

# The Racial Heterogeneity Project: Implications for Educational Research, Practice, and Policy



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This report was made possible through generous funding from the ACT Center for Equity in Learning. Central to the collaboration between UCLA's Institute for Immigration, Globalization, and Education (IGE) and the ACT Center for Equity in Learning is the commitment to scholarship that examines racial inequity in education and offers research-based recommendations that address structural barriers to improve educational outcomes. In this report, we were intentional in our exploration of racial heterogeneity across racial groups, in order to shed light on the importance of data practices that represent the wide diversity of America's rapidly changing demography.

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## Foreword

Facts. The population of children in U.S. public schools became majority non-White in 2014, and it is estimated that a child who starts first grade in 2017 will be just 33 years old when the population of the United States becomes majority non-White. According to Census Bureau predictions, our nation's foreign born population will account for almost 20 percent of our population by 2060, when first- and second-generation immigrants will include almost two out of every five Americans.

The children we are educating today will not only define the 21st century, they will also set the stage for what our nation becomes in the 22nd century. Therefore, it's critical that we as a nation consider the long-term effects of these demographic changes in how we educate our students to live and work together, as they will create our shared future.

ACT has been grounded in our nonprofit mission to help all people succeed in education and the workplace since we were founded in 1959. America's population looks different than it did then, and each generation and each passing decade has brought new facets to our nation's struggle to actualize our motto—*e pluribus unum* (out of many, one). As a people, we are more global, more connected, and more diverse than ever before in our nation's history. Global competition requires that we reexamine and change longstanding policies and practices in order to dramatically increase the ways we are preparing a greater number of people for the world of work.

ACT's Center for Equity in Learning supports The Racial Heterogeneity Project at UCLA's Institute for Immigration, Globalization, and Education because we believe that we must understand who we are educating as we seek to evaluate and improve education policy and practice. To that end, we must begin with quality data. Only then can we begin to understand and serve our increasingly diverse population and meet the needs of students and families in ways that respect who they are and what they aspire to achieve.

This report dives into the possibilities and implications that result when racial and ethnic group data is disaggregated to reveal more nuanced patterns that were previously obscured. For instance, the educational experiences and needs of a Cambodian American child may be influenced by different cultural experiences, mores, language, and access to social capital than a Chinese American child—yet the data for both students, both Asian Americans, are classified the same when we look at group averages drawn from aggregated data. The same is true for students of Native American, Pacific Islander, Latino, and Black heritage—and while the aggregation of data can help reveal differences *across* groups, it does so by rendering invisible the important differences that exist for sub-groups that are nested *within* the larger aggregated groups.

Racial heterogeneity is a complex subject and its thoughtful exploration will present both challenges and opportunities. ACT Center for Equity in Learning is proud to support UCLA's Institute for Immigration, Globalization, and Education in advancing its groundbreaking efforts to investigate the value of disaggregating data for the purpose of informing improvements in the practices and policies that impact each student's opportunity to learn and thrive.

Jim Larimore  
Chief Officer  
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*iCount: A Data Quality  
Movement for Asian Americans  
and Pacific Islanders in Higher  
Education (2013)*

Building on the existing body of research on AAPI in education, this report makes a case for an AAPI data quality movement. We demonstrate how and why institutional, state, and federal datasets are a significant issue for the AAPI community, what changes are needed in how data are collected and reported, and the impact more refined data can have for the AAPI community and the institutions that serve them. The focus on the report was threefold: 1) provide an empirical rationale for disaggregated data; 2) provide a case study of a student-initiated data disaggregation movement; and 3) discuss the importance of disaggregated data for Pacific Islander students.

## Preface

As the United States continues to grow and the composition of its population shifts, expanding opportunity and reducing barriers to education must be a national priority. An essential first step toward greater educational equality is a deeper understanding of the fundamental changes in the demographic composition of the nation. Consider, for example, that there are 18.7 million children born to immigrant parents, which represents 25 percent of the U.S. population under the age of 18 and 30 percent of the public school enrollment.<sup>1</sup> By 2050, Whites will comprise under half of the total population.<sup>2</sup> The rapidly changing demography of our nation must be central to how we think about national priorities relative to education, workforce development, labor market participation, and human rights.

An essential task at hand for organizations, institutions, and states is to more accurately capture representations of the increasingly complex population. Current data practices and policies, however, do not reflect the heterogeneity of the nation's populace and have led to the harmful oversight of many underserved groups who are among the most in need of recognition and resources. Concerted efforts to address gaps in data processes are urgently needed to better represent the changing demography, understand the unique needs facing diverse communities, and support overlooked populations who need it most. Though there is growing demand for data reform, there is little research that examines racial heterogeneity specifically, and even fewer efforts have focused on cross-racial collaboration around this shared problem.

In response to the need for closer attention to racial heterogeneity in the field of education, the Institute for Immigration, Globalization, and Education at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), with generous support from the ACT Center for Equity in Learning, initiated the Racial Heterogeneity Project (RHP). This collaborative effort focuses on identifying and targeting attention for equitable access to resources and learning experiences that contribute to improved experiences and outcomes of underrepresented communities, including Black, Latino, Native American, Asian American, and Pacific Islander. There are three primary questions of interest for RHP:

1. How is racial heterogeneity a unique challenge for each racial/ethnic population?
2. How have inaccurate data practices hindered the ability for practitioners and policymakers to understand and respond to the unique needs of each racial/ethnic population?
3. What approaches or strategies should be considered to better support each racial/ethnic population?

In considering and responding to these questions, we assembled a group of scholars and advocates to collaborate in a discussion about this critical and timely issue. As a result of these discussions, this report offers a conceptual lens and actionable steps for organizations, institutions, and states to improve data practices and more accurately capture and represent the nation's racial and ethnic diversity.

## Introduction

The U.S. population is experiencing remarkable change with regard to its composition and heterogeneity. One of the most notable demographic trends in the 21st century is the fact that minority groups will constitute a new majority sometime between now and 2050, by which time Whites will comprise under half of the total population.<sup>3</sup> First- and second-generation immigrants will comprise nearly 40 percent of the population and the Asian American and Latino populations

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will increase by over 100 percent each.<sup>4</sup> Needless to say, the racial and ethnic composition of the nation's demography is rapidly becoming more diverse and increasingly complex.

These demographic changes have a number of implications for organizations, institutions, and government agencies, which in turn intensifies the need for closely examining data practices responsible for the representation of our rapidly changing national demography. In considering how to broach the difficult task of collecting data on complex racial and ethnic identities, for example, it is important to consider if the racial categories that currently exist accurately represent the individuals who fall into those groupings. Put another way, what are the limitations of aggregated data on racial groups, which conceal a great deal of diversity within these groups? It is from this context that we raise the relevance of heterogeneity within racial groups and the need for further consideration of how greater attention to within-group differences for particular racial groups is important for addressing inequality in education.

With the aim of educational equity in mind, the collection of more accurate data informs not only who is attending colleges and universities across the nation; it also opens the door for better understanding student needs and narrowly focusing attention on supporting those needs. Taking this one step further, utilizing data that recognizes racial heterogeneity offers organizations, institutions, and government agencies the opportunity for nuanced conversations about both between-group and within-group variation, which is a pathway to collaboration on cross-cutting issues. Simply stated, better data results in more reflection, greater insight, and increased opportunity for informed decisions to collaboratively support students.

In considering racial heterogeneity as the starting point for stimulating conversations about demographic change and educational equity, this report builds upon the premise of race as a socially and politically constructed concept that is malleable and can fluctuate as it absorbs the circumstances of its time.<sup>5</sup> The concept of race—particularly as it pertains to racial categorization—represents a complex process through which individuals are grouped by the conditions of politicization. As such, it is equally important to understand single racial groups as it is to comprehend the relationship between groups, all of which helps to make sense of the changing demography of students, their families, and the communities where they live. Starting from this premise, it is possible for the Racial Heterogeneity Project (RHP) to closely consider how data practices can represent not only race as a method of categorization, but as a mechanism for capturing the accurate realities of individuals who fall into those categories.

The following themes from prior research are important context for a deeper understanding of the relevance of data disaggregation in education:

- *Race as a social construct.* With regard to racial categorizations, it is important to acknowledge that the concept of race has and will continue to evolve over time, demonstrating the complexity of the term and the varied ways in which its definitions have been used in scientific, social, political, and legal arenas.<sup>6</sup> Thus, there are academic, social, political, and legal factors that shape how racial groups are defined, and these definitions can and do change over time.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, as we acknowledge race as a social construct, we equally recognize that race has material consequences that privilege some, while oppressing others.
- *Student needs and institutional response.* There is a surge of activity to establish a culture of inquiry and decision-making processes in education, which has implications for how we understand and respond to the particular needs of specific student groups.<sup>8</sup> Data on student sub-groups is critical for gauging more accurately who our students are, the

***The Hidden Academic Opportunity Gaps Among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders: What Disaggregated Data Reveals in Washington State (2015)***

Utilizing disaggregated data from the state of Washington, this report offers a more nuanced perspective on the educational realities of AAPI students and reinforces the need for disaggregated data to unmask the hidden opportunity gaps of particular AAPI students in the state. The report aims to demonstrate why and how data disaggregation is a critical tool for closing the academic opportunity gaps through the advancement of equitable educational practices and offers a foundational study on state-level efforts that is the first of its kind to utilize disaggregated data since it was first collected in the state of Washington in 2010.

***The Racial Experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander Students: An Examination of Campus Racial Climate at the University of California, Los Angeles (2016)***

This study shifts attention from the national and state-level foci reported in prior iCount reports to an institutional emphasis, spotlighting the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). This report brings attention to the range of AAPI academic experiences through an examination of AAPI student interactions with the campus environment. Funded by UCLA's Research Initiative for Diversity and Equity (RIDE), this study aligns itself with the program's goal to address and eliminate systemic inequities and structural barriers due to race and ethnicity through innovative approaches to research.

These and other reports can be found on the IGE website at: <http://ige.gseis.ucla.edu>

extent to which institutions are serving these students, and how institutions can adapt to be more effective and efficient with their resources.<sup>9</sup>

- *Intragroup differences in education.* A more nuanced approach to race and ethnic definitions helps to lay the groundwork for a deeper analysis of distinctions that exist between racial sub-groups.<sup>10</sup> Analysis of within-group differences reveals where there are opportunities and challenges that need more attention in education.<sup>11</sup>
- *Disaggregated data as a tool for social justice.* Disaggregated data, both the collection and utility, have been found to be an essential tool for advocacy and social justice, shedding light on ways to mitigate disparities in educational outcomes and improve support for the most marginalized and vulnerable populations. Data disaggregated for individual student sub-groups raises awareness about issues and challenges that impact those sub-groups disproportionately.<sup>12</sup>

## Purpose of the Report

In collaboration with the esteemed RHP scholars, this report offers a conceptual lens and actionable steps for organizations, institutions, and government agencies to improve data practices and more accurately capture the nation's racial and ethnic diversity. By offering data highlights on each racial population and providing specific examples of the relevance of data disaggregation for those communities, this report signifies a critical first step toward examining how the nation's demography can be best represented and the inequities between groups can be better addressed. With these aims in mind, this report focuses on three intents:

1. Raise awareness about the complexity of race and the rapidly changing demography, both of which have important implications for education and addressing inequality,
2. Stimulate the demand for collecting *and* utilizing data disaggregation for all racial groups, with particular attention to opportunities to work collaboratively across and within racial groups to support the unique needs of students, and
3. Advance a call to action for organizations, institutions, and government agencies to commit to the examination of racial heterogeneity, the collection and use of disaggregated data, and collaboration within and between groups.

Through addressing these intents, we shed light on the ways in which education practice and policy can benefit from closer attention to the importance of data disaggregation. We also acknowledge that the practice of data collection and reporting continues to be a push-pull process that reflects the evolving nature of race. As the nation faces even greater racial and ethnic shifts and far deepened complexity, it is exceedingly necessary to examine and implement data methods that can capture these transformations. Racial heterogeneity is no longer a conceptual consideration, but an immediate reality that warrants further investigation.

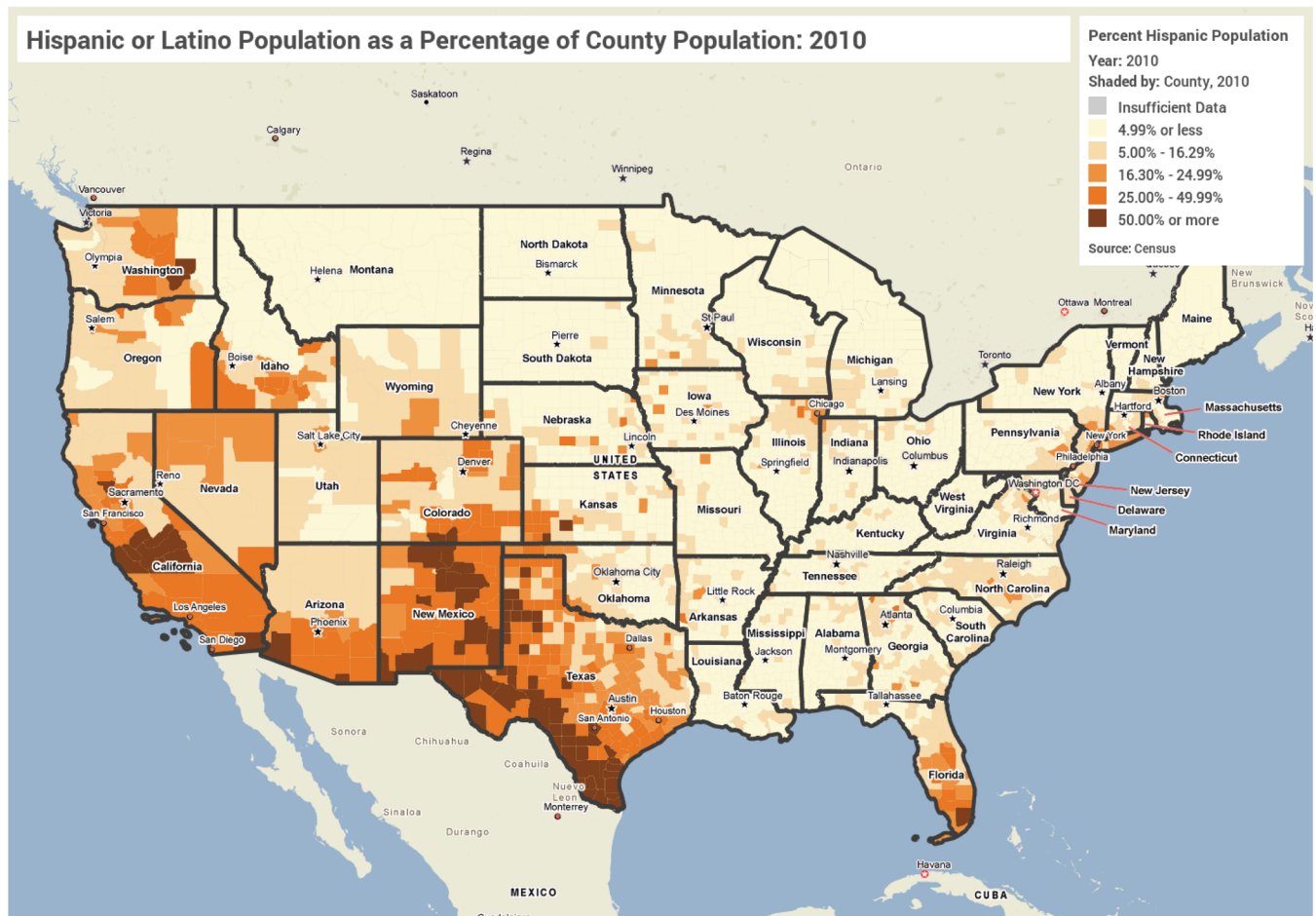
In this report, we will provide insight into the relevance and significance of racial heterogeneity for each of the major racial minority groups—Latinos, Blacks, Native Americans, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. In each section, we will offer a general synopsis of the racial group's population statistics, followed by a deeper dive into the racial category through a disaggregated approach. Next, we turn our attention to why the recognition of racial heterogeneity is important for each group within an educational context by demonstrating how disaggregated data can be used to uncover inequities. Following these sections, we conclude with implications and a number of recommendations for policy and practice.



# Exploring Difference and Diversity in the Racialized Experiences of Latinos: The Complexity of Ethnic Labeling

## The Demography of the Latino Population in the U.S.

As of 2014, there were 55.3 million Latinos, made up of various ethnic groups, which represent 16.3 percent of the U.S. population. Latinos who were once the fastest growing population in the U.S.—surpassed now by the Asian American community—remain the largest racial subgroup in the U.S., and population growth continues to grow at a rate of 2.8 percent.<sup>13</sup> Although the Latino population is generally characterized by rapid population growth and mass migration, recent studies focused on the demography of Latinos find that immigration from Latin American countries and domestic birthrates have actually fallen—an important consideration when examining the changing demography of this racial group.<sup>14</sup> Although immigration rates nationwide have decreased, the Latino population in particular states have increased. Several states where Whites were once the majority now have the designation of majority-minority states—where Latinos have become the majority. These states include: Arizona, California, Florida, New Mexico, Nevada, and Texas (Figure 1)—demographic shifts that are important precisely because of their implications for policies to respond to demographic shifts. Consequently, there has been a rapid growth within the Latino population in certain states that have been described as new Latino destinations such as Nebraska, Kansas, and Georgia (Figure 1) which traditionally have had very small numbers of Latinos.



**Figure 1.** Hispanic Population as a Percentage of County Population, 2010

Source, U.S. Census, 2010

## The Diversity of the Latino Population

The extent to which the racial category, “Latino,” has affected the demographic landscape in the U.S. remains an important and ongoing conversation. Especially significant are the ways through which “Latino” and “Hispanic”—terms that have been used interchangeably and independently—emerged out of historical and politicized contexts.<sup>15</sup> In fact, Latinos are the only group in the U.S. Census to be categorized as an “ethnic group” as opposed to a racial group. The first and only time the Census has categorized Latinos as a racial group was in 1930 when “Mexican” was a racial grouping. The population was not separately counted again until 1970 when they were counted within the “Hispanic” ethnic group.<sup>16</sup> The shifting assignment of the Latino racial category is enveloped in the politicized nature of ethnic labeling and discounts Mexican people who were living in what would eventually be known as the “U.S.” prior to the formalization of the nation.

The term Latino can be thought of as a marker for identity, be used in the sense of membership in a larger community, as well as signal geography; whereas Hispanic can be linked to both identity as well as racial category.<sup>17</sup> An approach to tease out these categories can be found with an ethno-racial framework that acknowledges the long-standing presence of Latinos in the United States and newcomer immigration patterns. Such a framing that captures, “the intersection between ethnicity and immigration is formative for how group identities are created and maintained.”<sup>18</sup> An ethnoracial framing of the complexities found within the term “Latino” then becomes legible in ways that race alone could not account for and demonstrates how Latino and Hispanic are not synonymous categories. Consequently, the terms are employed differently within the U.S. geographic contexts, as one survey study found that Latino participants in California, Texas, Florida, and New York preferred the term “Hispanic” over “Latino” in that specific region.<sup>19</sup>

Data disaggregation (Figure 2) can help unravel the complexity within the two terms and points toward the need for and value of policies that simultaneously define and operationalize terms, especially with regard to labels and identity markers. However, Latino ethnic groups depicted in the Census do not accurately account for the vast diversity of the Latin American countries represented among the Latino population in the U.S. For Latinos, “racial ties reach into all primary racial categories, deriving from a rich and complicated history of colonization, slavery, and labor” and this is why, for example, there are large populations of Afro-Latinos, mestizos, and Asian-Latinos that settled in the U.S. for many generations.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the complicated ways in which “Latino” functions as a racial identity combined with the racial category of “Hispanic” by the U.S. Census encourages further exploration of ethnic labeling and affiliation through data disaggregation.





Source: U.S. Census

**Figure 2.** The Racial and Ethnic Categorization of “Hispanic” by the U.S. Census, 2010

One must ask then: what is lost when Latino is treated as a homogenous group? The category of “Hispanic” emerged in the 1970s and was introduced by the federal Office of Management and Budget. The term was operationalized to refer to: “A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South America or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.”<sup>21</sup>

While much of the discourse concerning Hispanic and Latino is automatically assumed to mean Mexican, this is a misleading and narrow perspective; after all, they are not synonymous although they are used interchangeably. The assumption that the Mexican American experience is *the* definitive Latino experience is inaccurate. This overgeneralization can be problematic for other groups whose experiences differ from Mexican Americans. Recent scholarship moves beyond the salience of “Hispanic” and “Latino” as applied to Mexican Americans.<sup>22</sup>

### Linguistic, Cultural, and Political Diversity

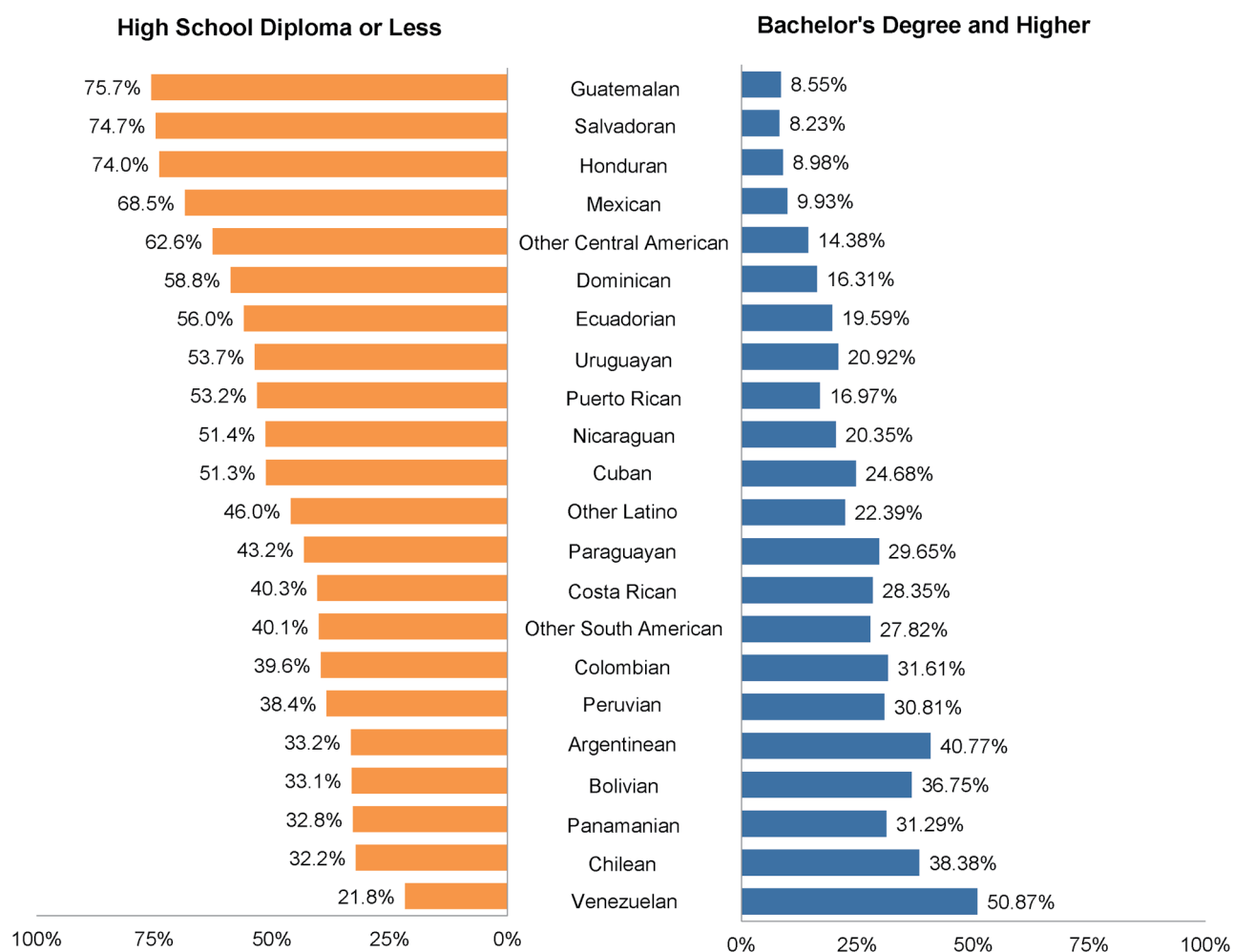
In addition to racial heterogeneity, diversity among Latinos exists across a number of other factors, such as linguistic, cultural, and political diversity. Scholars concerned with investigating how the tenuous and at times competing contexts of citizenship, racialization, language, and immigration affect Latinos have produced a number of interventions to better serve Latinos.<sup>23</sup> More importantly, these approaches reveal the value in engaging with heterogeneity within and beyond race. While the majority of Latino sub-groups are Spanish speaking, linguistic diversity for Latinos can be found in Brazil, for example, with Portuguese and Indigenous and colloquial language usage within each country.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, within the Latino population are U.S. born and naturalized citizens, as well as foreign-born (e.g. born outside of the U.S.) and undocumented, the latter two of which may seek citizenship, although the process can be challenging, unclear, and at times, hostile. In 2013, 35.2 percent of the Latino population was foreign born, signaling the ways in which immigration patterns and their attendant causes and contexts for immigration vary for each racial group.<sup>25</sup> The different experiences among Latino population can partly be explained by one’s immigration status; for instance, between 2000 and 2010, individuals of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent were the majority of Latinos, although now, as they are showing a decrease in numbers, Central Americans, Bolivians, and Venezuelans are increasing in numbers.<sup>26</sup> Skin color is something that also plays a role in Latino experiences in the U.S. where darker skin was a factor in negative self-perceptions and discrimination. Fergus found that among Mexican and Puerto Rican high school students,

there are varying racialized experiences due to skin color.<sup>27</sup> Thus, for Latinos, diversity encompasses a multi-layered complexity that is critical for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to be aware of. Through disaggregation, these nuances emerge and offer insights for understanding the shifting demography of the U.S. and also the ways the Latino population affects those shifts.

## **What Disaggregated Data Tells Us About the Educational Experiences of Latinos**

Disaggregated efforts must take place for Latinos in the educational context as well. The educational experiences of Latinos have been long documented by scholars and have been characterized as underperforming in relation to their White counterparts and/or having high drop out and low college completion rates.<sup>28</sup> Studies whose focus is on the diversity of Latinos, for example on Central Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, Caribbean Americans, and undocumented and/or Indigenous Latinos, provides an important foundation to examine the diversity of Latino ethnic groups.<sup>29</sup> While there exists a solid foundation of educational research concerned with understanding Latinos, it is not explicit how studies regarding Latinos identify different ethnic groups. Current practices regarding data collection and Latinos miss crucial opportunities to learn from the diverse experiences that arise through disaggregation. Simply put, aggregated data in education does not account for difference for individuals and communities.

The value of disaggregating the Latino racial category can be made visible when exploring Latino educational attainment. In fact, in 2011–2013, 73.1 percent of Latinos had a high school degree or less, whereas only 8.5 percent held a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>30</sup> Applying principles of data disaggregation to the group suggests an alternative interpretation. That is, the educational experiences of Latinos are not all similar, as seen in Figure 3. For instance, Guatemalans ages 25 and over are underrepresented in bachelor degree holders but overrepresented in holding a high school diploma or less, compared to Venezuelans. More specifically, 8.6 percent of Guatemalans that are 25 years of age or older hold a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 50.9 percent of Venezuelans. Alternatively, more than two-thirds (75.7%) of Guatemalans hold a high school diploma or less, compared to less than one-quarter (21.8%) of Venezuelans. Such a comparison is offered to demonstrate how within a racial group, nuanced approaches toward disaggregated data yield alternative, and more telling, results. Furthermore, when taking into account degree attainment, there is an uneven representation between Mexicans, Hondurans, and Salvadorans with less than 10 percent holding a bachelor's degree and Venezuelan and Argentineans achieving at a rate four and five times that at 50.9 percent and 40.8 percent, respectively.



Source: ACS, 2011–2013.

**Figure 3.** Educational Attainment among Latinos 25 or older, 2011–2013

***Disaggregated Data Varies Across Contexts: An Example of State Level Policy and Practice.***

The contexts in which data-informed decision-making are made are increasingly important, given that national data are collected differently from state-level data.<sup>31</sup> For example, in-state tuition and access to aid vary by both institutions and states for undocumented students across racial groups, which is true for undocumented students across racial groups. And while policies like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) have provided temporary benefits and relief with accessing higher education, barriers still exist with regards to varying state policies. In this way, data disaggregation supports further understanding the complexities of a racial group, like Latinos, but also points to challenges associated by policy-level variance across states. In addition, it is imperative to understand that not all Latino students are undocumented and not all undocumented students are Latinos; undocumented students are diverse as they come from all regions of the world with their own unique histories, assets, and challenges. Examples then present layered instances for how varying policies must be understood against differing contexts since policies on how to best serve undocumented students varies from state to state.

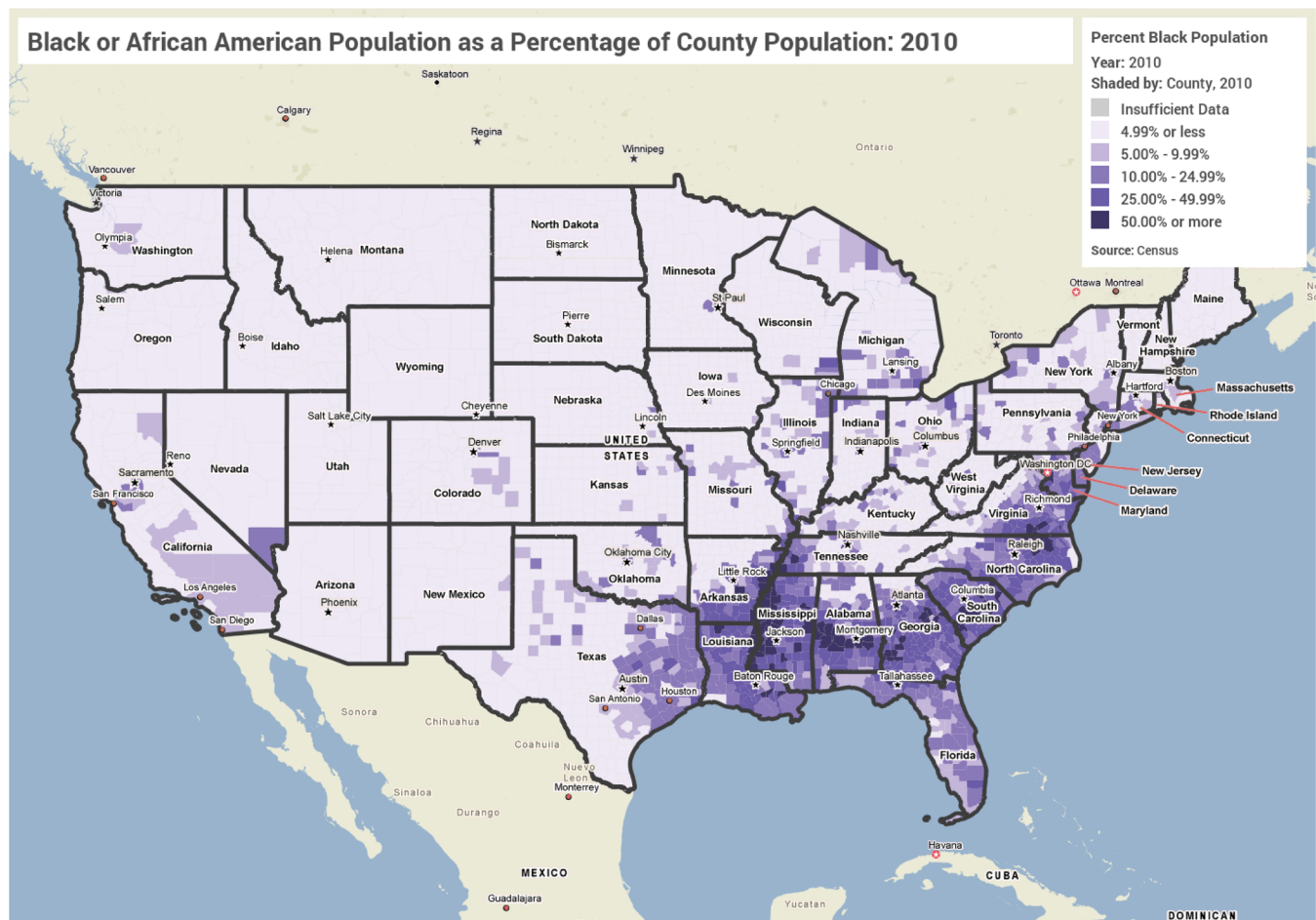
## **Conclusion**

The cultural, linguistic, political diversity, and immigration backgrounds are important factors for understanding and representing the diverse experiences of Latino population. This is even more critical for Latinos in higher education as data reveals their diverse experiences among ethnic groups. Matters of context and the ways in which data can be used to understand and identify efforts in the best interests of Latinos must be pursued, particularly as the population becomes increasingly diverse and ethnic labeling becomes more challenging. The homogenization of this population is a contributing factor in the treatment of the individuals and communities who fall into the racial category. Disaggregation alleviates this and provides focus for policies and interventions designed to better serve a diverse and complicated population like Latinos.

## Don't Forget the "S": Identities, Experiences, and Racial Heterogeneity in the Black Population

### The Demography of the Black Population in the U.S.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, roughly 14 percent of the American population identified as Black or African American. Compared to the previous 2000 Census, the Black population (alone or in-combination) grew by 15 percent, which was a larger and faster population increase than the growth of the total U.S. population.<sup>32</sup> Of the 42 million people who self-identified as Black in 2010, the majority of them (55%) lived in the Southern region of the U.S. (Figure 4), compared to 18 percent in the Midwest, 17 percent in the Northeast, and 10 percent in the West.<sup>33</sup> The states with the highest Black population were New York (3,334,550), Florida (3,200,663), and Texas (3,168,469).<sup>34</sup>



Source: U.S. Census, 2010.

**Figure 4.** Black Population as a Percentage of County Population, 2010

Throughout history, the Black population has been treated as a homogenous, singular group through racial categorization and terminology, with little attention paid to conversations of what it means to be “Black” in America. This has continued despite early sociological work that pointed at the limitations and inaccuracies of the treatment of Blacks as a homogenous group. W. E. B. Du Bois, for example, in the *Philadelphia Negro*, discussed the importance of race,

Undocumented Black Immigrants

Another layer of complexity that the Black population faces is the issue of deportations. Both the Afro-Latino population and other immigrant Black population face the unique challenge of living in fear of deportations. Although the narrative surrounding deportations has largely focused on Mexican immigrants and more recently, non-Black Central American immigrants, the conversation has hardly discussed Black immigrants. The Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI) and the New York University Law School’s Immigration Rights Clinic reported between 2003 and 2015, Black immigrants accounted for 10.6 percent of removal proceedings.

space, and place in the early part of the 20th century. Specifically, he focused his analysis on the distinctions among and between urban Black Americans, which reveals important insight into the social construction of race.

In contemporary education research, there are similar trends in the social construction of the Black student experience. Shaun Harper, for example, points to the fact that while there has been an increase in the number of studies that focus on the experiences of Black students in higher education, there has been little attention to how within-group differences vary with regard to experiences, relationships, and interactions.<sup>35</sup> He states, “the vast majority of this research treats Black collegians as a monolithic or homogeneous group . . . and unique variations within the race are often overlooked at the expense of comparing these students to their White counterparts.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, the treatment of Black students as a homogenous group is further challenged by the normative approach to comparing Blacks against Whites, which masks what we are able to know about the unique needs and experiences of individuals that comprise the Black student population.

The Diversity of the Black Population

Scholars of the Black population have advanced the challenge to interrogate the multitude of Black identities in America and to begin collecting disaggregated data to better understand the nuances within the Black population. One particularly revealing within-group analysis is centered on Black immigrants, who have been overlooked by the predominant narratives of native-born, Black experiences. In placing the realities of native-born Blacks on the entire Black population in America, data has ignored and undermined the diverse histories, identities, and experiences of this heterogeneous group.

The heterogeneity of the Black population is revealed in the unique demography of the immigrant populations. For example, since 1980, the Black immigrant population has experienced a sharp proportional increase from 800,000 to 3.8 million. In fact, from the year 2000 to 2013 alone, the Black immigrant population grew by 137 percent. Additionally, while Black immigrants are making up a larger share of the total Black population, they are also a sizeable proportion of all immigrants (7%). And, even among Black immigrants, there are variations that are notable. Although the majority of Black immigrants in the U.S. are from Africa and the Caribbean, a small but significant number have also immigrated from Europe, Central America, and South America (Table 1).<sup>37</sup> Black immigrants are concentrated in various states across the country, but mostly in the eastern region of the U.S.: Florida (34%), New York (28%), and Washington, D.C. (15%).<sup>38</sup>

Table 1: Nation of Origins and Population Breakdown of Black Immigrants

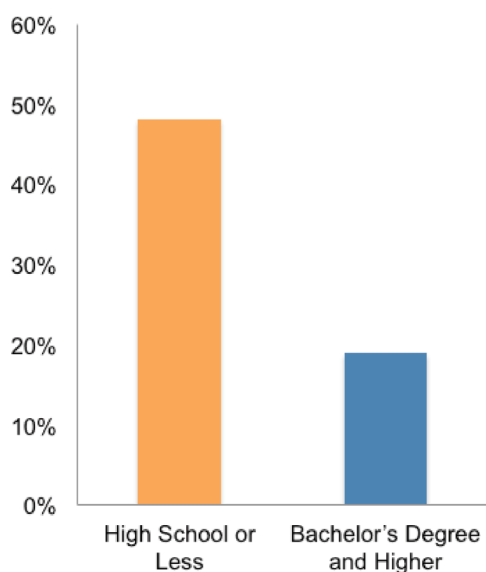
AFRICA			CARIBBEAN		
Nation of Origin	% Black Immigrant Population	Population in Thousands	Nation of Origin	% Black Immigrant Population	Population in Thousands
Nigeria	6%	226	Jamaica	18%	682
Ethiopia	5%	191	Haiti	15%	586
Ghana	4%	147	Trinidad & Tobago	5%	192
Kenya	3%	107	Dominican Republic	4%	161
Liberia	2%	83	Barbados	1%	51

Source: Anderson, M. (2015). A rising share of the US Black population is foreign born. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research

In the native-born and immigrant Black populations alike, there is also a growing number of members that simultaneously identify as Latino. According to the 2010 U.S. Census,<sup>39</sup> Black Latinos, also recognized as Afro-Latinos or Hispanic-Blacks, made up 4.5 percent of the Black population. Similarly, Pew Research Center conducted a study in 2014 with 1,520 self-identified Hispanic adults and found that 24 percent of those surveyed identified as “Afro-Latino” and mostly resided (65%) on the East Coast.<sup>40</sup> The complexity of the racial categorization of the Black Latinos is depicted within this report. For example, Dominicans are often grouped with Latinos, but are often also categorized as Black and/or Caribbean. The Pew Research Center, however, presents an important complication when studying and collecting data on race in the U.S. Of the 24 percent of Latinos who identified as Afro-Latino, only 18 percent of them selected Black as their race. The majority, 39 percent, identified as White, which helps to further emphasize the complexities behind self-identified racial categorization and group membership.<sup>41</sup>

## What Disaggregated Data Tells Us About the Educational Experiences of the Blacks

The 2015 Current Population Survey reveals that 22.5 percent of the Black population, age 25 and older, have a bachelor’s degree or more (Figure 5).<sup>42</sup> However, when the data is disaggregated by “native” and “foreign-born” categories, there are notable differences. While native-born Blacks have a degree attainment rate of 20 percent, foreign-born Blacks have a degree attainment rate of 30 percent.<sup>43</sup>



Source: ACS, 2011–2013.

**Figure 5.** Educational Attainment for Black Population 25 or older, 2011–2013

Further complicating the conversation on Black student experiences is that there is an emerging trend in Black student college enrollment where a significant number of the Black students enrolling in U.S. postsecondary institutions are immigrants or the children of immigrants. Over a quarter (27%) of the Black student population enrolling at the most selective institutions in the U.S. are first- and second-generation immigrants. In the case of Ivy League institutions, well over one-third of the Black student population (40%) are first- and second-generation immigrants as well.<sup>44</sup>

## What Does It Mean to be Black?

Gloria Ladson-Billings highlights the hybridity, complexity, and fluidity of the 21st century Black racial identities in America by presenting the example of the national conversations about whether President Obama was “Black enough” or if he “transcended blackness” with his appointment as Commander-in-Chief.<sup>48</sup> Did President Obama’s White ancestry automatically rid him of his “Blackness”? Did the fact that America elected a Black man as President of the United States mean that as a country it transcended race and racism? These types of questions are important for interrogating Black identities in America. What does it mean “to be Black”? Who “counts” as Black? And, are we really living in a post-racial and/or colorblind society? Ladson-Billings argues that in fact, “Barack Obama was never able to transcend race,” and his presidency and the climate in America was and continues to be filled with racialized tension.<sup>49</sup> The discourse surrounding Black identification extends beyond former President Obama and is further complicated when it is noted that a significant population of the Black community is now composed of Black immigrants and their children, and Black Latinos.



***Dangerous Discourse: African Immigrants as the “New Model Minority”?***

Griffin and George Mwangi highlight that this trend of relatively high enrollment rates for Black immigrant students has caused the media to label Black immigrants and the children-of-immigrants as the “new model minority.”<sup>50</sup> This newly imposed status of the “model minority” is a dangerous assumption because, as it is for Asian American students, the model minority myth assumes that because a relatively small portion of students have successfully gained access to and completed a postsecondary level education, the population in question no longer requires assistance in accessing or navigating higher education. This dangerous myth does not take into account that there are a number of ethnic sub-groups under a single racial category that face different barriers in navigating the educational pipeline. By labeling Black students who are immigrants and children of immigrants as the “new model minority,” it ignores the fact that a majority of these enrolling students are from sub-Saharan African descent, leaving Caribbean, Central American, and South American Black students behind, who have lower rates of enrollment compared to African immigrants.<sup>51</sup> In addition, referring to Black immigrants as “model minorities” can exacerbate tensions with Black Americans, who are often framed as underachievers.

There is scarce literature that contextualizes heterogeneous Black student experiences not only within an education framework, but one of immigration as well. The little research that does exist demonstrates that Black immigrant and native-born Black students, “engage or experience their racial and ethnic identities differently in the same academic context.”<sup>45</sup> This difference is attributed to the fact that Black immigrant students interpret race differently; they have a difficult time adjusting to their new status as a racial minority on a college campus, thus, producing a different college experience than those of native-born Black students.<sup>46</sup> Black immigrant students do not only have to adjust to their new status as a racial minority in the U.S., but also have to deal with xenophobia and racist nativism from their U.S. peers and faculty.<sup>47</sup> In keeping with the need for parsing out the heterogeneity within racial groups, it is equally important in this instance to note that the challenges with adjustment and racial identity primarily apply to first-generation Black immigrant students, and less so to second-generation immigrants. Put another way, there is an additional layer of complexity when considering not only within-group difference across ethnicity, but also across immigration status.

## **Conclusion**

Data disaggregation for the Black population in the U.S. is a tool that would help all who are invested in racial equity to gain a clearer perspective into the issues and challenges that various student sub-groups are experiencing. Data collecting agencies, institutions of higher learning, and otherwise cannot operate under the assumption that all Blacks in the U.S. identify and experience race in the same manner, and therefore will benefit in the same way from the same state, federal, and institutional interventions. Given that experiences differ a great deal between native-born and immigrant Blacks, it would be useful to begin collecting data based on generational-immigration status. Being able to collect data and distinguish between U.S.-born Black, new-immigrants, primary language(s) spoken, and country of origin is a critical first step in recognizing the heterogeneity of this population.

When we take into account that there is no singular Black experience and that “being Black” means different things to different people in varying contexts, we can not only gain a deep understanding of social inequities faced by Black communities, but also create targeted interventions to best assist and alleviate the repercussions of these inequities.

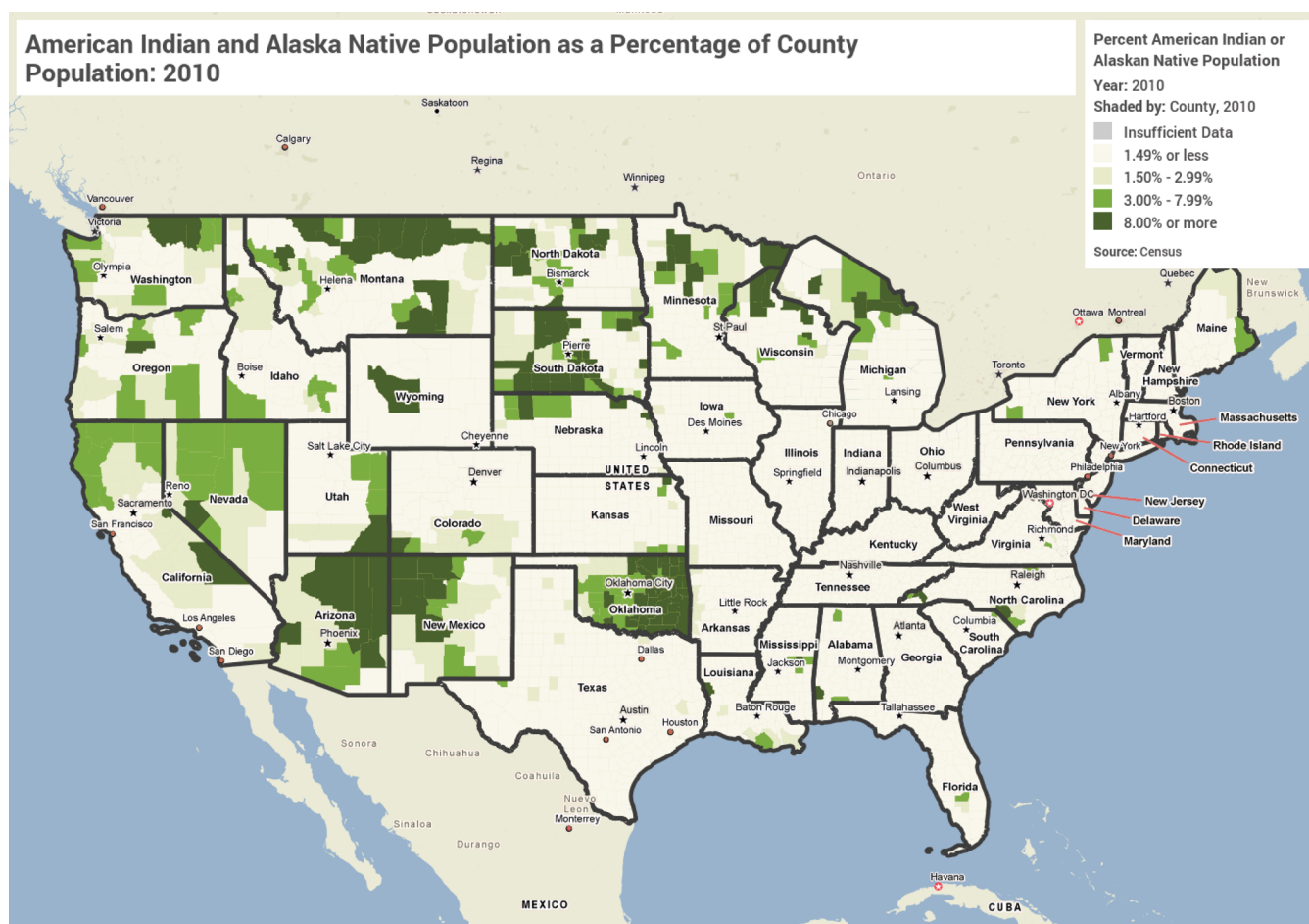


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## **Plural, Not Singular: The Multifaceted Experiences of Native Americans**

### **The Demography of the Native American Population in the U.S.**

According to the 2015 U.S. Census, nearly 6.6 million people—2 percent of the U.S. population—identified as American Indian and/or Alaska Native (AI/AN).<sup>52</sup> It is projected that by 2060, AI/ANs will represent nearly 10.2 million or 2.4 percent of the total U.S. population.<sup>53</sup> It is important to note, however, that numbers reported by the U.S. Census on the Native American population are based on self-identification, which can differ from the demographics based on tribal citizenship, which are determined by the standards of each individual tribe. As such, it is even more critical to deeply examine the complexity of this racial group to better understand what lies beneath the aggregated demographics. One such complexity, for example, is the misconception that Native Americans only reside on reservations when, in fact, the Native American population spans throughout various communities across the nation. As Figure 6 demonstrates, Native Americans live in a diversity of residential contexts, which extend beyond the boundaries of reservations.<sup>54</sup> In fact, nearly 78 percent of AI/ANs live outside of protected AI/AN areas (i.e. federal reservations, off-reservation trust lands, state reservations, and Alaska Native and tribal statistical areas), which reveals that a large proportion of Native Americans reside in urban contexts across the U.S.<sup>55</sup> Of the many locations in which Native people reside, the largest concentrations of AI/AN (alone or in combination) are located in California, Oklahoma, Arizona, Texas, New York, New Mexico, Washington state, North Carolina, Florida, and Michigan (listed in descending order).<sup>56</sup>



Source: U.S. Census, 2010.

**Figure 6.** American Indian/Alaska Native as a Percentage of County Population, 2010

The use of the racial categorization “alone or in combination,” as opposed to only “alone”<sup>1</sup> or “in combination,”<sup>2</sup> has particular salience for the Native American population of whom nearly half reported one or more races—second only to Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders who had the largest proportion of individuals reporting more than one race.<sup>57</sup> In fact, the AI/AN “in combination” population more than doubled the growth rate of the AI/AN “alone” population, indicating how increasingly diverse Native communities are becoming.<sup>58</sup> The collection of these multiple categories of data are critical for the Native American population who continue to be a misunderstood and overlooked demographic due to their small proportional representation in the U.S. population.

In fact, the lack of data prior to the 1890 census—when AI/AN was collected as its own racial category for the first time—has shrouded the vast diversity within the racial group.<sup>59</sup> Over the years, as the Native American population has grown in both proportion and complexity, the need for recognizing the within-group heterogeneity has become more urgent, as their experiences continue to be dismissed in national data sets that influence how schools and

<sup>1</sup> “Alone” refers to respondents who marked only the “American Indian or Alaska Native category”

<sup>2</sup> “In combination” refers to respondents who marked more than one of the six racial categories, including “American Indian or Alaska Native category”

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society perceive Native communities. The ongoing trend is to aggregate or entirely omit Native American experiences due to their population size of two percent of the U.S. population. One approach to addressing this concern is through the use of the “alone or in combination” category, as previously discussed. However, there is far greater diversity that must be captured in order to understand this rapidly changing racial group and the unique barriers they face in being represented.

## **The Diversity of the Native American Population**

Given the use of data in resource allocation, political representation, and policy decisions, the collection of disaggregated data is of great concern for Native American populations. The single racial category of AI/AN represents 567 federally recognized tribes in the U.S., each accounting for a diverse set of histories, languages, cultures, and identities.<sup>60</sup> The U.S. government officially acknowledges federally recognized tribes and sovereign nations; this distinction defines their political ties with the administration. Members of a federally recognized tribe are eligible for dual citizenship in that they are both citizens of their tribal nations and the United States at large.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, federally recognized tribes have access to various federal programs in addition to those offered specifically to Native Americans, such as those offered by the Indian Health Service.<sup>62</sup> Nearly 230 of the current 567 federally recognized tribes are located in Alaska, with the remaining dispersed across 33 other states.

In addition to federally recognized tribes, there are also state recognized tribes, which is an important designation to consider when capturing the diversity that exists among the Native American population.<sup>63</sup> State recognized tribes are designated by their respective state governments, but not officially recognized by the U.S. federal government.<sup>64</sup> For example, Georgia has a number of state recognized tribes, which includes the Cherokee of Georgia Tribal Council—a separate distinction from the Cherokee tribal grouping.<sup>65</sup> These tribes operate differently than those that are federally recognized, as they do not have formal ties with the U.S. government and are thus not afforded the same benefits and resources.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, Native scholars and advocates have argued that the discussion of differences in status is a critical data point with regard to the heterogeneity within the racial group. This is not to imply that a tribe is only considered legitimate if the federal government recognizes it, but it is important to highlight the complexity and the multiple layers that exist when discussing the political status of the diverse experiences of Native Americans in the U.S.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to differences in governmental recognition, Native Americans boast a wide diversity in a number of other aspects of their lives. For example, there are over 200 different Native languages spoken and each tribe has its own linguistic tradition.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, while the word “tribe” is used to describe indigenous groups of people, it does not account for all Native communities. Some indigenous groups and governments are referred to as nations, bands, pueblos, communities, and Native villages.<sup>69</sup> Put together, while the use of aggregated data does acknowledge the similarities across tribal groups, it falls short in recognizing the diversity across individuals, communities, and tribes that make up the AI/AN racial group.

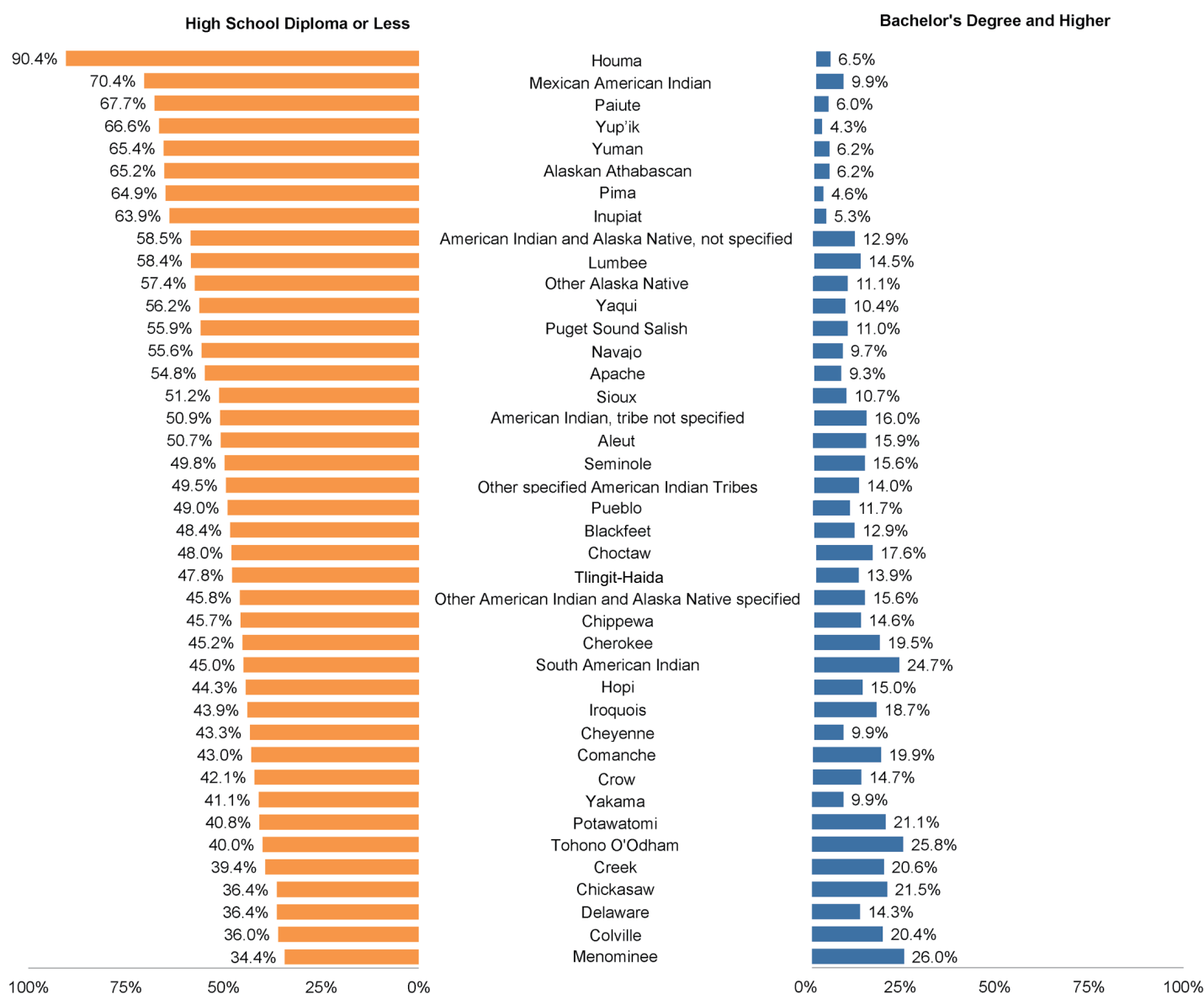
## **What Disaggregated Data Tells Us About the Educational Experiences of Native Americans**

Due to the small population size and lack of data, studies exclude Native Americans from institutional data and reporting, neglect their histories within curriculum, and ignore their

### ***Census Categories***

Since the 2000 U.S. Census, there have been changes to the reporting of tribes, through which various indigenous groups are counted within the Native American population. To account for the great diversity within the racial group, for example, the census has shifted away from the broad “Latin American Indian” grouping to individual tribal categories that better captures racial heterogeneity, as it includes “Central American Indian,” “Mexican American Indian,” “South American Indian,” and “Spanish American Indian.” Given the changes in the categories, the 2010 U.S. Census was able to identify that the Mexican American Indian tribes had the fourth largest Native American population alone or in any combination—a distinction that better captures the nuance within the Native population.<sup>70</sup>

experiences in educational research and literature.<sup>71</sup> When included, the data demonstrates that Native American students are academically falling behind other racial groups.<sup>72</sup> For example, nationally, less than a quarter (22%) of AI/AN aged 25 and older have completed high school, and only 13 percent have completed a bachelor's degree or higher, in comparison to the 29 percent of the total U.S. population.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, the high school graduation rate of AI/AN students is 67 percent, which is the lowest of any other racial/ethnic group across all schools.<sup>74</sup> The most recent Department of Education data reports that the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools are experiencing lower rates of success, as 53 percent of students at BIE schools graduate from high school as compared to 80 percent of high school students nationwide.<sup>75</sup> When disaggregated, however, vast disparities across tribal affiliation are revealed (Figure 7).

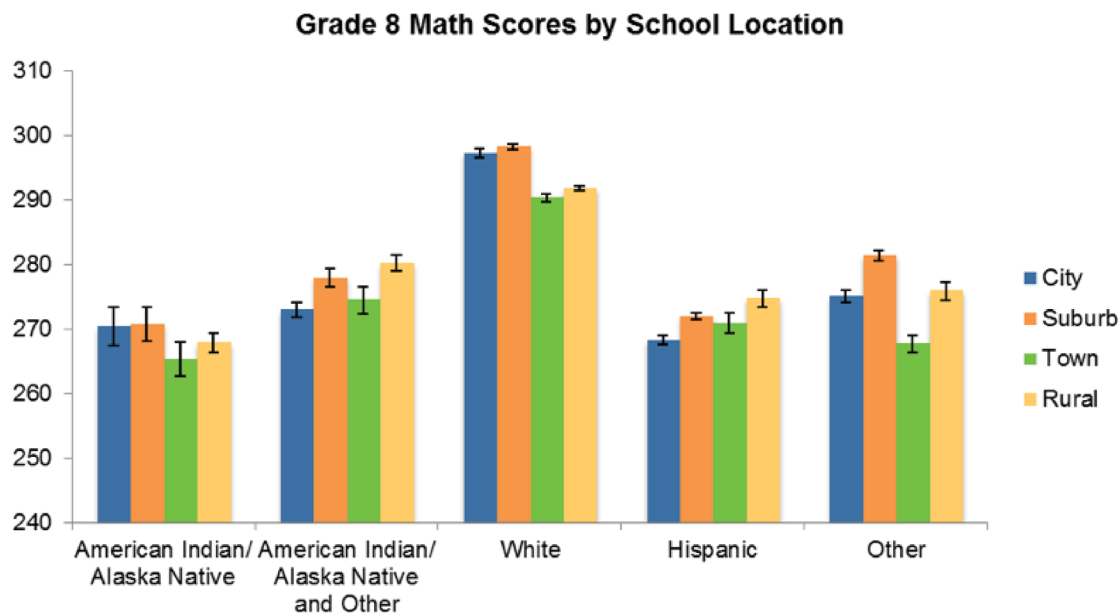


Source: ACS, 2011–2013

**Figure 7.** Educational Attainment among American Indian and Alaskan Native 25 or older, 2011–2013

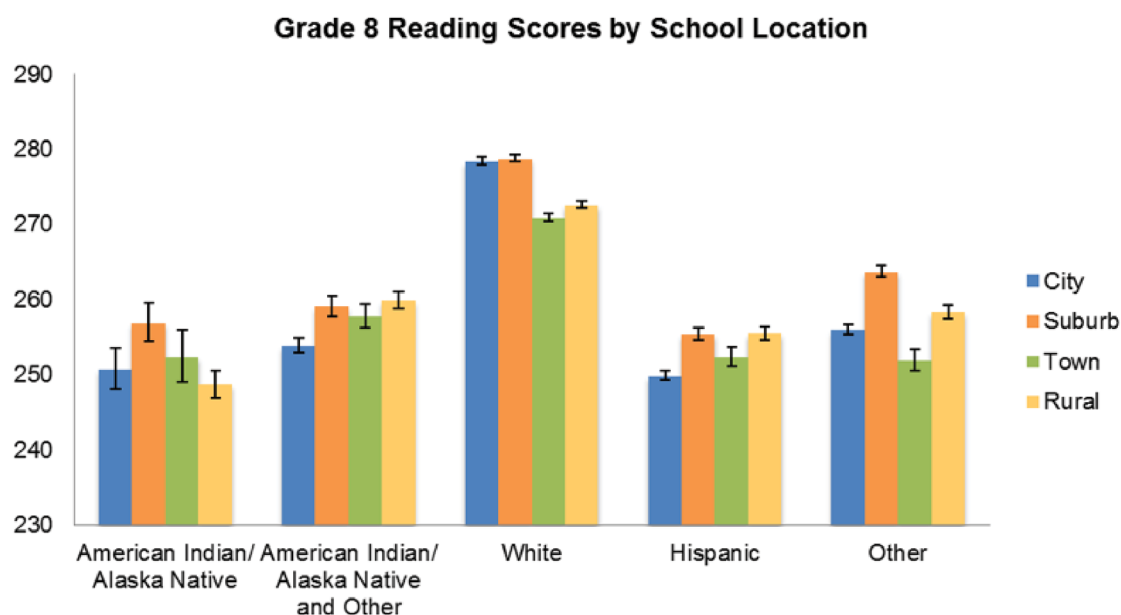
These distinctions in school type are important in the consideration of the heterogeneity within the Native student population, as institutions that are managed by the BIE are underfunded, geographically located in isolated areas, and housed in poor facilities and can largely shape the experiences and outcomes of students.<sup>76</sup> One of the most persistent challenges for Native American students is the insufficient funding of their schools, as nearly 34 percent of the BIE funded schools are in poor condition. Therefore, federally recognized tribes and Native American educators have called for more resources, for not only maintenance in their facilities, but also for the dearth of quality instructional materials needed to serve their student population.<sup>77</sup> This points towards the diverse educational experiences and opportunities that Native students encounter and highlights the need for recognizing the distinctly varied realities of their educational pathways, which help to inform decisions about how to better support their success.

To this point, there is a need for disaggregated data that captures the within- and between-tribe differences in class, geographical location, and other factors to shed light on both the achievements and challenges of Native American individuals and communities. One example of the utility of disaggregated data is through the examination of tests scores among Native students in different school locations (Figure 8).<sup>78</sup> These data demonstrate, for example, that AI/AN students attending schools in the suburbs are more likely to perform better in reading than their peers enrolled in schools in urban cities. This remains true when shifting the demographic to AI/AN alone or in combination, though the overall scores are higher.



Source: Brady, Strong, & Fryberg, 2016.

**Figure 8.** Grade 8 NAEP Math and Reading Scores Disaggregated by School Location, 2011  
*continued*



Source: Brady, Strong, & Fryberg, 2016.

**Figure 8.** Grade 8 NAEP Math and Reading Scores Disaggregated by School Location, 2011  
*continued*

As is the case with this example of school location, other specific aspects of Native students' lives can highlight the disparities in academic outcomes—evidence of the need for further exploring how these distinctions influence the lives of Native communities.<sup>80</sup>

In higher education, specifically, there is a lack of understanding about the Native American student population, as much of the data for Native college students fails to account for tribal affiliation.<sup>81</sup> The importance of disaggregating the Native American student population by tribal affiliation and geographical location is crucial for better understanding the precollege educational experiences of Native students, the cultural and social environments they come from, and opportunities for supporting their postsecondary success.<sup>82</sup> As access to college continues to be a challenge for the AI/AN population, the commitment to acknowledging racial heterogeneity through the use of disaggregated data becomes a critical call for action.

## Conclusion

Aggregate data contributes to the invisibility of Native Americans, which hinders their ability to be represented and to gain access to the support systems and resources needed to improve their academic success and life outcomes. As such, there is a need to acknowledge and be inclusive of the diversity that exists within and between tribes to better understand the Native American population. In addition to their heterogeneity in political status affiliation in the U.S., other aspects of Native Americans' lives such as geographical location, tribal designation, and class status are critical considerations. Data disaggregation can help to

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capture these distinctions, and, more importantly, has the potential to disrupt the dominant deficit perspectives that exist for Native communities. Better representation can also shift the discourse to recognize and include stories of hope and academic excellence that exist within the diverse Native American student experience. Put together, disaggregating data leads to more accurate representations of Native communities and can help strengthen the relationship institutions and organizations have with tribal citizens.

### ***Threats to Identity Safety***

Brady and colleagues illustrate how the aggregation of Native experiences into a singular narrative spotlights the narrow perspective of Native Americans as an academically underperforming group, which fuels deficit perspectives, or the attribution of failure to a cultural group. This monolithic view of the Native population threatens their *identity safety*, which is the belief that one belongs and can be successful in an educational context.<sup>83</sup> Empirical evidence has shown that when identity safety is undermined, students' academic performance declines.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, the need for disaggregated data is significant for Native American students in order to disrupt the negative stereotypes that are reinforced by aggregated data, as it continues to dismiss the diversity among Native American students' academic experiences and performances, and ultimately, undercuts the accurate representation of Native American students and communities.

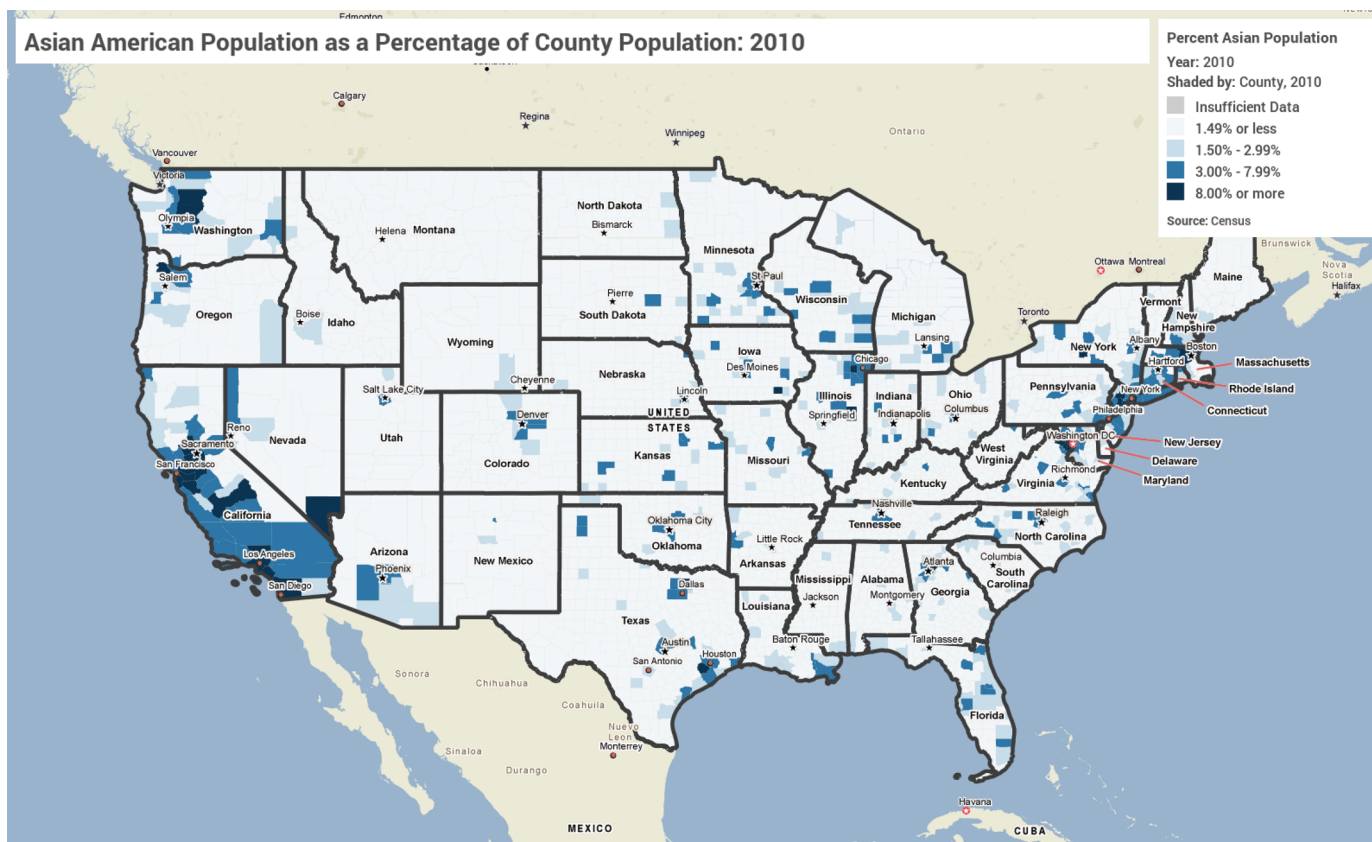


## The Political Ties That Bind Us: The Racial Heterogeneity of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

### The Demography of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Population in the U.S.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) represent over five percent (5.1%) of the total U.S. population and are currently the fastest growing racial group in the United States—a distinction once held by Latinos.<sup>85</sup> From 2010 to 2013, Asian Americans grew by 10 percent and NHPs grew by seven percent, compared to four percent growth among Latinos.<sup>86</sup> The U.S. Census reports that the rapid growth within the population is largely explained by the growing migration from Asian countries and the rise in mixed race ancestry among NHPs.<sup>87</sup>

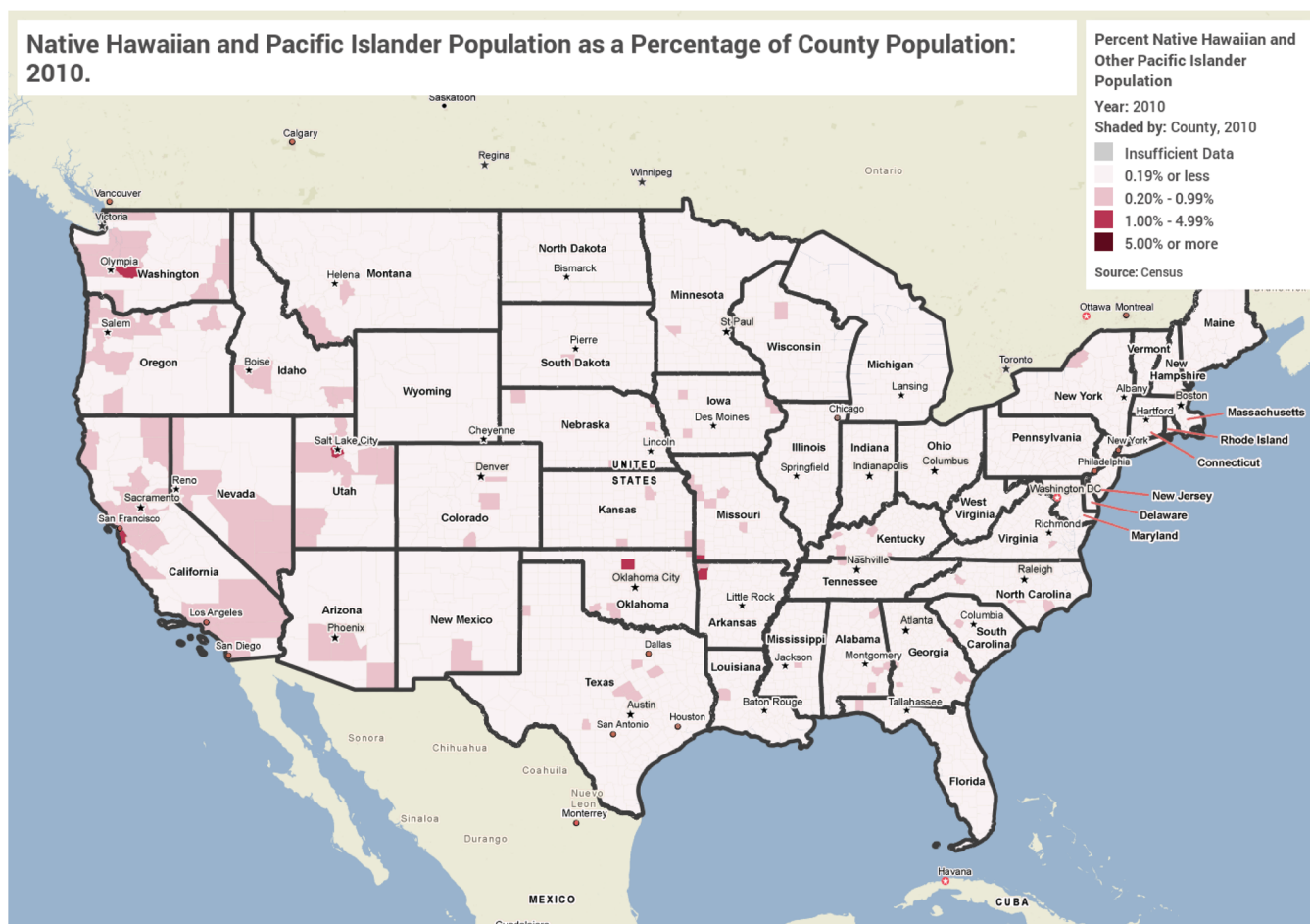
Asian Americans are largely concentrated in California, New York, Texas, New Jersey, and Hawai'i (Figure 9).<sup>88</sup> Similarly, NHPs who represent approximately three percent (3.2%) of the AAPI population and less than one percent (0.2%) of the U.S. population,<sup>89</sup> are also concentrated in particular states—Hawai'i, California, Washington, Texas, and Utah (Figure 10).<sup>90</sup> Although small relative to other racial groups, AAPIs are a rapidly emergent population, particularly within the states where communities are most concentrated.



Source: U.S. Census, 2010.

**Figure 9.** Asian American Population as a Percentage of County Population, 2010





Source: U.S. Census, 2010.

**Figure 10.** Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Population as a Percentage of County Population

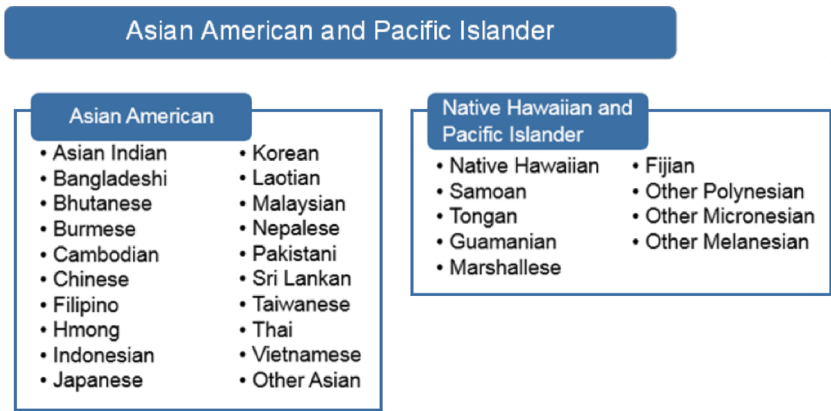
These figures demonstrate a bird's eye view of the AAPI population and do not reflect the vast diversity that exists within each of these clusters. Although typically treated at a monolith, AAPIs are actually *polyethnic*—in terms of ethnic composition, language, culture, immigration (history and status), historical and political ties to the U.S., social status, and educational attainment rates. The vast diversity among AAPIs can be linked to the varying immigration histories of particular ethnic sub-groups, and the subsequent racial and ethnic categorization of those immigrant populations.

The counting of Asian Americans in the U.S. Census, for example, began with “Chinese,” “Japanese,” and “Filipino” in 1870—a mechanism to track those immigrants that the nation sought to keep out.<sup>91</sup> Since that time, the Asian American racial category has changed considerably as evidenced by the growth from ten Asian American and eight NHPI groups in 1990 to 20 Asian American and ten NHPI groups in 2010.<sup>92</sup> The addition of these census ethnic categories has not been enough to respond to the unique needs of the diverse community, as the reporting and utility of racial data remains largely aggregated. This is especially problematic for particular AAPI ethnic subgroups who experience lower levels of educational attainment, higher levels of poverty and low socioeconomic status, and are faced with considerably more

barriers to upward mobility.<sup>93</sup> The aggregation of data has not only overlooked the experiences of these groups, including Southeast Asians (Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, Vietnamese) and Pacific Islanders, it has also hindered their ability to gain access to necessary resources to overcome their circumstance. Being misrepresented by data has served as a particular detriment to NHPs who have fallen under the universal “Asian American and Pacific Islander” joint category until 1997, at which time the two groups were separated by the OMB. In 1997, Hune & Chan offered the first scholarly argument for data disaggregation, calling for the inclusion of AAPI ethnic subgroups in data collecting practices. Following their lead, other AAPI scholars advocated for data disaggregation that acknowledges the heterogeneity that has otherwise been overlooked.<sup>94</sup> The racial heterogeneity movement continues to be vibrant within the AAPI community and is gaining further traction in the education and policy arenas.

The Diversity of the AAPI Population

In order to fully understand the heterogeneity of AAPIs, we must first grapple with the racial categorization of this population and the vastly diverse ethnic populations within this category. There are over 50 ethnic sub-groups within the AAPI category (Figure 11), speaking over 300 different languages.<sup>95</sup> The largest Asian American ethnic groups are Chinese, Asian Indians, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese.<sup>96</sup> Together, these six sub-groups represent 85 percent of the total Asian American population in the U.S. The compositional make-up of each Asian American ethnic sub-group varies drastically; for example, Hmong comprise 1.7 percent of the Asian American population, as compared to Vietnamese that comprise 10.8 percent of the population.<sup>97</sup> The variation within the population has lead to the simultaneous underrepresentation, over-representation, and misrepresentation of various Asian American ethnic sub-groups, together resulting in the oversight of the vastly heterogeneous experiences of Asian Americans.

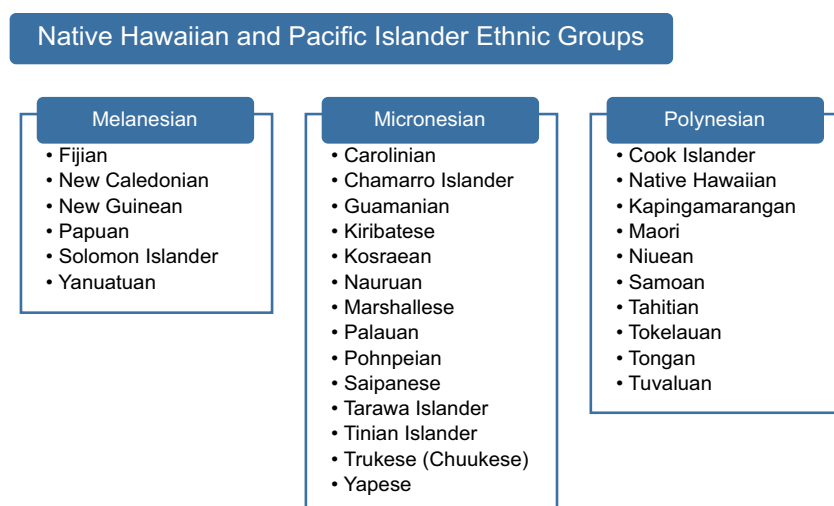


Note: Previously cited in CARE Report; Ethnic categories retrieved from U.S. Census, 2010.

Figure 11. The Racial and Ethnic Categorization of AAPIs

One of the underrepresented and misunderstood AAPI ethnic populations is Pacific Islanders (also known as NHPs). Whether aggregated under the broader AAPI category or with Pacific Islander alone, the categorization of this population includes over 30 distinct ethnic sub-groups representing a wide diversity of cultures, languages, religions, and traditions (see Figure 12).<sup>99</sup> The heterogeneity within the Pacific Islander population is represented in the diversity in compositional makeup. Marshallese, for example, represent 2.63 percent of the

Pacific Islander population, as compared to 32.81 percent of Native Hawaiians—the largest ethnic sub-group within grouping, followed by second largest ethnic sub-group, Samoans (20%).<sup>100</sup> Because NHPs are less than one percent (0.17%) of the total U.S. population, and thus underrepresented, they are neglected, and/or misrepresented in research, policy, and practice discussions. Consequently, this population is rendered invisible, underserved, and under-resourced.<sup>101</sup>



Source: U.S. Census, 2014

**Figure 12.** Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Ethnic Groups

## What Disaggregated Data Tells Us About the Educational Experiences of AAPIs

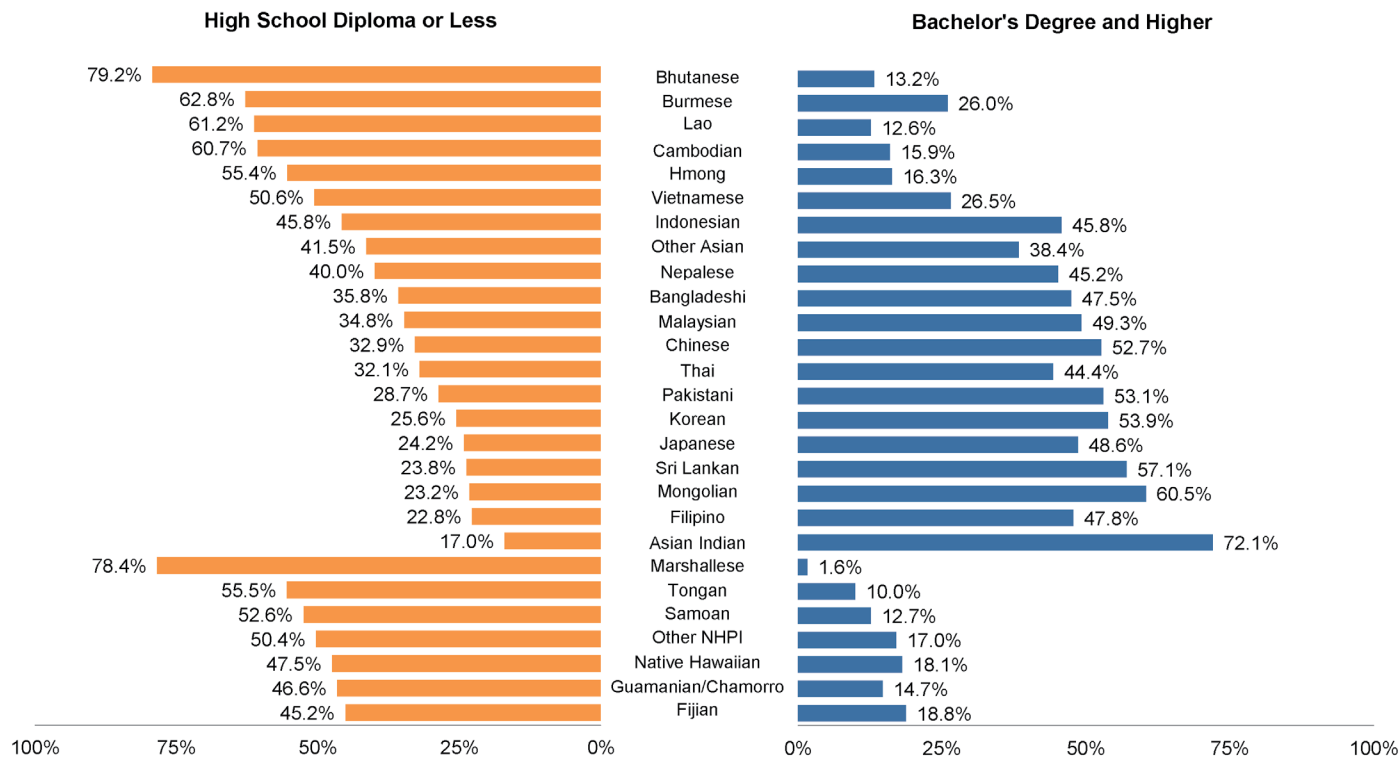
The monolithic view of AAPIs and the lack of disaggregated ethnic data has maintained harmful stereotypes of AAPIs as being universally successful and overrepresented in postsecondary education, wrongfully dismissing the distinct needs of underrepresented AAPI ethnic groups in education policy and practice. Disaggregated data for AAPIs shows the educational disparities that exist within the population. For example, in the aggregate, an estimated 34 percent of the AAPI population has earned a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>103</sup> This statistic conceals that over a third (36%) of the Asian American population has earned a bachelor's degree or higher compared to less than a quarter (9.39%) of the Pacific Islander population.<sup>104</sup> The differences in educational attainment are even greater when the AAPI population is disaggregated further by ethnicity.

Figure 13 reveals that AAPIs fall along the full spectrum of academic success from 12.6 percent of Lao and 13.2 percent of Bhutanese attaining a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 60.5 percent of Mongolians and 72.0 percent of Asian Indians.<sup>105</sup> Among Pacific Islanders that are 25 and older, 78.4 percent of Marshallese, 55.5 percent of Tongans, and 52.6 percent of Samoans have a high school diploma or less.<sup>106</sup> Inversely, only 10.0 percent, 12.0 percent, and 17.0 percent of those populations, respectively, have earned a bachelors degree or higher.<sup>107</sup> Thus, the aggregated educational attainment rate for AAPIs not only masks the educational disparities among individual ethnic subgroups, but also hinders the ability of underrepresented sub-groups to gain access to much needed support and resources.

## *The Influence of Politicized Migration on the Diverse Experiences of AAPIs*

One of the factors that differentiate Pacific Islanders from Asian Americans is Pacific Islanders' political ties to the U.S., which is affected by a history of imperialism, colonialism, and military control.<sup>108</sup> For example, the U.S. has political ties to the Marshall Islands through the Compact of Free Association Migrants (COFA); PIs coming to the U.S. from the Marshall Islands are able to lawfully live and work in the U.S. without any restrictions and are considered "nonimmigrants," but they are neither U.S. citizens nor nationals which affects their opportunities for voting and receiving federal benefits.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, PIs born in Guam are U.S. citizens and thus are able to lawfully work, vote, and have access to all federal benefits.

Asian Americans—who make up 30 percent of the 42.4 million immigrants in the U.S.—also have distinct migration relationships with the nation.<sup>110</sup> The differences in these immigration histories define their political ties and current status with the U.S. Burma, for example, is the top country of origin among all refugees in the U.S. at 26.3 percent in 2015.<sup>111</sup> Also, Asian immigrants are the third largest undocumented population in the U.S. (14% from Asia compared to 56% from Mexico and 15% from Central America) with the largest undocumented Asian groups coming from China, India, and the Philippines.<sup>112</sup>



Source: ACS, 2011–2013.

**Figure 13.** Educational Attainment among AAPIs 25 or older, 2011–2013

## Conclusion

Data disaggregation matters for the AAPI community due to the invisibility and misrepresentation the aggregate data presents for this population. Although aggregate data has the advantage of presenting the AAPI community with a larger sample size, it masks the needs and various identities of ethnic AAPI sub-groups. Historical and political contexts are different for AAPIs; while Pacific Islanders have a long history of colonization and imperialism, Asian Americans have a long history of immigration and exclusion, all of which have shaped the experiences and outcomes of various communities, which is demonstrated in their educational attainment levels. With the unique historical positioning of ethnic AAPI sub-groups, it is imperative to understand the specific context where data disaggregation can accurately embody AAPI narratives, needs, and identities. Thus, in order to battle against misrepresentations of AAPIs, we must continue to make efforts to disaggregate and recognize the unique contexts that exist among ethnic sub-groups.

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## Conclusion and Implications

This report reveals the ways in which aggregated data can provide a misleading statistical portrait of heterogeneous racial groups. This is particularly problematic when it conceals significant disparities in opportunities and outcomes for some particular student sub-groups. This report also provides examples for effectively utilizing disaggregated data and the extent to which it can be a powerful tool for measuring and reporting on the changing demography of particular student groups. This more nuanced perspective on particular student groups is critical for measuring participation and representation in different sectors of education, as well as enabling stakeholders to mitigate disparities and inequality that exist between sub-groups.

There are several implications that emerge from the research in this report. We focus our recommendations around needs assessment, data collection procedures, and data reporting practices.

*A call to action to establish momentum for change.* The civil rights community and other advocacy efforts should be aware of and advocate for a more nuanced perspective of racial minority groups. This is important groundwork for establishing awareness about the unique needs and challenges of particular sub-populations, as well as building a foundation for better data that can reflect the opportunities, experiences, and outcomes of these groups. Washington state is a model for how long-term community engagement and advocacy have led to broad change in both policy and practice, particularly in the form of House Bill 1541, which mandates the disaggregation of data across all racial groups with particular attention to revealing educational opportunity gaps.<sup>119</sup> Initiated by a grassroots community effort to raise awareness about unseen ethnic sub-groups, the persistent activism and coalition building across sectors were the keys to success in Washington state. These actions represent tools for advocacy and opportunities for other states to replicate momentum for change. On the national level, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) advocates across the country took a similar cross-sector approach to push for AAPI data disaggregation by the federal government, resulting in the U.S. Department of Education's "Asian American and Pacific Islander Data Disaggregation Initiative," which provides federal grants for states to pursue opportunities to collect and utilize disaggregated data.<sup>120</sup>

*Better data results in more reflection and better insight.* Data should be collected in a manner that reflects the heterogeneity of different racial populations. This has been an evolving project for the U.S. Census Bureau, which has revealed useful insight from which other government agencies can learn. New data categories that reflect the increasingly diverse national demography will be critical for education policy and practice. The exploration of the new racial category "Middle Eastern or North African" (MENA), for example, reflects the responsiveness of the U.S. Census to capture the changing national demography.<sup>121</sup> On a more specific occasion, the collection of better data can lead to greater understanding of populations served, such as is the case for Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) situated within particular contexts. HSIs located on the U.S.-Mexico border, for example, have extended ethnic-specific services such as bilingual outreach programs to recruit Mexican students from local high schools.<sup>122</sup>

*A call for proof points.* Disaggregated data should be made more widely accessible, and there is a need for effective models for reporting and utilizing these data. Results from

### *Panethnic vs Ethnic Heterogeneity for AAPIs*

Omi and colleagues argued, "Panethnicity and ethnic heterogeneity are not binary choices, but should be understood as different modalities by which the lives, experiences, and identities of [Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders] can be discerned for policy and practice."<sup>113</sup> AAPI have many sub-groups that represent diverse and heterogeneous ethnic groups. Thus, Omi and colleagues argued that instead of gravitating toward one, both panethnicity and heterogeneity concepts can be used to depict the unique positioning and experiences of AAPIs in the U.S.; also, both concepts can help us better understand the specific needs and resources that may be overlooked among AAPI students due to the dominant narrative of model minority myth.<sup>114</sup>

The movement to group Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders into a panethnic category as AAPI was done strategically for political mobilization and coalition building by civil rights activist in the late 1960s.<sup>115</sup> Panethnic categorizing is where ethnic populations group themselves together in order to "achieve social and political goals."<sup>116</sup> However, years later, this aggregate categorization of AAPIs, combined with increasing number of AAPIs, led to the problematic public view of **ALL** AAPIs as "model minorities" and not minorities that face systemic oppression.<sup>117</sup> Scholars have described that "monolithic monotone" conceals each ethnic group's uniqueness and differences that are based on many factors such as ethnicity, class, gender, religion, etc. and is often born out of oppression.<sup>118</sup> Thus, these stereotypes and misrepresentations of AAPI ethnic groups result in inaccurate depiction of the AAPI communities.

studies using disaggregated data should be shared widely to make decisions to show the utility of this data for informing practice, policy, and advocacy, especially for sub-groups that are particularly marginalized and vulnerable. A notable model for the collection and utilization of data is the University of Hawai'i, where data on the Native Hawaiian student population has been used to specify programs to improve graduation rates by six to eight percent—a goal that has been exceeded each year.<sup>123</sup> Other excellent examples of utilization of disaggregated data are featured throughout this report, highlighting the research of RHP scholars such as Brady, Fryberg, and Strong on the differential outcomes of Native students by school location and Griffin and George Mwangi on the educational experiences and outcomes of Black immigrant versus native-born Black students.<sup>124</sup> Outside of education, the utility of disaggregated data has come to the forefront in the health sector, where the disaggregation of Asian American data has been used to shed light on health disparities, such as through the California Health Interview Survey and the National Latino and Asian American Study.<sup>125</sup>



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## Technical Appendix

### Data Sources

Data for this report were drawn from numerous sources. This report primarily utilized disaggregated data from the U.S. Census Bureau on a number of key variables including Educational Attainment and U.S. population by county. Data from the 2010 U.S. Census as well as the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) were used.

#### *2010 U.S. Census—Summary File 1*

The U.S. Census counts every resident in the United States, as required by the Constitution and takes place every 10 years. Although the decennial Census is the most accurate measure of the U.S. population, communities of color, low-income, homeless, and undocumented peoples may not be as accurately counted. Summary File 1 (SF1) is a 100 percent file that contains detailed demographic information collected from all people and households in the United States.

#### *American Community Survey—3-Year Estimates (2011–2013)*

The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing and annual survey that gathers detailed data including educational, employment, housing, and many others. The ACS randomly samples in every state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico and offers data in one-year estimates, three-year estimates, and five-year estimates. We relied on three-year estimates because it contained larger sample sizes for sub-populations. Additionally, we used ACS data in the form of Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files, which are untabulated records about individual people or housing units. By using PUMS files, we created customized tables that disaggregated subgroup data, which is not available through pretabulated ACS data products on the U.S. Census Bureau's website.

### Variables

#### *Educational Attainment*

Educational attainment, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, refers to the highest level of education that an individual (25 years or older) has completed. This is distinct from the level of schooling that an individual is attending. This report utilized educational attainment data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey's 3-Year Estimates, 2011–2013. It should be noted that respondents who received their education outside of the United States may have indicated their education attainment levels with the same categories as those who received their education in the United States.

#### *U.S. Population for Maps*

The maps used in this report were created with PolicyMap, a web-based Geographic Information System application.<sup>126</sup> The 2010 U.S. Census was used to detail racial group population as a percentage of county population.

## Glossary of Concepts and Terms

This report specifically defines the following key concepts and terms in order to accurately describe and explain the complexities and nuances with regards to racial heterogeneity.

### *Race and Racialization*

Race is “a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies,” and while the “concept of race invokes biologically based human characteristics (so-called “phenotypes”), selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always necessarily a social and historical process.”<sup>127</sup>

In addition, racialized or racialization is defined as “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group” or “the process of selection, of imparting social and symbolic meaning to perceived phenotypical differences.”<sup>128</sup>

### *Generational Status*

Generational status, as used in this report, refers to the number of generations a person has been in the United States. Individuals who are classified as (1) first-generation are those who were born outside the United States, (2) second-generation refers to those who were born in the United States, where one or both of their parents were born outside the United States, and (3) third-generation or higher are those who were born in the United States and have parents who were also born in the United States but whose grandparent(s) are foreign-born. Additionally, there are a number of categorizations for generational status between first and second-generations. They include: 1.75 (arriving before age 5), 1.5 (arriving between ages 6 and 12), and 1.25 (arriving after age 12) generation designations.



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