# THE MODERATING ROLE OF FACTORS OF ASSIMILATION IN FIRST- AND SECOND-GENERATION ASIAN AMERICANS' SOCIOECONOMIC ATTAINMENT

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## ABSTRACT

Contemporary assimilation theory has focused on immigrant groups reaching socioeconomic parity with whites as an indication that immigrants are integrating into the U.S. mainstream. In the case of Asian Americans, assimilation scholars contend that socioeconomic parity has been reached or is close to being reached, depending on the sub-group in question. However, this claim coupled with the model minority image of Asian Americans as educated, hard-working, and well-adjusted to the U.S. mainstream discounts several negative factors of Asian assimilation trajectories that prevent Asian Americans from reaching parity with whites on several important indicators. Using the Kinder Houston Area Survey (KHAS), I examine how perceptions of discrimination and community relations, and how civic participation, English language acquisition, and ethnic identity affect first- and second-generation Asian Americans' socioeconomic attainment. Results indicate that second generation Asian Americans' socioeconomic attainment depends on their experiences in their communities. Specifically, second-generation Asian Americans who express positive perceptions of ethnic relations in the Houston area are associated with increases in their income, and second-generation Asian Americans that hold negative perceptions of ethnic relations are associated with decreases in their income. These findings highlight divergent paths to assimilation in a racial/ethnic population that is overwhelmingly thought to assimilate upwardly through subsequent generations.

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## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary assimilation theorists have consistently focused on socioeconomic parity with whites as the primary marker that a racial group has successfully integrated into the U.S. mainstream (Haller & Landolt 2005; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller 2009; Sakamoto, Goyette, & Kim 2009). Asian Americans have been regarded as the model for this type of assimilation (Tran & Curtin 2017), as their high levels of economic and educational success casts them as the minority group that has assimilated most successfully (Sakamoto et al. 2009). For this reason, researchers have used the "model minority image" as an explanation for Asian American's successful assimilation. The model minority image depicts Asian Americans as motivated, hardworking, and economically successful, which makes them well-situated for integration into the U.S. mainstream (Kim and Sakamoto 2014). However, this view of Asian Americans as the template for modern immigrant assimilation has discounted several important factors that halt Asian Americans' complete integration, most notably along racial lines. For instance, Kim (2007) argues that what limits Asian Americans' complete assimilation into the U.S. mainstream lie in the racialization of the population through the deleterious effects of discrimination and poor ethnic relations. Ethnic relations are defined as the social, political, and economic relationships between different ethnicities, encompassing macro-level interactions with organizations and institutions, as well as micro-level interactions with individuals (Briggs 2007; Diaz 2012). The combined effects of discrimination (Hwang and Goto 2008) and poor ethnic relations within Asian American communities (Kiang, Thompson, & Peterson 2011; Tran & Curtin 2017) have an influence on the group's level of political participation (Xu 2005), language acquisition (Stolzenberg & Tienda 1997), and identity formation (Haller & Landolt 2005; Yoo & Lee 2005). As such, each of these are posited by researchers to influence Asian

Americans' socioeconomic attainment (Kim et al. 2009; Lee & Kye 2016), which is what the present study will attempt to address. Successful assimilation would see the deleterious effects that discrimination and poor ethnic relations has on immigrant populations subside through subsequent generations.

However, despite the influence these factors have on Asian Americans' socioeconomic attainment, past studies have not consistently considered them in an assessment of their effects on Asian Americans' structural assimilation (e.g., Sakamoto et al. 2009; Kim & Sakamoto 2010, 2014). Structural assimilation is the incorporation of a minority group into the economic, political, and social structures of the majority group, mostly independent of the cultural and behavioral customs of the mainstream (Portes & Rumbaut 2001). Lee and Zhou (2015) and Lee and Kye (2016) argue that a focus on the structural assimilation of Asian Americans discounts several important cultural and community (e.g., perception of ethnic relations and civic participation) factors that affect Asian Americans' socioeconomic attainment. The current study attempts to rectify this limitation.

Asian Americans are becoming an increasingly important part of the U.S. social landscape. From 2000 to 2010, Asian Americans experienced a 46 percent population growth, higher than any other racial group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2010a). The Pew Research Center also predicts that Asian Americans will be the nation's largest immigrant group by 2055, accounting for 38 percent of all U.S. immigrants versus 31 percent for Latinos (Lopez & Ruiz 2017). However, despite the growing importance of Asian Americans in the United States, their integration is still vastly understudied, especially when compared to their Latino counterparts. The model minority image also provides an excuse for many researchers to

discount the effects that discrimination and ethnic relations can have on Asian Americans' structural assimilation (Sakamoto et al. 2009; Kim & Sakamoto 2010; Kim & Sakamoto 2014).

In this study, I compare first- and second-generation Asian Americans to examine the moderating effect that various community indicators of assimilation may have on the relationship between generational status and socioeconomic attainment. Here, I consider generational differences in English language acquisition, civic participation, community relations, and ethnic identity (Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Xu 2005; Portes & Rumbaut 2014). I specify two research questions: (1) What is the relationship between first- and second-generation Asian Americans' assimilation processes and their socioeconomic attainment? and (2) How do these assimilation processes moderate the relationship between Asian Americans' generational status and socioeconomic attainment? Asian Americans' continued socioeconomic parity with whites ignores factors of Asian Americans' assimilation that, if left understudied, may be deleterious to Asian Americans' efforts to reach full socioeconomic parity with whites, one traditional marker of successful assimilation (Portes et al. 2005; Portes et al. 2009; Sakamoto et al. 2009).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Assimilation Theory

*Linear Assimilation.* Assimilation is the process by which immigrants are socialized and integrated into the larger U.S. mainstream. Until 1965, the majority of immigration to the United States was from Europe (Portes & Rumbaut 2014), and the model of assimilation experienced by immigrants was understood in linear terms (Park 1928). Park's (1928) linear model frames assimilation as a process by which immigrants continually abandon the culture and values of their home country and adopt the mainstream culture and structural processes of the United States. The model represents a first step in attempting to understand the processes that affect

immigrants' integration into mainstream society. However, many critics of this perspective argue that its linear framework does not accurately capture the diverse processes that different immigrant groups experience, and that the outcome of different immigrant groups hinge on cultural and structural factors that lead to varying levels of group integration (Berry 2005; Haller & Landolt 2005; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller 2009).

*Cultural Assimilation.* The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 changed the scope of immigration to the United States from Europe to Central and South America, and Asia. Due to the diverse areas from which new immigrants were arriving, the cultural values they held were perceived to be distinctly different from the U.S. values to which many European immigrants had already adjusted. Also, the arrival of new European immigrants throughout the United States' history continually changed the scope of the U.S. mainstream to embody a coalescence of Euro-centric values, even though European migrant groups still experienced inter-group conflict because of distinct cultural differences between groups that had arrived before them (Portes & Rumbaut 2014). However, post-1965 immigrants' cultural and racial characteristics are distinct when juxtaposed with pre-1965 groups. Because of this, post-1965 immigrant groups must contend with a cultural mainstream that resists their incorporation. This prompted assimilationist scholars to examine cultural elements of assimilation.

The cultural model of assimilation stresses the importance of acculturation—the process by which immigrants and the host society undergo a cultural change because of contact with the host country (Berry 2005)—in explaining immigrants' assimilation into mainstream society. The model highlights the role that community relations (Berry 2005), English language acquisition (Stolzenberg & Tienda 1997), and maintenance of cultural values play in determining an immigrant's successful integration into the U.S. mainstream. The model also highlights the

selective nature of acculturation processes, as immigrants choose the parts of their ethnic identity they wish to keep, and the parts of an American identity they wish to attain (Portes et al. 2009).

Alba and Nee (1997, 2003) further complicate the cultural model by positing that assimilation not only affects the individual immigrant, but the culture of the host country as well, and that the culture of both parties is changed through the integration process. Therefore, navigating the U.S. mainstream can be problematic for immigrants, as the cultural exchange between differing immigrant groups constantly changes the U.S. cultural mainstream. Additionally, based on this assumption, the continued arrival of post-1965 immigrant groups embed the U.S. mainstream with their own cultural values, and resist the embedded Euro-centric values of pre-1965 groups. Various political and historical events also stemmed the tide of European migration, meaning that these groups were not consistently re-supplied, allowing for a continued re-shaping of the United States' demography and cultural landscape. However, due to the conflicting findings of acculturation's role in assimilating immigrants successfully into the U.S. mainstream, assimilation theorists turned to structural explanations and divergent paths of assimilation to explain the integration of immigrants into the United States (Portes & Rumbaut 2001).

*Segmented Assimilation.* While Gordon's (1964) model delineates between structural and cultural factors of assimilation, segmented assimilation provides a more nuanced understanding of structural assimilation processes that conceptualizes assimilation in a model better suited to the experiences of post-1965 immigrant groups. Segmented assimilation theorists focus on the divergent paths to assimilation that different immigrant groups experience. They focus not on whether assimilation is occurring, but to what segment of society immigrants assimilate (Portes & Rivas 2011). For example, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that post-1965 immigrant groups

experience differential paths to assimilation based on the context of their arrival to the United States. The main mechanisms that segmented assimilation theorists use to indicate an immigrant group's successful assimilation is by achieving socioeconomic parity with whites (Kim 2007; Kim and Sakamoto 2010), English language acquisition (Portes & Rumbaut 2014), and integration into inclusive, inter-ethnic communities (Portes et al. 2005). The mechanisms that influence these contexts include the immigrant's family make-up (Portes et al. 2005; Portes et al. 2009), community relations (Sakamoto et al. 2009), and parental resources (Zhou & Xiong 2005; Lee & Kye 2016). Based on whether these mechanisms positively or negatively affect an immigrant's assimilation, segmented assimilation theorists maintain that immigrants will experience one of three paths of assimilation: upward, stagnant, and downward (Portes & Rivas 2011).

Upward assimilation is generally marked by first generation immigrants' establishment in middle class occupations because of high levels of education and professional experience (Portes et al. 2005). Upward assimilation continues through subsequent generations as well, as the second generation acquire higher levels of socioeconomic gains than the first generation due to their increased proficiency with navigating the United States' education and employment systems, followed by the third generation that is completely incorporated into the U.S. cultural and economic mainstream (Portes & Rumbaut 2001). Additional mechanisms that contribute to subsequent generations' upward mobility are the high human capital of the first generation (Portes & Rumbaut 2001), integration into positively receiving, inter-ethnic communities (Briggs 2007), and civic engagement/community activism (Putnam 2000). Also, while several studies have identified divergent paths to structural assimilation using the segmented assimilation model (Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Haller & Landolt 2005; Portes et al. 2005; Portes et al. 2009), there are

outliers and exceptions. First, it is possible for second generation immigrants to be upwardly mobile without the first generation's establishment in middle class occupations, but it is characteristic of the upward path for the first generation to occupy this position (Lee & Zhou 2015). Additionally, upward mobility experienced from the first to the second-generation can be problematic due to the contextual nature of first-generation immigrants' arrival and diminished status as a foreign minority. The first generation often secures employment with lower pay and occupational prestige to establish an economic foothold for themselves, and upward mobility in the second generation is sometimes a result of the first generation taking on employment with diminished socioeconomic benefits in the United States (Gans 2007, 2009). Despite this, upward assimilation continues through subsequent generations, as the second generation acquires higher levels of socioeconomic gains than the first generation, followed by the third generation's complete incorporation into the U.S. cultural and economic mainstream.

The next path of assimilation, stagnant assimilation, establishes first generation immigrants in working class occupations that suppress their earning potential. However, communities with positive, strong, and diverse ethnic relations can buffer against the effects of lower earnings characteristic of the stagnant path (Portes & Rivas 2011). These communities present themselves to the immigrant in two forms: the ethnic enclave and the integrated community. The ethnic enclave distributes additional resources to immigrants that live within it due to the enclave's stronger community relations and more accessible employment opportunities as a result of cultural and ethnic solidarity (Haller & Landolt 2005). The integrated community establishes immigrants in communities with strong inter-ethnic ties (Briggs 2007; Diaz 2012), which subsequently leads to greater amounts of social capital and employment opportunities (Putnam 2000). Immigrants living in communities with positive and strong inter-

ethnic relations have more inter-ethnic peers (Kiang et al. 2011), are more civically involved (Stoll & Wong 2007; Diaz 2012; Tran & Curtin 2017), have higher levels of English fluency (Stolzenberg & Tienda 1997; Portes & Rumbaut 2014), and demonstrate a stronger ethnic identity that buffers against the negative effects of discrimination (Yoon et al. 2005; Hwang & Goto 2008; Park et al. 2012). In short, integrative communities serve as a buffering force against the negative effects of assimilation that are present in the stagnant path. Therefore, while immigrants on the stagnant path may not assimilate in the traditional sense, inclusive communities become strong, integrative, and socializing forces to the values of the U.S. mainstream. These communities are especially important for first generation immigrants, as the second generation's continued success in the U.S.'s economic landscape is contingent on the first generation's firm establishment in an inclusive community (Portes et al. 2005; Portes et al. 2009; Portes & Rivas 2011).

The final path of assimilation identified by segmented assimilation theorists is downward. Downward assimilation is marked by the first generation's establishment in working class occupations similar to the stagnant path. However, immigrants that experience downward assimilation lack the strong inter-ethnic ties in their communities that is present in stagnation (Portes et al. 2005). Without these ties, first generation immigrants experience barriers to their identity formation (Haller & Landolt 2005; Portes & Rivas 2011) and English language acquisition (Stolzenberg & Tienda 1997). They also experience higher levels of discrimination (Yoon et al. 2012). Additionally, instances of forced migration and traumatic events leading to migration can influence many immigrants towards the downward path, as their arrival to the United States is often involuntary or marred by struggle (Gans 2007; Payne et al. 2007; Fitzgerald & Arar 2018). These negative effects spill over into the second and subsequent

generations. Portes et al. (2005) contend that second-generation immigrants whose parents undergo downward assimilation experience negative educational outcomes, as well as barriers to their American identity formation, and are relegated to low-paying positions that produce lower economic gains. Additionally, downward assimilation can take place in the second generation, as the first generation's establishment in non-inclusive communities leads the second generation to struggle with legitimate avenues to employment (Portes & Rumbaut 2001), their identity formation (Haller & Landolt 2005), and lower levels of educational attainment (Crosnoe 2005). Additionally, Rumbaut (2005) argues that the coalescence of these negative determinants leads to the second and third generation's engagement in criminal and deviant behaviors.

## Asian Americans and Assimilation Theory

*The Model Minority Image and Myth.* The mass arrival of Asian Americans in the United States began in the 1970s. Many researchers posit that a strong facilitative resource for newly-arrived Asian Americans in the 1970s were the co-ethnic enclaves that existed in the United States' immigrant gateway cities (Lee & Zhou 2015). These communities—long established from past waves of Asian migration before exclusions were enacted—provided new, post-1965 arrivals with an economic foothold and socioeconomic resources to facilitate their integration into the United States (Lee & Zhou 2015). The interrelation of integrative communities, professional employment, and high socioeconomic attainment cultivated an image of Asian Americans as hard-working, successful, and ideal immigrants. Because of this, determinants of downward assimilation such as discrimination and poor community relations have often been dismissed in the U.S. Asian population (Kim & Sakamoto 2014), even though much of the Asian migration wave in the 1970s were refugees from Vietnam and other Southeast and South Asian countries from the sustained military conflict in the region. Several researchers have cited that

discrimination and poor integration into communities are still salient factors in Asian Americans' assimilation (e.g., Feagin & Feagin 1993; Hwang & Goto 2008; Sakamoto et al. 2009; Kim & Sakamoto 2014). For example, Feagin and Feagin (1993) find that Asian Americans must exceed whites in education levels to achieve equal levels of income, indicating institutional barriers to Asians' experience with the U.S. labor market. Discrimination also has additional widespread effects on Asian Americans—from reduced socioeconomic status (Sakamoto et al. 2009), to poor mental health (Hwang and Goto 2008), to lack of English fluency (Stolzenberg & Tienda 1997; Yoo, Gee, & Takeuchi 2008). Researchers cite that discrimination breaks down community ties, and results in poorer community relations and lower rates of civic participation (Xu 2005; Jang 2009; Diaz 2012; Lee & Kye 2016; Kim 2018). Here, I argue that these factors may have a moderating effect on assimilation, particularly as measured by socio-economic attainment. While past research has examined these factors individually, their effects on attainment outcomes have not been assessed in a comprehensive manner, especially by testing the way their presence or absence may lead to divergent assimilation outcomes for the community.

*Sub-Group Stratification of Asian Americans.* Research on stagnant and downward assimilation consistently focuses on Latinos while Asian Americans are overwhelmingly thought to assimilate upwardly (Crosnoe 2005; Haller & Landolt 2005; Portes et al. 2005; Portes et al. 2009; Sakamoto et al. 2009; Kim & Sakamoto 2014). However, the consensus that Asian immigrants and subsequent generations are experiencing upward assimilation ignores important sub-group differences within the racial group as a whole, as the socioeconomic gains and upward assimilation of Asian Americans are primarily driven by Asian Americans from India, China, Japan, and Korea while Laotian, Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Hmongs do not experience the same levels of socioeconomic gains (Sakamoto et al. 2009; Lee & Zhou 2015; Lee & Kye 2016).

Crosnoe and Turley (2011) argue that the educational attainment of children of Southeast Asian immigrants more closely mirrors that of the children of Latino immigrants, and that the educational attainment of Asian Americans are as stratified as their economic attainment. Southeast and South Asian's recent migration history also feature more instances of refugee arrivals than East Asians/Indians, resulting from turbulent political and religious climates in their home countries (Lee & Zhou 2015; Portes & Rumbaut 2001). As a result, Southeast Asians often suffer socioeconomic penalties because of the context of their arrival to the United States (Payne et al. 2007; Fitzgerald & Arar 2018). Therefore, the model minority image only applies to part of the Asian American population, and a large portion of the population still experiences high rates of discrimination (Yoo & Lee 2005), low rates of English fluency (Portes & Rumbaut 2014), and poor integration into inter-ethnic communities (Lee & Kye 2016). Based on these outcomes, Sakamoto et al. (2009) contend that Asian Americans are one of the most stratified racial groups in the United States, and that the negative factors of assimilation still affect their socioeconomic outcomes in significant ways.

Zhou and Xiong (2005) further complicate Sakamoto et al.'s (2009) claim of stratification by examining the heterogeneous nature of identity formation and educational attainment in second-generation Asian immigrants. They argue that the stratification within the U.S. Asian population leads to differential paths of assimilation, as the socioeconomic gains of first-generation Asian Americans from India, China, Japan, and Korea masks the lower gains of immigrants from Southeast Asian countries. Southeast Asians' poor community relations and higher levels of perceived discrimination in the United States are largely ignored as well. Zhou and Xiong find support for segmented assimilation insofar as the success of the second generation is contingent on the success of the first generation's establishment into inclusive

communities with positive community relations (Portes et al. 2005). However, they contend that upward trends of Asian assimilation are predominantly explained by Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrants. In contrast, the negative determinants of downward assimilation (e.g., discrimination, poor community relations) are largely ignored. Zhou and Xiong conclude by arguing that a model assessing potential measures of Asian assimilation should also include its negative determinants, as they are still prevalent in a large portion of the population, despite the model minority image that surrounds Asian immigrants in the United States.

**Conceptual Model and Hypotheses**

In order to address the limitations of previous studies described above, I will conduct a study which considers these experiences with discrimination and other barriers to upward assimilation that Asian Americans experience. I have formulated several hypotheses based on the expected relationships between factors of assimilation and Asian Americans' income and educational attainment. I also expect a moderating relationship between perceptions of ethnic relations and generational status, and the impact this relationship has on Asian Americans' income and educational attainment. I detail these hypotheses here.

*Factors of Assimilation's Role in Asian Americans' Integration.* Several factors of assimilation are related to positive outcomes for immigrant populations, including Asian Americans. Building positive relationships within a diverse, inter-ethnic community affords immigrants more diverse friendships (Briggs 2007; Kiang et al. 2011) and social capital networks (Putnam 2000; Portes & Rumbaut 2001). Additionally, living in these diverse, positive communities increases immigrants' propensity to learn and speak English (Stolzenberg & Tienda 1997; Portes & Rumabut 2014), participate in political and civic activities (Jang 2009; Diaz 2012; Kim 2018), and align their ethnic identities with the American mainstream (Yoon et al.

2012; Gartner et al. 2014). However, factors of assimilation that produce negative outcomes in immigrant populations, such as discrimination and strong ethnic identities, have the potential to impede the assimilation of immigrant groups and, more specifically, Asian Americans. Moreover, Asian Americans' experiences with these factors are stratified by sub-ethnic group, as East Asians/Indians are posited to experience more positive factors of assimilation than Southeast Asians (e.g., Sakamoto et al. 2009; Lee & Zhou 2015; Lee & Kye 2016). Thus, based on the impact of these factors of assimilation on Asian Americans' assimilation, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

*Hypothesis 1: For Asian Americans, positive community relations, English language acquisition, civic participation, and being East Asian/Indian will all be related to increases in income and educational attainment.*

*Hypothesis 2*: *For Asian Americans, discrimination and a stronger ethnic identity will be related to decreases in income and educational attainment.*

*The Moderating Relationship Between Factors of Assimilation and Asian Americans' Generational Status.* Because of the positive relationship between several factors of assimilation and Asian Americans' socioeconomic attainment, the intergenerational mobility of Asian Americans' socioeconomic attainment likely depends on the presence of these factors (Lee & Zhou 2015; Lee & Kye 2016). If the first generation does not situate themselves in communities with positive, inter-ethnic relations between members, the second generation will not reap the benefits of these assimilation processes (Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Sakamoto et al. 2009), leading to more experiences with discrimination and a preservation of ethnic identity. Therefore, given the moderating relationship between factors of assimilation and Asian Americans' generational status, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

*Hypothesis 3: For Asian Americans, factors of assimilation will moderate the effect of generational status on socioeconomic attainment, such that the effect of generational status on income and educational attainment depends on the presence of these factors.*

Based on the impact of community relations on Asian Americans' earning potential, and the stratification of sub-ethnic groups of Asian Americans, certain sub-ethnic groups are better integrated into their communities than others. Therefore, as Asian Americans' assimilation processes continue into the second generation, certain sub-groups of Asian Americans would see their earning potential increase because of positive community relations, while other groups would see their earning potential decrease because of negative experiences in their communities. This is contrary to the model minority image which situates Asian Americans as a homogenous group poised for integration into the U.S. mainstream regardless of sub-ethnic group and generational status (Sakamoto et al. 2009; Lee & Kye 2016). Essentially, the commonplace assertion that Asian Americans overwhelmingly experience upward mobility in their assimilation processes ignores the sub-group stratification of the racial group. It also ignores the negative determinants of assimilation (e.g., perceived discrimination, poor community relations) that produces divergent paths of assimilation within Asian American sub-groups. My study will address these limitations by specifying a model of Asian American assimilation that includes these negative determinants and will assess how they moderate the effect changes that generational status has on Asian Americans' income and educational attainment.

**THE CURRENT STUDY**

In my study, I will examine Asian Americans from the Houston area using Rice University's Kinder Houston Area Survey. Houston serves as a good case for studying these relationships as it is an immigrant gateway city that has gone understudied despite its growing

population of immigrants (Waters & Jimenez 2005) and its status as a majority-minority city (Klineburg & Wu 2012). Houston's growing Asian American population also reflects the greater trends of the United States, whose population is expected to be 9 percent Asian American by 2060 (U.S. Census Bureau 2015) and Houston's population more closely mirrors this projection than the U.S. population (7 percent versus 5 percent). The population distribution of the remainder of Houston's minority groups also reflect the majority-minority direction the country is moving toward, as Houston has lower percentages of whites than the United States (31 percent versus 62 percent) and a higher percentage of Hispanics (43 percent versus 17 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau 2015, 2017). Therefore, the population of Houston more closely mirrors the future population trends of the United States and may serve as a template to study future immigrant dynamics in the coming years.

## DATA AND METHODS

### Data

To test the hypotheses described above, I use the Kinder Institute for Urban Research's Kinder Houston Area Survey (KHAS). The KHAS is a representative survey of almost 44,000 (average 1,227 per year) Houston area adults 18 years and older. The study uses random-digit dialing procedures (landline and cellphone) to conduct interviews. Surveys have been conducted annually since 1982. Average response rates for the survey are approximately 35 percent with a 50 percent completion rate. Using data from the 2002 and 2011 KHAS, I will examine the effects of factors of assimilation on first- and second-generation Asian Americans' socioeconomic attainment using a multivariate regression model. I use the 2002 and 2011 surveys to test my research question because they contain oversamples of Asian Americans in the Houston area and a battery of questions relevant to the aspects of assimilation I aim to test with my study.[1]

Although the response rate is around 35 percent for both years, the sample is fairly similar to the Houston area in general with few exceptions. The 2002 sample more closely reflects the population distribution of Harris County than the 2011 sample in terms of sub-ethnic group, but both samples closely reflect other characteristics of the population. The 2002 sample was 22 percent Chinese, 22 percent Indian, 23 percent Vietnamese, 2 percent Japanese, and 5 percent Filipino. This reflects the distribution of the Asian population in Harris County, which in 2000 was 20 percent Chinese, 21 percent Indian, 32 percent Vietnamese, 2 percent Japanese, and 8 percent Filipino (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). The median age of the 2002 sample was 36, which was 32 in Harris County. The sample from the 2011 data was not as similar to the Harris County population: 22 percent of the sample were Chinese, 28 percent were Indian, 17 percent were Vietnamese, less than 1 percent were Japanese, and 6 percent were Filipino. This does not as accurately represent the population distribution of Harris County which, in 2011, was 17 percent Chinese, 20 percent Indian, 32 percent Vietnamese, 1.4 percent Japanese, and 9 percent Filipino based on the 2010 Census (U.S. Census Bureau 2010b). The largest discrepancy between the sample and population are the Vietnamese distributions, which the sample does not as accurately capture. The median age of the 2011 sample was 38, which was 32 in Harris County (U.S. Census Bureau 2010b). The median household income for my 2011 sample was $62,500, which in Harris County was $61,859 (U.S. Census Bureau 2011).

**Measures**

*Dependent Variables.* My dependent variables for my research question are income level and educational attainment.[2] For income level, I use a six-category assessment of the respondent's household income level, because this item was included in both years of the KHAS that I use. The six income categories range from "$0 to $12,500" to "More than $75,000". To

make the variable continuous, I recoded income to its categorical medians (e.g., "$0 to $12,500" was re-coded to "$7,250"), and the "More than $75,000" response was re-coded to $100,000.[3] To ensure consistency between both years of the KHAS that I use, I converted the 2002 income categories to reflect 2011 dollars using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to calculate the inflation rate from 2002 to 2011. The educational attainment variable is a 9-category assessment ranging from "9$^{th}$ grade or less" to "Professional degree (Ph.D., M.D., J.D.)", with each category representing an increase in educational attainment.

*Independent Variables.* My substantive independent variables of interest on assimilation processes are sorted into five categories related to my hypotheses as detailed above: (1) perceived discrimination, (2) civic participation, (3) community relations, (4) language acquisition, and (5) ethnic identity. I also constructed a set of dummy variables for generational status. Multiple survey items from the KHAS were used to construct each variable. I also include control variables for age (in years), age-squared, sex (0=male, 1=female), marital status (0=unmarried, 1=married), and if the respondent has children (0=no, 1=yes).[4]

*Perceived Discrimination.* Perceived discrimination reflects the extent to which immigrants feel disadvantaged and poorly treated because of their race/ethnicity (Hwang and Goto 2008). This is captured by one item in the survey: "How often have you personally felt discriminated against in Houston because of your ethnicity? Would you say: very often, fairly often, rarely, or never?" I recoded this variable into a dummy variable by combining categories and using "rarely" and "never" as the reference categories.[5]

*Community Relations.* Community relations reflect the extent to which an immigrant feels included and integrated into their community through positive ethnic relations and encounters with community members (Briggs 2007; Kiang et al. 2011). The KHAS includes

several variables that measure these, including the respondent's perception of ethnic relations ("How would you relate the relations among ethnic groups, in terms of living in the Houston area?"). The KHAS' measure of ethnic relations is attitudinal (excellent, good, fair, or poor), and I recoded the survey item into a dummy variable, using "poor" and "fair" as the reference categories.[6] I also include a measure for the number of friends the respondent has of a different ethnicity. Three items ask if a respondent has a close friend who is black, Hispanic, or Anglo. I combined these items into a single measure—the total number of "yes" responses to the three categories.

*Language Acquisition.* Language acquisition reflects the extent to which an immigrant has acquired the language of the host country (Stolzenberg & Tienda 1997), in this case, English. The KHAS records whether the language of the interview was in English, Spanish, or an Asian language (Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, or Korean), which I recoded into a dummy variable for whether the interview was conducted in English.

*Civic participation.* Civic participation reflects the extent to which an immigrant participates in the host country's electoral processes and activism within their community (Kim 2018). To measure political participation and civic engagement, I used the KHAS variables of whether the respondent is registered to vote (1=yes, 0=no) and whether the respondent has volunteered in the past year (1=yes, 0=no)[7].

*Ethnic Identity.* An immigrant's ethnic identity reflects the sense of peoplehood and meanings one derives from membership in their ethnic group (Phinney & Ong 2007). The KHAS includes a variable that measures the self-reported identity of the respondent: "Do you think of yourself as primarily Asian, equally Asian and American, or primarily American?" I recoded each identity category into a dummy variable, with "equal parts American and Asian" as the

reference category, to assess the differences in income and education that ethnic identity influences in reference to having a bicultural identity. I also constructed a scale for participation in ethnic activities from three KHAS variables: (1) "How often during the past year did you participate in an Asian holiday or cultural event," (2) "How often during the past year did you participate in the meetings of an Asian organization in Houston," and (3) "How often during the past year did you make a special effort to teach younger family members about their ethnic background?" Each item is assessed on a scale of "often, occasionally, or never." I combined the items into a single construct ($\alpha$=0.777) and higher scores on the scale represent greater participation in ethnic activities.[8]

*Generational Status.* Generational status was constructed from two variables: (1) "Were you born in the U.S.", and (2) "Were your parents born in the U.S.?" Both variables were combined, with the first generation as the reference category. The first generation was generated by re-coding the combined variable to ensure that first generation respondents receive a score of "0" (i.e., they were not born in the U.S. and their parents were not born in the U.S.) The second generation was generated by re-coding respondents who were born in the United States, but at least one of their parents were not, into the "1" category. Subsequent generations were then dropped from the dataset, as they each made up too small of a percentage of the total to include as another category.

*Sub-Ethnic Group.* I constructed sub-ethnic group from two variables: (1) "Where does your mother's family come from?" and (2) "Where does your father's family come from?" Ultimately, I used three response options/locations from these two questions to create a dummy variable for being from one of three countries that drives a large portion of the socioeconomic attainment of Asian Americans: China, India, and Japan. I constructed the variable by creating a

dummy variable and coding respondents who had at least one parent from the three countries into the "1" category[9]. From this sample, the "1" category was 49.15 percent Chinese, 46.78 percent were Indian, and 4.07 percent were Japanese. The "0" category was 45 percent Vietnamese and 9 percent Filipino, with the rest of the sample comprising small percentages of respondents from Southeast Asian countries (e.g., Laos, Cambodia, Thailand) .

I will test my hypotheses by estimating a series of multivariate Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models as my two dependent variables are continuous. I will introduce the conceptual categories (i.e., language, perceived discrimination, civic participation, ethnic identity, community relations) of the variables into seven models: two models that assess the variables' effect on Asian Americans' educational attainment and five models that assess the variables' effect on Asian American's income. Model 1 of education assesses the direct effects of the independent variables on educational attainment, while Model 2 includes a specified interaction between the generational status and ethnic relations variable.[10] Model 1 of income assesses the direct effects of the independent variables on income attainment, and Model 2 assesses the same effects but with a control variable for educational attainment.[11] Model 3 of income assesses the results of Model 1, but with a specified interaction between the generational status and ethnic relations variables. The fourth model of income assesses the results of Model 3 but controlling for educational attainment. Multicollinearity was assessed by calculating the variance inflation factor (VIF) across all model specifications and was not an issue in any of the models. Additional tests revealed that the education models were heteroskedastic, and I report robust standard errors in these models.

**Sample**

*By Generational Status.* My sample includes first- and second-generation Asian Americans from the Houston area. Descriptive statistics for the first (N=510) and second (N=107) generation are presented in Table 1. To assess differences between the samples, I also ran t-tests between both the generational and sub-ethnic samples. The average age of my first-generation sample was 40.7 (SD=15.32), their median level of education was "4 years of college/B.A. degree", and their average income was $72,852 (SD=$38,932). The average age of the second generation was 29.03 (SD=15.21), their median level of education was "2 or 3 years of college/A.A. degree", and their average income was $67,529 (SD=$35750). Based on the t-tests conducted, the second generation's age and average level of education (5.10 vs. 5.92) was significantly lower than the first generation's[12]. Additionally, the proportion of the second generation that had volunteered and were registered to vote were significantly higher than the first generation. The second generation also had significantly more inter-ethnic friendships and the proportion of the second generation that identified as American was also significantly higher than the first generation.

*By Sub-Ethnic Group.* Descriptive statistics based on sub-ethnic group are also provided in Table 2. From the two dependent variables, East Asians/Indians' median level of education was "4 years of college/B.A. degree", and their average income was $75,223 (SD=$38,220). The median level of education for the Southeast Asian sample was "4 years of college/B.A. degree", and their average income was $68,683 (SD=$38,416). Based on the t-tests conducted, the Southeast Asian sample's income was significantly lower than East Asians/Indian. Additionally, the Southeast Asians' average level of education (5.26) was significantly less than the East

Asians'/Indians' education level (6.31). A significantly higher proportion of Southeast Asians had volunteered and were registered to vote, and a significantly lower proportion were married.

**RESULTS**

The first two models from Table 3 presents the results from the OLS model of assimilation's effects on first- and second-generation Asian Americans' educational attainment. The significant results from the education model include being female, being East Asian/Indian, being registered to vote, language acquisition, and generational status. From my independent variables, being registered to vote was associated with a 0.385 categorical increase in educational attainment and conducting the interview in English was associated with a 0.903 categorical increase in educational attainment. However, the association between voter registration and education may be indicative of reverse causation, as more educated people are more likely to be registered to vote. Interestingly, being in the second generation was associated with a 0.461 categorical decrease in educational attainment even when controlling for age. Despite the significant associations for these independent variables, none of the assimilation process variables had a significant interaction with generational status.

The final four models from Table 5 presents the results from the OLS models of first- and second-generation Asian Americans' income. From Model 1, controls for age, age-squared, and being married were significant. Regarding the substantive independent variables: being East Asian/Indian, civic participation, inter-ethnic friendships, and language acquisition were all associated with significant increases in income. Of note is that in this model, unlike with education, the variable for second generation is not significant.

The second model of income from Table 5 presents the same results from the first model, but includes a control variable for educational attainment (the dependent variable in the first set

of models), as education has a known strong relationship to income. Here, as expected, I find that education is significant and has a strong positive association with income, such that each additional category of education leads to a $5936.76 increase in income. Education reduces the size of the relationship between income and language acquisition, and income and civic participation. Controlling for educational attainment reduced the positive association between English proficiency and income from $12,542.07 to $7,143.61, and the positive association between civic participation and income from $9,996.91 to $8,823.72, suggesting that educational attainment may at least partially mediate the relationship between language acquisition and income, and civic engagement and income. Also, of note, is that when education is controlled for in this model, being East Asian/Indian is no longer significant and the coefficient is reduced from $6,101.53 to $924.92. This suggests that education may partially mediate the relationship between being East Asian/Indian and income.

Models 3 and 4 introduce an interaction term with generational status and perceptions of ethnic relations. Model 3 does not include education, as in Model 1, but Model 4 includes education as a control variable. In Model 3, without controlling for education, this interaction term is not significant. However, the interaction term becomes significant when education is controlled for in Model 4. This term is significant and positive here, meaning that being in the second generation and experiencing positive ethnic relations is associated with a $15,108.79 increase in income. Also, without controlling for education, being East Asian/Indian is significant, such that being East Asian/Indian is associated with a $6,083.30 increase in income.

The results of the interaction are better interpreted through the plot of the interaction's predicted margins in Figure 1. The figure clearly demonstrates how the effect of generational status is altered by perceptions of ethnic relations. The predicted income of a first-generation

Asian American perceiving poorer ethnic relations is $74,405.77 while the same predicted income for second generation Asian Americans is $69,496.14, illustrating downward intergenerational mobility. The predicted income of a first-generation Asian American perceiving positive ethnic relations is $69,031.54, while the same predicted income for the second generation is $79,230.71, illustrating upward intergenerational mobility. These findings demonstrate divergent paths to assimilation in second generation Asian Americans.

## DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

*Discussion.* The present study sought to examine if certain community factors of assimilation moderated the intergenerational mobility of first- and second-generation Asian Americans. While Asian Americans have characteristically been thought to experience upward mobility (Sakamoto et al. 2009, Lee & Kye 2016), here I hypothesize that several categories that impact Asian American's community integration would moderate this intergenerational pathway, and that Asian American's successful (i.e., positive) integration depends on these factors.

Hypothesis 1 is mostly supported by the data. Volunteering was associated with significant income increases, while voter registration was associated with significant increases to the sample's education level. These findings potentially point to the role that positive community integration plays in integrating immigrant groups to the U.S. mainstream—socializing them to the values of civic participation (Diaz 2012). Subsequently, socialization to civic participation potentially provides immigrant groups with greater social capital networks (Putnam 2000) and greater socioeconomic gains as a result. However, civic participation did not produce a significant moderating effect with generational status. Therefore, civic participation did not moderate the effect of generational status on socioeconomic outcomes, though it is independently associated with improved socio-economic status.

Conducting an interview in English was associated with significant and substantial gains in income and education. These findings, while not new, confirm the socioeconomic benefits that immigrant groups reap when orienting their cultural characteristics towards the American mainstream (Portes & Rumbaut 2014). However, language acquisition did not moderate the relationship between income and generational status. Inter-ethnic friendships were also associated with significant gains in income, potentially pointing to the socioeconomic benefit's immigrant groups experience when integrated into positive, inter-ethnic communities (Portes et al. 2009; Diaz 2012; Lee & Kye 2016). However, more inter-ethnic friendships and language acquisition did not moderate the socioeconomic effect of generational status.

Interestingly, being East Asian/Indian had less association with the models than expected. Hypothesis 1 stated that East Asians/Indians would experience higher levels of income and educational attainment than Southeast Asians, which was partially supported by the education and income models. However, when I assessed if sub-ethnic group moderated the socioeconomic attainment of the second generation, the interactions were not significant. Therefore, in my sample, sub-ethnic group did not have a significant impact on the socioeconomic mobility of the second generation, contrary to other studies findings (e.g., Sakamoto et al. 2009; Kim & Sakamoto 2010; Lee & Zhou 2015). This is potentially due to the broad measure of my sub-ethnic group variable (being East Asian/Indian versus not being East Asian/Indian), as well as the small sample size of the second generation. Future studies assessing this issue should include more refined sub-ethnic group measures to assess this relationship.

Hypothesis 2 is not supported by the data. A strong ethnic identity did not produce significant main effects or moderate the relationship between generational status and income. There is research to show that the prominence and dimensions of Asian American's ethnic

identity is shaped by a variety of cultural, social, and political integration processes (Pei-te, Conway, & Wong 2003; Phinney & Ong 2007). Moreover, Lee and Zhou (2015) argue that East Asian Americans/Indian Americans, because of their high educational attainment and professional employment, migrate a class-specific ethnic identity separate from that of other East Asians and Southeast Asians. Therefore, the sample's dimensions of ethnic identity may be different for each respondent based on their sub-group context, and lead to conflicting or inconsistent assessments of their ethnic identity that cannot be captured by a three-item ethnic participation scale. Future research should further explore the different dimensions of Asian American's ethnic identity and use more refined identity assessments to explore the interrelation between Asian American's ethnic identity and socioeconomic attainment.

Self-perceptions of discrimination were also not significant in any model and did not moderate the relationship between generational status and income. Sakamoto et al. (2009) and Lee and Zhou (2015) posit that most discrimination that Asian Americans experience, and that has the most impact, is in the workplace. Furthermore, much of this workplace discrimination is structural (e.g., reduced pay, barriers to promotion) rather than singular, perceived instances of discrimination. Therefore, instances of structural/workplace discrimination may not be assessed in a measure of self-perceived discrimination. Therefore, a broad measure assessing Asian Americans' self-perceived discrimination may not capture important sources of discrimination that affect Asian Americans' socioeconomic attainment.

Based on the results from my models, Hypothesis 3—factors of assimilation would have a moderating effect on first- and second-generation Asian Americans' socioeconomic attainment—is partially supported. I identified a moderating relationship between generational status and one's perception of ethnic relations, such that being in the second generation and

perceiving positive ethnic relations was associated with increases in income, indicating that the upward mobility of Asian Americans depends on their experiences with their communities. These findings point to the differential paths highlighted in segmented assimilation through generations (Portes & Rumbaut 2001), and how these paths are influenced by the strength of ethnic relations in immigrant communities. The findings also highlight the differential and potentially stratified experiences of the Asian American racial group (Zhou & Xiong 2005; Lee & Kye 2016). While this finding is contrary to the model minority image, it also identifies important measures that affect Asian Americans' socioeconomic attainment through subsequent generations. While some researchers have begun to contend that Asian Americans have reached socioeconomic parity with whites (e.g., Sakamoto et al. 2009), these findings highlight community determinants that potentially halt Asian Americans' reaching complete parity with the dominant group (Lee & Kye 2016).

The substantial changes that controlling for education influenced in Model 4 of income were also salient findings and emphasized the positive role that education plays in combating downward determinants of assimilation. From Model 3 to Model 4, controlling for education changed the interaction term between generational status and ethnic relations from insignificant to significant, indicating that education facilitates the perception of positive ethnic relations for Asian Americans, a finding that is consistent with the literature. Lee and Zhou (2015) demonstrate how first-generation Asian Americans stress the importance of education to their second-generation children to use as a tool to buffer against negative racial and ethnic experiences. They recognize the potential discrimination and hostility that their children may face in the workplace and in their communities and view education as a mechanism to buffer against these negative effects (Lee & Zhou 2015). Additionally, segmented assimilation theorists

posit that a lack of both education and positive community relations place second generation immigrants on a downward path when integrating themselves into the U.S. mainstream (Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Portes et al. 2009). My findings potentially demonstrate this claim. While poor ethnic relations were shown to be associated with substantial losses in income for the second generation, their effects were completely removed when a measure for education was introduced. However, experiencing positive ethnic relations were still associated with significant and substantial increases in income for second generation Asian Americans, indicating that community factors still produce substantial effects on Asian Americans' successful integration into the U.S. mainstream. Thus, despite researchers' claims that Asian Americans are beginning to reach socioeconomic parity with whites, these results are more consistent with Lee & Kye's (2016) assertion that Asian Americans' assimilation is becoming increasingly racialized, and that this group assimilates in racially/ethnically specific ways which impacts their residential preferences. In the context of this paper, Asian Americans' residential preferences may be fueling their perception of racial and ethnic relations. And, to the extent that these perceptions moderate Asian Americans' socioeconomic attainment, these racially specific assimilation strategies may lead to segmented trajectories for Asian Americans.

*Limitations.* Despite this study's contribution to the literature, it is not without its limitations. First, there was not a large enough third generation sample to track further socioeconomic changes through subsequent generations. Also, the measures used to assess levels of perceived discrimination, ethnic relations, and voluntarism were broad compared to more in-depth measurements found elsewhere in the literature. The sub-ethnic group variable was also broad, as my sample was too small to separate the ethnic groups into more specific sub-ethnic categories. The KHAS is also a cross-sectional survey and not longitudinal. Therefore, the

second generation's socioeconomic outcomes cannot be interpreted as a direct result of the first generation's (i.e., their parents) human capital and community integration. However, the dataset still demonstrates determinants of assimilation that are related to the second generation's upward mobility. Despite these limitations, the findings of the study in relation to the moderating relationship between ethnic relations and generational status remain salient.

## CONCLUSION

The effect that the perception of ethnic relations has on second-generation Asian Americans' income highlights the importance of positive integration into inter-ethnic communities for assimilating immigrant groups. Also, education's influence on the relationship between generational status and ethnic relations confirm important mechanisms (e.g., community integration, differential gains in education) that segmented assimilation identifies as producing divergent paths to assimilation (Portes et al. 2009), and that these mechanisms are interrelated for Asian Americans. This may be indicative of an internalization of the model minority image—they recognize the social pressures for them to succeed and attempt to situate themselves in communities that facilitates their success (Lee & Zhou 2015). Future studies should explore this to further explicate how Asian Americans determine the quality of racial and ethnic relations in their community. By doing this, researchers could begin to explore what specific dimensions constitute Asian American's perception of ethnic relations, and the specific factors that influence their socioeconomic mobility (Lee & Kye 2016).

Finally, these findings also point to the deleterious effects that racialization can potentially have on immigrant groups, resulting in the subordination of Asian American's assimilation along racial lines, associating their socioeconomic attainment with racial and ethnic determinants (Kim 2007; Lee & Kye 2016). This goes against the claim that Asian Americans

have reached socioeconomic parity with whites (Sakamoto et al. 2009), because whites would not see their socioeconomic attainment substantially penalized by their racial/ethnic identifications and perceptions (Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Lee & Kye 2016). This study has addressed this situation by identifying determinants of assimilation that affect Asian Americans' socioeconomic attainment.

**NOTES**

1. There is research into the role that ethnic attrition plays in the self-identification of second-generation-plus immigrant groups (e.g. Trejo & Duncan 2016). Therefore, selecting an Asian American sample based on their ethnic identification is potentially problematic, as second-generation-plus Asian Americans may not identify as Asian. However, research on the racialization of the Asian American population (e.g., Kim 2007, Lee & Zhou 2015; Lee & Kye 2016) suggests that despite this attrition, the specific ways that Asian Americans assimilate into residential areas preserves much of their racial identity (e.g., Lee & Zhou 2015, Lee & Kye 2016).

2. Twenty percent of the sample was dropped due to missing responses from the income variable. However, this subset of the sample was isolated and the remaining descriptive statistics were generated for them and compared to the main sample. No substantial difference between the two samples were found except for the discrimination variable. While discrimination did not produce a significant effect on the models, the missing income sample was found to experience less discrimination than the sample with values for income. A t-test was conducted and the difference between the two values was not significant. T-tests were ran between the two samples and the remaining variables as well, and no significant differences were found.

3. I also ran the income variable in its original 6-category, non-continuous form to assess if the re-coding of the variable was driving the effect changes. While running this variable in its categorical form did remove the significance of the volunteering and generational status variables, the interaction of generational status and ethnic relations remained significant. Also, the direction and size of the effect changes of the variables remained the same when running the income variable in its categorical form.

4. A variable for age at arrival to the United States was also generated by subtracting the number of years the respondent had been in the U.S. from their age. However, since this variable has no variation across the second generation (all coded as 0) and did not produce changes in any of the models, it was not included.

5. I ran this variable in its 4-category, ordinal form rather than its dichotomous form to assess if the re-coding of the variable was driving the effect changes and produced no or substantial changes in the model.

6. The variable was also run in its 4-category, ordinal form rather than dichotomous to assess how the re-coding of the variable was influencing the effect changes. The variable's effect remained insignificant, and the direction of the relationship remained the same. Interacting the variable with generational status still produced results that were associated with reduced income for second generation respondents that perceived poor ethnic relations, but the effect size of the association was reduced.

7. Unfortunately, a variable was not available to distinguish between volunteering within or outside of one's own community. The KHAS does have an item asking this question, but was not asked in the 2011 survey year.

8. I conducted a factor analysis on the items and generated predicted values for the combined scores. The analysis supported the items as a single construct; however, I chose to leave the items in its simple, combined form as the predicted scores did not produce any changes in my results.

9. I chose to include biracial individuals as being from India, China, and Japan. I made this decision because intermarriage is a key determinant of integration for immigrants (e.g., Qian & Lichter 2007; Gonsoulin & Fu 2010; Wu et al. 2015) and is posited to facilitate upward mobility

in immigrant populations. Additionally, Asian Americans intermarry at higher rates than other immigrant groups, especially Chinese migrants (Gonsoulin & Fu 2010). Therefore, I chose to include biracial individuals in the "1" category of this variable because of Asian Americans' high rates of intermarriage, and these high rates of intermarriage are also a mechanism that facilitates the upward mobility of the East Asian/Indian population.

10. I specified other interactions between my 5 conceptual categories and generational status; however, no other interactions were significant, and therefore, I chose to not include them in the models.

11. I did not control for income in the education model because of my theoretical logic. For income attainment, my argument credits education as a vital resource that Asian Americans use to buffer against negative effects of discrimination and poor community integration (e.g., Sakamoto et al. 2009; Lee & Zhou 2015). However, I do not make the claim that Asian Americans' higher levels of income lead to greater educational attainment in the population, as research demonstrates that South and East Asians/Indians converge in levels of educational attainment in the second generation (Lee & Zhou 2015). Therefore, I do not include income attainment as a control in the education models.

12. This finding is indicative of claims made by Garcia Coll and Marks (2012) that second-generation children fare worse in developmental and educational outcomes than their first-generation parents. The idea is that acculturating to the values and lifestyle of the United States, as well as learning in its public school system, produces an immigrant paradox that limits the socioeconomic mobility of assimilated second-generation children. This claim is complicated by Feliciano and Lanzano's (2017) research, which indicates that these outcomes depend on where first-generation parents receive their education, as well as their socioeconomic status before

immigrating to the United States. Thus, the claim that second-generation children fare worse socioeconomically than their parents is moderated by the contextual socioeconomic attainment of the first generation (Feliciano and Lanzano 2017). For my research, while the second generation sample did have significantly less education, the survey did not contain questions asking the respondent about their parent's socioeconomic background, and I was unable to further explore this relationship. However, future research should continue to explore how the inter-generational mobility of Asian Americans may be moderated by the contextual attainment of the first generation.

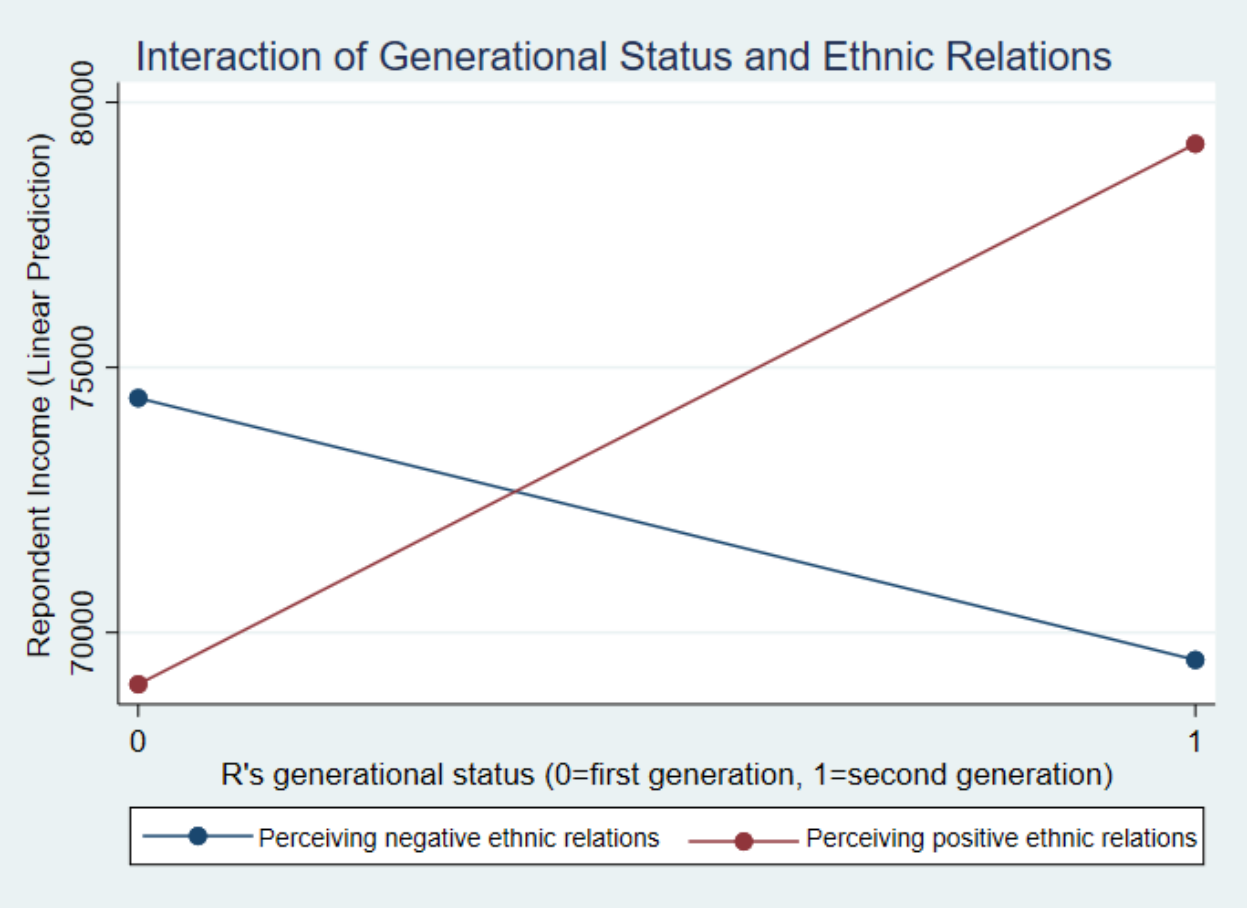


*Figure 1. Interaction of Generational Status and Ethnic Relations, Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey, N=617*

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for First- (N=510) and Second-Generation (N=107) Asian Americans

| | Mean | | Standard Dev. | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variables** | **1st gen.** | **2nd gen.** | **1st gen.** | **2nd gen.** | **Min** | **Max** | **Description** |
| Age | 40.70* | 29.03 | 15.32 | 15.21 | 18 | 86 | Respondent's (R's) age in years |
| Sex | 0.44 | 0.46 | 0.50 | 0.52 | 0 | 1 | R's sex (0=male, 1=female) |
| Marital Status | 0.70* | 0.31 | 0.46 | 0.46 | 0 | 1 | If R is married (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Children Status | 0.67* | 0.34 | 0.47 | 0.47 | 0 | 1 | If R has children (0=no, 1=yes) |
| East Asian/Indian | 0.49 | 0.32 | 0.50 | 0.47 | 0 | 1 | If R is East Asian/Indian (0=no, 1=yes) |
| **Dependent Variables** | | | | | | | |
| Income | 72852 | 67529 | 38932 | 35750 | 7500 | 124981.50 | R's income in dollars |
| Education | 5.92* | 5.10 | 1.89 | 1.61 | 1 | 9 | R's education (1-9)(1=9th grade or less, 9=Ph.D., M.D., J.D.) |
| **Independent Variables** | | | | | | | |
| Volunteering | 0.52* | 0.70 | 0.50 | 0.46 | 0 | 1 | If R has volunteered in the past 30 days (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Voter Registration | 0.60* | 0.80 | 0.49 | 0.46 | 0 | 1 | If R is registered to vote in the Presidential election (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Perceived Discrimination | 0.23 | 0.21 | 0.43 | 0.41 | 0 | 1 | If R has experienced self-discrimination (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Ethnic Relations | 0.53 | 0.44 | 0.75 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | If R perceives good ethnic relations (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Identity | | | | | | | |
| Asian | 0.25* | 0.10 | 0.44 | 0.31 | 0 | 1 | If R identifies as primarily Asian (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Bicultural | 0.54 | 0.59 | 0.50 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 | If R identifies as equally Asian and American (0=no, 1=yes); reference category |
| American | 0.19 | 0.28 | 0.40 | 0.45 | 0 | 1 | If R identifies as primarily American (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Ethnic Identity | 5.61 | 5.49 | 2.09 | 2.28 | 3 | 9 | Ethnic Identity Scale (3-9, higher scores reflect stronger ethnic identity) |
| Inter-ethnic friendships | 1.86* | 2.42 | 1.15 | 0.89 | 0 | 3 | R's inter-ethnic friendships (1-3)(1=has friend of one different ethnicity, 3=has friends of three different ethnicities) |
| Interview Language | 0.75* | 0.89 | 0.44 | 0.32 | 0 | 1 | Language of interview (0=Asian language, 1=English) |

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey N=617. *significant t-test for unequal variance between groups.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for East Asian/Indian (N=295) and Southeast (N=322) Asian Americans

| Variables | Mean | | Standard Dev. | | Min | Max | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | East Asian/Ind. | Non-East | East Asian/Ind | Non-East | | | |
| Age | 40.09* | 37.31 | 18.78 | 16.13 | 18 | 86 | Respondent's (R's) age in years |
| Sex | 0.43 | 0.46 | 0.52 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | R's sex (0=male, 1=female) |
| Marital Status | 0.71* | 0.56 | 0.45 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | If R is married (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Children Status | 0.65* | 0.57 | 0.48 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | If R has children (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Second Gen. | 0.13 | 0.22 | 0.34 | 0.41 | 0 | 1 | If R is second generation (0=no, 1=yes) |
| **Dependent Variables** | | | | | | | |
| Income | 75223* | 68683 | 38220 | 38416 | 7500 | 124981.50 | R's income in dollars |
| Education | 6.31* | 5.26 | 1.83 | 1.79 | 1 | 9 | R's education (1-9)(1=9$^{th}$ grade or less, 9=Ph.D., M.D., J.D.) |
| **Independent Variables** | | | | | | | |
| Volunteering | 0.50* | 0.60 | 0.50 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 | If R has volunteered in the past 30 days (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Voter Registration | 0.61 | 0.67 | 0.50 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 | If R is registered to vote in the Presidential election (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Perceived Discrimination | 0.24 | 0.23 | 0.42 | 0.42 | 0 | 1 | If R has experienced self-discrimination (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Ethnic Relations | 0.51 | 0.53 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | If R perceives good ethnic relations (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Identity | | | | | | | |
| Asian | 0.24 | 0.22 | 0.43 | 0.41 | 0 | 1 | If R identifies as primarily Asian (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Bicultural | 0.53 | 0.56 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | If R identifies as equally Asian and American (0=no, 1=yes); reference category |
| American | 0.21 | 0.20 | 0.41 | 0.40 | 0 | 1 | If R identifies as primarily American (0=no, 1=yes) |
| Ethnic Identity | 5.68 | 5.51 | 2.30 | 1.96 | 3 | 9 | Ethnic Identity Scale (3-9, higher scores reflect stronger ethnic identity) |
| Inter-ethnic friendships | 1.95 | 1.97 | 1.11 | 1.14 | 0 | 3 | R's inter-ethnic friendships (1-3)(1=has friend of one different ethnicity, 3=has friends of three different ethnicities) |
| Interview Language | 0.76 | 0.78 | 0.43 | 0.41 | 0 | 1 | Language of interview (0=Asian language, 1=English) |

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey N=617. *significant t-test for unequal variance between groups.

Table 3: Unstandardized Regression Coefficients from OLS Models of Education and Income

| | Education | | Income | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable** | **Model 1** | **Model 2** | **Model 1** | **Model 2** | **Model 3** | **Model 4** |
| Age | .130*** | 0.130*** | 2541.58*** | 1770.64** | 2499.15*** | 1719.74** |
| | (0.032) | (0.032) | (592.49) | (577.21) | (591.67) | (576.01) |
| $Age^2$ | -0.001*** | -0.001*** | -30.34*** | -22.77*** | -29.91*** | -22.27*** |
| | (0.001) | (0.001) | (6.11) | (5.94) | (6.10) | (5.93) |
| East Asian/Indian | 0.871*** | 0.872*** | 6101.53* | 924.92 | 6083.30* | 872.17 |
| | (0.147) | (0.147) | (2867.78) | (2836.14) | (2861.72) | (2827.87) |
| Sex | -0.360** | -0.357** | -1267.84 | 873.89 | -1474.86 | 663.15 |
| | (0.135) | (0.136) | (2866.74) | (2761.75) | (2862.81) | (2755.39) |
| Survey Year | 0.390** | 0.392** | -9830.09*** | -12145.58*** | -9999.95*** | -12344.44*** |
| | (0.150) | (0.151) | (3049.66) | (2938.50) | (3044.55) | (2931.33) |
| Marital Stat. | 0.237 | 0.244 | 14942.54*** | 13534.24** | 14436.85*** | 12958.55*** |
| | (0.211) | (0.212) | (4132.03) | (3963.12) | (4132.70) | (3960.72) |
| Child Status | -0.200 | -0.211 | 2162.23 | 3351.76 | 2944.07 | 4206.75 |
| | (0.220) | (0.220) | (4405.03) | (4223.12) | (4415.44) | (4229.88) |
| Volunteering | 0.198 | 0.198 | 9996.91*** | 8823.72** | 9914.55*** | 8726.97** |
| | (0.151) | (0.152) | (2966.45) | (2846.34) | (2960.49) | (2838.30) |
| Voter Reg. | 0.383* | 0.385* | 3710.53 | 1434.43 | 3610.81 | 1311.85 |
| | (0.177) | (0.177) | (3322.99) | (3198.45) | (3316.38) | (3189.53) |
| Discrimination | -0.175 | -0.177 | -4894.94 | -3857.09 | -4726.77 | -3668.21 |
| | (0.167) | (0.167) | (3327.53) | (3190.90) | (3321.70) | (3182.73) |
| Ethnic Rels. | 0.107 | 0.140 | -2140.22 | -2775.94 | -4533.75 | -5374.23 |
| | (0.166) | (0.159) | (2807.65) | (2691.12) | (3078.87) | (2949.27) |
| Identity | | | | | | |
| Asian | 0.127 | 0.132 | -1238.56 | -1993.20 | -1600.14 | -2389.91 |
| | (0.188) | (0.189) | (3612.41) | (3462.21) | (3609.91) | (3457.05) |
| American | -0.046 | -0.041 | 1656.35 | 1932.66 | 1313.67 | 1563.01 |
| | (0.171) | (0.172) | (3702.33) | (3547.03) | (3699.01) | (3540.85) |
| Ethnic Identity | -0.019 | -0.018 | 67.29 | 180.49 | 48.04 | 160.34 |
| | (0.035) | (0.035) | (719.99) | (689.92) | (718.53) | (687.95) |
| Inter-Eth Friends | 0.021 | 0.022 | 5311.48*** | 5185.65*** | 5199.87*** | 5063.88*** |
| | (0.070) | (0.070) | (1360.41) | (1303.38) | (1358.83) | (1300.80) |
| Language | 0.909*** | 0.903*** | 12542.07*** | 7143.61* | 12973.31*** | 7576.61* |
| | (0.197) | (0.197) | (3559.77) | (3488.43) | (3559.67) | (3484.11) |
| Education | | | | 5936.76*** | | 5974.59*** |
| | | | | (807.55) | | (805.36) |
| Second Gen. | -0.550*** | -0.461* | -1333.07 | 1930.32 | -7663.02 | -4909.63 |
| | (0.176) | (0.215) | (4235.23) | (4081.56) | (5409.31) | (5191.07) |
| Second Gen. * | | -0.195 | | | 13939.87 | 15108.79* |
| Eth. Rel. | | (0.215) | | | (7435.29) | (7118.80) |
| $R^2$ | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.22 | 0.28 | 0.22 | 0.28 |

Notes: Standard Errors in Parentheses, Robust Standard Errors reported in Education models. Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 N=617

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