# POVERTY AMONG ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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**ABSTRACT:** *Using the American Community Survey from 2005 to 2007, this study investigates absolute and relative poverty among Asian-Americans. The results indicate that both absolute and relative poverty are slightly higher among Asians than among whites overall as well as by nativity status (i.e., foreign born vs. native born). More detailed analysis suggests, however, that these racial differences appear to be largely associated with factors relating to immigration. Poverty is much higher among recent immigrants than among those who have been in the United States for more than five years, and foreign-born Asians are more likely to be recent immigrants than are foreign-born whites. Furthermore, after controlling for basic demographic characteristics, poverty is actually lower among foreign-born Asians than among foreign-born whites. Among native-born adult Asians (i.e., those who are not dependent on the incomes of immigrant parents), poverty is lower than among whites especially in terms of being characterized as members of the "working poor." However, significant ethnic differentials within the Asian category are evident. Poverty rates higher than those for whites continue to be evident among the native-born adult offspring of Cambodians, Hmong, and Thai. The theoretical implications of these findings are discussed.*

Keywords: poverty; Asian-Americans; American Community Survey

Since the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, the Asian-American population has been significantly increasing in both absolute and percentage terms (Xie and Goyette 2004). While some sociologists have investigated whether certain groups of Asian-Americans may have surpassed whites in regard to indicators of education and labor market attainments (Sakamoto, Goyette, and Kim 2009), poverty among Asian-Americans has been largely ignored. Occupying the lower end of the socioeconomic hierarchy, the poor are less likely to be emblematic of the "model

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minority" image. Although the study of the poor has virtually become a growth industry in the United States—with various centers around the country being devoted to it—Asian-Americans are often curiously omitted from these studies.

In the following, we report more up-to-date information on poverty among Asian-Americans using recent data. Due to the great importance of the social problem of poverty, the complex variability among Asian-Americans, and the regrettable neglect of this critical information in prior research, our primary objective is to provide a descriptive overview of this population. We summarize bivariate and multivariate statistics about the extent of poverty including both its absolute and relative dimensions. Group variation within the Asian-American population by ethnicity, nativity, and age is also considered. Our results should be of interest not only to researchers who study poverty, inequality, or related public policy but also to those who seek a more complete portrayal of Asian-Americans.

Our secondary objective is theoretical. To the extent possible using these data, we also assess different hypotheses about the sources of poverty in relation to various theoretical perspectives. Our major objective of describing broad statistical patterns prohibits us from focusing narrowly on investigating detailed processes relating to the generation of poverty, but we are nonetheless able to consider basic patterns in regard to various theoretical predictions. We leave for future research the next step of developing more rigorous empirical tests of competing theoretical explanations using more focused data analyses. We emphasize that, despite our many statistical tables, the following is ultimately only a preliminary analysis. While hundreds of studies about poverty for other racial and ethnic groups are available, very little is currently known about poverty among Asian-Americans.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND PRIOR LITERATURE

### Previous Research on Poverty and Asian-Americans

Lee (1994) studied poverty among Asian-Americans using the 1989 Current Population Survey. Using the official U.S. Census Bureau measure (which is an indicator of absolute poverty), she found that the poverty rate for Asian-American households overall was much higher than for white households especially among immigrants. Considerable variation by ethnicity was also evident with a couple of groups having lower poverty rates than whites while most others had higher poverty rates. The most extreme case was the Laotian and Cambodian group, whose combined poverty rate was well over a majority of their households (i.e., 62 percent). Lee concluded that poverty among Asian-Americans was most pronounced among immigrants and especially among the most recent immigrants.

Although not focusing specifically on poverty as their main research topic, other studies of Asian-Americans have reported some relevant statistics. Xie and Goyette (2004) as well as Sakamoto and Xie (2005) considered the official U.S. Census Bureau measure using data from the 2000 Census. Their approach slightly differed from Lee (1994), however, in that they used individuals rather than households as the unit of analysis when reporting the poverty rate. Nonetheless, their major conclusions appear to be generally consistent with Lee (1994). The overall poverty rate was higher for Asian-Americans than for whites. Substantial variation across the Asian ethnic groups was evident with a few having lower poverty while most

groups had higher poverty. Poverty was higher for immigrants and especially for those groups that had a higher proportion of recent immigrants.

All three foregoing studies are based on the official measure of poverty, which, as noted earlier, is an indicator of absolute poverty that is provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. Persons who live in absolute poverty reside in households in which the total money income is less than the fixed threshold that is deemed necessary for satisfying a minimal standard of living (as established by the "poverty threshold" devised by the U.S. Census Bureau) based on their respective household size and composition (Lee 1994). That is, the income thresholds vary by household size and composition (i.e., number of children) to indicate the cost of a minimally acceptable "basket of goods." In real economic terms, however, the income figures are constant over time and are not updated for improvements in the average standard of living in society (although adjustments for inflation are allowed).

Recently, Brady (2003) has critiqued the concept of absolute poverty by arguing that a measure of relative poverty is more appropriate for developed societies such as the United States. We concur that the rationale for considering relative poverty in the United States is generally persuasive. In the following, we therefore include a measure of relative poverty that has not been investigated for Asian-Americans in prior research. As mentioned by Brady (2003:721), relative measures often use a threshold of 50 percent of the median household income (after adjusting for household size), and we adopt this approach.

We do not, however, abandon the absolute measure of poverty. Both absolute and relative poverty are considered because they may be seen as complementary rather than mutually exclusive (Iceland 2006:37). Brady (2003) argues for the importance of a relative measure based on his discussion of "social exclusion." In practice, however, Americans in absolute poverty may be thought of as simply being even more "socially excluded" than those who are in relative poverty but not in absolute poverty. Both measures provide useful information about the positions of groups in the distribution of income relative to household needs.

## Theoretical Perspectives

Poverty among Asian-Americans potentially involves a variety of theoretical issues. First, as a non-white group, poverty among Asian-Americans relates to discussions of racial and ethnic relations (Sakamoto et al. 2009). Second, poverty in general has been considered in studies of the labor market and the stratification system (Zeng and Xie 2004). Third, most Asian-Americans are foreign born, which raises further issues pertaining specifically to immigration and assimilation (Farley and Alba 2002). While it is beyond the scope of this research to fully address all of the theoretical issues involved in these complex literatures, our analysis does yield basic results that provide important insights that are relevant to these perspectives.

### The Racialized Hierarchy View

Asian-Americans are generally identifiable as having a non-white phenotype. According to what we refer to as the racialized hierarchy view, non-whites are disadvantaged in society due to discrimination and prejudice against racial and ethnic

minorities (Bonilla-Silva 1996). As discussed by Saenz and Morales (2005:173), whites gain socioeconomic advantages because of "structural arrangements" that provide them greater opportunities in terms of higher status residential neighborhoods, better schooling, enhanced college admissions, favored job interviews, improved career opportunities, and higher labor market rewards. By contrast, non-whites are incorporated into subordinate positions in the "racialized stratification system."

According to Bonilla-Silva (1996), prejudice against non-whites has been so thoroughly ingrained into American culture for so long that these negative attitudes cannot be easily dismantled. Whites will therefore always be at the top of the social structure, and "a hierarchical racial order continues to shape all aspects of American life" (Bonilla-Silva and Glover 2004:28). As stated by Feagin and Vera (1995:7), "white racism can be viewed as the socially organized set of attitudes, ideas, and practices that deny African Americans and other people of color the dignity, opportunities, freedoms, and rewards that this nation offers white Americans."

The hypothesis derived from the racialized hierarchy view is that *Asian-Americans have higher poverty rates than whites*, which is suggested by the fact that Asian-Americans are commonly viewed and officially classified as non-whites in the United States. In emphasizing minority status as being the critical factor for Asian-American placement in the stratification system, this view also suggests the additional hypothesis that *variation in poverty rates across Asian-American ethnic groups is small compared to their common disadvantage relative to whites*. If this pattern were not observed, then logically the description of a "racialized hierarchy" would not be accurate because the disadvantage of being a minority would not be so salient.

The hypotheses mentioned earlier refer to whites in general but do not control for immigrant status. However, immigrants tend to have higher poverty rates due to adjustment issues, and most non-Hispanic whites are native born (Lee 1994). In order to focus on the presumed salience of minority racial and ethnic status per se (as is emphasized by the racialized hierarchy view), we investigate an additional hypothesis that more specifically takes nativity status into account. That is, *native-born Asian-Americans have higher poverty rates than native-born whites* because minority status itself continues to be a serious handicap in the American stratification system beyond the adjustment problems associated with immigration.

Two final hypotheses that we consider which are derived from this perspective pertain to biracial Asian-Americans. Among Asian-Americans who also identify as white (typically relating to racial intermarriage in their family; Tafoya, Johnson, and Hill 2004), their phenotype may permit them to "pass" as a socially accepted white person. In this way, they may be less subject to the discrimination associated with the "racialized stratification system." Conversely, Asian-Americans who also identify as African-American may encounter increased discrimination if their social identity is associated with a more distinctively darker skin tone, which is generally considered to be a key variable according to this perspective (Bonilla-Silva 2003). We therefore investigate the hypothesis that *white–Asian-Americans have lower poverty rates than single-race Asian-Americans* as well as the hypothesis that *black–Asian-Americans have higher poverty rates than single-race Asian-Americans*. Although these specific hypotheses have not been formally proposed in this literature, we believe that they are reasonable to consider given the logic of this perspective.

### The Demographic Heterogeneity Approach

From the point of view of labor market inequalities and class stratification, education is seen as a critical resource that helps individuals to avoid poverty and low wages by obtaining higher labor market rewards (Iceland 2006). In regard to the study of Asian-Americans, this class perspective is evident in what we refer to as the demographic heterogeneity approach that is illustrated by Sakamoto and Xie (2005) and Zeng and Xie (2004). The main insight is that the heterogeneous category of Asian-Americans needs to be disaggregated due to variability in their class- and status-related resources (such as education) that affect labor market competitiveness and hence poverty. Different groups of Asian-Americans are presumed to vary dramatically in terms of their class resources and competitiveness due to variation in immigration patterns, nativity, generational status, and socioeconomic background.

One important aspect of class competitiveness is the "place of education." Zeng and Xie (2004:1087) distinguish between native-born Asian-Americans who are usually schooled in the United States, foreign-born Asian-Americans who obtained their highest level of schooling in the United States (often due to immigration to the United States at a young age), and foreign-born Asian-Americans who obtained all of their schooling overseas (due to immigration to the United States as a mature adult). Zeng and Xie (2004) argue that only the latter group faces a systematic wage disadvantage relative to whites. Other studies have similarly found that educational degrees obtained from other foreign countries are typically heavily devalued in the American labor market (Bratsberg and Ragan 2002).

Immigrants to the United States may often be disadvantaged in other ways. For example, immigrants from Asia may face reduced labor market opportunities if they lack fluent English-language skills. Limited English-language skills may be particularly problematic among immigrants who came to the United States after adolescence and at other older ages (Espenshade and Fu 1997). Recent immigrants are usually less familiar with American labor market practices and institutions, which may be further obfuscated by cultural differences, limited social networks, or inadequate English-language skills (Sakamoto et al. 2009). On the other hand, bilingualism does not appear to represent a systematic advantage for Asian-Americans in the U.S. labor force net of other conventional variables (Shin and Alba 2009).

For these reasons, the demographic heterogeneity approach to the study of Asian-Americans avoids lumping together all generations of Asian-Americans when investigating their attainments in the U.S. labor market. Indeed, the demographic heterogeneity approach suggests that recent immigrants need to be further distinguished from immigrants with greater lengths of experience in the United States as the latter group accumulates more English-language skills, knowledge of the American labor market, job skills that better match the U.S. economy, and a broader set of social networks (Borjas 1985; Chiswick 1978). As suggested by Lee (1994), the highest rates of poverty are expected to be associated with the most recent immigrants, who have been in the United States for only a short while (e.g., less than five years) and will therefore be the most likely to be unemployed and to have the worst English-language skills.

Based on the demographic heterogeneity approach, we consider several hypotheses. First, we investigate whether *foreign-born Asian-American adults have higher poverty rates than native-born Asian-American adults (who are not the dependents of immigrants)* in part because the latter group typically has U.S. educational degrees while foreign-born Asian-Americans often received their schooling overseas. Second, *foreign-born Asian-Americans who have been in the United States for five years or less have higher poverty rates than foreign-born Asian-Americans who have been in the United States for more than five years* because recent immigrants are expected to have the worst labor market competitiveness. Third, in contrast to the racialized hierarchy view, the demographic heterogeneity approach generally suggests the hypothesis that *variation in poverty rates across Asian-Americans based on ethnicity, nativity, and length of stay in the United States is often large*. This hypothesis follows from the demographic heterogeneity approach because it views non-white minority status per se as being a much less important factor compared to class and status characteristics that are associated with the varied demography and immigration histories of Asian-Americans.

### Traditional Assimilation Theory

The demographic heterogeneity approach seems generally consistent with traditional assimilation theory. With greater experience with the United States, immigrants increase their knowledge, skills, and capacities in ways that are more congruent with higher socioeconomic attainments in the American labor market. The disadvantages of immigrants are thereby reduced over time as they become more assimilated.

One point of difference, however, is that traditional assimilation theory places a greater emphasis on change across several successive generations, whereas the demographic heterogeneity approach is most closely associated with studies of the first generation and their offspring (i.e., the second generation). In general, traditional assimilation theory posits an eventual convergence to the characteristics of the majority group as the endpoint of the assimilation process. This prediction has not been considered systematically for Asian-Americans, however, because they are mostly first and second generations associated with the post-1965 era of migration, so only a small proportion of Asian-Americans are third or higher generations (Sakamoto et al. 2009).

The one group that might be considered in this regard, however, is native-born, biracial white-Japanese. Due to their particular immigration history, Japanese are the one group of Asian-Americans that is primarily native born and is likely to include a substantial proportion of third- and higher-generation persons due to relatively limited immigration in recent decades (Sakamoto et al. 2009). Because intermarriage is high among native-born Asian-Americans and because most Japanese-American intermarriage is with whites (Qian and Lichter 2007; Xie and Goyette 2004), native-born white-Japanese are one of the few groups that is likely to include a substantial proportion of third- and higher-generation persons (Sakamoto et al. 2009). White-Japanese are further expected to be more assimilated due

to having a social identity that includes being white, typically reflecting parental intermarriage with whites.

We therefore consider the hypothesis that *the poverty rate for white-Japanese is similar to that for whites.* An additional hypothesis from this perspective of traditional assimilation theory is that *poverty rates for other Asian-American groups (which have more immigrants) tend to be higher than that for whites*. These other Asian-American groups are presumed to be less well adapted to competition in U.S. society because they are less advanced (at least as an overall group) in the assimilation process.

### Segmented Assimilation Theory

Segmented assimilation theory is not highly codified, and different studies may emphasize slightly different issues. One strand of research in this general literature includes references to "immigrant optimism" (Kao and Tienda 1995). This idea suggests that the second generation may have high socioeconomic attainments due to greater selectivity, effort, ambition, and motivation. Second-generation children are frequently reminded of the sacrifices that their parents have made in order to come to America often for the purpose of obtaining better socioeconomic opportunities. Immigrant parents who lack U.S. educational credentials may find that their own labor market prospects are constrained and may alternatively motivate their children into becoming high achievers (Goyette and Xie 1999).

An additional theme in this broad literature is the selective retention of traditional values and customs (thus, "segmented" assimilation) that might serve as resources for upward mobility or improved socioeconomic attainments in the more multicultural environment of contemporary America. As stated by Zhou (1997:994), "Asian subgroups … selectively unpack from their cultural baggage those traits suitable to the new environment, such as two parent families, a strong work ethic, delayed gratification, and thrift. …" Zhou (1997:988) also notes that by maintaining some traditional values and norms, Asian-American children may be better equipped to counteract the "oppositional culture" and "poverty, poor schools, violence, drugs, and a generally disruptive social environment" in the inner-city. The segmented assimilation perspective thus suggests that limited or incomplete integration into American society may actually improve the socioeconomic attainments of Asian-Americans.

Xie and Goyette (2004:10) report, for example, that 53 percent of recent cohorts of native-born Asian-Americans complete college as compared to 30 percent among whites. This Asian-American advantage in education may be in part facilitated by traditional Asian values and norms regarding family cohesiveness, the parental control of children, and children's sense of filial piety toward accommodating their parents' wishes (Goyette and Xie 1999; Sakamoto et al. 2009). While the selectivity of Asian immigration toward persons who are more highly educated plays an important role as well, every known study on this issue seems to find that social class factors alone cannot fully account for the higher educational attainments of Asian-American youth over white youth (Sakamoto et al. 2009).

Thus, segmented assimilation processes (including "immigrant optimism") may be conducive toward high educational attainment among second-generation

Asian-American youth. High education, in turn, has one of the strongest negative effects on poverty and one of the strongest positive effects on long-term earnings (Iceland 2006). Because most native-born Asian-Americans are second generation for whom segmented assimilation processes may be the most prominent, we investigate the hypothesis that *the poverty rate for native-born Asian-American adults (who are not the dependents of immigrants) is lower than that for white adults*. This hypothesis brings us full circle by being the opposite of the first hypothesis from the racialized hierarchy view discussed earlier.

## METHODOLOGY

### Data and Variables

We use the American Community Survey (ACS), which is conducted annually in recent years by the U.S. Census Bureau. The ACS is a household survey that is large and nationally representative of the American population. By using the ACS data combined for the years 2005, 2006, and 2007, an adequate sample size for small minority groups is obtained.

The ACS provides reliable information on a variety of demographic and socioeconomic variables. We study all of the sixteen different single-race Asian-American ethnic groups that are identified in the ACS. Our reference group is single-race, non-Hispanic whites, whom we refer to simply as "whites." In addition, fifteen different groups of multiracial or multiethnic persons are identified that involve an Asian identity. We investigate all fifteen of these latter groups, which, for convenience, we refer to as "multiracial Asian-Americans."

As mentioned earlier, we consider measures of absolute poverty as well as relative poverty. They are dichotomous variables. In regard to absolute poverty, we investigate the official U.S. Census Bureau definition, which was discussed earlier. This measure is well known and is widely studied, albeit not so much for Asian-Americans.

Relative poverty is not a specific measure that is available in the ACS, but we compute it by first adjusting the distribution of household income by family size and composition. This adjustment refers to the ratio of the income of a household relative to its respective official U.S. Census Bureau poverty threshold. This ratio—which is an indicator of economic well-being that is known as the income-to-needs ratio—is then treated as a variable with its own distribution (Sakamoto and Xie 2005:73). One-half of the median of this distribution is then used as the cutoff for relative poverty status. Our measure of relative poverty can thus be viewed as having a household income that is less than one-half of the median after adjusting for household size and composition (Brady 2003).

Using the 2005–2007 ACS data, we obtain a relative poverty threshold of 1.66 (because the median income-to-needs ratio is 3.32). This threshold is thus 66 percent higher than the absolute poverty threshold, which is 1.00. According to the official definition of absolute poverty, any household below its respective U.S. Census Bureau threshold is in absolute poverty, which implies that it refers to an income-to-needs ratio of less than 1.00.

For example, the U.S. Census Bureau poverty threshold for a family of four with two children was $19,806 in 2005. Families of that type with total incomes below

$19,806 in 2005 are classified as being in absolute poverty in our analysis (and by the U.S. Census Bureau). That is, $19,806 times 1.66 equals $32,878. A family of four with two children and a total income below $32,878 is thus classified as being in relative poverty in our study. Generally speaking, families classified as being in relative poverty but not in absolute poverty will include many who are commonly referred to as the "working poor," who receive limited if any welfare assistance from the government (Iceland 2006).

Although poverty status is determined on the basis of total household income, we impute it to the level of the individual as is common in the poverty literature (Iceland 2006). That is, our analysis uses the individual (rather than the household) as the unit of analysis. In our multivariate statistical analysis, logistic regressions are estimated in which the dependent variable refers to poverty status (either absolute or relative) for the sample of individuals. The control variables refer to basic demographic characteristics that are usually considered to be associated with income and poverty status (Iceland 2006). They include gender (i.e., whether male), age (in years), a quadratic term for age (to indicate its typically declining labor market impact), highest level of education completed (as indicated by five dichotomous variables referring to high school, some college, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and more than a bachelor's degree, with the reference category being less than high school), disability status (as indicated by a dichotomous variable), metropolitan residence (as indicated by a dichotomous variable), and region of residence (as indicated by three dichotomous variables referring to South, Midwest, and Northeast, with the reference category being West).

## EMPIRICAL RESULTS

We report many statistics, which are displayed in nine tables. Almost all of these results are unavailable elsewhere. Space constraints prohibit us from discussing every number that is provided in our tables. Our discussion will highlight those results that most immediately relate to the foregoing discussion of theoretical issues.

### Poverty Rates by Race/Ethnicity

Our most general results are shown in Table 1, which includes statistics on absolute and relative poverty rates for the various groups along with their sample sizes. Also reported in Table 1 is the coefficient of variation for the income-to-needs ratio. This measure indicates the degree of inequality (i.e., a scale-invariant measure of dispersion) in the distribution of the income-to-needs ratio for the particular group.

The absolute poverty rate for whites overall is 8.8 percent, while their relative poverty rate is 18.3 percent, which is much larger. That is, the relative poverty is over twice as high as the absolute poverty and thus includes many people who are sometimes described as the "working poor." They are commonly perceived by others in society to be socially deprived even though most of them do not fall below the official poverty line of the U.S. Census Bureau. Foreign-born whites have slightly higher poverty rates than native-born whites.

**TABLE  1**

Poverty Rates by Race/Ethnicity

| | Absolute Poverty | Relative Poverty | Sample Size | Coefficient of Variation[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall whites | 0.0879 | 0.1826 | 6,259,430 | 2.18 |
| Foreign-born whites | 0.0978 | 0.2001 | 216,977 | 2.12 |
| Native-born whites | 0.0875 | 0.1819 | 6,042,453 | 2.19 |
| Native-born whites age ≥ 25 | 0.0690 | 0.1564 | 4,286,732 | 2.34 |
| Native-born whites age ≤ 24 | 0.1286 | 0.2384 | 1,755,721 | 1.92 |
| White male | 0.0769 | 0.1622 | 3,039,433 | 2.29 |
| White female | 0.0985 | 0.2021 | 3,219,997 | 2.09 |
| Overall Asians | 0.0997[b] | 0.1980[b] | 358,316 | 2.11 |
| Foreign-born Asians | 0.1003[c] | 0.2016[c] | 235,481 | 2.10 |
| Native-born Asians | 0.0985[d] | 0.1907[d] | 122,835 | 2.14 |
| Native-born Asians age ≥ 25 | 0.0536[e] | 0.1086[e] | 40,344 | 2.73 |
| Native-born Asians age ≤ 24 | 0.1198[f] | 0.2299[f] | 82,491 | 1.97 |
| Asian male | 0.0965[g] | 0.1944[g] | 168,163 | 2.13 |
| Asian female | 0.1027[h] | 0.2014[h] | 190,153 | 2.10 |
| *Asian ethnic group* (all ages including both foreign and native born) | | | | |
| Asian Indian | 0.0762[b] | 0.1531[b] | 64,594 | 2.37 |
| Bangladeshi | 0.2359[b] | 0.4161[b] | 1,430 | 1.52 |
| Cambodian | 0.1906[b] | 0.35438[b] | 5,347 | 1.67 |
| Chinese | 0.1129[b] | 0.2176[b] | 84,233 | 2.06 |
| Filipino | 0.0540[b] | 0.1226[b] | 66,398 | 2.53 |
| Hmong | 0.2765[b] | 0.5197[b] | 4,440 | 1.51 |
| Indonesian | 0.1189 | 0.2241[j] | 1,555 | 1.98 |
| Japanese | 0.0770[b] | 0.1392[b] | 24,326 | 2.44 |
| Korean | 0.1070[b] | 0.2103[b] | 32,668 | 2.04 |
| Laotian | 0.1446[i] | 0.3019[b] | 4,693 | 1.82 |
| Malaysian | 0.1046 | 0.2038 | 355 | 2.16 |
| Other Asian | 0.1324[i] | 0.2728[b] | 4,716 | 1.82 |
| Pakistani | 0.1368[b] | 0.2937[b] | 5,020 | 1.80 |
| Sri Lankan | 0.0890[i] | 0.2072[b] | 912 | 2.10 |
| Thai | 0.1325 | 0.2306[j] | 3,994 | 1.94 |
| Vietnamese | 0.1343[b] | 0.2674[b] | 38,679 | 1.85 |
| *Asian multiethnic/multiracial group* (all ages including both foreign and native born) | | | | |
| Black-Korean | 0.1852[j] | 0.3083[i] | 261 | 1.68 |
| Black-Japanese | 0.1413 | 0.1985 | 293 | 1.96 |
| Black-Filipino | 0.0996 | 0.2573[j] | 821 | 1.95 |
| Black-Chinese | 0.0978 | 0.2042 | 310 | 2.05 |
| Black–Asian Indian | 0.1397[i] | 0.2285 | 490 | 1.94 |
| Chinese-Vietnamese | 0.1027 | 0.2321 | 1,047 | 2.03 |
| Chinese-Japanese | 0.0505[b] | 0.0847[b] | 849 | 3.09 |
| Chinese-Filipino | 0.0406[b] | 0.0782[b] | 1,005 | 2.87 |
| Filipino-Japanese | 0.0451[b] | 0.0780[b] | 494 | 2.78 |
| White–Asian Indian | 0.0979 | 0.1798 | 2,332 | 2.27 |
| White-Chinese | 0.0711[i] | 0.1169[b] | 4,341 | 2.65 |
| White-Filipino | 0.0763[b] | 0.1575[b] | 7,948 | 2.32 |
| White-Japanese | 0.0823[b] | 0.1502[b] | 5,517 | 2.34 |
| White-Vietnamese | 0.0876[j] | 0.1944 | 1,300 | 2.18 |
| White-Korean | 0.0924 | 0.1685[i] | 2,936 | 2.22 |

[a]Coefficient of variation refers to the standard deviation of the income-to-needs ratio divided by the mean.
[b]$p < 0.001$ relative to overall whites.
[c]$p < 0.001$ relative to foreign-born whites.
[d]$p < 0.001$ relative to native-born whites.
[e]$p < 0.001$ relative to native-born whites age ≥ 25.
[f]$p < 0.001$ relative to native-born whites age ≤ 24.
[g]$p < 0.001$ relative to white males.
[h]$p < 0.001$ relative to white females.
[i]$p < 0.01$ relative to overall whites.
[j]$p < 0.05$ relative to overall whites.

The absolute poverty rate for Asians is 10.0 percent, while their relative poverty rate is 19.8 percent. These differences are statistically significant. Poverty is thus slightly higher among Asians than among whites. Although Asians are often dismissed as being too heterogeneous to consider their socioeconomic characteristics as an overall group, the coefficient of variation for the income-to-needs ratio for Asians (i.e., 2.11) is actually smaller than that for whites (i.e., 2.18). In terms of this measure of economic well-being, Asians as an overall group are thus slightly more homogeneous than whites, contrary to the conventional wisdom in this field. The most homogeneous group is Bangladeshi (i.e., 1.52), and the most heterogeneous group is Chinese-Japanese (i.e., 3.09).

Native-born adult Asians (i.e., those at least twenty-five years of age) have notably lower poverty rates. Their absolute poverty rate is 5.4 percent, which is lower (and statistically significant) than that for native-born adult whites (i.e., 6.9 percent). The Asian advantage is even more evident in terms of relative poverty (i.e., 10.9 percent versus 15.6 percent for native-born adult whites). Thus, non-immigrant Asians whose income does not depend on immigrant parents are much less likely than whites to be among the "working poor."

Considerable variability by ethnicity is evident among Asians. In terms of both absolute and relative poverty rates, Asian Indians, Japanese, and Filipinos are all less likely to be poor than whites. The differences in the absolute poverty rates between whites and Indonesians, Malaysians, and Thai are not statistically significant. The other single-race groups (including Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, Hmong, and Other Asian) all have higher rates of absolute and relative poverty than whites. The groups with the highest poverty rates are Bangladeshi (i.e., 23.6 percent in absolute poverty and 41.6 percent in relative poverty), Cambodians (i.e., 19.1 percent in absolute poverty and 35.4 percent in relative poverty), and Hmong (i.e., 27.7 percent in absolute poverty and 52.0 percent in relative poverty).

Regarding multiracial Asians, their poverty rates tend to be closer to whites (i.e., either slightly lower or slightly higher). The only groups with somewhat higher poverty rates are black–Asian Indian, black-Japanese, and black-Korean. At the other extreme, Filipino-Japanese have the lowest poverty rates in Table 1. Their relative poverty rate of 7.8 percent is actually lower than the absolute poverty rate for whites. White-Japanese have an absolute poverty rate that is close to whites, but relative poverty is somewhat lower for White-Japanese than for whites.

### Poverty Rates by Race/Ethnicity, Nativity, and Years in the United States

Table 2 further breaks down the poverty rates by: (1) native born, (2) foreign born with a length of stay in the United States that is five years or less, and (3) foreign born with more than five years of time spent in the United States. The differentials are shown for each of the detailed ethnic groups along with their respective sample sizes.

Substantially higher poverty characterizes persons who are foreign born with a length of stay in the United States that is five years or less. This is especially true in regard to absolute poverty. Among whites as well as among Asians, absolute

## TABLE 2
### Poverty Rates by Race/Ethnicity, Nativity, and Years in the United States

| | Absolute Poverty | Relative Poverty | Sample Size | | Absolute Poverty | Relative Poverty | Sample Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Native-born whites | 0.0875 | 0.1819 | 6,042,453 | Native-born Asians | 0.0985[a] | 0.1907[a] | 122,835 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1774 | 0.3027 | 30,420 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1691[d] | 0.3002[d] | 43,187 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0825 | 0.1803 | 186,557 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0830[g] | 0.1768[g] | 192,294 |
| *Asian Ethnic Group* | | | | *Asian Multiethnic/Multiracial Group* | | | |
| Native Asian Indian | 0.0798[a] | 0.1551[i] | 17,519 | Native black–Asian Indian | 0.1634[a] | 0.2619[c] | 274 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1223[d] | 0.2248[d] | 11,118 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2874 | 0.3748 | 16 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0581[g] | 0.1267[g] | 35,957 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0912 | 0.1655[i] | 200 |
| Native Bangladeshi | 0.3133[a] | 0.4669[a] | 351 | Native black-Chinese | 0.1050 | 0.1975 | 216 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2434 | 0.5767[d] | 273 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.5000 | 0.5000 | 6 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1980[g] | 0.3316[h] | 806 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0588[i] | 0.2059[h] | 88 |
| Native Cambodian | 0.2556[a] | 0.4414[a] | 2,010 | Native black-Filipino | 0.0958 | 0.2523[b] | 781 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1682[d] | 0.3574[d] | 317 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1603 | 0.3846 | 10 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1508[h] | 0.2974 | 3,020 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1899 | 0.3642 | 30 |
| Native Chinese | 0.0998[a] | 0.1809[a] | 26,018 | Native black-Japanese | 0.1413 | 0.2028 | 273 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2068[d] | 0.3640[d] | 9,847 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2994 | 0.2994 | 2 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0976[g] | 0.2018[g] | 48,368 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1038 | 0.1038 | 18 |
| Native Filipino | 0.0603[a] | 0.1265[a] | 21,043 | Native black-Korean | 0.1918[b] | 0.3206[a] | 239 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0981[d] | 0.2053[d] | 7,996 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 1.0000 | 1.0000 | 1 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0406[g] | 0.1019[g] | 37,359 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0461 | 0.0892[i] | 21 |
| Native Hmong | 0.2800[a] | 0.5377[a] | 2,453 | Native Chinese-Filipino | 0.0483[a] | 0.0868[a] | 636 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.5556[d] | 0.7637[d] | 230 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0687[d] | 0.1385[d] | 56 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.2350[g] | 0.4631[g] | 1,757 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0210[g] | 0.0511[g] | 313 |
| Native Indonesian | 0.1156 | 0.2603 | 332 | Native Chinese-Japanese | 0.0457[a] | 0.0809[a] | 802 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2024 | 0.2773[d] | 306 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2283 | 0.2283 | 10 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0889[g] | 0.1908[g] | 917 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0940 | 0.1165[i] | 37 |
| Native Japanese | 0.0508[a] | 0.1081[a] | 15,251 | Native Chinese-Vietnamese | 0.1203 | 0.2388 | 466 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2068[d] | 0.2691[d] | 2,693 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1263 | 0.4360 | 31 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0695[g] | 0.1426[g] | 6,382 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0866[g] | 0.2135[h] | 550 |
| Native Korean | 0.0954[a] | 0.1897[a] | 7,812 | Native Filipino-Japanese | 0.0450[a] | 0.0708[a] | 457 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2134[f] | 0.3529[d] | 4,333 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1101 | 0.1762 | 6 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0863[g] | 0.1846[g] | 20,523 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0292[i] | 0.1673 | 31 |
| Native Laotian | 0.1757[a] | 0.3748[a] | 1,758 | Native white–Asian Indian | 0.1040 | 0.1780 | 1,900 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2355 | 0.3041[e] | 126 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1057 | 0.3630 | 57 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1213[h] | 0.2572[g] | 2,809 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0640[h] | 0.1565[i] | 375 |
| Native Malaysian | 0.0450 | 0.1245 | 59 | Native white-Chinese | 0.0700[b] | 0.1130[a] | 3,963 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1897 | 0.3643[f] | 109 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1018[d] | 0.1637[f] | 79 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0703[i] | 0.1278[g] | 187 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0784 | 0.1570[g] | 299 |
| Native Other Asian | 0.1052 | 0.2400 | 1,937 | Native white-Filipino | 0.0762[a] | 0.1588[a] | 7,490 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2391 | 0.4348 | 851 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1440 | 0.2237 | 54 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1032[g] | 0.2206[g] | 1,928 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0690[g] | 0.1236[g] | 404 |
| Native Pakistani | 0.1575[a] | 0.3022[a] | 1,511 | Native white-Korean | 0.0896 | 0.1664[c] | 2,690 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1839[e] | 0.4102 | 725 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1707[d] | 0.4238[d] | 21 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1126 | 0.2561[h] | 2,784 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1190 | 0.1703 | 225 |
| Native Sri Lankan | 0.0533[a] | 0.1842[c] | 167 | Native white-Japanese | 0.0819[a] | 0.1488[a] | 5,267 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2386 | 0.4861 | 193 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1567 | 0.2433[f] | 28 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0349[g] | 0.0950[g] | 552 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0827 | 0.1705 | 222 |
| Native Thai | 0.1893[c] | 0.2855 | 862 | Native white-Vietnamese | 0.0835[a] | 0.1912[c] | 1,148 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2479 | 0.3475[d] | 601 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.5644 | 0.5644 | 8 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0838[g] | 0.1822[g] | 2,531 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0947 | 0.2000 | 144 |
| Native Vietnamese | 0.1425[a] | 0.2734[a] | 13,441 | | | | |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2068[f] | 0.3952 | 2,757 | | | | |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1199[g] | 0.2464[g] | 22,481 | | | | |

[a] $p < 0.001$ relative to native-born whites.
[b] $p < 0.01$ relative to native-born whites.
[c] $p < 0.05$ relative to native-born whites.
[d] $p < 0.001$ relative to foreign-born whites ≤ 5 years.
[e] $p < 0.01$ relative to foreign-born whites ≤ 5 years.
[f] $p < 0.05$ relative to foreign-born whites ≤ 5 years.
[g] $p < 0.001$ relative to foreign-born whites > 5 years.
[h] $p < 0.01$ relative to foreign-born whites > 5 years.
[i] $p < 0.05$ relative to foreign-born whites > 5 years.

poverty is about twice as high among the foreign born with five or fewer years of stay in the United States compared to the foreign born with more than five years of stay.

Although Table 1 indicated that foreign-born Asians have slightly higher poverty rates than foreign-born whites, Table 2 shows that Asians are no longer disadvantaged after breaking down by those with five or fewer years in the United States versus those with more than five years. The racial differentials in poverty are similar after distinguishing between recent immigrants and those who have been in the United States more than five years. The sample sizes shown in Table 2 also imply that foreign-born Asians are more likely to be recent immigrants than are foreign-born whites (i.e., 18.3 percent vs. 14.0 percent, respectively).

For all of the specific Asian groups (except Bangladeshi), absolute poverty is substantially higher among foreign born with a length of stay that is five or fewer years compared to either the native born or the foreign born with more than five years of stay. In fact, the foreign born with more than five years of stay sometimes have lower poverty rates than the native born (e.g., whites, Asian Indians), although this pattern is likely to be affected by immigration patterns and fertility differentials. Second-generation Asians are often children who are the dependents of immigrant parents (and may have only recently arrived in the United States).

The variability in poverty rates in Table 2 is notable. For example, foreign-born Sri Lankans with more than five years of stay have an extremely low absolute poverty rate of 3.5 percent versus 23.9 percent for foreign-born Sri Lankans with five or fewer years of stay. Foreign-born Japanese with five or fewer years of stay have an absolute poverty rate of 20.7 percent versus 7.0 percent for foreign-born Japanese with more than five years of stay and 5.1 percent for native-born Japanese.

As for multiracial Asians, Table 2 shows that they are mostly native born. For example, the sample size for native-born White-Japanese is 5,267, which constitutes 95.5 percent of this group. Only 4.5 percent of white-Japanese are foreign born. This latter finding seems consistent with the assumption that white-Japanese are less likely to have an immigrant parent and are more likely to have a higher generational status. The absolute poverty rate for white-Japanese is fairly similar to that for native-born whites, but the relative poverty rate is slightly lower for white-Japanese than for whites.

### Poverty Rates for Persons Twenty-Five Years of Age and Older by Race/Ethnicity, Nativity, and Years in the United States

Table 3 is similar to Table 2 except that Table 3 is limited to persons who are at least twenty-five years of age. Thus, Table 3 does not include children and young adults, who are usually dependent on the incomes of their parents. Because children tend to be in larger households and tend to have a parent who must work less in the paid labor force in order to care for them, children tend to have higher poverty rates. Removing children from Table 3 therefore results in poverty rates that are slightly lower in comparison to Table 2.

### TABLE 3

Poverty Rates for Persons Twenty-Five Years of Age and Older by Race/Ethnicity, Nativity, and Years in the United States

| | Absolute Poverty | Relative Poverty | Sample Size | | Absolute Poverty | Relative Poverty | Sample Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Native-born whites | 0.0690 | 0.1564 | 4,286,732 | Native-born Asians | 0.0536[a] | 0.1086[a] | 40,344 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1329 | 0.2503 | 20,080 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1399[d] | 0.2634[d] | 28,456 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0788 | 0.1754 | 172,536 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0762[g] | 0.1670[g] | 173,724 |
| *Asian Ethnic Group* | | | | *Asian Multiethnic/Multiracial Group* | | | |
| Native Asian Indian | 0.0677[a] | 0.1156[a] | 2,595 | Black–Asian Indian | 0.1661[b] | 0.2276[c] | 77 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0919[d] | 0.1798[d] | 7,965 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0785 | 0.1986 | 11 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0502[g] | 0.1147[g] | 32,316 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0709 | 0.1543 | 182 |
| Native Bangladeshi | 0.3757 | 0.5118 | 14 | Black-Chinese | 0.0938 | 0.1775 | 75 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2599 | 0.5550[d] | 170 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.4752 | 0.4752 | 4 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1872[g] | 0.3274[h] | 674 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0437[i] | 0.2080[i] | 79 |
| Native Cambodian | 0.1757[c] | 0.3049[b] | 92 | Black-Filipino | 0.0984 | 0.2428[c] | 139 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1429 | 0.2876 | 163 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.8772 | 0.8772 | 2 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1432[h] | 0.2900[i] | 2,675 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1826 | 0.4288 | 21 |
| Native Chinese | 0.0515[a] | 0.0941[a] | 8,412 | Black-Japanese | 0.0637 | 0.0747[c] | 95 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1860[f] | 0.3488[e] | 6,263 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0930[g] | 0.1959[g] | 44,312 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0506 | 0.0506[i] | 15 |
| Native Filipino | 0.0452[a] | 0.0961[a] | 7,003 | Black-Korean | 0.0941 | 0.1982 | 72 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0867[d] | 0.1837[d] | 5,297 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0385[g] | 0.0977[g] | 34,393 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0474 | 0.0917 | 20 |
| Native Hmong | 0.1043 | 0.2966[b] | 141 | Chinese-Filipino | 0.0607 | 0.0754[a] | 233 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.3872[d] | 0.6460[d] | 70 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0278[e] | 0.1427[e] | 26 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1997[g] | 0.4347[g] | 1,362 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0141[g] | 0.0384[g] | 267 |
| Native Indonesian | 0.0337 | 0.2419 | 85 | Chinese-Japanese | 0.0413[a] | 0.0988[a] | 329 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1545 | 0.2265[d] | 203 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2988 | 0.2988 | 6 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0802[g] | 0.1767[g] | 827 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0639 | 0.0885[i] | 32 |
| Native Japanese | 0.0415[a] | 0.0935[a] | 12,390 | Chinese-Vietnamese | 0.0552 | 0.2385 | 28 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1441[d] | 0.2098[d] | 1,908 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0898 | 0.2707 | 18 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0621[g] | 0.1365[g] | 6,100 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0764[g] | 0.1993 | 516 |
| Native Korean | 0.0604[a] | 0.1110[a] | 1,826 | Filipino-Japanese | 0.0321[a] | 0.0463[a] | 179 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1997 | 0.3402 | 2,651 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 1 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0812[g] | 0.1805[g] | 17,696 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0332 | 0.1303[h] | 27 |
| Native Laotian | 0.0602 | 0.1743 | 105 | White–Asian Indian | 0.1360 | 0.2330 | 581 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1953 | 0.2295[f] | 74 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0905 | 0.3233 | 31 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1192[i] | 0.2488[h] | 2,552 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0737[h] | 0.1683 | 323 |
| Native Malaysian | 0.1197 | 0.1197 | 13 | White-Chinese | 0.0838 | 0.1452 | 802 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0888 | 0.3008[e] | 65 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1038[d] | 0.2559 | 27 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0685[i] | 0.1269[h] | 182 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0832 | 0.1720 | 240 |
| Native Other Asian | 0.0844 | 0.1641 | 433 | White-Filipino | 0.0678[a] | 0.1473[a] | 1,760 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2284[f] | 0.4092 | 529 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0614 | 0.1228 | 29 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0927[g] | 0.2019[g] | 1,690 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0567[g] | 0.1086[g] | 355 |
| Native Pakistani | 0.0395 | 0.0930[c] | 127 | White-Korean | 0.0682 | 0.1360[c] | 566 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1310[f] | 0.3282 | 398 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.0514 | 0.4346 | 7 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1009[i] | 0.2311[g] | 2,299 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0910 | 0.1422 | 185 |
| Native Sri Lankan | 0.0941 | 0.1749 | 18 | White-Japanese | 0.0727[b] | 0.1373[a] | 1,789 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.2101 | 0.4524[f] | 135 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1502 | 0.2802 | 16 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0281[g] | 0.0916[g] | 492 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0842 | 0.1834 | 193 |
| Native Thai | 0.1601[a] | 0.2288 | 267 | White-Vietnamese | 0.0723 | 0.1661 | 199 |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1618 | 0.2644[d] | 419 | Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.3716 | 0.3716 | 7 |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0747[g] | 0.1649[g] | 2,373 | Foreign born > 5 years | 0.0617 | 0.1733 | 125 |
| Native Vietnamese | 0.0739 | 0.1585[b] | 3,201 | | | | |
| Foreign born ≤ 5 years | 0.1794 | 0.3599 | 1,710 | | | | |
| Foreign born > 5 years | 0.1078[g] | 0.2282[g] | 20,210 | | | | |

[a] $p < 0.001$ relative to native-born whites age ≥ 25.
[b] $p < 0.01$ relative to native-born whites age ≥ 25.
[c] $p < 0.05$ relative to native-born whites age ≥ 25.
[d] $p < 0.001$ relative to foreign-born whites age ≥ 25, in the United States ≤ 5 years.
[e] $p < 0.01$ relative to foreign-born whites age ≥ 25, in the United States ≤ 5 years.
[f] $p < 0.05$ relative to foreign-born whites age ≥ 25, in the United States ≤ 5 years.
[g] $p < 0.001$ relative to foreign-born whites age ≥ 25, in the United States > 5 years.
[h] $p < 0.01$ relative to foreign-born whites age ≥ 25, in the United States > 5 years.
[i] $p < 0.05$ relative to foreign-born whites age ≥ 25, in the United States > 5 years.

In Table 1, we found that, as a group, native-born Asian-Americans twenty-five years of age and older have lower poverty rates than whites. Table 3 shows that this pattern is also evident for several ethnic groups but not all of them. In terms of relative poverty, native-born adult whites have a higher rate than do comparable Asian Indians, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Pakistani. Groups that have higher relative poverty than whites include Cambodian and Hmong. Compared to native-born adult whites, the level of relative poverty is very similar to Vietnamese and not statistically different from the relative poverty of Bangladeshi, Indonesians, Laotians, Malaysians, Sri Lankans, Thai, and Other Asians (although some of these latter groups have low sample sizes). In regard to native-born white-Japanese twenty-five years of age and older, their poverty rates are similar to comparable whites (i.e., slightly higher in terms of absolute poverty and slightly lower in terms of relative poverty).

### Baseline Logistic Regression Models of Absolute Poverty

Table 4 shows the results for logistic regressions of absolute poverty. The reference group is native-born whites. Separate models are estimated for each of the following groups: (1) all Asians, (2) foreign-born Asians, (3) native-born Asians, and (4) native-born Asians who are twenty-five years of age or older.

After controlling for the other independent variables, all Asians have 61.8 percent higher odds of being in absolute poverty. For foreign-born Asians, the odds are 71.6 percent higher. Among native-born Asians, the odds are just 14.2 percent higher. Among native-born Asians who are twenty-five years of age or older, the coefficient is not statistically significant (relative to native-born whites who are twenty-five years of age or older). Among Asians who are not immigrants and who are not dependent upon the incomes of immigrant parents, the chances of being in absolute poverty do not differ from whites net of other basic demographic variables. These results underscore the salience of immigration factors in affecting absolute poverty among Asians.

### Additional Logistic Regression Models of Absolute Poverty

The same logistic regression specification is shown in Table 5, except that in these models the reference group is not native-born whites. In the model for all Asians, the reference group is all whites. Relative to that group, the net effect of being Asian has 33.3 percent higher odds of being in absolute poverty. This finding may be interpreted as indicating the larger proportion of all Asians who are immigrants as compared to all whites.

In the next model for foreign-born Asians, the reference group is foreign-born whites (i.e., rather than all whites or native-born whites). In comparison to foreign-born whites, foreign-born Asians have about 4.2 percent lower odds of being in absolute poverty. In other words, to the extent that whites are immigrants (rather than native born), they too have at least as much (if not a little bit more) absolute poverty as do immigrant Asians net of other basic demographic characteristics.

TABLE 4

Baseline Logistic Regression Models of Absolute Poverty

| Racial/Ethnic Group | All Asians (1) Odds Ratio | Foreign-Born Asians (2) Odds Ratio | Native-Born Asians (3) Odds Ratio | Native-Born Asians Age ≥ 25 (4) Odds Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All Asians[a] | 1.618*** | | | |
| Foreign-born Asians[a] | | 1.716** | | |
| Native-born Asians[a] | | | 1.142*** | |
| Native-born Asians age ≥ 25[b] | | | | 0.945 |
| Age | 0.897*** | 0.898*** | 0.906*** | 0.948*** |
| Age-squared | 1.001*** | 1.001*** | 1.001*** | 1.000*** |
| Male | 0.441*** | 0.440*** | 0.400*** | 0.387*** |
| *Educational attainment* | | | | |
| High school | 0.456*** | 0.457*** | 0.414*** | 0.413*** |
| Some college | 0.373*** | 0.372*** | 0.317*** | 0.288*** |
| Associate degree | 0.239*** | 0.239*** | 0.203*** | 0.202*** |
| College degree | 0.159*** | 0.159*** | 0.123*** | 0.116*** |
| More than college degree | 0.110*** | 0.110*** | 0.085*** | 0.085*** |
| Disability status | 3.806*** | 3.810*** | 3.712*** | 3.692*** |
| Metropolitan area | 0.905*** | 0.904*** | 0.919*** | 0.914*** |
| *Region* | | | | |
| South | 1.052*** | 1.044*** | 1.157*** | 1.132*** |
| Midwest | 0.997 | 0.989 | 1.001 | 0.969*** |
| Northeast | 0.940*** | 0.931*** | 0.986 | 0.962*** |
| In the U.S. > 5 years | | | | |
| Pseudo-$R^2$ | 0.1403 | 0.1403 | 0.1584 | 0.1493 |

*Note:* Reported odds ratio refers to the anti-log of the estimated coefficient.
[a] The reference category is native-born non-Hispanic whites.
[b] The reference category is native-born non-Hispanic whites age ≥ 25.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

## Logistic Regression Models of Absolute Poverty by Ethnicity

In Table 6, Asians are broken down by their particular ethnic group while the reference category is native-born whites. For almost all of the ethnic groups, the odds of being in absolute poverty are substantially higher. In regard to this outcome, these results suggest that the significance of being foreign born applies to almost all of these groups. The two exceptions in these results are Laotians (whose odds are not different from whites) and Filipinos (whose odds are slightly lower than whites).

The next model in Table 6 includes only native-born Asians, with the reference category being native-born whites. The estimated odds vary considerably across

**TABLE 5**

Additional Logistic Regression Models of Absolute
Poverty

| Racial/Ethnic Group | All Asians (1) Odds Ratio | Foreign-Born Asians (2) Odds Ratio |
|---|---|---|
| All Asians[a] | 1.333*** | |
| Foreign-born Asians[b] | | 0.958** |
| Age | 0.909*** | 0.925*** |
| Age-squared | 1.001*** | 1.001*** |
| Male | 0.416*** | 0.511*** |
| *Educational attainment* | | |
| High school | 0.417*** | 0.542*** |
| Some college | 0.315*** | 0.360*** |
| Associate degree | 0.208*** | 0.301*** |
| College degree | 0.131*** | 0.235*** |
| More than college degree | 0.093*** | 0.160*** |
| Disability status | 3.541*** | 2.586*** |
| Metropolitan area | 0.925*** | 0.915*** |
| *Region* | | |
| South | 1.136*** | 1.167*** |
| Midwest | 0.967*** | 0.952** |
| Northeast | 0.984* | 0.982 |
| In the U.S. > 5 years | | |
| Pseudo-$R^2$ | 0.1499 | 0.1013 |

*Note:* Reported odds ratio refers to the anti-log of the estimated coefficient.
[a] The reference category is all non-Hispanic whites.
[b] The reference category is foreign-born non-Hispanic whites.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

the ethnic groups, in part reflecting the heterogeneity of native-born persons across these groups. For example, the sample sizes given in Tables 2 and 3 imply that 96.0 percent of native-born Bangladeshi are under twenty-five years of age, while only 18.8 percent of native-born Japanese are under twenty-five years of age.

The variability in the native born is reduced in the next model, which includes only native-born Asians who are at least twenty-five years of age. For this model, the reference group is native-born whites who are at least twenty-five years of age. Although several groups had to be deleted from this model due to insufficient sample sizes (i.e., Bangladeshi, Cambodians, Indonesians, Malaysians, and Sri Lankans), most of the other groups do not have statistically significant coefficients, which are also usually fairly close to unity (i.e., Chinese, Hmong, Korean, Laotian, Pakistani, Thai, Vietnamese, and Other Asian). Two groups are less likely

**TABLE 6**

Logistic Regression Models of Absolute Poverty by Ethnicity

| Racial/Ethnic Group | Foreign Born[a] (1) Odds Ratio | Native Born[a] (2) Odds Ratio | Native Born Age ≥25[b] (3) Odds Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|
| Asian Indian | 1.475*** | 1.776*** | 1.453*** |
| Bangladeshi | 4.659*** | 8.577* | |
| Cambodian | 1.722*** | 1.286 | |
| Chinese | 2.166*** | 1.376*** | 1.035 |
| Filipino | 0.915* | 0.898 | 0.746*** |
| Hmong | 2.638*** | 1.357 | 1.107 |
| Indonesian | 2.070*** | 0.842 | |
| Japanese | 1.704*** | 0.838** | 0.790*** |
| Korean | 2.201*** | 1.611*** | 1.056 |
| Laotian | 1.086 | 0.408* | 0.358 |
| Malaysian | 2.368** | | |
| Other Asian | 2.172*** | 1.107 | 1.070 |
| Pakistani | 2.881*** | 2.437** | 1.372 |
| Sri Lankan | 2.067*** | 2.494 | |
| Thai | 1.889*** | 1.331 | 1.623 |
| Vietnamese | 1.708*** | 1.274** | 1.086 |
| Black–Asian Indian | 0.916 | 2.423** | |
| Black-Chinese | | 1.158 | |
| Black-Filipino | | 0.714 | 1.044 |
| Black-Japanese | | 1.569 | |
| Black-Korean | | 1.111 | |
| Chinese-Filipino | 0.676 | 1.379 | 1.659 |
| Chinese-Japanese | | 1.438 | 0.984 |
| Chinese-Vietnamese | 1.212 | 1.480 | |
| Japanese-Filipino | | 0.531 | 0.583 |
| White–Asian Indian | 2.256*** | 1.946*** | 1.736*** |
| White-Chinese | 1.664*** | 1.428* | 1.198 |
| White-Filipino | 1.451*** | 1.075 | 0.988 |
| White-Japanese | 1.442** | 1.208 | 1.104 |
| White-Korean | 1.131 | 0.935 | 0.950 |
| White-Vietnamese | 1.605 | 1.345 | 1.189 |
| Age | 0.898*** | 0.906*** | 0.948*** |
| Age-squared | 1.001*** | 1.001*** | 1.000*** |
| Male | 0.440*** | 0.400*** | 0.387*** |
| *Educational attainment* | | | |
| High school | 0.458*** | 0.414*** | 0.413*** |
| Some college | 0.373*** | 0.317*** | 0.288*** |
| Associate degree | 0.240*** | 0.203*** | 0.202*** |
| College degree | 0.160*** | 0.123*** | 0.116*** |
| More than college degree | 0.109*** | 0.084*** | 0.085*** |
| Disability status | 3.811*** | 3.710*** | 3.691*** |
| Metropolitan area | 0.905*** | 0.919*** | 0.914*** |
| *Region* | | | |
| South | 1.042*** | 1.155*** | 1.131*** |
| Midwest | 0.987 | 1.000 | 0.968*** |
| Northeast | 0.926*** | 0.984* | 0.961*** |
| In the U.S. > 5 years | | | |
| Pseudo-$R^2$ | 0.1408 | 0.1493 | |

*Note:* Reported odds ratio refers to the anti-log of the estimated coefficient.

[a]The reference category is native-born non-Hispanic whites.

[b]The reference category is native-born non-Hispanic whites age ≥ 25.

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

to be in absolute poverty: Japanese (i.e., 21.0 percent lower odds) and Filipino (i.e., 25.4 percent lower odds). Asian Indians are the one group that is more likely to be in absolute poverty (i.e., 45.3 percent higher odds).

In regard to multiracial persons, most of their coefficients are fairly close to unity as well as not statistically significant in the model for native-born adults. For example, the non-significant coefficient for white-Japanese is 1.10. The one multiracial group that has a statistically significant effect is white–Asian Indians, for whom the odds of being in absolute poverty are 74 percent higher.

### Baseline Logistic Regression Models of Relative Poverty

The models in Table 7 parallel those in Table 4, except that in Table 7 the outcome is relative poverty (rather than absolute poverty). The reference group is again native-born whites. After controlling for the other independent variables, all Asians have 62.1 percent higher odds of being in relative poverty (which is the same result as in Table 4). For foreign-born Asians, the odds of being in relative poverty are 80.1 percent higher (which is fairly close to the corresponding result for absolute poverty in Table 4).

One finding that differs slightly from Table 4 is that, for native-born Asians in Table 7, the odds of being in relative poverty are 5.3 percent lower (i.e., not 14.2 percent higher, as is the case for absolute poverty in Table 4) compared to native-born whites. Among native-born Asians who are at least twenty-five years of age, as shown in column 4 of Table 7, the odds of being in relative poverty are 16.6 percent lower than among native-born whites who are at least twenty-five years of age. Thus, native-born Asians seem slightly more successful than comparable whites at avoiding relative poverty (and more so in comparison to absolute poverty).

### Additional Logistic Regression Models of Relative Poverty

In Table 8, the first model for all Asians indicates that they have 33.5 percent higher odds than all whites to be in relative poverty. This estimate is nearly identical to the finding regarding absolute poverty in Table 5. When comparing only foreign-born Asians to only foreign-born whites in the next model in Table 8, however, Asians are 11.0 percent less likely to be in relative poverty. In terms of being in relative poverty, the chances are slightly greater for a foreign-born white than for a foreign-born Asian. This Asian advantage is slightly larger than is the case for absolute poverty in Table 5.

### Logistic Regression Models of Relative Poverty by Ethnicity

In regard to the multivariate estimates of being in relative poverty for the different ethnic groups, the first model in Table 9 indicates that Filipinos are the one group that does not differ from native-born whites. For all of the other Asian groups (including Laotians), the odds are higher. The reasons for the underlying advantage of Filipinos (which was also observed in terms of absolute poverty in Table 6) are unclear, but one factor may perhaps be their more targeted immigration streams

**TABLE 7**
Baseline Logistic Regression Models of Relative Poverty

| Racial/Ethnic Group | All Asians (1) Odds Ratio | Foreign-Born Asians (2) Odds Ratio | Native-Born Asians (3) Odds Ratio | Native-Born Asians Age ≥25 (4) Odds Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All Asians[a] | 1.621*** | | | |
| Foreign-born Asians[a] | | 1.801*** | | |
| Native-born Asians[a] | | | 0.947** | |
| Native-born Asians age ≥ 25[b] | | | | 0.834*** |
| Age | 0.881*** | 0.881*** | 0.885*** | 0.916*** |
| Age-squared | 1.001*** | 1.001*** | 1.001*** | 1.001*** |
| Male | 0.445*** | 0.444*** | 0.410*** | 0.402*** |
| *Educational attainment* | | | | |
| High school | 0.452*** | 0.453*** | 0.418*** | 0.419*** |
| Some college | 0.327*** | 0.327*** | 0.292*** | 0.278*** |
| Associate degree | 0.225*** | 0.225*** | 0.199*** | 0.200*** |
| College degree | 0.131*** | 0.131*** | 0.107*** | 0.104*** |
| More than college degree | 0.086*** | 0.087*** | 0.070*** | 0.071*** |
| Disability status | 3.351*** | 3.356*** | 3.404*** | 3.399*** |
| Metropolitan area | 0.892*** | 0.891*** | 0.903*** | 0.899*** |
| *Region* | | | | |
| South | 1.050*** | 1.040*** | 1.141*** | 1.128*** |
| Midwest | 0.995 | 0.986* | 0.987** | 0.967*** |
| Northeast | 0.925*** | 0.915*** | 0.933*** | 0.923*** |
| In the U.S. > 5 years | | | | |
| Pseudo-$R^2$ | 0.1668 | 0.1672 | 0.1808 | 0.1755 |

*Note:* Reported odds ratio refers to the anti-log of the estimated coefficient.
[a] The reference category is native-born non-Hispanic whites.
[b] The reference category is native-born non-Hispanic whites age ≥ 25.
*$p < .05$; *$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

associated with employment as nurses, which are well-paying jobs in the United States (Bankston 2006). Another possible factor may be greater return migration (i.e., back to the Philippines) among those immigrants who were not successful in the United States.

Among native-born Asians, lower odds of being in relative poverty are evident in Table 9 for Japanese and Filipinos, while higher odds are observed for Asian Indians, Koreans, and Vietnamese. The coefficients are not statistically significant for the other native-born groups. In the next model, where the native born are restricted to those who are at least twenty-five years of age, Japanese, Filipinos, and also Chinese have lower odds of being in relative poverty (compared to whites who are native born and at least twenty-five years of age). Higher odds are statistically significant for Asian Indians and Vietnamese, while the coefficients for all of the other groups are not statistically significant.

**TABLE 8**

Additional Logistic Regression Models
of Relative Poverty

| | All Asians | Foreign-Born Asians |
|---|---|---|
| Racial/Ethnic Group | (1) Odds Ratio | (2) Odds Ratio |
| All Asians[a] | 1.335*** | |
| Foreign-born Asians[b] | | 0.890** |
| Age | 0.893*** | 0.908*** |
| Age-squared | 1.001*** | 1.001*** |
| Male | 0.429*** | 0.576*** |
| *Educational attainment* | | |
| High school | 0.404*** | 0.531*** |
| Some college | 0.278*** | 0.316*** |
| Associate degree | 0.192*** | 0.254*** |
| College degree | 0.110*** | 0.186*** |
| More than college degree | 0.076*** | 0.124*** |
| Disability status | 3.332*** | 2.607*** |
| Metropolitan area | 0.918*** | 0.918*** |
| *Region* | | |
| South | 1.092*** | 1.101*** |
| Midwest | 0.916*** | 0.870*** |
| Northeast | 0.896*** | 0.812*** |
| In the U.S. > 5 years | | |
| Pseudo-$R^2$ | 0.1700 | 0.1304 |

*Note:* Reported odds ratio refers to the anti-log of the estimated coefficient.
[a] The reference category is all non-Hispanic whites.
[b] The reference category is foreign-born non-Hispanic whites.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

For the multiracial groups in the model for native-born adults in Table 9, most of the coefficients are not statistically significant (as was the case for absolute poverty in Table 6). For example, the non-significant coefficient for white-Japanese is .969. However, the two groups that have statistically significant effects are black-Filipinos (who have 72.1 percent higher odds) and white–Asian Indians (who have 49.5 percent higher odds).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our findings are consistent with the general conclusion reached by Lee (1994) about the salience of immigration-related factors in influencing the level of poverty in the Asian-American population. As is the case with whites, foreign-born Asian-Americans have higher poverty rates than native-born Asian Americans,

**TABLE 9**

Logistic Regression Models of Relative Poverty by Ethnicity

| Racial/Ethnic Group | Foreign Born[a] (1) Odds Ratio | Native Born[a] (2) Odds Ratio | Native Born Age ≥ 25[b] (3) Odds Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|
| Asian Indian | 1.538*** | 1.389*** | 1.234* |
| Bangladeshi | 6.372*** | 3.489 | |
| Cambodian | 1.817*** | 1.024 | |
| Chinese | 2.228*** | 0.986 | 0.806*** |
| Filipino | 1.035 | 0.789*** | 0.711*** |
| Hmong | 3.617*** | 1.460 | 1.439 |
| Indonesian | 1.957*** | 0.942 | |
| Japanese | 1.413*** | 0.707*** | 0.682*** |
| Korean | 2.419*** | 1.403*** | 1.075 |
| Laotian | 1.286*** | 0.697 | 0.589 |
| Malaysian | 2.196** | | |
| Other Asian | 2.598*** | 1.164 | 1.132 |
| Pakistani | 3.787*** | 1.661 | 1.321 |
| Sri Lankan | 2.301*** | 1.049 | |
| Thai | 1.863*** | 1.043 | 1.192 |
| Vietnamese | 1.854*** | 1.293*** | 1.169* |
| Black–Asian Indian | 1.036 | 1.499 | |
| Black-Chinese | | 0.443 | |
| Black-Filipino | | 1.162 | 1.721* |
| Black-Japanese | | 0.802 | |
| Black-Korean | | 1.245 | |
| Chinese-Filipino | 0.529 | 0.955 | 1.015 |
| Chinese-Japanese | | 1.209 | 0.974 |
| Chinese-Vietnamese | 1.548** | 1.658 | |
| Japanese-Filipino | | 0.577 | 0.526 |
| White–Asian Indian | 2.025*** | 1.606*** | 1.495** |
| White-Chinese | 1.276 | 1.148 | 0.975 |
| White-Filipino | 1.324** | 0.999 | 0.865 |
| White-Japanese | 1.239* | 1.083 | 0.969 |
| White-Korean | 1.069 | 0.855 | 0.770 |
| White-Vietnamese | 1.174 | 1.071 | 1.155 |
| Age | 0.881*** | 0.885*** | 0.916*** |
| Age-squared | 1.001*** | 1.001*** | 1.001*** |
| Male | 0.443*** | 0.410*** | 0.402*** |
| *Educational attainment* | | | |
| High school | 0.454*** | 0.418*** | 0.419*** |
| Some college | 0.328*** | 0.292*** | 0.278*** |
| Associate degree | 0.226*** | 0.199*** | 0.200*** |
| College degree | 0.132*** | 0.107*** | 0.104*** |
| More than college degree | 0.086*** | 0.070*** | 0.071*** |
| Disability status | 3.356*** | 3.403*** | 3.399*** |
| Metropolitan area | 0.891*** | 0.903*** | 0.899*** |
| *Region* | | | |
| South | 1.037*** | 1.139*** | 1.126*** |
| Midwest | 0.983** | 0.985** | 0.966*** |
| Northeast | 0.910*** | 0.931*** | 0.921*** |
| In the U.S. > 5 years | | | |
| Pseudo-$R^2$ | 0.1677 | 0.1808 | 0.1756 |

*Note:* Reported odds ratio refers to the anti-log of the estimated coefficient.

[a] The reference category is native-born non-Hispanic whites.

[b] The reference category is native-born non-Hispanic whites age ≥ 25.

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

and more recent immigrant Asian-Americans have higher poverty rates than immigrant Asian-Americans who have had more time to adjust to American society. Furthermore, foreign-born Asians are more likely to be recent immigrants than are foreign-born whites. After breaking down by the length of stay in the United States, immigrant Asians are not significantly disadvantaged relative to immigrant whites. In addition, the multivariate analysis (which controls for age, gender, education, disability, region of residence, and metropolitan status) indicates that foreign-born Asians are slightly less likely than foreign-born whites to be in either absolute or relative poverty.

Among native-born adult Asian-Americans (i.e., those who are not dependent on the incomes of immigrant parents), absolute and relative poverty rates are actually lower than among native-born adult whites. In the multivariate analysis, native-born adult Asian-Americans do not differ from native-born adult whites in regard to absolute poverty. In terms of relative poverty, the multivariate results indicate that native-born adult Asian-Americans are actually less likely to be among the "working poor" (which is also consistent with the basic bivariate results shown in Table 1).

These Asian-American advantages relative to demographically comparable whites are consistent with the general interpretation that immigration-related characteristics play a large role in the higher overall poverty rate for Asian-Americans. Immigrants are more likely to have higher poverty rates and Asians are more likely to be immigrants. At least when considered as a general racial category, Asian-Americans do not seem to have any notable minority disadvantage or increased rate of poverty that would appear to be due to racial discrimination per se. We speculate that their "model minority" image may perhaps serve as a symbolic buffer that diffuses efforts to promote the racial exploitation of Asian-Americans.

Significant ethnic differentials do exist, however, within the Asian-American category. The Hmong are consistently the poorest Asian-Americans and have higher poverty rates than whites. Other groups that tend to have notably high levels of poverty include Bangladeshi, Cambodians, and Thai. Although sample sizes are sometimes limited, these groups appear to have higher poverty rates than whites even among native-born adults. On the other hand, Filipino, Japanese, and to some extent Asian Indians have lower poverty rates than whites.

Generalizing, however, about the degree to which the high poverty rates for some of the poorer Asian ethnic groups carry over into the adulthood for their native born is not very clear. As just noted, only limited sample sizes of native-born adults are available for many of these groups given that they are largely post-1965 immigrants. For example, our sample size for native-born adult Bangladeshi is only 14. Particularly in the multivariate analysis of native-born adults (which requires a larger sample size), statistically significant differentials were evident for only three groups (i.e., lower odds for Filipinos and Japanese but higher odds for Asian Indians). Larger sample sizes would have yielded more precise estimates for the other groups.

Furthermore, from a more substantive point of view, more recent immigrant streams may be less selective than older ones. For example, we were surprised to find that native-born adult Laotians do not have particularly high poverty rates. By contrast, poverty among foreign-born Laotians is fairly substantial. This

differential may derive, however, from more middle-class persons being represented in the earliest immigration streams from Laos, although this topic warrants further research.

Perhaps the groups that most clearly stand out as having consistently higher levels of poverty regardless of nativity and age are the Hmong, Cambodians, and Thai. As we have noted, their sample sizes are not that large. However, to the extent that their non-significant net effects are assumed to be accurate and not simply a lack of statistical power, the interpretation of our multivariate results would be that the disadvantages for these groups stem largely from their class-related characteristics. In particular, their low levels of education are a disadvantage that to some extent persists across generations, as is the case for whites as well (Sakamoto and Woo 2007).

In regard to the theoretical views relating to Asian-American poverty, all of the perspectives that we discussed earlier provide some valuable insights. With the possible exception of the racialized hierarchy view, each of the theoretical approaches helps to inform our findings. Our analysis was not designed to focus on testing competing theoretical claims, but our results do permit several basic though important generalizations about fundamental patterns.

In regard to the racialized hierarchy perspective, our findings suggest that poverty among Asian-Americans does not fit neatly into the "majority-minority paradigm" which contends that the key feature of the socioeconomic circumstances of non-white minorities is the disadvantage of systematic racial discrimination perpetuated for the benefit of whites (Sakamoto et al. 2009). Some superficial support for this approach can be found in that the overall poverty rate for Asians is slightly higher than for whites. As we have seen, however, this differential reflects immigration-related factors. Poverty among native-born adult Asian-Americans is not greater than poverty among native-born adult whites, and foreign-born Asian Americans are actually less likely to be poor than comparable foreign-born whites (i.e., in a multivariate context).

In addition, Table 1 shows the great variation across the different Asian ethnic groups. This diversity is inconsistent with the claim that poverty across all of the Asian groups is primarily determined by their supposedly major commonality of being non-white minorities. Tables 2 and 3 further reveal extensive variability by nativity, length of stay in the United States, and age even *within* any given ethnic group. Although white-Asian groups do often have lower poverty rates than other Asians overall, these differentials largely reflect nativity because most multiracial Asians-Americans are native born. Relative to single-race native-born Asian-Americans, poverty is not systematically lower among multiracial Asian-Americans. Black-Asians do tend to have higher poverty rates than whites and other Asian Americans, but this pattern may suggest that the racialized hierarchy view fits blacks better than Asians because the poverty rates of black-Asians are lower than for single-race blacks.

Our findings fit better with the demographic heterogeneity view that emphasizes variation in class resources and competitiveness due to differences in immigration patterns, nativity, generational status, and socioeconomic background. This view is evident in the consistently higher poverty rates among foreign-born adults

than among native-born adults (who are not dependent on immigrant parental incomes). Furthermore, poverty rates are notably higher for recent immigrants than for immigrants who have been in the United States for at least five years. As already mentioned, Tables 2 and 3 often reveal major differentials within specific Asian ethnic groups that underscore the significance of demographic heterogeneity that extends beyond race and ethnicity. Thus, the demographic heterogeneity view fits well with our broader interpretation about the salience of immigration-related factors in affecting the level of poverty among Asian-Americans relative to whites.

Our results also suggest that the traditional assimilation view may still be relevant to some extent in that poverty tends to be lower among native-born adult Asian-Americans and among foreign-born Asian-Americans who have been in the United States for a longer time period (i.e., those who are more likely to have adapted or assimilated to some aspects of American society, such as greater fluency in English). That is, the immigration-related disadvantages that are evident in our results may be interpreted in terms of the traditional assimilation perspective. In addition, white-Japanese (who are presumably higher generation than other Asian-Americans) have patterns of poverty that are fairly similar to those for whites.

The main limitation of the traditional assimilation view is that aspects of segmented assimilation appear to be evident for native-born adult Asian-Americans. The *lower* poverty rate among native-born adult Asian-Americans suggests that second- and third-generation Asian-Americans are to some extent *advantaged* over whites in regard to poverty. This pattern was especially evident in terms of avoiding relative poverty, which is rather high among whites. Traditional assimilation theory generally assumes that socioeconomic disadvantages will "whither away" with assimilation as the endpoint that is represented by a convergence to the rates of whites. Our finding that native-born adult Asian-Americans have lower relative poverty rates than whites—*even after controlling for age and education*—cannot be explained by any of our foregoing theoretical perspectives except segmented assimilation.

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