

# After-School *Hagwon* Style in Southern California



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**Introduction:** A *hagwon* is a for-profit after-school institution originating from South Korea which occurs in the evenings and on the weekends for Korean, English, and mathematics. Students use *hagwons* to prepare for university entrance examinations relative to the South Korea's educational system. In the United States, *hagwon* businesses have recently developed in clusters – specifically in Southern California.

**Purpose:** While not a predictor of *hagwon* success or failure, this study argues that *hagwons* are more likely to (1) form clusters to fulfill a niche market in Asian American suburban communities and (2) flourish in communities that are comprised of high educational attainment levels and relatively high socioeconomic statuses. This study uses demographics and economic characteristics of Asian Americans and specifically Korean Americans to predict the likelihood of *hagwon* location and consumption.

**Data Analysis:** The U.S. Census Bureau estimates 5.6 million self-identified Asian-Americans reside in California, becoming the state with the largest Asian population (36% of the total Asian population in the U.S.) as of July 1, 2008. Asian American populations have recently moved away “ethnic enclaves” – immigrant communities in urban areas providing labor and educational opportunities for social mobility over time. Table 1 shows that Asian and Korean Americans have a larger presence in the suburban areas (Diamond Bar, Walnut, and Irvine) compared to the urban metropolitan areas (Los Angeles and Garden Grove). Referring to Figure 2, Asian Americans earn the highest median household income of \$73,570 compared to California median household income of \$60,392, and earning the highest median income household in suburban areas (Walnut, Irvine, and Diamond Bar). Over 50% of single-race Asians 25 and older hold a bachelor's degree or higher in education compared to 30% of the total population earning a college degree (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). California has the largest number of Asian-owned firms, estimated at 510,000 businesses. In Los Angeles County, 183,000 establishments are estimated to be Asian-owned while Orange County had 64,000 Asian-owned establishments. Businesses with educational services – including exam preparation and tutoring are estimated at over 460 establishments in Los Angeles County and over 150 establishments in Orange County (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Referring to Figure 3, the *KUMON* franchise (similar to the *hagwon* business) returns a Google Map search of over 180 results, with clusters in Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

Figure 1. Koreans (Percentage in Total Asian Population):

	U.S.	California	L.A. County	Orange County	Los Angeles	Garden Grove	Diamond Bar	Walnut	Irvine
<b>Total Asian</b>	4.4%	13.6%	13%	16.1%	10.7%	33.2%	50.3%	59.9%	36.3%
<b>Korean</b>	0.4%	1.1%	2%	2.5%	2.6%	3.1%	10.5%	4.1%	6.6%
<b>Other Asian</b>	4%	12.5%	11%	13.6%	8.1%	30.1%	39.8%	55.8%	29.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010



Figure 3. Source: GoogleMaps

Median Household Income and Asian Median Household Income 2009

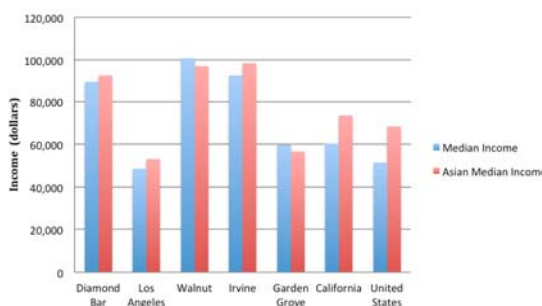


Figure 2. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

**Conclusion:** As Asian Americans have cultivated “ethnoburbs” and creating their own educational ethnic niche, *hagwons* have grown to meet consumer needs. Essentially, the economic capital background of Asian American populations in affluent communities allows for a setting where the *hagwon* can develop and flourish in these areas.