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## PREFACE

**AMERICAN SOCIETY** is at a critical juncture: policy makers, practitioners, families, and individuals are forced to face the urgent issues that result from expanding ethnic diversification and an aging population. In recent years, gerontological research that focuses on ethnic and cultural diversity has been emerging as a discipline with the potential to shape public policies as well as health and social service programs. However, more work needs to be done to formulate precise and effective recommendations.

In the next decade, the Asian American growth rate is projected to outpace that of whites, blacks, Native Americans, and Hispanics. The number and proportion of Asian Americans sixty-five or older will increase at an even faster rate than the Asian American population as a whole. Despite the rapid increase in the Asian American elderly population, empirically based research with this group has been limited, both nationally and regionally. Furthermore, much of the work that has been done assumes that the study subjects are homogeneous, whereas the Asian American population is in fact diverse, representing more than thirty groups with different national origins. The large surveys that place all Asian Americans in a single category do not allow for an understanding of differences based on nationality or ethnicity.

The aim of this book is to provide information on Asian American elders and their quality-of-life issues. We address the void in the existing body of gerontological literature by presenting empirical findings on the key indicators of psychosocial well-being among this population. Our data are based on the U.S. Census 2000 and the Asian American Elders in New York City (AAENYC) Study, 2000, the very first regional probability sample of Asian American elders in the United States. Data on quality-of-life issues of the six

largest groups (Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese) are presented and discussed by addressing their (1) physical health, (2) mental health, (3) acculturation, (4) intergenerational relationships, (5) utilization of social and health services, and (6) productive activities.

The book examines eight areas in the lives of Asian American elders. Chapter 1 presents the historical and sociological background of Asian immigrants to the U.S. The research methodology of the AAENYC Study is discussed in chapter 2, and data from that study is examined in light of the U.S. Census 2000 and the New York City 2000 Census. Chapter 3 looks at the health of Asian American elders and the effects of cultural influences, everyday life stresses, and cultural ways of coping with health-related issues. Mental health indicators are presented in chapter 4, with a focus on depression and life satisfaction. Traditional Asian values regarding family relationships and eldercare, in addition to the extent to which current Asian elders uphold these values, are discussed in chapter 5. Chapter 6 considers the actual state of family relationships and social network support, and examines factors associated with intergenerational exchanges. Utilization of formal services is reviewed in chapter 7, where we also examine help-seeking behaviors and factors associated with the use of community-based, in-home, and health services. Using productive aging as a framework, chapter 8 analyzes factors associated with volunteerism and grandparent caregiving among Asian American elders. In chapter 9 we present the implications of the findings of our study for developing elder-friendly environments responsive to the needs of Asian American elders.

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## **ASIAN AMERICAN ELDERS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

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