Types and Composition of Household Extension: The Case of Asians in the United States

A significant theoretical development in the larger migration literature has been a shift from conceptualizing the international migration[1] decision as a product of the rational economic behavior on the part of the isolated individual actor to instead viewing it as a result of the decisions and behavior 'within larger units of interrelated people, typically families or households…' (Massey 1999, page 36; Stark and Taylor 1989, 1991; Stark 1991)[2].

Scholarly work in this area emphasizes the significance of the household and kinship networks both in the sending countries as well as the host country. Thus, households not only garner social and financial capital to enable some of their members to go abroad (Tienda 1980; Pessar 1982; Massey and Espana 1987; Boyd 1989) but also play a role in maximizing economic gains and/or minimizing risk in the host country.

Although, the recognition of supplementing the analyses of individual level labor market outcomes with that at the level of the household to better comprehend the economic well being of immigrants is increasing, research employing household as a unit of analysis in the case of Asians is very limited. Asians constitute an increasing proportion of the immigrant population in the United States (U.S. henceforth). The share of Asians in the immigrant population in the U.S. rose from 11 to 30 percent between 1960 and 2000 (Martin and Midgley 2003).

This research examines the various types of household extension for households belonging to the six major Asian groups, namely, Chinese, Filipino, (Asian) Indian, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese disaggregated by the nativity status (foreign or native born) relative to one another and to native born non-Hispanic whites. The focus of the inquiry accordingly is to

[1] The role of family and kinship ties on migrant adaptation began with a focus on internal rather than international migration (Tilly and Brown 1967). (See Tienda 1980 for a review of the early work on this subject).

[2] In this context, it may be mentioned that another major approach that has been employed to understand economic outcomes of international migrants is that of a combination of the structural (policies, programs in the sending and receiving countries, relative position of the sending and receiving countries in the world economy) and household factors (Gurak and Kritz 1996; Perez 1986; Pessar 1982; Portes and Bach 1985)

examine a) whether the groups vary in the kind of extension and b) whether the groups are different in the composition of each type of extended household in terms of the relationship of the members (with the householder) who comprise the households.

Previous Work

Empirical investigations on immigrant households has its genesis in the assessment of the relative economic deprivation of female headed households, primarily those of Hispanic origin. Angel and Tienda (1982) in a comparison among non-Hispanic white, black and Hispanic groups report that the propensity to live in extended families is greater among minority households (black and Hispanics) and also that extension (of families) helps alleviate temporarily or chronically low earnings of the primary earner.

There is evidence indicating that immigrant households tend to be larger, have multiple earners and 'indulge' in greater resource sharing – physical and financial (Tienda 1980; Tienda and Angel 1982; Reimers 1985; Perez 1986; Chavez 1990; Burr and Mutchler 1993; Glick et.al 1997; Glick 1999, Tienda and Raijman 2000). It is seen that among the minority groups, the contribution of the nonnuclear members is significant (in terms of total household income), although their relative contribution is approximately similar in both poor and non poor households. Among non –Hispanic whites, however, nonnuclear members do not make a significant contribution to the household income. Burr and Mutchler (1993) in their research on older unmarried Mexican American and Puerto Rican women report that as economic status improves, the impact of cultural factors on living arrangement status diminishes implying that at a higher economic strata, women prefer to live alone rather than in a complex household resonating with the economic argument.

In recent work, Glick et.al (1997) and Glick (1999) show a higher tendency among recent immigrants from Mexico and Central America (Guatemala and Salvador) to live in horizontally extended (i.e. households in which adult siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles or other relatives of the unit head are present) and vertically extended (i.e households in which the parents, parents –in

law, grandparents, grandparents in law or grandchildren of the unit head are present along with the horizontally extended relatives) households. These studies also indicate that likelihood of living in non - horizontally extended households increased between 1980 and 1990 more than that between 1970- 1980 and is attributable to the changing demographic characteristics of entrants (who are more often younger and single than in the past) rather than to changing poverty levels, though poverty also plays a role.

There is however no clear evidence on relative primacy of the cultural inclinations versus the economic compulsion to extend. The investigations on the subject of living arrangements of Asians (Gibson 1988; Jensen 1991; Kibria 1993; Lessinger 1995 Bianchi and He 1997; Foner 1997) are further scant. In one of the pioneering pieces on Asians, Nee and Wong (1985) argue that historically, formation of family has been critical for the 'social and economic mobility' of the households. According to them, cheap labor generated within the household allowed many Asians to form and develop family businesses and enterprises in the early years of the post World War II immigration era. Foner (1997) in a more theoretically driven piece talks about separate Asian groups like the Japanese, Vietnamese and the Indians in the context of how these groups emerge with new family patterns, combining elements of their beliefs and norms of their source countries with those in the U.S. .

In one of the very few contemporary studies that include Asians as an immigrant group, Jensen (1991) demonstrates the role of earnings other than that of the head of the household in ameliorating the poverty of the households. Drawing a comparison between native white, black, Hispanic, Asian, and native other with foreign black, foreign Hispanic, foreign Asian, and foreign other, Jensen (1991) shows that the contribution of 'secondary earners' (earners other than the household head) in lifting the households out of poverty is greater for immigrants than for natives. However, the same cannot be said for the Asian immigrant households relative to native Asian families. The reason for Asians being an exception is because of the very high average secondary earnings among the native Asians. He further disaggregates Asians into Chinese,

Japanese and Asian other categories and finds that Chinese families benefit more from 'secondary earners' than to native born whites.

What then are the types of extension that the major Asian groups experience? Are there intergroup differences in the distribution and in the composition of the various extended living arrangements? What is the kinship relationship with the householder of the members who inhabit these various types of living arrangements? It is with these questions in mind that the present descriptive analyses are undertaken. The analyses present cross –tabulations of that describe the composition of the different types of living arrangements in terms of the kinship relationship of the household members with the householder for the six Asian groups, namely, Chinese, Filipinos, Indians, Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese and whites disaggregated by Asian ethnicity and nativity. The purpose of the descriptive exercise is to investigate further the broad research questions namely, a) what is the degree of extension for the 13 study groups? and b) whether there are intergroup ethnic differences that are consistent with either an economic or cultural motivation[3] to extend?

Data and Methods

The data sets that I employ for my analyses are the one percent and five percent state samples of the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) of the 2000 Census. The census IPUMS is the only data set that provides large enough sample sizes to enable intergroup comparisons among Asian sub groups, especially for groups such as native born Indians, Koreans, and the Vietnamese that comprise a relatively small share of the total population.

I use the one percent sample to obtain the sample of whites and the five percent sample for the sample of six Asian subgroups. The five percent state sample provides one with enough observations in each of the specific Asian subgroup to enable a disaggregated analysis (by Asian sub group and gender). Additionally, I combine the 1 and 5 percent samples in the case of the six

[3] It may be noted that since there are no measures available in the census data that can help capture cultural factors, the results indicating cultural reasons are at best suggestive.

Asian groups to expand the sample size. This is a routine strategy adopted by researchers using the IPUMS data set. The one and five percent samples are drawn independently of one another in the IPUMS data and therefore combining the two data sets is permissible. I adjust the sample weights in both the individual and household level data sets to account for the pooling.

The sample is composed of householders born in China, Philippines, India, Japan, Korea, Vietnam or in the U.S. and who self identify themselves as Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese or white respectively and the households reside in either of the 50 states or the District of Columbia in 1999.The ethnic and nativity status of the householder is determined by that of the householder.

Evidently, the household is the unit of analysis. In studying household economic well being, prior research examining living arrangements in general and for immigrant groups in particular varies with respect to the unit of analysis. Some analyses employed household (Angel and Tienda 1982; Tienda and Angel 1982; Bianchi and He 1997), others the family (Jensen 1991), individual household members (Reimers 1985; Duleep and Sanders 1993), and some a Minimum Household Unit (MHU henceforth) (Glick et.al 1997; Glick 1999). MHU is the smallest unit that can potentially reside independently of others (Ermisch and Overton 1985) and includes unit householder, spouse (if present) and single dependent children. With MHU as the unit, there is a possibility of more than one MHU per census enumerated household (Glick et.al 1997). I employ *household* as the unit of analysis since it entails, in my opinion, a more straightforward definition of who lives together and who are available to pool resources.

The typology has been created in the following way[4];

a) nuclear – a household including a householder, spouse and/or single dependent unmarried children of age 24 or below but no other individuals.

[4] There can expectedly be other criteria than the one used above to categorize nuclear-nonnuclear types of household extension.

b) nonnuclear – the residual category, a households that does not classify as nuclear is categorized as nonnuclear.

I sub-divide nonnuclear household into three types based on the relationship of the members of a household with the householder; 1) vertically extended, 2) horizontally extended, and 3) horizontally extended including non-relatives.

The break-down of the 'residual' category of 'nonnuclear' is done as follows;

a) vertically extended household - a household with a householder, spouse, single dependent children of age 24 or below and at least one child of the householder aged above 24 or one relative of the householder who is the parent or parent-in –law or grandparent or grand parent in law or grandchild.
b) horizontally extended household – a household with a householder, spouse, single dependent children of age 24 or below and at least one relative of the householder who is a sibling, cousin, aunt, uncle, or any other relative of the householder
c) (other) extended household including non relatives – a household with a householder, spouse, single dependent children of age 24 or below and at least one non relative of the householder

The categories are mutually exclusive and households are categorized by the greatest degree of extension represented. Thus, household category (c) trumps (b) which in turn supersedes (a). For instance, a household comprising vertically or horizontally extended relatives as well as non –relatives is classified as 'extended household including non relatives'. Nuclear household type is the reference category. It may be noted that not all studies use age 24 as the cut-off (Angel and Tienda 1982). My choice of age 24 as the cut-off is both to be in line with some recent work (Glick et.al 1997) and to account for intergroup differences, particularly so for the foreign born, in whether age 18 is the benchmark of reaching adulthood.

The descriptive distribution of the various kinship characteristics entailed in the above three nonnuclear household arrangements across the foreign and native born Asian households

and whites advances our understanding of the rationale to adopt a nonnuclear versus a nuclear living arrangement.

A caveat is in order. The significant variation in the age composition amongst the various Asian population groups and whites makes the intergroup comparison somewhat dubious. The majority of the native born Asian groups are younger than their foreign born counterparts and whites. Further, foreign born Asians on an average are a younger population group than whites. This difference in the age profile leads to variations in other demographic characteristics such as marital status. Difference in the percentage married is particularly significant as marital status defines to a large extent the legitimacy for independent living especially in many Asian cultures. I accordingly standardize the age of the householder. Additionally, the younger age profile of the native born groups, Indians, Koreans, Vietnamese in particular makes the sample sizes in some of the disaggregated household categories quite small. The further breakdown by member composition yields numbers nearing negligible in magnitude in some cases. Not withstanding these limitations, the descriptions presented in this paper have the potential to provide useful insights into the inter-ethnic variations in the patterns of living arrangements of at least some of the Asian groups and whites.

Table 1 provides a tabulation of the nuclear and three nonnuclear household types with the age of the householder being unstandardized; 1) vertically extended, 2) horizontally extended and 3) horizontally extended including non-relatives, for the 13 study groups.

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Table 1. Percentage Distribution (Weighted) of Household Type by Ethnicity and Nativity

Ethnicity/ Nativity	Nuclear	Vertically Extended	Horizontally Extended	Horizontally Extended Including Non-relatives	All	All Nonnuclear (col. 6-col.2)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Chinese						
Foreign born	68.4	17.9	5.4	8.3	100 (19,374)	31.6
Native born	73.7	8.8	4.5	13.0	100 (7,610)	26.3
Filipino						
Foreign born	56.6	21.2	10.8	11.4	100 (21,820)	43.4
Native born	65.8	8.5	6.8	18.9	100 (6,841)	34.2
Indian						
Foreign born	75.3	11.8	5.2	7.7	100 (19,203)	24.7
Native born	72.1	4.3	6.0	17.7	100 (2,659)	28.0
Japanese						
Foreign born	83.7	5.9	0.9	9.5	100 (6,282)	16.3
Native born	74.9	14.2	3.1	7.9	100 (12,356)	25.2
Korean						
Foreign born	75.1	13.9	5.0	6.1	100 (12,095)	24.9
Native born	67.4	5.6	6.3	20.7	100 (2,714)	32.6
Vietnamese						
Foreign born	57.5	19.4	12.1	11.0	100 (13,438)	42.5
Native born	58.6	5.9	13.9	21.6	100 (2,161)	41.4
White	81.6	7.5	1.8	9.2	100 (793,541)	18.5

Note : The figures in the brackets in column 6 indicate the unweighted N.