite astonishing, though perhaps no more remarkable than the actual performances of many young Asian Americans—in schools, in the workforce, and in families.[1]

Virtually unnoticed in all of the attention that has been paid recently are those Asian Americans from the Indian Subcontinent or having cultural and ethnic roots there. As often as not South Asians are not acknowledged as such,[2] attention going instead to the Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, Filipinos, and, most recently, the Vietnamese and others from mainland Southeast Asia. Yet South Asians have been in the thick of the immigration action for many decades. The earliest South Asians in this country arrived just after the turn of the century. The far more numerous and highly educated recent wave of South Asians has easily matched or bettered the other successful Asian ethnic groups, and with them South Asians have outstripped the mainstream white population. Thus we have the remarkable phenomenon of a large ethnic community, highly visible, highly successful, yet on the whole unnoted in public discourse.[3]

Surely one element of this invisibility is racial. A National Opinion Research Center (NORC) survey in 1978 (Taub, n.d.) revealed considerable uncertainty in the U.S. population over the proper racial attribution of Asian

1 The positive media coverage is pervasive, examples include Lindsey (1982), McBee (1984), Doerner (1985), and Bell (1985). The images are widely reported in the Asian source societies as well (e.g.: *Newsweek*, Asia/Pacific Edition, 1987).

2. We use the term "South Asian" to refer to people whose origins are on the Indian Subcontinent, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Sikkim. No label is ideal, but this one emphasizes the origins of many South Asians outside the political entity of India; it is synonymous with "Indo-American," a term currently popular. The term "Asian Indian" refers herein to persons whose origins are in the political entity of India, though this term is also ambiguous, given the political history of the region.

3. South Asians are nowhere mentioned in any of the articles cited in footnote 1. A good deal of scholarly attention, however, has focused on the earlier discrimination toward Asian Americans, including South Asians. Studies of the contemporary South Asian community have usually considered a single metropolitan area, see Fisher (1980) and Saran (1985) for studies of New York City, for example. For a recent, useful bibliography, classified and annotated, see Singh (1988).

Indians. Eleven percent of the respondents saw Asian Indians as "white," another 15 percent as "black," 23 percent as "brown," 38 percent as "other." Thirteen percent said they did not know how to classify them.[4] Another source of this invisibility is the virtual absence of the kind of poverty that is usually associated with immigrants.

Asian Americans, including South Asians, offer a valuable perspective on American society, in particular because their experience seems to challenge some prevailing views about social opportunity and ethnic relations in the United States. The image of how America absorbs its immigrants has been built up and then cast aside in a continuing history of reconsideration and revision. Most dramatic, surely, has been the reification and then vilification of the idea of America as a "melting pot," as a social and cultural porridge. The contrary view takes ethnic identity and pride as enduring, powerful, and positive forces in the society. Another commonly held notion claims a pernicious role for ethnic stratification in America. Economic and racial hierarchies are maintained and kept congruent, it is said, through institutionalized discrimination of various kinds. Certainly the experience of many blacks, Hispanics, and other groups lends support to these ideas. Yet much (though by no means all) of the Asian American experience would seem to support another model of America, as ethnically and economically open.

Much can be learned about these important issues through an examination of the South Asian experience in America. Most South Asians are well prepared for economic life in America. More so than many other communities, they have the necessary language skills and formal schooling. But in cultural terms they offer about as severe a test as a Western society is likely ever to encounter. To the familiar American triad of Protestant, Catholic, and Jew are now added Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, and Buddhist. And to the familiar black versus white dichotomy so central to the American social world must somehow be incorporated a category of dark-skinned Caucasians. South Asians are more distinct culturally than their degree of economic assimilation and economic achievement would suggest. Statistically (with respect to incomes, for example), they resemble native-born Americans more than other immigrants do, yet they are less like Americans than most immigrants with respect to culture and social behavior, particularly in the realms of religion and family organization.

4 These responses were to question 77x in NORC Survey 4269. The question was, "Would you classify most people from India as being white, black, or something else?" The same survey revealed a broadly favorable view of India as a country, though an exaggerated view of India's level of poverty. The attitudes of Americans toward Indians as individuals seem to be shaped by the fact that a remarkable 53 percent of respondents claimed to have had personal contact with Indians. Furthermore, this personal contact was associated with favorable sentiments.

Having begun with some rather sweeping generalizations, we must now insert a caution regarding the great diversity that exists within the South Asian community, a diversity that belies easy generalization. Several discontinuities stand out. First is the notable discontinuity between the first and second (post-World War II) "waves" of South Asian immigrants. A further discontinuity is emerging between those who arrived in the late 1960s and early 1970s and those arriving since the late 1970s. A comparative observation will put these discontinuities into focus. The South Asian, Chinese, and Filipino immigrant experiences have been similar in that their first waves consisted disproportionately of men, most of whom had rural and agricultural origins. None of these groups at first produced families or descendants in significant numbers. In all three communities, however, the second and much larger wave was educated and urban in background, and the most recent immigrants have been drawn from a broader social and economic spectrum of the respective sending societies.

However, the South Asian community is further divided in complex ways. The first wave was largely Sikh and Punjabi, whereas the newer immigrants are mainly Hindu and drawn from all over India. Significant generational differences are also apparent. Hansen's Law (roughly, that what the grandfather seeks to forget the grandson seeks to remember; or, the first generation worries about survival, the second about assimilation, the third about roots) is nicely borne out among South Asians, among whom the first American-born generation is largely adapting to the modern American lifestyle. The generation gap within families is very great among South Asians. Many in the parental generation (today's adults) were married according to tradition in India before leaving for the United States or returned to India at some point to obtain a spouse. But their children do not share their traditional values regarding spouse selection, dating, and marriage. As this second generation is still in its schooling phase, it is a matter of interested speculation among older South Asians how these young people will behave when they become parents themselves. Historical and cultural divisions are also emerging within the South Asian community. A diversity of loyalties seems to be growing as a function of group size and the maturing of the migration stream. The initial migrants describe themselves as loyal to "India" and close-knit, perhaps of necessity. Now that South Asians constitute a large group in the United States, they recognize among themselves a proliferation of language, caste, sect, and other distinctions.

There is much to be learned from studying such a vibrant, diverse, and successful community. The first step toward understanding what the South Asian experience has to teach us about U.S. society lies in developing a better understanding of the South Asian population itself. This study is directed to that seemingly straightforward task.

SOURCES AND METHODS

Until recently there has not been a source of statistical materials on South Asians that was both national in scope and reasonably reliable. The 1980 census provides such a resource, offering a static profile, a snapshot portrait of numbers and composition. But many of the issues of greatest interest—migrant adjustment, assimilation, mobility—are processes that take place in time and throughout lifetimes; the census data shed little light on them. This shortcoming, inherent in any census or survey, is counterbalanced to a degree in the 1980 census by a wealth of detail on basic social and economic characteristics in a population never described in national statistics heretofore. Similar statistical materials from the 1990 census will provide a more dynamic view, with the 1980 situation as a baseline for comparison.

Meanwhile, however, we are limited to the 1980 census data. Our approach to using these materials will become apparent as the exposition develops, but the following points may be helpful to readers unfamiliar with census data. The census gives us the age, gender, and other compositional features—the demographics—of the population; and for various subgroups we can examine important social and economic characteristics. We focus here on three personal characteristics: age, gender, and immigrant status (country of birth and, for immigrants, time period of immigration). Throughout the paper we seek to clarify the analysis by making comparisons among the subgroups within the South Asian population (for example, by country of birth or year of immigration) and with other ethnic groups, both other Asian American groups and Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics.[5]

We draw upon published reports of the U.S. Bureau of the Census; but as those are rather thin for ethnic groups other than the White, Black, and Hispanic, we also use tabulations and data files prepared for us by the Census Bureau in connection with a larger project to examine the Asian American and Pacific Islander population of the United States. The tabulations are:

- Public Use Micro Sample (PUMS) files (see USBC 1982 for details): Tabulations for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics were derived from the PUMS 1 percent sample tape (A and B samples combined). Tabulations for Asian

5. The census provides information primarily on categories of "Race," one of which is "Asian Indian." In this paper we use the term *Race* (capitalized) only when reporting results based on the census classification by Race. Otherwise we use such terms as "ethnic group" and "ethnicity" to denote cultural background or "roots." Capitalization of the word "Race" serves as a reminder that a census concept and nothing more is implied. When capitalized, "Ancestry," "Place of Birth," and "Language" refer to the census classifications. Similarly, the terms "White" and "Black" are capitalized when they refer to the census classifications.

Americans were derived from the PUMS 5 percent sample tape. Both these sources are identified herein as PUMS.

- PUMS subsamples: Microcomputer tabulations were based on subsamples drawn from the PUMS files so as to result in approximately 2,000 cases per Race. This source is identified herein as PUMS-S.
- A complete count file (CCAA) of Asian Americans, including persons qualifying as Asian American by any one or combination of the four available criteria: Race, Ancestry, Place of Birth, and Language (all defined subsequently), and any persons not Asian American but living in a household containing one or more Asian Americans. Tabulations from this file were run for us at the Bureau of the Census under the supervision of Michael Levin. The tabulations available to us from this complete count file are: a basic set of socioeconomic tabulations (CCAA-1); a full cross-tabulation of Race by Ancestry by Place of Birth by Language (CCAA-2); a tabulation of the socioeconomic characteristics of the foreign born, by country of birth (CCAA-3); and a tabulation of detailed information on Ancestry (CCAA-4).
- Tabulations of ethnicity indicators in the November 1979 Current Population Survey (CPS79-1).

A STATISTICAL TAXONOMY OF "SOUTH ASIANS" AND "ASIAN INDIANS"

Four questions in the 1980 census served to identify ethnicity. The questions asked about Race, Place of Birth and Period of Entry into the United States, Language, and Ancestry (Exhibit 1).

To obtain the Race of a respondent the questionnaire asked, "Is this person—," and listed 14 "Races," including Asian Indian. Also permitted were write-in responses under "Other-specify." According to the Census Bureau, this familiar "self-identification" item is "not intended to provide any clear-cut scientific definitions of biological stock" (USBC 1982:10). (In 1970 Asian Indians were counted among the White population whereas the remaining Asians other than Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, and Koreans were counted as "Other.") The responses to the ethnicity questions generated the following statistics on South Asians:

Asian Indian	387,223
Pakistani	15,792
Bangladeshi	1,314
Sri Lankan	2,923
Total	407,252

Exhibit 1. The 1980 census questions on ethnicity

RACE

4. Is this person —

Fill one circle.

- O White
- O Black or Negro
- O Japanese
- O Chinese
- O Filipino
- O Korean
- O Vietnamese
- O Indian (Amer.)

Print tribe → _____

- O Asian Indian
- O Hawaiian
- O Guamanian
- O Samoan
- O Eskimo
- O Aleut
- O Other – *Specify* –

PLACE OF BIRTH/PERIOD OF ENTRY TO U.S.

11 In what State or foreign country was this person born?
Print the State where this person's mother was living when this person was born Do not give the location of the hospital unless the mother's home and the hospital were in the same State

_____
Name of State or foreign country, or Puerto Rico or Guam, etc

12. *If this person was born in a foreign country –*
a. Is this person a naturalized citizen of the United States?

- O Yes, a naturalized citizen
- O No, not a citizen
- O Born abroad of American parents

b When did this person come to the United States to stay?

- O 1975 to 1980
- O 1970 to 1974
- O 1965 to 1969
- O 1960 to 1964
- O 1950 to 1959
- O Before 1950

LANGUAGE

13a Does this person speak a Language other than English at home?

- O Yes
- O No, only speaks English – *Skip to 14*

b What is this language?

_____
(For example – Chinese, Italian, Spanish, etc)

c How well does this person speak English?

- O Very well
- O Well
- O Not well
- O Not at all

ANCESTRY

14 What is this person's ancestry? *If uncertain about how to report ancestry, see instruction guide*

_____
(For example Afro-Amer , English, French, German, Honduran, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Jamaican, Korean, Lebanese, Mexican, Nigerian, Polish, Ukrainian, Venezuelan, etc)

Source: 1980 census questionnaire.

In addition to the more than 407 thousand persons who identified themselves as ethnically South Asian, 12,897 respondents identified themselves or household members as "Asian," not specifying details. Some of those persons may also have been of South Asian origin, particularly the 4,430 among them who reported a South Asian location as their Place of Birth.

Ancestry was a new item in the 1980 census, intended to capture subjective affiliations. It replaced an item that for many decades had been used to elicit information on the birthplaces of parents, which analysts could combine with a person's Place of Birth to identify a category of respondent known as "foreign stock,"—that is, persons with at least one parent born abroad though they themselves were born in the United States. In contrast, Ancestry might refer to a connection three or more generations into the past. Because respondents were permitted to list multiple Ancestries, the Ancestry item was a less precise measurement of ethnicity than was the Race item, but arguably more appropriate as an assessment of ethnic affiliation or "roots." Although useful, it would have been more useful if it had been augmented by the item on parents' birthplaces so that the "foreign stock" of Asian Indians in 1980 could have been compared with that of other immigrant groups of the past.

Only two of the recorded Ancestry responses were relevant to identifying South Asians:

Asian Indian	311,786
Pakistani	25,963
Total	337,749

In addition, an unknown number of the 105,682 persons claiming "Other Asian" Ancestry were likely to be South Asian, perhaps 14,000 or so, producing an estimated total of 351,000 South Asians by Ancestry.[6]

In contrast to the Race and Ancestry information, responses to the Place of Birth and Language questions are likely to minimize the size of any ethnic group if used alone because they often will exclude the native-born. Combined with the other questions, however, they provide useful information. In the 1980 census the following numbers of persons reported a South Asian Place of Birth:

6. Among those of "Other Asian" Ancestry, 12,847 reported Asian Indian or Pakistani as their Race. India or Pakistan was reported as Place of Birth by 6,643. The sum of these numbers, less the 5,570 who were counted in both groups, yields an estimate of 13,920. The use at home of South Asian languages was reported by 9,860 of those with Other Asian Ancestry, but those persons are likely to have been counted among those who classified themselves as Asian Indian by Race or Place of Birth.

Born in India	206,087
Born in Pakistan	30,716
Born elsewhere in South Asia	139,013
Total	375,685

There is of course considerable room for error in these numbers, given political changes in South Asia. (Whether one reported Pakistan or India as Place of Birth depended in part on when one had been born.) Moreover, statistical sources differ in their geographic definitions of South Asia.[7]

Among persons of Asian Ancestries who reported using the numerically most important South Asian languages in their homes, only 3.8 percent were neither Asian Indian nor Pakistani by Ancestry (Table 1). The figures in Table 1 exclude persons of non-Asian Ancestries who spoke a South Asian language at home.

In the analysis that follows it will be generally necessary to consider the census materials for "Asian Indians" in isolation, since only Asian Indians are shown separately in most published tabulations. Fortunately, Asian Indians make up a very large proportion of the South Asian total. We use the label "Asian Indian" henceforth, but the reader should bear in mind that this is an artificial census category and not a meaningful racial, ethnic, or ancestral designation.

The total number of persons reported as Asian Indians in the 1980 census varied according to the questionnaire item eliciting the Asian Indian label:

Race	387,223
Ancestry	311,786
Language	243,402
Place of Birth	206,087

The existence of these four rather different statistical criteria for Asian Indian status affords an opportunity to explore the interrelationships among them. Our purpose in doing so is not primarily taxonomic, but rather to explore the variegated nature of affiliation to the Asian Indian ethnic category and to decipher in what respect "ethnicity" may be the proper label to use at all.

The four questions produced a revealing pattern of responses, diagrammed in Figure 1. The number of persons claiming Asian Indian "ethnicity" according to at least one of the four criteria was 476,355, 23 percent

7. For example, in our source CCAA-3 South Asia seems to include Afghanistan and Iran, and South Asians born outside Asia but not in the United States are excluded from that source.

Table 1. Persons reporting use at home of a South Asian language, by Asian Ancestry: 1980 U.S. census

	Ancestry							
	All Asian Ancestries		Asian Indian		Pakistani		Other Asian	
Language[a]	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Hindi	107,573	57.7	89,823	55.4	13,512	78.9	4,238	59.3
Bengali	11,271	6.0	10,877	6.7	74	.4	320	4.5
Punjabi	17,008	9.1	13,145	8.1	3,414	19.9	449	6.3
Gujarati	31,547	16.9	30,589	18.9	82	.5	876	12.3
Malayalam	9,576	5.1	9,208	5.7	40	.2	328	4.6
Tamil	9,445	5.1	8,511	5.2	0	.0	934	13.1
Total	186,420	100.0	162,153	100.0	17,122	100.0	7,145	100.0

Source: CCAA-2.

a. Table includes only the most commonly mentioned languages. Other languages mentioned were Pashto (1,577), Kurdish (1,909), Balochi (112), Tadzhik (332), Ossete (135), Sanskrit (603), Hindi (129,968), Bengali (13,180), Punjabi (19,298), Marathi (6,305), Bihari (226), Rajasthani (439), Oriya (670), Bhili (27), Assamese (493), Kashmiri (264), Nepali (783), Sindhi (1,650), Maldivian (50), Sinhalese (3,205), Dravidian (138), Brahui (1,737), Gondi (128), Jelugu (9,503), Kannada (5,440), Malayalam (11,385), Tamil (10,597), Kurukh (82), Munda (127), and Burushaski (80). These numbers, which unlike those in the table itself include speakers with non-Asian Ancestries, raise the total using South Asian languages at home by 37.9 percent, to 257,063. Speakers of the major languages in Table 1 are increased by 18.6 percent when speakers of non-Asian Ancestries are included.

more than the number by any single criterion. The number who identified themselves as Asian Indian by all four criteria was only 134,078. Large numbers of people classified themselves as Asian Indian by Race, although they did not claim Asian Indian Ancestry nor qualify as Asian Indian on grounds of Language or Place of Birth. Similarly, the Race criterion failed to record as Asian Indian many who said they had been born in India or spoke an Asian Indian language at home.

Among U.S. ethnic groups large proportions claim an ethnicity by Ancestry even when they do not claim the ethnicity by any other criterion (Levin and Farley 1982:table 6). This is what one would expect. The Ancestry item is designed to identify a broader as well as a generationally deeper afffiliative bond. In a historical situation of immigration and assimilation, Ancestry can be a more enduring attribute than Race. It is ironic that Race, putatively the more factual and fixed attribute, undergoes a subjective revision, whereas Ancestry, by intention the more subjective measure, does not. We are not surprised, therefore, that vast numbers of people identify themselves as Irish or German or French by Ancestry but by no other criterion.

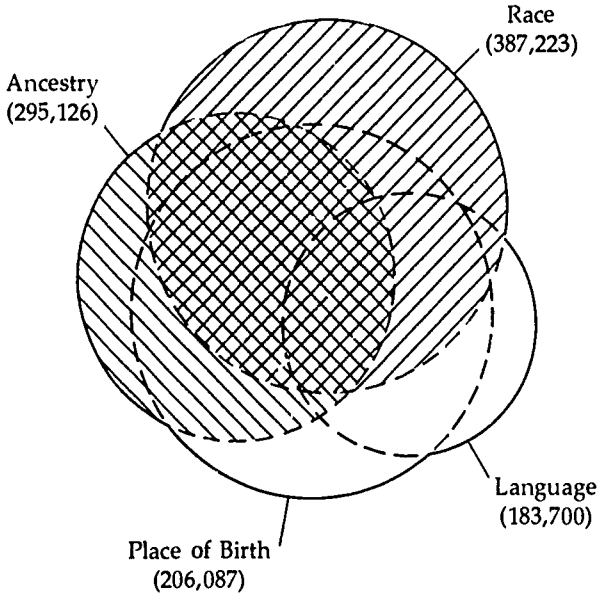

Figure 1. Relationships among the four 1980 census criteria for identifying Asian Indians

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, unpublished tabulations from the 1980 census.

But we are surprised to find that among Asian Indians precisely the reverse is the case: many who identified themselves as Asian Indian by Race in the census did not claim to be Asian Indian by Ancestry (Table 2). One-fourth of them claimed "American" Ancestry. Of those who claimed Asian Indian Ancestry but not Race, 44 percent reported multiple ancestry, in nearly all cases non-Asian. Both these results seem to indicate a process of identification with American society and perhaps of intermarriage as well.

We also observe in Table 2 that nearly all those Asian Indian by Ancestry but not by Race had been born outside India. This interesting result is illuminated by another census tabulation (CCAA-4), which indicates that some one-third were born in the United States and two-thirds were born elsewhere. Those born elsewhere are further classified by Place of Birth as follows:

South Asia other than India	31.2%
Southeast Asia	15.6%
East Asia	3.2%
Outside Asia	50 0%

Table 2. Number and percentage distribution of Asian Indians, by criteria for Asian Indian designation: 1980 U.S. census

Criterion	Number	Percentage distribution		
Race	387,223			
Ancestry	311,786			
Race and Ancestry	260,496			
Race but not Ancestry	126,727	100.0		
Ancestry = American	32,705	25.8		
Ancestry = Not stated	4,304	3.4		
Ancestry = All others	89,718	70.8		
Ancestry but not Race	51,290	100.0		
Born outside India	46,558	90.8	100.0	
Single Ancestry	22,626		48.6	
Multiple Ancestries	23,932		51.4	100.0
Variant on Asian Indian	36			0.1
Other Asian	1,569			6.6
Not Asian	22,327			93.3
Born in India	4,732	9.2		

Source: CCAA-2.

The tabulation also establishes that nearly all of those persons reported using English in their homes. We can take the analysis no further with the data available, but the image coming into view is one of Asian Indians, at least those who had by 1980 found themselves in the United States, living throughout the world and retaining their sense of Asian Indian ethnicity though not of Race. Many of those who reported themselves to be Asian Indian by Ancestry but not by Race came to the United States indirectly, via other Asian countries and from elsewhere in the world.[8]

8. For more on this global dimension of South Asian emigration see Tinker (1977). Jain (1982) and Madhavan (1985) provide rough estimates of the size of Asian Indian communities in other countries According to Madhavan (1985.table 1), about 13.5 million persons of Indian origin were living outside India in 1981. The U.S. share was small, but the size of the U.S. Asian Indian community was approximated or exceeded only in India's historical destination areas, nearby countries (Burma, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nepal, Singapore, and Sri Lanka) and those farther away (Fiji, Guyana, South Africa, and Trinidad and Tobago). Among the more recent destinations were Canada, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The largest of these newer communities were in the United Kingdom and the United States—accounting for 500 thousand and 410 thousand persons, respectively, in Madhavan's data.

Supplementary evidence comes from the November 1979 round of the Current Population Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. In that round all of the measures of ethnicity used in the census, including Ancestry and Parents' Birthplaces, were used to afford comparisons among them (Levin and Farley 1982; McKenney, Farley, and Levin 1983) The data suggest some disagreement between the concepts of Ancestry and "foreign stock"; 24.1 percent of those claiming Asian Indian Ancestry also reported themselves not to be Asian Indian by either their own or their parents' Birthplaces. Still, 95.6 percent of those Asian Indian by Ancestry were also Asian Indian by at least one other criterion, suggesting that nearly all claims to Asian Indian status are well founded in one respect or another.[9]

The additional information elicited by the census question on Ancestry concerns third and subsequent generations. McKenney et al. (1983) report that 57.5 percent of the Asian Indians were first-generation (i.e., they had been born abroad), 16.6 percent were second-generation (one or both parents had been born abroad), and 24.1 percent were third-generation (neither parent born abroad). Data for other ethnic groups indicates that the third-generation percentage tends to be low for recently arrived groups (e.g., for the Vietnamese it was 2.3 percent) and high for groups who have been in the United States for longer periods (e.g., it was 39.5 percent for the Japanese and 18.9 percent for Filipinos). But the Asian Indian figure was unexpectedly high, implying that a substantial proportion had arrived some time in the past. In addition, among the third generation of Asian Indians nearly half (46.6 percent) had multiple ancestries. As we will see subsequently, the 1980 census includes a surprising number of third-generation Asian Indians, many of older ages and female. We explore this result further below.

Putting aside the implications of these data for clarifying the meanings of such terms as race, ancestry, and ethnicity for the Asian Indian population, we are left with the fact that efforts to fine-tune estimates of numbers of South Asians or Asian Indians are largely futile because both the concepts and their measurement are elusive. A related implication is that projections of the future Asian Indian population are "soft" at best. As to the deeper implications for personal identity and group membership, to unravel them will require another kind of investigation altogether.

9. Levin and Farley (1982) report the following percentages agreeing with the Ancestry response: birthplace, 57.5; father's birthplace, 75.0; mother's birthplace, 72.3, current language in the home, 60.0; mother tongue, 53.7. The case base for these distributions is 182.

ASIAN INDIAN DEMOGRAPHY

We use the term demography in this paper to refer broadly to the features of a population that stand as significant markers of its social, economic, and cultural character as a community relative to other communities or the national population as a whole. This paper is concerned in its entirety with the demography of Asian Indians—with their educational attainments and occupational specializations and incomes and geographic distribution and the like. We begin by considering the core demographic features that underlie population change: growth of the Asian Indian population in total numbers, numbers by age and gender, and numbers by place of birth and duration of residence in the United States. We discuss these features using a set of diagrams—age and sex pyramids—that contrast Asian Indians with other Asian American communities and with the whole of the U.S. population. This information stands as a cross-sectional map of the Asian Indian community in 1980, delimiting some of the major subgroups within it at that time. The data can also be read more dynamically, as a reflection of the history of Asian Indian settlement.

The Remarkable Growth in Numbers

In the first half of the twentieth century immigration from South Asia was limited to the several thousand people who arrived prior to the informal restrictions that applied after 1907. Those earliest immigrants came mainly from the Punjab; nearly all were from rural and agricultural backgrounds, and many were of the Sikh religion (Jacoby 1956; La Brack 1980; Chandrasekhar 1982; Minocha 1987). The very restrictive immigration legislation of 1917 defined a "Pacific Barred Zone" and effectively ended South Asian immigration until 1946, when a small quota was alloted to South Asians. Only 7,629 immigrants from South Asia are recorded as having arrived over the entire postwar period prior to 1965 (Table 3). But in the 15 years between the legal changes of 1965 and the 1980 census the annual number of immigrants from South Asia grew from fewer than three thousand to nearly 30 thousand, and that figure has been approximated in each year since 1980. Some 221 thousand South Asian immigrants were recorded in the period from 1965 through 1979. Nearly all came from India or Pakistan (82 percent from India alone), and a high proportion of the total from both countries immigrated under the 20,000-person quotas provided to those nations by the 1965 law.[10]

10. The substantial immigration to the United States in the 1960s and 1970s was but a small proportion of total emigrants from India during those two decades, estimated at about 4.5 million. (The figure is derived from Madhavan 1985:table 2, using midpoints of the ranges given.)

Table 3. South Asian immigrants to the United States: 1946-84

Year of immigration	Total Asia	Total South Asia	India	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka	Nepal	Bhutan
1946-64	238,750	7,629	6,319	1,310[a]				
1965	17,080	769	582	187				
1966	35,807	2,805	2,458	34				
1967	53,403	5,288	4,642	646				
1968	50,841	5,355	4,682	673				
1969	65,111	6,814	5,963	851				
1970	83,468	11,884	10,114	1,528		242		
1971	92,165	16,667	14,317	2,125		180	40	5
1972	108,208	19,755	16,929	2,480		306	39	1
1973	111,927	16,309	13,128	2,525	154	455	46	1
1974	117,023	15,936	12,795	2,570	147	379	43	2
1975	118,952	19,297	15,785	2,620	404	432	56	0
1976	133,486	21,455	17,500	2,888	590	411	59	7
1977[b]	172,823	28,478	23,208	3,931	762	475	89	13
1978	232,141	25,811	20,772	3,876	716	375	68	4
1979	170,851	24,721	19,717	3,967	549	397	79	12
1980	217,353	27,912	22,607	4,265	532	397	98	13
1981	244,075	28,105	21,522	5,288	756	448	83	8
1982	293,872	27,529	21,738	4,536	639	505	97	14
1983	265,918	31,632	25,451	4,807	787	472	105	10
1984	239,722	31,925	24,964	5,509	823	554	74	0

Sources: INS data taken from Minocha (1987:table 15.1).

Note: A blank cell means that information is not available for that country of origin and year.

a. Data for 1954-64 only.

b Data for 1977 include the transition quarter (1 July 1976 to 30 September 1976) and therefore cover the 15 months ending on 30 September 1977.

Thus, the United States has been receiving large numbers of South Asians for nearly two decades. Unknown numbers have returned to South Asia.[11] Those who settled and their offspring combined to number around 400 thousand in the census of 1980. This magnitude is striking when one considers how little notice has been paid to the growth of the Asian Indian community. One reason for the little notice is the more rapid growth of several other Asian American populations over the same period (Table 4). By 1980 the Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino communities each numbered between 716 and 812 thousand, and the Koreans and Vietnamese had emerged as large communities as well. Despite its rapid expansion, the Asian Indian population constituted only 11.2 percent of the Asian American total in 1980, though it was the fourth largest Asian American community, just larger than that of the Koreans.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine immigration statistics in detail (see Minocha 1987 and Arnold, Minocha, and Fawcett 1987 for good reviews on which the following discussion draws), but two observations bear upon our discussion of the situation in 1980. First, we note the pattern of family-based immigration. Immigrant preference categories have shifted from nonpreference and occup. nal preference to family reunification, and within the family unification categories from spouses and children toward brothers and sisters. The prevalence of families in the immigration stream recently has served to give the stream a demographically more "normal" gender composition—it has gone from 60 percent male in 1970 to about 50 percent male in 1984—and has created the basis for a vibrant and viable community of Asian Indian families. Second, we note that the socioeconomic, and particularly the occupational, selectivity, which was once very strong (86 percent of those with occupations having reported professional, technical, or kindred occupations in 1965-69) has been weakened considerably as immigrants increasingly qualify as relatives of citizens rather than as engineers or doctors. In 1983-84 only 45 percent of immigrants from India had professional backgrounds. This change has implications for the internal heterogeneity and economic level of the Asian Indian community.

Since 1980 the Asian Indian community has continued to grow rapidly. According to one estimate based on recent immigration figures and assessments of changes due to births and deaths (Gardner, Robey, and Smith 1985:table 1), the Asian Indian population grew by some 37 percent to 526

11. Over the period of 1908-57 the number of recorded entrants (8,117) exceeded only slightly the numbers of those who left according to unpublished data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service. These figures correspond with estimates by Davis (1951) that, worldwide over the period between 1834 and 1937, some 30.2 million people left India but 23.9 million returned.

Table 4. Growth of the Asian American communities: 1900–80 U.S. censuses
(Numbers at census dates, in thousands)

Census year	Total U.S.	Total Asian	Japanese	Chinese	Filipino[a]	Korea	Asian Indian[b]	Vietnamese
1900	76,212	204[c]	86	119	—	—	—	—
1910	92,229	250[c]	153	94	3	5	3	—
1920	106,022	332[c]	221	85	27	6	2	—
1930	123,203	489[c]	279	102	108	8	3	—
1940	132,165	490[c]	285	106	99	9	2	—
1950	151,326	599c	326	150	123	7[d]	—	—
1960	179,323	878c	464	237	176	—	—	—
1970	203,212	1,430c	591	436	343	69[e]	—	—
1980	226,546	3,466	716	812	782	355	387	245

Sources: USBC (1983a:table 40) and various census volumes for the years shown.

a. Included with "other Races" for the United States in 1900 and for Alaska in 1920 and 1950.

b. Precise Asian Indian census totals are: 1910 (2,546), 1920 (2,495), 1930 (3,130), 1940 (2,405), 1980 (387,223).

c. Total only of Asian groups listed for particular year.

d. Data for Hawaii only.

e. Excludes Koreans in Alaska.

thousand in the period 1980–85. Remarkably, many other Asian American groups are estimated to have expanded even faster, so that by 1985 Asian Indians were only the sixth largest group, representing only 10.2 percent of all Asian Americans. The Vietnamese and Koreans had surged ahead with exceptional in-migration.

It is likely that Asian Americans as a whole and Asian Indians among them will experience continued remarkable growth in the foreseeable future. The projections summarized in Table 5 suggest the presence of one million Asian Indians by the year 2000 and nearly two million 30 years thereafter. These results can hardly be precise in light of the assumptions that were necessary and the problems with arriving at an appropriate figure for 1980, but it is clear that considerable expansion of the Asian Indian population is in store.

Demographic Structure in 1980

One of the striking facts about the Asian American population is its enormous diversity. Heterogeneity is apparent within each of the ethnic groups as well as among them. Divergent histories of migration are evident from even the crude measurement categories used in the census: age groups, gender, country of birth, year of immigration. From Figure 2, for example, it can be seen that the Japanese, with a large population of early immigrants, are now mainly in the middle and older age groups and mostly native-born today (there were relatively few Japanese immigrants during the 1970s). In

Table 5. Projections of the future Asian American population, by Race: 2000 and 2030

(All numbers in thousands)

Race	Year		
	Estimated population	Projected population	
	1980	2000	2030
All Asian Americans	3,466	9,850	19,935
Chinese	812	1,684	2,779
Filipino	782	2,071	3,964
Japanese	716	857	946
Asian Indian	387	1,006	1,919
Korean	357	1,321	2,947
Vietnamese	245	1,574	3,935
Other Asian	166	1,338	3,445

Source: Bouvier and Agresta (1987).

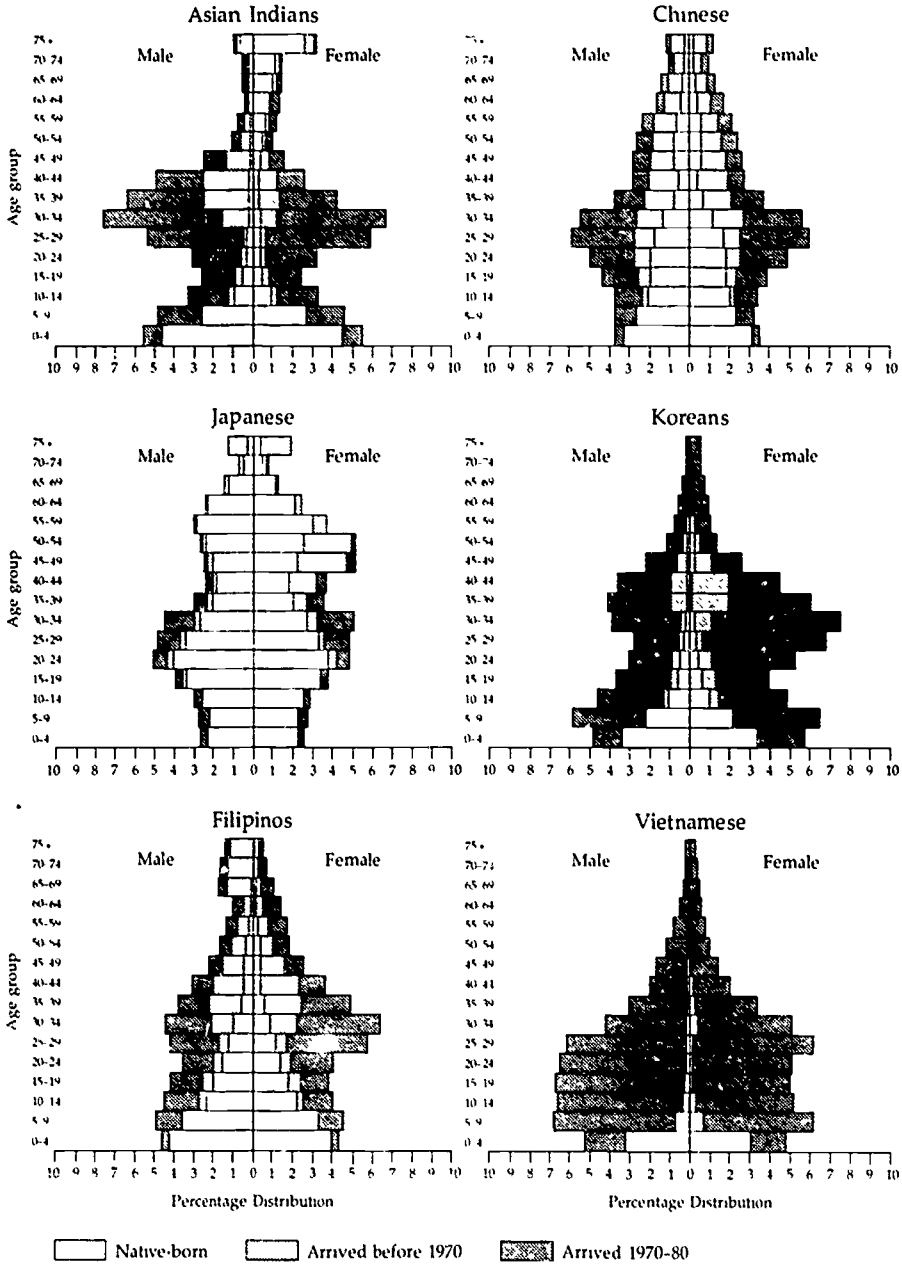

Figure 2. Age and sex distributions of Asian American racial groups, by Place of Birth and period of immigration

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, unpublished tabulations from the 1980 census.

contrast, the Vietnamese are mostly recent immigrants; among them few (mostly the young) are native-born. Asian Indians are much more like the Vietnamese than the Japanese in their demographic structure but much more akin to the Japanese in their socioeconomic characteristics.

The age composition of the Asian Indian population is remarkably concentrated (72 percent) in the middle ages, 15–44. The low share of young people (15.2 percent) results from a low level of childbearing and the immigration primarily of adults without children. (Other recent immigrations, especially of Koreans and Vietnamese, have included many families with children.) The low share of Asian Indians above age 65 (12.8 percent) results from the recency of immigration by this group and the scarcity of older persons among the immigrants. The implications of this highly concentrated age distribution become evident when we consider the demographic changes in store in the coming decades. The concentration in adult ages means that within Asian Indian households the ratio of consumers to potential earners is relatively low.

The age–sex pyramid for Asian Indians reveals suprisingly large percentages of older (age 60 or older) native-born women. We can find nothing in the early history of Asian Indian settlement that would explain the presence of these older native-born women in 1980, and therefore we have examined available data on the native-born population more closely in an effort to learn more about them and whether a census error may be involved.[12]

The 1980 census recorded 270,268 native-born Americans who were Asian Indian by one or another of the remaining three criteria of Race, Language, and Ancestry, and 17,785 native-born who were Asian Indian by Race but not Ancestry (Table 6). One possibility we have considered is that a misunderstanding led some American Indians to record themselves as Asian Indians by Race. American Indians (also called native Americans) are more likely to be disproportionately native-born, aged, and female. This type of error would also contribute to the high percentage of reported third-generation Asian Indians. But the women in question do not reside disproportionately in areas associated with American Indians. Consistant with the hypothesis, however, is the finding that, among those who reported being Asian Indian by Race only, the median age was high (44.2 years), the percentage 65 years old or older was also high (31.9 percent), and the median income was low ($13,900). (In contrast, for those who reported them-

12. Hess (1974) reports the arrival of 6,000 Asian Indians in 1910, mainly Punjabi males who came to the United States via Canada. He refers to 3,130 Asian Indian immigrants in 1930 and 2,405 in 1940, figures that accord with those in Table 4. Jacoby (1956) indicates that only a few Asian Indian immigrants were female. Leonard (1985) suggests that a high percentage of the men were married but had left their spouses in India.

Table 6. Number and percentage distribution of native-born Asian Indians, by criteria for Asian Indian designation: 1980 U.S. census

Criterion	Number	Percentage distribution		
Any criterion	270,268	100.0		
Race	191,706		100.0	
Ancestry	143,613			100.0
Race and Ancestry	97,055		50.6	67.6
Race but not Ancestry	17,785			
Race only	83,195	30.8	49.4	
Ancestry but not Race	46,558			
Ancestry only	41,676	15.4		32.4
Language only	25,675	9.5		
Multiple criteria	119,722	44.3		

Source: CCAA-2.

selves Asian Indian by Ancestry but not Race the median age was 20.1, the percentage 65 years old or older was 3.1, and median income was $16,700.) Unfortunately, we cannot adduce more from these circumstantial bits of evidence and thus must leave the issue unresolved. But although we can neither rule out nor confirm error in the census, we believe the effect of such an error on the estimated total of Asian Indians would not be great.[13]

There is considerable diversity in the proportions of immigrants among the various ethnic groups of Asian Americans (Table 7). The proportions range from 28 percent among the Japanese (an old migration stream with little continuing in-migration) to 90.5 percent among the Vietnamese (a new migration stream with little pre-1970 migration and a small native-born population). Several Asian American groups consist of large proportions of native-born, recent migrants, and older migrant groups (for example, the Chinese and Filipinos). Asian Indians are predominantly immigrants (only the Koreans and Vietnamese are more so), and especially recent (since the 1970s) arrivals. If the Koreans, Vietnamese, and Asian Indians are distinguished from the other groups by their substantial shares of recent migrants, the Asian Indians are distinguished from the Koreans and Vietnamese by the concentration of their recent immigrants in the early adult ages (Figure

13. If all of the 6,492 persons of ages 65 and over who were classified as Asian Indian by Race only were actually American Indian, correcting the classification error would reduce the Asian Indian total by only 1.7 percent. The adjustment would, however, diminish considerably the excess of older Asian Indian women.

Table 7. The share of immigrants and recent immigrants, by Race: 1980 U.S. census

Race	Percentage of immigrants[a] among total population of race	Percentage of immigrants who arrived during 1970s	Percentage of recent immigrants[b] among total population of race
Japanese	28.4	47.5	13.5
Chinese	63.3	60.4	38.1
Filipino	64.7	64.1	41.5
Asian Indian	70.4	78.5	55.3
Korean	81.9	84.6	69.3
Vietnamese	90.5	98.1	88.8

Source: CCAA-1.

a. An immigrant is defined as a foreign-born person of non-U.S. parents.

b. A recent immigrant is defined as one who immigrated during the 1970s.

2). It is these early-adult men and women who make up the core of the new Asian Indian family life in the United States.

Turning to the geographic distribution of Asian Americans and Asian Indians in the United States, we encounter a recurrent theme: Asian Indians are in this respect much more like the U.S. population as a whole than they are like other Asian Americans. Whereas nearly two-thirds of Asian Americans were living in the West in 1980, more than half (57 percent) of Asian Indians were found in the Northeast and North Central regions; for the U.S. population as a whole, nearly half was living in the Northeast and North Central regions, and one-third was living in the West (Table 8).

More than Americans as a whole, Asian Indians were concentrated in a few metropolitan areas in a few states in 1980 (Table 9). Six states—

Table 8. Regional concentration of Asian Indians and Asian Americans: 1980 U.S. census

Region	Asian Indians	Total Asian Americans	Total United States
Total United States	100.0	100.0	100.0
Northeast	34.2	15.4	21.7
North Central	23.1	10.0	26.0
South	23.4	11.1	33.3
West	19.2	63.6	19.1

Source: USBC (1983b:table 1).

Table 9. Main urban concentrations of Asian Indians: 1980 U.S. census

State and urbanized area	Asian Indian population	
	City	State
California		59,774
Los Angeles-Long Beach	24,138	
San Francisco-Oakland	12,722	
4 additional urbanized areas	10,309	
Illinois		37,438
Chicago	32,242	
3 additional urbanized areas	1,044	
New Jersey		30,684
New York City	25,427	
Philadelphia	2,048	
2 additional urbanized areas	3,047	
New York		67,636
New York City	56,725	
5 additional urbanized areas	6,209	
Pennsylvania		17,230
Philadelphia	8,179	
Pittsburgh	3,196	
8 additional urbanized areas	2,785	
Texas		23,395
Houston	11,107	
Dallas-Ft. Worth	4,642	
8 additional urbanized areas	2,653	

Sources: USBC (1983b:table 1; 1983c:table 248).

California, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Texas, and Pennsylvania—contained 236 thousand Asian Indians, or 61 percent of the total; those states and four others—Michigan, Maryland, Ohio, and Florida—accounted for 290 thousand, or 74.9 percent. No other states had more than 10,000 Asian Indians.

The concentration of Asian Indians in large cities is equally pronounced. Some 80 percent of California's Asian Indians were living in six urbanized areas in 1980; of those, 62 percent were living in the two largest metropolitan areas, Los Angeles-Long Beach and San Francisco-Oakland. Some 85 percent of New York State's Asian Indians were living in the New York City metropolitan area, and about the same percentage of Illinois's Asian Indians were living in the Chicago area. Many of the smaller Asian Indian communities in less urbanized states were even more concentrated in cities of

those states. For example, virtually all of Colorado's 2,565 Asian Indians were living in urbanized areas. This urban orientation is not surprising, but it is often forgotten when comparisons of incomes and educational levels are made between Asian Indians and the general U.S. population. The relevant comparison, were such data available, would be with urban Americans rather than the U.S. population as a whole.

As we turn now to a discussion of schooling, work, and incomes, we should emphasize that the Asian Indian population in 1980 was in most respects aided by its demography. Disproportionately it was a population of young adults; and although many were immigrants, they were highly endowed with schooling and skilled in the English language.

HUMAN RESOURCES

How Asian Indians fare in the United States reflects at least in part the training and skills they bring to the American economy. Our discussion of human resources is necessarily brief because the census offers rather limited information on skills and training. It does, however, provide information on educational attainment and current enrollment in formal schooling. One further piece of census information of considerable relevance to immigrant communities is facility with the English language.

Overall, Asian American high school completion rates (Table 10) show dramatic progress over cohorts, a pattern shared with the American population as a whole. Unique to the Asian American ethnic groups, however, is a considerable initial educational advantage for males over females, a reminder of social conditions in the societies from which Asians have migrated to this country. Asian Indians share in these Asian American patterns. Although high school completion levels for females in the 45-54 age group were not the lowest among the groups shown in 1980, the deficit of female relative to male levels was the largest, approximated only by the Koreans and the Vietnamese.

For each of the Asian American groups the gender difference in schooling levels had been greatly reduced over time, however, as indicated in the last two columns of Table 10. In the case of Asian Indians the female deficit in the younger age group was only 5.6 percent, roughly equal to that of the other groups. Only the Koreans and Vietnamese continued to show a substantial difference in high school completion between males and females.

From Table 11, which presents high school completion rates for the same age groups by sex, distinguishing Asian Indians by country of birth and time period of immigration, we can see that younger immigrants with the longer durations in the United States had the highest rates of high school completion in 1980. Even older men who had arrived recently had an 80

Table 10. High school completion (in percentages), by Race and sex, for two age groups: 1980 U.S. census

Race	Males			Females			Difference between males and females	
	25–29	45–54	Difference	25–29	45–54	Difference	25–29	45–54
White	87.0	68.7	18.3	84.2	70.1	17.1	2.8	-1.4
Black	73.8	42.9	30.9	76.5	45.9	30.6	-2.7	-3.0
Japanese	96.4	88.1	8.3	96.3	82.5	13.8	0.1	5.6
Chinese	90.2	68.7	21.5	87.4	57.7	29.7	2.8	11.0
Filipino	88.8	79.6	9.2	85.0	71.3	13.7	3.8	8.3
Korean	93.5	90.4	3.1	79.0	68.5	10.5	14.5	21.9
Asian Indian	93.5	86.1	7.4	87.9	62.0	25.9	5.6	24.1
Vietnamese	75.5	63.6	11.9	63.4	41.4	22.0	12.1	22.2

Source: USBC (1984).

Table 11. High school completion (in percentages), by Place of Birth, period of immigration, and sex, for two age groups: All Asian Indians and foreign-born Asian Indians: 1980 U.S. census

Place of birth and period of immigration	Males			Females			Difference between males and females	
	25-29	45-54	Difference	25-29	45-54	Difference	25-29	45-54
All Asian Indians	93.5	86.1	7.4	87.9	62.0	25.9	5.6	24.1
Total foreign-born	94.4	91.2	3.2	90.4	69.5	20.9	4.0	21.7
Immigrated 1975-80	94.3	79.5	14.8	89.9	47.0	42.9	4.4	32.5
Immigrated 1970-74	95.2	91.8	3.4	90.8	68.6	22.2	4.4	23.2
Immigrated 1965-69	92.4	95.2	-2.8	94.5	87.9	3.4	-2.1	7.3
Immigrated before 1965	92.5	96.5	-4.0	100.0	88.1	11.9	-7.5	8.4

Source: CCAA-1.

percent completion rate; the female rates were also generally high, except among older women who had immigrated recently. Within the immigrant population the gender differential had dropped from a high level to reverse itself (now favoring women) among younger people, most of whom received their education in the United States.

The overall level of high school completion among Asian Indians has been so high that much of our subsequent discussion relates to college graduates, especially their occupational and income attainment. Relative to the American population as a whole, the Asian Indian college completion rate is very high (Table 12, row 1). Roughly two-thirds of males and half of the younger age group of females were college graduates in 1980. Only the older age group of women lagged. Asian Indian women without college degrees were mainly U.S.-born (row 2). There has been a general and dramatic reduction in the gender differentials in college completion; in 1980 the female level was low only among recently arrived older women, those whose school years were probably spent in India. Indeed, nearly all of the less educated of each sex were older, recent arrivals.

Perhaps the most elementary human resource in the context of American society and particularly the American labor market is the ability to communicate in the English language. We therefore examined census data on language abilities in a young adult age group, 18 through 24 years of age, for each of the Asian American groups. This age group finds itself at a critical stage with regard to continuation and success in school as well as successful labor market entrance.

In 1980 Asian Indians more than any other Asian American group had command of both English and a "native" language (Table 13). Only 26.9 percent spoke English alone. Six of ten spoke a native language, and of those 92 percent also spoke English well or very well. Only Filipinos had more widespread proficiency in English, and that is largely because so many of them were native-born Americans who spoke only English. In contrast, many Asian Indians spoke English in India. Among Asian Indians in the 18–24 age group who did not speak English well, 97.4 percent were foreign-born, and of those 85.3 percent had arrived in the preceding five-year period.

These patterns among the foreign-born can be examined more closely in Table 14, which shows for different age, sex, and immigrant subgroups the percentage having some problem speaking English. We make several observations here that will be pursued in subsequent discussion. First, the prevalence of English language difficulty in 1980 was very low among immigrants overall, though somewhat higher for women than for men (12.8 versus 4.8 percent). Second, the levels diminished with age and duration of experience in the United States in just the manner one would anticipate. Third, recently arrived young people of school age were an important exception. An important segment of this group had difficulty using English;

Table 12. Completion of four or more years of college (in percentages), by Place of Birth, period of immigration, and sex, for two age groups: All Asian Indians and foreign-born Asian Indians: 1980 U.S. census

Place of birth and period of immigration	Males			Females			Difference between males and females	
	25-29	45-54	Difference	25-29	45-54	Difference	25-29	45-54
All Asian Indians	65.4	66.8	-1.4	50.3	24.0	26.3	15.1	42.8
Total foreign-born	73.9	74.9	-1.3	57.9	69.5	-11.6	15.7	5.4
Immigrated 1975-80	73.9	49.7	24.2	61.1	17.7	43.4	12.8	32.0
Immigrated 1970-74	76.5	71.9	4.6	51.0	37.9	13.1	25.5	34.0
Immigrated 1965-69	54.1	87.4	-33.3	48.0	58.6	-10.6	6.1	28.8
Immigrated before 1965	54.1	87.4	-33.3	64.1	41.2	22.9	-10.0	46.2
United States total	23.6	19.7	3.9	20.5	10.5	10.0	3.1	9.2

Sources: CCAA-1; USBC (1984).

Table 13. Indicators of language ability among persons of ages 18–24, by Asian American group: 1980 U.S. census

Measure of English ability	Chinese	Filipino	Japanese	Asian Indian	Korean	Vietnamese
Percentage speaking only English	25.4	40.8	76.1	26.9	23.8	3.7
Percentage speaking a native language	70.9	55.1	22.4	59.7	73.3	84.7
Percentage speaking some other language	3.7	4.0	1.5	12.3	3.0	11.7
Percentage of native speakers speaking English well or very well	85.2	95.5	81.7	92.0	77.2	64.1

Source: CCAA-1, table 33.

Note: We lack information on some members of each group, as defined by Race, who spoke some language not regarded as "native" to the Race. Thus, 12.3 percent of the Asian Indians by Race spoke some language at home that was neither English nor an Asian Indian language. This level is rather high in comparison with the other Asian American communities. Our statements about language abilities pertain to persons of each Race who were speakers of English only or of some "native" language, alone or along with English. In many cases English language ability in this age group was reported by someone else in the household.

still, it is important to recognize how low these levels were relative to those of other immigrant groups. Fourth, recently arrived women had notable levels of difficulty with English, particularly women of ages 35 and over, among whom 42.0 percent had difficulties. In the absence of evidence we can only surmise that three groups are represented here: uneducated wives of educated husbands, women immigrating as household help, and mothers of recent immigrants.

OCCUPATIONS AND INCOMES

The broad occupational distributions of Whites, Blacks, and the other Asian American ethnic groups reveal a sharp contrast offered by Asian Indians. Whites present perhaps the most suitable basis of comparison for Asian Indians. At the same time they provide an approximate picture of the American population as a whole. The Black population reflects the American extreme in discriminatory treatment and other forces blocking occupational attainment. Table 15 is limited to the "white collar" occupational categories, where Asian Indians are heavily concentrated. Males and females are shown separately, since the forces acting on the two sexes in the realm of job attainment are quite different and yield markedly different results.

Table 14. Percentage speaking English "not well" or "not at all" among persons born in India, by sex, age, and period of immigration: 1980 U.S. census

Sex and age group[a]	Period of immigration			
	All immigrants	1975–80	1970–74	Before 1970
Males	4.8	8.8	2.2	1.5
5–13	14.1	19.8	4.61	0.0
14–17	4.8	8.9	2.4	0.0
18–24	7.6	9.6	3.3	0.8
25–29	4.5	5.3	1.7	10.2
30–34	2.3	3.9	1.4	0.6
35+	3.9	10.0	2.2	1.5
Females	12.8	19.2	7.5	5.0
5–13	10.0	14.6	3.4	5.4
14–17	6.0	13.4	0.8	0.0
18–24	12.1	14.5	5.1	2.9
25–29	8.6	10.5	4.2	6.0
30–34	6.9	11 2	4.7	2.4
35+	21.1	42.0	14.0	6.2

Source: CCAA-3, table 12.

a. Excludes persons not living in households.

In 1980 a remarkably high percentage of Asian Indian males had professional occupations. Their concentration in the executive and professional ranks (57 percent) was the highest recorded of any ethnic group. To a more modest degree the same was true of Asian Indian females. Only Chinese males and Filipino females had patterns at all like that of Asian Indians, and even their levels were considerably lower.

To understand this professional and white-collar concentration, it is necessary to consider a more detailed breakdown of occupations. Table 16, which shows 13 broad occupational categories, reveals that Asian Indians in 1980 were virtually absent from many of them. In addition, we provide more detail on the most common occupations among Asian Indians. The following discussion is of persons who worked during 1979 and who reported an occupation in the 1980 census, not the "employed" in the usual sense. The source is our PUMS-S subsamples for Whites and Asian Indians. Our procedure here is to display detailed (three-digit code) occupations whenever 50 or more Asian Indians of either sex in the sample reported that occupation. It should be noted again that, because we are

Table 15. Percentage distribution of Asian Americans and native-born Whites and Blacks, by sex and broad occupational group. 1980 U.S. census

Sex and race	Total	Broad occupational group			
		Executive, administrative, managerial	Professional	Technical	All other groups
Males					
Asian Indian	100.0	14.9	41.7	8.0	35.4
White	100.0	13.5	11.5	3.1	71.9
Black	100.0	5.7	5.9	2.0	86.4
Chinese	100.0	15.0	23.6	6.7	54.7
Filipino	100.0	9.3	13.2	5.9	71.6
Japanese	100.0	17.0	16.5	5.5	61.0
Korean	100.0	14.5	18.5	5.1	61.9
Vietnamese	100.0	4.7	10.1	10.5	74.7
Females					
Asian Indian	100.0	6.4	27.1	7.0	59.5
White	100.0	7.8	14.6	3.1	74.5
Black	100.0	4.7	11.8	3.3	80.2
Chinese	100.0	10.4	14.5	5.9	69.2
Filipino	100.0	6.4	21.0	6.1	66.5
Japanese	100.0	8.3	14.7	3.1	73.9
Korean	100.0	5.7	11.7	2.5	80.1
Vietnamese	100.0	4.3	7.0	4.6	84.1

Source: PUMS-S.

working with a subsample of the PUMS sample, our results generally will not be exactly the same as those in published tables from the Census Bureau.

The most important revelation in Table 16 concerns the specific occupational specialties of Asian Indian professionals. We find that more than one in four among male professionals was a physician and that two out of three were physicians, engineers, architects, or surveyors. This finding contrasts with the much greater range of professional occupations among White males. Asian Indian female professionals were even concentrated in the "health diagnosing" professions (62 percent). Across the total occupational distribution one Asian Indian male in eight was a health professional and

Table 16. Percentage distribution of Asian Indians and Whites, by broad and selected detailed occupations and sex: 1980 U.S. census

Occupation	Males		Females	
	Asian Indians	Whites	Asian Indians	Whites
All occupations				
Number	(1,109)	(1,125)	(680)	(894)
Percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Executive, administrative, managerial	17.3	15.8	5.7	7.9
Executive, administrative, managerial	12.9	12.2	3.5	5.9
Management-related	4.4	3.6	2.2	2.0
Professional specialties	42.4	10.1	26.8	13.0
Engineers, architects, surveyors	17.0	1.9	0.6	0.4
Mathematicians, computer, natural scientists	5.1	0.8	1.9	0.3
Physicians	11.0	0.9	7.9	2.9
Registered nurses	0.5	0.1	6.9	0.6
Other health-diagnosing occupations	1.3	0.6	1.2	0.7
Teachers, post-secondary	4.1	0.7	1.9	5.4
Other teachers	1.4	2.4	3.4	2.7
Other professionals	2.0	2 8	2.9	0.0
Technical	7.9	2.5	6.5	2.6
Sales	5.5	11.0	6.8	13.0
Sales, retail and personal services	1.4	2.8	5.4	9.2
Sales, not elsewhere classified	4.1	8.2	1.3	3.8
Administrative support	5.9	6.4	23.8	33.1
Secretaries, stenographers, typists	0.4	0.4	7.1	13.9
Misc. administrative support	1.5	0.4	6.6	6.9
Administrative support. not elsewhere classified	4.0	5.6	10.1	12.3
Services, private household	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.9
Services, protective	0.5	3.4	0.3	0.2
Services, other	4.6	4.0	12.1	12.8
Health services	4.1	0.1	6.9	2.9
Services, not elsewhere classified	0.5	3.9	5.2	9.9
Farming, forestry, fishing	1.4	4.4	0.9	0.7
Precision production, etc.	6.8	21.5	2.8	2.8
Operators, not transport	5.6	9.8	11.5	10.2
Operators, transport	0.5	7.7	0.3	0.8
Handlers, cleaners, helpers, laborers	1.6	3.4	1.8	2.1

Source: PUMS-S.

Notes: Percentages may not sum exactly to 100.0 because of rounding.

one in nine was a physician; among Asian Indian females one in six was a health professional and one in 13 was a physician. That these are remarkable proportions is seen simply by considering the White population. Among White males in Table 16 fewer that one in 50 was a health professional, and among White females the ratio was about two in 50.

Table 16 reveals other notable patterns. Asian Indians were relatively well represented in the teaching profession, males generally at the post-secondary level and females at the lower levels. Teaching as an occupation was rare among White males; White females were well represented but only at the lower levels. Asian Indians, however, were underrepresented in the sales occupations, and few reported working in most service roles, in extractive occupations such as farming, or in most other blue-collar occupations.

The few remaining concentrations of Asian Indians are worth noting. Asian Indians were well represented in a range of technical occupations; and Asian Indian females, like their White counterparts, were found disproportionately in the administrative support occupations, though often in roles other than the usual ones of secretary, stenographer, or typist.

Measuring incomes in a census is a complex task, and comparing the results meaningfully across subgroups of the population requires great care. Individual incomes reflect personal characteristics, such as schooling and work experience, that bear directly on productivity; but incomes also reflect the society's treatment of race, gender, and other attributes. Moreover, incomes, and women's incomes in particular, may reflect decisions to work only part time or intermittently because of family or other obligations. It is generally found that women's incomes are well below those of men with similar educational and other backgrounds, even after part-time and intermittent work histories are taken into account. In the discussion that follows we always show male and female incomes separately, and we include an adjustment for the time spent working.

No matter how incomes are assessed, data for the 1960–80 period indicate that the relative positions of Asian Americans, both among themselves and compared with Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics, have been more or less constant over the last decade or two (Hirschman and Wong 1981, 1984; Wong 1980, 1982). In fact, the only significant development is that Asian Indians—who appear in the statistics for the first time in 1980—turn out to have the highest individual incomes of all. In our sample data, for example, Asian Indian incomes are fully 17 percent above the White level and even 9 percent above the Japanese (Table 17). These tabulations raise a caution concerning overall comparisons of this kind, for much depends on what one wishes to compare.

Table 17 distinguishes males and females and also shows an adjusted, hypothetical income figure that reflects the supposition that everyone report-

Table 17. Personal incomes of Asian Indians, Japanese, and Whites, by sex: 1980 U.S. census

Indicator and sex	Asian Indian	Japanese	White
Personal income from wages/salaries[a]			
Males	20,643	19,890	18,759
Females	9,685	10,327	7,908
Both sexes	15,574	14,224	13,237
Adjusted personal income[b]			
Males	21,570	21,583	19,618
Females	13,159	13,342	10,930
Both sexes	17,680	16,700	15,197
Number			
Males	1,140	846	1,193
Females	981	1,230	1,236

Source: PUMS-S.

a. Wage and salary income in 1979 among those who worked at all in 1979 and reported an income. Persons with a reported income of zero dollars were excluded.

b. Adjusted proportionately to income equivalent to 40 hours per week and 50 weeks per year.

ing an income worked full time all year in 1979. The entirely expected effect of this calculation, shown in the second panel of Table 17, is that male incomes rise slightly and female incomes rise substantially. (Among Asian Indians, for example, male incomes rise by 4.4 percent and female incomes by 35.9 pecent.) The more remarkable result is that, even after women's work patterns are adjusted in this way, their incomes still fall on average well below those for men. This is especially so for White women, whose adjusted incomes were 56 percent below White male incomes. Notably, Asian Indian and Japanese women did markedly better than did White women relative to their male counterparts.

Thus we have three sets of figures for Asian Indian, White, and Japanese income earners in 1979—for males, for females, and for both sexes—and the overall comparison favors Asian Indians by more than $1,300. But the margin among males is narrower ($753), and in fact Japanese women did better than Asian Indian women by nearly the same amount. Moreover, in the adjusted figures, which control for the time each population group spent working, Asian Indians, both male and female, did not do quite so well as their Japanese counterparts. The Asian Indian advantage was therefore due in part to their greater likelihood of working full time all year. In contrast, the combined result for males and females favors Asian Indians over Japanese. This at first mysterious result is easily explained by the relatively high ratio of female to male income earners among Japanese (59 per-

cent) compared with Asian Indians (46 percent). Though among Asian Indians neither men nor women equaled the incomes of Japanese, their combined income level reflected mainly male incomes, whereas the combined income level of Japanese reflected mainly female incomes. The result is that the combined income level of Japanese was lower. It should be noted that White income levels, especially for females, were lower regardless of the kind of comparison made.

The remainder of this section is devoted to explicating just one of the factors underlying this overall comparison of personal incomes: formal schooling and the occupations that education makes possible. Our strategy here is to examine education and income among Asian Indians within the same broad occupational groups and the selected specific occupations we considered in Table 16. Data are presented in Table 18 for Asian Indian males and females, with similar data for Whites as a basis for comparison.

Among all males reporting an occupation, Asian Indians reported wage and salary incomes averaging $20,600, 10 percent above the incomes reported by White males. Among females the advantage of Asian Indians was greater, about 2_ percent. This was so although the excess of Asian Indian over White schooling was much greater among males than among females. Division of these quantities (incomes/years of schooling) produces another kind of difference: this average "return" to, or benefit from, a year of education was highest for White males ($1,476), followed by Asian Indian males ($1,234), then Asian Indian females ($683), then White females ($637). The data reveal an important difference between ethnic groups in monetary rewards for schooling, but it was different for each gender, favoring White males and Asian Indian females. And there was a much more dramatic gender difference favoring males over females regardless of ethnicity. As we have seen, some of this gender difference was due to women's taking part-time or intermittent work, but not all of it.

Focusing now on the schooling and occupational component of these patterns, we first offer a few comments on income returns to schooling before discussing intervening occupational attainments. The educational attainments of Asian Indians in 1980 were of course much higher on average than those of Whites. Among income earners in 1979 no fewer than 71 percent of Asian Indian males and 39 percent of Asian Indian females had completed four or more years of college (Table 19). What is less obvious is that the income advantage of Asian Indians over Whites was virtually all due to their educational advantage. At each educational level Asian Indian males earned less income than White males. Asian Indian females had a slight advantage over White females at each educational level. This means that the whole of the vaunted Asian Indian income superiority over Whites has been due to the former group's higher educational achievement. In 1980, 64 percent of all Asian Indian income earners were college gradu-

Table 18. Mean education (in years) and income among Asian Indians and Whites, by sex, for selected detailed occupations: 1980 U.S. census

Occupation	Males				Females			
	Asian Indians		Whites		Asian Indians		Whites	
	Education	Income	Education	Income	Education	Income	Education	Income
All occupations	16.7	$20,600	12.6	$18,800	14.2	$9,700	12.4	$7,900
Executive, administrative, managerial	16.8	21,700	14.5	26,800			13.0	10,300
Executive, administrative, managerial	16.6	23,800	14.3	27,700			13.1	10,400
Management-related								
Professional specialties	18.8	26,300	16.8	25,900	16.8	15,800	15.4	10,100
Engineers, architects, surveyors	18.6	24,300						
Mathematicians, computer, natural scientists	19.0	21,100						
Physicians	19.6	38,600			19.6	23,200		
Registered nurses								
Other health-diagnosing occupations								
Teachers, post-secondary								
Other teachers								
Other professionals								
Technical	17.1	15,500						
Sales	14.9	14,900	13.3	17,100			12.4	6,400
Sales, retail and personal services								
Sales, not elsewhere classified			13.9	19,200			12.2	5,600

Administrative support	15.5	12,700	13.2	16,300	14.1	7,500	12.5	8,700
Secretaries, stenographers, typists								
Misc. administrative support							12.5	8,300
Administrative support, not elsewhere classified	13.0	16,300	13.9	7,800	12.6	7,500		
Services, private household							12.5	9,700
Services, protective	12.3	10,200			12.7	7,000	10.8	3,800
Health services			11.7	14,400				
Services, not elsewhere classified							10.8	4,000
Farming, forestry, fishing								
Precision production, etc.			11.3	16,000				
Operators, not transport	12.4	11,700	10.9	15,300	11.2	5,700	10.6	7,800
Operators, transport			10.6	17,200				
Handlers, cleaners, helpers, laborers								

Source: PUMS-S.

Note: A blank cell indicates that the means were not calculated because the number of cases was fewer than 50

Table 19. Personal incomes of Asian Indian and White males and females, by level of education: 1980 U.S. census

(All estimates rounded to nearest hundred dollars)

Sex and education group	Asian Indian		White	
	Wage/salary income	%	Wage/salary income	%
Males				
Below high school	$ 9,500	4.3	$12,500	11.1
1-3 years of high school	10,100	4.3	15,300	14.2
4 years of high school	13,600	9.0	17,200	34.9
1-3 years of college	12,800	11.0	18,600	17.4
4 or more years of college	23,800	71.4	25,500	22.5
Total	20,600	100.0	18,800	100.0
Number		(1,140)		(1,193)
Females				
Below high school	5,500	11.8	5,400	10.4
1-3 years of high school	6,400	11.8	5,400	15.4
4 years of high school	8,300	16.4	8,000	45.3
1-3 years of college	8,100	20.7	7,400	15.8
4 or more years of college	12,600	39.3	11,200	13.1
Total	9,700	100.0	7,900	100.0
Number		(981)		(1,236)

Source: PUMS-S.

ates, compared with only 20 percent among White earners. No other group—neither other Asian Americans, Whites, Blacks, nor Hispanics—has achieved an educational level even close to that of Asian Indians.

Considering the detailed occupational groups in Table 18, we find that Asian Indian average incomes in 1980 were frequently below White average incomes, but they are well above White incomes in those broad professional and technical categories in which Asian Indians have been so concentrated. Across the entire occupational classification Asian Indians had more schooling than Whites in the same occupational categories. Detailed analysis would identify ethnic and gender differences in income returns to schooling, partly because of differences in the occupations and partly because of income differences within occupations and educational levels. But the differences do not consistently favor one or the other ethnic group, at least in this particular ethnic comparison. Gender differences are much greater and much more uniform. Indeed, the most striking comparison in Table 18 is between Asian Indian male and female physicians; they

had the same levels of formal schooling, yet among physicians male incomes exceeded female incomes by about two-thirds.

These data suggest that a complex of relationships underlies the overall comparison made earlier. Moreover, we have been engaged in the relatively easy analytic task of decomposing occupations, genders, and age groups into component parts. The more difficult and important questions concern causal forces, the reasons for the patterns we observe. But analysis of causal factors would go beyond the scope of this paper as well as beyond the limits imposed by our data sources.

In the preceding discussion we have presented several important patterns of income within the Asian Indian population, in particular the very large difference between males and females and the great income differences among people at various educational levels. We have noted that on gender Asian Indians differ less than do Whites, whereas on educational attainment they differ even more. Other important differences deserve discussion, such as those between immigrants and the native-born and those among immigrants by period of immigration.

Table 20 presents estimates of these important income differentials, along with another set of income levels labeled "adjusted." The observed levels by sex and educational level reflect our earlier discussion, whereas those for nativity and period of immigration are newly introduced. Nothing need be said about the observed income levels except to note the pattern by nativity and period of immigration: low incomes were reported both by those who were newly arrived in 1980 and by those who were born in the United States. To grasp what is revealed by the adjusted figures, however, we need to recognize that each of the population subgroups is itself heterogeneous. Males and females had different educational attainment distributions, recent immigrants were less disproportionately male than were earlier immigrants, the native-born were disproportionately female, and so on. The adjusted figures tell us what the income patterns would be if the groups being compared were similar in composition. The gender differential, for example, declines sharply in the adjusted column, the adjusted male income level being lower and the adjusted female income level being higher. These adjusted levels reflect an assumption of more schooling for females and less for males such that the two groups have the same educational distribution. Similar adjustments are made simultaneously for the factors of gender, employment sector, nativity or period of immigration, region of residence, prestige of occupation, weeks worked in 1979, and usual hours worked per week in 1979. (For details see Barringer, Takeuchi, and Xenos 1986:footnote 3).

The results can be stated briefly. Male and female incomes come closer together, but still differ by $3,600. Since education and time spent working have been adjusted for, as have the kind of occupation and industry of em-

Table 20. Observed and adjusted incomes of Asian Indians, by sex, education, and nativity or period of immigration: 1980 U.S. census
(All estimates rounded to nearest hundred dollars)

Population subgroup	Estimate	
	Observed	Adjusted[a]
Sex		
Males	$20,300	$18,000
Females	10,100	14,400
Education		
No high school	8,400	14,600
1–4 years of high school	9,700	15,000
Some college or more	18,900	17,200
Nativity/period of immigration		
1970–80	14,500	15,100
1960–69	24,500	21,500
Before 1960	24,200	21,800
Native-born	11,500	16,100

Source: PUMS-S.

a. For each characteristic all remaining characteristics are adjusted.

ployment, we are left to consider factors specific to Asian Indians such as, perhaps, choices within Asian Indian households that women in those households devote themselves less than fully to income attainment in deference to other uses of their time. Surely Asian Indian women could be earning more, given their high educational levels. Still, we ought not lose sight of the fact that among women by Race in the United States Asian Indian women are the most highly paid, even taking into account their exceptional educational levels. For example, were Asian Indian women in these population subgroups to have the incomes of the corresponding Japanese groups, the overall income level of Asian Indian women would be some $1,300 less. (For details of this analysis see Barringer, Smith, and Gardner 1985.)

The low average income of those with less than a high school education proves to be due to one or more of the factors we have taken into account. Gender (most Asian Indians with low education are female), time spent working, and nature of employment (sector and prestige) are likely explanations. Roughly the same pattern occurs for nativity or period of immigration. In particular, the low average income of U.S.-born Asian Indians is largely eliminated in the adjusted income figures.

Turning to incomes of households (Table 21), we find that they seem at first glance to contradict what we have just observed regarding the su-

Table 21. Indicators of household workforce and income among Asian Indians, Japanese, and Whites: 1980 U.S. census

Indicator	Asian Indians	Japanese	Whites
Household income	23,228	25,345	20,902
Income per person	7,847	10,318	8,813
Income per worker	17,612	16,711	15,116
No. of persons per household	3.0	2.4	2.4
No. of workers per household	1.3	1.5	1.4
Number of households	(2,209)	(2,412)	(1,750)

Source: PUMS-S.

periority of Asian Indian over Japanese and White incomes. However, household incomes reflect differences in the the composition of households, in particular the size of households and the proportion of members who are income earners. Individual earnings are usually pooled to meet the expenses of families or households, so that an individual's need to work part or full time is assessed in light of group as well as individual circumstances. Moreover, the composition of a living unit may itself represent an effort to cope economically. These considerations make it necessary to examine household as well as personal incomes.

In 1980 the Japanese had the highest average level of household incomes, exceeding that of Asian Indians by 9 percent; and by a much wider margin (31 percent) they had the highest average level of income per person within households. That this was so despite a slightly lower average level of income per worker in Japanese than in Asian Indian households must be attributed to the fact that Japanese households were 20 percent smaller on average and had a larger proportion of members earning incomes. Income per person in Asian Indian households was below that for White households as well. Put another way, highly paid Asian Indian workers supported on average larger numbers of nonearners in their households, so that their income per person was lowest of the three groups even though their per-earner income was the highest. This interesting contrast between individual and household incomes is a potential source of confusion in income comparisons.

FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS

Thus we find that to understand how Asian Indians adapt to life in the United States it is necessary to consider the organization of Asian Indian families and households a bit further. A complex body of statistical materials can be summarized for our purpose by highlighting two underlying

processes. First is the household cycle itself, the pattern of family and household expansion and then diminution that is common to all populations. Second is the process of adaptation to American economic life that comes with length of time in the United States. We are interested in the variations in living arrangements—household size and composition and the kin relationships of those who are living together—and the variations in household income that are associated with these processes.

The householder's age is a reasonable indicator of a household's stage in its cycle of growth and decline. Even a broad classification by ages of householders (Table 22) is sufficient to reveal general patterns. (A "householder" is the person listed first on the completed census form.) The average household size of 3.0 persons (shown in first panel for all households) conceals a considerable range, from 2.0 when householders are under age 25, to 3.4 when householders are between ages 45 and 65, to only 1.4 when householders are 65 or older. To interpret these figures we must recognize that households can be formed by persons who are not related or who do not constitute families, as well as by primary families.[14] Some 28 percent of all Asian Indian households in the 1980 census were "nonfamily" households, but in most of them the householder was either youthful or elderly. About two-thirds of the young householders headed households of this kind, as did more than seven of ten among elderly householders. These nonfamily households tended to be small (see the third panel of Table 22), so that the change in household size with householder's age becomes rather less when we consider family households separately (cf. second panel). The relatively high frequency of nonfamily households among the young and the old is a notable feature of the Asian Indian household cycle, distinguishing it from the pattern for White households. Another interesting feature is the prevalence of other family members in youthful and aged family households. One of four relatives of the young householder was someone from outside the primary family, and among aged householders such household members were one of three.

The same kind of information by place of birth and period of immigration to the United States, presented in Table 23, indicates that immigrant households were substantially larger than native-born households, but that this was entirely due to the larger size of immigrant primary families rather than to the presence of "other family" or unrelated persons. The largest primary families, and thus the largest households, were found among those whose householders had arrived in the United States prior to 1970.

14. In the census "family households" are those containing at least one person related by blood, marriage, or adoption to the householder. All others are "nonfamily households." The "primary family" consists of the householder and his or her spouse or children.

Table 22. Indicators of household composition, workforce, and income, by age of householder: Asian Indians, 1980 U.S. census

Indicator	Age of householder				
	All ages	Under 25	25-44	45-64	65+
ALL HOUSEHOLDS (*N*)	(2,209)	(78)	(1,438)	(333)	(360)
No. of persons	3.0	2.0	3.3	3.4	1.4
Primary family	2.4	0.6	2.8	2.9	0.4
Other family	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Unrelated	0.4	1.1	0.3	0.3	0.8
No. of workers	1.4	1.2	1.6	1.7	0.2
Household income					
Total	$23,228	$9,257	$26,581	$26,868	$9,497
Per person	$8,760	$5,200	$9,380	$9,070	$6,730
Per worker	$17,612	$7,411	$18,286	$17,711	$11,925
% of households					
Nonfamily	27.7	65.4	16.5	18.9	72.5
FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS (*N*)	(1,597)	(27)	(1,201)	(270)	(99)
No. of persons	3.6	2.7	3.7	3.9	2.5
Primary family	3.3	1.9	3.4	3.6	1.6
Other family	0.3	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.8
Unrelated	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1
No. of workers	1.7	1.4	1.7	2.0	0.6
Household income					
Total	$27,567	$10,558	$28,344	$30,173	$15,669
Per person	$8,088	$3,827	$8,212	$8,496	$6,630
Per worker	$18,267	$7,049	$18,665	$18,010	$13,276
NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLDS (*N*)	(612)	(51)	(237)	(63)	(261)
No. of persons	1.2	1.6	1.2	1.1	1.0
Primary family					
Other family					
Unrelated	1.2	1.6	1.2	1.1	1.0
No. of workers	0.6	1.2	1.1	0.7	0.1
Household income					
Total	$11,908	$8,569	$17,648	$12,707	$7,155
Per person	$10,498	$5,931	$15,314	$11,516	$6,771
Per worker	$14,655	$7,588	$16,296	$15,736	$10,107

Source: PUMS-S.

Note: A blank cell means that information was not available for that type of household and householder age group.

Table 23. Indicators of household composition, workforce, and income, by nativity and period of immigration: Asian Indians, 1980 U.S. census

Indicator	Total	Native-born	Immigrants, by immigration period			
			Before 1965	1965-1969	1970-1974	1975-1980
ALL HOUSEHOLDS (*N*)	(2,209)	(454)	(236)	(326)	(617)	(576)
No. of persons	3.0	1.7	3.2	3.6	3.4	3.0
Primary family	2.4	0.9	2.7	3.1	3.0	2.4
Other family	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2
Unrelated	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4
No. of workers	1.4	0.5	1.4	1.7	1.7	1.5
Household income						
Total	$23,228	$11,648	$31,913	$32,829	$27,715	$18,558
Per person	$876	$704	$1,075	$1,065	$946	$746
Per worker	$17,612	$12,714	$24,094	$22,125	$18,189	$13,369
% of households nonfamily	27.7	60.6	26.7	12.3	14.1	25.5
FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS (*N*)	(1,597)	(179)	(173)	(286)	(530)	(429)
No. of persons	3.6	2.8	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.5
Primary family	3.3	2.2	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.2
Other family	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.3
Unrelated	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
No. of workers	1.6	1.0	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.7
Household income						
Total	$27,567	$17,193	$38,886	$34,526	$29,393	$20,435
Per person	$8,088	$6,465	$10,647	$9,468	$8,529	$6,269
Per worker	$18,267	$13,556	$25,048	$22,424	$18,538	$13,510
NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLDS (*N*)	(612)	(275)	(63)	(40)	(87)	(147)
No. of persons	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	.13
Primary family	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other family	—	—	—	—	—	—
Unrelated	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	.13
No. of workers	0.6	0.2	0.5	1.1	1.1	1.0
Household income						
Total	$11,908	$8,038	$12,768	$20,699	$17,495	$13,081
Per person	$10,498	$7,418	$11,046	$19,099	$15,115	$10,952
Per worker	$14,655	$11,133	$18,469	$19,950	$15,945	$12,905

Source: PUMS-S.

This household pattern contrasts sharply with the living arrangements found among many of the other Asian American immigrant groups, especially Filipinos, Koreans, and Vietnamese, for whom recent-immigrant households were relatively large and contained large numbers of "other family" and unrelated persons (Gardner et al. 1985:20 ff.). Their household patterns reflect economic strategies common in immigrant groups, such as the sharing of major household costs and the provision of resources to other kin as they arrive in the United States. Although we do not have direct evidence, the census data on households just reviewed suggest that these strategies are not common among Asian Indians. Instead we find that the Asian Indian community is composed mainly of smaller and simple family households. In addition there is a group of nonfamily households within which we distinguish youthful and aged households as inferred by the ages of householders. Further tabulation of the 1980 census data indicates that the youthful households were primarily immigrant households (91.3 percent), and particularly recent immigrants (75.4 percent), whereas the aged households were made up mainly of native-born Asian Indians (82.8 percent).

Although we lack direct information on the ways that Asian Indians may be employing these living arrangements to ease the process of immigration and economic adjustment, we do have some direct evidence regarding work force participation and income patterns at the household level. These data also appear in Tables 22 and 23.

The usual tendency of household and per-person incomes to rise and then to fall with householder's age is evident in Table 22. But the most important observation concerns the distinct income patterns of family and nonfamily households. In 1980 nonfamily households were small and had proportionately even fewer workers than family households. Morever, the workers in these households had low incomes. In Table 23 we find that the same observations apply to subgroups by nativity and period of immigration. Immigrant family households had substantially higher incomes than nonfamily households, resulting from high ratios of workers to nonworkers and very high personal incomes. The immigrant nonfamily households had lower incomes mainly because per-worker incomes were low.

THE ASIAN INDIAN POOR

One useful means to understanding family and household processes in relation to economic issues is to consider characteristics of the losers in the process, the poor. Discussions of poverty in America generally focus on the recent feminization of poverty due to marital instability, and on the implications of this trend for children. That is, American poverty is linked closely to a breakdown in family processes, so that women and children

suffer disproportionately. Among Asian Indians, in contrast, "poverty" and "families" seem to be virtually unrelated. In the census data we have examined there is little indication of marital instability, at least of marital dissolution involving children. Ninety-two percent of all family households in the 1980 census contained both husband and wife. The Asian Indian poverty that exists takes other forms.

The overall poverty rate recorded in 1980 among Asian Indian households was only 11.6 percent, and among family households the poverty rate was but 7.8 percent.[15] In contrast, 21.7 percent of all nonfamily households were poor. The profile of Asian Indian family households below the poverty line indicates that they are mainly youthful, recent-immigrant households that have not yet gained a foothold in American society. There is every reason to expect that they will succeed in the end, however. One-third of the householders in 1980 had college degrees; fewer than one in ten had difficulty with the English language. Their immediate difficulties stemmed from the relatively large size of their households (3.7 persons) and the small number of workers (1.0 persons) earning low incomes ($3,500 on average).

One large group of these householders (33.1 percent) was not in the labor force in 1979. Only one in eight was still in school, and therefore we cannot easily explain why so many householders were not in the labor force, nor what were their sources of support. They were disproportionately male and married (both 73.2 percent) and more than half had arrived in the United States in the 1970s. Significantly, from a welfare standpoint, this category of poor households contained virtually no children.

The remaining two-thirds of the poor family households seem to consist of householders who earned low incomes because of working intermittently in 1979 (three-fourths worked fewer than 40 weeks). Many of these householders were still in school. It should be noted that these households were larger than better-off family households because they had more offspring of the householder. They reported an average of 3.5 children ever born, and two-thirds of the households had one or more children in the household; one in five had a child under age six. Given this profile, it is remarkable that only one in 12 of these poverty households reported receiving public assistance.

The youthful, poor nonfamily households seem to contain in many cases students living on institutional or family support, and are thus enmeshed in the special kind of poverty associated with the student life. Our census evidence for this assertion is, it must be stressed, indirect. In 1980,

15. The discussion in this section is based on tabulations from PUMS-S not shown here. The federal government's family poverty threshholds take into account family size, age of householder, and number of related children (USBC 1982).

79.6 percent of such householders were single, 83.3 percent were male, and the households contained virtually no children. Only 55.6 percent of the householders were in the labor force in 1979 and only 37.0 percent worked during that year. Virtually all of them spoke English well or very well. Only one in five was a U.S. citizen. Since they reported virtually no public assistance income and their reported income from all sources was but $1,327, we infer that they received considerable support from elsewhere.

The aged, poor nonfamily households present a contrasting profile. The householders here had low educational levels, and they were disproportionately female (85.9 percent) and widowed (73.4 pecent). Few had worked in 1979. Their low household incomes ($2,257) were derived almost entirely from social security transfers ($1,720), reported by 75.0 percent of these households. Only 17.2 percent reported any public assistance, however, and the average public assistance payment per household (including households with zero receipts) was but $300.[16]

THE FUTURE OF THE ASIAN INDIAN COMMUNITY

There are many sources of uncertainty regarding the future of this remarkable community, among them the matter of future numbers, any assessment of which hinges largely on prospects for continued immigration. Survivorship can change but little from its current already high level, and rates of childbearing are low and unlikely to rise. As a basis for discussion we draw upon a set of projections prepared by Bouvier and Agresta (1987) for each of the Asian American communities.

The projections incorporate continued substantial immigration of Asian Indians via the family preference categories. Together with likely patterns of fertility and mortality, this immigration produces the following series of Asian Indian population totals:

Year	Population (in thousands)
1980	387 (estimate)
2000	1,006 (projection)
2030	1,919 (projection)

If immigration continues, the population may be expected to grow by 2.6 times by the year 2000, and then nearly to double again to almost two million by the year 2030.

16. This is a typical profile for American households of the aged. We are puzzled, however, by the finding that most of these Asian Indian householders (87.5 percent) claimed to be native-born. Nine of ten reported that they could speak no language but English. We commented earlier on the possible anomaly of numerous aged, female, native-born Asian Indians.

More important than simple population totals are the changes in age and sex composition that are implied by these assumptions. Figure 3 illustrates a few important changes and further distinguishes two population groups: those already in the United States in 1980 (and their future descendants) and those projected to arrive subsequently (and their descendants). The normal aging and survivorship of the 1980 resident population will produce among them in future decades a declining share of the most productive adult ages and a growing share of the elderly and relatively dependent. Note the bulge among those in their 50s in the year 2000 and among the very old in 2030. The ratio of persons 65 and over to those 15–64, a simple measure of the dependency burden on the working population, rises from 78 per thousand in 1980 to 84 in 2000, and to 216 in 2030.

We have stressed that these projections reflect the assumption of continued substantial immigration. The immigrant component of the total Asian Indian population is projected to be just over one-half in 2000 and about three-fourths by 2030.

We would expect the concentration of Asian Indians in metropolitan and suburban areas to persist. Their regional concentration in the North and North Central regions, however, is likely to diminish. That this process has already begun is indicated by the 1980 census data on change of residence between 1975 and 1980.

It is clear from these future population scenarios that the Asian Indian community is in for considerable change in the years ahead. The overall socioeconomic level of Asian Indians in the future will reflect mainly the characteristics of future immigrants rather than of those already here. And we have seen that the remarkably high levels of professional immigration are not being maintained among the most recent immigrants, who are being admitted on the strength of their relationships with U.S. citizens rather than on the basis of their schooling.

Our evidence is almost exclusively economic, and Asian Indians are extremely well assimilated economically. But they constitute a highly diverse community on cultural, religious, and other dimensions vital to the community's life, which are not reflected in the statistics and are belied somewhat by the group's economic homogeneity. How Asian Indians ultimately accommodate themselves to life in the United States remains an open question, though they certainly have the economic resources to support whatever life style they choose. Complete assimilation into American society seems to be an option, but one not likely to be attractive to many Asian Indians. Appadurai and Breckenridge (1987) make a strong case for a vigorous Hindu presence in the United States, as part of a transnational culture closely tied to India and to Asian communities elsewhere (see also Williams 1988). The metaphor of a banyan tree (Tinker 1977), taken from the Bengali poet Rabin-

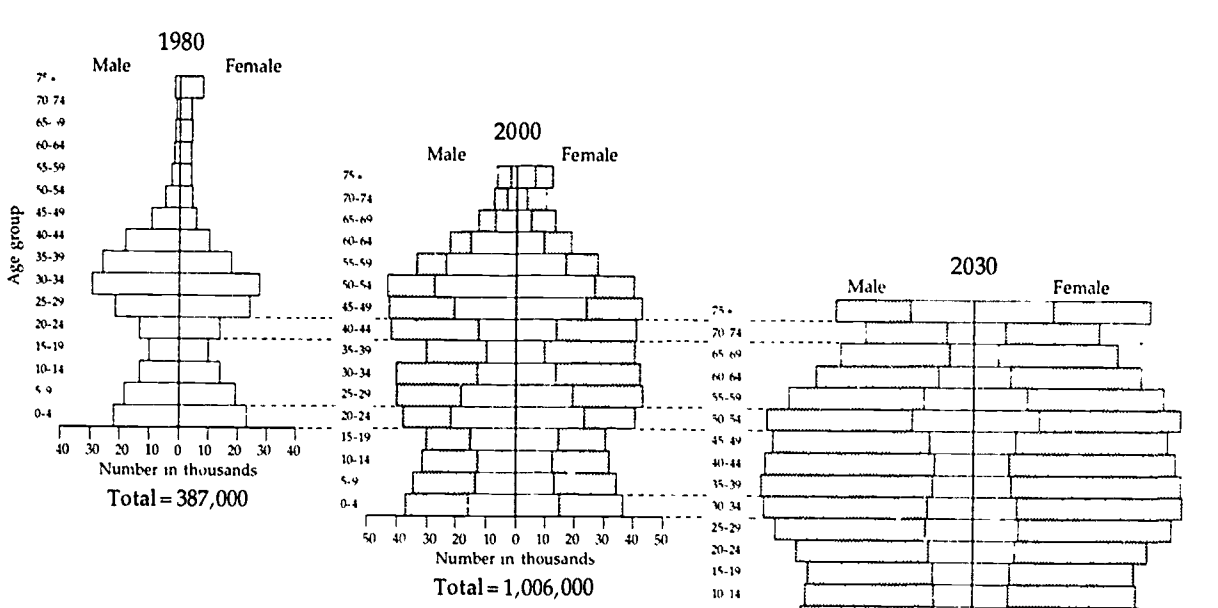

Figure 3. Population projections to the year 2030 for Asian Indians
Source: Bouvier and Agresta (1987; unpublished data).

dranath Tagore and employed in reference to the Commonwealth overseas communities, may be relevant to South Asians in the United States as well.

We have some misgivings about the statistical data and methods we have used to identify Asian Indians, and this problem is related to questions of shifting personal and group identities. What kinds of Asian Indian are there? What are the degrees of membership in the Asian Indian community? What is the importance of birthplace and race to behavioral characteristics such as language use? How well or poorly does "Ancestry" capture these complications? How do census categories relate to other behavioral characteristics associated with culture, caste, and religion that are assessed in other data on Asian Indians but not in the United States census?

The Asian Indian population is bound to become economically more diverse as time passes, given that the current adult population was admitted to the United States on occupational and educational grounds, whereas the most recent arrivals (into the 1980s) have come as family members of the earlier group. Recent Asian Indian immigrants are better educated than the general U.S. population but not as distinctly so as their predecessors; they are not moving into the labor force with the same ease, in part because of important changes in the American job market. They are going to end up in a wider range of jobs and earn a wider range of incomes.

The projected age-sex pyramids for the years 2000 and 2030 suggest a rising problem of dependency burdens within Asian Indian households as the current middle-age group ages. Much depends upon whether traditional values affecting care of the elderly are retained by the generation now in its childhood. This issue may underlie the ambivalence some Asian Indians have expressed about returning to India someday. The current affluent generation of Asian Indian adolescents will be faced, more often than in the past, with surviving, aged parents. Will the traditional Asian Indian attitude toward their care prevail, or will American values and behavior win out? On one hand, the demography of this group makes this issue even more important than it would otherwise be. On the other, the relative affluence of the older generation of Asian Indians will help to alleviate the stresses involved.

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