# Topic: Asian American Higher Education Access in Philadelphia

Asian American comprises a panoply of differing and unique intersectional identities, histories, and experiences, yet Asian Americans are essentialized as a group and broadly stereotyped as the model minority, which shapes information to college access and campus resources (Museus & Truong, 2009; Palmer & Maramba, 2015; Poon & Byrd, 2013). Scholars and researchers have frequently called for the disaggregation of Asian American data to ensure that ethnic minorities are supported within the Asian American racial category (Museus & Truong, 2009).

In the pursuit of data disaggregation, I hope to map the different experiences of Asian American ethnic groups across Philadelphia and their access to higher education. I’m particularly looking at East Asians in Central Philadelphia and South East Asians (broadly) in South Philly.

College Access Frameworks

Postsecondary institutions in the United States are critical for developing a workforce and providing individual opportunities for development. Although the need for postsecondary education is evident, the need is often mismatched by various factors (Dache et al., 2021). Perna (2006) offers a conceptual model of higher education which encompasses four layers: (1) habitus, (2) school and community context, (3) higher education context, (4) social, economic and policy context. Although this framework does consider context, it does not explicitly address the geographic context (Turley, 2009). Turley argues that college choice must be situated in the geographic context and found that high school seniors had a wide range of colleges within commuting distance, zip code had a small but significant increase in the odds of applying to college. Finally, schools that are more conveniently accessible had higher application rates.

Hillman (2016) builds upon the geographic distance of higher education institutions to argue for the existence of education deserts — places where there are no educational opportunities. These education deserts show that place shapes the decision-making process in deciding whether to attend and where to attend college. The idea of applying the term geography of opportunity is to show that there are unequal opportunities to higher education. Like food deserts, education deserts are constrained along the lines of race and class. Individual choices to go to college are shaped by their geographic context, which constrains the options of school context, community context, and their social habitus. Dache-Gerbino (2016) argues that geographic context is critically important using a Critical Geographic College Access (CGCA) framework to visually show how urban development and modernization failed black communities and that locations of colleges are not just coincidences but socially constructed around a history of residential segregation.

Although geographic analysis considers the way residents and communities can see and access higher education (Dache-Gerbino, 2016; Turley, 2009), Colleges and universities must recognize and reach out to these communities. Jaquette and Salazar (2018) found that college recruiters strategically select high schools for recruiting, typically picking high schools that are whiter and wealthier. Even when schools primarily made of students of color performed well on tests, colleges would still visit the predominately white high schools. This proposed study challenges college access from a student perspective to the responsibility of higher education institutions. College access is not just about what school students visually see and are conveniently close to, but what schools have taken the time to reach out and recruit.

# Open Answer

There’s definitely some kind of difference. Just using google maps, there’s a 30 minute difference in commute time from South philly to central philly. Additionally, there are parts of Philadelphia that have more or less college access, the big question is how much of a factor is public transit in making this possible or not?

# Possible data sources

I am still hoping to use Census data; however, I also realized I have data from the company SafeGraph for academic use. In addition to this, I have been working with the GTFS files from SEPTA that allow me to map public transit access through the Open Transit Planner (OTP) package in R. If possible I’d like to incorporate a bit of my qualitative data that I’ve memo’d about if possible, but they may be a stretch.

# Format of your final deliverable

Rather than a markdown, I am going to speak with my adviser to see how I can use this capstone towards my Ph.D. I realized that this capstone will be a good opportunity to allow me to use many of the skills that I’ve learned to explore the data.