Intergenerational Mobility of Asian Post-1965 Immigrants and the New Second Generation in the United States, 1980 to 2005

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Paper proposed for presentation at the annual meetings of the Population Association of America, April 2008, New Orleans.

ABSTRACT

To measure the socioeconomic progress across immigrant generations, most researchers have observed all generations at a single point in time. However, to measure true intergenerational mobility, the status of the first generation must be compared to their children, the second generation, when they reach a comparable age 25 to 30 years later. Hence, the first generation must be observed at a different point in history than the second generation.

In this paper, intergenerational mobility is addressed across educational attainment, occupational attainment, and poverty status for the five largest Asian foreign-born populations in 1980 (Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Asian Indian, and Vietnamese). Immigrant parents of the second generation and young immigrant children are observed in 1980 and then their children are observed in 2005. Because of the substantial changes occurring in overall socioeconomic conditions between periods our analysis also controls for the status of an Asian third-generation reference group.

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, assimilation for the immigrant population has been thought to occur over generations with each successive generation becoming more like the mainstream society (Alba and Nee 2003). To measure the socioeconomic progress across immigrant generations, most researchers have observed all generations at a single point in time. Although this is an effective measurement of *difference* between generations, this methodology does not capture intergenerational mobility or progress of children relative to their parents. However, to measure true intergenerational mobility, the status of the first generation must be compared to their children, the second generation, when they reach a comparable age of maturity some 25 to 30 years later. Hence, the first generation must be observed at a different point in history than the second generation (Smith 2003).

This paper reports new findings from a NICHD-sponsored study of assimilation in America, specifically for the largest post-1965 Asian immigrant groups. This is an extension of an earlier paper on intergenerational mobility from the project examining differences across broad race groups and gender (Park and Myers 2006). However, the grouping of various ethnics groups within the broader racial category of "Asian" is problematic because there are vast differences between the groups in terms of the context from which they came, the context in which they live in the U.S., and the social and human capital they possess. This paper attempts to examine the differences between the various Asian ethnic groups to get a fuller understanding of how the pace of intergenerational mobility is not the same for all immigrants and their children.

Secondly, I propose the use of multiple outcome indicators to get a more comprehensive picture of intergenerational mobility. Different aspects of immigrants' lives can advance faster than others and it is important to better understand how this works. It is also important to gauge whether advancements in educational attainment necessarily translates into the same rate of advancement in occupational attainment and escape out of poverty. It is important to document whether certain groups are not getting the same socioeconomic returns on their educational investment in order to begin asking why this might be.

Intergenerational mobility is addressed here across multiple outcome indicators. In this paper, we compare three dimensions of status—educational attainment, occupational attainment, and poverty status—of the second generation in 2005 to that of the first generation in 1980. Because of the substantial changes occurring in overall socioeconomic conditions between periods our analysis also controls for the status of a reference that is comprised of third or higher generation Asian American residents.

Five main research questions will be addressed in this paper. First, is the second generation better off than their parents' generation? More specifically, can we verify Smith's (2003) finding that the foreign-born stock progress over time between generations exceeds the difference between generations at a single moment in time? Second, how much has the second generation in 2005 closed the gap with a third or higher generation reference group compared to the gap experienced by their "parents" in

1980? Third, are there significant differences between the progress achieved by the second generation and their immigrant peers who arrived during their childhood (loosely defined here as the 1.5 generation)? Fourth, is the pattern of intergenerational progress consistent across a range of outcome variables: educational attainment, occupational attainment, and poverty? Fifth, are there any noteworthy differences between Asian ethnic groups?

II. DATA AND METHODS

The dataset to be used in this analysis is constructed from the 1980 decennial census Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) and pooled Current Population Survey data at the national level from 2004 and 2006 (referred to as "2005"). The sample is designed to repeatedly observe second generation birth cohorts in 1980 and 2005 (when they are 25 years older), and designed to match the first generation observed in 1980 to the second generation matching their children's age in 2005. Note that the sample is constructed from repeated cross-sections and does not longitudinally trace kin between generations.

A. Defining the Second Generation and Their Parents

We identify aggregate intergenerational relationships by defining samples to approximate parent-child spacing between generations. With the hierarchical file structure we identify the immigrant parent sample living with this second generation in 1980 (those who are native-born and are between the ages of 0 and 16). For comparability between the generations, we limit the first generation to those age 25 to 44 so that we observe the generations at roughly the same range in their life cycle. In addition, because some parents are not co-resident, we will define an alternate "parent" sample comprised of all first generation ages 25-44. In 2005, we identify the second generation cohort ages 25 to 41.[1]

Smith (2003) assumed a 25-year spacing while Reed et al. (2005) assumed a 28-year spacing. For our analysis, the second generation can be identified in 1980 using the available census questions in that year and restricting this to ages 0-16. (In 2005, we identify the second generation cohort now grown 25 years older (ages 25 to 41). Although this will not match exactly the age range of their parents observed 25 years earlier (largely 25-44), they are similar enough for the purposes of the outcomes variables we are measuring.

B. Defining the 1.5 Generation

Similar to the definition of the second generation, the 1.5 generation (loosely defined as immigrants who arrived between the ages of 0 and 16) are observed in 1980 as immigrants who have two immigrant parents.[2] These immigrants, who arrived as

[1] For the purposes of this paper, we are defining the second generation as those with two immigrant parents, following Ramakrishnan (2004) definition.

[2] This is a slight variation on Ruben Rumbaut's coined term of the 1.5 generation (1991).

children, are then observed in 2005 as adult immigrants age 25 to 41 who arrived in the United States prior to 1980 (in other words, that they have arrived in time to be observed in the 1980 census). The parents of the 1.5 generation are observed in 1980 in the same way as the parents of the second generation (this sample is also restricted to those age 24 to 44).

C. Defining Asian Ethnic Groups

For the 1980 census data, specific Asian ethnic groups can be identified in the race variable for the purposes of ethnic-specific analyses. However, the CPS only identifies persons into broad race groups and does not have additional variables about specific ethnic identity. To proxy for specific Asian ethnicities with the CPS data, the parental nativity questions were utilized. For example, a person was identified as second-generation Chinese if he/she was Asian and native born as well as both of their parents were born in China. To make the data comparable in 1980, we limited the sample to the second generation children living with parents who have the same Asian ethnic identity. There are some limitations to this approach. First, those who are Asian but have different specific Asian-ethnic origins due to intermarriage are systematically excluded from the analyses. Second, there is an assumption that a country of origin necessarily indicates that they are of that ethnicity. Certainly, there are exceptions to this assumption such as ethnic Chinese who were living in Vietnam before coming to the U.S. but these types of cases are relatively small in number.[3] It is important to recognize these limitations when making interpretations and possible generalizations, but there are still some very important and interesting observations to be made with the proposed approach.

D. Model Design

For each of our outcome measures of assimilation, we contrast second generation status in 2000 and first generation status in 1970. The analysis will borrow from part of the double cohort design of Myers and Lee (1996, 1998). In place of arrival cohorts, we have generational status (G). For this intergenerational mobility analysis, G has four groups pooled: first generation from the 1980 sample, and second generation from the 2005 sample, both coded G=1, and 3rd or higher generation from both 1980 and 2005, both coded G=0. For this analysis, the reference group is a pooled sample of all Asian native-borns combined who are 3rd or higher generation (all Asian native-born in 1980). The main effect of Year represents period change in outcomes for the reference group between 1980 (Year=0) and 2005 (Year=1). The differential effect of passage between immigrant generations is represented by Year*G. The same logic applies in determining the 1.5 generation and their parents. The resulting intergenerational model can be represented:

$$(O) = \text{Year} + G + (\text{Year} * G) + G1.5 + (\text{Year} * G1.5) + \text{Age} + X$$

[3] A separate analysis will be carried out to analyze the intersections and departures between country of origin and ethnic origin for the final paper.

where:

(O) = outcome variable of interest,

Year = observation year (1980 = 0 and 2005 = 1), capturing period effects for the 3rd+ generation reference group,

G = generation, represented by second generation in 2005 and first generation in 1980, contrasted to a reference group of 3rdor higher generation,

(Year*G) = the differential effect of passing of time between first and second generations, over and above changes for the 3rd or higher generation,

G1.5 = immigrant generation, represented by 1.5 generation in 2005 and their first generation parents in 1980,

(Year*G1.5) = the differential effect of passing of time between first and 1.5 generations, over and above changes for the reference group,

Age = centered coded with age 35=0 and the effect of age is recorded as deviations from that, and

X = a vector of covariates (gender, marital status, education, area contextual factors, or other).

The selected outcome variables are used to measure key socioeconomic characteristics for the total Asian: educational attainment is determined by measuring the percent of the population that has completed a bachelor's degree or higher. Occupational attainments is determined by measuring the percent of the population in upper white collar occupations (those in professional and managerial occupations broadly). Poverty is measured by the percentage of persons who are at or fall below the federally determined poverty level.

III. FINDINGS

A. Descriptive Results

The descriptive results with this intergenerational approach are shown in the following three tables. First, Table 1 compares educational attainment of the generations in 1980 and 2005 (pooled 2004-2006). For the parents of the second generation, there is certainly a high level of educational attainment with the exception of the Vietnamese. And most second generation has surpassed their parents in obtaining a bachelors degree. The Vietnamese second generation has made the largest gain (over 22 percentage points) from their parents, but they still lag behind the other Asian groups. There are much more dramatic changes from the first generation of immigrant children to the 1.5 generation

young adults. Though most 1.5 generation groups did not achieve parity with their second generation counterparts (again with the exception of Vietnamese), they certainly experienced large gains from their parents' generation.[4]

Table 1: Intergenerational Educational Attainment (Percent with Bachelors Degree or Higher) of the 1.5 and New Second Generation for 5 Asian Ethnic Groups, 1980 to 2005

	Parents of Second Generation in **1980**	2nd Generation (age 25-41) in **2005**	Intergenerational Mobility
Asian Indian	71.3	85.1	13.9
Chinese	54.3	67.0	12.7
Filipino	57.1	55.1	-2.0
Korean	57.2	74.5	17.3
Vietnamese	20.0	42.5	22.5

	Parents of 1.5 Generation in **1980**	1.5 Generation (age 25-41) in **2005**	Mobility
Asian Indian	54.2	80.0	25.8
Chinese	29.0	66.6	37.6
Filipino	52.4	53.9	1.5
Korean	38.7	61.3	22.5
Vietnamese	10.5	56.6	46.1

[4] The rising societal standard for educational attainment in the past few decades are well-documented. This intergenerational mobility analysis will be more complete when the native-born Asian standard is added for the final paper.

Secondly, Table 2 shows the percent of each generation that are in upper white collar occupations. Similar patterns of intergenerational mobility are seen here.

Table 2: Intergenerational Occupational Attainment (Percent in Upper White Collar Occupations) of the 1.5 and New Second Generation for 5 Asian Ethnic Groups, 1980 to 2005

	Parents of Second Generation in **1980**	2nd Generation (age 25-41) in **2005**	Intergenerational Mobility
Asian Indian	56.8	74.5	17.7
Chinese	42.9	67.7	24.8
Filipino	38.2	61.2	23.0
Korean	40.2	56.2	16.0
Vietnamese	18.6	29.4	10.8

	Parents of 1.5 Generation in **1980**	1.5 Generation (age 25-41) in **2005**	Mobility
Asian Indian	45.4	72.8	27.4
Chinese	25.3	54.2	28.9
Filipino	30.1	53.0	22.9
Korean	21.5	62.1	40.6
Vietnamese	12.0	63.0	50.9

Table 3 shows the percent in poverty by the generations. For Asian Indians, Chinese, and Filipinos, poverty rates were quite low for the parents of the second generation and remained quite low for the second generation. It is important to note that the poverty rate rises quite significantly from the first to second generation for Koreans and Vietnamese to rates higher than the national poverty rate. This certainly warrants further analysis.[5]

There is a more consistent pattern of moving out of poverty for the 1.5 generation but this is partially due to the higher rates of poverty for the parents of the 1.5 generation. The Koreans again deviate from the rest of the groups which warrants further analysis.

Table 2: Intergenerational Movement out of Poverty (Percent 100% Below the Poverty Line) of the 1.5 and New Second Generation for 5 Asian Ethnic Groups, 1980 to 2005

	Parents of Second Generation in **1980**	2nd Generation (age 25-41) in **2005**	Intergenerational Mobility
Asian Indian	2.8	8.6	5.7
Chinese	7.3	8.2	0.8
Filipino	3.5	6.2	2.7
Korean	7.5	15.4	7.9
Vietnamese	12.3	18.9	6.7

	Parents of 1.5 Generation in **1980**	1.5 Generation (age 25-41) in **2005**	Mobility
Asian Indian	9.1	0.0	-9.1
Chinese	23.8	4.9	-18.9
Filipino	5.5	6.7	1.2
Korean	13.6	11.3	-2.3
Vietnamese	37.0	1.4	-35.6

[5] Possible explanations or contributing factors to explore may include marital status variations, uneven distribution within the 25 to 41 age range, and occupational or employment distribution (outside of the upper white collar occupations).

B. Model Results

The following 3 tables show the preliminary model results for the various socioeconomic outcomes.

Table 4. Logistic Regression Results of BA +, 1980-2005

		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Intercept (3rd+ generation in 1980)		-0.5086	***	-0.3119	***	-0.5151	***	-0.3174	***
Year									
1980	Ref.								
2005 (3rd+ generation in 2005)		-0.0907		-0.0927		-0.0887		-0.0907	
Gen									
Parents of 1.5 generation		0.0261		0.0731	***	-0.1253	***	-0.0724	*
1.5 generation in 2005		0.8568	***	0.8825	***	0.5839	***	0.6132	***
Parents of 2nd generation		0.9460	***	0.9228	***	1.1936	***	1.1701	***
2nd generation in 2005		0.2491	*	0.2323	*	0.2988	**	0.2804	**
Age									
age 35=0		0.0154	***	0.0114	***	0.0125	***	0.0084	***
Gender									
male	Ref.								
female				-0.4195	***			-0.4220	***
Asian Indian									
						0.8364	***	0.8193	***
Filipino									
						0.3741	***	0.3800	***
Korean									
						0.1926	***	0.1939	***
Vietnamese									
						-1.3751	***	-1.3984	***
Obs.		38,778		38,778		38,778		38,778	
-2 Log Likelihood		51,635		51,241		50,206		49,820	
Pseudo R-Square		0.0396		0.0493		0.0744		0.0835	

*** p<0.01 ** p<0.05 * p<0.1

Table 5. Logistic Regression Results of Upper White Collar, 1980-2005

		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Intercept (3rd+ generation in 1980)		-0.6218	***	-0.4497	***	-0.6226	***	-0.4604	***
Year									
1980	Ref.								
2005 (3rd+ generation in 2005)		0.1609	*	0.1599	*	0.1612	*	0.1603	*
Gen									
Parents of 1.5 generation		-0.3852	***	-0.3604	***	-0.4026	***	-0.3768	***
1.5 generation in 2005		0.3881	***	0.3979	***	0.2971	***	0.3045	***
Parents of 2nd generation		1.0976	***	1.0865	***	1.3467	***	1.3299	***
2nd generation in 2005		0.5013	***	0.4903	***	0.5928	***	0.5750	***
Age									
age 35=0		0.0400	***	0.0364	***	0.0396	***	0.0361	***
Gender									
male	Ref.								
female				-0.3829	***			-0.3609	***
Asian Indian									
						0.7139	***	0.6910	***
Filipino									
						-0.0765	*	-0.0462	
Korean									
						-0.2191	***	-0.2237	***
Vietnamese									
						-0.9273	***	-0.9395	***
Obs.		33,840		33,840		33,840		33,840	
-2 Log Likelihood		43,006		42,735		42,241		42,007	
Pseudo R-Square		0.0283		0.0360		0.0500		0.0565	

*** p<0.01 ** p<0.05 * p<0.1

Table 6. Logistic Regression Results of Below Poverty, 1980-2005

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept (3rd+ generation in 1980)	-2.9795 ***	-3.0274 ***	-2.9596 ***	-3.0063 ***
Year				
1980 Ref.				
2005 (3rd+ generation in 2005)	0.5705 ***	0.5707 ***	0.5653 ***	0.5656 ***
Gen				
Parents of 1.5 generation	1.4061 ***	1.3918 ***	1.7477 ***	1.7326 ***
1.5 generation in 2005	0.0213	0.0144	0.5134 ***	0.5066 ***
Parents of 2nd generation	-1.9282 ***	-1.9179 ***	-2.0779 ***	-2.0680 ***
2nd generation in 2005	-0.2653	-0.2576	-0.2099	-0.2065
Age				
age 35=0	-0.0561 ***	-0.0548 ***	-0.0507 ***	-0.0495 ***
Gender				
male Ref.				
female		0.1021 ***		0.0984 **
Asian Indian				
			-1.1040 ***	-1.0991 ***
Filipino				
			-1.2780 ***	-1.2778 ***
Korean				
			-0.4486 ***	-0.4492 ***
Vietnamese				
			0.5840 ***	0.5872 ***
Obs.	38,623	38,623	38,623	38,623
-2 Log Likelihood	21,336	21,329	20,491	20,484
Pseudo R-Square	0.0328	0.0330	0.0538	0.0539

*** p<0.01 ** p<0.05 * p<0.1

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