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# The Extraordinary Educational Attainment of Asian-Americans: A Search for Historical Evidence and Explanations

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*Social Forces*, Volume 65, Issue 1, 1 September 1986, Pages 1–27,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/65.1.1>

**Published:** 01 September 1986

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# Abstract

The very high educational attainments of Asian-Americans have roots in the pre- World War II era. Native-born Chinese- and Japanese-Americans reached educational parity with majority whites in the early decades of the twentieth century. In this paper, we present an analysis and interpretation of the structural conditions that may have favored the educational progress of Asian-Americans in spite of considerable societal discrimination. Changes in the occupational structure of the Asian-American population and a somewhat positive rate of occupational returns to education appear to be plausible explanations for Asian-American educational gains. Our interpretation is consistent with the middleman minority thesis.

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Online ISSN 1534-7605

Print ISSN 0037-7732

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