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**Authors**

Treiman, Donald J.

Lew, Vivian

Lee, Hye-Kyung

et al.

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OCCUPATIONAL STATUS ATTAINMENT  
AMONG ETHNIC GROUPS IN LOS ANGELES

Donald J. Treiman  
Vivian Lew  
Hye-Kyung Lee  
Thad A. Brown

## About the Authors.

Donald J. Treiman, Professor of Sociology at UCLA, was Associate Director of the Institute for Social Science Research from 1975-77, and has served as chairman of the ISSR faculty Advisory Committee. Vivian Lew and Hye-Kyung Lee are graduate students in the Department of Sociology, UCLA. Dr. Thad A. Brown is an ISSR Research Associate; he has received an appointment in the Department of Political Science at the University of Missouri beginning in January, 1987.

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In a nation of immigrants Los Angeles is increasingly a city of new immigrants. As of 1980, which is the most recent date for which good data are available, 20 percent of the population of the Los Angeles metropolitan area had been born abroad, mostly in Latin America and various Asian countries. Whereas New York historically has been the major port of entry for those immigrating to the U.S. from Europe, Los Angeles has been, and increasingly is, the major point of entry for those immigrating from Latin America and Asia. The result is a multi-ethnic, polyglot metropolis, with 142 languages spoken at home out of the 200 languages tabulated by the 1980 Census. As a consequence of this new immigration, Los Angeles has a more diverse ethnic mix than virtually any other city in the nation, and perhaps the world.

The pace of immigration, to Los Angeles as to the remainder of the country, has increased dramatically in recent years, starting in 1965, when past restrictive immigration policies were moderated (Muller and Espenshade, 1985). This new immigration wave shows few signs of abating as the 1980s draw

to an end.

Why do these immigrants come? The motives for immigration are by now a familiar story. In the absence of political turmoil, individuals immigrate to improve economic opportunities for themselves and their children (Jackson 1969). California's strong economic growth as well as its proximity to the Pacific Rim have made it a natural entry point for immigrants from Asia and Latin America (McCarthy, 1983). Yet, once started, immigration has a self-sustaining quality. Growing ethnic enclaves can provide an important magnet for the continued flow of immigrants. At the micro level this occurs via chain migration, the movement of individuals within known social networks, usually the family. Information about economic opportunities can be quickly transmitted to distant relatives by previous immigrants. Patterns of chain migration can also reduce the costs of geographic mobility directly. Individuals who move within social networks often have jobs and housing waiting for them in the host country. At the macro level, the development of ethnic subeconomies can dampen the impact of fluctuations in the business cycle. In the 1970s, even though the Los Angeles economy declined relative to that of the rest of the state, immigrants were still coming, attracted by the opportunities afforded them in the various ethnic subeconomies (Light and Bonacich, 1985).

How do they fare? It is obvious that some groups have been much more successful than others. Selected socioeconomic characteristics for the 28 largest ethnic groups in the Los Angeles metropolitan area are shown in Table 1. Those of Asian, European, and Middle Eastern origin do substantially better than those of Latin American, African, or American Indian origin. Most striking, the first three groups have much higher proportions of adult males employed in administrative and professional occupations. Why is this so? The concern of this paper is to account for why some ethnic groups on average get better jobs than others. Subsequent papers will deal with other socioeconomic differences among ethnic groups in the Los Angeles area, and with the aggregate socioeconomic and political consequences of these group differences.

#### Hypotheses About Group Differences in Achievement

Three competing explanations have been offered for group differentials in achievement, which for convenience we might label the resource differentials hypothesis, the cultural values hypothesis, and the discrimination hypothesis. To anticipate the conclusions of our statistical analysis, we think that the major source of ethnic group differences in occupational status attainment is the differential socioeconomic resources immigrant groups bring to the United States. This assessment is contrary to two commonly held positions: 1) that group status differences are the product of distinct cultural values indigenous to specific ethnic groups and lacking in others; and 2) that group status differences are the product of differential discrimination against various ethnic groups. Each of these competing explanations is discussed briefly below.

The resource differentials hypothesis posits that ethnic group differences in occupational status depend on group differences in the attributes that facilitate occupational attainment. The main determinants of occupational status are by now well established. Among these, the most important is education--all else equal, the greater the number of years of school completed, the higher the status of one's occupation (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Featherman and Hauser, 1978). But language skills (Chiswick, 1978; Evans and Kelly, 1985) and labor force experience (Carliner, 1980; Long, 1980; Borjas, 1984, 1985a, 1985b) have also been shown to affect occupational outcomes. The claim of the resource differentials hypothesis is thus that ethnic group differences in occupational status can be accounted for by group differences

in socioeconomic resources. Under this hypothesis, the superior attainments of Jews compared to other early 20th century immigrants is attributable not to special Jewish values, but to the fact that Jewish immigrants to the U.S. tended disproportionately to be from urban artisan or shopkeeping backgrounds which gave them an advantage relative to the peasants arriving from Southern Italy, Ireland, and other parts of Europe (Portes and Bach, 1985). Similarly, if this hypothesis is correct, the superior occupational attainments of Asians compared to those of Latin American origin observed in Table 1 can be explained by the superior education and other socioeconomic resources of Asians.

This, of course, leaves open the question of how group differences in resources arise. A full treatment of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper, but there is some indication in our data that such differences are mainly a reflection of differential patterns of selective migration rather than of any systematic cultural differences in values. Table 2 presents data on the level of educational attainment of those in our ample immigrating from specific countries who completed their education abroad. For these persons we show the percentage with at least some secondary education and the percentage with at least some second cycle secondary education (i.e., senior high school). We also show the corresponding percentages of the total populations from each of the origin countries who obtained similar levels of education. The first feature of the table to notice is that immigrants from every country in the table have substantially more education than their compatriots who stayed behind—it is the relatively well educated persons from these countries who immigrated to the Los Angeles area (and no doubt to the rest of the U.S. as well). Second, educational selectivity is much greater for Asian immigrants than for those from Latin America, particularly from Mexico. This is not surprising. The ocean crossing and greater distance make immigration from Asian countries much more costly in both human and material respects than immigration from Mexico or Central American countries, so that the resources required to make the move are likely to be much greater. Additional support for this suspicion can be found in the observation that the percentage of immigrants from Mexico with secondary education is substantially lower than that even for those from Guatemala and El Salvador. Mexican immigrants quite literally can simply walk across the border and hence even those with very limited resources or coping skills can successfully make their way to Los Angeles in search of better opportunities. But for those from further away it takes more of a concerted effort, and the greater the effort, the greater the resources required for immigration. Asians with resources comparable to those of the typical Mexican immigrant are usually excluded from the wave of new immigrants.

Cultural values. It is a familiar story by now that some groups are believed to do particularly well because they have the culturally based values necessary for success in a post-industrial society. This argument is encountered frequently in discussions of the differential success of European ethnic groups. For example, the "Jewish emphasis on education" has been adduced to explain the very high levels of occupational attainment among American Jews. This sort of claim has been revived with respect to Asians in late 20th century California: the Chinese have been called "the Jews of the Orient," and the Japanese labeled the "model minority." While the tenor of much discussion of cultural values seems most appropriate to cocktail parties and car pools, some academic discussion of the cultural imperatives for economic and social success in the United States can be found (e.g., Kitano and Sue, 1973). The claim has been seriously offered that what makes Asians successful is that they value education and they appreciate the value of hard work, both to an unusual degree.

The contrast in cultural values is usually understood (at least impli-

citly) as a contrast between Asians and Hispanics. Latino culture is perceived to be inconsistent with what it takes to thrive in post-industrial society. Emphasis on family rather than on work, on the present rather than on the future, and on particularistic rather than on universalistic values, supposedly leads those of Hispanic origin to emphasize occupational attainment less than do other groups, particularly Asians. Note that the claim is not simply that those of Latin American origin do less well than others, but that they do less well than others with comparable resources. The cultural values hypothesis would make the same claim about the basis of the unusually high achievement of Asians. We have already noted that the special Asian emphasis on education, insofar as it exists, is probably the consequence of the selective migration of well educated people from Asian countries rather than any particular aspect of national character, just as the special emphasis on education among Jewish immigrants is probably the consequence of the fact that they were more literate and more urban than were other immigrants. Thus, it is quite possible that particular groups have distinctive values without those values having any independent consequences. That is, those of Asian origin may be unusually well educated, may have the values of educated people, and may therefore gain unusually high status occupations. What is at issue here is whether the supposed distinctive Asian emphasis on family enterprise and on work productivity promotes occupational achievement above and beyond what would be expected from the educational and other resources of members of the Asian groups, and correspondingly, whether the supposed inward-turning values of Latinos lead those of Latin American origin to emphasize occupational attainment rather less than do members of other groups and hence on average to achieve lower status occupations than would be expected on the basis of their education and other resources.

The discrimination hypothesis posits that the majority population feels an aversion to those who are physically or culturally different from themselves and hence, insofar as they are able, avoids interaction with them. Prejudice may be manifested in many ways: avoiding voluntary interaction (Willner, Walkely, and Cook, 1952; Williams, 1964), being reluctant to hire members of disfavored groups, being reluctant to work or live along side them (Hughes and Hughes, 1952), or being reluctant to patronize establishments run or frequented by them. It may even, in the extreme, involve legal restrictions on residence, citizenship, or employment. While prejudice, and the discrimination that results from it, has many consequences, what is of interest here is its impact on occupational opportunities. The expectation is that those who are the objects of prejudice will find some occupational opportunities closed to them and in general must be better qualified than others to secure jobs of equal status.

Prejudice is, of course, largely an attitudinal predisposition. The roots of intolerance are often in the early socialization and early experiences an individual has with different racial and ethnic social environments (Miller and Sears, 1986). Although discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity is now illegal, it is very much part of the history of Los Angeles, in common with most of the rest of the country. The entire Japanese-American population of the Los Angeles metropolitan area was forcibly relocated during the Second World War, entailing enormous losses of property and disruptions of careers. Even though the Western states led the way in anti-discriminatory legislation in the post-World War II period, restrictive covenants forbidding the sale of housing in certain neighborhoods to Blacks, Jews, and sometimes to Asians remained effectively in practice in Los Angeles until the 1960s. And employment discrimination did not become illegal until 1964.

Employment and housing discrimination is now explicitly illegal. And, indeed, the attitudinal basis that provided a grounding for discriminatory

legislation has shown signs of improvement, at least with respect to Blacks (Taylor, et al., 1978; Condran, 1979). But the increased presence of ethnic minorities, and the perception of the White majority population that minorities may be given preferential treatment because of government intervention, could sustain informal discriminatory practices with respect to employment and housing (Klugel and Smith, 1982). Moreover, prejudice is a two-edged sword. members of ethnic minorities may perceive or expect discrimination, and may modify their behavior in anticipation, restricting their interaction to within their own ethnic community, and in particular not aggressively pursuing employment opportunities.

Direct measurement of current patterns of differential prejudice toward or discrimination against ethnic groups is not possible within the scope of this paper. However, the historical pattern of ethnic prejudice (Bogardus, 1924a, 1924b) and discrimination in Los Angeles would lead us to suspect that if whatever remaining discrimination has any impact on the occupational opportunities of ethnic minorities, it will be manifest in the propensity for non-European origin groups to have lower levels of occupational status than would be expected on the basis of their resources and for European origin groups to have higher levels of occupational status than would be expected on the basis of their resources.

The discussion so far can be summarized in the form of testable hypotheses about group differences in average occupational attainment.

H1. Resource differentials. Group differences in the average level of occupational attainment can be accounted for by group differences in resources (education, language skill, labor force experience, etc.).

H2. Cultural differences. Asian ethnic groups should, on average, have higher levels of occupational attainment than would be expected on the basis of their resources, while Latin American origin groups should have lower levels of occupational attainment than would be expected on the basis of their resources.

H3. Discrimination. European origin groups should, on average, have higher levels of occupational attainment than would be expected on the basis of their resources and non-European origin groups should, on average, have lower level of occupational attainment than would be expected on the basis of their resources.

We now turn to a discussion of how to test these alternative hypotheses.

## Data and Methods

The data used in this analysis are from the five percent Public Use Microdata Sample from the 1980 U.S. Census of Population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983). From the national Microdata File, all persons residing in the five counties constituting the Los Angeles metropolitan area (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties) were extracted. Although these counties cover a vast region of Southern California, 96 percent of their population live within 60 miles of the Los Angeles city hall, and on a variety of measures the region clearly constitutes a single metropolis and a single labor market (Security Pacific National Bank, 1979). It is, however, a vast population, numbering about 12 million persons in 1980, or four times the population of Israel and on a par with that of Australia. Our five percent sample of the population consists of 581,109 cases.

Why Los Angeles? The choice of Los Angeles as a study site is based on

its intrinsic interest as one of the largest and most diverse of the world's metropolitan areas and on its position as the major gateway to the U.S. among Asian and Latin American immigrants. Friendly critics have suggested that a metropolitan area, especially in the United States, is a poor choice as a unit of study, since metropolitan areas have open borders and are not politically important units with respect to the decisions of relevance to immigration. Why not study the entire nation, since immigration policies, such as they are, are national and there are restrictions on international but not subnational border crossings? Our reply is that ethnicity is a local, not a national, phenomenon. Migration streams are directed to particular places, as those who remained behind go to join their families, neighbors, and compatriots. Life chances and life styles depend heavily upon demographic factors--the number of members of particular groups residing in a given place and the proportion of the total population they constitute. And life chances also depend on the nature of local economies--whether particular types of jobs or economic opportunities are available. Thus, in our view, national studies, while valuable, miss much that is important in understanding the role ethnicity plays in economic, social, and political life. We think something is to be gained by supplementing national studies with those focusing on specific communities, especially communities large enough to be relatively self-contained, such as Los Angeles.

In the present analysis, we restrict our attention to males age 20-64 with an occupation. The age restriction is conventional in analyses of occupational attainment, including most of the male labor force while avoiding the special problems associated with the transition from school to work and from work to retirement. That is, since the occupations people engage in at the very beginning and very end of their working life are often temporary and frequently atypical of those they hold through most of their working life, it is best to treat these transitory periods separately. The restriction to the male labor force is based on the well-established fact that patterns of female labor force participation are quite different from patterns of male participation (Treiman, 1985:215-218) and some evidence that this is particularly true of immigrant women (Evans, 1984).

The ethnic classification. Much that is interesting about the immigrant and ethnic groups of Los Angeles is lost when comparisons are restricted to gross categories such as "Asians," "Hispanics," or "Whites." Table 1 makes this clear, displaying sharp distinctions within each aggregate category. For example, among those of Asian origin the percentage with upper nonmanual (professional and managerial) occupations ranges from 57 percent of Indians down to 18 percent of Vietnamese. Similarly, among those of Latin American origin, the same percentages range from four percent of Salvadorians to 21 percent of Cubans. And among Blacks, 26 percent of those from the West Indies but only 16 percent of other Blacks hold professional or managerial jobs. To capture this sort of diversity, we thought it useful to devise as detailed an ethnic classification as our data could support. After extensive exploration of alternatives, we settled upon the 28 category classification shown in Table 1 and used in the remainder of the analysis.

We began by adopting as a guideline the principle that we would attempt to distinguish all ethnic and immigrant groups with at least 20,000 members residing in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. The basis for this choice of a minimum group size is that this would yield a minimum of 1,000 cases in the five percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). Of course, since the PUMS includes all members of households, the number of males in the labor force--or other subgroups of particular interest in other analyses we have planned--would be somewhat smaller, but still large enough to establish reliable estimates. For the present analysis, for example, the smallest group consists of 215 men of West Indian origin.

The second principle we adopted was that our classification should be one of ethnic groups rather than of immigrant groups, and that it should include the entire population of the area. While a major focus of our research is on the experiences of immigrants, restricting the analysis to the foreign born is likely to be misleading and is certainly incomplete. An important set of questions concerns the experiences of the children of immigrants. Hence, we need to be able to classify in the same way both the native born and the foreign born. To do this, we made use of the Hispanic origin, race, and first ancestry questions in the 1980 Census. The creation of an unambiguous and accurate ethnic classification scheme involved a complex recode of these three questions. The decision rules used are as follows:

If "Spanish origin," subdivide on the basis of the Spanish origin code, distinguishing "Mexican," "Puerto Rican," "Cuban," and "Other." Further subdivide "Other" on the basis of the first ancestry code, "Ancestry 1," to distinguish "Guatamalan," "Salvadorian," "Other Central American," "South American," and "Other Hispanic."

If not "Spanish origin," distinguish "Armenian," "Iranian," "Black West Indian," and "Other North African and Southwestern Asian" on the basis of "Ancestry 1."

If not "Spanish origin," and not "Armenian," "Iranian," "Black West Indian," or "Other North African or Southwest Asian," subdivide on the basis of race, to distinguish "White," "Black," "American Indian," "Japanese," "Chinese," "Filipino," "Korean," "Asian Indian," "Vietnamese," "Other Asian," and "Other." Combine "Hawaiian" with "Other Asian." If "White," further subdivide on the basis of "Ancestry 1" into "English," "German," "Italian," "Polish," "Russian," and "Other."

The 28 category classification resulting from this exercise works well both as a classification of immigrant groups and as a classification of ethnic groups. The non-European origin groups are unambiguously ethnic groups by conventional criteria. In addition, a majority of virtually all of the Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern origin groups are foreign born, the exceptions being those of Japanese origin, of whom only about one-quarter are foreign born; those coded as "other Hispanic," which is a residual category consisting both of those actually from Spain--of which there are very few--and of those who responded "Spanish American," "Hispanic," or "California" to the ancestry question; and those from Puerto Rico, who consider themselves American-born since Puerto Rico is a U.S. Commonwealth (see Table 1). The European origin groups, who of course constitute a majority of the population, are somewhat more problematic. First, there are relatively few immigrants from Europe in the Los Angeles area, especially compared to the native born population of European origin. Second, a large fraction of those of European origin are of mixed European ancestry or no longer identify themselves as anything other than "American." Thus, for the European origin population, the ancestry question does not work very well. Given this, and given our interest in immigrants, we decided to distinguish only those European groups with large numbers of foreign born residing in the area. Using our threshold level of a minimum population of 20,000, we distinguished five European origin groups with at least 20,000 foreign born in the five-county area: English, Germans, Italians, Poles, and Russians. We then included in each of these groups all those who indicated the group as their first response to the ancestry question. It seems reasonable to us to define, say, ethnic Italians as those who



tell the census that they are of Italian ancestry when asked, and similarly for the other groups.<sup>3</sup>

Analytic strategy. Recall from our discussion of alternative hypotheses that the choice between them rests on the relationship between observed levels of occupational attainment and levels of occupational attainment expected from a group's resources. To test these hypotheses therefore requires that we develop a model of occupational attainment that allows us to estimate the effect of ethnic group membership net of resource differentials and, of course, the effect of resource differentials net of ethnic group membership. We do this by estimating an equation of the form

Equation 1.

$$S = a + b(E) + c(E') + \sum_{i=2}^3 E_{di}(P_i) + e(F) + f(F') + g(U) \\ + h(U') + \sum_{i=2}^5 E_{ii}(L_i) + \sum_{i=2}^5 E_{ji}(I_i) + \sum_{i=1}^{20} E_{ki}(G_i) + \sum_{i=22}^{28} E_{ki}(G_i)$$

where the variables included in the model are defined as follows.

The dependent variable, S is Duncan's Occupational Socioeconomic Index, updated for application to the 1980 census occupational classification by Stevens and Cho(1985). Stevens and Cho's measure TSEI, which provides scores based on the education and income of both male and female workers in each occupation category, was used because we anticipate making comparisons between male and female workers in future papers and hence need a single standard and because in any event we believe that measures of occupational status should reflect the characteristics of the entire labor force rather than a portion of it. The Duncan index, which has a range of approximately 0-100, has come to be regarded as the standard measure of occupational attainment in the U.S. and hence its use permits comparisons between our results and those obtained by others using other data sets. In our data, the mean of S is 36.9 and the standard deviation is 19.4.

The remaining variables include all the variables available in the PUMS that we considered pertinent to the prediction of occupational status.

E = years of school completed, which is a standard summary measure of educational attainment. As we noted above, it is well established that years of schooling is the single strongest determinant of occupational status.

E' = (E - 11.4). This and the corresponding squared terms for years of labor force experience are included for two reasons. First, they allow for the possibility that the return to years of education varies for different levels of schooling. For example, it is probable that an additional year of college is worth more than an additional year of high school. Second, their inclusion reduces the chance that results will be distorted by outliers.<sup>5</sup> In order to improve the accuracy of the estimates by reducing the colinearity between education and its square, a constant was subtracted from the education variable before squaring (Mosteller and Tukey, 1977:285-287). It can be shown that by choosing the constant equal to b/2, where b is the slope of the bivariate regression of E on E', the resulting squared variable is orthogonal to the original variable (see Treiman and Roos, 1983:621, note 10). This transformation of the squared term has no substantive consequences, since the resulting estimates may be transformed into their original form at will. (See Kelley and McAllister, 1984, for further discussion of this procedure.)

P2 and P3 are dummy variables indicating where education was completed. P2 is scored 1 if the place of educational completion is ambiguous, and 0 otherwise. P3 is scored 1 if education was completed abroad, and 0 otherwise. The omitted category consists of those completing their education in the U.S.

The reason for including these variables was our suspicion that education completed abroad would not be as valuable as education completed in the U.S. because of the greater relevance of American education to the U.S. labor market as well as the presence of specific vocational guidance that is a standard part of the curriculum in the U.S. However, there is no direct information on place of educational completion in the data. Hence we developed a crude estimate by assuming that education was continuous and coding those individuals whose age at immigration was clearly greater than their school leaving age (estimated as years of school completed plus six) as having completed their education abroad, and those whose age at immigration was clearly less than their school leaving age as having completed their education in the U.S. Since date of immigration is coded in five year categories, in many instances the relationship between school leaving age and age at immigration could not be established unambiguously. These cases were coded as "place of schooling unknown." We would expect completion of schooling in the U.S. to yield a positive increment in occupational status relative to completion of schooling abroad, with those for whom place of school completion is unknown falling in the middle.

$F$  = years of labor force experience abroad. Occupational status has been shown to increase substantially over the course of the career (Sorensen, 1975), presumably as a result of the increase in human capital that results from experience in the labor force. Since experience in the U.S. labor force is likely to be more valuable than foreign labor force experience, we divide total labor force experience into a foreign and a U.S. component. Since we have no direct measure of years of labor force experience, we approximate it in the conventional way by estimating total labor force experience,  $X = \text{age} - E - 6.6$ . We then estimate years of foreign labor force experience by defining two new variables:  $R$  (the year the respondent left school) = year of birth +  $E + 6$ ; and  $M$  (a point estimate of year of immigration) = 0 for the native born and those immigrating before 1965, = 1967 for those immigrating 1965-69, = 1972 for those immigrating 1970-74, and = 1977 for those immigrating 1975-80. Years of foreign labor force experience,  $F$ , is then defined as  $F = N - R$  if  $N - R > 0$  and  $F = 0$  otherwise. That is, years of labor force experience is estimated by year of immigration minus year the respondent left school for those immigrating since 1965 who left school before they immigrated, and is assumed to be zero for those immigrating prior to 1965. While this assumption obviously is not strictly correct, it is unlikely that much distortion is introduced by making it since those who both left school and immigrated prior to 1965 had a minimum of 15 years of U.S. labor force experience by 1980 and therefore the impact of any previous foreign labor force experience should be minimal.

$F' = (F - 13.4)^2$ . A squared term for foreign labor force experience is introduced for the same reasons that a squared term was introduced for education. In contrast to education, for which the slope of the squared term should be positive since the return to each additional year of schooling presumably increases with the level of education, the slope of the squared term for labor force experience should be negative, since the increase in human capital and therefore the increment in occupational status associated with each additional year of experience should be greatest at the beginning of one's career.

$U$  (years of labor force experience in the U.S.) =  $X - F$ . As noted above, our expectation is that U.S. labor force experience will be more valuable than foreign labor force experience, but that both will have positive slopes.

$U' = (U - 21.7)^2$ . Again, the slope of this term should be negative.

$L2...L5$  is a set of dummy variables indicating the degree of English language competence. The hypothesis is, of course, that English language competence has a positive net effect on occupational status. The omitted

category consists of those who are monolingual in English. members of the remaining categories all speak a language other than English at home. L2 is scored 1 for those who, by the report of whoever completed the census form (themselves or another member of their household), speak English "very well," and 0 otherwise. L3 is scored 1 for those who speak English "well," and 0 otherwise. L4 is scored 1 for those who speak English "not well," and 0 otherwise. L5 is scored 1 for those who do not speak English at all, and 0 otherwise.

I2...I5 is a set of dummy variables indicating date of immigration among the foreign born. The assumption is that, all else equal, the native born will have higher occupational status than those who immigrated to the U.S. and that the more recent the date of immigration, the lower the occupational status, on the ground that more recent immigrants will not have had as much of a chance to "learn the ropes" or to advance within the jobs they initially acquire. The omitted category consists of those who are native born. I2 is scored 1 for those immigrating prior to 1965 and 0 otherwise. I3 is scored 1 for those immigrating 1965-69, and 0 otherwise. I4 is scored 1 for those immigrating 1970-74, and 0 otherwise. I5 is scored 1 for those immigrating 1975-80 (the date of the census was April 1, 1980) and 0 otherwise.

G1...G2, G22...G28 is a set of dummy variables representing the 28 ethnic groups described above, except that group 21, "Other White," is omitted to avoid linear dependency.

## Results

Table 3 shows the coefficients of four models of the determinants of occupational status based on the variables described above. Column 4 shows the coefficients of Eq. 1 presented above, but it is useful to compare our final model to several preliminary models based on portions of the full set of variables, and these are discussed first. The first two columns predict occupational status from education, labor force experience, language competence, and immigrant status. The regression coefficients in column 1 are derived from an equation of the form

Equation 2.

$$S = a + b(E) + \sum_{i=2}^3 E di(Pi) + e(F) + g(U) + \sum_{i=2}^5 E ii(Li) + \sum_{i=2}^5 E ji(Ii)$$

while those in column 2 are derived from an equation of the form

Equation 3.

$$S = a + b(E) + c(E') + \sum_{i=2}^3 E di(Pi) + e(F) + f(F') + g(U) + h(U') + \sum_{i=2}^5 E ii(Li) + \sum_{i=2}^5 E ji(Ii)$$

The two equations differ only in that Eq. 3 includes squared terms for education, foreign labor force experience, and U.S. labor force experience while Eq. 2 does not. The importance of including these terms is seen by comparing the coefficients of determination for Eq. 2 and Eq. 3. Eq. 3 explains more than six percent more variance in occupational status than does Eq. 2 and in all instances the coefficients associated with the squared terms are significant at the .05 level; indeed, all coefficients associated with Eq. 3 are statistically significant except for completing education abroad. In the remainder of our discussion, we will concentrate on Eq. 3 to the exclusion of Eq. 2.

Inspecting the standardized coefficients for Eq. 2 at the bottom of Table 3, it is clear that years of schooling is by far the single most important determinant of occupational status. It is also clear that the value of each additional year of education increases as the level of education increases. That is, a year of college is worth more than a year of secondary school, which in turn is worth more than a year primary school. Also, as predicted, both foreign and U.S. labor force experience have positive effects on occupational status and the return to U.S. labor force experience is greater than the return to foreign labor force experience. Finally, the effect of both foreign and U.S. labor force experience is greatest for low levels of experience, which is consistent with the idea that the learning curve is steepest at the beginning of the career. Immigrants who begin their working lives before they immigrate have two career beginnings, the second one constituting their first labor force experience in the U.S. While we have not estimated our model in such a way as to isolate immigrants with previous labor force experience, it is likely that were we to do so, we would find the same curvilinear relationship for the second career that we see for both foreign and U.S. career beginnings. (Note that for the sample as a whole, the U.S. labor force experience variable is mainly a simple labor force experience variable, since only about 20 percent of our sample is foreign born, and some fraction of the foreign born immigrated as children and began their work lives in the U.S.)

As anticipated, those whose country of educational completion is unknown experience a slight but reliable decrement in their occupational status, net of all other effects. However, anomalously, the same is not true of those who completed their schooling abroad, who appear to do as well as those who completed their schooling in the U.S. Since those coded as "place of schooling completion unknown" are in fact those who immigrated to the U.S. just about the time they finished their schooling it is not entirely surprising that they experience a small decrement in occupational status relative to those who unambiguously completed their schooling either in the U.S. or abroad. For both of these groups the relevance of schooling for initial occupational opportunities was presumably greater than it was for those who completed their schooling in a foreign country and then came to the U.S. to work. Immigrants who unambiguously completed their schooling abroad were, by definition, likely to have had several years of foreign labor force experience prior to immigration and were more likely to have worked at jobs relevant to their education than were those who immigrated immediately after completing their schooling.

English language competence has precisely the predicted effects: net of other factors, monolinguals have the highest occupational status, and each level of increasing difficulty with English is associated with a decrement in occupational status, ranging from about two and a half status points for those bilinguals who speak English very well to over five and a half points for those who do not speak English at all.

By contrast, immigrant status has effects precisely opposite to those we

anticipated. Net of other factors, immigrants have better jobs than the native born. We are at a loss to explain this, particularly in light of the fact that the net increment in occupational status is greatest for the most recent immigrants. It is, however, of interest to note that the zero-order effect of immigrant status on occupational status is what we would expect. The coefficients are  $I_2 = -2.88$ ;  $I_3 = -10.40$ ;  $I_4 = -6.87$ ;  $I_5 = -10.25$ . That is, on average immigrants do not secure as high status jobs as the native born and those who immigrated in 1965 or later do even less well than those who immigrated prior to 1965. In light of this, the positive coefficients observed when education, labor force experience, and English language competence are taken into account (with curvilinear effects) suggest that on balance new immigrants are not doing as badly as their inferior language competence and U.S. labor force experience would lead us to expect; they still do worse than those who have been here longer, but their handicaps are not as severe a disadvantage as the same handicaps are for those who have been here longer. It may be that long term residents who still have difficulty with English, who have limited U.S. labor force experience, and who are poorly educated represent those for whom immigration's promise has failed, a hard core left behind when the bulk of immigrants acquire language and job skills and the enhanced occupational status that results.

Alternatively, immigrants, and particularly new immigrants, may be more likely than the native born to secure jobs in ethnic enclaves and hence to have the entire range of occupational opportunities available to them including high status positions, with the result that their occupational status is increased relative to co-ethnics who, by choice or by necessity--due to the loss of old country language skills--compete in the general labor market. It might be, further, that new immigrants trade income for occupational status, going out to seek the higher paying (if not particularly high status) jobs in the wider labor market only after they acquire a secure command of English.

Taken together, the variables in Eq. 3 account for just over 40 percent of the variance in the occupational status of male workers age 20-64, which is equivalent to that explained for representative national samples.

Having seen what it is that affects occupational status among the men of Los Angeles, we now turn to an explicit test of our competing hypotheses regarding ethnic differences in occupational attainment. We do this by estimating equations identical to Eqs. 2 and 3 except that in addition they include dummy variables for each of our 28 ethnic groups (excluding "other whites," which we use as a reference category). That is, we estimate equations of the form

Equation 4.

$$S = a + b(E) + \sum_{i=2}^3 E d_i(P_i) + e(F) + g(U) \\ + \sum_{i=2}^5 E i_i(L_i) + \sum_{i=2}^5 E j_i(I_i) + \sum_{i=1}^{20} E k_i(G_i) + \sum_{i=22}^{28} E k_i(G_i)$$

Equation 5.

$$S = a + b(E) + c(E') + \sum_{i=2}^3 E d_i(P_i) + e(F) + f(F') + g(U) \\ + h(U') + \sum_{i=2}^5 E i_i(L_i) + \sum_{i=2}^5 E j_i(I_i) + \sum_{i=1}^{20} E k_i(G_i) + \sum_{i=22}^{28} E k_i(G_i)$$

The coefficients associated with these equations are presented in columns 3 and 4 of Table 3. Since it is clear from our examination of Eqs. 2 and 3 that education and work experience have curvilinear effects, we will restrict our discussion to Eq. 5 and present the coefficients of Eq. 4 simply for reference.

Two features of the coefficients in column 4 need to be stressed. First, with one exception the coefficients are very similar to the corresponding coefficients in column 2. The exception is the set of dummy variables for English language competence. Because the language competence variables are correlated with ethnic group membership, the end effect of language competence is reduced when ethnic group membership is included in the equation. Second, ethnic group membership adds very little to the explanation of occupational attainment above and beyond what can be explained by education, labor force experience, language competence, and immigration status. The inclusion of 27 dummy variables for ethnic group membership increases the explained variance by less than one percent, from .419 to .428. This is our first indication that ethnic differences in occupational status mainly reflect ethnic differences in socioeconomic resources.

Nonetheless, the question remains open as to whether there are systematic differences in the occupational achievements of ethnic groups apart from what would be expected on the basis of their education, labor force experience, language skills and time in the U.S. To discover this, we turn to Table 4, which has been constructed using information from Tables 1 and 3. Column 1 simply replicates the mean occupational status scores shown in column 1 of Table 1, and column 2 shows these scores expressed as deviations from the overall mean for the entire sample, the male labor force of metropolitan Los Angeles age 20-64.

Recall now our three hypotheses. The "cultural values" hypothesis predicts that Asians will, on average, have higher occupational status than would be expected from their measured resources, while those of Latin American origins will, on average, have lower occupational status than would be expected from their measured resources. The "discrimination" hypothesis predicts that all non-European origin groups will have lower occupational status than would be expected from their resources while those of European origin will have higher occupational status than expected from their resources. And our main hypothesis, the "resource differentials" hypothesis, predicts that there will be no systematic group deviations of observed average occupational status from the occupational status expected from a group's resources.

To assess these alternatives, we make use of the coefficients for ethnic group membership from column 4 of Table 3. These coefficients indicate the average increment or decrement in occupational status for members of each ethnic group compared to others with identical resources, that is, identical values on each of the other variables included in the equation. Column 4 of Table 4 shows these coefficients, transformed so as to represent deviations from the overall mean rather than deviations from the omitted category, the form in which they are displayed in Table 3. The coefficients in column 3 are then derived by the simple subtraction of the values in column 4 from the values in column 2. The coefficients in columns 3 and 4 thus represent a partition of each ethnic group's average occupational status (expressed as a deviation from the overall mean) into two components: a portion due to the resources of the ethnic group (column 3) and a portion due to other factors (column 4). For example, Asian Indians (who happen to be the most occupationally successful of all 28 ethnic groups) have a mean occupational status score of 54.2, which is 17.3 points above the overall mean of 36.9. Of

the 17.3 point advantage of Indians, compared to the average member of the male labor force, 15.1 points is due to the superior resources Indians bring to the labor force (as measure by the variables included in Eq. 4) and 2.2 points is due to other factors. 10

Inspecting columns 3 and 4, it is evident that differences among ethnic groups in average levels of occupational attainment are due mainly to differences in the characteristics that promote occupational attainment: education, labor force experience, English language skills, and length of residence in the U.S. Whereas 27.6 ( $=15.0 - (-12.6)$ ) points separate the highest from the lowest ethnic group with respect to the portion of occupational status attributable to group differences in resources, only 8.7 ( $=4.4 - (-4.3)$ ) points separate the highest from the lowest ethnic group with respect to the portion of the gap in occupational status attributable to other factors.

Moreover, group differences in factors other than resources do not appear to be systematic, as would be expected under the "cultural values" and "discrimination" hypotheses. On average, those of Asian origin are 4.0 points higher in occupational status than the average worker, but most of this is due to their superior resources. As a group, Asians are three-tenths of a point lower in average occupational status than would be expected on the basis of their resources, with Asian Indians and Chinese doing slightly better than expected, Japanese and Vietnamese doing about as expected, and Filipinos, Koreans, and those from other Asian origins doing slightly worse than expected. Since the "cultural values" arguments pertain to the Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese fully as much as they do to the Chinese, there is little support to be found in these results for the notion that Asian cultural values lead to occupational success, net of the resources of these groups. Similarly, the fact that the discrepancy between the level of occupational status expected from the socioeconomic resources of Asians and that actually observed is so small argues against the discrimination hypothesis, at least with respect to Asian-Americans.

Among those of Latin American origin, the picture is again mainly one of a disadvantage in terms of resources that translates into a deficit in occupational status. Latin American origin men have a mean level of occupational status 10.3 points below that of the average worker. Of this, 8.2 points can be attributed to their resource disadvantage and 2.1 points to other factors. Whether the "other factors" represent cultural values, discrimination, or still something else (e.g., the fact that the bulk of Latin American immigrants are from small villages and hence may lack the skills necessary for success in urban labor markets in ways that we have not been able to measure) cannot be determined from our data, and must be left for future research. It is notable, however, that every Latin American origin group displays a consistent, although relatively small, deficit in occupational status due to factors other than their measured resources. The consistency of this differential suggests that "cultural values" are not a likely source, given the notable cultural differences between, for example, Mexicans, Cubans, and South Americans. Small but systematic discrimination against Spanish speaking people, perhaps fueled by suspicions that they may be illegal aliens, remains a real possibility, as do demographic factors, that is, features of the social organization of the Spanish speaking community associated with its extremely large size (18 percent of the population of the Los Angeles metropolitan area speaks Spanish at home).

Of the remaining groups, it need to be noted that all European origin groups do slightly better than expected from their resources as do all three Middle Eastern origin groups, while those of African origin, both from the West Indies and others, American Indians, and the residual group from "Other" origins do slightly worse than expected from their resources. Again, these differences are very small, with two exceptions. Those of Russian origins do

substantially better (+4.4) than expected, probably because most of those of Russian origin living in the Los Angeles area are Jewish, including both recent immigrants and the native born population, and it is well established that American Jews have been more successful at capitalizing on their socioeconomic resources than have members of other religious groups (Gockel, 1959: Table 3). On the other hand, "Other Blacks," that is, all Blacks with the exception of those of West Indian origin, do substantially worse (-4.3) than expected on the basis of their resources. The relative inability of American Blacks to capitalize on their socioeconomic resources has been noted many times before (e.g., Stolzenberg, 1975; Featherman and Hauser, 1976) and probably represents continuing discrimination based on race, although there is nothing in our data that enables us to settle this question definitively.

To summarize our results so far, we have shown 1) that differences in the average occupational status of ethnic groups are mainly due to group differences in resources contributing to occupational attainment: education, labor force experience, English language skills, and immigrant status; 2) that group differences in occupational status due to factors other than socioeconomic resources are for the most part small and unsystematic; and 3) that the pattern of such differences is not consistent with either a hypothesis of gross differences in the cultural values of those of Asian origins compared to those of Latin American or Black origins or with a hypothesis of systematic discrimination against non-European origin groups. To be sure, in addition to the probable continuing discrimination against Blacks mentioned above, there is also a possibility of slight discrimination against those of Latin American origin, but this is hard to reconcile with other evidence indicating that feelings of prejudice against Asians historically have been fully as strong as those against Latin Americans.

## Discussion

What can we make of these findings? First, we need to acknowledge that they are incomplete. While it seems clear to us that the selective migration of immigrant groups is the most important determinant of differential success here, we have not been able to nearly as conclusive about the absence of cultural or discriminatory factors. This is the consequence of our research strategy, which assessed these alternative hypotheses only indirectly, by identifying each of them with particular patterns of residuals from the levels of occupational attainment expected from group differences in resources. Obviously, direct assessment of these alternatives, based on suitable attitudinal and behavioral data accumulated through surveys of members of various ethnic groups, would be extremely useful.

These findings are incomplete in another, and perhaps more important respect, as well. We know relatively little about the characteristics of immigrants. Even our measures of resources are very limited. We have had to make quite gross assumptions about the process of educational completion in order to get any estimate at all of what sorts of educational resources immigrants bring with them, and we know nothing at all about most of their other characteristics prior to immigration, nor about what motivated them to come to the United States. Again, pursuit of such questions cries out for new data collection.

Despite these limitations, however, our findings lead us to conclude unequivocally that, at least with respect to occupational outcomes, the process of status attainment is a universalistic one for the ethnic groups of Los Angeles. Whatever constraints in opportunities may exist, they do not appear to affect the process by which men acquire jobs of differential attractiveness. To be sure, there may well be differences among groups in the kinds of jobs obtained, and concomitant group differences in average incomes,



that cannot be accounted for by group differences in education and other socioeconomic resources, but there are no corresponding group differences in the process by which men are allocated among jobs located at different points on the socioeconomic status hierarchy. This result parallels that for a national sample of European origin ethnic groups surveyed 18 years earlier (Duncan and Duncan, 1968) and provides additional support for the notion that the process of occupational status attainment is for the most part a universalistic one. To what extent other aspects of status attainment display the same lack of ethnic differentiation remains an open question.

1. For details on how we identified such persons, see the description of the variable "completed education abroad" below.
2. This classification was devised for a large scale project on the political economy of immigration to the Los Angeles area, of which this paper is a part.
3. The question might be raised as to whether the use of the "country of birth" question would have yielded more reliable results. The difficulty with this question is both that, as we indicated above, "country of birth" yields no information on the children of immigrants, and that, for some groups, it yields ambiguous results even for the foreign born. The Chinese are a case in point. Of foreign born Chinese, 42 percent were born in "China," 15 percent in Taiwan, 11 percent in Hong Kong, five percent in Vietnam, three percent in Burma, and the remaining 23 percent in a number of other countries. Armenians, also, cannot be adequately identified on the basis of their birth place. Of foreign born Armenians, 21 percent were born in Iran, 15 percent in Turkey, 13 percent in "Armenia," 13 percent in Lebanon, 9 percent in Syria, seven percent in the U.S.S.R., six percent in Iraq, and the remaining 15 percent in a number of other countries.
4. For those readers unfamiliar with the Duncan index, some feel for its character may be obtained by noting some typical scores. These are the TESI scores from Stevens and Cho (1985): physicians = 88; civil engineers = 77; teachers, elementary school = 71; personnel and labor relations managers = 60; real estate sales workers = 52; data processing equipment repairers = 49; police and detectives, public service = 38; electricians = 31; bus drivers = 21; waiters and waitresses = 19; janitors and cleaners = 18.
5. The difficulty with linear regression estimates is that the slope coefficient is relatively sensitive to extreme observations. Suppose, for example, that virtually all Asian Indians have at least some university education, with only a handful more poorly educated, and that the exact number of years of university education is relatively unimportant for this group. A straight line relating occupational attainment to years of school completed for Indians would then be determined by the handful of poorly educated cases, and in consequence probably would overstate the effect of years of university education. A curved line, by contrast, would more closely approximate the actual relation between educational attainment and occupational status.
6. This estimate closely approximates actual labor force experience for men (Treiman and Roos, 1983:620-621, note 9).

7. In the present context tests of significance are not very informative, for two reasons. First, because of the very large size of our sample, any coefficient large enough to be substantively interesting will almost certainly be statistically significant at any conventional level. Second, t-values routinely provided by standard statistical packages, such as SPSS-X (used here), express the significance of the difference between the coefficient for each included dummy variable and the (implicit) coefficient for the omitted category, but give us no information about the significance of the differences among the categories explicitly represented. For this reason, we generally forego the presentation and discussion of significance tests in the remainder of the paper, but rely upon the pattern and size of the coefficients for our interpretation of the results of our analysis.
8. Standardized coefficients are not presented for dummy variables since they are heavily influenced by the size of the categories and have no straightforward interpretation. By contrast, the standardized coefficients for the ratio level variables, years of schooling, years of foreign labor force experience, and years of U.S. labor force experience, and the squared terms corresponding to each of these variables, usefully inform us as to the relative importance of each of these three factors as determinants of occupational status.
9. The transformation is quite straightforward (Andrews, et al., 1973:46): where  $a_{ij}$  = the transformed coefficient for the  $j$ th category of predictor  $i$ ,  $b_{ij}$  = the corresponding dummy variable regression coefficient, and  $p_{ij}$  = the proportion of cases in the  $j$ th category of predictor  $i$ .
10. A frequently used alternative procedure for decomposing group differences in status characteristics into a component due to group differences in levels of a set of determining factors (composition) and a component due to other factors is to choose one group as a standard and substitute the means on the independent variables for the other group or groups into the equation estimated for the group chosen as the standard. The resulting predicted mean on the dependent variable is then interpreted as the status that would be expected if the group being evaluated had the same determining characteristics, on average, as the group used as the standard. The difference between this predicted score and the actual average score on the dependent variable is then interpreted as representing the difference in the rate of return between the group being evaluated and the standard group. In the present instance, this alternative procedure would involve successively substituting the means for each of the 28 groups into Eq. 3 (reported in column 2 of Table 3) to generate a set of scores that could be used as an alternative to those reported in column 3 of Table 4. In fact, in the present instance the two procedures yield nearly identical results, judging from the fact that the correlation between the set of coefficients actually reported in column 3 of Table 4 and the set created by the alternative procedure is .965 and the pattern of discrepancies between the observed group means and the group means expected from a group's resources is very similar no matter which procedure is used, although the discrepancies are actually slightly smaller under the alternative procedure. The difference between the two procedures is that in the one we actually used, group differences with respect to the other variables included in the equation are explicitly held constant and the coefficients associated with the ethnic groups explicitly represent the effect of ethnic group membership net of the other variables included in the equation. By contrast, the procedure in which the means for each group are substituted into an overall equation has

the awkward feature that the overall equation is more heavily influenced by the large ethnic groups than by those with fewer members, so that the resulting estimates of the effect of group resources on group outcomes are potentially biased. For this reason we prefer the procedure in which both the resource variables and a set of dummy variables for ethnic groups are included in the same equation.

11. To be sure, it is logically possible that Asians have cultural values that would result in higher achievement than expected from their resources but experience discrimination that undercuts this advantage. This does not seem very plausible, however, given the internal heterogeneity among the Asian groups.

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