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UNDERSTANDING ASIAN AMERICAN ELDERS

Historical, Political, and Sociocultural Contexts

ASIAN AMERICANS ELDERS comprise one of the fastest-growing groups of ethnic elders in the United States. According to the U.S. Census 2000, more than eight hundred thousand Asians aged sixty-five and older reside in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2001). The population of Asian American elders increased by 78 percent between 1990 and 2000, and this number is projected to increase to close to 7 million by 2050 (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics 2004; U.S. Census Bureau 1990, 2000). In contrast to Asian Americans, the non-Hispanic, white elderly population is projected to grow by only 74 percent in the next twenty-five years (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, 2005).

Despite the rapid increase in the Asian American elderly population, empirically based research with this group has been limited on both the national and regional levels. Included among the twenty-four groups of Asian national origin classified in the U.S. Census 2000 are Asian Indian, Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Malaysian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, Thai, and Vietnamese (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). The nationalities that comprise the largest Asian groups, for individuals reporting only one race, are Chinese (25.4%), Filipino (19.3%), and Asian Indian (17.6%) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2001).

The majority of Asian American elders, with the exception of Japanese, were born outside the United States. Table 1.1 presents the demographic characteristics of Asian American elders by nationality, nativity, and year of immigration, based on the U.S. Census 2000. Over 90 percent of the Filipino, Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese elders, and 88 percent of the Chinese elders were born outside the United States. In contrast, only 30 percent of the Japanese

TABLE 1.1 Demographic Characteristics: Asian Population Age 65 and Over, Census 2000

	CHINESE[1]	FILIPINO	INDIAN	JAPANESE	KOREAN	VIETNAMESE	TOTAL
n =	**11,202**	**8,233**	**2,947**	**8,326**	**3,180**	**2,681**	**36,569**
Proportion of Asian elders (%)	30.60	22.5	8.1	22.8	8.7	7.3	
Mean age	74.1	73.9	72.3	74.5	73.1	72.7	73.8
(*SD*)	(6.9)	(6.9)	(6.3)	(6.7)	(6.6)	(6.6)	(6.8)
Age (over 75)[2,****] (%)	41.0	39.9	30.7	35.5	44.7	32.3	39.7
Gender (female)[2,****] (%)	54.1	58.3	50.4	63.9	62.1	51.5	57.5
Foreign-born[2,****] (%)	86.7	91.5	95.7	28.0	93.8	97.4	76.52
U.S. citizen[2,****] (%)	71.5	75.2	50.5	93.0	64.7	59.3	74.0
Arrived after age 60[2,4,****] (%)	34.9	34.7	43.0	5.4	30.2	43.6	34.0
Years in the U.S.[3]	23.6	23.6	17.4	39.7	21.2	14.8	23.2
(*SD*)	(16.4)[a]	(16.7)[a]	(12.3)[b]	(13.9)[c]	(11.5)[d]	(9.6)[e]	(16)
Age at immigration[3]	50.4	50.4	54.8	32.0	51.7	57.8	50.1
(*SD*)	(16.8)[a]	(16.5)[a]	(14.0)[b]	(13.1)[c]	(13.7)[d]	(10.8)[e]	(16.5)

Note: Figures reflect analyses of Census 2000 PUMS data, 5% file, extracted from IPUMS-USA (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series –USA). ANOVA statistics with Tukey's post hoc multiple comparisons were used to test the differences among means.

[1] Chinese include Taiwanese.
[2] Chi-square statistics were used.
[3] Excludes those married, with spouse not present.
[4] Calculated for foreign-born population, $n = 27{,}761$.
[*] $p < .05$.
[****] $p < .0001$.

[a, b, c, d, e] Means with the different letters are significantly different at less than the .05 level in the same variable.

elders were born in the United States. A typical immigrant in the United States arrives before reaching middle age, attracted largely by better employment opportunities than are available in the home country. Many Asian elders, however, immigrated after age sixty to live with their adult children. For example, more than 30 percent of Chinese, Korean, and Filipino elders and close to 43 percent of Indian and Vietnamese elders immigrated after age sixty (U.S. Census Bureau 2001).

Asian immigrants in the U.S. are often categorized as Asian and Pacific Islanders (API). However, following the U.S. Census 2000, which presented "Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders" as separate racial categories, we use the term "Asian American" in this book. The term "Asian American" was coined in the 1960s by the late historian and social activist Yuji Ichioka during an era when Asians, influenced by the Civil Rights movement, came together to resist discrimination and oppression (Zhou and Lee, 2004). In contrast to the word "Oriental," which carries derogatory connotations having been imposed in the late 1800s by those in power to discriminate against Asians, the term "Asian American," chosen by Asian Americans, is a neutral expression that acknowledges the hybrid nature of the group it designates. Using the term "Asian American" as a racial category is significant because race has a profound impact on the lives of ethnic elders and their families in the United States. As Thomas contends, ignoring race minimizes the consequences of racism on physical and mental health (Thomas 2001).

Though the term "Asian American" is important sociopolitically, the term should not be taken to deny the heterogeneity of Asian Americans based on national origin, social class, and gender (Lowe 1991). Variations exist even within the many national groups. The majority of Chinese elders are from the People's Republic of China (PRC) or Taiwan and speak Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese, and dialects such as Toishanese and Fujianese. A sizable number that come from Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Singapore, and Vietnam are ethnically Chinese. As is well known, Indian elders represent a highly diversified nation with at least six different major ethnic groups, thirty-three languages (Das 2002), and many religions including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Janism, Judaism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism (Rastogi and Wadhwa, 2006). Filipino elders come from an archipelago made up of seven thousand islands with 150 different languages (Tucker 1998). Frequently, however, elders from Southeast Asia are grouped in one category when the reality is that, although Cambodians, Laotians, Hmongs, and Vietnamese, for example, share national boundaries, historically Vietnam was heavily influenced by China and Mahayana Buddhism, and the cultures of Laos and Cambodia were influenced by Hinduism and Theravada Buddhism (Jenkins et al. 1996). Moreover, not all Asian immigrants come directly from their home countries to the United States. For instance, according to Park (1997), more than forty-thousand Koreans who originally immigrated to countries in South America have moved to the United States.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ASIANS IN THE UNITED STATES

PRE-1965 IMMIGRANTS

The current demographic characteristics of Asian American elders are strongly associated with U.S. immigration policies. The first Asian immigrants to arrive in the United States came from China, the Philippines, Korea, India, and Japan starting in the mid-1800s through the early 1900s. The majority came in response to labor demands (Segal 2002). Many Chinese Americans worked in the gold mines, and others were recruited as laborers on the transcontinental railroad. Japanese and Koreans first migrated to Hawaii to work on plantations and then moved to the West Coast (Ichioka 1988; K. Park 1997). The Filipinos came to the United States as early as 1763 on Spanish galleons and established a settlement in New Orleans. Known as Manila Men, these Filipinos founded the first large-scale shrimp fishery on the Gulf Coast (Cordova 1983). Other Filipinos began migrating to Hawaii in the 1900s to work on plantations (Posadas 1999). The Sikhs from Punjabi were among the first groups to emigrate from South Asia, prompted by a British law in India forbidding them to own arable land. The Sikhs had originally settled in Canada but immigrated to the United States because of anti-Indian sentiments. They entered through San Francisco and eventually settled as farmers in central California (Mazumdar 1984).

Asian immigrants first came to the United States during an era of intense anti-Asian sentiments. During the 1880s and 1920s more than 27 million European immigrants arrived in the United States. The Asian population, however, because of exclusionary policies, remained small, representing less than 5 percent of the immigrant population (Zhou and Gatewood 2000). The 1790 Naturalization Law limited citizenship to people who were white, preventing

Asians from gaining U.S. citizenship. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, one of the first restrictive U.S. immigration laws, banned Chinese from immigrating to the United States. This act was not repealed until 1943, when China became a wartime ally of the United States (M. G. Wong 1986). The Chinese Exclusion Act was followed by the Immigration Act of 1917. Also known as the Asiatic Barred Zone Act, this legislation banned immigration from India, Siam, Indochina, Afghanistan, Arabia, and parts of Siberia. Asian Indians, originally considered to be white, had gained citizenship. However, a 1923 Supreme Court decision determined that Asian Indians were Caucasians but not "free white persons" and therefore were not eligible for citizenship. As a result of this legislation, Indians who had gained naturalization before 1923 were stripped of their citizenship (Mazumdar 1984). Not until 1946, when a new immigration bill allowed an annual quota of one hundred Indian immigrants, were Indians allowed to come to the U.S. (Das 2002).

The first wave of Korean immigrants to the U.S. arrived in Hawaii in 1903 to work in the plantations. Many were brought to replace Japanese laborers who had gone on strike in the cane fields (Park 1997). Immigration from Korea, however, was short-lived. At the time, Korea was occupied by Japan, and in 1905 the Japanese government placed a ban on Korean immigration to the United States. It is estimated that seven thousand Koreans entered the United States during this period (Okihiro 2001). Immigration from Japan was curtailed following the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907–1908. This legislation, however, allowed families of those already in the U.S. to immigrate, which led to women arriving as "picture brides" from Japan as well as Korea. Marriages were arranged by proxy between men who were in the United States and women who were in their home country. Approximately eleven hundred Korean women immigrated to Hawaii and the mainland as picture brides (Yu, Choe, and Han 2002). The exact number of Japanese women who entered as picture brides is unknown. Records indicate that by 1920, in San Francisco alone, twenty thousand picture brides had been processed on Angel Island, which had served as an immigration and quarantine station (Lucaccini 1996). These women, along with their husbands and children, established the foundations of the first Japanese American and Korean American communities in the United States.

Early Asian immigrants also faced segregation laws, such as the 1913 Alien Land Law prohibiting Asians who were ineligible for citizenship from owning land in the United States. Asians were also subject to segregation laws that prohibited their children from attending schools with whites, and to antimiscegenation laws banning them from marrying whites (Hing 1993).

The National Origins Quota Act of 1921 imposed a quota system and restricted the number of new immigrants from a given country to 3 percent of the people of the national origin group that were already in the U.S. in 1910 (M. G. Wong 1986). Finally, the Immigration Act of 1924, the Johnson-Reed Act, reduced each country's quota to 2 percent of those immigrants already in the United States. China, Japan, and Korea received no quota, and the 1924 Immigration Act effectively ended immigration from those countries. Filipinos were not subjected to these laws because the Philippines were under U.S. colonial rule. The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, however, acknowledged the Philippines as a commonwealth and changed the status of Filipinos in the U.S. from colonial subjects to citizens of an autonomous nation. As a result, Filipinos also became aliens ineligible for U.S. citizenship (Posadas 1999).

The exclusionary immigration laws were lifted for Asian women following World War II. The War Brides Act was enacted in 1945 to allow spouses and adopted children of U.S. servicemen to immigrate. It is estimated that between 1947 and 1964 more than seventy-two thousand women, mostly from Japan and Korea, immigrated under this law (Simpson 1998; R. Wong 2007). The McCarren-Walter Act of 1952 abolished national origin requirements and allowed one hundred people per year to immigrate from Pacific and Asian countries.

POST-1965 IMMIGRANTS

Because of the exclusionary immigration policies, there was little immigration from Asia to the United States between the 1920s and the 1960s. It was not until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which abolished national quotas and national origin, race, and ancestry as a basis for denying immigration to the U.S., that Asians began to immigrate again. Immigrants were admitted based on three criteria: (1) family reunification, (2) occupational immigration, and (3) refugees and those seeking asylum from political persecution. Since 1980, Asians have comprised 43 percent of the total number of immigrants to the United States (M. G. Wong 1986). The following is a brief summary of post-1965 immigration of the six ethnic groups—Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese—that are the focus of this book.

CHINESE. The Chinese constitute the largest subgroup of Asian Americans and the second-largest immigrant group in the United States following Mexican Americans. According to the U.S. Census 2000, the Chinese population grew by 48 percent from 1.6 million in 1990 to nearly 2.5 million in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2001). Chinese immigration to the United States increased after 1965 because of separate quotas for people from the People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The U.S. began to admit immigrants from the PRC in 1979, after diplomatic ties were established between the two countries. Post-1965 immigrants from China mostly came from urban areas. About half of those who immigrated between 1966 and 1975 were students, professionals, and white-collar workers (Takaki 1989). Another half were low-wage earners who worked for garment sweatshops and small businesses (Lee 1997). It is important to acknowledge a group of undocumented immigrants from the rural areas of China who are victims of human trafficking and human rights violations. A large number are from Fujian Province and work in restaurants and garment factories that ignore labor codes (Kwong 1997). Currently cities with large Chinese American populations include New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Houston (U.S. Census Bureau 2001). In addition to these concentrations in large cities, smaller pockets of Chinese Americans are dispersed in rural towns, often university towns, throughout the United States. A large number of elders in the Chinese community immigrated to be with their family members.

FILIPINOS. Until the 1960s the Filipinos were mostly concentrated in Hawaii, where the majority worked on plantations (Posadas 1999). Following the Immigration Act of 1965, a new group of Filipinos, with professional backgrounds, moved to the United States (Wolf 1997). In the 1970s and 1980s Filipina immigrants had the highest percentage of professionals compared to other native and foreign-born women (Cabezas, Shinagawa, and Kawaguchi 1986). In the early 1970s most Filipinos in the mainland lived in California. Since then, the Filipinos have moved to other states including Illinois, New York, Texas, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Michigan. The majority of Filipino Americans live in metropolitan areas, such as Honolulu, Chicago, New York, Jersey City, and Seattle. The number of Filipinos in the United States continues to grow: the population increased from 1.4 million to 1.85 million between 1990 and 2000. It is important to note that the Immigration Act of 1990 featured an important provision, allowing about 150,000 Filipinos who served in the U.S. military during World War II to gain U.S. citizenship (Posadas 1999).

INDIANS. The initial Indian immigrants who arrived after 1965 were mostly professionals, including physicians, scientists, and academics, as well as students (Pettys and Balgopal 1998). It is estimated that 85,000 scientists, engineers, and physicians emigrated from India between 1966 and 1977 (Subramanian 2007). Since the 1970s there has been an increase in the number of Indian women immigrants. There has also been growing diversity among the Indian population since the mid-1980s as earlier groups began to sponsor their relatives to immigrate to the United States. Currently the Indian immigrant group is the third-largest Asian American ethnic group in the United States, following the Chinese and Filipinos. According to the U.S. Census 2000, there are close to 1.7 million Indians in the United States, and the states with Indian populations of more than sixty thousand are California, Texas, New York, New Jersey, and Illinois. Indians comprise the largest Asian American ethnic group in New Jersey, the second-largest after the Chinese in New York. The states of California, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas accounted for 70 percent of the Indian population in the 1990s (Das 2002). Indians have the highest median family income among all groups in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2004).

JAPANESE. Japanese Americans are the only Asian group that decreased in population in the past decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). This decrease is due to low immigration rates from Japan and high rates of out marriages. According to the U.S. Census 2000, 70 percent of Japanese American elders were born in the United States. Japanese elders in the U.S. are categorized into groups according to their immigration history and are identified as such. Currently, the oldest group of Japanese American elders is composed of the second generation, known as *Nisei*, which means "second generation," and new immigrants are known as *Shin Issei*, which means "first generation." Among *Nisei*, there are two subgroups: *Nisei* who grew up in the United States and those known as *Kibei Nisei*, who were sent back to be educated in Japan as children. The *Kibei Nisei* tend to be less acculturated to the United States, preferring to speak Japanese, and share similarities with immigrants arriving later from Japan (*Shin Issei*). A growing number of third-generation Japanese Americans, known as *Sansei* and belonging to the baby boom generation, are entering older adulthood (Shibusawa, Lubben, and Kitano 2001). Japanese Americans have the longest average life span among all ethnic groups in the United States (McCormick et al. 1996).

KOREANS. Korean Americans rank as the fifth-largest Asian group in the United States, with a population of more than 1 million, according to the U.S. Census 2000. California is the state with the largest Korean American population (33%), followed by New York (12%). Prior to 1965 there were about ten thousand Koreans in the United States (Takaki 1989). Between 1970 and 1988 the population grew to nearly half a million (Min 1990). Many of the initial post-1965 immigrants were medical professionals such as physicians, pharmacists, and nurses, who entered under special provisions of the immigration law, which encouraged the immigration of professionals with skills in short supply in the United States (Min 1990). More recent immigrants from Korea are concentrated in retail and service industries. In the 1980s one-third of Korean immigrant families were engaged in small businesses, and have the highest rate of self-employment among any ethnic group (Lee 2007). It is also important to note that there are more than one hundred thousand Korean adoptees in the United States (Huh and Reid 2000).

VIETNAMESE. According to the U.S. Census 2000, more than 1.1 million U.S. residents identified themselves as Vietnamese. Among Asian Americans, the Vietnamese along with Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmong are the least likely to marry outside their ethnic group, and have the largest percentage of people who identify themselves as belonging to only one ethnicity (U.S. Census Bureau 2002). The first wave of immigration from Vietnam occurred after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. People who had close ties to Americans or who worked for the South Vietnamese government left Vietnam during the spring of 1975 immediately following the war (Gold 1992). These Vietnamese were generally highly skilled and educated, and were airlifted by the U.S. government to refugee centers in the United States. The second wave of immigration began in 1978 and continued until the early to mid-1980s. Those who left Vietnam during this era are known as “boat people,” because they fled in small fishing boats to escape the Communist regime, reeducation camps, or forced evacuation to “new economic zones” (Gold 1992). These people suffered extreme hardships, remaining in the harsh conditions of refugee camps for many years. Half of those who tried to escape are thought to have perished during their exit from Vietnam. During the third wave of immigration that took place between the mid-1980s and 2000, more than five hundred thousand Vietnamese refugees immigrated to the United States. Among those who immigrated in the mid- to late 1980s were survivors of reeducation camps who were permitted to leave Vietnam and join their families in the United States (Gold 1992). A subgroup of this wave of immigrants, the ethnic Chinese, was descended from Chinese who had immigrated to Vietnam centuries earlier (Gyory 2000). The proportion of adults sixty-five and older is 5 percent, quite small compared to other Asian immigrant groups (Leung and Boehnlein 2005).

ASIAN ELDERS: A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE

This book is based on a cross-sectional study in which elders were interviewed about their current life situation at a single point in time. Thus the data do not include information about their past life experiences. It is important, however, to consider the lives of Asian American elders from a life course perspective. Life course theory views human development and aging as a lifelong process and stresses the importance of understanding the contexts that shape this process (Bengston, Burgess, and Parrott 1997). These contexts include socially and culturally defined life-cycle stages and the timing at which an elder progressed through these stages. Another important aspect to consider is the influence of historical and social events in the life of an elder and the timing of these events (Elder, Johnson, and Crosnoe 2003). Table 1.2, the Life Course Chart, presents the historical and social events that occurred for Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese elders born in 1930.

As seen in table 1.2, Asian elders have lived through different periods of historical turmoil. Chinese elders born in the 1930s spent their early childhood years during the Japanese military occupation and their adolescent years in the civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists following the defeat of Japan in World War II. Some Chinese fled to Taiwan, and others stayed behind to witness Mao Zedong proclaim the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. People of this generation who remained in China spent their young adulthood under various land reforms and Mao's economic program known as the Great Leap Forward, an attempt to transform China from an agricultural economy to an industrial communist society (Becker 1996). This resulted in a famine that killed 20–40 million people (Becker 1996). During their thirties and forties, they experienced the Cultural Revolution and the destruction of old establishments by the Red Guards, a group largely composed of youth carrying out communist policies.

TABLE 1.2 Life Course: Global and National Events in the Life of a Person Born in 1930

PERIOD	U.S./ASIAN AMERICAN	CHINA	PHILIPPINES	INDIA	JAPAN	KOREA	VIETNAM
1930s **Age: 0–10**	**1929** Great Depression **1939–45** World War II	**1931** Japan invasion of Manchuria **1934** Long March **1937–45** Second Sino-Japanese War	**1906–34** First major immigration wave to the U.S. **1934** Tydings-McDuffie Act: Annual immigration quota cut to 50 persons; Filipinos in the U.S. reclassified as “Aliens”	**1800s** Occupation by Great Britain **1930–31** Civil Disobedience Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi	**1931** Japan invasion of Manchuria	Japan continues Korean occupation, which started in **1905**	**1930** Ho Chi Minh forms Indochinese Communist Party (ICP)
1940s **Age: 10–20** Childhood, early to mid-adolescence	**1942** Internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans **1945** War Brides Act: Immigration of an estimated 200,000 Asian women married to U.S. servicemen	**1945** Chinese wives of American citizens allowed to immigrate **1947** Kuomintang retreats to Taiwan **1949** People’s Republic of China established; Mao Zedong becomes Chinese Communist Party Chairman	**1944–46** Allied forces in the Philippines **1946** Independent Republic of the Philippines established	**1944** Japanese invasion along the Indian-Burmese border **1946** Indian Citizenship Bill (token annual quota of 100 immigrants to the U.S.) **1947** Independence; country partitioned into India and Pakistan	**1941** Attack on Pearl Harbor **1941–42** Invasion of the Philippines, Thailand, the Dutch East Indies, and British India **1945** The U.S. drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Japan surrenders	**1945** Korea is divided	**1946–54** Indo-China War; Vietnam is divided into two separate countries at the 17th Parallel. Geneva Accord gives control of North Vietnam to Communist Party causing approximately one million anti-Communists to flee to South Vietnam

(*continued*)

TABLE 1.2 (*continued*)

PERIOD	U.S./ASIAN AMERICAN	CHINA	PHILIPPINES	INDIA	JAPAN	KOREA	VIETNAM
	1948 California repeals law banning interracial marriages		**1946** Filipino Naturalization Bill allows Filipinos to become U.S. citizens. **1947** Military Bases Agreement with U.S.	**1947** Second wave of immigration of South Asians to the U.S. begins	**1945–47** 45,000 war brides admitted to the U.S. **1946** U.S. occupies Japan		
1950s **Age: 20–30**	**1952** Relatives of Asian immigrants allowed to immigrate to the U.S. **1952** The McCarran-Walter Act repeals the 1790 Naturalization Law racial restrictions **1959** Hawaii becomes the fiftieth state **1959** Vietnam War begins	**1950** Treaty with USSR forming an alliance **1951–52** Land reform and redistribution of land **1953–57** First Five-Year Plan **1958–60** Great Leap Forward	**1951** The Republic of the Philippines signs peace treaty with Japan. Post–WWII war brides to U.S.	**1950** India becomes a republic	**1952** End of U.S. occupation; First-generation Japanese gain the right to become naturalized U.S. citizens **1956** Japan joins the United Nations **Late 1950s–70s** Economic growth	**1950** North Korea invades South Korea **1950–53** The Korean War; Korea is divided into North Korea and South Korea **1953** The second wave of Korean immigration to the U.S.	**1955** Ngo Dinh Diem appointed Premier of South Vietnam; the U.S. provides direct support **1957** Troops from North Vietnam invade South Vietnam **1959** Family code prohibits legal separation and divorce

1960s **Age: 30–40**	**1965** Immigration Act of 1965 eliminates “national origin” quotas		**1960s** Immigration Act of 1965 draws many Filipino professionals to the U.S.; the annual immigration quota increases to 20,000 **1965** Ferdinand Marcos becomes president	**1962** India loses border war with China **1964** Prime Minister J. Nehru dies **1965** India-Pakistani War **1965** Second wave of immigration to U.S. begins **1966** Indira Gandhi becomes prime minister	**1964** Tokyo Olympics	**1960** Student protest; Syngman Rhee steps down as president **1961** General Park Chung Hee organizes military coup, establishes and later becomes president **1968** Third wave of immigration to the U.S.	**1964** U.S. Congress passes the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution authorizing use of force in Vietnam **1965** The U.S. begins bombing North Vietnam; U.S. combat troops land in Da Nang **1968** The Tet Offensive; massacre at My Lai
1970s **Age: 40–50**	**1975** End of Vietnam War	**1972–76** End of the Era of Mao Zedong **1978** The U.S. Congress passes Taiwan Relations Act **1978** Deng Xiaoping assumes power	**1972** President Marcos declares Martial Law under Proclamation 1081 **1973** A new constitution gives Marcos absolute powers	**1974** India conducts its first nuclear test explosion **1975–77** A state of emergency is declared and 1,000 political opponents are imprisoned; compulsory birth control program is introduced	**1972** Okinawa is returned to Japan	**1979** President Chung Hee Park is assassinated	**1973** U.S. troops leave Vietnam **1975** End of the Vietnam War The first wave of Vietnamese, Cambodians, Hmong, and other Southeast Asians arrive in the U.S. **1976** Socialist Republic of Vietnam is established

(*continued*)

TABLE 1.2 (*continued*)

PERIOD	U.S./ASIAN AMERICAN	CHINA	PHILIPPINES	INDIA	JAPAN	KOREA	VIETNAM
		1979 The PRC and the U.S formally exchange diplomatic recognition of the border war between Vietnam and China **1979** U.S. begins to admit immigrants from the PRC					**1978** The second wave of Southeast Asian refugees enter the U.S. **1978–79** Vietnam overthrows the Khmer Rouge government in Cambodia
1980s **Age: 50–60**		**1980** Trial of the Gang of Four **1987 and 1988** Riots in Lhasa (Tibet) **1988** China increases diplomatic exchanges to 134 countries **1989** Tiananmen Square protests	**1982** Martial law lifted **1983** Opposition leader Benigno Aquino is assassinated **1986** Corazon Aquino forms a new government **Late 1980s–early 1990s** Filipino labor export; 500,000 citizens work outside the country	**1984** Indira Gandhi is assassinated; Rajiv Gandhi succeeds as prime minister	**1982** Honda, the automobile company, opens its first U.S. plant **1988** President Ronald Reagan signs the Civil Liberties Act, authorizing $125 billion in reparations to Japanese American survivors of WW II internment camps	**1980** Military coup by General Chun Doo Hwan **1987** Violent student demonstrations **1988** Seoul Olympics **1988** National elections; Roh Taewoo becomes President	**1980s** Second wave of refugees from the Hill Tribes of Laos immigrates to the U.S. By **1980**, 1 million people have immigrated from Vietnam because of political conflict **1987** The third wave of Vietnamese immigration to the U.S. begins

1990s Age: 60–70		**1997** Hong Kong returned to China	**1990** Immigration Reform Act, U.S. citizenship offered to 20,000 Filipino WW II veterans **1992** Subic Bay U.S. naval base returned, ending U.S. military presence in the Philippines	**1991** Rajiv Gandhi is assassinated **1992** Widespread Hindu-Muslim riots **1998** India carries out nuclear tests	**1997** The Japanese economy experiences severe recession	**1992** Los Angeles riots **1997** IMF Crisis (Asian Economic Crisis) impacts nation **1998** Daejung Kim elected President	**1994** The U.S. lifts its thirty-year trade embargo on Vietnam
2000s Age: 70–80	**2001** 9/11 Terrorist attacks	**2001** Beijing elected to hold 2008 Summer Olympics		**2000** Celebration of the birth of India's billionth citizen			

Sources: C. Agatucci, Central Oregon Community College. China: Timeline 5: Republican & Communist China (1912–present), retrieved April 2006 from, http://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum210/tml/ChinaTML/chinatml5.htm; C. Agatucci, Central Oregon Community College, India: Timelines, Sources and Resources, retrieved April 2006 from, http://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum210/tml/IndiaTML/indiatml4.htm; BBC News: Timeline India, Retrieved April, 2006 from, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/country_profiles/1155813.stm; BBC News: Timeline: Vietnam, retrieved April 2006 from, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1243686.stm; S. Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne, 1991); CNN Interactive: India & Pakistan: Fifty years of independence, retrieved April 2006 from, http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9708/India97/india/timeline/; S. Das, Loss or gain? A saga of Asian Indian immigration and experiences in America's multi-ethnic mosaic, *Race, Gender & Class* 9, no. 1 (2002): 131–155; Japanese American National Museum. Historical Timeline of Japanese American, retrieved April 2006 from, http://www.janm.org/projects/inrp/english/time_us.htm; Korean American Museum, Korean American History, retrieved April 2006 from, http://www.kamuseum.org/community/base.htm; Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, Country Studies: Philippines, retrieved April 2006 from, http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html; Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, Country Studies: Vietnam, retrieved April 2006 from, http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/vntoc.html#vn0004; S. Mazumdar, Punjabi agricultural workers in California, 1905–1945, in L. Cheng and E. Bonachich, eds., *Labor Immigration under Capitalism: Asian Workers in the United States before World War II*, pp. 549–578 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Northern Illinois University Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Vietnam: Timeline of Events to 1974, Retrieved April 2006 from, http://www.seasite.niu.edu/crossroads/russell/vntimeline.htm; B. Posadas, *The Filipino Americans* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1999); U. A. Segal, A *Framework for Immigration: Asians in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); R. Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1989); M. G. Wong, Post-1965 Asian immigrants: Where do they come from, where are they now, and where are they going? *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 487 (1986): 150–168; G. Yeo, ed., *Curriculum in Ethnogeriatrics*, Stanford Geriatric Education Center, retrieved April 2006 from, http://www.stanford.edu/group/ethnoger/index.html.

Korean elders born in the 1930s also spent their childhood under Japanese occupation, and experienced the Korean War and the subsequent partition of their country into South and North Korea during their young adulthood. Later they experienced the rapid transformation of their country from an agrarian society to an industrial society and the growth of a new middle class (K. Park 1997; S.-J. Park and Kang 2007).

Japanese elders who grew up in Japan spent their childhood years under the extreme nationalism that led to World War II, while their Japanese American counterparts who grew up in the United States were incarcerated in internment camps during the war. The Indians of this generation spent their childhood years in India under the occupational rule of Great Britain. They also witnessed the independence of their nation and its division into Pakistan and India during their adolescence. The Vietnamese elders born in the 1930s spent their childhood years under the French colonial occupation of their country, witnessed their country divided into South and North Vietnam during their adolescence, and lived through the Vietnam War (or the "American War," as it is known in Vietnam) during their thirties and forties. Many Vietnamese elders were exposed to traumatic events as a result of the Vietnam War. Many lost family members during and after the war, and those who escaped Vietnam in fishing boats were subjected to attacks by pirates, and many women were victims of sexual assaults. As refugees, they were placed in camps for stays averaging two years, where they suffered severe physical and emotional distress including lack of food and water, overcrowded living conditions, and persecution by camp personnel (Mollica, Wyshak, and Lavelle 1987).

As this historical background illustrates, Asian elders have lived through many disruptive events, and it is important to understand how these events have shaped their current lives. Studies of Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian refugees report high rates of psychological trauma (Shapiro et al. 1999). Many Asian elders who were born and grew up in the United States also lived through extremely stressful events. For example, the internment experience during World War II has left an indelible mark on the lives of Japanese Americans (Nagata 1993). Despite the growing interest in the impact of traumatic events on children and adults, few studies have focused on trauma among older adults. Very little is known about the negative interactions between unresolved distal and recent trauma, on the one hand, and stressors associated with aging, on the other. Research on long-term psychological effects of trauma have been limited to studies with Holocaust survivors (Joffe et al. 2003) and military veterans (Schnurr et al. 2002). These studies suggest that external and internal resources can diminish in later life, and that prior trauma can be reactivated. Delayed onset, reemergence, or exacerbation of symptoms and behaviors associated with posttraumatic stress may appear during the aging process.

Conditions in late life not only are related to past events but are also associated with access to education, labor, and health care in earlier stages of life. Inequities experienced in earlier life are usually intensified later in life (Dannerfer 2003). Different sociohistorical periods provide different opportunity structures and social roles for individuals with varying personal characteristics. These opportunities and roles, in turn, determine the particular life events that people experience and the adaptive resources with which they respond to these events. Opportunity structures refer to the various restrictions that prevailing society places on individuals with certain personal attributes, thus reducing their life chances. Asian elders who were born and grew up in the United States experienced different episodes of discrimination throughout the course of their lives. The accumulation of these multiple disadvantages can have negative effects on their aging process. The majority of elders from rural areas of Asia had limited access to education, reducing their opportunities for employment in the United States.

Health status among elders is frequently associated with nutrition and access to health care in earlier life. Early developmental experiences such as malnutrition may influence chronic physical conditions in later life (Hertzman 2004). Research suggests that a lifetime of deficits such as low-paying jobs and inadequate resources translates into poor physical and mental health among Asian elders (Mui 1993).

IMMIGRATION AND THE LIFE COURSE

The life stage at which people immigrate influences their subsequent life experiences. People who immigrate during young adulthood usually migrate at the beginning of their career and during their child-bearing years. Those who immigrate before mid-adulthood have a work history, and many come with their children in search of new opportunities. Older adults who immigrate usually do so to be with their adult children. The current cohort of Asian elders includes those born in the United States, those who immigrated during young and middle adulthood, and those who immigrated after age sixty. Although immigrants of all ages face stressors such as loss of a familiar environment, support systems, and identity and status, researchers suggest that it is more difficult to adjust to a new environment in late adulthood than in young adulthood (Angel et al. 1999; Kim, Kim, and Hurh 1991; Q. K. Le 1997; Phua, Kaufman, and Park 2001). Older immigrants are thought to be less capable of meeting the demands of acculturation, such as learning a new language and adapting to new surroundings, than those who immigrate earlier in life.

Life stage transitions follow an age-graded timetable, which marks the time when individuals typically enter and exit specific stages (Hagestad and Neugarten 1985). Transitions such as getting married or entering the workforce are evaluated as being on time if they take place during culturally determined ages and off time if they do not. When role transitions occur off time, individuals and families can experience psychological distress (Hagestad and Neugarten 1985). Immigrating to a new country in late life counters the normal transitions in aging. As people age, they are expected to ease out of their work and career, to find new meaning in life while adjusting to various physical limitations posed by the physical conditions of aging. Elders who immigrate in late life not only have to go through life-cycle challenges, but they also have to cope with the process of acculturating to a new environment. Stressors that accompany immigration, such as language barriers, altered social and financial resources, fear of racial discrimination, and feelings of helplessness, can have negative impacts on psychological well-being. (Angel et al. 1999; Tsai and Lopez 1997). The concept of “multiple jeopardy” contends that occupying several disadvantaged positions, such as racial minority status, lack of language proficiency, and low-income status, may increase the risk of negative outcomes in old age (P. T. P. Wong and Ujimoto 1998).

RISKS AND RESILIENCY

While it is important to recognize the challenges of Asian elders who face the effects of cumulative disadvantages, it is equally important to examine their strengths and the ways in which they adjust to mainstream culture, navigate through the formal service systems, and cope with changes in their family relationships. Resilience among older adults has been defined as their capacity to withstand or endure difficulties and to recover or thrive in the face of disruptive life challenges (Hardy, Concato, and Gill 2004; Ryff et al. 1998). The notion of resiliency also includes the way in which individuals gain positive outcomes from a stressful event by fostering positive adaptation (Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker 2000).

The consequences of stressful factors in an elder's life are often mediated by protective or adaptive factors. Protective factors found in individuals include previous life experience, personality, optimism, coping skills, religiosity/spirituality, and self-rated health (Ong and Bergeman 2004). Positive attitudes toward acculturation, reasons for and conditions of emigration, and having a sense of coherence are also considered individual protective factors among immigrants (Ying et al. 1997). Family and community resources that serve as protective factors for elders include social support from family, friends, and neighbors; availability of community services; religious affiliation; and cultural influences (Ong and Bergeman 2004). Socioeconomic status, economic security, and the receptiveness of the host society are also important resources. These strengths and resources enable individuals and their families to respond successfully to crises and persistent challenges, and to recover and grow from those experiences (Walsh 2004). In this book, we examine intergenerational relationships, social support, psychological well-being, and involvement with family and social activities as sources of resilience among Asian American elders.