



RICE

THE HOUSTON AREA SURVEY (1982-2002)

**HOUSTON'S ECONOMIC
AND DEMOGRAPHIC
TRANSFORMATIONS:**

**FINDINGS FROM THE EXPANDED 2002 SURVEY
OF HOUSTON'S ETHNIC COMMUNITIES**

by

Stephen L. Klineberg

Department of Sociology

Rice University

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INTRODUCTION: THE TWO REVOLUTIONS

Beginning in early 1982, the annual Houston Area Survey has monitored systematically the continuities and changes in the demographic patterns, life experiences, attitudes and beliefs of Harris County residents. The past two decades have brought remarkable changes to this city. Houston is at the forefront of the two most far-reaching social transformations of our time — in the foundations of the American economy and in the ethnic composition of the population. Using identical items across the years, with new questions added periodically, these continuing surveys have tracked America's fourth largest city in the midst of fundamental redefinition.

The historical context. During most of the twentieth century, and particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, Houston was America's quintessential "boomtown." While the rest of the country was languishing in the long national recession of the "stagflating seventies," this city's prime industrial products were becoming several times more valuable with no lessening of world demand. The price of a barrel of Texas oil rose from \$3.39 in 1971, to \$12.64 in 1979, to \$31.77 in 1981. The value of foreign trade through the Port of Houston increased ten-fold during this period, local bank deposits tripled in value, and Houston led the nation in housing starts, real estate investments, and the growth of manufacturing (Feagin, 1988).

"Houston is not a city," one reporter wrote at the time (Recer, 1978). "It's a phenomenon; an explosive, churning, roaring urban juggernaut that's shattering tradition as it expands outward and upward with an energy that stuns even its residents." By the late 1970s, Houston seemed to be on the verge of forging a new urban landscape and a distinctive political ideology that would serve as models for the rest of the nation. "Houston is THE city of the second half of the twentieth century," declared a distinguished architectural critic from *The New York Times* (Huxtable, 1976).

This was the undisputed resource and energy capital of the world, the "Golden Buckle of the Sun Belt," the favored showplace of the world's most famous architects. Its "official bird" was the construction crane, and its leaders assumed that all that was needed to keep on booming was a brash Texas spirit and the perpetuation of what was proudly proclaimed to be the nation's best economic climate. Houston was world-famous for having imposed perhaps the fewest regulations and restrictions on development of any city in the Western world (Louv, 1983). This was to be a metropolis built almost entirely by developers' decisions (Thomas and Murray, 1991).

The city's conception of the "good business climate" included weak unions, cheap labor, low taxes, deliberately ineffective land-use controls, and minimal municipal services. So strong was the opposition to government social programs that, until the mid 1960s, the Houston school board even refused to accept federal funds to provide free lunches to indigent children, on the grounds that this would sap self-reliance and lead to a welfare state (Shelton et al., 1989).

Houston was known as the "City of Business Oligarchs" (Davidson, 1982), one of the last bastions of the nineteenth-century laissez-faire philosophy of unfettered economic expansion (Fisher, 1990). In this preeminent "free-enterprise city," Houstonians proclaimed themselves to

be the epitome of what Americans can achieve when left unimpeded by zoning codes, excessive taxation, and government regulation (Kaplan 1983).

Harris County's population grew by more than 40% during the 1960s and by another 38% in the 1970s. Between 1970 and 1982, almost one million people moved into the metropolitan area. They were coming at the rate of some 1,300 per week. Every day on average, 250 motor vehicles were being added to the streets and freeways of Harris County. It was clear to most observers that such frenetic growth would eventually have to come to an end (Stevens, 1981). Few suspected, however, that the ending would arrive so abruptly, or that it would occur in a way that would make it so unmistakably evident that the era of "Boomtown Houston" was over.

In May 1982, two months after the first Houston Area Survey, the oil boom collapsed. The global recession had lowered the demand for oil just as new supplies were coming onto world markets. The price of Texas crude fell from approximately \$32 per barrel in early 1982 to less than \$28 at the end of 1983, but Houston had been building and borrowing in the expectation of \$50 oil. Within 18 months, a region that for more than a century had known only growing prosperity recorded a net loss of nearly 100,000 jobs.

When the falling price of oil hit bottom at less than \$12 per barrel in late 1986, the recession had spread from the energy sector to the entire economy (Smith, 1989). One out of every seven jobs that were in Houston in 1982 had disappeared by early 1987, marking this as the worst regional downturn in any part of the country at any time since World War II.

By 1990 the city had recovered from the recession to find itself in the midst of a restructured economy and a demographic revolution. More clearly than perhaps anywhere else in the nation, Houston today is confronting the two most important societal changes of our time.

The "resource economy" of the Industrial Age has receded into history, replaced by a new knowledge-based, high technology, truly worldwide economic system. The traditional "blue collar" path to financial security has now largely disappeared. Income inequalities are widening, based primarily on access to technical training and higher education. And long-neglected quality-of-life issues have become critical determinants of Houston's success in the twenty-first century.

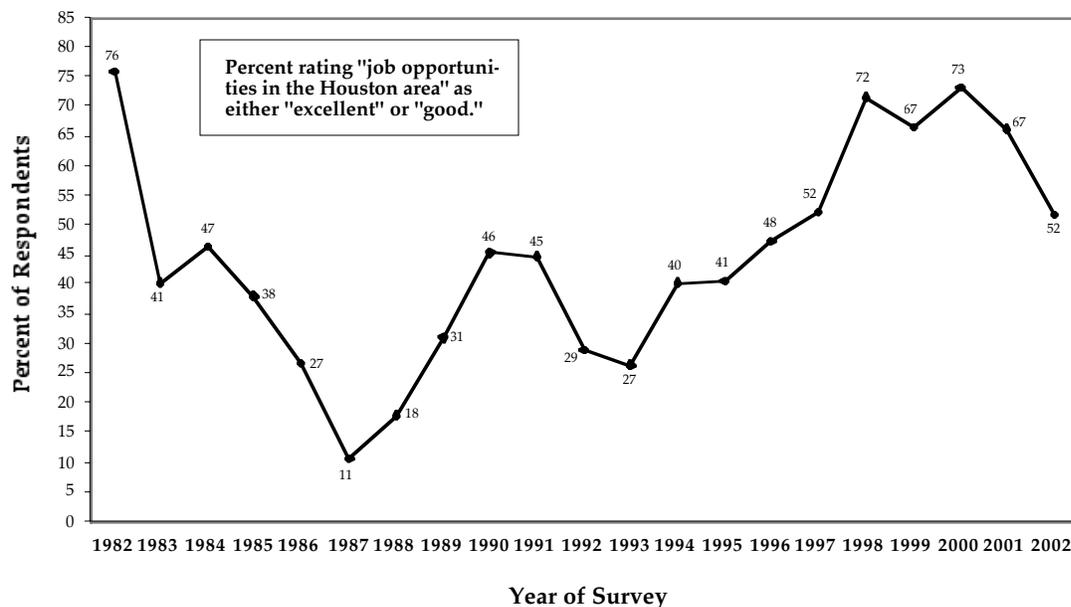
At the same time, new immigration streams have changed the composition of the American population. As an important immigrant destination, Houston has quite suddenly become one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse metropolitan areas in the country. It is at the forefront of the new diversity that is reconstructing the social and political landscape of urban America.

The annual Houston Area Survey has measured public responses to these remarkable trends. The research was underwritten from 1983 through 1995 by the Houston Post Company and from 1996 through 1999 by the Houston Chronicle. Beginning in 2000, the annual surveys, including the "oversample interviews" in Houston's ethnic communities, have been supported by generous gifts from a growing consortium of corporations, foundations and individuals.

This report traces the sweeping changes that have occurred in Houston's economic and demographic foundations. It draws on the unique record of 21 years of systematic annual surveys to assess the way area residents have been responding to the new realities. It makes particular use of the expanded 2002 research, which has reached larger samples than ever before from all four of the region's major ethnic populations, to explore the way Houston's diverse communities are experiencing these remarkable transformations.

From the "resource" boom and bust into the "knowledge" economy. Over the past 21 years, the Houston surveys have painted a vivid picture of the economic roller coaster this city has experienced. Figure 1 shows the proportions of respondents in each year's survey who gave positive evaluations ("excellent" or "good") when asked to rate "job opportunities in the Houston area."

Figure 1
Positive Ratings of Local Job Opportunities
(1982–2002)



Positive ratings of local opportunities were soaring at 76% at the time of the 1982 survey. Two months later, the boom gave way to deep and prolonged recession. By February 1983, the positive outlooks on the local economy had dropped to 41%. There was a slight improvement in 1984 (prompting the oft-repeated words of encouragement, "Stay alive 'til '85!").

Then came the second blow, when the falling price of oil hit bottom in late 1986. The survey conducted in early 1987 marked the low point in economic optimism. In that year, only 11% of area residents gave positive ratings to job opportunities. Almost three-fourths (72%) cited the economy (unemployment, poverty, homelessness) when asked to name the "biggest problem facing people in the Houston area today," and one-half of all respondents said that local living conditions were getting worse.

By 1990 Houston had fully recovered from the recession, having replaced all the jobs that were lost between 1982 and 1987. Its economy was now no longer "countercyclical" relative to the rest of the country, but integrated into national and global economic systems. The city participated in the U.S. recession of 1991-92, and then led the nation through the prolonged economic expansion of that decade.

As indicated in Figure 1, the positive ratings of job opportunities grew from 27% in 1993, to 41% in 1995, to 52% in 1997. They jumped to 72% in 1998 and 73% in 2000, when public optimism was effectively back to the levels last reached at the height of the oil boom in 1982. After 2000, however, the stock market "bubble" had burst, the expansion was clearly ending, and the proportion of respondents giving positive evaluations to job opportunities in the Houston area fell from 73% in 2000, to 67% in 2001, to just 52% in 2002.

Along with the rest of America, Houston is now competing in a fundamentally new kind of economic system. The resource-based industrial-era economy, for which this region was so favorably positioned, has receded into history. The source of wealth today has less and less to do with control over natural resources and more to do with human resources, with nurturing, attracting and retaining the "knowledge workers" whose creativity and skills are the basis for wealth creation in the new economy.

In today's high-tech, knowledge-based, fully global economy, individuals, corporations, and industries have greater freedom than ever before to choose the places where they would like to live. Surveys of high-technology companies have repeatedly found that among the factors driving the decision of where to locate, a "quality of life" that would make an area attractive to skilled workers is far more important than the factors Houston has traditionally emphasized, such as low taxes, minimal regulations, or inexpensive land and housing costs (Kotkin, 2000:7).

The enhanced importance of quality-of-life issues has challenged the city's time-honored conception of "the good business climate" and redefined the meaning of "pro-growth" policies. Urban amenities that were once dismissed as frivolous distractions in a narrowly focused businessman's calculus are turning out to be among the most important determinants of economic success for American cities in the twenty-first century.

Houston's prosperity in the new economy will depend, to an important extent, on new kinds of attributes. It will rest on the city's ability to make continuing improvements in the vitality of its downtown areas, the mobility of its commuters, the excellence of its public schools, the renown of its centers of art and culture, the quality of its air and water, the abundance and beauty of its parks, trees, and bayous, the accessibility and richness of its hiking, boating, and birding areas. It has become clear to almost all thoughtful observers that if this city is to succeed in the new economy of the twenty-first century, it will need to develop into a more environmentally and aesthetically appealing urban destination.

The "hourglass" economy. The industrial era's many good-paying production jobs, as in Houston's thriving construction and oil-field manufacturing industries, once brought financial security

to millions of Americans with high school diplomas or less. In today's "skill-biased" economy, restructured by recent advances in computers and robotics, by intensifying worldwide competition, inexpensive transportation, and declining unionization, that traditional "blue-collar path" is now much more difficult to navigate (Farley, 1996; Levy, 1998).

The "knowledge economy" offers rich and expanding opportunities for those with high levels of trained intelligence, technical skills, and educational credentials. For workers without such skills, the economy is generating large numbers of low-wage service jobs, which offer few chances for people to work their way out of poverty. "Human capital" has become the critical economic resource and education the single most important determinant of a person's ability to earn enough to support a family. In this two-tiered "hourglass" economy, poverty persists even as the city gets richer, opportunities narrow for many while they expand for others, and the inequalities in income and wealth grow ever wider and deeper (Sassen, 2000).

Here are some national figures: Between 1979 and 1997, the after-tax incomes of the best-paid 20% of Americans, controlling for inflation, grew by more than 50%; and among the top one percent, incomes rose by 157%. Meanwhile, the bottom 20% of wage earners experienced an actual decline in real incomes of 1% (Shapiro, Greenstein, and Primus, 2001). The share of total family incomes earned by the top fifth of American families grew from 40% in 1980 to almost half by the end of the century. The portion going to the best-paid one percent of Americans grew from 9% to 16% and is now about as large as the share going to the bottom 40% of the American population (Krugman, 2002). The pay of corporate CEOs soared from 93 times that of production workers in 1988 to 419 times in 1999 (Phillips, 2002:153).

On almost every measure, the inequalities in America have been growing rapidly. The disparities in income and wealth are now greater than at any time since the 1920s, and the wage gaps are larger than in any other industrial nation on earth. As Lester Thurow (1995), the well-known economist and Dean of the School of Management at MIT, observed: "No country in the world, without undergoing a military defeat or an internal revolution, has ever experienced such a sharp redistribution of earnings as the United States has seen in the last generation."

In this increasingly unequal and rigid economic structure, most of those at the top of the hierarchy are white, while most brown and black Americans remain at the bottom. The effort to reverse that economic polarization will constitute a formidable political challenge, even as it profoundly determines the nature and quality of the Houston and American future.

From a "European" to a "universal" nation. Meanwhile, the reform of the nation's restrictive immigration laws in 1965 opened the gates to new immigration flows that have transformed the composition of the American population. From 1492 until 1965, 82% of all the peoples in the world who came to these shores came from Europe. Another 12% were African-Americans, originally brought here as slaves to serve the Europeans. A small number of Chinese and Japanese were working as farmers or laborers in California and Hawaii. The American nation was to be composed almost exclusively of European nationalities.

From 1924 to 1965, under the notorious National Origins Quota Act, immigration slowed to a trickle, Asians were effectively banned entirely from coming to America, and preference was given to the "Nordics" over the "Alpines" and the "Mediterraneans." With this legislation in effect, 82% of all immigrant visas went to northwestern Europeans and another 16% were allocated to other Europeans, leaving 2% for everyone else. No limits were imposed on Western Hemisphere countries, in order to ensure that Mexican labor could be recruited when needed and then deported en masse when no longer required. The law had its intended effect: The ethnic composition of the country in 1965 remained as it had been in 1920.

The Immigration Reform Act of 1965 (also called the Hart-Celler Act) finally changed American immigration policy. Far more generous limits were established, and visas were now allocated not by national origin, but primarily on the basis of family reunification, with secondary preferences given to immigrants with needed professional skills or proven vulnerability to persecution. After 1965, the number of newcomers to America grew rapidly once again, and (unexpectedly) the proportions among them who were Europeans fell dramatically (Rumbaut, 1994).

In the decade of the 1960s, 3.2 million immigrants arrived, of whom only 34% were Europeans. There were 5 million immigrants in the 1970s, only 18% of whom were from Europe. In the 1980s, almost 10 million newcomers immigrated to America, and fewer than 11% were Europeans. Not since the peak years of immigration before World War I had so many sought to make their way to America. The census of 1990 recorded a foreign-born population of 19.8 million, until then the largest number in American history. The 2000 census counted 31.1 million foreign-born residents, an increase by another 57% over the 1990 figures (Kilborn and Clemetson, 2002).

More than 80% of all the immigrants to America in the past 30 years have come from Asia, Mexico, Latin America, the Caribbean, or Africa. The United States, once an amalgam almost exclusively of European nationalities, is rapidly becoming the first truly "universal nation," a microcosm of all the peoples of the world (Wattenberg, 1991). The speed with which this transformation has occurred, brought about primarily by the unexpected acceleration of Hispanic and Asian immigration into the gateway cities of America, was one of the major surprises of the 2000 census (Schmitt, 2001).

The Hispanic population of the United States grew by 58% during the 1990s. Today, several years earlier than expected, Latinos have overtaken African-Americans to become the largest minority group in the country. The Asian population, starting from a much smaller base, grew even more rapidly (by 72%) during the past decade.

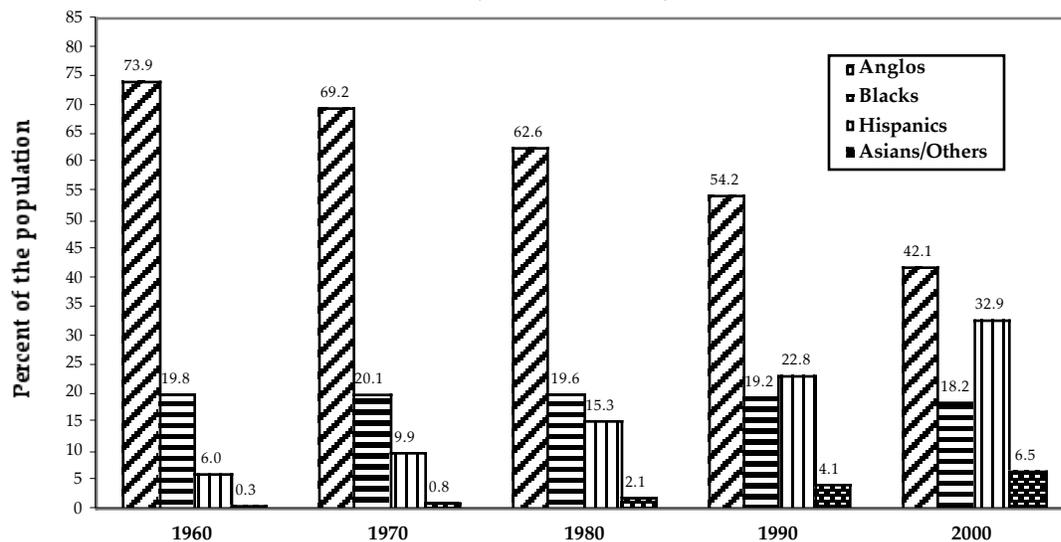
In contrast with the surging growth of Hispanics and Asians and with the increase by more than 16% in the population of African-Americans, the U.S. census reported that the numbers of European Americans grew by just 3.4%. In the 1990s, the three minority populations together expanded at almost 12 times the rate of Anglos. By the year 2000, fewer than 70% of all Americans were white and non-Hispanic, down from more than 75% just a decade earlier. If current trends continue, the census bureau projects that before 2060, Americans of European descent will

constitute less than half the nation's population. By then, Latinos will be 27% of all Americans, blacks will be 13%, and Asian Americans 10% (Frey, Abresch, and Yeasting, 2001).

In several of America's largest cities, that "majority minority" future has already arrived. Immigrants tend to cluster in a small number of metropolitan areas, held there by family and linguistic ties and benefiting greatly from the social and economic support that co-ethnic communities provide. The metropolitan regions of Los Angeles and New York together contain more than a third of the entire foreign-born population of America (Waldinger, 2001). Next come four smaller but important gateway cities — Miami, San Francisco, Chicago, and Houston. Perhaps nowhere has the ethnic transformation been more sudden or surprising than in the case of Houston.

The Houston numbers. Figure 2 depicts the U.S. census figures for Harris County during each of the last five decades. The surging population growth of this region in the 1960s and 1970s was brought about primarily by the influx of white non-Hispanic Americans, who were streaming into this booming area from other parts of the country. The Anglo population of Harris County grew by 31% in the 1960s and by another 25% in the 1970s. By 1981 Houston had overtaken Philadelphia to become the fourth largest city in America, with a population that was still almost two-thirds Anglo. Only 15% of Harris County residents in 1980 were Hispanic, and only 2% were Asian.

Figure 2
U.S. Census Figures for Harris County, Texas
(1960–2000)



FIGURES FROM THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
(Total populations: 1,243,258 — 1,741,912 — 2,409,547 — 2,818,199 — 3,400,578)

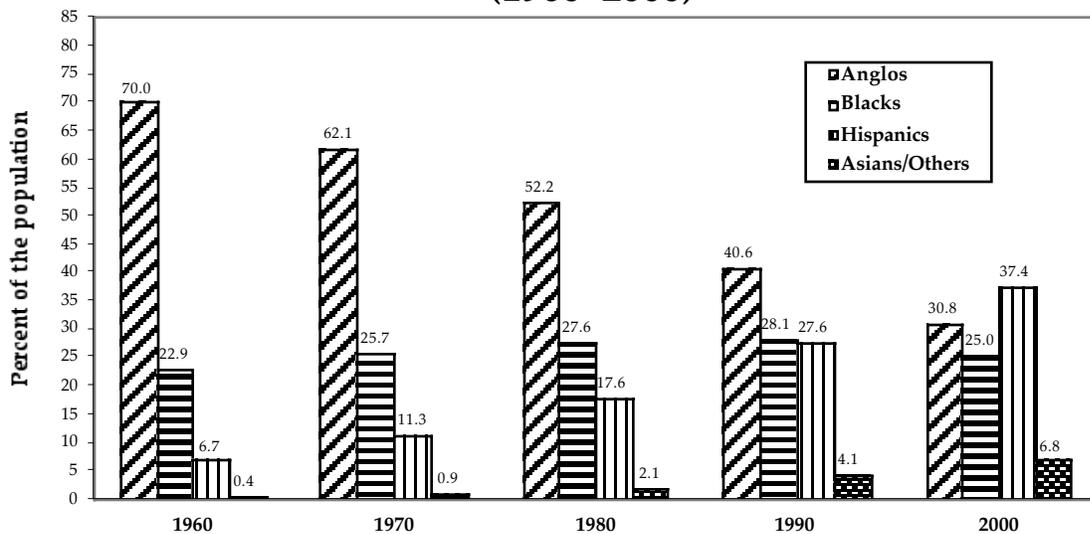
After the collapse of the oil boom in 1982, the numbers of Anglos in the county stabilized, growing by just 1% in the 1980s, and then declined by 6% in the 1990s. Yet Harris County's total population increased by another 17% during the 1980s and by 21% in the 1990s. The African-American numbers grew by about 14% in each of these decades, fueled both by African im-

migration and by the return to the South of many middle-class blacks from northern cities. Meanwhile, the county's Hispanic population doubled in the 1960s, doubled again in the 1970s, and expanded by approximately 75% in both the 1980s and the 1990s. The Asian numbers grew by 129% in the 1980s and by another 76% in the 1990s.

By the year 2000, Houston had joined New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, to become one the nation's premier "multiethnic melting pots" (Frey et al., 2001). All four of America's largest cities now have majority minority populations. The 2000 census counted 3.4 million people living in Harris County, of whom just 42% were European-Americans. The area's population was 33% Hispanic, 18% African-American and 7% Asian or other. The 2002 Houston Area Survey found that 22% of all Harris County residents aged 18 or over were foreign-born, and 14% of the entire adult population was comprised specifically of Hispanic immigrants.

Figure 3 presents the even-more dramatic figures for the city of Houston. The numbers of Anglos living within the city limits declined by 21% in the 1980s and by another 9% in the 1990s, while the populations of Hispanics and Asians were surging. In the 2000 census, the city of Houston, with almost 2 million inhabitants, was 37% Hispanic and only 31% Anglo; another 25% were African-American and 7% were Asian and other.

Figure 3
U.S. Census Figures for the City of Houston
(1960–2000)



FIGURES FROM THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
(Total Populations: 938,219 — 1,232,802 — 1,595,138 — 1,630,553 — 1,953,631)

Throughout virtually all of its history, Houston was essentially a biracial Southern city dominated and controlled by white men. In just 20 years, it has been transformed into one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse cities in America. More than a decade ago, a cover story in *Time Magazine* (Henry, 1990) used this city to illustrate the new America. "At the Sesame Hut restau-

rant in Houston," the author wrote, "a Korean immigrant owner trains Hispanic immigrant workers to prepare Chinese-style food for a largely black clientele."

This region's evolution into a fully multiethnic society will inevitably be marked by conflict and controversy. The new diversity is an enormous potential asset for Houston as this city positions itself for successful competition in the global economy. It could also become a serious and divisive liability in the absence of effective and determined community-wide efforts. The development of objective and reliable information about the similarities and differences in the experiences, attitudes, and beliefs both within and among Houston's major ethnic communities can be particularly helpful during this period of transition.

CONDUCTING THE HOUSTON SURVEYS

Obtaining the annual samples of Harris County residents. In order to ensure that every Harris County adult living in a household with a telephone will have an equal probability of being interviewed, survey respondents are selected each year through a two-stage random-digit-dialing procedure. In each household reached by computer-generated telephone numbers, a designated respondent is selected randomly from all residents in the household aged 18 or older.

Using back translation and the reconciliation of discrepancies, each year's questionnaire is translated into Spanish — and in 1995 and 2002 into the major Asian languages as well. The actual interviews for the basic surveys were conducted during February and March in each of the 21 years by Telesurveys Research Associates, the Houston research firm.

In the early years, the sample size was set at 450 to 550. It increased to 679 in 1988, and has remained at around 650 since 1990. Response rates, indicating the number of completed interviews in relation to all possible households in the sample, ranged from 75% during the early 1980s to 58% more recently.

The decreasing response rates are not the result of any growth in the numbers of designated respondents who decline to be interviewed: The refusal rate has remained at around 14% across the years. Instead, the lower response rates reflect the increasing difficulty all such surveys encounter, in an era of "caller-I.D." and recording machines, in simply getting people to answer their telephones. The response rates obtained in the Houston surveys are nonetheless consistently higher than the average for professional survey research, justifying continued confidence in the reliability of the data.

With samples of 650, there is a 95% probability that the findings obtained in the surveys will hold true for the entire Harris County population within a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5%. In assessing changes from one year to the next or in measuring the central thrust of Houston attitudes, this means that a difference of six percentage points or less may be due to chance variations in the samples.

When responses differ from one year to the next by seven or more percent, however, such discrepancies could have been produced by chance fewer than five times out of a hundred. Differences of this magnitude justify the conclusion that the surveys are reflecting real changes among area residents in their responses to identical questions asked in the different years. Similarly, if responses in any one year diverge by seven or more points, it can be concluded that a majority found in the survey represents a true majority in the population as a whole.

The changes in Houston's demographic composition since the surveys began made clear the need for more extensive research into the life circumstances and perspectives of residents from all of Houston's ethnic communities. Additional support from several companies and organizations in the Houston area, under the leadership of the SBC Foundation, made it possible to expand the surveys in 10 of the last 12 years with "oversample" interviews in Houston's black and Latino communities.

It is more difficult to obtain large representative samples from Houston's increasingly important Asian communities, because they still constitute a relatively small proportion of the Houston population as a whole. One out of every two randomly selected households in Harris County will contain an African-American or Latino adult, but only three or four of every one hundred households contains an Asian.

In 1995, generous contributors from the wider Houston community enabled us for the first time to include interviews with a scientifically selected representative sample of Houston's Asian communities. This research endeavor is still unduplicated in any other city in America (see Klineberg 1996).

In 2002, a major grant from the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast, buttressed by additional contributions primarily from the Asian community itself, made it possible to replicate and enlarge the 1995 "Houston Area Asian Survey." This report presents some of the most interesting findings from the expanded 2002 survey. The research constitutes the most comprehensive study ever conducted to explore the similarities and differences in life circumstances, experiences, attitudes, and beliefs among Houston's Anglo, black, Hispanic and Asian communities.

The expanded 2002 Houston Area Survey. Table 1 outlines the extraordinary efforts that were undertaken to obtain truly representative samples of adults from all four of Houston's major ethnic communities. The staff at Telesurveys Research Associates began in February 2002 with groups of randomly generated numbers that could serve Harris County telephones. As the numbers were dialed, the ones that were disconnected or not in service, that reached business or government offices, or that turned out to be children's phones, faxes, modems, beepers and the like were removed from the list. The interviewers eventually dialed a total of 65,000 numbers, from which there remained 40,083 that were potentially connected to Harris County households.

By the end of the three months of data collection, a total of 24,267 interviews were conducted with a randomly selected respondent in each household reached with these numbers. The 650 in-

interviews for the basic 2002 Houston Area Survey, reaching a representative sample of all Harris county residents, were completed between February 21 and March 8.

TABLE 1

**GENERATING REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLES FROM
HOUSTON'S FOUR MAJOR ETHNIC COMMUNITIES
(Field Period: 21 February through 23 May 2002)**

A. Total random phone numbers assigned	65,000
1. <u>Less</u> : Non-existent or disconnected numbers	12,699
Business or government telephones	8,621
Children's phones, faxes, modems, etc.	3,597
<u>Total unusable numbers</u>	24,917
2. <u>Net sample</u> (phone numbers that are presumably reaching Houston area households)	40,083
3. <u>Less</u> : Refusals, break-offs	6,388
Other (e.g., no answer after repeated tries)	9,428
B. Screening interviews	24,267 (60.5%)
1. Anglo interviews completed (by 11 March 2002)	504
2. Hispanic interviews completed (by 26 March 2002)	504
3. African-American interviews completed (by 8 April 2002)	500
4. Other non-Asian interviews for HAS2002 (completed, 8 March 2002) ..	33
5. <u>Less</u> : Other non-Asian households	19,016
Call-backs (unable to reach designated respondent)	2,495
Other (e.g., no answer after repeated tries)	474
<u>Total unusable screens</u>	21,985
C. Asian households identified	741 (3.1%)
1. <u>Less</u> : Refusals, break-offs	164
Others (e.g., inability to reach the designated respondent; no answer after repeated tries; etc.)	77
2. Asian interviews completed (by 23 May 2002)	500 (67.5%)

That basic 2002 sample consisted of 335 Anglos (52%), 151 Latinos (23%), 118 African-Americans (18%), 23 Asians (3.5%), 18 "others" (2.6%), and 5 individuals who did not report their ethnicity. Note that the minority communities are inevitably underrepresented in the basic annual samples, primarily because the two-stage random-digit-dialing procedure designates only one respondent in each randomly selected household, and minority households generally contain

more adults than do Anglo households. The "ethnic oversamples" were initiated in 1991 in part to compensate for this characteristic of the research methodology.

In order to enlarge and equalize the number of respondents this year at approximately 500 from each of Houston's four major ethnic communities, the interviewing process continued through March, April and May 2002. The additional oversample surveys used identical random selection procedures and the same opening questions to screen for eligible respondents. After the first few questions, the interviews were terminated if the respondent was not of the "correct" ethnicity. Otherwise, they proceeded to the end of the questionnaire in exactly the same way as in the interviews for the basic 2002 Houston Area Survey.

The screening and interviewing process continued until at least 500 surveys were conducted with randomly selected individuals from each of Houston's four largest ethnic communities. As indicated in Table 1, the Anglo interviews were completed by March 11, the Hispanic interviews by March 26 and the interviews with African-Americans by April 8. It required another month and a half of intensive effort to complete the 500 Asian interviews.

In the process of conducting the initial 24,267 household interviews, the staff at Telesurveys Research Associates, which included several multilingual Asian interviewers, identified 741 households (3.1% of the total) in which there was a least one Asian adult. By May 23, they completed the 500 interviews with a randomly selected Asian living in each of these households (for a response rate of 67.5%). One-fourth (24.8%) of all the Asian interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin or Korean.

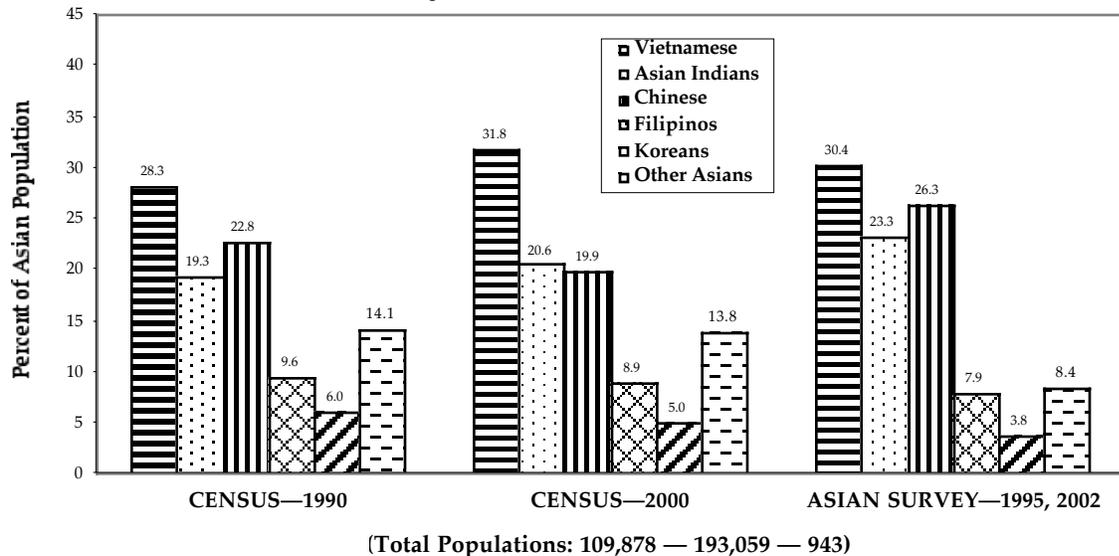
In the 2000 U.S. census, 174,626 residents of Harris County checked an Asian nationality on the "race" question, and an additional 18,433 checked "Asian" in combination with one or more other races, for a total of 193,059 Asian-origin Harris County residents. This represents an increase of 75.7% from the 109,878 Harris County Asians who were counted by the 1990 census, a growth rate that even exceeds the 73.5% increase in the county's Latino population. The most rapid growth of all was recorded by the Vietnamese and the Asian Indians, followed by the Filipinos, Chinese and Koreans.

Figure 4 compares the countries of origin of the respondents in the combined 1995 and 2002 Asian surveys with the distribution of Asian nationalities as recorded by the U.S. census in 1990 and 2000. As indicated in the figure, the countries of origin of Harris County Asians in the 2000 census were distributed as follows: 32% were Vietnamese, 21% were Asian Indians, 20% were Chinese and 9% were Filipinos. The comparable distributions among the respondents who participated in the two Asian surveys (1995 and 2002, combined) were consistent with the census figures: 30% of the survey respondents were Vietnamese, 23% were Indians, 26% were Chinese, and 8% were Filipinos.

This close correspondence with the census data, in combination with the unusually high response rates obtained in both of the Asian surveys (67.5% in 2002, 82.1% in 1995), strengthens confidence in the reliability of the data. The careful procedures that were followed here should provide about as accurate a picture as it is possible to obtain through scientific survey research of the ex-

periences and perspectives to be found both within and among all four of Houston's major ethnic communities.

Figure 4
Harris-County Asians by Country of Origin,
in the U.S. Census of 1990 and 2000, and in the
Asian Surveys (1995 and 2002, Combined)



The survey questions. This year's 2,041 interviews were unusually detailed, averaging 24 minutes apiece. The information encompasses a wide array of attitudes and beliefs, and probes deeply into backgrounds and life experiences. This report can present only a small sampling of the research findings. Some additional findings are reviewed briefly by Klineberg (2002) and Snyder (2002a). Further analyses of the data as they become available will be posted on the survey web site (www.houstonareasurvey.org), and other aspects of this research will be presented in subsequent published reports.

The interviews measure respondents' socioeconomic status, including educational attainment, current occupation, personal and household incomes, and fathers' occupations, as well as access to computers and the Internet, and self-reported health. They record family status (marriage, children, household size), age, and gender; and ask about the difficulties the respondents personally have experienced in buying groceries to feed their families, in balancing the demands of work and parenting, and in arranging for adequate day care or after-school activities for their children.

Respondents were also asked, as in previous years, about their attitudes and beliefs with regard to various dimensions of ongoing societal change. The surveys measure economic outlooks in terms of personal, local and national prospects. They explore perspectives on poverty and welfare programs, on workplace discrimination and affirmative action, on the new immigration and interethnic relations in Houston.

They measure attitudes toward crime, education, taxation, community service, downtown development, environmental protection and other quality-of-life issues. They record responses to changes in family structures and gender roles, and to issues of homosexuality, abortion rights and sex education. And they assess several different aspects of the respondents' religious and political orientations.

For the immigrant communities (Hispanics, Asians and foreign-born blacks), additional questions ask about ethnic identity and acculturation. These include the languages spoken, citizenship and voting behavior, and self-perceptions as primarily of one's country of origin or American. They also ask about the frequency with which respondents report teaching young people about their ethnic heritage, participating in ethnic holidays or cultural events, and attending meetings of organizations from their ethnic community.

DIFFERENCES IN PATTERNS OF IMMIGRATION AND IN SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Ethnic group differences in migration patterns. Table 2 draws on the 2002 "oversample" surveys to compare the basic background variables across the four communities. The differences among the populations reflect the interconnections of the two most consequential demographic trends of our time — known as the "aging" and the "colorizing" (or the "graying" and the "browning") of the American and Houston populations. As indicated in the table, 42% of all the Anglo respondents in the 2002 surveys were 50 or older, compared to 30% of blacks, 24% of Asians and 14% of Latinos. At the other end of the spectrum, 40% of Hispanic adults were under the age of 30, compared to just 13% of Anglo adults.

The table also reflects the patterns of immigration that have transformed this city's ethnic makeup. Black Houstonians are far more likely than area residents of other ethnicities to have been born or raised in the Houston area: 57% report that they grew up in this region, compared to just over a third of the Anglos, less than a third of the Latinos, and only a fifth of the Asians. The U.S.-born members of the two predominantly immigrant communities, however, are the most likely of all to be Houston born and bred. The surveys reveal (not shown in the table) that 70% of all U.S.-born Asian Houstonians and 65% of the U.S.-born Latinos grew up in the Houston area.

Hispanics, of course, lived in the Houston region well before the city was founded in 1836 (De Leon 1989). Yet almost two-thirds (63%) of all Hispanics aged 18 or older now living in Harris County are first-generation immigrants. Table 2 indicates further that 53% of all Latinos grew up in their countries of origin and came to Houston as adults. Even more striking, fully 86% of all Asian adults in Harris County today are first-generation immigrants, and 69% grew up outside the United States. Almost half (48%) immigrated to Houston directly from abroad, without having lived anywhere else in America. More than 70% of all Hispanic adults and more than 95% of all Asians report that *both* parents were foreign-born.

TABLE 2

AGE AND MIGRATION PATTERNS IN FOUR COMMUNITIES
(From the Expanded 2002 Houston Area Survey)

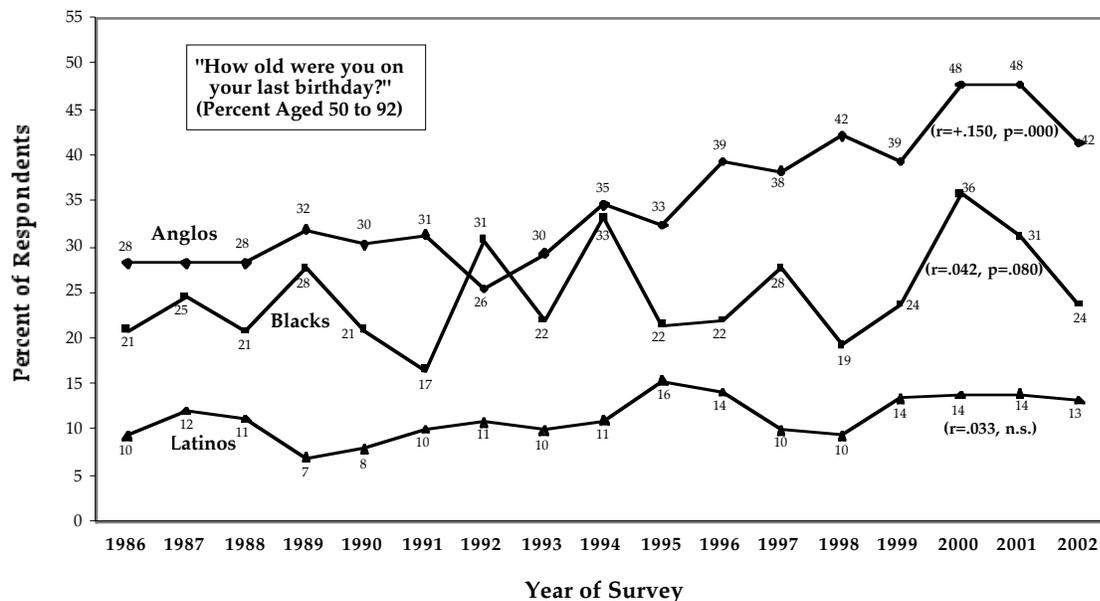
		ANGLOS (N = 504)	BLACKS (N=500)	LATINOS (N=504)	ASIANS (N=500)
1. How old were you on your last birthday?	18 to 29	12.8%	23.1%	39.7%	30.0%
	30 to 49	33.3	36.5	36.7	46.3
	50 to 92	41.8	29.9	13.8	23.7
2. For how many years have you lived in the Houston area?	9 years or less	18.7%	16.4%	37.6%	42.8%
	10 to 19 years	16.1	14.8	27.0	29.8
	20 to 29 years	23.0	19.6	18.3	23.2
	30 years or more	42.3	49.1	17.1	4.2
3. Where did you live just before coming to the Houston area?	Born in H. area	25.1%	46.2%	18.9%	9.4%
	Elsewhere in TX	31.3	23.0	21.5	12.3
	Elsewhere in US	42.0	26.2	8.4	30.4
	Outside the US	1.6	4.7	51.2	48.0
4. Where did you live when growing up (when you were 16 years old)?	Houston area	36.3%	56.7%	30.9%	21.2%
	Elsewhere in TX	22.5	18.3	14.0	3.5
	Elsewhere in US	38.6	19.0	2.7	6.4
	Outside the US	2.5	6.0	52.5	68.8
5. Were you born in the United States?	Yes	96.0%	93.6%	36.7%	13.9%
	No	4.0	6.4	63.3	86.1
6. Were your parents born in the United States?	Yes, both of them	90.5%	92.4%	19.5%	1.8%
	Only one of them	4.0	1.2	8.0	1.4
	No, neither of them	5.6	6.4	72.6	96.8

The aging of the Anglos. The ethnic transformation of this city is especially dramatic when age is taken into account. Across the country, the "aging of America" in general is turning out to be as much a division along ethnic lines as it is along generational ones. The group differences at the national level reflect the aging of the predominantly Anglo baby-boom generation (the 73 million Americans who were born between 1946 and 1964, now aged 38 to 56), as well as Anglos' generally longer life expectancies and lower fertility rates.

The age differences in Houston are unusually stark because they also result from the timing of the two great immigrant streams into this region. It is the younger adults, of course, who are the most likely to brave the difficult immigrant journey in pursuit of better opportunities for themselves and their children.

Figure 5 depicts the percentages of Anglo, black, and Latino respondents who were 50 years old or older in each of the basic surveys conducted since 1986. The data document the continual aging of Harris County's Anglo population. In 1992, 26% of all the randomly selected Anglo respondents were 50 or older. The proportions grew to 35% in 1994, to 39% in 1996, to 42% in 1998, to 48% in 2000 and 2001, and 42% in 2002. Meanwhile, the surveys indicate very little increase in age in the African-American population across the years, and none at all in the population of Latinos.

Figure 5
Respondents Aged 50 and Older in
Three Ethnic Communities (1986–2002)



As we have seen in Table 2, only 36% of all Harris County Anglos were living in the Houston area before the age of 16. Anglos generally moved here as "domestic migrants" during the booming years of the 1960s and 1970s. The median date on which they arrived in Harris County was 1977, at the median age of 28. After 1982, as we have seen, the numbers of non-Hispanic whites in the Houston area stabilized and then declined.

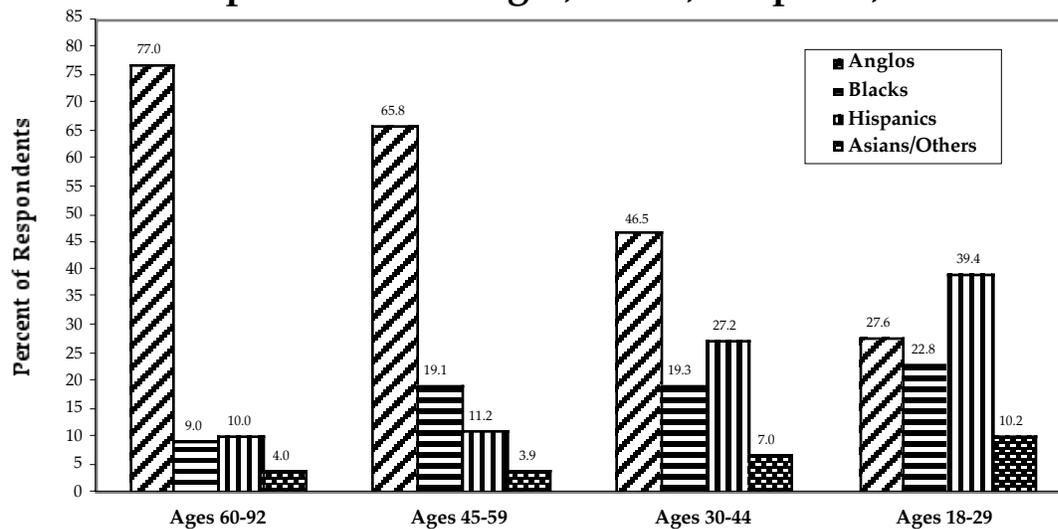
Virtually all the net growth of Harris County's population during the past 20 years is attributable to immigration directly from Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa, and to the birth of new babies, often the children of earlier immigrants. Other urban areas less attractive to the new immigrants — cities such as Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, and St. Louis — saw their populations decline during the 1990s (Frey et al., 2001).

The surveys indicate that the median date of arrival for the Hispanic immigrants was 1988, at the median age of 24. Of all the Latino immigrants living in the Houston area today, 43% moved to the region in the past 10 years. This explains their predominance among today's younger adults. Hispanics are even more numerous among Houston's future adults: More than half of all the pu-

pils in the Houston Independent School District, in all classes from kindergarten through the senior year, are now Latino children.

These demographic forces are reflected in Figure 6, which presents a striking snapshot of Houston's present and future. The 2002 basic Houston Area Survey found that, of all the respondents in Harris County who were 60 and older, fully 77% were Anglos. Only 10% were Hispanics, 9% were African-American, 4% Asians or other. At each younger age group, particularly after age 45, the proportion of Anglos plummets, while the percentages of the other ethnicities (especially Latinos) grow rapidly. Among all area residents aged 18 to 29, Figure 6 indicates that more than 72% are black, Hispanic and Asian.

Figure 6
The Proportion of Respondents in Four Age Groups Who Are Anglo, Black, Hispanic, Asian

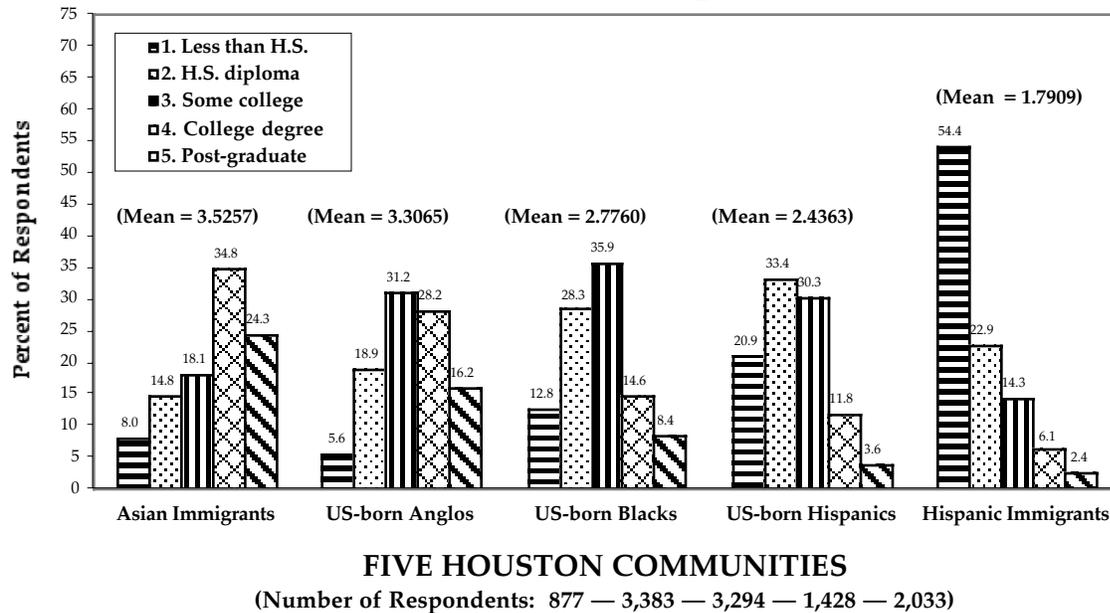


THE HOUSTON AREA SURVEY—2002
 (Number of Respondents: 100 — 152 — 243 — 127)

Almost two-thirds (62%) of Harris County's young adults today are African-American and Hispanic. These are the populations that have been the least well served historically by Houston's educational and social service institutions, and they will constitute the bulk of the city's work force in the twenty-first century. Clearly, if this community's "minority" youth are unprepared to succeed in the knowledge economy of the new millennium, it is hard to envision a prosperous future for the city as a whole.

The socioeconomic diversity of the new immigration. Figure 7 depicts the remarkable differences in educational attainment among Houston's varied immigrant and American-born communities. The contrasts reflect two of the most important ways in which the current stream of immigration differs from all previous immigrant streams in American history. First, of course, the new immigration is predominantly non-European.

Figure 7
Educational Attainment in Five Communities
(1994–2002 Oversample Data)



Second, and equally unprecedented, is its socioeconomic variability (Waldinger, 2001). One group of immigrants (mostly from Asia and Africa) is coming to Houston and America with higher levels of education and professional skills than ever before in the history of American immigration. Another, much larger group (mostly Hispanic) is arriving with stunning educational deficits relative to the rest of the American population.

As we have seen, almost nine-tenths of all Asian adults living in Harris County today are first-generation immigrants; more than two-thirds of them grew up in their countries of origin and came to America as adults. Figure 7 indicates further that 59% of all the Asian immigrants residing in the Houston area have college or postgraduate degrees, compared to just 44% of the U.S.-born Anglos.

In sharp contrast, more than 54% of all the Hispanic immigrants in Harris County do not have high school diplomas, and only 8.5% have college degrees. The comparable figures for the U.S.-born Latinos in Houston are 21% without high school and 15% with college degrees or more. The U.S.-born blacks have higher levels of education than their Latino counterparts: Only 13% of the African-Americans are without high school diplomas, and 23% are college-educated.

The Asian difference. The success that so many Asian immigrants have achieved in America has given rise to the "model minority" stereotype. This widely held image is based on the assumption that Asians generally resemble the European peasants who came to America during the great "third wave" of immigration, between 1890 and 1914. Like these earlier immigrants, Asians are assumed to have arrived in this country with little money and few skills. If they have succeeded, it must therefore be solely by virtue of hard work, high intelligence and strong family values.

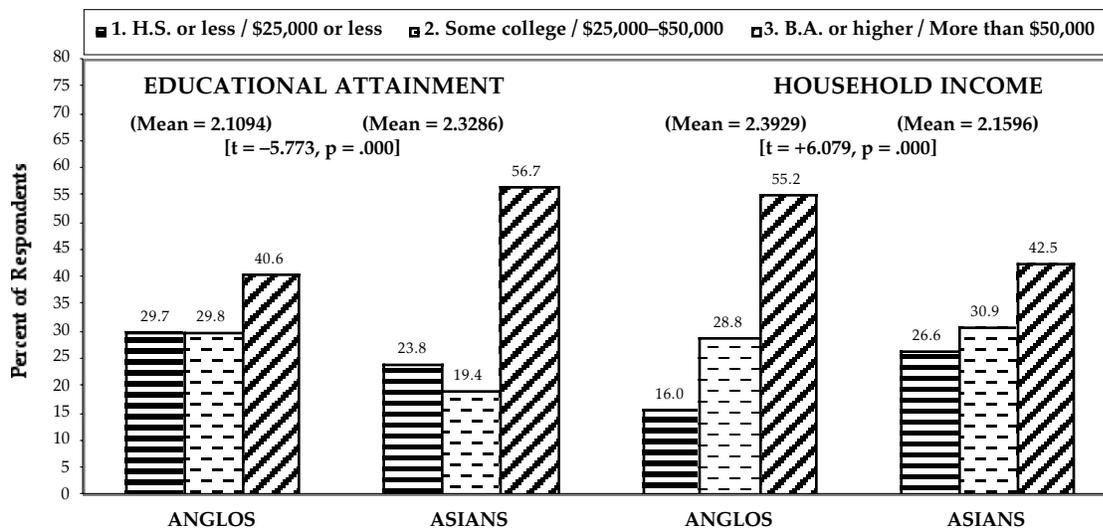
Hence, at least by implication, Houston's blacks and Latinos have only themselves to blame if they have not achieved equal success.

The data in Figure 7 make it clear, however, that Asians have been relatively successful in Houston primarily because they come from families in their countries of origin whose educational and occupational attainments far exceed the average for native-born Anglo-Americans. Their success is attributable primarily to the educational and occupational backgrounds the Asians experienced *before* most of them immigrated to America (Snyder, 2002b).

When asked what occupation their fathers had when they themselves were 16 years old, almost half (48%) of all the Asian respondents in the 2002 survey said their fathers were doctors, lawyers, professors, engineers, corporate executives or other professionals. This was true of just 39% of the Anglos and 17% of the blacks and Latinos. Only 20% of Asians said that their fathers were in low-paying production jobs or worked as low-skilled agricultural or day laborers; but this was the case for 37% of Anglos, 62% of blacks and 70% of Latinos.

The surveys point to something else as well. Figure 8 compares the levels of educational attainment and household incomes among the Anglo and Asian respondents in the combined 1995 and 2002 expanded surveys. Despite levels of education that are considerably higher than those of most Anglos, Asians report much lower family incomes. Only 43% of the Asians, compared to 55% of the Anglos, said their total household incomes exceeded \$50,000.

Figure 8
Differences among Anglos and Asians in
Education and Household Incomes (1995, 2002)



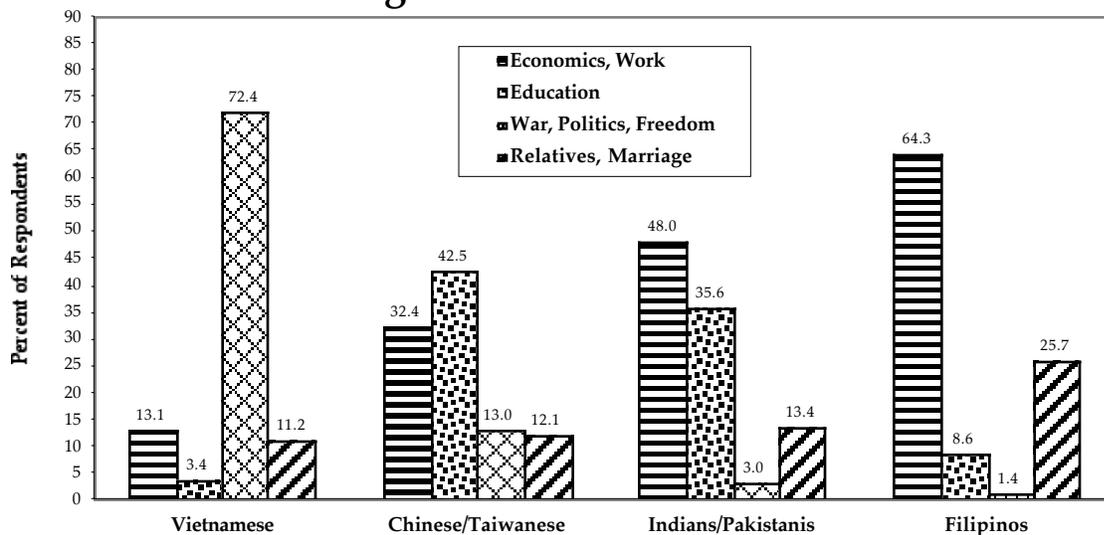
ANGLOS AND ASIANS ON EDUCATION AND INCOME
 (Number of Respondents: 951 — 977 — 840 — 821)

The differences loom even larger when family size is taken into account. More than half (52%) of the Asian respondents reported that four or more people lived in their households; just 28% were in households with only one or two members. Among Anglos, in contrast, only 33% were in households with four or more members, and 48% lived alone or with just one other person. The surveys also indicate that Asians are significantly less likely than Anglos to have health insurance, to own their own homes, or to live in the suburbs.

Asian Americans in Houston are as likely as Anglos to be employed in professional or managerial positions, but they earn less and report considerably lower household incomes. Some part of this discrepancy is surely a consequence of having arrived as recent immigrants with educational credentials that are often difficult to transfer into a new society. Part of the disparity may also reflect the impact of continuing discrimination. The so-called "glass ceiling," through which Asian professionals can see the top management positions in their companies but are unable to reach them, has been documented in studies across the country (Fong, 2002).

The stereotype of the "model minority" thus overlooks the class advantages enjoyed by the high proportion of Asian immigrants who come from upper-middle-class families in their countries of origin, and it diverts attention from continuing discrimination. It also lumps together into a single image individuals from 27 different nationalities, who speak different languages, follow different religious and cultural traditions, and may be recent immigrants or fourth-generation Americans.

Figure 9
Reasons for Immigrating to America
among Four Asian Communities



FOUR ASIAN COMMUNITIES
 (Number of Respondents: 268 — 207 — 202 — 70)

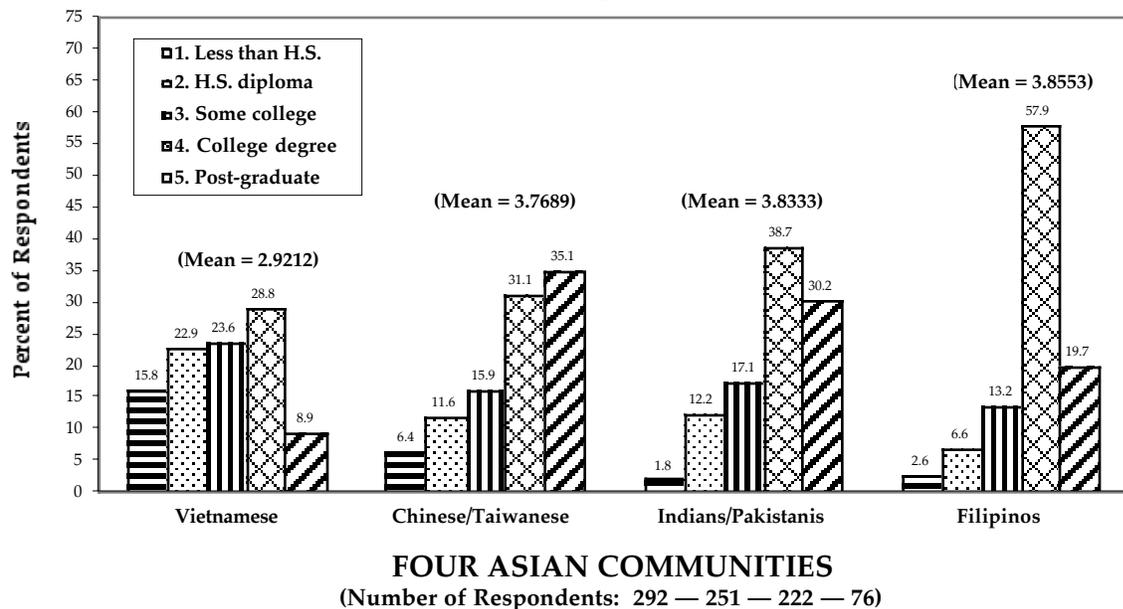
Above all, the "model minority" myth glosses over the fact that large segments of the Asian population in America and Houston are far from prosperous, and makes it less likely that improv-

erished Asians will be given the help that others receive. As indicated in Figure 9, the various Asian nationalities came to America under contrasting circumstances, for divergent reasons, and with vastly different levels of resources. When asked what it was that brought them or their parents to this country, almost three-fourths of the Vietnamese respondents said they immigrated because of political persecution, as a result of war, or in search of freedom.

Only 13% of the Chinese gave political reasons, and virtually none of the other Asians from elsewhere than Southeast Asia did so. Filipinos said they came primarily for work opportunities; they were also more likely than the other groups to cite marriage or family reasons for immigrating. Both the Chinese and the Indians gave reasons of education and work in roughly equal proportions, but the Chinese were more likely to mention education, and the Indians more often cited work opportunities.

Figure 10 depicts the educational differences among Houston's four largest Asian communities. The high overall levels of educational achievement among Asians in general mask important differences by country of origin. The differences have much to do with the policies that determine one's ability to come to this country either as a legal immigrant or as a refugee facing political persecution.

Figure 10
Educational Attainment among Asians by
Country of Origin (1995, 2002)



The Vietnamese fled to America after the fall of Saigon in 1975 as part of the largest refugee resettlement program in American history. Like most refugee communities in the United States (Cubans in Miami are a prime example), they came in two waves. Many of the early arrivals were highly educated professionals, politicians or military officers who had served in the former American-backed government in Vietnam.

Many more Southeast Asians (Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians) came in the 1980s and 1990s with little formal education and few resources, having survived horrible conditions in refugee camps and terrifying voyages across the seas. Often they speak little English: 47% of the Vietnamese respondents in the Asian surveys completed the interviews in their native language. This was also the case for 41% of the Chinese and for 54% of all the Latino respondents in the 2002 survey.

Fewer than 38% of the Vietnamese have college or professional degrees, compared to 58% of all Asians in the Houston area and to a striking 78% of the Filipinos (although Figure 10 indicates that Indians and Chinese are more likely than Filipinos to have post-graduate degrees). The Filipinos, 67% of whom are women, came primarily under the occupational provisions of the 1965 Immigration Reform Act — conspicuously, the data suggest, for jobs as health technicians and nurses at the Texas Medical Center and other area hospitals.

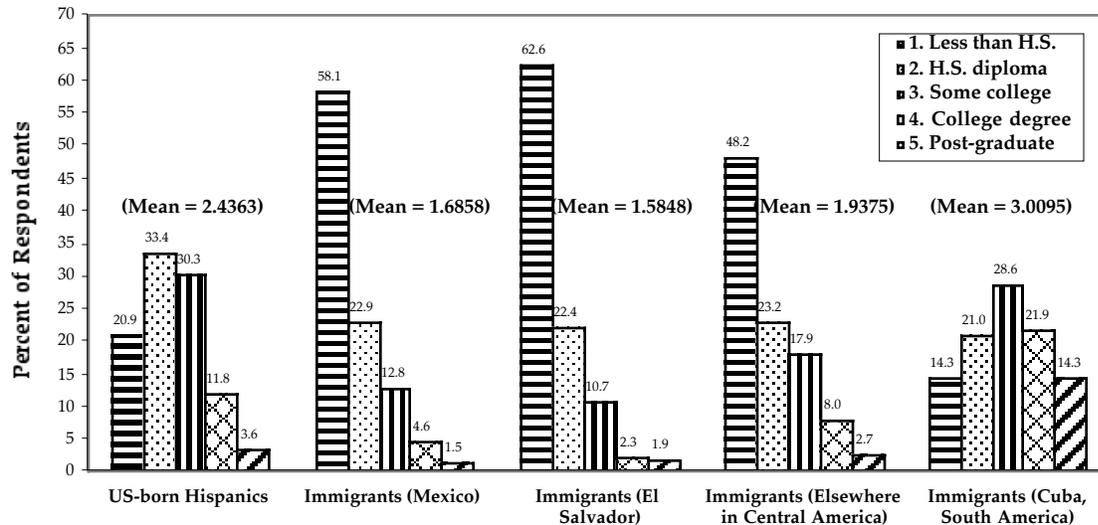
The surveys indicate that the Vietnamese are generally facing more difficult challenges than other Asians in Houston: Only 13% of all Asians are in low-paying production or day-labor jobs; but this is the case for 28% of the Vietnamese. Houston's southeast Asians are also significantly less likely than other Asians to have health insurance and more likely to report that they have problems buying groceries to feed their families. Clearly, many Vietnamese are having a hard time in this city, and they may be less likely to receive the help they need, in a language they can understand, from a wider community that continues to believe that all the Asians are doing fine.

Diversity within the Latino and black immigrant communities. Not surprisingly, there are important differences by country of origin within all the other pan-ethnic communities as well. Figure 11 indicates that the immigrants from Cuba and South America, unlike those from Mexico and Central America, are coming to Houston with much higher levels of education and professional credentials than the U.S.-born Hispanics. Only 14% of the immigrants from these countries do not have high school diplomas; fully 36% have college degrees.

These more highly skilled immigrants, however, represent just 7% of Houston's Hispanic immigrant population. According to the surveys and in keeping with the census figures, fully 72% of all the Latino immigrants now living in Harris County come from Mexico. Another 13% are from El Salvador, and 7% come from elsewhere in Central America. As indicated in Figure 11, the majority of immigrants from these countries do not have high school diplomas.

The immigrants from Mexico and Central America are coming to Houston with extraordinary energy and ambition, a proven willingness to work hard and strong family values. They also come in great numbers with very low levels of education and few economic resources. The Latino immigrants are generally working long hours in jobs that offer very low wages and no benefits. They are responsible for much of this region's low-cost and high-quality construction and yard work, and they fill the expanding low-skilled niches in the service sector — cooking and washing dishes in restaurants, cleaning private homes or caring for children and the elderly.

Figure 11
Educational Attainment among Latinos by
Place of Birth (1994–2002 Oversample Data)



HISPANICS BY PLACE OF BIRTH
 (Number of Respondents: 1,428 — 1,184 — 214 — 112 — 105)

According to the recent surveys, only 24% of Anglos in the Houston work force earn less than \$25,000; but this is the case for 55% of the African-Americans, 58% of the U.S.-born Hispanics, and 70% of the Latino immigrant workers. Only 38% of Houston's Hispanic immigrants have health insurance, compared to 84% of all other area residents.

The children of the Latino immigrants are generally attending overcrowded, underfunded inner-city schools. Their parents have few of the resources needed to ensure that they will be able to stay in school. Unless these young people receive the kind of help, support and encouragement from the wider community that will enable them to continue through high school and into some level of advanced education, they run the risk of being relegated to the same menial jobs now held by their parents (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996). There can be little doubt that the way the lives of Latino immigrants and their children unfold will profoundly shape the Houston future.

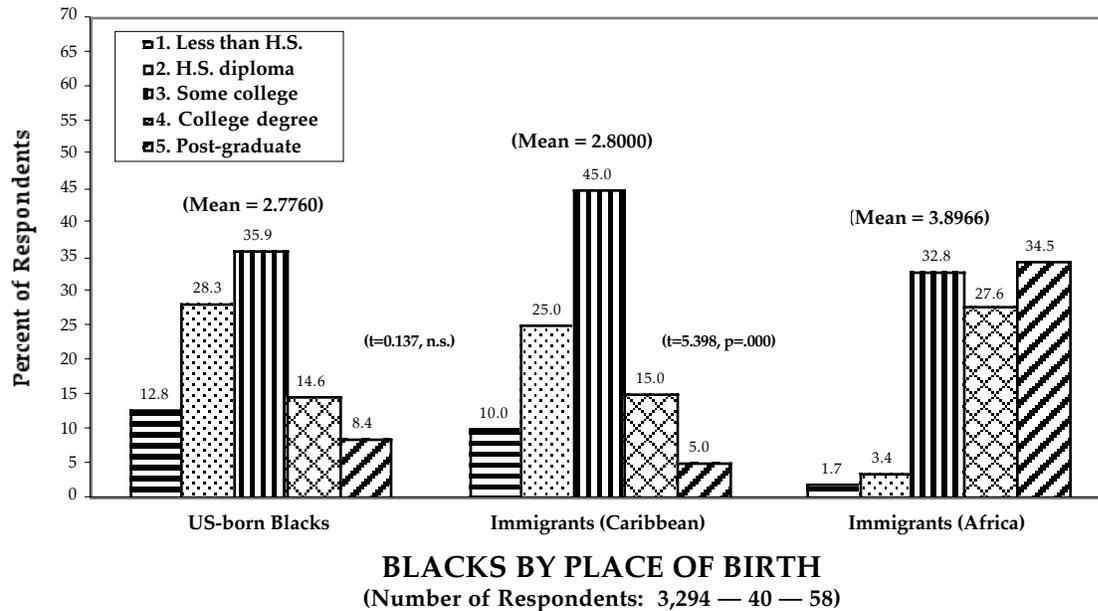
The cumulative "oversample" surveys since 1994 have now reached a sufficient number of foreign-born Anglos and blacks to be able to compare the educational credentials of immigrants and natives from these two predominantly U.S.-born communities. Unlike the case of the Hispanics, both black and European immigrants are coming to Houston with considerably higher levels of education and professional skills than their American-born counterparts.

Among the European immigrants interviewed in these surveys, 57% have college degrees, compared to 44% of native-born Anglos. Similarly, 46% of the black immigrants, but only 23% of the U.S.-born blacks, are college-educated. The Houston surveys confirm the national figures, which indicate that the immigrants who are coming from most of today's sending countries are more likely than native-born Americans to have high levels of educational credentials and professional

skills (Waldinger, 2001). The very least skilled and the most vulnerable of all the new immigrants, however, also constitute by far the largest group: namely, those arriving from Mexico and Central America.

Figure 12 shows that distinctions by continent of origin matter greatly for the black immigrants as well. Remarkably, the newcomers from Africa (primarily Nigeria) have higher levels of education than *any* other immigrant community interviewed in the surveys, including the Asians. Only 5% of the African immigrants now residing in Harris County have no more than high school diplomas; 62% have college degrees and 35% have post-graduate credentials. In contrast, immigrants from the Caribbean (primarily Jamaica) are arriving with no higher educational credentials than those of native-born African-Americans.

Figure 12
Educational Attainment among Blacks by
Place of Birth (1994–2002 Oversample Data)



Why do immigrants from Africa and from most of Asia come with levels of education and professional skills that are so much higher than among those from Mexico, Central America, or Southeast Asia? The primary explanation lies in the restrictive American immigration laws before reform in 1965. Through most of the twentieth century, Asians were banned entirely from coming to America, and Africans were never allowed before 1965 to immigrate freely. As a result, entry into America by the primary route of family reunification was unavailable to these potential immigrants after the restrictive laws were changed.

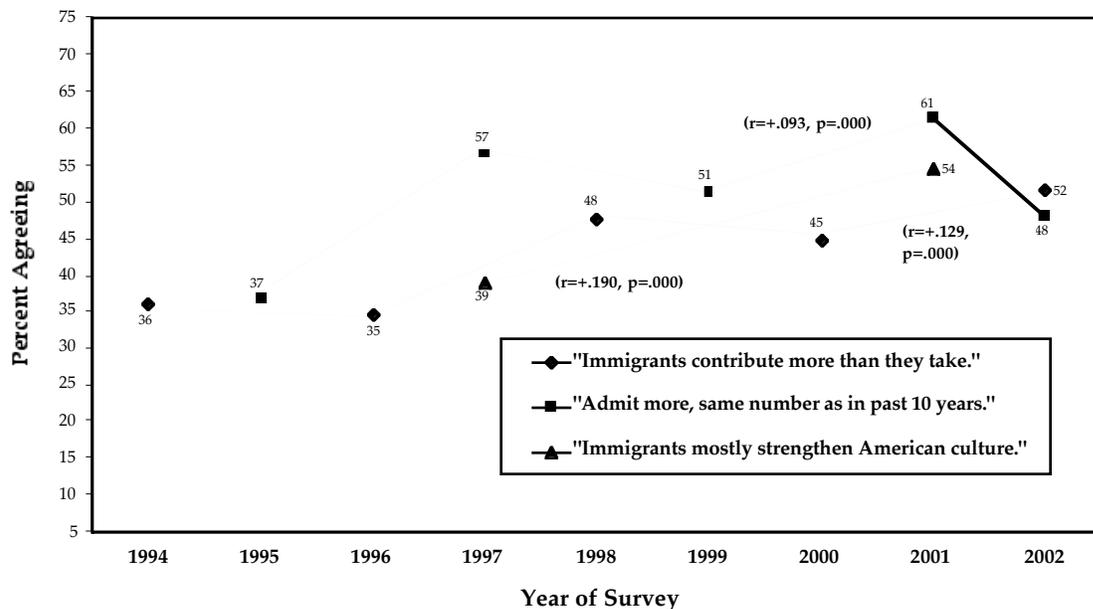
The only other ways to immigrate legally after 1965 were by virtue of refugee status and proven vulnerability to persecution (the Vietnamese), or by qualifying as "professionals of exceptional ability" (Asian Indians, Chinese, Africans), or by having occupational skills that were sorely needed and in demonstrably short supply in the United States (Filipino nurses). The unprece-

mented socioeconomic diversity among today's immigrant communities reflects the two different parts of the "hourglass" economy into which immigrants have been relegated by virtue of the skills they bring with them from their countries of origin.

INTERGROUP RELATIONS IN A "MULTIETHNIC MELTING POT"

Perspectives on the new diversity. The surveys have asked a variety of questions over the years to measure attitudes toward the new ethnic diversity brought about by accelerating immigration into the Houston region. The data presented in Figure 13 indicate that area residents as a whole (and Anglo respondents in particular) have generally been feeling better over the years about the city's demographic changes, although the respondents in the 2002 survey were also calling for more restrictive immigration policies.

Figure 13
Attitudes toward the New Immigration
(1994–2002)



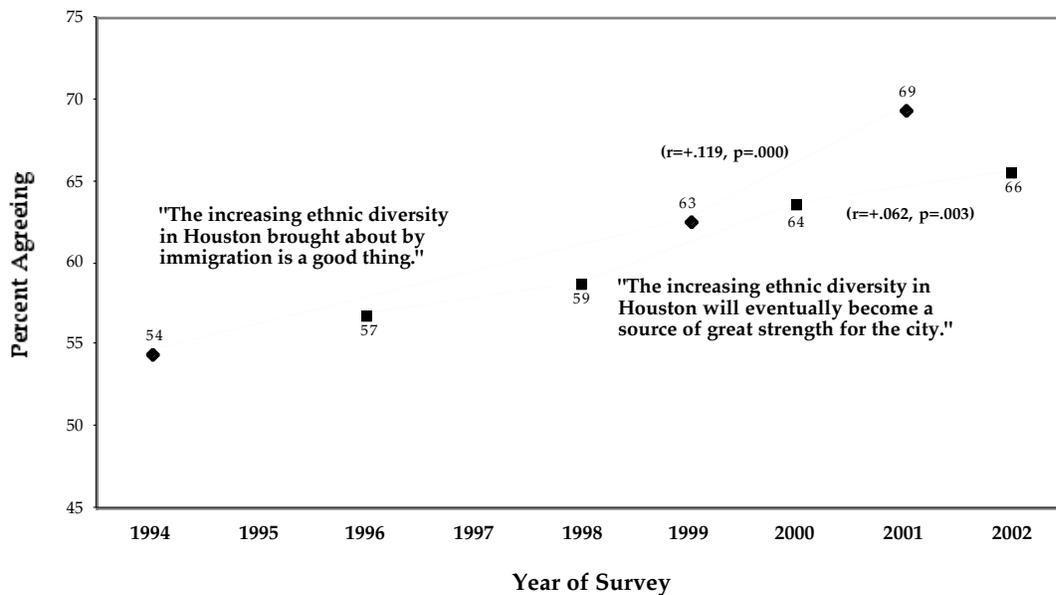
The growing economic insecurities since the year 2000, coupled with anxieties triggered by the terrorist attacks of 9/11, may have generated increased resistance to continued rapid immigration. The 2002 survey, replicating a question from the previous year, asked: "During the next ten years, would you like to see the U.S. admit more, fewer, or about the same number of legal immigrants as were admitted in the last ten years?" The proportion of area residents calling for more or the same number of immigrants dropped from 61% to 48% from last year to this; the numbers wanting fewer immigrants to be admitted grew from 31% in 2001 to 45% in 2002.

On the other hand, there were no signs of an increase in negative attitudes toward the immigrants who are already here. When asked if "immigrants to the U.S. generally take more from the American economy than they contribute, or do they contribute more than they take," 52% of the re-

spondents in 2002 said immigrants "contribute more" — up significantly from 45% in 2000 and from 35% in 1996. Asked if they thought that the increasing immigration into this country today "mostly strengthens" or "mostly threatens" American culture, 61% of the respondents in 1997 saw immigrants as a threat to American culture. By 2001, in contrast, 54% said that the new immigrants mostly strengthen the national culture.

Figure 14 tracks responses to two questions measuring attitudes toward the increasing ethnic variety in Houston. When asked if they thought the region's new diversity will eventually become a source of great strength or a growing problem for the city, the proportion of respondents who saw that diversity as a source of strength rose to 66% in the 2002 survey, continuing a steady upward climb from 64% in 2000, 59% in 1998 and 57% in 1996.

Figure 14
Assessments of the Increasing Ethnic Diversity
(1994–2002)



In alternating years, respondents were asked whether "the increasing ethnic diversity in Houston brought about by immigration is a good thing or a bad thing." The proportions saying that Houston's growing diversity was a good thing for the city increased steadily from 54% in 1994, to 63% in 1999, to 69% in 2001.

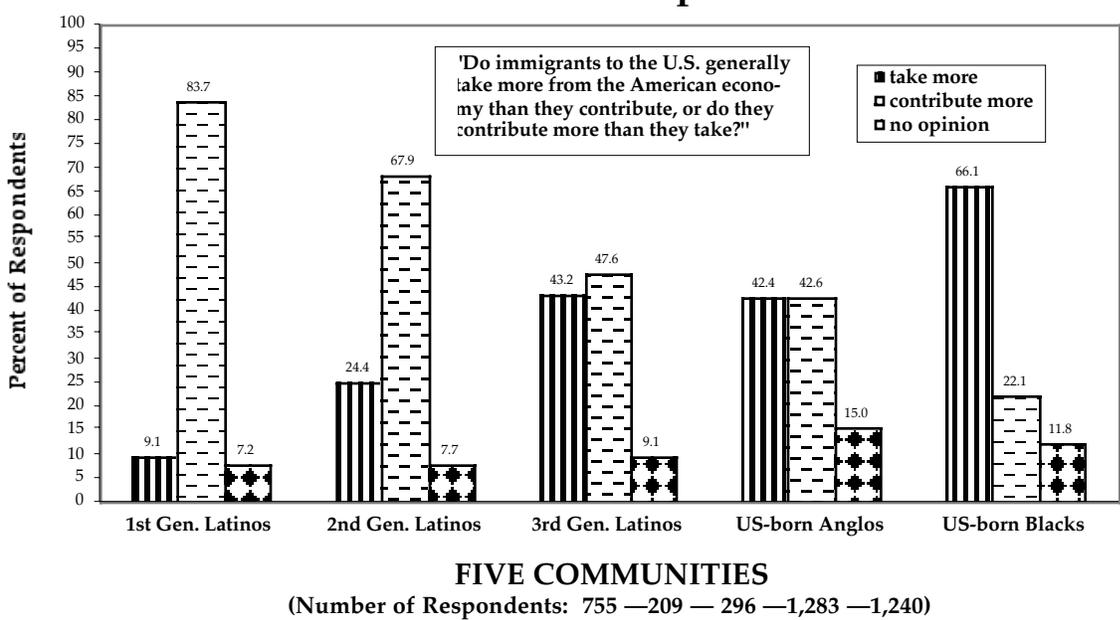
Several factors seem to have combined to generate these positive assessments of the new diversity. Daily life for most area residents has been markedly enriched by the cultural variety of Houston's restaurants, theaters, and festivals. The growing ethnic diversity is also widely recognized by Houston's business leaders as an important asset for this major port city, in its efforts to build enduring cultural and economic connections to the global marketplace.

Not surprisingly, however, there are important and consistent group differences in attitudes toward the new immigration. Latinos and Asians, as recent immigrants themselves, are the most likely to have positive attitudes, and the closer they are to their own immigrant experience, the more favorable their views.

The Latino respondents were divided into three groups — those who are themselves foreign-born (the first-generation immigrants), those who were born in the United States but had at least one foreign-born parent (the second generation), and those who were not only U.S.-born themselves, but reported that both of their parents were also born in this country (the third generation). The first-generation immigrants are generally the most pro-immigrant, followed by the second generation, and then the third. The attitudes of third-generation Latinos are typically similar to those of Anglos, and African-Americans are the most likely of all groups to have serious reservations about the economic impact of the new immigration.

Figure 15 illustrates this pattern. The percentages in the "oversample" surveys who said that "immigrants generally contribute more to the American economy than they take" were 84% for the Latino immigrants, 68% for the second-generation Latinos, 48% for the third generation, 43% for Anglos and 22% for blacks. Similarly, 71% of the first-generation Asian immigrants said that immigrants contribute more than they take, compared to 67% of the U.S.-born (second-generation) Asian respondents. On a comparable question, the proportions in 2002 who called for *fewer* new immigrants to be admitted during the next ten years were 62% for African-Americans, 49% for Anglos, 50% for third-generation Latinos, 33% for second-generation Latinos, 29% for the U.S.-born Asians, 17% for Asian immigrants and 18% for Hispanic immigrants.

Figure 15
Immigrant Attitudes in Five Communities
(1998–2002 Oversample Data)



The generally favorable attitudes toward the new immigration among Houston area residents, particularly in the surveys conducted during the middle to late 1990s, is surely in part a reflection of continuing feelings of economic well being. When times are good and jobs are plentiful, the positive energies that new immigrants infuse into American cities are likely to be more clearly perceived by the general public than the potential competition for jobs that they also bring.

The effects of economic well being may also help to account for the lower levels of enthusiasm that Houston's African-Americans generally express toward the new immigration. Among all groups, measures of socioeconomic status (particularly education and evaluations of job opportunities) are typically among the most powerful predictors of attitudes toward immigrants (Nissimov, 2002). If the current economic downturn persists and feelings of heightened insecurity continue, the surveys may well reveal an intensification of anti-immigrant attitudes in the years ahead.

Beliefs about abortion rights and homosexuality. At the same time, the surveys provide intriguing indications that a more lasting shift in perspectives may be occurring among area residents. The data in Figure 16, exploring attitudes toward issues relating to abortion and homosexuality, suggest that Houstonians may be growing more comfortable with diversity in general.

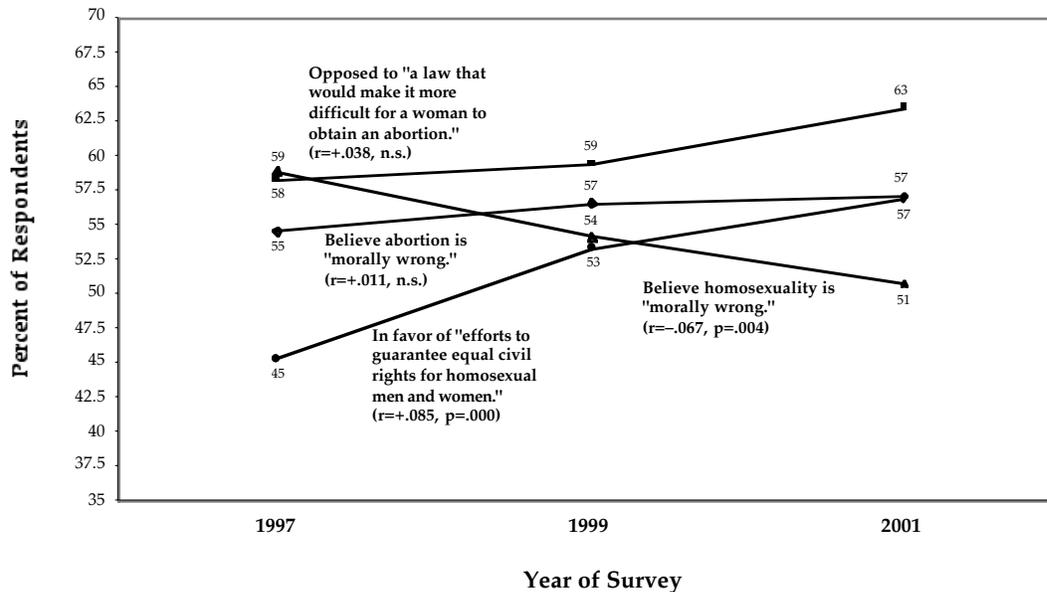
When asked about the morality of abortion and about support for new laws that would restrict a woman's access to abortion, there were no changes at all between 1997 and 2001. In 2001, 57% of the survey respondents believed that abortion was morally wrong, as did 55% in 1997. The data also make it clear that there are many area residents who espouse "traditional" values for themselves, but are tolerant of others who make different decisions in their own lives.

In the 2001 survey, 57% of the respondents said they personally believed that abortion was morally wrong. At the same time, 63% were opposed to "a law that would make it more difficult for a woman to obtain an abortion." A comparable question was asked on seven different occasions between 1988 and 2002. By averages of 56% in agreement to 40% opposed, the survey respondents have decisively endorsed over the years the strong assertion that "it should be legal for a woman to obtain an abortion if she wants to have one for any reason."

In further evidence of the respect for differences, Figure 16 shows that 51% of the respondents in the 2001 survey believed that homosexuality is morally wrong, yet 57% were in favor of efforts to guarantee equal civil rights for homosexual men and women. It is by virtue of this important group of "tolerant traditionalists" that Houston has become a modern, progressive city, rather than a traditionalistic one. These are the 20% or so of area residents who are personally conservative, yet respect the rights of others to make different decisions when it comes to their own lives.

On issues of homosexuality and gay rights, in contrast to abortion attitudes, significant change has clearly occurred during the five years in which these questions were asked. Figure 16 indicates that the percentage of survey respondents believing homosexuality to be "morally wrong" decreased from 59% in 1997, to 54% in 1999, to 51% in 2001.

Figure 16
Stability and Change in Attitudes toward
Abortion and Homosexuality (1997–2001)



At the same time, the numbers in favor of "the efforts to guarantee equal civil rights for homosexual men and women" grew from 45%, to 53%, to 57%. Similarly, in the 2001 survey, when respondents were asked about "health insurance and other employee benefits for gay partners of people who work for the city of Houston," 61% said they thought such benefits *should* be offered; only 28% were opposed.

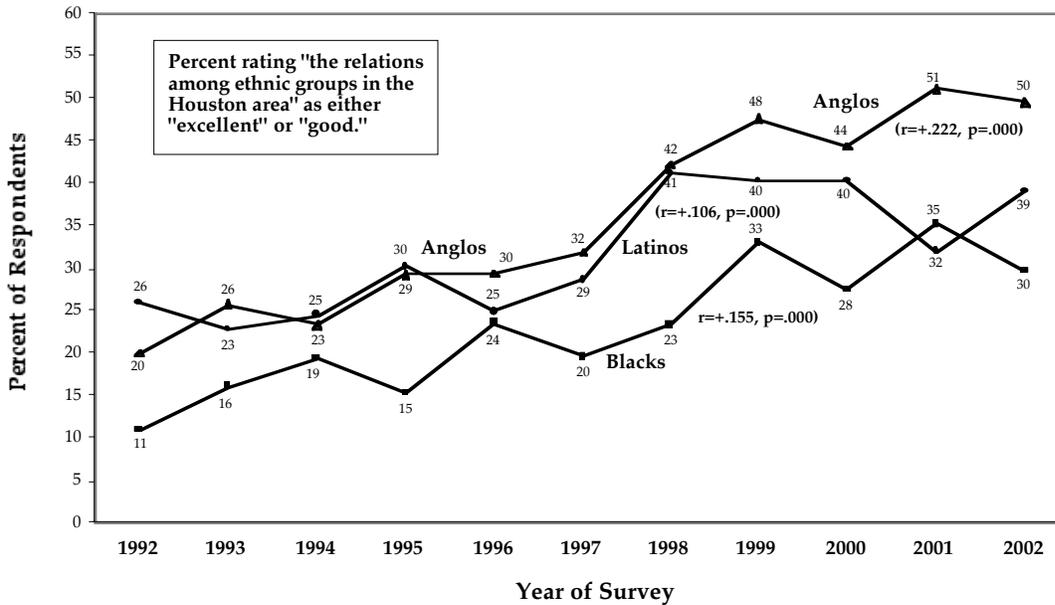
The most recent survey repeated the following question from previous years: "Are you generally in favor or opposed to homosexuals being legally permitted to adopt children?" Confirming the evolution of attitudes we have seen on other measures, the numbers expressing approval of this still-controversial proposition grew from 19% in 1991, to 26% in 2000, to 38% in 2002. Increasingly, it would appear, area residents are coming to view homosexuality as a part of the diversity of a modern city, and support for equal rights for gays and lesbians, while still far from overwhelming, has grown significantly in recent years.

Assessments of intergroup relationships. When asked to evaluate "the relations among ethnic groups in the Houston area," the proportion of respondents in the basic surveys who gave ratings of "excellent" or "good" has also grown steadily. Positive evaluations increased from 21% when the question was first asked in 1992, to 31% in 1997, to 45% in 2002. Figure 17 graphs the data separately for each of Houston's three largest ethnic communities.

The continually improving assessments have occurred among all groups, but they are particularly evident among the Anglo Houstonians. The proportion of the non-Hispanic white respondents

who said that ethnic relations in the Houston area were excellent or good grew steadily and consistently from 20% in 1992, to 29% in 1995, to 42% in 1998, to 50% in 2002.

Figure 17
Positive Ratings of Ethnic Relations
among Anglos, Blacks, and Latinos (1992–2002)



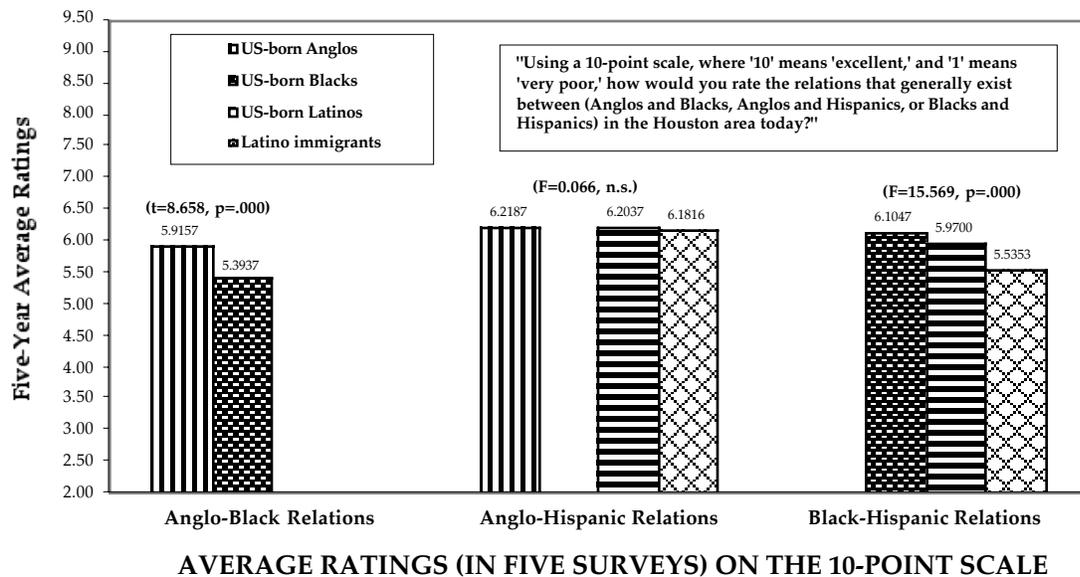
In recent years, the Hispanic respondents have diverged from the general increase in positive ratings of ethnic relations in Houston. Favorable evaluations on the part of the Latinos (both among the U.S.-born and immigrant populations) stopped increasing after 1998, when they peaked at 41%. Meanwhile, the positive ratings continued to climb, from 42% to 50% among the Anglo respondents, and from 23% to 30% among blacks.

Figure 17 indicates further that throughout the past eleven years, the African-American respondents have consistently been less upbeat about ethnic relations in Houston than either of the other two groups, although their evaluations also improved significantly over the years. The lower levels of optimism about ethnic relations among African-Americans may be due in part to their greater sensitivity to continuing patterns of discrimination in the Houston workplace (see Figure 21).

The relative pessimism about ethnic relations on the part of African-Americans may also reflect the perception that white Americans, in their increasingly vocal opposition to affirmative action policies, may be retreating from earlier commitments to the achievement of racial equality. In the 1992 survey, area residents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with this statement: "Anglo Houstonians do not support the aspirations of minority groups today as much as they did ten years ago." Only 36% of all survey respondents agreed with that assertion, but this was the case for almost half (48%) of the African-Americans.

To clarify the intergroup differences in assessments of ethnic relations, survey participants were asked on five different occasions to evaluate on a 10-point scale the relations that generally exist in the Houston area between members of their own group and each of the other three major ethnic communities. Figure 18 shows the average ratings given across the survey years by Anglos, African-Americans, U.S.-born Latinos, and Latino immigrants to relationships among Anglos and blacks, Anglos and Hispanics, or blacks and Hispanics.

Figure 18
Ratings of Interethnic Relationships among
Anglos, Blacks, and Latinos (1995–2002)



Averaging across the five years of surveys (1995, 1997, 1999, 2001 and 2002), it is evident that the Anglo respondents expressed significantly more positive attitudes than did blacks regarding the relations between Anglos and blacks in the Houston area. The average of the ratings given to those relationships by Anglos was 5.92 on the 10-point scale, compared to a significantly lower mean of 5.39 for the African-Americans.

Figure 18 also compares the views of the Anglo respondents with the two groups of Hispanics — those who were born in the United States and the Latino immigrants — in their assessments of Anglo-Hispanic relations in Houston. The data indicate that all three groups gave similar evaluations, and the overall ratings were considerably more positive (at 6.20) than the average ratings given to Anglo-black relations (5.65).

A different picture emerges when the African-American respondents are compared with the two Latino groups in their ratings of black-Hispanic relations in the Houston area. As indicated in the figure, there were no differences between blacks and U.S.-born Hispanics in their ratings of these relationships. The Latino immigrants, however, gave significantly lower ratings to black-Hispanic

relations (averaging just 5.53 on the 10-point scale) than did either the U.S.-born Latinos (at 5.97) or the African-Americans themselves (6.10).

We also know, as indicated earlier, that the Latino immigrants have come to Houston with few skills and are generally relegated to low-paying menial jobs. In addition, the surveys indicate that they speak little or no English: More than 80% of all the Latino immigrants in the 2002 survey completed the interviews in Spanish, and 36% said they spoke no other language besides Spanish. They are not only facing daunting economic and cultural challenges; they are also more likely than other residents to feel insecure and vulnerable in this unfamiliar city.

When asked in the latest survey how safe they would feel walking in their neighborhood after dark, 56% of the Hispanic immigrants said they felt "not very safe" or "not at all safe." Only 24% of all other Houston area residents said they would not feel safe walking in their neighborhoods after dark. Similarly, in the 2001 survey 55% of the Latino immigrants said they were "very worried" that they or a member of their family will be the victim of a crime, compared to just 21% of all other area residents.

In addition, the Latino immigrants are especially unlikely to have personal relationships with African-Americans. In the 2001 survey, only 42% said they had a "personal friend" who was black, as opposed to 80% for the population as a whole. In 2002, just 38% said they had a "close personal friend" who was black, compared with 68% of all area residents.

Moreover, as shown in Figure 21, the Latino immigrants are more likely than the U.S.-born Latinos to believe that Hispanics are often discriminated against in Houston, and they are the only group to believe that Hispanics are more often discriminated against than blacks. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the Latino immigrants perceive relations with Houston's African-Americans to be particularly problematic.

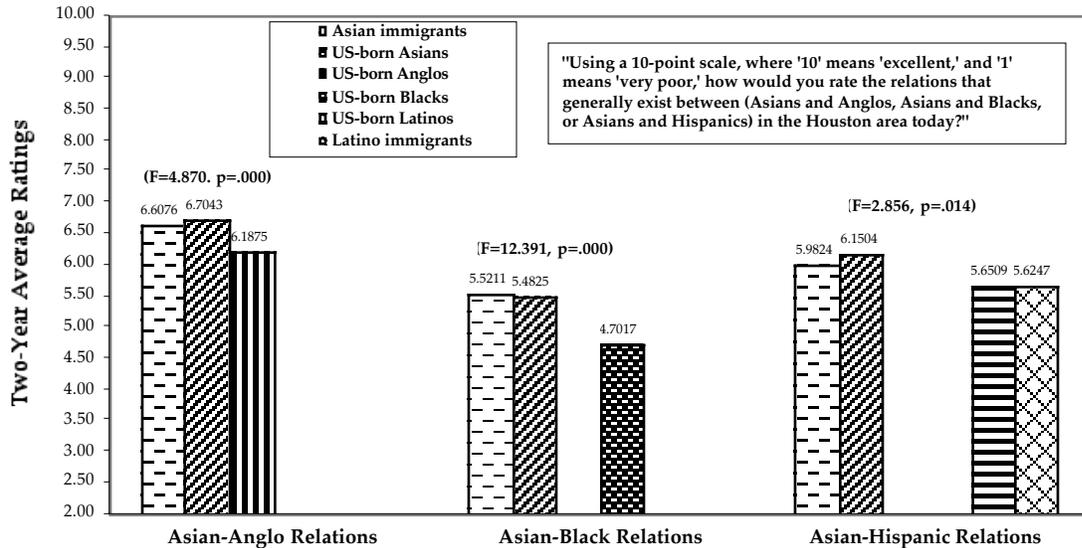
Figure 19 draws on the combined 1995 and 2002 expanded surveys to compare the Asians with the other three ethnic groups in their evaluations of the relationships that exist between their communities. With regard to all three relationships (Asian-Anglo, Asian-black, and Asian-Hispanic), the Asian respondents give significantly more positive ratings than their non-Asian counterparts.

As indicated in the figure, Asians bestowed an average rating of 6.6 on the 10-point scale to Anglo-Asian relations in Houston, compared to a rating of 6.2 given by the Anglos themselves. They rated Asian-Hispanic relations far more favorably, at 6.1, than did either group of Latinos, with average ratings of 5.6.

The ethnic differences are particularly striking with regard to Asian-black relationships. Asians gave their lowest ratings to these relations (at 5.5 on the 10-point scale), but the most negative ratings given by any group to any relationship were the ones given by blacks to Asian-black relationships. With an average rating of just 4.7 on the 10-point scale, African-Americans express

considerably more negative attitudes regarding the relations between blacks and Asians in Houston than do the Asians themselves.

Figure 19
Ratings of Interethnic Relations between Asians
and Other Ethnic Communities (1995, 2002)



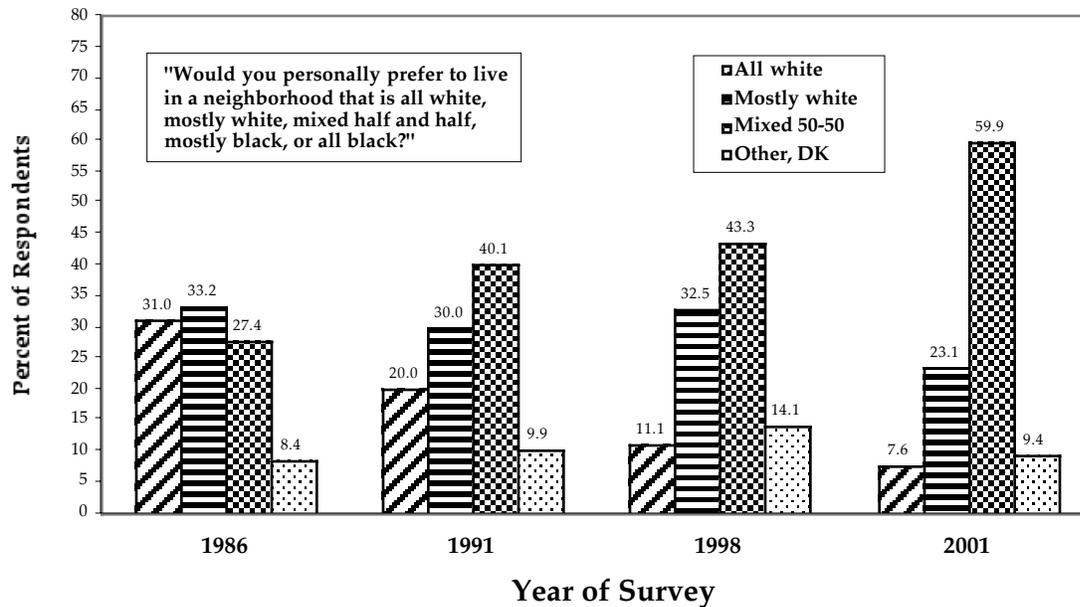
AVERAGE RATINGS (IN TWO SURVEYS) ON THE 10-POINT SCALE

More generally, Figures 18 and 19 indicate that of all the intergroup relationships, the most positive ratings were given by Anglos and Asians to the relations between their two communities. The next most favorable were the ratings given to Anglo-Hispanic relations. It is also interesting to note that blacks see their relationships with Latinos in a more favorable light than their relations with Anglos, whereas the Hispanics (especially the Hispanic immigrants) give higher ratings to their relations with Anglos than to their relations with blacks.

The most tension-free relationships in Houston today appear to be those between Anglos on the one hand and Asians and Hispanics on the other. African-Americans experience the most problematic relationships overall, now no longer just in relation to Anglos. The first-generation immigrants (both Asian and Latino) are, not surprisingly, the least likely to have close personal friendships beyond their own ethnic communities, and they generally feel more uneasy than the U.S.-born Asians and Latinos about the overall quality of interethnic relations in Houston.

The ethnic divides. It is difficult to measure racial prejudice in modern America. Figure 20 presents one approach to this complex issue, asking about attitudes toward residential segregation. On four different occasions, the Anglo and African-American respondents were asked about their personal preferences with regard to the racial composition of their neighborhoods.

Figure 20
Anglos' Personal Preferences with regard to the Racial Composition of Neighborhoods



The proportions among the Anglo respondents who said that they would personally prefer to live in a racially integrated neighborhood ("mixed half and half") grew from 27% in 1986, to 40% in 1991, to 43% in 1998, and to 60% in 2001. The numbers expressing preference for an "all white" neighborhood declined from 31% in 1986 to less than 8% in 2001.

There were no comparable changes in black feelings about neighborhood segregation. In proportions ranging from 69% to 75% over the years, the African-American respondents in the Houston surveys have consistently expressed a strong desire to live in fully integrated neighborhoods.

What are we to make of the striking changes in the expressed preference for integration among Anglos in Houston? Data from the 2000 census indicate that residential segregation in Harris County has actually increased during the past decade, despite the dramatic expansion that has occurred in the region's overall ethnic diversity (Rodriguez, 2001). Anglos were *less* likely in 2000 than in 1990 to have black or Hispanic neighbors, even as the proportion of Anglos in the surveys saying they would personally prefer to live in integrated neighborhoods grew from 40% in 1991 to 60% in 2001.

As in most American cities, Houston's residential patterns are based primarily on socioeconomic status, but the result is ethnic as well as class separation. Americans generally live in the company of "P.L.U.'s," (people like us), according to the *Wall Street Journal* (Suskind, 1992). And this seems to be particularly true in the case of Houston.

Affectionately known as "the blob that ate East Texas," the City of Houston sprawls across more than 620 square miles, an area into which could be placed simultaneously the cities of Bal-

timore, Detroit, Philadelphia and Chicago (Thomas and Murray, 1991:17). This low-density metropolitan area is largely composed of "decentralized villages," where people of similar socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds live in relative isolation. Thus white students continue to attend mostly white schools, while minority students are in schools with mostly minorities, even as the broader school districts themselves grow more ethnically diverse (Cobb, 1999).

The data in Figure 20 suggest that conscious feelings of racial prejudice among Anglos in Houston are indeed diminishing. The vast majority of European-Americans no longer accept the assumptions of "old-fashioned" racism (generally understood to mean the belief that blacks are inferior and segregation is good).

A further indication of changes in expressed attitudes in this connection comes from a question asked on two different occasions: "If a close relative of yours wanted to marry someone of a different ethnicity, would you approve or disapprove?" In 1995, 71% of the Anglo respondents said they would approve or that ethnicity would make no difference. The proportion grew to 82% in the 2002 survey.

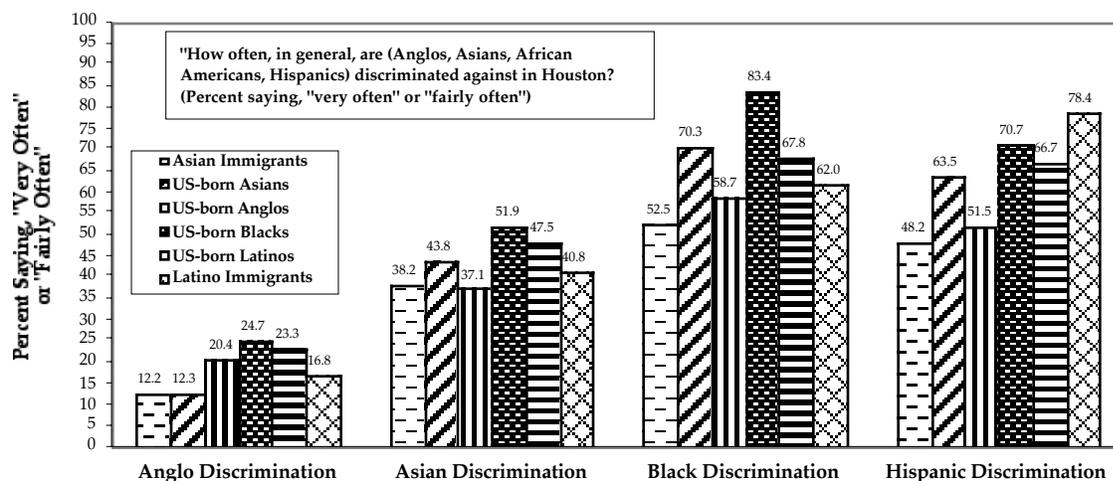
Perhaps in part because they sincerely do not believe that they themselves are prejudiced, nor do they know many others who are, Anglos generally believe that racism has now largely disappeared from American society. They are convinced that discrimination is a thing of the past and affirmative action remedies are both unnecessary and unfair. Minorities, and especially African-Americans, live in and experience a quite different reality.

Deep divisions thus accompany the growing ethnic tolerance in this city. Anglos and minorities hold divergent beliefs about a variety of issues, particularly with regard to the continued realities of discrimination, the extent of equality of opportunity, and the need for affirmative action remedies (Kravitz and Klineberg 2000). Figure 21 depicts the extent to which respondents believe that each of four different ethnic groups is discriminated against in Houston. The figure presents the views of the six communities in the 2002 expanded survey — Asian immigrants, U.S.-born Asians, U.S.-born Anglos, U.S.-born blacks, U.S.-born Latinos, and Latino immigrants.

Figure 21 indicates, first, a general consensus among all ethnic communities that African-Americans are the most likely of the four groups to be discriminated against in Houston, followed closely by Latinos. Of all 2,041 respondents in the expanded 2002 survey, 66% believed that blacks were "very often" or "fairly often" discriminated against, and 63% said the same for Latinos; 43% believed that Asians were often discriminated against; only 19% of all respondents thought this was the case for Anglos.

Second, African-Americans perceive the greatest amount of discrimination overall. The black respondents were more likely even than Anglos to believe that Anglos are often discriminated against in Houston, and they were more likely than either group of Asians to perceive high levels of discrimination against Asians. Anglos and Asian immigrants perceived the least amount of discrimination overall.

Figure 21
Perceived Discrimination against Four Ethnic
Groups among Six Communities
(The 2002 Expanded Survey)



PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST FOUR ETHNIC GROUPS
 (Number of respondents from the six communities: 429 — 69 — 484 — 468 — 185 — 319)

It is particularly interesting to note the contrast between African-Americans and Latino immigrants in their perceptions of discrimination in Houston. At 78%, the Latino immigrants were the most likely to believe that Hispanics are often discriminated against in Houston, and they were the only group of the six to believe that Hispanics are more often discriminated against than blacks. Only 62% of the Latino immigrants said that blacks are often discriminated against, compared to 68% of the U.S.-born Latinos and 83% of the African-Americans themselves.

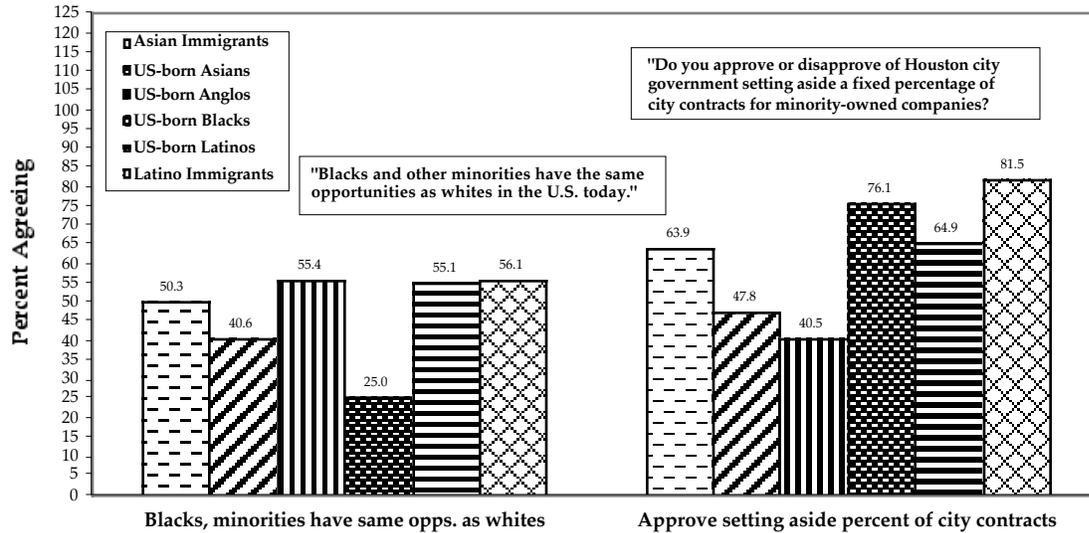
The 2002 survey also asked respondents how often they themselves have personally felt discriminated against in Houston because of their ethnicity. Almost half (48%) of the African-American respondents reported having personally experienced discrimination either "very often" or "fairly often." For the Latino immigrants and the U.S.-born Latinos, the figures were 35% and 32%. Just 25% of the U.S.-born Asians and 22% of the Asian immigrants said they often felt personally discriminated against. Only 11% of the Anglo respondents claimed to be frequent victims of discrimination in Houston.

Figure 22 compares the six communities in their beliefs about the extent to which minorities have an equal chance to succeed in America and about the need for affirmative action remedies. In response to the statement, "blacks and other minorities have the same opportunities as whites in the U.S. today," 56% of Latinos and 55% of Anglos agreed, whereas 74% of the black respondents *disagreed* with that assertion.

In the 2001 survey, respondents were asked about the alternative view: "Black people in the U.S. are still a long way from having the same chance in life that white people have." By 63%, the Anglo respondents firmly disagreed with the suggestion that blacks continue to be harmed by une-

qual opportunities; 55% of the Latinos also disagreed; but 68% of the African-American respondents *agreed* with that statement.

Figure 22
Beliefs about Equal Opportunity and
Affirmative Action in Six Communities (2002)



THE EXPANDED HOUSTON AREA SURVEY (2002)
 (Number of respondents in the six communities: 429 — 69 — 484 — 468 — 185 — 319)

Figure 22 also compares the six communities in their attitudes toward Houston's affirmative action contracting program. In a strongly worded version of the city's policies, the program was described in the surveys as: "Houston city government setting aside a fixed percentage of city contracts for minority-owned companies." The wording of the question was designed to provide a conservative measure of the public's support for Houston's affirmative action program while clarifying the issues involved in determining individual attitudes.

The terms, "setting aside" and "fixed percentage," imply preferential quotas, whereas the city insists that its program involves only flexible goals and "good faith" efforts (Rodriguez 1999). In addition, the survey item neglects to mention that companies owned by Anglo women and persons with disabilities are also included in the city's program, and it says nothing about the "graduation clause" that was introduced in 1998 to cycle established firms out of the program.

The question has been asked in every survey since the fateful date of 1997. In November of that year, after a closely watched and hard-fought campaign, Houston voters rejected Proposition A, which would have dismantled the city's affirmative action program. Blacks went to the polls in unprecedented numbers, and by 9 to 1 voted against the Proposition, as did three-fourths of the Hispanic voters. Meanwhile, the Anglo precincts were voting by 2 to 1 in favor (Bernstein, 1997).

In the 2002 survey, as indicated in Figure 22, 82% of the Latino immigrants, 76% of the African-Americans and 64% of the Asian immigrants said they approved of the city's affirmative action program as described in the surveys. However, by 54% to 41%, the Anglo respondents firmly disapproved.

In each successive survey since 1999, respondents from all ethnic communities have expressed increasing support for the set-aside program. Anglo approval grew from 33% in 1999 to 41% in 2002. The city's contracting program was now in place, and some part of that increased support may reflect a tendency to accept established policies. Moreover, in an effort to respond to public complaints and to stave off legal challenges, the program itself was modified, with the introduction of the "graduation" clause and the inclusion of firms owned by people with disabilities.

The surveys underscore the continuing sharp disagreements between Anglos and minorities regarding the extent of discrimination in the Houston workforce. This is surely a factor in the divisiveness of public policies that appear to treat ethnicity per se as a determining element in the allocation of benefits and opportunities. The city of Houston's efforts to craft carefully targeted and flexible policies that are perceived to be responding only to documented disadvantage may have helped to reduce the opposition to its affirmative action contracting program (Klineberg and Kravitz, forthcoming).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The unique scientific record from more than two decades of the annual Houston Area Survey, along with this year's expanded research in Houston's four major ethnic communities, provides a compelling picture of America's fourth largest city in the midst of fundamental redefinition. The surveys underscore and help to clarify important challenges facing this city at the dawning of the new century.

Houston is at the center of the two fundamental and irreversible trends that have redefined the nature of twenty-first-century America. This Anglo-dominated biracial city, which was riding the major resource of the Industrial Age to continual prosperity during most of the last century, has emerged from the oil-boom collapse of the mid 1980s to find itself in the midst of a restructured economy and a demographic revolution.

The region's rapid population growth during the booming years of the 1960s and 1970s was brought about largely by the in-migration of Anglos from other parts of the country. By 1981 Houston had become the fourth largest city in America, with a population that was still almost two-thirds composed of non-Hispanic whites. After the collapse of the oil economy in 1982, however, Harris County's Anglo population stabilized and then declined. Yet the county grew by another 17% during the 1980s and by 21% in the 1990s.

As a major immigrant destination, Houston has become one of the nation's most ethnically and culturally diverse metropolitan areas. It is now at the forefront of the new diversity that is radically reconstructing the social and political landscape of urban America. In the census of 2000,

only 42% of the 3.4 million people living in Harris County were Anglo. The Houston area was now 33% Hispanic, 18% African-American and 7% Asian. The city of Houston, with almost 2 million inhabitants, was 37% Hispanic, 31% Anglo, 25% African-American and 7% Asian.

The ethnic transformations are particularly dramatic when age is taken into account. Of all the respondents in the 2002 Houston Area Survey aged 60 or older, 77% were Anglos. In contrast, 72% of those 18 to 29 were black, Hispanic, and Asian. Almost two-thirds (62%) of these young adults were African-American and Hispanic. These are the populations that have been the least well served historically by Houston's educational and social service institutions. Clearly if this community's "minority" youth are unprepared to succeed in the knowledge economy of the twenty-first century, it is hard to envision a prosperous future for the city as a whole.

The new immigration stream that began in 1965 (and shows no signs of ending) is unprecedented in American history: It is predominantly non-European and it is marked by an extraordinary degree of socioeconomic diversity. One group of immigrants (mainly from India, China and Africa) is coming to Houston and America with higher levels of professional skills than ever before in the history of American immigration. Another, much larger group (mostly Hispanic) is arriving with stunning educational deficits into the new "hourglass" knowledge-based economy, where these immigrants are generally confined to low-paying dead-end service-sector jobs.

The "model minority" myth that purports to explain the success that Asians have achieved in America overlooks the many Asian immigrants who come from families in their countries of origin with educational and occupational backgrounds that far exceed the average for native born Anglo-Americans. It also diverts attention from continuing discrimination. And it lumps together in a single stereotype professionals from India, Taiwan and the Philippines who came to America under the occupational provisions of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965 and poverty-stricken refugees fleeing persecution in Southeast Asia or rural China.

During recent years, the annual surveys have documented increasingly positive attitudes toward the new immigration. Respondents from all four ethnic communities affirm their belief that Houston's ethnic diversity will be a distinctly positive asset and a source of strength for the city as a whole. Latinos and Asians, as recent immigrants themselves, are the most likely to have positive attitudes. African-Americans, reflecting their greater economic insecurity, are more likely to express serious reservations about the economic impact of the new immigration.

If the current economic downturn persists and feelings of heightened insecurity continue, the surveys may well reveal an intensification of anti-immigrant attitudes in the years ahead. Already we have seen a sharp increase from last year to this in the proportion of area residents calling for more restrictive immigration policies. At the same time, the large numbers of "tolerant traditionalists" and the increasing percentages of survey respondents who support equal rights for gays and lesbians suggest that the residents of Harris County are growing more comfortable with diversity in general.

The overall evaluations of interethnic relationships in Houston have also been improving during the past decade, but more so among Anglos and Asians than among Latinos or blacks. The surveys make it clear that, beneath the surface calm and the generally positive feelings about the relationships among these diverse communities, there are unmistakable signs of mutual misunderstanding and feelings of alienation. The relations between blacks and the Latino immigrants and between blacks and Asians are particularly problematic. The data also reveal strong disagreements between Anglos and members of all three "minority" communities in their beliefs about the realities of discrimination, equality of opportunity and the need for affirmative action.

In today's complex and changing mosaic of often-problematic intergroup encounters, many more opportunities are needed for interactions that can reduce misunderstandings and mutual distrust. Prejudice has not yet disappeared in this low-density, still segregated city, but it is now less conscious and thus more difficult to address.

Area residents need more opportunities to join across the ethnic divides in common purpose and to engage in more open and honest interaction. Only then will they understand more fully why Houston looks and feels like a different place if the perceiver has black skin or white skin, if that person is Latino or Asian. This city's ethnic transformation is a great potential asset in the global economy of the new century. But if most area residents continue to live and work in largely segregated ethnic enclaves, and if they remain divided by misperceptions and stereotypes, reinforced by a widening gap in economic opportunities, Houston's expanding diversity may instead give rise to serious social conflict.

The economic and demographic transformations that are reshaping Houston in the twenty-first century will challenge this city's capacity to build a strong and inclusive sense of civic identity and public purpose. Until recently, the ingredients of this nation's traditional "melting pot" were limited to the various shades of white to be found among European nationalities. The pot is now being called upon to integrate into a single American stew all the colors and flavors of the world.

Nevertheless, the assimilationist powers of American culture appear to be up to the challenge. Today's Asian and Hispanic newcomers are generally following the path of previous immigrants toward adoption of the common language and culture of the American nation, and intermarriage rates are soaring. As Michael Lind (1995) observed, the process of building a "transracial" America is clearly under way. The fragmentation of society along purely ethnic lines is unlikely to be the fate of the new America.

Instead, the chief danger confronting this city and nation seems closer to what Lind (1995:216) has described as "Brazilianization" — that is, "not the separation of cultures by race, but the separation of races by class." In today's increasingly unequal and rigid economic system, Houston's citizens live in worlds divided by social class. They are cut off from other realities in a pattern of residential segregation that continues unabated even as the region as a whole becomes more diverse.

If Houston is to succeed in the twenty-first century, it will clearly need to fashion a more unified and vibrant multiethnic society, one in which all of its citizens have equal opportunities for personal fulfillment and all are encouraged to participate as full partners in the decisions that shape the city's future. Only a determined and committed effort to reverse the economic polarization can ensure that the majority of Houston's Hispanic and African-American citizens will be able to benefit from the city's economic progress.

Much will depend on the degree to which this community can achieve significant improvements at all levels of public education, develop more equitable and effective health and welfare policies, and moderate the growing inequalities generated by the new economy. In the current environment, the efforts to address these issues will constitute a formidable political challenge.

Encouraging progress is being made in many of these critical areas. Much more will be required if Houston is to grow into the stature of a truly world-class multiethnic metropolis, positioned for sustainable prosperity in the new millennium. The ability to follow the continuing evolution of the public's attitudes and experiences through the annual Houston surveys will inform our understanding of what may yet be possible for this remarkable city.

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Professor Stephen L. Klineberg, Department of Sociology, MS-28,
Rice University, P. O. Box 1892, Houston, Texas 77251-1892.
Phone: 713-348-3484 or 713-665-2010; Facsimile: 713-348-5296; Email: slk@rice.edu.
Web: www.houstonareasurvey.org.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A graduate of Haverford College in 1961, Dr. Stephen L. Klineberg received an M.A. in Psychopathology from the University of Paris and a Ph.D. in Social Psychology from Harvard. After teaching at Princeton, he joined Rice University's Sociology Department in 1972. In March 1982, he initiated the annual Houston Area Survey, exploring public responses to changing trends, and has conducted extensive additional research in Harris County's ethnic communities.

Co-author of *The Present of Things Future: Explorations of Time in Human Experience* (1974), and the recipient of eight major teaching awards at Rice, he has written numerous journal articles and appears frequently on radio and television. He has a book in preparation, tentatively entitled *Making Sense of Our Times: Houston's Economic and Demographic Transformations*, that builds on more than two decades of survey research to explore the way the general public is responding to the economic, demographic, and environmental challenges of our time.

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