

## Ethnic and Gender Subgroup Differences in Education, Employment, and Incarceration in the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community<sup>i</sup>

The stratification of opportunities and disparate outcomes for Black and Latino boys and men has been well documented. However, there remains a lack of awareness about the extent to which these issues are relevant for the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. This brief focuses on key status and leading indicators for the mobility and life course outcomes of AAPI boys and men, demonstrating the ways in which broad sweeping generalizations about the population miss incidences of differential access to educational opportunities and significant educational challenges. This brief reports on analysis of both differences between men from different AAPI subgroups, as well as differences between men and women within AAPI subgroups. Data reveal the need for greater inclusion of the AAPI community in efforts to address the educational challenges facing all men of color.

### HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION

Despite relatively high rates of high school completion for AAPIs in the aggregation, there are significant gender disparities in high school completion rates for certain AAPI subgroups. These include differences between men from different subgroups, as well as differences between men and women within subgroups.

In some school districts in California, such as in Oakland and Los Angeles, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander, and Filipino males have a 50% dropout rate, which is more than twice the statewide male dropout rate and nearly three times the national average.<sup>1</sup>

Differences in high school completion also include disparities between men and women within AAPI subgroups. The high school completion rates for Hmong, Laotian, Samoan, Tongan, and Guamanian males are all lower than their female counterparts. The dropout rate for Guamanian males, for example, is 2.5 times great than Guamanian females.<sup>2</sup>

### ACCESS AND SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Among AAPI males that graduate from high school, their likelihood of attending college and earning a degree is far from certain, and there are

In California, Nevada, and Hawaii, three states with a significant number of AAPI college students, 50 to 60% of AAPI men attend community colleges where fewer than 15% earn a degree or transfer to a four-year institution.<sup>3</sup>

AAPI male high school graduates from some subgroups have a much lower rate of college attendance than is the case for other subgroups. Native Hawaiian men who graduated from high school were half as likely as AAPIs in the aggregate to attend college. The college-going rate for Native Hawaiian male high school graduate (49%) is also much lower than their female counterparts (69%).<sup>4</sup>

Broad sweeping support for young men of color needs to be inclusive of and responsive to marginalized and vulnerable AAPI subgroups.

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There are significant disparities in degree attainment for men between AAPI subgroups, as well as between men and women within the same subgroup.

More than half of all Hmong (57%), Laotian (52%), Guamanian (56%), Native Hawaiian (56%), and Samoan (62%) men who attend college leave without earning a degree.<sup>5</sup>

There are notable differences in degree attainment rates for men and women within AAPI subgroups. Cambodian and Tongan male college students were twice as likely to earn an associate's degree as their highest level of education compared to their female counterparts, while the females were nearly twice as likely to complete college with baccalaureate degrees.<sup>6</sup>

## COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

The rising cost of higher education presents a large and growing challenge for low-income AAPI families. Data reveal that differential access to postsecondary opportunities and resources for AAPI men and women likely contribute to gender disparities in educational attainment.

Among applicants for the Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund – the nation's largest scholarship provided for the AAPI community – AAPI females outnumber AAPI males 2 to 1 among applicants in 2013 (67% female; 33% male).<sup>7</sup>

Within-group disparities between male and female APIASF applicants were particularly large among Tongans (14% vs. 86%), Mien (18% vs. 82%), Thai (21% vs. 70%), and Hmong (25% vs. 75%).<sup>8</sup>

## INTERGENERATIONAL EDUCATIONAL MOBILITY

Age-cohort analysis – comparing cohorts of younger adults to older adults – is a method through which to gauge intergenerational changes in educational mobility. Age-cohort analyses reveal that some AAPI male subgroups are experiencing downward intergenerational educational mobility. These trends are compounded by a widening gap between males and females.

Among Native Hawaiian high school graduates, women, age 25-34, have a higher college-going rate than women, age 55-64 (65% vs. 48%), while men, age 25-34 have a lower college-going rate than men, age 55-64 (47% vs. 52%).<sup>9</sup>

Among Filipino college attendees, the baccalaureate degree attainment rate is higher for women, age 25 to 34 (61%) than it is for women, age 55-64 (51%), while the baccalaureate degree attainment rate is lower for men, age 25 to 34 (50%), than it is for men, age 55 to 64 (58%).<sup>10</sup>

## EMPLOYMENT

The high correlation between educational attainment, employment, and earnings has implications for some subgroups of AAPI men. This section reports on significant disparities in unemployment between males from different AAPI subgroups.

Some Southeast Asian subgroups are experiencing unemployment among men that is more than double the unemployment rate of men in the general AAPI population (14% for Cambodian men, 12% for Hmong men, and 13% for Laotian men).<sup>11</sup>

Pacific Islander adult males as a whole have an unemployment rate of 12%, with particularly high rates of unemployment among Samoan (17%) and Tongan (16%) men.<sup>12</sup>

The gaps in unemployment between AAPI males and females are the greatest among Cambodian Americans, with the unemployment rate for men (14%) that is twice as high as women (7%).<sup>13</sup>

While inclusiveness of the AAPI community in large-scale support for all young men of color is important, there also needs to be support that targets the unique challenges faced by AAPI boys and men - efforts that are targeted regionally and within institutions serving large concentrations of low-income AAPI students.

## VIOLENCE, VICTIMIZATION, AND INCARCERATION

AAPI males report high levels of violence and victimization.

In a national survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander high school students had the highest rates of being bullied (25%) and threatened or injured on school property (11%).<sup>14</sup>

A survey conducted by the Sikh Coalition in the Bay Area found that 65% of Sikh middle school boys have experienced some form of racial or religious bullying.<sup>15</sup>

Native Hawaiian males exhibit disproportionately high rates of incarceration.

Native Hawaiians make up 24% of population in Hawai'i, but 27% of the arrests, 39% of the incarcerated population, and 41% of the parolees.<sup>16</sup>

Native Hawaiians also receive longer prison sentences and are less likely to receive probation compared to other racial or ethnic groups.<sup>17</sup>

As a result of one of the largest increases in the rate of incarceration of any state, Native Hawaiians receiving sentences in Hawai'i have a high rate of being incarcerated in out-of-state facilities (29%).<sup>18</sup>

## PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Some subgroups of AAPI males are exhibiting symptoms of poor mental health.

In a national survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control, Asian American high school students reported the highest levels of feeling sad or hopeless (26%) and having seriously considered attempting suicide (17%).<sup>19</sup>

A study by the Rand Corporation found that nearly half of all Cambodian youth have symptoms of depression.<sup>20</sup>

Some subgroups of AAPI males are exhibiting poor physical health

In the same CDC survey of high school students, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders had a high rate of being overweight (19%) or obese (21%), and the highest rate of being diagnosed with asthma (27%).<sup>21</sup>

Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Filipino young men experience higher blood pressure than other racial and ethnic subgroups.<sup>22</sup>

An effort to better address the needs of AAPI boys and men requires engaging directly with community leaders, advocacy organizations, and scholars with expertise in and access to the AAPI community.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> R. Teranishi, *Asians in the Ivory Tower: Dilemmas of Racial Inequality in American Higher Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010).
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> Author analysis of census data, ACS 3-year sample.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> Author analysis of data from the Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> Author analysis of census data, ACS 3-year sample.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> H. Rho, J. Schmitt, N. Woo, L. Lin, & K. Wong. *Diversity and Change: Asian American and Pacific Islander Workers* (Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2011).
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (Atlanta, GA: Author, 2013).
- <sup>15</sup> The Sikh Coalition. *Sikh Coalition Bay Area Civil Rights Report* (Fremont, CA: Author, 2010).
- <sup>16</sup> Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA). *The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians in the Criminal Justice System* (Honolulu, HI: Author, 2010).
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (Atlanta, GA: Author, 2013).
- <sup>20</sup> G. Marshall, T. Schell, M. Elliott, S. Berthold, & C. Chun, *Mental Health of Cambodian Refugees Two Decades After Resettlement in the United States* (Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, 2010).
- <sup>21</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (Atlanta, GA: Author, 2013).
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*