

Understanding the diversity of immigrant incorporation: a forms-of-capital model

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Abstract

This article develops the concept of forms of capital as the basis of a model of immigrant incorporation. The model sets out the manner in which the social, financial, and human-cultural capital of immigrant families predict the sorting of immigrants into various labour market trajectories. For example, immigrants arriving with low stocks of financial and human-cultural capital are most likely to find employment in the ethnic economy, whereas immigrants with human-cultural capital that is fungible in the host society tend to gain employment in the broader mainstream economy. Event history analysis is employed to demonstrate the model on four patterns of job mobility common among immigrants: entrepreneurship, professional-managerial-technical jobs, employment in the public sector, and semi- or low-skilled factory work and low-paid service jobs. The findings show that the mix of capital immigrants arrive with, and subsequently accumulate, shapes the trajectory of their incorporation into the host society. The research is based on a field study of Asian immigrants in the greater Los Angeles area.

Keywords: Immigrants; human-cultural capital; social capital; job mobility; labour markets; entrepreneurship.

The migration of people to advanced capitalist societies is among the major social movements of our time. Twenty-five million legal immigrants have migrated to the US since the passage of the landmark Immigration Act of 1965. Immigrants now constitute nearly 10 per cent of the American population according to the 2000 decennial census. How recent immigrants are incorporated into host societies has broad ramifications for the evolution of these societies. Stimulated by the scale of recent immigration, research on how immigrants adapt to their new country is undergoing a marked revival. This reflects a belief that the orthodox assimilation model does not capture important aspects of the

experience of contemporary immigrants. Critics contend that the orthodox model, which grew out of studies of earlier European immigration, does not provide an adequate framework for understanding the contemporary migration of largely non-Europeans to Western societies. During the 1990s, 80 per cent of all legal immigrants to the United States, for example, have come from Latin America, Asia and the Caribbean.

In recent years, specific criticisms of the assimilation model and alternative accounts of the experiences of immigrant minority groups have come from a number of structural perspectives. Middlemen minority theory focuses on the economic positions of minorities like Jews and Chinese who provide a buffer between elites and masses. Serving as intermediaries in economic transactions, such minorities remain structurally separate from both groups. This division contributes to interethnic antagonism and intra-ethnic solidarity (Bonacich 1973), thereby impeding assimilation. Segmented labour-market interpretations have led scholars to fault the assimilation framework for its failure to account for why some minority groups remain concentrated at the bottom of the stratification order, filling low-wage, dead-end jobs (Piore 1979). The enclave economy hypothesis, in turn, contends that those immigrant minorities who establish enclave economies can achieve economic parity with little prior movement towards assimilation (Wilson and Portes 1980). Immigrant minorities who either fail to establish enclave economies or build strong ethnic institutions insulating them from exposure to the influences of poor minorities in central cities are at greater risk of experiencing 'segmented assimilation' (Portes and Zhou 1992). Rather than following a pattern of upward inter-generational social mobility, their children may assimilate instead into the underclass.

Each of these perspectives contributes to our understanding of the incorporation of recent immigrants. Together they provide a useful set of competitive hypotheses that add important qualifications to the general pattern of assimilation for Europeans. In contrast to Europeans, contemporary immigrant minorities have encountered persistent barriers to assimilation – but those who possess comparative advantages in human capital are rapidly assimilating (Alba and Nee 1997). Notably, none of the current perspectives accounts for *why* there is so much *diversity* in the kinds of incorporation experienced by contemporary immigrants, who are dispersed throughout the advanced capitalist economy though they document this diversity (see Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Immigrants not only find jobs in low-wage sectors, but they also gain entry to jobs in core labour markets, eventually achieving returns on human capital that are comparable to those achieved by the majority population.

In this article we outline a forms-of-capital model which extends and complements the literature on assimilation by offering an explanation

for *why there is so much diversity* in the modes of incorporation in contemporary immigration. The model highlights the institution of the immigrant family (nuclear and extended) as a repository of the different forms of capital that immigrants bring with them and accumulate after immigration. The family is viewed as a key social institution providing the basis for trust and collective action. Our general argument is that *the mode of incorporation is largely a function of the social, financial, and human-cultural capital of immigrant families and how these resources are used by individuals within and apart from the existing structure of ethnic networks and institutions.*

A focus on the immigrant family

While most recent studies of immigrant adaptation stress the importance of ethnic resources, with few exceptions the role of the immigrant family is only marginally considered. However, the dispersal of immigrants in all sectors of the receiving economy cannot be readily explained only by reference to ethnic resources and institutions. Structural accounts are useful in the analysis of group-level differences (for example, Cubans and Mexicans), but they do not account for the considerable variations of outcome that occur within as well as across ethnic groups. The analysis of immigrant incorporation must also take into account the 'supply-side' characteristics of immigrants (Light and Bonacich 1988; Kim, Hurh and Fernandez 1989). At this level of analysis, the focus should be on the immigrant family. Traditional labour migration entails young male sojourners leaving villages and rural towns in search of jobs in urban centres, often in a foreign land. Sojourners migrate with the hope of accumulating savings in order to return to their hometown or villages to invest in land or businesses, resume family life, and become local notables (Nee and Nee 1973). Given their orientation towards maximizing short-term earnings, there is little incentive for sojourners to make long-term cultural and social investments in the host society (Bonacich 1973). In contrast to the earlier sojourning pattern of labour migration, contemporary immigration is decidedly family-based, with entire families migrating to settle permanently in the US (Jasso and Rozenzweig 1990). To be sure, the sojourning pattern of labour migration persists, but frequently as a form of family migration, in so far as many sojourners and their families eventually settle in the US (Massey *et al.* 1994). Hence family migration comprises the dominant pattern in the post-1965 immigration, especially evident in the new migration from Asia.¹ The persistence of sojourning combined with immigration involving the nuclear and extended family contributes, we argue, to the increased diversity in the modes of incorporation.

Without a focus on the salience of family resources and on how family strategies interact with larger social institutions, particularly those of the

ethnic group, our understanding of immigrant incorporation will be seriously limited (Boyd 1989). For example, although ethnic economies generate a high demand for female labour, and ethnic ties can bring immigrant women and employers together, family circumstances govern the supply of female workers (Duleep and Sanders 1993; Baker and Benjamin 1997).²

Conceiving of the immigrant family as the primary social basis of trust and collective action is consistent with empirical observations and a number of earlier studies (Bloom and Riemer 1949; Loewen 1971; Yanagisako 1975; Li 1977; Boyd 1989; Aldrich and Waldinger 1990; Waldinger *et al.* 1990). A majority of Asian-owned businesses in the United States rely exclusively on unpaid family labour (U.S. Department of Commerce 1986). Family enterprises formed the backbone of the pre-War Japanese ethnic economy (Bonacich and Modell 1980). The earlier formation of families among Japanese immigrants was the key to their more rapid acculturation compared to Chinese immigrants, who continued a sojourning pattern of male labour migration for several generations. The establishment of families increases the incentive to invest in the acquisition of cultural skills that enhance accommodation in the host society.

Ethnic solidarity can be mobilized in the face of perceived threats spawned by interethnic competition for jobs and resources. But when ethnic conflict is at a low ebb, institutions based on common ethnicity are unlikely to engender the bounded solidarity needed to overcome the free rider problem (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). For this reason, ethnic collective actions aimed at achieving public goods are presently relatively uncommon. Social ties associated with common ethnicity are unlikely to replicate the household communism and solidarity of the family household or to be as strong as the social ties within extended family networks.

Forms of capital and the family

The family unit comprises strategic resources. Its social capital is embodied in relationships both within the family and external to it in social relations that include kinship, ethnic, and non-ethnic ties. Social capital is accumulated through social exchange over time, and is reflected in the sentiments of obligation and solidarity. Like financial capital, social capital is an asset that yields profit, whether in business or education or in securing non-economic rewards like social approval and status (Coleman 1990; Portes 1995; Sanders and Nee 1996). The family provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' that entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu 1983). As such, especially for immigrants who do not possess substantial financial capital, the family (nuclear and extended) constitutes

the most important capital asset. Max Weber (1978, p. 359) characterized the high degree of solidarity found in the family as 'household communism', defined as 'solidarity in dealing with the outside and communism of property and consumption of everyday goods within'. Such solidarity provides the basis for trust that enables individuals to sacrifice their private interests for the benefit of the group, a form of altruism that is more characteristic of the family than larger social groups.

The social resources that are incorporated within the family are multi-dimensional. The family offers emotional resources in softening the strain and frustration associated with settling in a strange land (Yans-McLaughlin 1971; Hareven 1977). In contrast to the loneliness and sexual deviance that characterized the earlier migration of single male sojourners (Siu 1987), family immigrants satisfy their need for understanding, emotional support, and sexual relationship from within a stable, culturally legitimated network instituted in the family and kinship group. The social capital embodied in family relationships promotes cooperation needed in realizing both economic and non-economic values. Coleman's (1988) analysis of social capital, for example, illustrates how relations within the family account for differences in school performance. The social connections that individual members invest in and accumulate provide information and access to resources available to all members of the family.

Newly arrived immigrants rely on social capital to reduce the costs involved in settling in a new country. They often turn to their extended family and ethnic group to get general information about hiring practices and labour-market conditions. For example, family members or ethnic acquaintances may provide tips about appropriate etiquette for job interviews and information about the reputation of local firms. In some cases the help can be quite focused; for example, a family member may accompany the immigrant to the place of work and introduce him or her to the employer or foreman. Often such jobs are in the immigrant ethnic economy. Immigrants also draw on their social capital when they ask a relative for an affidavit of support, when they initially live with relatives who immigrated earlier, when unpaid family labour is utilized in a family business, when they use information provided by relatives, friends, or ethnic networks to find work and housing, when they draw on the experiences of others in learning how to deal with American institutions so that they can obtain a driver's licence, receive telephone service, establish a bank account and begin establishing credit, and pursue any number of other social actions (Nee and Sanders 2001). The quality and scope of this form of social capital are conditional on the social class position of the immigrant family prior to immigration; social networks of elite families are likely to be more powerful than those of working-class families. By contrast, sojourning single male labour migrants are disadvantaged relative to others.

The opportunity to utilize ethnic-based social capital depends on immigrants' connections within the ethnic community, the size and growth-rate of that community, and the diversity and scale of its institutions. Thus, the presence of an ethnic economy shapes the choice-set for newly arrived immigrants by offering them an array of ethnically bounded opportunities in which ethnic labour markets provide mechanisms for transferring job skills to immigrant workers (Bailey and Waldinger 1991), while patron-client ties between boss and worker limit demands for higher wages and better conditions of work.³

It may be, as Weber pointed out, that reliance on the family household for the social organization of economic action intensifies the solidarity of the family unit. Thus, not only do newly arrived immigrants utilize family ties in their adaptive strategies, but in doing so, they may be developing stronger family bonds. In other words, *immigrants may* be investing more in social capital embodied in relationships within the family as an unintended consequence of their family-based strategies. In the case of recently arrived immigrants, individualistic tendencies are often subordinated to family concerns and interests. The willingness of parents to rationalize the hardships and challenges associated with immigration as necessary to further their children's educational opportunities, as well as their children's commitment to strive for academic excellence, is an example of a family strategy. Immigrant entrepreneurship is often made possible by family strategies that require adults to work two jobs, older children to care for their younger siblings, and household consumption to be minimized so as to accumulate savings. Once a family business is initiated, family members provide essential unpaid labour. Another example of a family strategy is the decision of immigrant families to operate shops in other minority neighbourhoods, thereby gaining marginal advantages as a middleman minority, but also experiencing social isolation and vulnerability to ethnic hostility. Family solidarity is no panacea, however. Immigrant entrepreneurship may incur such stressful demands on family members that interpersonal relationships within the family suffer (Bonacich 1988).

Property rights and financial capital are also vested in the institution of the family, membership in which carries the right to consume material resources and to inheritance. The amount of financial or liquid capital brought to the US indicates the class resources that immigrants have at their disposal at the time of entry. Some immigrants periodically receive capital earnings from investments which they continue to hold in their home country, or they have the option of turning non-liquid assets into liquid assets and transferring them to their new country. To the extent that such assets can be transferred on demand, they represent another source of financial capital at the disposal of their holder.⁴ In families characterized by high levels of internal solidarity, economic resources

can be utilized by members to invest in new ventures or capital purchases through informal loan arrangements.

Lastly, the immigrant family is the repository of cultural capital, accumulated both prior to immigration and during the process of incorporation. Cultural capital exists for immigrants primarily in two forms: institutionalized, such as educational credentials, and embodied, that is, 'long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body' (Bourdieu 1983, p. 243). Among East Asians, for example, the latter includes the cultural legacy of Neo-Confucianism, which espouses family and education as core values. Competence in the language of the receiving country and familiarity with its cultural customs are highly valuable cultural capital.

Although Bourdieu (1983; 1984) criticizes the concept of human capital for its 'economism', clearly there is considerable overlap between the two concepts. Whereas human capital pertains to investments in education and the acquisition of job experience and skills that can generate returns in the labour market (Schultz 1963; Becker 1964), cultural capital emphasizes competence in cultural practices that can be converted into other forms of capital (Di Maggio and Mohr 1985). Both human and cultural capital refer to human competence that is acquired through formal and informal education. Human capital has the advantage of wider usage in the social sciences and standardized measurement. By contrast, cultural capital is difficult to measure, especially in a multicultural society. Notwithstanding, in the course of our field research we observed that the concept human capital missed important dimensions of cultural competence among immigrants. Moreover, while human capital refers to ability gained through formal education and work-place experience, cultural capital emphasizes socialization within the family. One way to think of the differences between these two concepts is to compare them with contrasting views on the effect of formal schooling on labour-market experience. Human capital theory posits that education is an investment in the acquisition of skills that pay return over a career (Chiswick 1979), whereas theories of filtering (Arrow 1973) and signalling (Spence 1974) contend that formal schooling serves as a signal to employers of the employees' job-related attributes. We use the term human-cultural capital to emphasize the cultural component of human competence, which we feel is especially relevant with regard to immigrants.

The human-cultural capital that immigrants bring with them, and continue to accumulate in their new country, can be important resources that open up employment opportunities in the social mainstream and in the ethnic community. Familiarity with the customs and language of the receiving society, its high- and middle-brow cultural forms, educational degrees and professional credentials that are fully transferable are examples of human-cultural capital that can yield profit in the majority society. By contrast, familiarity with the customs and language of the ethnic community and past experiences in ethnic institutions such as

rotating credit associations represent human-cultural capital useful in the ethnic community.

The transmission of human-cultural capital, the investment strategies and methods of accumulation, takes place largely within the immigrant family. The connection between social-class position and human-cultural capital is in the resources afforded by financial capital in initiating investments in cultural competence, with middle-class and elite families starting earlier and allocating greater resources to foreign language tutorials, music lessons, foreign travel, concert attendance, and so on.

In sum, immigrants arrive with varying amounts of social, financial, and human-cultural capital. The mix of these forms of capital in their families significantly affects their involvement with ethnic networks and institutions and/or the open economy and majority institutions. All these forms of capital are combined by immigrant families to produce the greatest perceived advantage. For instance, the route to establishing an ethnic business typically involves family savings and unpaid labour, prior employment in several different types of ethnic shops that serves as an informal apprenticeship, and conversations with acquaintances, friends and relatives with respect to raising capital, deciding on a line of business, negotiating the purchase of an existing business, finding a location where a new business can be established and numerous other aspects of entrepreneurship. In each stage of adaptation, immigrants' calculations involve decisions about the course of action that is likely to increase the probability of success given the resources they have in hand, while limiting the odds of failure. Depending on the combination of social, financial, and human-cultural capital, the process of incorporation of some immigrants is almost completely rooted in the social institutions of the ethnic community, whereas other immigrants depend almost entirely on the resources of their immediate family and the open economy. But such examples are at the extremes. Where an immigrant ethnic economy exists, there is generally an interaction between forms of capital and ethnic institutions and networks.

Data

Accordingly, the mode of labour-market incorporation is a diachronic conception, grounded in the real-life succession of jobs experienced by immigrants in a particular historical period. Measures of the mode of labour-market incorporation may be obtained by tracking the job histories of immigrants. This provides a record of how immigrants are initially sorted into the economy and how that sorting changes over time. Several characteristics of each job (and firm) should be taken into account. Ethnicity of employer, ethnic and sex distribution of the employees, differences in job assignments by ethnicity and sex, location of the firm, line of business, opportunities for promotion, unionism,

benefit programmes, and ethnicity of clientele represent some pertinent characteristics. Economic attainment over time (and hence, mobility) can also be recorded.

During the summers of 1989 and 1990 a research team conducted face-to-face interviews with Chinese, Filipino and Korean immigrants in greater Los Angeles. Interviews were typically conducted over two days and lasted three to five hours in the preferred language of the respondent. When possible, the interviews included not only householders but also spouses and other live-in adults such as in-laws. The interviews explored how the immigrants' job histories were influenced by the financial resources they brought to their new country or continue to hold in the home country, by adaptive strategies conceived and carried out by families (nuclear and extended), by participation in ethnic institutions and social networks, and by various background characteristics such as educational attainment and English language skills. A total of 171 job histories were recorded from adult breadwinners.

The sample of Koreans was randomly drawn from the Korean Directory of Southern California. Many names and telephone numbers were out of date, and the turndown rate reached approximately 50 per cent despite a financial inducement. Koreans frequently said they were too busy to take part in the study. Our interviews suggest that this is more a statement of fact than a polite brush-off. The Filipino sample was randomly drawn from lists of naturalized immigrants obtained from the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Since most Filipino surnames cannot be clearly distinguished from other surnames, especially Hispanic, the sample of Filipinos is restricted to naturalized citizens. Almost no Filipinos refused to be interviewed. The Chinese sample was drawn in three ways: random selection from Pacific Bell telephone directories, random selection from lists of naturalized immigrants obtained from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and follow-up snowball sampling in Chinatown near downtown Los Angeles to compensate for possible sampling bias in overlooking poorer unnaturalized immigrants without telephones. More details are provided in Nee, Sanders and Sernau (1994).

Modelling job transitions

We use event history procedures to analyse job transitions. Transition rates into four employment states are considered. Two types of employment that are highly prized by immigrants – (1) self-employment, (2) government employment (all levels of government) – are examined first. Subsequently, all jobs are coded as either (3) skilled professional-managerial-technical positions or (4) semi- or low-skilled factory jobs and low-paid service positions. Outcomes (1) to (3) are almost always superior to (4) with respect to remuneration, work conditions, or any

number of relevant indicators, and consequently, are usually preferred by immigrants, who generally turn to semi- or low-skilled factory jobs and low-paid service positions only when no better alternatives are available. According to the model, transitions into these states should be influenced by the mix of social, financial, and human-cultural capital held by immigrants.

The data contain all jobs in the employment history of these immigrants since coming to the United States. When two jobs partially overlap in time, the ordering of jobs is based on the date each job began. Proportional hazard models are utilized to carry out the event history analyses. Jobs are the unit of analysis. Duration in the origin job is measured in months. We specified each equation with a common set of independent variables, including controls for demographic attributes, whether the origin and destination states of employment differ, and several elements of social capital, financial capital, and human-cultural capital.

For each transition from an origin job to a destination job, the value of an independent variable is in reference to the origin job. For example, we predict future job transitions as a function of the ethnicity of the current employer. Because many of the independent variables, such as ethnicity of the employer, vary from one job to the next, the values of these variables are allowed to vary across an immigrant's job history. The details of the operational variables of the three forms of capital are provided in Table 1. Measurement details of the other variables are provided below and in Table 2.

Years of age at the start of a job and dummy variables for sex and ethnicity are specified as control variables. Chinese from the mainland and a few from Hong Kong who originally came from the mainland are the reference group in our sample. We distinguish the Taiwanese from other Chinese immigrants to control for the advantages in education, financial resources, and familiarity with Western customs enjoyed by the Taiwanese. It would be desirable to estimate separate models for each ethnic group, but the limited sample size makes such a strategy impossible. For the most part, cross-sectional regional contextual factors should be similar across the groups since the study is located in one metropolitan area. However, the regional economic context clearly varies across time. Consequently, we specify a dummy variable that identifies years of recession in California. This variable helps to control for the economic context of the regional labour market at the time of each job transition.

An analysis of covariance was conducted in which we specified sex interactions for each independent variable. We did this because Asian immigrants often observe traditional sex role practices, including a patriarchal conception of family organization. For this reason, the various forms of capital may influence the job histories of men and women in

Table 1. *Forms of capital frequently drawn upon during the process of immigrant incorporation*

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Employed by a Co-ethnic (non-relative)

(dummy coded 1 if employed by a co-ethnic, 0 otherwise)

Employed by a Relative

(dummy coded 1 if employed by a relative, 0 otherwise)

Direct Personal Means of Obtaining Employment

(dummy coded 1 when a job is obtained through direct personal ties: the job was offered by a friend or acquaintance; or the job offer was arranged through the actions of a family member, a friend or an acquaintance, 0 otherwise)

Married, not Separated

(dummy coded 1 if cohabiting married couple, 0 otherwise)

Initially Resided with Relatives

(dummy coded 1 if initial residence was that of a relative, 0 otherwise)

HUMAN-CULTURAL CAPITAL

Participates in Ethnic Association(s)

(dummy coded 1 if a person participates in at least one ethnic association (e.g., ethnic church, rotating or bidding credit association, alumni group), 0 otherwise)

Strong English Skills

(dummy coded 1 if a person does not encounter serious difficulties in using the English language, 0 otherwise)

Education in the United States (two variables)

(dummy coded 1 if a person has no education in the United States, 0 otherwise)

(dummy coded 1 if a person has a four year (or greater) college degree that was earned in the United States, 0 otherwise)

Education in the Home Society

(dummy coded 1 if a person has a four year (or greater) college degree that was earned in the home society, 0 otherwise)

Technical Training/Experience

(dummy coded 1 if a person has undertaken formal training, or acquired work experience, in a technical field, 0 otherwise)

Number of Jobs in the United States

(the number of prior jobs held in the United States at the time of a job transition)

Years in the United States

(the number of years since immigrating to the United States at the time of a job transition)

FINANCIAL CAPITAL

Individual or Family Holds Foreign Assets

(dummy coded 1 if, at the time of arrival, a person controlled valuable assets back home (e.g., savings, stocks, real estate), the cash value of which could be transferred to the United States, or they have relatives in the United States from whom loans can be obtained or joint investments undertaken, 0 otherwise)

Liquid Assets Upon Arrival

(dummy coded 1 if a person arrived in the United States with so few liquid assets (less than \$2,000 in 1989 U.S. dollars) as to be unable to provide for their own housing and other essential needs, 0 otherwise)

somewhat different ways. Two additional interactions were specified for substantive reasons. *English skills X Filipinos* takes into account that most Filipinos arrive with stronger English skills than Chinese and Koreans. *Arriving with minimal financial assets X initially living with relatives* distinguishes the effect of living with relatives for convenience versus necessity.

Several of the interactions obtain statistical significance. The estimates reported in Table 2 are obtained from models that specify only the interactions that were statistically significant in the initial analyses of covariance. In equation 1 of Table 2, the censoring event is coded 1 for self-employed destination jobs and 0 otherwise (including the right censored cases). Coding of the censoring events in equations 2–4 (government jobs, skilled professional-managerial-technical positions, and semi- or low-skilled factory jobs and low-paid service positions) follows the same procedure.

Findings

Transitions into ethnic entrepreneurship are examined in equation 1. There are seventy-six such transitions, and consequently the tests of significance are based on limited statistical power. Given the limitations of the sample, moreover, the estimates reported in Table 2 should be considered as a preliminary demonstration of the utility of our forms of capital model in understanding the diversity of the various modes of incorporation that are characteristic of contemporary immigrants. A confirmation study using a larger sample, as might be provided by the New Immigrant Survey, is needed to provide a more definitive test.

Elements of each form of capital appear to influence movement into self-employment. With respect to social capital, being employed by a co-ethnic boss and relying on direct personal means to obtain employment associate with increased transitions into self-employment. These relationships obtain for men and women. The findings suggest the importance of ethnic social connections in the processes through which immigrants move into self-employment. We also find that initially residing with relatives appears to increase transitions into self-employment for men (but not for women), unless they arrived with minimal liquid assets and thus experienced immediate financial straits. Otherwise, initial residence with relatives appears to provide immigrants with resources that expedite their eventual move into business ownership. For both sexes, however, the combination of initially residing with relatives (being dependent) and arriving with minimal liquid assets (being needy) associates with low transitions into self-employment. By contrast, the combination of arriving with minimal liquid assets and *not* depending on relatives for an initial residence shows no sign of lowering transitions into self-employment – the estimate is positive. Our

Table 2. Event history proportional hazards estimates of transitions into four employment states

Equation	DESTINATION STATE								
	Self-employment		Government		Professional- managerial-technical		Low-semi-skilled factory/service		
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	
ORIGIN STATE									
Self-employed	.39	.35							
Government			1.49**	.38					
Professional- managerial-technical					.37	.20			
Low-semi-skilled factory/service							1.81**	.24	
SOCIAL CAPITAL									
Employment by a coethnic boss	.62a	.36	.37	.57	.09	.20	.62**	.17	
Direct personal means of obtaining jobs	1.61**	.58	b		-.06	.53	.32	.30	
Employed by a Relative	-.13	.58	1.28	.92	-.18	.45	-1.02**	.40	
Married, not separated	.39	.35	-.85*	.42	-.06	.16	-.32a	.18	
Initially resided with relatives	-1.25	.85	1.80**	.65	-.05	.17	.34a	.18	
HUMAN-CULTURAL CAPITAL									
Participates in ethnic association(s)	1.17*	.57	-.76a	.45	.19	.23	-.11	.16	

Table 2. continued

Equation	DESTINATION STATE							
	Self-employment		Government		Professional- managerial-technical		Low-semi-skilled factory/service	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Strong English skills	.39	.32	1.00a	.62	.23	.21	.26	.24
No Education in the United States	.88a	.45	-1.16*	.48	-.73**	.26	-.01	.20
College degree from the United States	-.53	.72	-.30	.58	-.23	.28	-.79	.59
Formal technical training/experience	-.26	.33	-.39	.44	.14	.17	-.65**	.25
Number of jobs in the United States	.13a	.08	-.14	.09	-.01	.04	-.11**	.04
Years in the U.S.	.15*	.06	-.07*	.04	-.07**	.02	-.02	.03
Foreign college degree	-.20	.32	-.28	.43	.15	.17	.20	.18
FINANCIAL CAPITAL								
Holds foreign assets/ Family holds assets	-.25	.32	-.25	.39	.22	.23	-.26	.21
Arrived with minimal liquid assets	1.19**	.42	-1.20*	.51	-.20	.20	.18	.19
DEMOGRAPHIC AND REGIONAL ECONOMY CONTROLS								
Age (years)	-.02	.02	-.00	.02	-.03**	.01	-.01	.01
Sex (male = 1)	2.52**	.95	1.50**	.54	.37	.31	.97**	.36

Table 2. continued

Equation	DESTINATION STATE							
	Self-employment		Government		Professional- managerial-technical		Low-semi-skilled factory/service	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
	1		2		3		4	
Filipino (yes=1)	.31	.72	1.29**	.50	1.06**	.37	1.17	.61
Korean (yes=1)	2.10**	.57	b		.39	.37	-.01	.25
Taiwanese (yes=1)	2.00**	.62	b		.55	.36	-.38	.29
Recession years (yes=1)	.11	.33	.53	.40	.30	.16	-.12	.18
INTERACTIONS								
Strong English skills X Filipino	ns		ns			ns	-1.44*	.64
Initially resided with relatives X arrived with minimal liquid assets	-2.53**	.83	ns			ns		ns
Sex X initially resided with relatives	1.86*	.90	-2.21**	.84	ns	ns		ns
Sex X participates in ethnic association(s)	-1.31*	.64	ns			.31		ns
Sex X no education in the United States	ns		ns			.29		ns
Sex X years in the U.S	-1.17**	.07	ns			ns	-.07*	.03
Sex X holds foreign assets/family holds assets	ns		ns			.30		ns

Table 2. *continued*

Equation	DESTINATION STATE											
	Self-employment			Government			Professional-managerial-technical			Low-semi-skilled factory/service		
	B	1	SE	B	2	SE	B	3	SE	B	4	SE
Model Chi-Square		57(DF=26)		82(DF=20)			130(DF=25)			179(DF=24)		
		p < .001		p < .001			p < .001			p < .001		
N		614		614			614			614		
N experiencing a transition		76		45			240			218		

** p ≤ .01 (two-tailed test)

* p ≤ .05 (two-tailed test)

^a p ≤ .05 (one-tailed test that is consistent with the family capital model)

^b Unable to estimate due to inadequate variation of independent variables for

values of the destination job

ns Non-significant interactions. All sex interactions were initially estimated

with an ANCOVA, see text.

arguments do not predict a positive relationship, and therefore we are especially interested in learning whether this relationship replicates in future tests conducted on alternative data sets.

Turning to the relationship between self-employment and human-cultural capital, we find that immigrants whose education has been entirely foreign experience a higher rate of transition into self-employment than immigrants who obtained some, or all, of their education in the United States. This is consistent with the view that owning a business offers immigrants who lack human-cultural capital that is fungible in the mainstream economy an alternative avenue for economic activity (Min 1988). We also find that the transition rate into self-employment increases as the length of stay in the host society lengthens, and as the number of prior jobs increases. Both measures capture the accumulation of post-immigration experience that better enables immigrants to pursue self-employment. Immigrants gradually move towards self-employment as they acquire work and socialization experiences in the host society, develop a network of social contacts, and gain business know-how (for example, Sanders and Nee 1996).

Furthermore, we find that transitions into self-employment are relatively high among women who participate in ethnic associations. Our interviews reveal that wives are most often the immigrant family's primary participant in informal ethnic associations. Part of the reason for this is cultural; that is, it is the woman's role to undertake the necessary social activities such as attending (or hosting) monthly lunches or dinners that keep the participants in touch with one another and serve to reinforce essential group norms (such as, paying monthly fees in rotating or bidding credit associations). Another reason is that husbands often work more hours than their wives and therefore the wife's participation is part of the division of labour worked out within families. Thus, it is not so much that only female self-employment relies on capital infusions or other types of resources that are derived from participating in ethnic associations, rather that the resources obtained through participation in ethnic associations are often used in *family* businesses, and these businesses may be owned and operated by the husband, the wife, or jointly.

Equation 2 of Table 2 reports estimates of the likelihood of transitions into government jobs. Statistical power for testing hypotheses is also weak in this equation inasmuch as there are only forty-five job transitions of this sort. Filipinos are dominant in holding government jobs among immigrants in our sample. It was necessary to drop the controls for the other ethnic groups because of a paucity of cases. For the most part, the immigrants hold low- or mid-level office jobs in city or county government. Some are in health-care fields; others work for the postal service (often in the 'graveyard' shift due to a lack of seniority). These employees tend to be young and are often single. As these jobs have

formal hiring procedures and require specific credentials, we would expect that social capital should be relatively ineffective in helping immigrants to obtain them. We do, however, find that women (but not men) who initially resided with relatives experience a high rate of movement into government jobs. Above (in equation 1), we found that for men self-employment is positively related to initially residing with relatives. Evidently, the social capital immigrants derive from their family based social connections can lead women and men into different forms of employment.

Human-cultural capital is more important for moves into government employment. Strong English language skills substantially increase its likelihood, whereas a lack of formal schooling in the United States retards movement into government jobs. One reason Filipinos enjoy an advantage in getting such jobs is their facility in English. Government jobs are obtained through formal procedures; moves into such jobs are facilitated by fungible human capital. On the other hand, immigrants who participate in ethnic associations have low transition rates into the government sector (in equation 1 we found that this form of cultural capital associates with self-employment). Also, members of earlier cohorts of immigrants (those who have been in the United States a relatively long time) have low transitions into government jobs. This latter relationship should hold for virtually all types of transitions into paid employment because slowing rates of job changes reflect a *settling-in* effect. The longer the period of residence, the more stable life becomes, and major transitions such as job changes occur less frequently. As we have already seen (equation 1), however, there is an important exception to this pattern. Immigrants who aspire to self-employment often work several years before accumulating the knowledge and resources they need to buy or establish a business.

As for financial capital, the immigrants who arrive under the poorest circumstances (with minimal liquid assets) have low rates of transitions into government jobs. The other measure of financial capital (holds assets back home or has relatives in the US from whom financial assistance can be obtained) is not statistically significant, but the estimate is also negative. Many immigrants who are from poor backgrounds may find that the formal procedures involved in gaining government employment, including hiring rules that require specific credentials and testing, are difficult to satisfy.

The categories of self-employment and government jobs that were examined in equations 1 and 2 are subsumed in equations 3 and 4. Equation 3 reports on 240 transitions into professional-managerial-technical jobs whereas equation 4 refers to 218 transitions into less prestigious semi- or low-skilled factory jobs and low-paid service positions.

For professional-managerial-technical jobs as for government jobs, human-cultural capital appears to be more consequential than social

capital. None of the elements of social capital is reliably related to moves into them. These jobs tend to require specific skills and credentials, and are often filled through formal, impersonal procedures. Resources based in ethnic social relations also appear to be unhelpful. Participating in ethnic associations is negatively related to men's transitions into professional-managerial-technical jobs.

For women, having no schooling in the United States corresponds to a reduced rate of obtaining them. We also find a *settling-in* effect whereby lower rates of transitions into professional-managerial-technical jobs are typical among immigrants who have been in the United States a long time. Consistent with this, we find a negative relationship between age and moves into such jobs.

Finally, we find that men who have valuable financial assets back home, or have relatives in America from whom financial assistance can be obtained, have comparatively low rates of transition into professional-managerial-technical jobs. Although this is the only statistically significant estimate we obtain with respect to the variable *having valuable financial assets back home, or having relatives in America from whom financial assistance can be obtained*, the three non-significant relationships in the other equations are also negative. Based on our interviews, we believe that the tendency (in our sample) for these immigrants to have low job transition rates, regardless of the type of job, is due to their relatively comfortable financial circumstances. They have no need to quickly move from one job to the next in an effort to gain upward mobility in small increments, job-by-job, as is the case for many immigrants (Nee, Sanders and Sernau 1994).

Equation 4 considers transitions into semi- or low-skilled factory jobs and low-paid service positions. Social capital appears to be important in providing mechanisms by which immigrants get these jobs. Transitions into such jobs increase when the origin job involves employment under a non-relative co-ethnic. Working for a relative, by contrast, is negatively related to the rate of transition into low-level jobs. It appears that working for a relative helps immigrants to minimize their experiences with these jobs, whereas working for an unrelated co-ethnic has the opposite effect. In this sense, family ties appear to be more useful than ethnic ties. Indeed, immigrants who are in the best position to draw on family resources, cohabiting married immigrants, have low transition rates into semi- or low-skilled factory jobs and low-paid service jobs. But immigrants who arrived under dependent circumstances, those who initially depended on relatives for their housing, have high transitions rates into these low-level jobs.

Human-cultural capital is also instrumental here. Having formal training or job experience in a technical field and having held several jobs since immigrating reduce the hazard of transitions into jobs of low prestige. Long spells in the United States associate with a low likelihood

of such a transition for men, and strong English facility decreases the rate of transition into semi- or low-skilled factory jobs for Filipinos, the one group for whom English was widely spoken prior to immigrating.

Initial and current jobs

The event history analyses reported above track the movement of immigrants from job to job. The findings imply that, depending on an immigrant's mix of social, financial, and human-cultural capital, post-immigration job histories can take on an upward movement or they can become stagnated towards the bottom of the job ladder. At the time of the interviews, when the job histories were censored, to what degree had the immigrants moved up the job ladder? In the initial jobs, 7.5 per cent of the immigrants were self-employed and 8 per cent worked in the government sector. In the final job, 26 per cent were self-employed and 9.5 per cent were government employees. The average number of years since immigrating is nine years, thus the growth in self-employment is impressive. The literature shows that in many immigrant groups, aspirations to become self-employed are high because that is widely viewed as the most likely means through which significant upward mobility can be gained (Portes and Bach 1985; Sanders and Nee 1996). Initially, also, 56 per cent of the immigrants held low- or semi-skilled blue-collar and service jobs whereas 44 per cent held professional, managerial, or technical jobs. At the point of censoring, the share of the sample that held lower level jobs had fallen to 41 per cent and the share holding the higher level jobs had grown to 59 per cent. Among the people in our sample, upward movement along the job ladder is apparent.

Sex and ethnicity

What are the implications of the sex differences we have found and the effects of ethnic group membership that persist despite the variables held constant? While we do not find a general tendency of sex differences in regard to how social, human-cultural and financial capital associate with job transitions, we do find some differences, and we also find that job transitions tend to be more rapid for men than for women. Men appear to be more active than women in moving from job to job, a strategy that Nee, Sanders and Sernau (1994) found to contribute to upward mobility. Traditional cultural practices that place primary responsibility on men to earn a living and primary responsibility on women to take care of the home and children may account for these differences. Yet qualitative studies of various immigrant groups reveal that, despite traditional sex role practices, the necessities of providing for the financial needs of a family often lead to major changes in the outlook and behaviours of 'traditional' adults who relocate in Western

societies (for example, Fernandez-Kelly and Garcia 1990; Gold 1992; Duleep and Sanders 1993). More in-depth research is needed into how families deal with the complications that arise when the necessities of post-immigration life make adherence to traditional sex role practices untenable. We would like to see additional research that focuses on issues such as how participation in ethnic associations differs between women and men, and how reliance on relatives for various forms of assistance immediately after immigrating may result in different obligations of reciprocity depending on the sex of the new immigrant.

As for the net associations between ethnicity and job transitions, unless we are to believe in ethnicity as a causal agent, the estimates imply that there is more to be explained. The significant coefficients pertain to groups that are disproportionately represented in certain types of job moves: Koreans and Taiwanese in self-employment; Filipinos in government and professional-managerial-technical jobs. Progress might be made by giving more attention to issues such as the motivations of some groups to focus on self-employment (for example, Min 1988), the opportunities immigrant workers have to gain access to key social networks and job experience (Bailey and Waldinger 1991), and the different historical contexts of sending societies (for example, the Spanish and US colonial periods in the Philippines) that may result in jobs in the government bureaucracy being viewed as highly desirable.

Conclusion

Like the orthodox assimilation model, which developed as the intellectual response to earlier European migration to North America, recent studies of contemporary immigration have sought to identify underlying processes that structure the incorporation of immigrants. Our forms-of-capital model takes a step towards specifying the household attributes that shape the diverse trajectories of incorporation characteristic of contemporary immigration. The model also indicates that macro structural outcomes are a function of population characteristics of immigrant streams. For example, those with fewer immigrants possessing the forms of capital that predispose them to entrepreneurship are less likely to establish large and differentiated ethnic economies. In the United States, this is evident in the contrast between the largely non-entrepreneurial migration of well-educated, middle-class Filipinos and refugee groups like Cubans and Vietnamese that are more entrepreneurial. The latter two groups contain a large representation of the deposed dominant classes. Koreans in the United States offer another example of how the development of large and diverse ethnic economies is encouraged by an immigrant stream composed of a sizeable supply of professional migrants with poor English language skills.

For contemporary immigrants who have insufficient financial and

human-cultural capital, social capital – embodied in intra family, kinship, and ethnic ties – serves as an important form of capital. Unlike financial and human-cultural capital, social capital is available to all classes of immigrants. It is a form of capital that is spontaneously produced and reproduced within the institution of the family and extended family group, and through recurrent social exchanges within the immigrant community. Immigrants lacking a family in America are more likely to move into less desirable jobs in the low and semi-skilled labour market. This finding is consistent with the historical experience of the sojourning pattern of immigration which involved single immigrant men who remained in low-wage labour and failed to invest in cultural and social practices of the host society. Immigrants with the lowest stock of family capital rely more on social ties embedded in the ethnic community as a substitute for the social support provided by a family. These social connections more often lead to jobs characterized by low wages and poor working conditions. Earlier in the twentieth century, labour unions improved the circumstances of many similar jobs that were often filled by immigrants. A recurrence of this process seems unlikely in the near future. For immigrants who lack the human-cultural capital to be competitive in the English-speaking sectors of the metropolitan labour market, less desirable jobs in the ethnic economy are preferable to unemployment. Social capital embedded in the immigrant community is a fungible form of capital in so far as it increases the rate of movement into self-employment. The job mobility of these immigrants is likely to remain bounded by the ethnic community and economy.

Human-cultural and financial capital are the forms of capital preferred by elite and middle-class immigrants. The stock of these forms of capital which immigrant families bring with them is an objectification of class advantages which they enjoyed in their home country. Financial capital may not be as liquid or as movable an asset as human-cultural capital when constraints are imposed by the home country on the portability of financial assets. For immigrants from professional and managerial backgrounds this form of capital may be quickly expended. Human-cultural capital, on the other hand, is an enduring resource embodied in the immigrant family. As such it is readily transferred to children of immigrants. Human-cultural capital is associated with higher rates of movement into professional-managerial-technical and government jobs. Financial capital is required for immigrants who enter into entrepreneurial careers. Immigrants who bring with them substantial amounts of this form of capital enjoy a head start in establishing family businesses. Notwithstanding this, many immigrants accumulate needed start-up capital after their arrival in the United States.

According to the forms-of-capital model, immigrant families who arrive with a high stock of financial and human-cultural capital fungible

in the host society are likely to have trajectories that lead to careers in the mainstream economy. Those lacking cultural capital fungible in the host society are apt to establish small businesses in the ethnic economy. In time both groups of advantaged immigrants can be expected to achieve returns on their human capital comparable to their American-born counterparts. The children of these immigrants may experience an acceleration of the past intergenerational process of assimilation. The large numbers of foreign-born Asian immigrant children who gain higher education in America is evidence supporting the view of an accelerated pace of assimilation for children of elite and middle-class immigrants.

In sum, the forms-of-capital model proposed here argues that the supply of social, financial, and human-cultural capital possessed by immigrant families shapes the mode of incorporation in a given societal context. First, stable social exchange within small groups generates social capital, which like other forms of capital, pays dividends to those who are well endowed in it. The social capital instituted and embodied in the family has been largely ignored in studies of status attainment and ethnic stratification. Yet the social capital of the family – both internal to the household and external to it, in the stock of social connections that embed the family within larger social structures – is likely to effect social mobility. The volume of financial and human-cultural capital of a family is an objective measure of its class position. Clearly immigrants do not bring with them the class structure within which their privilege or lack of it was determined and reproduced, but they do bring varying amounts of these forms of capital, the volume of which covaries with the initial level of entry, and influences the subsequent trajectory of incorporation. Especially in a multi-ethnic society, the concept of human capital, imported from economics, can be given richer sociological content by infusing it with a cultural dimension. Our reference to the importance of human-cultural capital attempts to accomplish this by incorporating both the dimensions of skill and filtering/signalling. General studies of mobility might benefit by taking into account the dynamic intersection of all of these supply and demand processes.

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Notes

1. For a convergence of views on the importance of the immigrant family, see Perez (1986); Portes and Jensen (1989, p. 946); Sanders and Nee (1996).

2. The economic activities of immigrant women are strongly tied to family composition, which helps account for the different rates of labour force participation among Cubans (Perez 1986) and various Asian groups (Gardner, Robey and Smith 1985).

3. Most studies that find advantages to employment in the ethnic economy focus on how these employment experiences are helpful in informally training and socially connecting immigrants in ways that better enable them to own and operate a business (Bailey and Waldinger 1991). For ethnic employees, Model (1997) finds that earning advantages that appear to associate with ethnic economies in New York City actually reflect earning variation across industries. All groups in well-paid industries benefit regardless of their ethnicity and whether or not they are employed in an ethnic economy.

Because opportunity for mobility within the ethnic firm is limited, many immigrant workers aspire to start their own businesses. Some immigrants arrive with adequate capital for opening a business. Notwithstanding, unless they have an entrepreneurial background or access to family networks that can supply such experience, few start up a business immediately after arrival. The usual entrepreneurial career involves taking a series of jobs in order to gain 'local experience' before investing in a business (Portes and Bach 1985; Bailey and Waldinger 1991; Sanders and Nee 1996).

4. In the United States, transfers of this sort are almost non-existent among some groups, such as Chinese from the mainland, but they frequently occur among other groups, such as Taiwanese.

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