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Choosing the Big City: Destination Choices of Asian Immigrants to the West Coast of the United States

Deenesh Sohoni

Abstract:

Since 1965, the United States has seen large scale immigration from Asian countries previously under-represented in immigration flows to the United States. Although we know that these groups are predominantly settling in large Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) on the West Coast, we know less about the factors that draw immigrant groups to particular areas. This study looks at the growth of immigrant populations in West Coast SMSAs among four different Asian immigrant groups, comparing census data from 1980 and 1990. Two major perspectives, economic and network models, were examined to see how well they explained current migration patterns within and across different Asian immigrant groups. The results suggest that neither economic nor network models alone adequately explain the growth of immigrant populations across SMSAs. Instead, comparisons across the four immigrant groups show the continuing attraction of the largest SMSAs irrespective of the economic characteristics of the SMSAs, or the socio-economic and historical characteristics of the immigrant groups themselves, and suggest the importance of these areas as "entry-ports" for newer immigrant groups.

The passage of the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, which replaced the national quota system that had favored Europe, and ended the ban on Asian entry, has dramatically changed the face of American immigration. Not only has immigration to the United States increased rapidly, rising from a little under 4.5 million people for the years 1971 through 1980, to around 7.3 million for the following ten years of 1981 through 1990, it has also changed significantly in composition. Whereas the majority of previous immigrants came from Europe, immigrants from Latin America (50%) and Asia (35%) now compose 85% of the total immigrants (Massey 1995). The annual number of immigrants has continued to grow, and given the economic changes occurring in Asia and Latin America, we can expect these regions to continue to provide a large percentage of the total immigrants to the United States (Massey 1988, 1995).

Although much of the public debate about immigration has focused on immigrants from Latin America, there are several reasons why

the study of immigrants from Asia is useful for increasing our knowledge about the processes of immigration. First, even though Asian-Americans currently make up only 3% of the United States population, they are the fastest growing segment of the population. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of people claiming Asian or Pacific Island ancestry in the US Census increased by 107.8%, the largest increase among any regional group (Kitano and Daniels 1995). With the leveling of immigration flows from Latin America, Asian immigration will become a larger and larger percentage of total immigration (Fix and Passel 1994).

Second, most Asian immigrants have settled in a few metropolitan areas, creating a greater visible presence than if they had settled more uniformly across the country. Examples of this concentration are the large Korean and Chinese populations in Los Angeles, and the Vietnamese populations in San Jose and Orange County (CA). In fact, on the West Coast, Asian immigrants make up a significant percentage of the total population, more than in any other region of the US except for Hawai'i.

Finally, the classification of Asian includes an incredible diversity of people across ethnic, religious, and socio-economic groupings; from Hindi and Sikh Asian Indians to Buddhist and Christian Vietnamese, from well educated Chinese to illiterate Hmong (Glazer 1985). Studying Asian immigrants to the United States therefore allows us to examine theoretical models concerning macro-level processes of immigrant settlement among a group that is becoming a more important component of the United States population, as well as permits us to test the generality of these models across diverse sub-groupings.

Researchers have examined various aspects of immigration, such as the characteristics of immigrants arriving to the United States, the social and economic consequences of migration for immigrants, and the impact their presence has on the communities they join. Many of these studies, however, have ignored an important step of the immigration process, that is, which areas immigrants choose to settle. How immigrants affect an area economically and socially, the reception they receive by the host population, the speed of their assimilation, all occur within a framework of the macro-level impact of these individual choices.

Frey (1996) has argued that present day immigrants are increasingly becoming concentrated in a few port-of-entry metropolitan areas, and that this concentration is leading to a demographic pattern of "balkanization" within the United States. Frey's analysis raises two important questions, first, why are immigrant groups becoming concentrated in certain areas, and second, what can we infer about future patterns of ethnic settlement.

This study focuses primarily on the question of why certain areas are proving more attractive to Asian immigrant groups by examining the determinants of immigrant population growth for these groups along the West Coast of the United States. In doing so, this study also seeks to provide some ideas about future trends in the spatial distribution of these Asian immigrant groups.

Immigrant Groups

This study compares the population growth of four of the six largest Asian immigrant groups among Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) along the West Coast;¹ Chinese, Asian Indian, Korean and Vietnamese. The two groups excluded from this study are Japanese and Filipinos. Japanese are excluded since their population consists mainly of native born members, while Filipinos were excluded due to their legal status as noncitizen nationals from 1898 until 1934.²

Portes and Böröcz (1989) have argued that current immigrants no longer can be pictured as low skill labor, but instead can be manual, professional, technical, or entrepreneurial workers. The four immigrant groups selected for this group were chosen to reflect this diversity; differing in both educational levels and occupational characteristics.

Among immigrants arriving to the United States between 1980 and 1990, Asian Indians had the highest levels of educational attainment, particularly in terms of percentage of college graduates, where they were well above the level of the general population. Chinese and Koreans were comparable to the general population in terms of high school completed, and above the level of the general population in terms of completing college. The Vietnamese had the lowest levels of high school and college

¹ The main SMSAS discussed in this study are (1) Anaheim, Santa Ana, Garden Grove (2) Los Angeles, Long Beach, Pasadena; (3) San Francisco, Oakland, Marin; (4) San Jose.

² Unlike other Asian groups, whose populations are predominantly foreign born, the majority of ethnic Japanese (68%) are native born (1990 Census of Population and Housing, Characteristics of the Asian and Islander Population in the United States). Although a case can be made for including immigrants from the Philippines due to their numerical significance, this group is excluded due to the unique status of the Philippines as a US possession from 1898 to 1934 (Hing 1993). Unlike other Asian groups whose entry was banned during this period, Filipino migration did not fall under the jurisdiction of US immigration policy, allowing for migration flows to continue between the two areas. Theoretically, there is also the question of how American influence in the Philippines has shaped migration dynamics between the two countries.

completed of all the immigrant groups, and were also well below the level of the general population (see Table 1).

Table 1: Educational Attainment of Immigrants (1980-1990)

	High School Graduates (% of people 25 and older)		Bachelor's Degree or Higher (% of people 25 and older)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
US Population	75.7	74.8	23.3	17.6
Chinese	74.0	65.7	44.8	31.1
Asian Indian	84.3	75.4	57.8	46.1
Korean	87.4	74.2	43.2	24.7
Vietnamese	61.1	44.4	14.6	7.7

Source: 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States.

In terms of occupation, Asian Indians (49%) and Chinese (33%) are found predominantly in the managerial and professional specialty occupations, while Koreans are more spread out among the different occupational categories. Finally, Vietnamese are found employed mainly as operators, fabricators, and laborers (30%) and in technical, sales, and administrative support (27%) (see Table 2).

**Table 2: 1980 Occupational Structure of Ethnic Groups by
Percentage (16 years and older)**

	Chinese	Asian Indian	Korean	Vietnamese
Managerial, Professional Specialty Occupations	32.6	48.5	24.9	13.4
Technical, Sales, Admin. Support	30.1	28.0	27.4	26.7
Service Occupations	18.6	7.8	16.5	15.3
Farming, Forestry, Fishing	0.5	0.9	0.9	0.9
Precision Production, Craft, Repair	5.6	5.2	9.9	14.5
Operators, Fabricators, Laborers	12.7	9.6	20.4	29.3
TOTAL	100.1*	100	100	100.1*

Note: Totals may be greater than 100% due to rounding error.

Sources: 1980 Census of the Population, Characteristics of the Population.

1980 Census of Population, Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States.

The four immigrant groups were also selected because they existed in significant numbers at the time of the 1980 US Census, while still being mainly composed of foreign born members. Although large scale immigration of these groups to the United States began with the passage of the 1965 Amendment, there are important differences in their immigration histories.

Immigrant Histories

Although each of these immigrant groups has its own unique history of settlement in the United States, this overview focuses only on major differences that have affected the characteristics and distribution of each group along the West Coast of the United States.

Chinese

Among all the Asian groups that have settled in the United States, the Chinese have the longest and most consistent history of settlement on the West Coast. Chinese immigration to the United States first began in the 1850s, when impoverished Chinese began to emigrate to the West Coast of the United States (Tsai 1986). In 1882, the federal government passed the Exclusion Law restricting Chinese immigration for ten years, an act that was continually renewed until 1943. The effect on Chinese immigration was that immigration dropped from an average of 72,000 a decade from 1851-1890, to 16,800 a decade from 1891-1960 (Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1994). For the Chinese remaining in the United States, most were driven into Chinatown ghettos (Tsai 1986). When large scale Chinese immigration began again in the 1960s, these new immigrants therefore entered the United States with the possibility of finding previously existing ethnic enclaves along the West Coast.

Koreans

Although there was some early immigration to Hawai'i at the beginning of the twentieth century, recent immigration from Korea began as a result of the Korean War (1950-1953). This migration (1951-1964), mainly consisted of wives of soldiers, war orphans, and students, who tended to locate near military bases and academic institutions (Kitano and Daniels 1995). When Koreans started to come in larger numbers after 1965, most moved to urban areas, but along the West Coast there were few well developed pre-existing Korean communities.

Asian Indians

Early immigration from India to the United States was primarily from the British Indian province of the Punjab (Leonard 1997). Consisting largely of farmers, these immigrants came to work in agricultural areas in California (Leonard 1997). This immigration was largely halted with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1917. There are two important characteristics that we need to note about present day Asian Indian immigrants. First, since 1965 there has been a drastic change in the composition of Asian Indian immigrants. Unlike the Sikhs that dominated early migration flows, most Asian Indian immigrants today come from more urban areas in India, and tend to be very well educated, and typically concentrated in the professions (Gonzales 1986). Asian Indians also differ greatly from other Asian immigrant groups in their settlement pattern. While over 50% of other Asian groups can be found along the West Coast, only 21% of Asian Indians live in the West. Instead around 33% live in the Northeast, with another 25% each in the South and Midwest (Kitano and Daniels 1995).

Vietnamese

Vietnamese migration to the United States is the most recent among the Asian groups, beginning with the fall of the U.S. backed government in Vietnam in 1975. Unlike immigrants from other groups, Vietnamese originally came to the United States as refugees. The U.S. government policy towards Vietnamese has been markedly different than immigrants from most other Asian countries. Settlement of Vietnamese refugees in the United States was delegated to voluntary agencies in the United States, but the U.S. government actively facilitated their dispersion throughout the United States, to avoid the development of large ethnic enclaves (Kelly 1986).

Table 3: Country of Origin and Year of Arrival for Foreign Born Immigrants

	China	India	Korea	Vietnam
Before 1970	200,369	56,500	42,807	3,989
1970-1980	265,961	174,770	180,350	152,174
(1970-1974)	(107,326)	(75,575)	(72,544)	(11,128)
(1975-1980)	(158,635)	(99,195)	(108,350)	(141,046)
1980-1990	649,214	345,622	326,842	292,717

Note: China data includes Taiwan beginning in 1957. Immigration from Taiwan makes up less than 7% of the Chinese total during all periods.

Sources: 1980 Census of Population, Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States.

1990 Census of Population and Housing, Characteristics of the Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States.

Theoretical Background

Since 1885, when Ravenstein presented his paper on what he would later call the “Laws of Migration”, researchers have tended to emphasize the economic forces that shape migration (Lee 1966). Most of the economic models of contemporary international migration are based on variations of the neoclassical model. The neoclassical economic model saw migration as caused by differences (at the macro level) between countries in supply and demand for labor. Countries with a large supply of labor relative to capital will have low wages, while countries with a small supply of labor relative to capital will have high wages. The difference in wages causes a redistribution of labor from low wage areas to high wage areas. At the micro-level, the theory saw each potential migrant as a rational actor making a cost-benefit analysis of whether to migrate (Massey et al. 1993). Recent modifications to this model have stressed the problem of how migrants obtain adequate information to make their decisions, the subjective nature of perceptions of costs and benefits (both economic and non-economic) of moving (Schwartz 1973), and whether it is economic conditions at origin country or destination country that is most important (Massey 1990).

Portes and Böröcz (1989) have raised several major criticisms of models solely based on “rational” decision making by individual actors. The first major problem they point to, is that these models are used to explain migration flows after they have already taken place, for example Mexican labor coming to the United States, or Italian labor to Switzerland in the past. They argue that though these theories may describe these migrations well as historical events, they are unable to explain: 1) why different countries or different regions of a country with similar economic situations have different rates of emigration, 2) which individuals ‘sharing similar lopsided differences of advantage’ will choose to migrate, and 3) why migration patterns are maintained when economic changes no longer make it advantageous to migrate.

Portes and Böröcz (1989) argue instead, that migration is primarily dependent on “networks constructed by the movement and contact of people over space.” At the national level these networks are seen to have been initiated by countries with need for cheap labor. The greater the economic links between countries, the greater the migration flows (Massey 1988). At the individual level, availability of networks reduces the costs and risks of moving. A potential immigrant can rely on kin or friends already in the country to provide information, help in finding jobs, or financial assistance if necessary (Portes & Böröcz 1989; Massey et al. 1993). Once these networks reach a certain level, they can perpetuate migrant streams even when the underlying economic situation that initiated the migrant flow no longer exists (Massey et al. 1993).

Although Massey (1995) has pointed out that economic models and network models of migration are not mutually exclusive, with migrants using social networks to help reduce the cost of migration, thereby changing the cost-benefit analysis of migration over time despite similar economic conditions, it has proved harder to test the relative importance of each factor to the creation and maintenance of migration streams, and whether these factors may differ in importance depending on the groups migrating. Although recent empirical studies have begun to examine the relative importance of economic conditions and social ties to the immigration process, these studies have typically focused on migrants that occupy lower status jobs in the receiving country, exemplified by Massey's work on Mexican labor, or compared differences within a single immigrant population, such as the work of Funkhouser and Ramos (1993), with Dominican and Cuban immigrants. This study seeks to address these problems by comparing the relative importance of different economic and social variables across the four Asian immigrant groups identified previously.

Methodological Orientation

Unit of Analysis

As the goal of this study is to analyze macro-level processes of immigrant group settlement, the unit of analysis for this study is the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA). In the ten year period studied, there were a total of 33 metropolitan areas in the three West Coast states of Washington (8), Oregon (4), and California (21). The decision to limit the analysis to SMSAs seems appropriate given that over 95% of Asian immigrants reside in metropolitan areas (1990 Census of the Population).

The decision to limit the analysis to West Coast SMSAs reflected several concerns. First, since of the approximately seven million Asians living in the United States over 50% live in Washington, Oregon, and California, studying the patterns of immigrant population growth within this region is important in itself (1990 Census of Population). Second, since one of the primary concerns of this study is analyzing the impact of economic versus network determinants of immigrant population growth, choosing areas with sufficient populations of all four Asian immigrant groups allows for comparisons across the groups that would not be possible otherwise. Finally, the restriction to West Coast SMSAs allows us to compare the attractiveness of smaller versus larger SMSAs in a region with a long history of Asian settlement.

Hypotheses

A logical extension of the premises of both “network theory” and economic models of migration is that the same factors that initiate the decision to move will also affect choice of destination within areas after the decision to move has been reached. Based on the available data, this paper will examine how well the two major perspectives of migration explain the growth of immigrant populations in SMSAs across the four Asian immigrant groups. In addition, other variables that have previously been found to be significant determinants of immigration will also be examined.

Hypothesis One: Economic Models

For economic models the assumption would be that SMSAs with the greatest number of economic opportunities will have the greatest growth in immigrant populations. This study will examine both general economic opportunities available to all groups, as well as the economic characteristics of SMSAs that may be specifically attractive to certain immigrant groups.

Hypothesis Two: Network Models

Based on network theories, immigrants would be expected to move to areas where previous immigrants from their county have settled. At the macro level, we would expect SMSAs with large pre-existing immigrant populations to have the greatest growth in immigrant population. Although these two positions are not mutually exclusive, this study will attempt to separate out the relative importance of various factors that influence destination choice among immigrants. This problem will be discussed in greater detail in later sections of this study.

Measures

Dependent Variable

Although ideally the measure that is most appropriate for this study is the growth of the immigration population, separating the ethnic population into those who are native born versus those who are foreign born proved problematic at the SMSA level. An indirect measure of immigrant population growth was therefore created for this study.

The dependent variable in this study is the growth of the ethnic population from 1980 to 1990 due to immigration (Census of Population: Metropolitan Areas, Social and Economic Characteristics). Given the likelihood that the natural increase of ethnic populations would be greater

the larger the SMSA, this measure was modified to take the natural increase of each ethnic population into account.

For each ethnic group, the increase in their population from 1980 to 1990 due to natural increase was calculated for the whole United States. The 1980 ethnic population within each SMSA was multiplied by this number to create an expected 1990 population given natural increase. The expected 1990 population based on natural increase was in turn subtracted from the actual 1990 ethnic population, leaving the growth in population assumed due to immigration.³ For each group if any SMSA had a decrease in population over the ten year period, then a constant was added to each SMSA so that there were no negative values. This was necessary for three of the immigrant groups, but the values in each case were relatively small (185 for Vietnamese, 450 for Chinese, and 165 for Asian Indians). Only several of the smaller SMSAs had declines in population for any of the groups over the ten year period.⁴

Independent Variables

I. Economic Opportunity

In order to test how important economic considerations are in determining immigrant population growth, this study examines three aspects of economic attractiveness of SMSAs for immigrants.

A. The first economic aspect analyzed is the economic opportunities provided by each SMSA irrespective of the ethnic group. There are three measures used to represent this aspect of economic attractiveness. The first is per capita income, which can be seen as a measure of the economic "pull" of an area. Economic models of labor movement predict that immigrants should move to areas where wages are highest.

The second measure is the population of the metropolitan area. Greenwood (1975) has argued that population size can be viewed as a proxy for the size of the labor market in an area, meaning the greater the number and diversity of job opportunities. Therefore, the larger the

³ The levels of natural increase as a percentage of the total increase in population for the four groups were; 24.9% for Chinese, 19.7% for Asian Indians, 34.8% for Koreans, and 27.6% for Vietnamese. At the national level, immigration was the major cause of population increase for all these groups.

⁴ The number of SMSAs where 1990 ethnic population was lower than the 1980 population, assuming the natural increase for that group (United States), was four for Chinese, two for Asian Indians, and six for Vietnamese. For the later two groups all of these SMSAs were located in either Oregon or Washington.

population of a given SMSA the more attractive the area should be for immigrants.

The third measure used is the absolute growth rate of the SMSA between the two time periods. A rapidly growing city can be seen as offering a variety of opportunities for newcomers and therefore should be attractive for immigrants.

Although total increase in SMSA population is also due to increased numbers of immigrants, there are two reasons these immigrants were not factored out. First, in almost all the SMSAs, the percentage of the total increase in population within an SMSA due to members of any immigrant group was negligible. Second, taking out members of each immigrant group from the total would make this variable harder to compare across the four groups.

B. The second aspect of economic attractiveness was intended to measure attractiveness of an SMSA specifically for each ethnic group. This measure was created by comparing the occupational structure for each immigrant group with the occupational structure of each SMSA.

Occupational structures for each immigrant group were created by analyzing the national job structure of these immigrants in 1980 (1990 Census of Population : The Foreign-Born Population in the U.S.). The occupational structure was broken into six categories: 1) managerial and professional specialty occupations, 2) Technical, sales and administrative support occupations, 3) Service occupations, 4) Farming, Forestry and Fishing, 5) Precision production, craft, and repair occupations, 6) Operators, fabrication, and laborers.

The distribution of occupation structure for each SMSA was created by looking at the distribution of employment in the thirty three West Coast SMSAs (1990 Census of Population: Metropolitan Areas, Social and Economic Characteristics). The fit of each immigrant group's occupational structure to that of each SMSA was then calculated using an index of dissimilarity (Preston and Richards 1995).

C. The third aspect of economic attractiveness analyzed is that of economic competition: how the presence or absence of other groups affect whether members of an ethnic group decide to move to a given SMSA.

As previously mentioned, Asian immigrants represent a diverse cross-section of educational and occupational backgrounds. For this reason it is hard to easily identify with whom these new immigrants are competing, but this study attempts to analyze how the racial and ethnic composition of SMSAs influences the choice of SMSA for immigrants.

This study examines three ethnic and racial groups within each SMSA: African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians.

There are several possible outcomes for how makeup of population within SMSAs could influence the desire of immigrants to move to an area. For the lower status immigrant groups, a large presence of Hispanics and African Americans could represent competitors, and we would expect to find lower levels of immigration to areas where this presence is high. For higher status immigrant groups the presence of these other two groups should not affect the likelihood of whether or not they settle in an SMSA, unless for non-economic reasons.

The presence of other Asian groups in an area presents two possible outcomes which are examined. The first is that the presence of other Asians in an area paves the way for future Asian immigrants, and that we should find higher rates of immigration to areas where there is a greater presence of other Asian groups. The second possibility is that members of Asian groups will view other Asians as competitors for a limited set of occupational opportunities and we would therefore expect to find lower levels of immigration to areas with high populations of other Asian groups.

II. Ethnic Population

The potential impact of social networks for the different ethnic groups was examined by looking at the ethnic population within each SMSA in 1980. At the macro-level, we would expect metropolitan areas with greater numbers of members from each ethnic group to have a greater likelihood of attracting new immigrants to the area. This can be envisioned as working in two ways. First, new immigrants to the United States are more likely to move to an area where they have friends and relatives, thus making it more likely that areas with larger numbers of a ethnic group will have corresponding greater increases in immigrants to that area. Second, for new immigrants, areas that have larger numbers of co-ethnics would seem more attractive since others have chosen to live there, and be more likely to provide economic opportunities.

III. Distance

Related to the issue of ethnic population of an area is the issue of dispersal. This study examines how the distance of each SMSA from SMSAs with large ethnic populations affect how much they gain in immigrant population. It is assumed that the closer an SMSA is to an SMSA with a large ethnic population, the more likely it is to have a gain in immigrant population, with available economic opportunities in nearby SMSAs more known to immigrants, and ease of travel and maintenance of network ties greatest in nearby SMSAs.

There is the concern, however, that looking solely at the largest enclave may not accurately represent patterns across states. Given the increasing likelihood of air transport for wealthier immigrants, this study also looked at how distance from largest major city influenced settlement patterns. The four cities selected were Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; Los Angeles, California; and San Francisco, California.

Each of these factors will be examined across the four groups, to see if there are patterns that hold across all groups. This study will also examine if differences that arise between groups can be explained by socio-economic characteristics of the different groups, or by characteristics of their immigration history to the United States.

Table 4: Weighted Means and Standard Deviations for Dependent and Selected Independent Variables

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Ln Population Growth (1980-1990)

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Chinese	7.42	1.77
Asian	6.79	1.76
Indian		
Korean	6.44	1.85
Vietnamese	6.74	2.13

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Ln SMSA Population (1980)	12.93	1.10
Ln SMSA Population Growth (1980-1990)	11.32	1.37
SMSA Per Capita Income	7675.09	914.25

Results

The two best indicators of which SMSAs had the greatest net increase in immigrants from 1980 to 1990 (natural log), for all four immigrant groups, were the size of population of the metropolitan area in 1980 (ln), and the size of the respective ethnic group in 1980 (ln). Using these two variables alone in a multiple regression analysis, we are able to explain from 64% of the variance of growth among SMSAs for Vietnamese, 70% for Asian Indians, 75% for Chinese, to over 90% of the variation of growth for Koreans (see Table 5).

Because of the high inter-correlation between SMSA population in 1980 and SMSA ethnic population in 1980 (.941 for Chinese, .837 for Asian Indians, .903 for Koreans, .913 for Vietnamese) it was impossible to separate the relative influence of each of these factors.

**Table 5: Net Growth in Immigrant Population for SMSAs (1980-1990)
(Pearson Correlations & Explained Variance Using SMSA Population & SMSA Ethnic Population)**

	Chinese	Asian Indian	Korean	Vietnamese
SMSA (1980) Population	.868	.783	.940	.789
SMSA (1980) Ethnic Population	.817	.815	.927	.770
Explained Variance	.753	.698	.917	.638

The problem of high inter-correlations between the population of the SMSA in 1980 and other variables limited the analysis of the data to examining the Pearson correlations between different variables and examining how much of the remaining variance is explained using the different hypothesized models.

Multiple Regression Analysis with Residuals

Although most of the variation in net SMSA immigrant population growth could be explained by the size of the SMSA population in 1980 and the SMSA ethnic population in 1980, the residuals were examined to see if any of the other variables could explain the remaining variance, and if there were differences to be found across the four groups. Four different models were examined to see which best explained the variance in residuals (Table 6).

I. Model One: SMSA Economic Characteristics

Using residuals, the first model examines if the economic characteristics of the SMSA, such as SMSA growth or SMSA per capita income could help explain which SMSAs would experience growth in immigrant populations.

Examining the zero-order correlations we find that for the Asian Indians (.311) and Vietnamese (.246) SMSA growth is moderately

correlated with the residuals. This effect is much weaker for Koreans (.129), and in fact for Chinese, a weak inverse relationship (-.041). For per capita income of the SMSA the results were the opposite, with correlations of .339 for Chinese and .352 for Koreans, and only .123 for Vietnamese, and an inverse relationship of -.232 for Asian Indians. Combining the two variables in a regression analysis, we find that other than for the Asian Indians ($R^2 = .279$), this model does not explain much of the remaining variance.

Table 6: Residuals of 1980 SMSA Population and Ethnic Population (Pearson Correlations and Explained Variance)

	Chinese	Asian Indian	Korean	Vietnamese
Ln SMSA growth	-.041	.311	.129	.246
SMSA Per Capita Income	.339	-.232	.352	.123
R^2	.166	.279	.125	.061
Ln SMSA growth	-.041	.311	.129	.246
SMSA Per Capita Income	.339	-.232	.352	.123
Ethnic Group Occupational Structure (Dissimilarity Index)	.076	.097	-.067	.123
R^2	.181	.280	.127	.065
Ln African American (1980)	-.135	-.002	-.115	.038
Ln Hispanic (1980)	-.056	.117	-.099	.232
Ln Other Asian (1980)	-.058	.075	-.064	.111
R^2	.065	.085	.035	.164
California	.044	.425	-.082	.447
Distance from largest ethnic enclave	-.051	-.360	-.075	-.396
Distance from nodal city	-.063	-.171	-.221	-.284
R^2	.006	.206	.059	.263

Sources: 1980 Census of Population, Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States.

1990 Census of Population and Housing, Characteristics of the Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States.

II. Model Two: SMSA and Ethnic Group Economic Characteristics

In the second model, the similarity of the economic characteristics of each Asian immigrant group to that of the SMSAs' occupational structure was added as an additional variable to the previous model. This model did not perform appreciably better than the previous one. Comparing the four ethnic groups, we find that only for Koreans is there a relatively moderate correlation in the expected direction (-.067), with a greater difference in occupational structure of the ethnic group from that of the metropolitan areas, correlated with lower rates of population growth.

III. Model Three: Competition vs. Trailblazers

The third model analyzed how the presence of other ethnic or racial groups affected SMSA growth for the four immigrant groups. The groups considered were African Americans, Hispanics, and other Asians. The presence of African Americans had a small negative relationship with the growth of the Chinese (-.135) and Korean (-.115) populations. The presence of Hispanics, on the other hand, was weakly correlated with rates of growth for the Asian Indian (.117) and Vietnamese (.232) populations. For each of the four immigrant groups the presence or absence of other ethnic or racial groups provide little explanation for the observed variance in residuals.

IV. Model Four: Distance and California Effects

The fourth model examined how distance from the city with the largest ethnic population or nodal port city influenced the growth rates of ethnic populations in each SMSA. This model also analyzed if there was a California effect, suggesting that immigrants are choosing California rather than SMSAs in other states.

Examining the zero order correlations we find that for Asian Indians (.425) and Vietnamese (.447) there is a strong correlation between net growth and whether the SMSA was in California. This effect was almost negligible for the Chinese (.044), and Koreans (-.082). This pattern is nearly replicated when we examine distance from the nearest city with a high ethnic population, with correlations of -.360 for Asian Indians and -.396 for Vietnamese, compared to -.051 for Chinese and -.075 for Koreans. The distance from the nearest nodal city had the expected relationship for all groups, with the strongest effect on Korean (-.221) and Vietnamese (-.284) growth rates.

Overall this model explained, as measured by residuals, .206 of the remaining variance for Asian Indians and .263 for Vietnamese, as opposed to .006 for Chinese and .059 for Koreans.

Discussion

At first glance, the results of this analysis could be used to support either hypothesis. The premise of network theory is that immigrants will move to areas where they have ties to other people. At the macro-level this would suggest that high growth rates for each immigrant group would occur in areas where there were larger concentrations of members from that ethnic group. As previously discussed, the correlations between the size of an ethnic group in an SMSA and the growth of that ethnic group over the ten year period was high across all groups.

What is harder to explain is why this finding is so consistent across the four immigrant groups compared in this study. For the Chinese, who already had strong ethnic enclaves in larger west coast SMSAs as a result of their historical situation in the United States, the argument that newer immigrants are going to areas with already established communities seems supported.

It is harder to make this case for the Asian Indians and Vietnamese. Unlike other Asian groups, Asian Indians have settled more uniformly across the United States, and historically the notable concentration of Asian Indians on the West Coast was near Fresno. Newer immigrants from India since 1965, despite the previous lack of large Asian Indian populations in the largest West Coast SMSAs, are replicating the pattern of Chinese settlement. The problem of using network models is even more pronounced when we examine the Vietnamese population. When Vietnamese refugees first started coming to the United States in the 1970s, the national government policy encouraged their dispersal across the United States. Despite this effort, the Vietnamese population has, within a short time, become concentrated in larger SMSAs along the West Coast, rather than growing in areas where the Vietnamese were originally located.

Simple economic explanations also seem inadequate for explaining the growth of immigrant populations across all four ethnic groups. The size of the SMSA in 1980 is clearly correlated with the growth of immigrant populations from 1980 to 1990, but how this finding should be interpreted is not as clear. Although some economic models use population size as a proxy for the labor market in an area (Greenwood 1975), unless we can identify what aspects of the labor market are attracting immigrants, it can also be argued that population size also serves as a proxy for non-economic characteristics of an area (i.e. the ability to support cultural aspects of an ethnic community such as ethnic newspapers or grocery stores). In addition, it seems unlikely that certain SMSAs would be equally attractive to ethnic groups with such a variety of socio-economic characteristics strictly on the basis of economic characteristics.

Examining the economic characteristics of the SMSAs we see that with the exception of Asian Indians, the economic models examined explain little of the remaining variance, and even for the Asian Indians we have the unexpected result of an inverse correlation of $-.232$ between per capita income and the growth of the Asian Indian population. This seems to provide support for Sassen's (1995) contention that "local" labor market characteristics, such as at the SMSA level, do not affect immigrants likelihood to settle in an area, as they do for native workers. The inability of the occupational structure of each immigrant group to help predict which SMSA would increase in immigrant populations adds additional credence to Sassen's contention that it is not the structure of the local labor market that is determining migration for members of these groups.

What the analysis does reveal is the continuing attraction of large SMSAs for immigrants. As previously noted, there is a strong linear relationship between SMSA size and net growth of immigrant population across all four immigrant groups. Particularly striking is the concentration of immigrant growth to a few large SMSAs (see Table 7). Immigrants from all groups seem to be choosing to settle in the Los Angeles area, the Bay area, and Orange County.

One interesting feature about the relationship between SMSA size and the net growth of immigrant populations is that there are several SMSAs that are relatively over-represented in Asian immigration growth, specifically Anaheim-Santa Ana-Garden Grove and San Jose. This seems less problematic when we incorporate distance into our analysis. Both Anaheim-Santa Ana-Garden Grove and San Jose are near the two largest SMSAs, Los Angeles and San Francisco respectively. In fact, Anaheim-Santa Ana-Garden Grove is considered part of the Los Angeles-Long Beach SCSA (Standard Consolidated Statistical Area), and San Jose part of the San Francisco-Oakland SCSA, suggesting their relatively higher growth rates may be a result of spillover from these larger areas.

How then, can we explain the consistent attraction these larger metropolitan areas have for immigrants with such diverse histories and varied socio-economic characteristics? An alternative explanation that is consistent with the observed findings, and one that takes into account the unique status of these cities, is the role that these areas have as "port-of-entry" cities. Sassen (1994) argues that certain cities become the destination of immigrants because of their positions within international regional economic systems. She argues that the same processes that allow the movement of goods and information from one area to another, also facilitate the movement of people to areas that act as transport hubs within these systems (Sassen 1994). Although not directly analyzed in this paper, the places that have been the recipients of large number of Asian

immigrants are also the ones with strong ties to the Pacific Rim.⁵ Rather than examining areas such as Los Angeles-Long Beach and the Bay Area based merely on their labor market characteristics, this suggests that we also examine the positions these metropolitan areas have within international regional systems.

Table 7: SMSAs with Greatest Net Increase of Ethnic Population (1980-1990)

	Chinese	Asian Indian	Korean	Vietnamese
	Los Angeles /Long Beach (151,324)	Los Angeles /Long Beach (25,356)	Los Angeles /Long Beach (84,813)	Anaheim- Santa Ana (52,489)
	San Francisco /Oakland (110,757)	San Francisco /Oakland (18,425)	Anaheim- Santa Ana (24,580)	San Jose (42,495)
	San Jose (42,174)	San Jose (14,594)	San Francisco /Oakland (12,644)	Los Angeles /Long Beach (33,898)
	Anaheim- Santa Ana (27,231)	Anaheim- Santa Ana (10,329)	Seattle (10,271)	San Francisco /Oakland (17,927)
% of growth in top four growth SMSAs	82.9%	75.9%	65.3%	72.4%
% of growth in largest growth SMSAs	37.8%	48.5%	24.0%	25.9%

Sources: 1980 Census of Population, Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States.

1990 Census of Population and Housing, Characteristics of the Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States.

Consistent with this interpretation is the “California effect” observed in the settlement patterns of the Asian Indian and Vietnamese populations. Although the Asian Indians are the most educated and

⁵ In 1990, Los Angeles (2nd), Seattle (4th), and San Francisco (5th) were among the major custom districts in terms of foreign exports (US Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1998).

professional group, and the Vietnamese the least educated and least concentrated in the professions, they both seem to have been influenced by similar variables in their settlement patterns. Both groups have predominantly settled in California, and their net growth in SMSAs is more strongly correlated to distance from largest ethnic enclave. Given the major differences in their socio-economic characteristics, it seems likely that this similarity is due to their status as more recent immigrant groups to the West Coast, with these effects acting more strongly on the more recently arrived Vietnamese. One possible explanation for the "California effect" is that California still has an international reputation as a "land of opportunity", and newer immigrants are still likely to view it as a primary port of entry to the United States.

The similarity of the effects of distance for Chinese and Koreans on one hand, and Asian Indians and Vietnamese on the other, may be due to different patterns of migration. The first pattern suggests that members of ethnic groups move out from areas with high numbers of co-ethnics to neighboring SMSAs, while the second suggests that members of ethnic groups enter large nodal cities and then disperse from there. In this study, the first pattern is seen among Asian Indians and Vietnamese, while the second pattern better reflects Chinese and Korean settlement. These two patterns may not be mutually exclusive, and we may find the second pattern replicated for Asian Indians and Vietnamese at some future point in time.

One major problem this study does point to is the difficulty of explaining why immigrants first choose to move to certain areas. Methodologically it was impossible to separate whether larger SMSAs were attracting more immigrants because, as economists have argued, they have greater and more diverse job opportunities, or because they offer a climate more conducive to the development of ethnic communities. Conceptually, it is also hard to distinguish whether a move is made because of economic reasons or due to ethnic connections. If someone moves to an area because a friend in an ethnic community offers a job, how do we define the move?

This study does, however, illustrate the importance of the comparative analysis of immigrant groups. The continued attraction of larger SMSAs for immigrant groups starting with such diverse settlement patterns, suggests that network models need to account for what initiates migration to a particular place. At the same time, the similarity in spatial settlement for groups with such varied socio-economic characteristics points to the need to move beyond strict labor market interpretations of immigration.

One future avenue of research would be a life history analysis of immigrants. Asking immigrants about their residential and work histories,

and why they decided to move to certain areas and how they found their jobs could help fill some of the gaps discussed in this paper, and untangle the relationship of economic and network aspects of immigration, as well as point to non-economic qualities of an area that may be important in settlement choice. Another way this type of research would be useful is that it could help researchers understand the time sequence of intra-regional moves, that a two period census study does not provide. It could also help researchers understand if immigrants are following a pattern of stage migration, first moving to areas with large ethnic populations and then on to other areas, whether they are flying into nodal cities and then moving, or if they are going directly to their choice of destination, and whether socio-economic characteristics of immigrants may be having a greater effect on this aspect of immigration.

What then can we say about future patterns of Asian settlement in the United States? Frey (1996) has argued that we are seeing a pattern of increased "balkanization" within the United States. Whether this will be true for Asian immigrants remains to be seen. Although Asian immigrant populations are growing in major SMSAs, there is also evidence that groups with longer histories in the United States are more likely to have higher growth rates in SMSAs further away from traditional access points. And although beyond the scope of this study, for all these groups, the majority of their populations are foreign born,⁶ and it is unclear whether native born ethnic group members will continue to follow settlement patterns of foreign born members, or like previous European immigrants to the East Coast, become more dispersed across the United States.

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⁶ The percentage foreign born for each of these groups in the 1990 Census was: 69.3% for Chinese, 75.4% for Asian Indians, 72.7% for Koreans, and 79.9% for Vietnamese.

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