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Revisiting the Asian second-generation advantage

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ABSTRACT

Asian Americans comprise 6.4% of the US population, but account for over 20% of the country's elite Ivy League students. While researchers have studied mechanisms that promote an "Asian second-generation advantage" in education, including immigrant hyper-selectivity, few have examined whether this advantage extends into the labour market. Focusing on the five largest Asian groups – Chinese, Indians, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and Koreans – we revisit the thesis of Asian second-generation advantage. We argue that how we define advantage – as outcomes or mobility, in education or in occupations – matters. Our analyses reveal that all five second-generation Asian groups attain exceptional educational *outcomes*, but vary in intergenerational *mobility*. Second-generation Vietnamese exhibit the greatest intergenerational gains, followed by second-generation Chinese and Koreans; second-generation Indians and Filipinos experience none. Moreover, this advantage disappears in the labour market for all groups, except for Chinese, revealing the domain-specific nature of the Asian second-generation advantage.

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KEYWORDS Hyper-selectivity; Asian Americans; second generation; education; occupational attainment; assimilation

Introduction

In 2015, the Asian American population numbered 20.4 million, comprising 6.4% of the total US population – a significant increase since 1965, when Asians accounted for only 1.2%. Asian Americans are also the fastest growing immigrant group. A defining characteristic of contemporary Asian immigration is its hyper-selectivity – a dual positive immigrant selectivity in which immigrants are more likely to have graduated from college than both their non-migrant counterparts and the host population. Previous studies have shown that hyper-selectivity can boost second-generation educational outcomes in ways that defy the status attainment model, resulting in an "Asian second-generation advantage" (Lee and Zhou 2015; Tran et al. 2018). We expand this body of research by examining whether the benefits

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of hyper-selectivity extend beyond the domain of education and into the labour market for second-generation Asians.

Focusing on the five largest Asian groups (Chinese, Indians, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and Koreans), who comprise 83% of the Asian American population, we find that how we define advantage – as outcomes or mobility – matters, as does the domain we study – education or the labour market. Our analyses of the Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS ASEC) over the last decade reveal four main findings.

First, all five Asian immigrant groups are highly selected from their countries of origin, and all but Vietnamese are hyper-selected. Second, all five Asian second-generation groups graduate from college at rates that far exceed native-born blacks and whites – pointing to a distinctive “Asian second-generation advantage” in educational outcomes. Third, when reframing advantage as intergenerational mobility, however, the Asian second-generation advantage disappears for some groups: while second-generation Vietnamese, Chinese, and Koreans are significantly *more* likely to graduate from college than the first generation, second-generation Indians and Filipinos exhibit no intergenerational gains. These differential mobility gains suggest that hyper-selectivity may not operate similarly for all second-generation Asian groups. Fourth, the educational advantage disappears in the labour market for all groups except for second-generation Chinese. Hence, despite the hyper-selectivity of contemporary Asian immigrants and the second generation’s exceptional educational outcomes, the educational advantage fails to transfer to the labour market for most second-generation Asians.

The paper is organized as follows. We begin with an overview of Asian Americans’ growth and diversity, focusing on the five largest Asian groups. Second, we review the literature on Asian American educational and occupational attainment, and highlight the ways in which hyper-selectivity affects second-generation socioeconomic outcomes and mobility. Third, we draw on CPS ASEC data to unveil patterns of educational and occupational attainment and mobility among the five largest Asian groups. Fourth, we discuss why the Asian advantage is relegated to the domain of education and fades in the labour market for most second-generation Asians, where we find evidence that Asian professionals are over-credentialed in education when they achieve parity with whites in the labour market.

The growth and diversity of Asian Americans

Asians are the fastest growing group in the United States, increasing from less than 1.2% of the US population in 1965 to 6.4% in 2015. By 2060, demographers project that Asians will reach 10% of the country’s population, in large part due to immigration. By 2065, Asians are projected to be the

largest immigrant group, making up 38% of the foreign-born population, while the Latino share will drop to 31% (Pew Research Center 2015).

Unlike Latino immigration, in which Mexico predominates as the single largest source country, Asian immigration is not dominated by a single sending country. Rather, the top source countries – China, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Korea – account for 71% of the Asian immigrant population, and 83% of US Asian population. Chinese, who have the longest migration history in the United States, account for the largest share of the US Asian population, totalling 4.9 million, or one-quarter (Pew Research Center 2017). At 4.0 and 3.9 million, Indians and Filipinos are the second and third largest groups, respectively, each accounting for about one-fifth of the total Asian population. Vietnamese and Koreans round out the top five, accounting for 2.0 and 1.9 million, respectively.

Immigration has not only increased the Asian American population, but has also diversified it. Prior to 1965, 80% of US Asians were East Asian, but today, they account for only 36% of the US Asian population. The recent growth in the US Asian population is driven primarily by South and Southeast Asians (Lee, Ramakrishnan, and Wong 2018). Today, the US Asian population is composed of twenty-four national origin groups with diverse migration histories, languages and dialects, phenotypes, legal statuses, and socioeconomic profiles at both extremes of the distribution (Lee, Ramakrishnan, and Wong 2018).

Chinese, Indians and Koreans are economic migrants, whose educational attainment exceeds that of the native-born Whites. Vietnamese are the largest Asian refugee group, who exhibit a range of human capital and occupational skills; the first wave of Vietnamese refugees was highly educated and hyper-selected, but later waves, far less so (Zhou and Bankston 1998). Filipinos are also economic migrants, but unlike East and South Asians, their migration was influenced by the Philippines' status as a former US territory.

Table 1. Characteristics of Asian population by ethnic origin in the United States.

Group characteristics	Chinese	Indian	Filipino	Vietnamese	Korean
Median age	36	32	35	36	35
Median household income	\$70,000	\$100,000	\$80,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
% Foreign-born	63	69	52	64	62
% US citizen ^a	58	50	68	75	60
% Married ^b	58	71	55	55	56
% Multigenerational household	25	33	23	32	20
% Home ownership rate	62	55	58	65	47
% Living in poverty	14.4	7.5	7.5	14.3	12.8
% Unemployed	5.8	5.4	6.2	5.7	5.6
% Total Asian population	24	20	20	10	9
N	4,948,000	3,982,000	3,982,000	1,980,000	1,822,000

Source: American Community Survey (2013–2015).

^aAmong foreign-born population.

^bAmong adult population.

In addition, while most Asian immigrants and refugees arrive with the protection of legal status, one in seven Asian immigrants is undocumented (Pew Research Center 2017).

Table 1 provides an overview of key demographic characteristics of the top five Asian groups. While median age is similar across groups, median household income is wide-ranging. Indians report the highest income (\$100,000), and Vietnamese and Koreans, the lowest (\$60,000). Indians also report the highest proportion of foreign-born (69%) – reflecting the relative recency of their immigration – whereas Filipinos report the lowest (52%). Among the foreign-born, Indians are also the least likely to be US citizens (50%), and Vietnamese, the most likely (75%).

English language proficiency is another dimension of difference. Whereas 80% of Filipinos and Indians report English proficiency – defined as speaking English “well” or “very well” – the rate drops to 60% among Chinese and Koreans. Home ownership also ranges widely, from a high of 65% among Vietnamese to a low of 47% among Koreans. Finally, despite the high median household income for all Asian groups, more than 14% of Chinese and Vietnamese live in poverty, as do close to 13% of Koreans. Indians and Filipinos – the two Asian groups who report the highest rates of English language proficiency – report the lowest poverty rates at 7.5%. Each of these characteristics affect patterns of socioeconomic incorporation, not only for the first generation, but also the second.

Hyper-selectivity and second-generation educational attainment

Despite the diversity within the US Asian immigrant population, a distinguishing feature is their positive immigrant selectivity, and, more specifically, their hyper-selectivity. Migrants who are more highly selected than those from their country of origin accrue social capital that benefits them in the United States (Fernández-Kelly 2008). Beyond *high* selectivity, Lee and Zhou (2015) coined the term *hyper-selectivity*, to describe a dual positive immigrant selectivity in which immigrants are not only more likely to have graduated from college than their non-migrant counterparts from their countries of origin, but also more likely to have a college degree than the host society. This hyper-selectivity helps to explain the favourable socioeconomic outcomes of the first generation, as well as the second generation’s exceptional educational outcomes (Kao and Thompson 2003; Lee and Zhou 2015; Tran et al. 2018).

Hyper-selectivity’s effects extend beyond the reproduction of advantage. Hyper-selectivity has cultural, institutional, and social psychological consequences that can boost the second generation’s educational outcomes in ways that defy the status attainment model. Hyper-selected immigrants

construct a strict and narrow “success frame” – including high educational and occupational achievement – and, critically, they create and sustain institutional resources, including after-school academies, tutoring services, and SAT preparatory classes, to ensure that their second-generation children realize the success frame (Lee and Zhou 2015). And because these resources are preferentially available to co-ethnics from a wide range of class backgrounds, children from working-class families are able to assuage their socioeconomic disadvantage with co-ethnic advantages, supporting the idea that an ethnic group’s socioeconomic heterogeneity is instrumental to group mobility (Tran 2016).

In addition, hyper-selectivity has social psychological consequences that have “spillover effects” across ethnic origin groups. For example, the hyper-selectivity of Chinese immigrants leads to the perception that all Chinese are highly educated, hard-working, and deserving (Lee and Zhou 2015). And because of the racialization that occurs in the US context, this perception extends to other Asian Americans, despite differences among them. Residential proximity among Asian ethnic groups in the United States also promotes spillover effects. This allows, for example, Vietnamese immigrants to benefit from institutional resources like after-school programmes that are available among Chinese communities. The spillover effects of hyper-selectivity help to boost opportunities and outcomes in ways that defy the status attainment model (Hsin 2016) and explain why the daughter of Chinese immigrants whose parents have only an elementary school education, work in ethnic restaurants, and live among working-class co-ethnics is able to soar past her parents and graduate from Harvard (Kasinitz et al. 2009; Lee and Zhou 2017). Indeed, Asian American educational achievement has reached such a level that academic success has become racially coded as an Asian American norm in some contexts (Drake 2017; Jiménez and Horowitz 2013).

While Lee and Zhou (2015) have illustrated how the hyper- and high selectivity of Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants, respectively, have produced exceptional educational outcomes among the second generation, and Tran et al. (2018) have examined how hyper-selectivity among Chinese, Cubans, Nigerians and Armenians affects second-generation achievement for those four groups, no study has examined whether hyper-selectivity operates similarly for other second-generation Asian groups, such as Indians, Filipinos or Koreans. Whether there is heterogeneity in second-generation achievement among Asian ethnic groups beyond Chinese remains an open empirical question. Furthermore, few studies have examined Asian Americans’ labour market outcomes. We address these theoretical and empirical gaps by examining both educational and labour market outcomes for the second generation of the five largest Asian groups.

Asian Americans' occupational attainment

Despite Asian Americans' out-performance of white Americans in education, Asian Americans have been less successful in translating these gains into the labour market. For example, researchers have found that Asian Americans were systematically overeducated relative to their labour market attainment, implying that some degree of ethnic or racial discrimination still persists in the labour market (Hirschman and Wong 1984; Madamba and De Jong 1997). Saad et al. (2012) suggest that ethnic minority factors – including degree of English proficiency and acculturation – influence the relationship between income and education for Asian Americans. In their survey of this literature, Sakamoto, Goyette, and Kim (2009) also document that foreign schooling leads to a lower rate of returns across all racial and ethnic minority groups (see also Bratsberg and Ragan 2002). Other research with better-specified models suggests that US-born Asians have attained parity with white Americans with regards to some labour market outcomes (Sakamoto, Goyette, and Kim 2009).

However, such conclusions about Asian-white parity in the labour market may have been premature. Kim and Sakamoto (2010) find that among college graduates, US-born Asian men earn 8% less than white men, even after controlling for years of education, school type, major, and region of residence. US-born Asian women are likely to earn as much as white women, but are less likely to hold supervisory positions (Kim and Zhao 2014). These findings suggest that second-generation Asian Americans of both genders have yet to achieve full equality across multiple labour market indicators compared to their native white counterparts. One area of significant disadvantage is in supervisory and leadership positions, where Asian Americans are still less likely than native whites with the same educational background to rise to such positions (Sakamoto, Goyette, and Kim 2009).

More recent research on Asian Americans' labour market outcomes points to inter-ethnic and inter-generational differences in attainment and occupational field among Asian groups. Lee and Kye (2016) find that disaggregating labour market outcomes by gender, national origin, and educational attainment reveals both significant disadvantages for underachieving Asian groups, as well as a "bamboo ceiling" that limits advancement for overachieving Asian groups. Inter-ethnic disparities are reflected in both rates of unemployment and the median household income of second-generation Asians, which ranges from a high of \$55,232 for Filipinos to a low of \$25,179 for Laotians and Cambodians (Kim and Sakamoto 2010; Kim and Zhao 2014; Portes and Fernández-Kelly 2008).

Occupational attainment may also be influenced by field. Asian Americans across generations are disproportionately concentrated in STEM and health-care-related fields, compared to both native-born whites and non-Asian

minority groups. Min and Jang (2015) find that for first-generation Asians, this concentration is the result of immigrant selectivity. Among the 1.5- and second generation, occupational concentration differs by subgroup. Second-generation Chinese, Indian, and Vietnamese are less concentrated in STEM than the first generation, primarily due to the latter's extremely high selectivity in these fields. By contrast, second-generation Korean and Filipino Americans are slightly more represented in these fields than their first-generation counterparts. In healthcare, second-generation Filipinos likewise do not maintain their first generation's over-representation in that field, whereas second-generation Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, and Korean Americans are more represented in non-nursing healthcare occupations than their first-generation counterparts.

Min and Jang (2015) posit that Asian immigrants transmit their skills and preference for math and science to their second-generation children, while Lee and Zhou (2015) find that Asian immigrant parents shepherd their second-generation children into specific fields that require high credentials in the hopes of shielding their children from potential racial discrimination. Similarly, Louie (2004) finds that Chinese parents are more likely to steer the second generation into academic fields that they consider more "practical" in part because of such occupations' perceived financial stability. Despite their efforts, however, qualitative and experimental research shows that Asian Americans face negative stereotyping in the workplace, which may limit their opportunities for mobility and advancement to managerial and supervisory positions (Chin 2016; Kiang et al. 2017; Lai and Babcock 2013; Rosette et al. 2016; Williams 2014).

We contribute to this body of research by systematically comparing Asian Americans' occupational attainment to assess whether their educational attainment translates into the labour market. By focusing on the second generation, we control for nativity, generational status, and English language proficiency. In addition, by comparing their outcomes to native-born whites and blacks, we show whether second-generation Asians meet, exceed, or fall below their predicted probabilities in occupational attainment based on their educational achievement. Ours is the first analysis to assess whether immigrant hyper-selectivity also boosts the professional labour market outcomes for the Asian second generation.

Data and methods

To examine patterns of second-generation educational attainment among Chinese, Indians, Filipinos, Vietnamese and Koreans, we use pooled data from the Census Bureau's Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the Community Population Survey (CPS ASEC) from the years 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016. The CPS ASEC is currently the only data source that provides

nationally representative samples of second-generation adults in the United States (Tran et al. 2018). While the American Community Survey (ACS) provides a wealth of socioeconomic data, it does not contain parental birthplace questions and therefore does not allow us to identify the second generation. The CPS ASEC uses a probability sample of about 60,000 occupied households from all fifty states and the District of Columbia to monitor basic population trends via monthly interviews. The survey's 4-8-4 sampling scheme includes households for the first four consecutive months, then excludes them for the next eight months, before returning for the last four months. Given this sampling design, pooling data from the five samples over a decade, each collected two years apart, ensures the presence of non-overlapping individuals in the pooled dataset. The pooled sample also ensures sufficient sample size for the five Asian groups.

The main outcomes of interest are educational and occupational attainment. We focus on the second generation among five US Asian groups. We compare their outcomes with each other and with two native-born groups – third and higher-generation whites and blacks. We restrict the analysis to respondents aged twenty-five to forty, given our interest in attainment in young adulthood. Our eight dependent variables capture both ends of the achievement distribution and are dichotomous because the CPS ASEC variables for education and occupation are categorical, not continuous. On education, we measure four outcomes: having no high school degree; having only a high school degree; attaining a bachelor's degree or more; and attaining a graduate degree or more. On occupation, we measure four outcomes, created by combining related occupations among the eleven major occupational coding categories in CPS ASEC¹: working in a business, professional or managerial occupation; working in a sales, office or administrative occupation; working in a service or related occupation; and working in a construction, maintenance or repair occupation. We focus on these measures because the majority of the Asian second generation work in these occupations. For our analyses on occupational attainment, we further limit the sample to those who reported being employed in the year prior to the survey.

Our key independent variables are ethnoracial origin and immigrant generation, operationalized based on the birthplaces of the respondent and of their parents. We classify respondents with one foreign-born parent and one native-born parent based on the foreign-born parent's ethnicity to ensure the largest samples of the second-generation.

The analyses proceed in three stages. First, we outline overall patterns of hyper-selectivity and high selectivity by comparing proportions of first- and second-generation Asian Americans from the five ethnic groups who have attained a college degree or higher (using CPS ASEC data), to the college attainment rates among non-migrants from the five countries of origin (using United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization data

for Chinese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and Koreans and Education Policy and Data Center data for Indians). Second, we provide bivariate analyses of second-generation attainment in the United States for each ethnic group. Third, we analyze each group's socioeconomic attainment, relative to native groups, using multivariate logistic regressions with robust standard errors and reporting the odds ratios. Control variables include age, the quadratic term of age, and region (using the four Census regions of Northeast, Midwest, West, and South). Because we pool the data over a decade using CPS ASEC 2008–2016, we also control for survey year to account for changes over time. For the models on occupational outcomes, we further control for education. Our analyses adjust for the stratified survey design using appropriate final weights provided by CPS ASEC. We also present post-regression predicted probabilities based on the multivariate models, holding values for the control variables constant at the mean level.

Results

The high- and hyper-selectivity of US Asian immigrants

Figure 1 presents the proportions within each US Asian ethnic group with a bachelor's degree or higher, contrasting these with the education rate

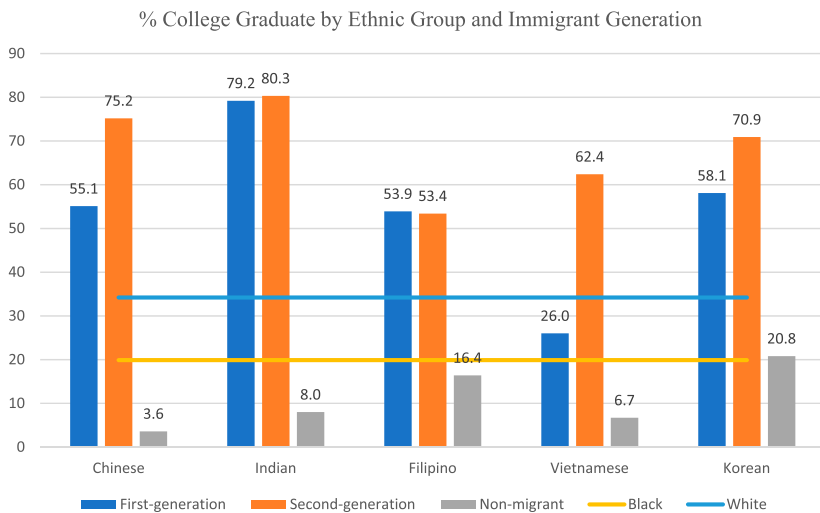


Figure 1. Hyper-selectivity by Asian ethnic origin. Source: Pooled CPS ASEC (2008–2016), UNESCO (2010–2012) and EPDC (2013). Notes: Combined sample is limited to population aged 25 and older to provide data compatibility across sending and receiving countries. Non-migrant data for Chinese, Filipinos, Vietnamese and Koreans are from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Non-migrant data for Indians are from Education Policy and Data Center (EPDC).

among non-migrants in the five sending countries. For data compatibility across sending and receiving countries, we limit our sample to those aged twenty-five and older. Among this population, first-generation Asians report significantly higher percentages of college graduation compared to their non-migrant counterparts in their respective countries of origin. Moreover, for all groups except Vietnamese, Asian immigrants are also more likely to have graduated from college than the US mean. Hence, Vietnamese immigrants are positively and highly selected, while Chinese, Indians, Filipinos, and Koreans are hyper-selected.

Hyper-selectivity is highest among Chinese and Indians. While 55.1% of US Chinese immigrants hold a bachelor's degree or higher, the comparable figure for non-migrant Chinese is only 3.6% – a ratio of eighteen to one. Among Indians, US immigrants are ten times more likely than their non-migrant counterparts to report having a bachelor's degree or more. Filipino and Korean immigrants, too, are three to four times as likely to have graduated from college than their non-migrant counterparts. And while Vietnamese immigrants are not more highly educated than the US mean, they are still highly selected; four times as many have graduated from college, compared to their non-migrant counterparts.

The high and hyper-selectivity of contemporary Asian immigrants indicate that those who migrate to the United States are not representative of their ethnic group in their country of origin. The educational advantage of the first generation extends to the second, as we show next.

Second-generation educational attainment

As [Figure 1](#) also shows, all five second-generation Asian groups graduate from college at exceptionally high rates that far surpass both native-born blacks and whites. Second-generation Indians evince the highest educational attainment with four-fifths (80.3%) having earned a bachelor's degree or higher, followed by second-generation Chinese (75.2%) and Koreans (70.9%). While college attainment is lower for Vietnamese and Filipinos, more than three-fifths of second-generation Vietnamese (62.4%) have graduated from college, as well as more than half of second-generation Filipinos (53.4%). To put these figures in perspective, the comparable figures for native-born whites and blacks are only 33% and 20%, respectively.

While educational outcomes for all five second-generation Asian groups exceed those of native-born whites and blacks, for some groups, this is precisely what the status attainment model would predict. For example, the high rate of college completion among second-generation Indians (80.3%) is unsurprising, given the extremely high rate of college completion among first-generation Indians (79.2%). Also consistent with the status attainment model, second-generation Filipinos' educational outcomes are likewise flat

compared to the first generation (53.4 versus 53.9%). Unlike Indian immigrants, however, first-generation Filipinos do not evince exceptionally high college graduation rates. Even second-generation Vietnamese leap past second-generation Filipinos, despite lower levels of educational attainment among first-generation Vietnamese compared to first-generation Filipinos. Indeed, second-generation Vietnamese report the most intergenerational mobility; they are more than twice as likely to have graduated from college than the first-generation (62.4 versus 26.0%).

Second-generation Chinese and Koreans also evince strong mobility gains in educational attainment. 55.1% of first-generation Chinese earned a B.A. or higher, compared to 75.2% of the second-generation. Among first- and second-generation Koreans, the rates are 58.1 and 70.9%, respectively. The intergenerational educational mobility of Vietnamese, Chinese, and Koreans reflects the boost associated with hyper-selectivity. Second-generation Filipinos, however, do not experience a comparable boost.

Table 2 shows four measures of educational attainment – high school drop-out rates, high school completion rates, college completion rates, and graduate degree completion rates – for young adults between the ages of twenty-five and forty. On these measures, all Asian groups fare better than native blacks and whites. The high school drop-out rate is less

Table 2. Second-generation socioeconomic attainment in young adulthood by ethnic group

Education	% No High School	% Only High School	% College Degree	% Graduate Degree
White	4.88	24.88	39.95	12.04
Black	10.04	34.48	21.39	6.14
Chinese	0.87	3.61	82.32	28.86
Indian	1.42	4.18	84.45	45.22
Filipino	1.45	13.79	54.53	13.76
Vietnamese	1.78	7.57	63.64	18.31
Korean	0.53	14.87	65.73	15.48
Total	5.65	26.20	37.49	11.25

Occupation	% Managerial/ Professional	% Sales/ Office	% Construction/ Maintenance	% Service Workers
White	45.24	21.69	9.10	13.67
Black	30.50	26.10	4.53	23.77
Chinese	73.27	15.66	2.11	6.03
Indian	78.91	14.41	1.13	3.56
Filipino	51.65	29.57	3.93	11.32
Vietnamese	53.45	29.69	1.50	12.85
Korean	60.21	17.61	2.55	16.07
Total	43.62	22.35	8.37	15.10

Source: Pooled CPS ASEC (2008–2016).

Notes: Results are for subsample of 25-to-40-year-old respondents. Native white and native black groups include third-plus-generation individuals. Asian ethnic groups include second-generation individuals. The eight outcome variables are dichotomous. Figures on occupational outcomes were restricted to those who reported working during the previous year.

than 1% for Chinese and Koreans, and less than 2% for other Asian groups, compared to 5% for native whites and 10% for native blacks. On college completion, 85% of Indians and 82% of Chinese report having a college degree. Filipinos report the lowest rate of college completion (55%) of the Asian groups, but this is still significantly higher than both native whites (40%) and native blacks (21%).

In sum, there are three notable findings with respect to hyper-selectivity and educational attainment. First, all five US Asian groups are highly selected, and all groups except Vietnamese are hyper-selected. Their dual positive immigrant selectivity gives the second-generation a unique educational advantage. Second, as a result of first-generation Asians' high and hyper-selectivity, second-generation Asians exhibit exceptional educational outcomes. All five US Asian groups graduate from college and graduate school at rates that far exceed native-born blacks and whites, and are less likely to drop out of high school and to hold only a high school degree compared to both blacks and whites.

Third, while all second-generation groups evince high educational outcomes, only some attain intergenerational mobility. Second-generation Indians are the most highly educated, but given that four-fifths of Indian immigrants have a college degree, there is little room for intergenerational mobility. Mobility is also flat for second-generation Filipinos, though, in contrast to Indians, only about half have graduated from college. At the other end of the mobility spectrum are second-generation Vietnamese, who are more than twice as likely to graduate from college as the first. Second-generation Chinese and Koreans also evince intergenerational gains that exceed the level predicted by the status attainment model. These results show the differential effects of hyper-selectivity on intergenerational mobility gains among second-generation Asians.

Second-generation professional attainment

Most studies of the Asian second generation focus on their educational attainment, while relatively few examine their labour market outcomes. We build on this scant body of literature by highlighting professional attainment among second-generation Asians and comparing their rates to native-born whites and blacks.

As [Table 2](#) shows, educational differences among second-generation Asian groups are reflected in their differential rates of professional attainment. Nearly four-fifths of second-generation Indians (79%) work in professional and managerial occupations, followed by Chinese (70%) and Koreans (66%). Even second-generation Vietnamese (53%) and Filipinos (52%) evince higher rates of professional attainment than both native whites (45%) and blacks (31%).

Similarly, native whites and native blacks with only high school degrees are more likely to be concentrated in lower-middle-class jobs such as sales, office and administrative occupations. Second-generation Chinese and Indians are least likely to work in these occupations (14 and 16%), compared to native whites (22%) and native blacks (26%). Filipinos and Vietnamese report the highest rates (30%), exceeding both blacks and whites. These results suggest that nearly a third of these two ethnic groups have moved into lower-middle-class position, even when they have not achieved higher professional occupations.

On construction, maintenance and repair work, second-generation Filipinos report the highest rates among Asians (4%), though this is still lower than rates for native blacks (5%) and native whites (9%). Consistent with their higher educational profile, second-generation Chinese and Indians are also the least likely to be concentrated in low-level service occupations (about 1–4%) compared to Vietnamese and native whites (14%). By stark contrast, about a quarter of native-born blacks work in the service sector.

Overall, the occupational patterns of these Asian groups reveal that second-generation Indians and Chinese are the most likely to be in professional and managerial positions. In contrast, second-generation Vietnamese and Filipinos are the least likely to be in professional or managerial positions compared to other second-generation Asian groups, with second-generation Koreans in the middle. Yet despite variation among the second-generation Asian groups, each exhibits higher rates of professional attainment than native-born whites and blacks.

Revisiting the Asian second-generation advantage

Table 3 presents multivariate results from logistic regressions on educational attainment, controlling for ethnic origin, age, gender, region and survey year. Asian groups are significantly less likely to drop out of high school compared to whites whereas blacks are twice as likely to do so (Model 1). Asian groups are also significantly less likely than whites to hold only a high school degree whereas blacks are 1.6 times more likely to do so (Model 2). On college attainment, Chinese and Indians are 6.5 and 8.1 times more likely, respectively, than whites to have completed college by age twenty-five (Model 3). This educational advantage is also substantial among Filipinos, Vietnamese and Koreans.

On graduate degree attainment, Chinese, Indians and Vietnamese are 3.1, 6.7 and 1.9 times, respectively, more likely than whites to have completed a graduate degree by age twenty-five, whereas rates for Koreans and Filipinos do not differ significantly from whites (Model 4). By contrast, native-born blacks are twice as likely as whites to drop out of high school and half as likely to have a college or a graduate degree. Asian groups have not only

Table 3. Second-generation Asians' educational attainment in young adulthood.

Variables	No High School Model 1	Only High School Model 2	College Degree Model 3	Graduate Degree Model 4
Native black	2.042*** (.075)	1.576*** (.035)	.412*** (.010)	.482*** (.019)
Chinese	.196*** (.090)	.119*** (.033)	6.577*** (1.001)	3.073*** (.398)
Indian	.279* (.142)	.129*** (.042)	8.136*** (1.659)	6.668*** (.956)
Filipino	.343** (.117)	.555*** (.076)	1.721*** (.177)	1.204 (.186)
Vietnamese	.375* (.163)	.263*** (.062)	2.639*** (.453)	1.903** (.427)
Korean	.114*** (.063)	.564* (.155)	2.733*** (.494)	1.333 (.299)
Age	.974 (.053)	.932* (.026)	1.115*** (.029)	1.916*** (.081)
Age-square	1.000 (.001)	1.001* (.000)	.998*** (.000)	.991*** (.001)
Gender	1.274*** (.040)	1.562*** (.026)	.721*** (.011)	.675*** (.016)
Midwest	1.170** (.061)	1.054* (.028)	.660*** (.016)	.610*** (.021)
South	1.378*** (.067)	1.074** (.027)	.693*** (.016)	.668*** (.022)
West	.875* (.051)	.809*** (.023)	.806*** (.020)	.735*** (.027)
CPS 2010 vs. CPS 2008	.998 (.042)	.962 (.022)	1.007 (.021)	.978 (.033)
CPS 2012 vs. CPS 2008	.902* (.040)	.905*** (.021)	1.077*** (.023)	1.081* (.036)
CPS 2014 vs. CPS 2008	.827*** (.039)	.859*** (.021)	1.129*** (.026)	1.209*** (.041)
CPS 2016 vs. CPS 2008	.802*** (.037)	.843*** (.020)	1.221*** (.027)	1.319*** (.044)
Constant	.080** (.070)	.873 (.397)	.151*** (.064)	.000*** (.000)
N	136,505	136,505	136,505	136,505

Source: Pooled CPS ASEC (2008–2016).

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. Reference for ethnoracial origin is native white (i.e. third-plus-generation whites). Reference for region is "northeast".

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

achieved parity with native whites, but have also surpassed them in education, even after controlling for observable covariates.

Table 4 presents occupational attainment outcomes among second-generation Asians, focusing on their concentration in different occupations. Controlling only for ethnic origin, Chinese, Indians, Filipinos and Koreans are significantly more likely than whites to be in business, managerial or professional occupations, reflecting Asians' educational advantage over whites (results not shown, but available upon request). The only exception is Vietnamese, who are the least likely among the Asian groups to be in these occupations. Compared to native whites, second-generation Vietnamese have

Table 4. Second-generation Asians' occupational attainment in young adulthood.

Variables	Managerial/ Professional Model 1	Sales/ Office Model 2	Construction/ Maintenance Model 3	Service Workers Model 4
Native black	.678*** (.021)	1.099** (.032)	.411*** (.024)	1.578*** (.049)
Chinese	1.543** (.219)	.858 (.140)	.472 (.239)	.692 (.160)
Indian	1.483 (.367)	1.043 (.261)	.349 (.221)	.563 (.200)
Filipino	.881 (.120)	1.534*** (.196)	.574* (.154)	.905 (.155)
Vietnamese	.811 (.179)	1.724* (.407)	.207** (.107)	1.250 (.357)
Korean	1.294 (.259)	.822 (.186)	.331* (.150)	1.558 (.434)
Age	1.130*** (.039)	.896** (.031)	1.196** (.067)	.934 (.038)
Age-square	.999** (.001)	1.002** (.001)	.997** (.001)	1.001 (.001)
Gender	.697*** (.014)	.501*** (.011)	3.796*** (2.465)	.574*** (.014)
High school graduate	1.569*** (.115)	1.625*** (.093)	.765*** (.047)	.767*** (.038)
Some college	3.896*** (.278)	1.681*** (.096)	.552*** (.034)	.631*** (.031)
College graduate	15.729*** (1.126)	1.219*** (.071)	.117*** (.009)	.220*** (.012)
Graduate degree or more	66.106*** (5.223)	.335*** (.024)	.024*** (.004)	.062*** (.005)
Midwest	.896*** (.028)	.963 (.031)	1.041 (.054)	.884*** (.033)
South	1.004 (.030)	1.020 (.032)	1.094 (.055)	.852*** (.032)
West	1.068* (.035)	1.049 (.036)	1.043 (.057)	.919* (.037)
Constant	.013*** (.007)	2.257 (1.252)	.001*** (.001)	2.333 (1.518)
N	105,886	105,886	105,886	105,886

Source: Pooled CPS ASEC (2008–2016).

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. Reference for ethnoracial origin is native white (i.e. third-plus-generation whites). Reference for region is "northeast". Models controlled for CPS year.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

achieved parity, while the other second-generation Asian groups have surpassed whites on this measure.

Beyond ethnic origin, Model 1 further controls for age, gender, educational attainment, region and survey year. In this adjusted model, the educational advantage that second-generation Asians have accrued disappears in the labour market for all groups, except for Chinese. In other words, despite their remarkable educational gains, there is *no* discernible advantage in the labour market for the non-Chinese second-generation Asian groups compared to whites. Put differently, Asian ethnic groups are over-credentialed with regards to education to achieve parity with whites in the

labour market. This is consistent with qualitative research that documents a “bamboo ceiling” among the Asian second-generation in the workplace (Chin 2016).

Model 2 shows Filipinos and Vietnamese are 1.5 and 1.7 times more likely than whites to work in sales, office or administrative support whereas there are no differences among other Asians and whites, controlling for education and other covariates. On construction, maintenance or repair work, Model 3 shows that Filipinos, Vietnamese and Koreans are significantly less likely to work in these occupations compared to whites, whereas there are no major differences among Chinese and Indians compared to whites. In other words, second-generation Asians are least likely to be concentrated in construction work whereas they are much more concentrated in sales, office or administrative work, adjusting for education.

At the other end of the occupational spectrum, Chinese and Indians are significantly less likely to be in the low-wage service sector whereas there are no significant differences among Vietnamese, Filipinos and Koreans in comparison to whites (results not shown, but available upon request). However, in Model 4, the relatively lower concentration of Chinese and Indians in service work is no longer significant after controlling for education and observable covariates.

The results show that second-generation Asians face barriers in the labour market and fare relatively less well than native whites, despite their significant educational advantage. The patterns of labour market disadvantage suggest two non-mutually exclusive possibilities. First, factors that are not measured such as cultural and social capital may affect labour market outcomes above and beyond human capital accumulation, in ways that particularly benefit native whites. Second, ethnoracial bias and discrimination may impede the professional attainment of second-generation Asian in spite of their high educational attainment.

Figures 2 and 3 graph the predicted probabilities by ethnic origin based on the multivariate analyses, holding other variables constant at the mean level. There is a clear Asian second-generation advantage compared to both whites and blacks in education. However, this Asian educational advantage does not translate into an Asian advantage in the labour market. With the exception of Chinese, other Asian groups show no advantage over whites in professional occupational attainment. In fact, Vietnamese and Filipinos are just as likely as blacks to report being in a professional occupation despite their significant educational advantage over blacks (results not shown, but available upon request). Moreover, compared to whites, there are no differences in concentration in service occupations among the five Asian groups, and compared to blacks, there are also no differences in service work among Vietnamese and Koreans.

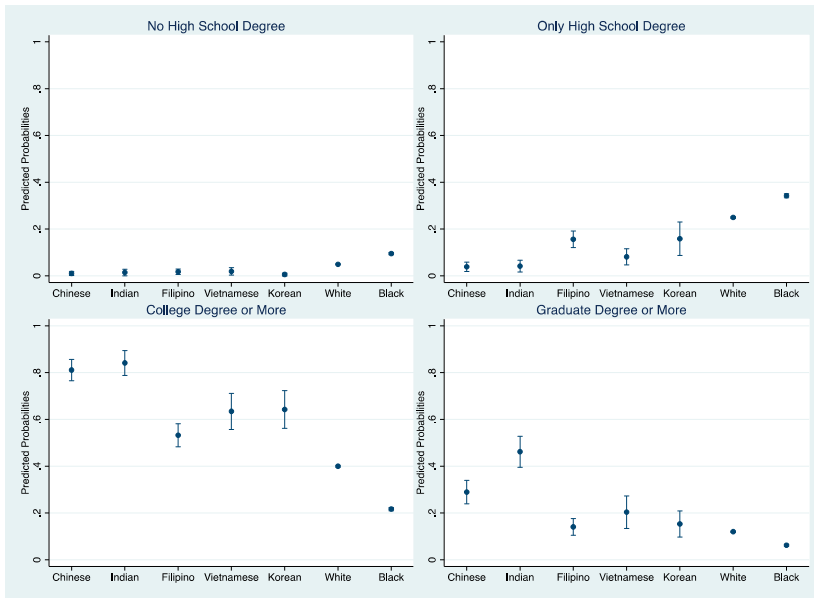


Figure 2. Predicted probabilities of second-generation Asians' educational attainment. Source: Pooled CPS ASEC (2008–2016). Notes: Results are for subsample of 25-to-40-year-old respondents. Native white and native black groups include third-plus-generation individuals. Asian ethnic groups include second-generation individuals. Predicted probabilities are based on multivariate models which control for gender, age, quadratic term of age, region and survey year.

Discussion and conclusions

While social scientists have documented the exceptional educational outcomes of second-generation Asians, few have examined whether this advantage extends into the labour market. Even fewer have problematized how we measure advantage: as educational outcomes versus intergenerational mobility. Moreover, none has examined whether hyper-selectivity's effects extend to second-generation groups beyond Chinese and Vietnamese. We address these empirical and theoretical holes by comparing the educational outcomes and mobility of five second-generation Asian groups – Chinese, Indians, Filipinos, Vietnamese and Koreans. and examining whether their educational gains lead to professional and managerial jobs at the same rate as comparably educated native whites.

We find that while all second-generation Asian groups evince educational outcomes that far exceed native-born whites and blacks, only Vietnamese, Chinese, and Koreans attain educational mobility. Neither second-generation Indians nor Filipinos attain intergenerational mobility in educational attainment. In the case of Indians, that more than four-fifths of the first generation graduated from college makes it difficult for the second generation to surpass

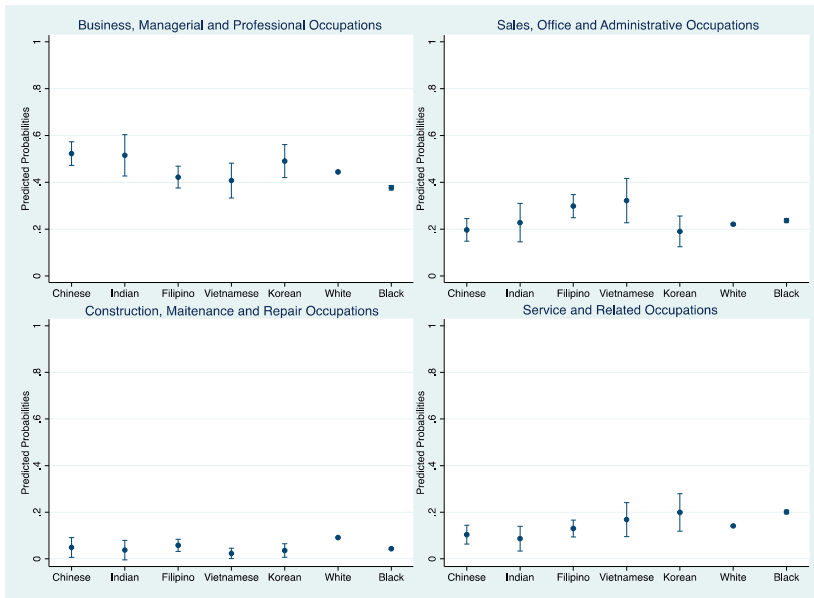


Figure 3. Predicted probabilities of second-generation Asians' occupational attainment. Source: Pooled CPS ASEC (2008–2016). Notes: Results are for subsample of 25-to-40-year-old respondents. Native white and native black groups include third-plus-generation individuals. Asian ethnic groups include second-generation individuals. Predicted probabilities are based on multivariate models which control for gender, age, quadratic term of age, region and survey year.

them. This is not the case, however, for Filipinos; only half of first-generation Filipinos have graduated from college, but despite their hyper-selectivity, the second generation does not progress past the first. In contrast, second-generation Vietnamese exhibit the greatest intergenerational gains in college attainment. While Vietnamese immigrants are not hyper-selected, the second generation soars past the first, and also surpasses second-generation Filipinos.

Interethnic differences in educational mobility among second-generation Asians reveal that immigrant hyper-selectivity operates differently for Asian groups. While more empirical research is needed to understand why hyper-selectivity does not boost the outcomes of second-generation Filipinos, in particular, as it does for groups like Vietnamese, Chinese, and Koreans, we offer two hypotheses that may help guide future research. First, Filipino immigrants may be less likely to create ethnic institutional resources that help to boost the educational outcomes of the second generation. As a group with low rates of limited English language fluency and of residential segregation, Filipino immigrants do not create ethnic resources – such as tutoring services, supplemental education classes, and SAT prep courses – at the same rate as Chinese,

Vietnamese, and Koreans with higher levels of limited English proficiency. The relative lack of supplemental educational resources may explain why second-generation Filipinos' educational outcomes are flat compared to the first.

A second hypothesis is that social psychological factors may suppress intergenerational mobility among second-generation Filipinos. It is possible that because Filipinos are racialized differently than East Asians in the US context (Ocampo 2016), second-generation Filipinos may not benefit from the direct and spillover effects of hyper-selectivity as their second-generation Chinese or Vietnamese counterparts. More specifically, because Americans are less likely to perceive Filipinos as Asian compared to East Asian groups, the former may not benefit from *stereotype promise* – the boost in performance that is associated with being perceived as smart, hard-working, and deserving (Lee and Zhou 2015; Lee and Ramakrishnan 2017).

Despite the lack of intergenerational educational mobility among second-generation Filipinos, it is worth underscoring that all five second-generation groups in our study evince educational outcomes that far exceed native-born groups. Critically, however, their advantage is restricted to the domain of education – pointing to the domain-specific nature of the second-generation Asian advantage. While many second-generation Asians hold professional positions, they report no advantage over whites in the labour market, despite Asians' significant advantage in educational attainment. The only exception is second-generation Chinese, who maintain their advantage. Understanding how second-generation Chinese are able to translate their educational gains into the labour market – unlike other second-generation Asian groups – may provide insight into which hypothesis better explains the why Asians need to be over-credentialed in education over whites in order to achieve professional occupational parity with whites.

Apart from the Chinese, our results are consistent with the growing body of research that shows that US-born, college-educated Asian Americans fall behind their native white counterparts with respect to professional attainment, earnings, promotions, and leadership roles (Chin 2016; Kiang et al. 2017; Lai and Babcock 2013). This labour market disadvantage might magnify as the Asian second-generation moves from entry-level professional positions in their young adulthood to mid-level management and senior leadership positions in middle adulthood. In short, the Asian second-generation advantage is confined to the domain of education – a point that has not garnered nearly as much scholarly nor media attention as their exceptional educational outcomes.

Note

1. The major occupational codes in CPS ASEC include: (1) management, business and financial occupations, (2) professional and related occupations, (3) service

occupations, (4) sales and related occupations, (5) office and administrative support occupations, (6) farming, fishing, and forestry occupations, (7) construction and extraction occupations, (8) installation, maintenance, and repair occupations, (9) production occupations, (10) transportation and material moving occupations, and (11) Armed Forces. We combine categories (1) and (2) to create “business, managerial or professional occupations”. We combine categories (4) and (5) to create “sales, office or administrative occupations”. We combine categories (7) and (8) to create “construction, maintenance or repair occupations”.

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