

Asian American communities have been shaped by immigration policies since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most strikingly, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act barred immigration from China, precluding women from joining husbands who had previously come as railroad and mine workers: by 1900 the male to female ratio was 18:1, with devastating effects on the community. The Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965 (P.L. 89-236) emphasized family reunification as a criterion for immigration. Previous immigration law had recognized spouses and minor children of those already in the US as being a privileged category, but the 1965 law extended this category to other relatives, such as parents and adult siblings (Kitano and Daniels 2001). The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) has the potential to affect immigration decisions through its impact on the eligibility of these extended family members for federal programs (Angel 2003; Binstock and Jean-Baptiste 1999).

Though immigration mainly occurs at relatively young ages, there are a significant number of older immigrants. In 1999, 11.6% of immigrants were aged 55 and older and 5.0% were aged 65 and older. Many of these older immigrants enter as parents of adult children; 9.5% of 1999 immigrants came to the US as parents of US citizens. (Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1999, calculated from Table 12, p. 60). Asian and Hispanic Americans bring their parents to the US at a rate three times higher than do persons of European ancestry (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 2002). PRWORA limits the public benefits of legal immigrants entering after August 22, 1996 (e.g. Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, subsidized housing and food stamps). Sponsors must sign affidavits that they will support the immigrant relative until she or he is naturalized or has earned 10 years of Social Security income (Fix and Passel 2002). Thus when a parent joins an adult child in the US now, the child must provide appropriate support until the parent is naturalized, as the Social Security income provision is often unlikely to be met by an older immigrant. Previously the sponsor was obligated to provide support for five years only (Binstock and Jean-Baptiste 1999). Older immigrants are most likely to be affected by this policy because of their dependence on public benefits. This burden on the sponsoring family member could potentially affect family immigration decisions (Angel 2003). The extent to which PRWORA has influenced immigration decisions for persons who would enter the country as parents is unknown.

## Methods

The purpose of this paper is to describe 11-year trends (1990-2000) for persons who have been admitted as parents for the five major Asian immigrant groups: Chinese, Indian, Korean, Philippine, and Vietnamese focusing on whether PPOWRA has affected immigration of parents. We will examine the number of immigrants admitted as parents, their age distribution, and their destination states. We used United States Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service. *Immigrants Admitted to the United State's Series* (<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu:8080/ICPSR-SERIES/00121.xml>). An annual file available for the past 30 years of all aliens who became legal permanent residents of the United States (n= 849,386 for 2000). The data include the following variables: month of admission, year of admission, country of birth, age, country of last permanent residence, marital status, state of intended residence, labor certification, occupation, sex,

country of chargeability, type of case, nonimmigrant class of entry, immigrant class of admission, principal vs. derivative class of admission.

## Results

For older adults (aged 55 and greater) admitted as parents, the proportion aged 75 and older is highest for Koreans. In 2000, 18 percent of older adult Korean immigrants were aged 75 and over, while this percentage was 10-12 percent for the other Asian groups. The high percentage of Koreans aged 75 and over is due to the low proportion aged 55 to 64, compared with other Asian groups. Across all of the Asian groups, there is evidence of greater geographic dispersion in the US from 1990 to 2000. The general trend for the settlement of parents is decreasing proportion of concentration in California. For example, in 1990, 55% of Filipino parent immigrants indicated California as their destination, while that percentage was 40% in 2000.

The number of persons admitted as “immediate relative – parents” category decreased from 1990 to 2000 in all five groups. There are two patterns. For immigrants from Philippine, India, and China, there is striking increase in fiscal years 1996 and 1997, and then a sharp decline. For Vietnamese and Korean parent immigrants there is a gradual decrease through the middle and later years of the decade.

These findings suggest that the effect of PROWRA was a short-term increase in the number of parents who come to USA from China, India, and Philippines, just prior to its implementation, followed by a decline in numbers. There was no apparent effect on Vietnamese and Korean parent immigrants. Future analyses (which would be included in the final paper) will examine trends by sex and marital status, and will place these trends in the numbers of immigrants arriving as parents in context by comparing them to other immigrant categories (both relatives and work-related) from the same sending countries over the same decade.