

# Labor-Force Participation Among Southeast Asian Refugee- Immigrants: An Update on 1975 to 1984 Entrants

[\[1\]](#)

[Howard Berkson](#)

---

[1]

This paper very closely follows the work of Bach and Carroll-Seguín and is intended to provide an empirical update on labor-force participation among Southeast Asian refugee-immigrants in the U.S. This effort will partially remedy the existing chronological gap in the economic status literature for this population by examining labor-force participation. Data were obtained from reports in the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) [\[2\]](#) of the 1990 census by five hundred twenty-nine male and five hundred seventeen female Southeast Asian refugee-immigrants arriving between 1975 and 1984. Sample population selection is restricted to the Great Lakes Midwestern states of Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan for reasons of regional interest. Special attention will be paid to English language proficiency. No other dimensions of "success" or "adaptation" will be examined here although, as Kim points out, social, personal, and economic adaptation are all interwoven. [\[3\]](#)

[2]

It should be mentioned at the outset that the literature is rife with discussions about "handicapped" groups and "slow assimilation" but these conclusions cannot be inferred directly from the data used in many studies. Regarding the quantitative literature on labor-force participation, it is

typically assumed that negative findings are due to negative circumstances. However, it is still a merely theoretical conclusion that low labor-force participation, where present, is a sign of unhappy circumstance rather than culturally dictated preference.

## **COHORTS**

[3]

Since 1982, there has been very little quantitative work published about Indochinese refugees. There are two intertwined reasons for supposing that a new look is called for. The first is that it has been over a decade since they have been widely studied; thus, little is known about their progress. The second reason has to do with the focus of some studies on the different levels of "success" between two separate entering cohorts with negative findings frequently reported for the later arrivals. These negative findings are usually attributed to lower levels of education among second cohort members. In short, the first wave is comprised mostly of middle- and upper-class individuals with significant formal education entering between 1975 and 1979. The second wave is comprised of individuals with a lesser amount of formal education and skills less desirable in the U.S. labor market, compared to the first cohort, entering between 1980 and 1984. [\[4\]](#) Although low education levels have been cited as likely causes in previous studies, we cannot differentiate between the extent to which the second cohort's labor-force participation suffered comparatively from the effects of short time in-country and the extent to which their labor-force participation suffered from an uncompetitive level of education. Time in-country is unanimously associated with higher labor-force participation but most of the existing literature was written before the second cohort passed much time here. Time in-country and education are the most commonly discussed root causes of low labor-force participation rates among refugees. However, those are only two possibilities. Various other causes including the pain of industrialization and divergent cultural values may also be at the root of the matter.

## **HETEROGENEITY**

[4]

The term "Southeast Asians" refers to one group only to the extent that it reflects a convenient category that is geographically determined. The reasons for use of this convenient categorization are probably rooted in the political necessity of defining the legal status for people from that part of the world. The ethnic groups falling into this geographically derived classification are highly diverse in language, religion, cultural practices, and economic outcomes.[{5}](#) Consequently, we should keep in mind that groups aggregated by convenient category may be radically different in preferences and assimilation trends.

[5]

Significant space is devoted in my thesis to discussion of the Hmong population for the purpose of demonstrating the wide gulf between their native culture and the expectations placed on them in the U.S. That discussion is only very briefly summarized here. The Hmong people were chosen as the exemplar for that discussion for three reasons. First, their adaptation along several dimensions has been characterized in the literature as markedly slower than other Southeast Asians. Second, understanding a little of the Hmong refugee experience has vast, though un-quantified, potential for explaining this phenomenon.[{6}](#) Third, Hmong representation is very high in the Midwest region. The Lao representation (including both Hmong and ethnic Lao) in the sample population exceeds that of the Vietnamese.

[6]

My discussion begins with the relatively new phenomenon of surplus-focused, cash-based economics, beginning with the imposition of cash taxation by French colonial forces.[{7}](#) In order to pay taxes, the Hmong frequently grew opium-producing poppies in quantities exceeding what was necessary for traditional medicinal and trading purposes. Apart from the not uncommon background of being opium-producing poppy farmers, there is at least one other important feature of Hmong society that is a convincing likely cause of severe culture shock. The French did little to develop Laos[{8}](#) and thus, the immigrant-refugees had to experience

"industrialization" much the same as their earlier European counterparts did. There is no reason to suspect that "industrialization" is any easier today than it was a century ago. Beyond the "industrialization" issue is the cultural distance problem. The much-discussed European immigrants of yesterday had more in common with the U.S. native-born population they were to integrate with than do their contemporary Southeast Asian counterparts. Not only did the European immigrants have somewhat more in common with the U.S. native-born population, but they mostly came voluntarily. Southeast Asian refugee-immigrants left their home countries under a realistic threat of death rather than what might usually fall under the rubric of "preference".

[7]

"Industrialization" pains are only one of many possible explanations of variation between groups' labor-force participation rates. Although it poses an interesting alternative hypothesis to the common reasonings, discussed above, there are still others. Low labor-force participation may be better explained by perfectly legitimate values rather than by some failure or inability to adopt all the expected practices of western industrialized society. This shortcoming of the quantitative-based literature is not remedied in this study. Rather the question is raised to remind us that conclusions about findings are still driven by rational-agent economic theory, the accuracy of which has not been shown with regard to labor-force participation among Southeast Asian refugee-immigrants.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND MODEL SPECIFICATION**

[8]

The importance of language proficiency for the economic well-being of refugees has been established in sociological literature. David W. Haines' overview article (1982) identifies language as one of five persistently identified problems for Southeast Asian refugees, particularly in its relationship to labor-force participation. [{9}](#) The findings are unanimous. It is expected that English language proficiency is still strongly and positively related to

labor-force participation. Those who failed to become competent with the dominant language *should* be expected to have a significantly lower labor-force participation rate. The reason usually given by researchers for the focus on labor-force participation among Southeast Asian refugee-immigrants is driven by policy interests. The government's stated *quid pro quo* for expenditures on refugees was to get them out of aid programs as quickly as possible.<sup>{10}</sup> Because labor-force participation is not a replacement for a study on economic self-sufficiency, no claims about self-sufficiency are being made here. The labor force is defined as those in the entire population, at or above the age of sixteen, with a legal ability to work, who are employed, actively seeking work, or awaiting recall from a layoff.

[9]

The model specified here is a close approximation of the methodology specified by Bach & Carroll-Seguin. They used a variable tracking self-reports of English proficiency at the time of entry in their study. The census gives self-reported English proficiency at the time the respondent fills out the form.<sup>{11}</sup> Those who spoke very well upon arrival cannot be separated from those who spoke poorly but learned to speak very well by the time of the census. It is expected that those who arrived with the ability to speak well obtained better employment in a shorter period of time than their peers. Consequently, the value of speaking very well might be understated in an income study due to the poorer opportunities available to those who became proficient speakers much closer to the census compared to those who showed up with high verbal English language proficiency (VELP). However, in a study on labor-force participation, the value of language proficiency at the time of arrival should be declining in significance with the progression of time. Because both cohorts had been in the country for a number of years by the time of the 1990 census, their (then) current language skills were probably a better indicator of labor-force participation than the magnitude of their language proficiency at the time of arrival.

[10]

Bach & Carroll-Seguin also found significance in the

following variables: education, year of arrival in the U.S., gender, age, years of formal education *outside of the U.S.* and some measures of domestic responsibility. They also considered two variables specific to refugees: the type of resettlement sponsorship received and residence in California where refugee experiences, they argue, are notably different than in other parts of the country. Their data came from two surveys of Southeast Asian refugees sponsored by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, US Department of Health and Human Services, taken in the early eighties. [\[12\]](#)

[11]

Year of entry will be considered in the model by tracking individuals' year of entry cohort. Because the second cohort is less represented in the upper education categories, and more highly represented in the lower education categories, they are presumed to be the disadvantaged group. Cohort one will be the referent group so the second cohort's putative disadvantage can be examined.

[12]

All the variables Bach & Carroll-Seguin found to be significant should be considered except for residence in California because the universe of discourse is restricted to the Great Lakes region of the Midwest for this study. However, Bach & Carroll-Seguin's reason for tracking region was to account for differences in business cycles, employment habits, and working habits. Even though this study examines only one region, it is reasonable to suppose that there are different employment and working habits as well as business cycles that can occur by area-type of residence. A common control for such effects is a dummy variable representing residence in an urban area.

[13]

Bach & Carroll-Seguin found that years of education prior to entering the U.S. was a stronger indicator of labor-force participation than overall years of education. [\[13\]](#) This may be due to the fact that their data was taken in the early eighties and was strongly influenced by time-in-country effects for over half of their sample. The census provides

only information about educational attainment without regard for where it was obtained. Total years of education, estimated by level of educational attainment, is still deemed a contributor to labor-force participation and the case in favor of the "strength of indication" issue is not strong at this later date because language and cultural skills should have improved sufficiently for any education to have due effect. Instructions were provided with the long form of the census to aid respondents in making appropriate decisions about converting foreign education experience to the U.S. paradigm. [\[14\]](#)

[14]

The authors also found that kinship structure variables did have impact on participation for both men and women, though more profoundly for women. The Indochinese generally maintain extended family households in their native lands. In order to continue this practice in the U.S., one must earn enough money to support a large residence or live in disobedience of typical health and fire safety ordinances pertaining to occupancy limits and the social norms of native residents. The importance of family and household to the Indochinese undoubtedly affects their decisions about work. [\[15\]](#) The operationalization of kinship and parental responsibilities was embodied in four variables. Bach & Carroll-Seguin tracked the size of the household, the proportion of the household that was under sixteen, and whether or not the household was either headed by a single parent, or contained an extended family. [\[16\]](#) (NB: Bach & Carroll-Seguin did not distinguish between groups by ancestry or country of origin, thus the use of the term "Indochinese" when reporting their findings.)

[15]

In the census, to be a child is to be under eighteen, so some workers who are also children may be included. Any children included in the sample population cannot have been enrolled in school during the reference week because they would have been excluded by the selection criteria. Thus, young workers in this sample are not students and should be considered typical workers. [\[17\]](#)

[16]

The authors observed that only women were significantly aided by the presence of relatives in labor-force participation. On the other hand, women were significantly handicapped if they headed single-parent households. Importantly, these effects of kinship structure on labor-force participation did not exist significantly in the second cohort. Bach & Carroll-Seguin believe this was due to the earlier arrivals' adaptation of the typical U.S. female headed householders' economic behavior. These cohort-specific results found among women are expected to be absent or minimized in the present study. This is so simply because the adoption of behavior that is more functional, economically, is probably preferred to behavior that is not to the extent that it is an acceptable adaptation to the relevant population. It is believed here that the differences between the cohorts are not relevant to economic adaptive behaviors of this type. [\[18\]](#)

[17]

The type of refugee resettlement sponsorship received is not covered by the census, and so that important variable cannot be accounted for in this study. Bach & Carroll-Seguin found that those who were sponsored by previously resettled Indochinese had significantly lower participation rates than those with other forms of sponsorship. [\[19\]](#) However, that group reflected only 3% of their sample from the entire U.S. Moreover, the special effect of sponsorship type was only significant in examining female arrivals between 1980 and 1983. It must be pointed out that failure to account for the impact of sponsorship type may cause overstatement of some other labor-force non-participation effect found, if any. The potential for this difficulty is assumed to be mitigated somewhat by the passage of time. Moreover, the significance of the effect was not demonstrated with any breadth.

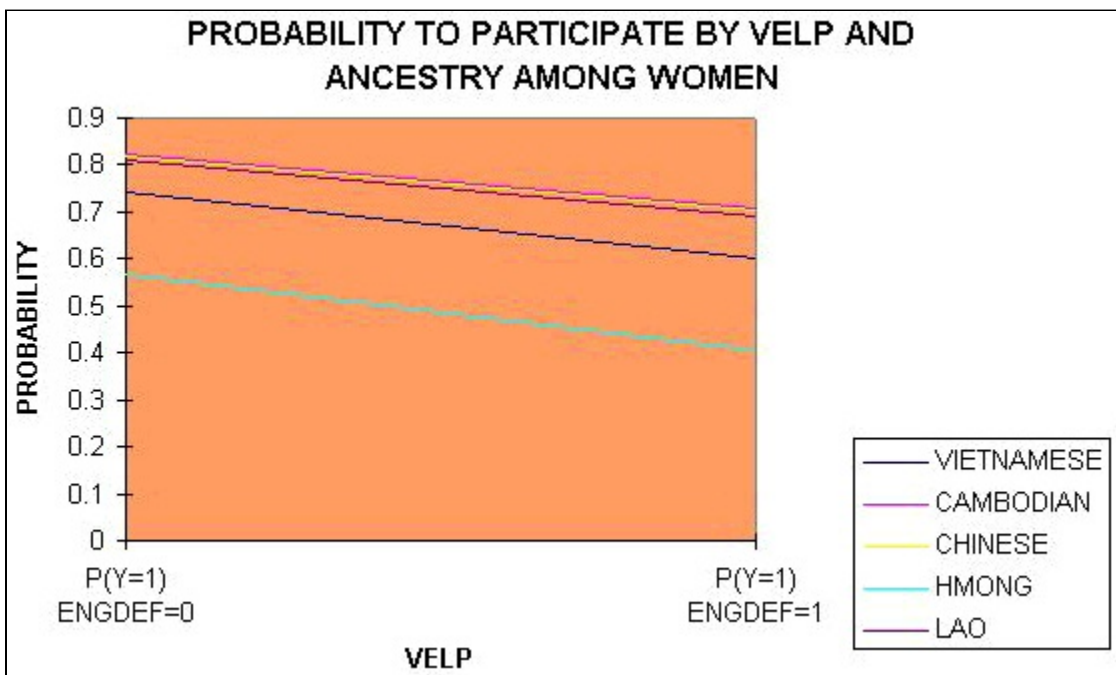
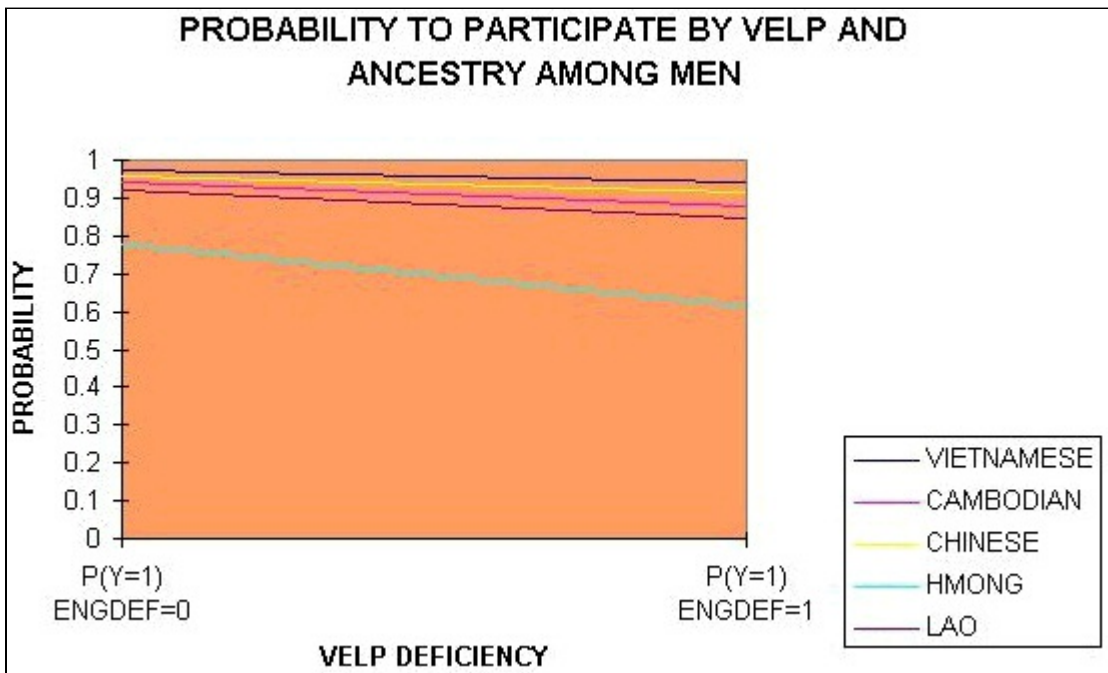
[18]

In sum, the labor-force participation model considers participation to be a function of familial responsibilities, urban locale, human capital variables, ancestral background, and the cohort in which each individual arrived. The familial responsibilities are measured by the size of the family, the ratio of adults to children in the family, the presence of a subfamily, and whether or not the household is single-parent-



headed. The human capital variables under consideration are age, education level, and some measure of the ability to speak English. The cohort variable proxies for time in-country as well as a host of other individual and sociological factors. Note that non-Hmong Lao are examined separately from the Hmong.

**RESULTS BY SEX**



[19]

For men and women, the three human capital variables were significant yielding about the same effect. For each incremental change on the education scale, the odds that a man would participate in the labor-force were increased by 14% and, similarly for women, that figure is 13%.[{20}](#) Additionally, having a VELP deficiency carried the predicted participation penalty for both men and women. In both cases, individuals with an English deficiency were about half as likely to participate in the labor-force as those without the deficiency. For both men and women, each additional year of age yields a 5% decrease in the probability that an individual will participate in the labor-force. Two variables in the model related to familial responsibilities were uniquely significant for women. Similar to Bach & Carroll-Seguin's findings, the family duty scale and single parent household variables had significant impact on the participation of women but not on that of men.

[20]

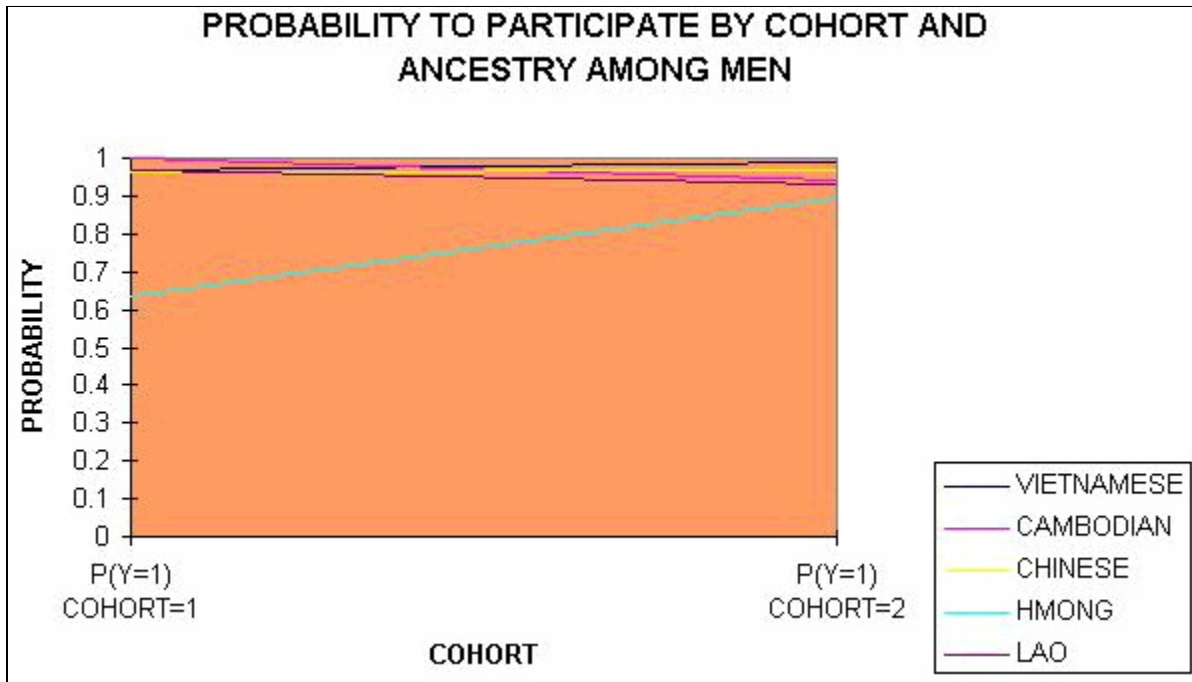
For each incremental change in the family duty scale (the proportion of children in the household aged 17 or under), women are only 20% as likely to participate as those women at one level lower on that scale. In other words, as the number of children increases, relative to the number of adults, women are far less likely to participate in the labor-force than women with fewer children per adult.[{21}](#) Single mothers are only half as likely to work as non-single mothers. In comparison to the ethnic Vietnamese, the Hmong are significantly behind the Vietnamese in the sample population with respect to labor-force participation. Labor-force participation is only one tenth as likely among the men and just short of one half as likely among the women as it is among the Vietnamese population. It is important to consider the limitations of these data with respect to the question of causality: in addition to issues of taste raised earlier, Hmong households tend to be larger than others in the sample so their per-person cost may be lower and consequently labor-force participation may not be as important as it is in the context of a nuclear family setting.[{22}](#) Moreover, with participation decreasing with age and age averaging in what are normally considered prime years for labor-force

participation, there may be other non-standard economic behaviors going on among individuals in this sub-population compared to the native population. Lao men, but *not* Lao women, are in a handicapped labor-force participation circumstance. At a differential of one third, compared to Vietnamese in the sample, their situation is not as extreme as those found among the Hmong men although more extreme than probabilities to participate among Hmong women.

[21]

Perhaps the most interesting result of this part of the study is that being a member of the second cohort carries no significant penalty in terms of labor-force participation. After controlling for age, education, *etc.* the second cohort participates with approximately the same regularity as the first cohort. However, the mean level of participation is significantly different by cohort. [\[23\]](#) It can be concluded, to the extent that this model captures labor force participation determinants, that whatever handicaps the second cohort experiences are sufficiently explained by variations in these independent variables. It is important to note that not only is education but one of the significant variables, variable significance varies by sex. The most common suppositions about some causal factors of lower participation rates in the second cohort receive partial empirical support by this study although there are several other factors which are further complicated by sex differentiation. Mean participation rates are significantly lower among second cohort men, but only without controlling for certain criteria. The largest effects are found for family responsibility variables among women and VEMP deficiency for men and women. It is surprising that the labor force participation is so much lower for Hmong, compared to Vietnamese, net of the effects of the other variables in the model. That is, a Hmong man with the same values in all the non-ancestral variables as a Vietnamese man is only one-tenth as likely to participate in the labor force. This leads to the conclusion that the cause of lower participation among Hmong men is probably related to matters of preference and not to ability.

## **RESULTS FOR MEN BY COHORT**



[22]

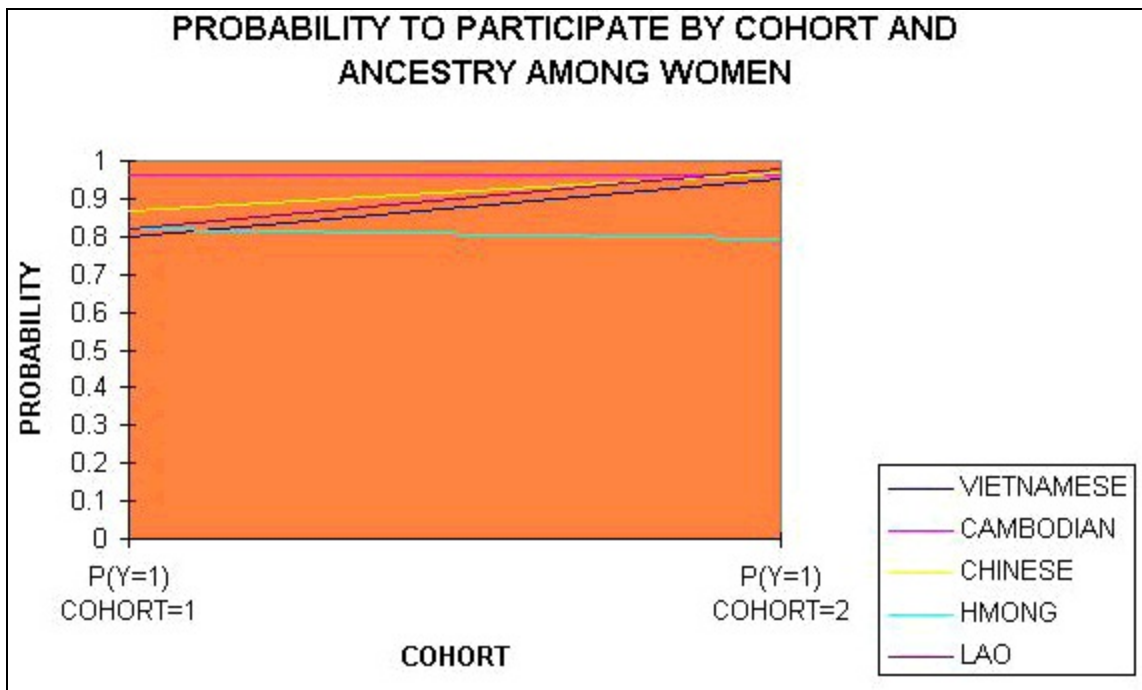
For men, as predicted, the inputs to labor force participation vary by cohort. That is, the mix of significant variables is different for the same model run separately for observations of men from each cohort. The first cohort's non-ancestral significant inputs are age and English language deficiency. Men of Cohort One are less likely to participate in the labor-force by seven percent per incremental change in their age. The penalty for age witnessed by the first cohort is possibly the result of their pursuit of professional jobs in keeping with perceptions about the value of their educational attainment and prior work experience. Foreign education, foreign certification, absence from working due to transition, and perhaps less experience by age than is desired due to the former circumstances are all possible stumbling blocks to finding the desired employment. After a time, discouragement is a reasonable end. Age differentiates men of the first cohort with negative impact on participation with advancing years. The second cohort's non-ancestral significant input is education level. The handicap to labor-force participation experienced by men of the second cohort might be explained by individuals who became discouraged after having held out for jobs more in keeping with their expectations of prestige, responsibility, challenge, and pay.

The second cohort's lower mean level of educational attainment should compress their range of employment possibilities into the lower level job categories which are not likely to fulfill expectations. Education positively differentiates members of the second cohort, increasing their odds of participation by a factor of 1.2 for an incremental change on the education scale. The first cohort's education levels are generally higher and probably sufficiently competitive whereas there is higher variance among those in the second cohort, generating their obtained significant impact for increased education. Observe that education is slightly understated in all the models of this study because there is some relationship between ancestry and country of origin, the latter of which is also related to education. The degree of relation is insufficient to cause multicollinearity but it is sufficient to partial out from significance all those instances of education (and the education portion of ancestry via country of origin) except the most extreme cases. Education is theoretically too important to leave out of a model relating to labor-force participation but the value of including variables for the different ancestral groups is too important as a source of new information to leave out of this study.

[23]

Second cohort Lao men are handicapped in comparison to second cohort Vietnamese men with respect to labor-force participation. The handicap attributed to being a Hmong male, compared to Vietnamese males, is a theme observed throughout the data analysis in my thesis for both studies. Hmong women, on the other hand, are only significantly handicapped by ancestry in comparison to the Vietnamese in the second cohort.

## **RESULTS FOR WOMEN BY COHORT**



[24]

All the women of the first cohort are participating comparably to the Vietnamese. The only significant determinant of labor-force participation among first-cohort women is VELP: those with a deficiency have lower participation odds by a factor of .6788 compared to those without a deficiency. [24] Women of the second cohort are differentiated by educational attainment, age, and Hmong ancestry. Higher levels of educational attainment provide either impetus or opportunity or both for higher levels of labor-force participation to the extent that an increase on the education scale will increase the odds of participation by 17%.

[25]

Second-cohort females obtain a small penalty (-6%) for age that is not present in the first cohort. This is curious, on the surface, because neither of their mean ages are significantly different nor is there a significant correlation between cohort and age. It is possible that women of the second cohort, who have lower mean levels of educational attainment, are compressed into more physically demanding jobs than women of the first cohort. For instance, women of the first cohort may be more likely to work as

teachers, secretaries, and seamstresses whereas women of the second cohort might be engaged in more physically demanding work such as farming, laundering, or unskilled or semi-skilled labor which is more highly likely to deselect the older population.

[26]

Finally, Hmong women have only 19.3% of the odds to participate in the labor-force as their Vietnamese counterparts. It cannot be emphasized enough that no study of this type can determine if participation handicaps such as age (when the average is in prime years) and ancestry result from traditional roles (or a rejection of the native work practices) or evidence of a *bona fide* barrier to labor-force participation.

[27]

Language deficiency did not show significance in the model for second cohort women. In the model's application to all women, language deficiency supported a significant negative coefficient. This is explained by three facts. First, the model's application to all women tacitly compares first and second cohort women because they are systematically different. That difference generates significance in VELP that may not be present for the second cohort when it is not being compared implicitly by the model to another group. Second, we should not see significance in a variable that lacks sufficient variance in the sample population for its predicting power to be tested. That is, the second cohort is more highly compressed into a single VELP category than the first. VELP probably is important for the second cohort women, but that importance cannot be seen quantitatively among them because labor-force participation varies often when VELP does not. Third, it may also be that members of the first cohort are playing an instrumental role in obtaining work for the later arrivals and thus VELP really may not have any significant impact.

## **DISCUSSION**

[28]

Since 1975, unemployment rates have dropped heavily while

VELP has improved in the Great Lakes Midwestern Southeast Asian refugee population based on a comparison of the results of this sampling with those published by Kim. The respective VELP and unemployment observations are shown on the following tables. Note that unemployment is the ratio of those unemployed to those in the labor force. To be unemployed, one must be participating in the labor-force. Time-in-country is a powerful ally to the employment of refugees but the dramatic change in VELP cannot be ignored. VELP's relationship to labor-force participation has persisted over time and is probably also related to success in landing a job as well.

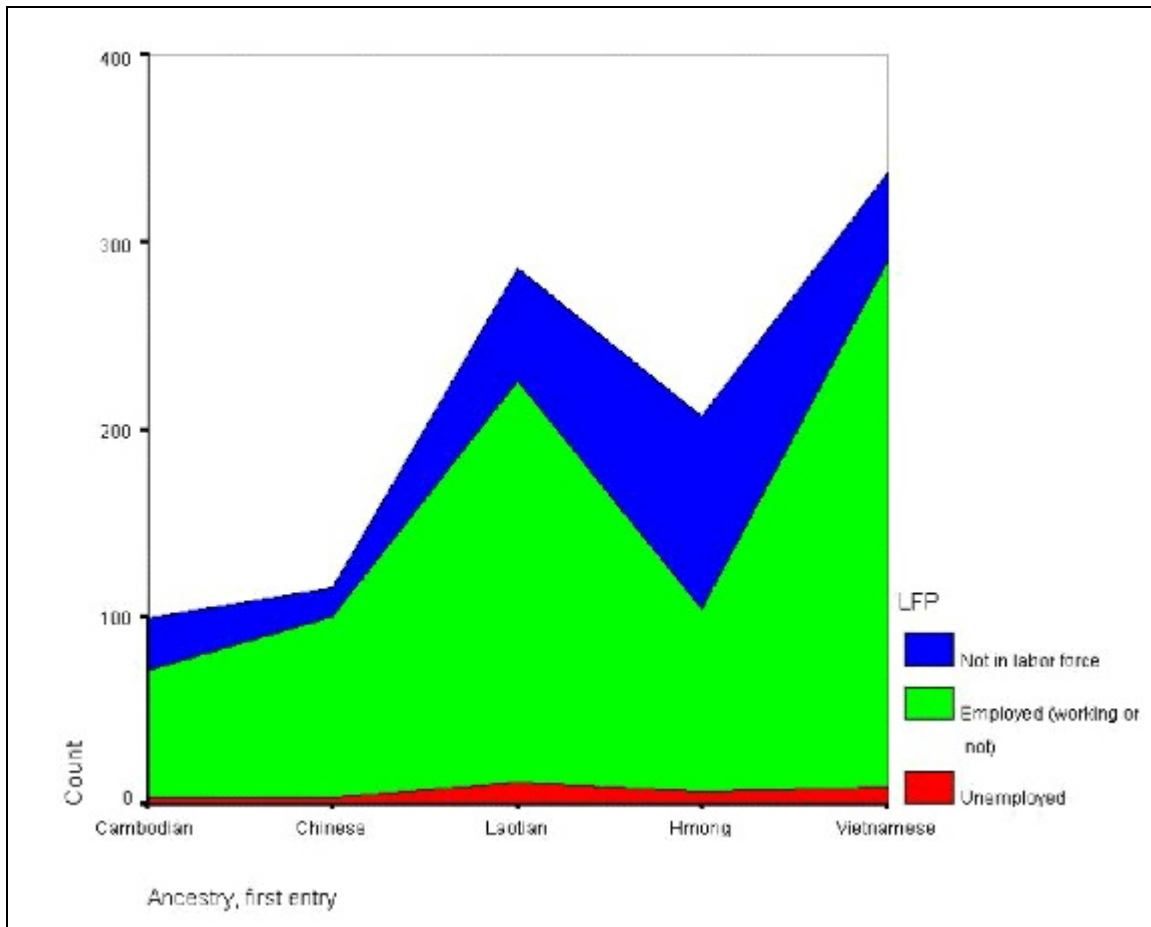
**Self-reports of VELP across studies:**

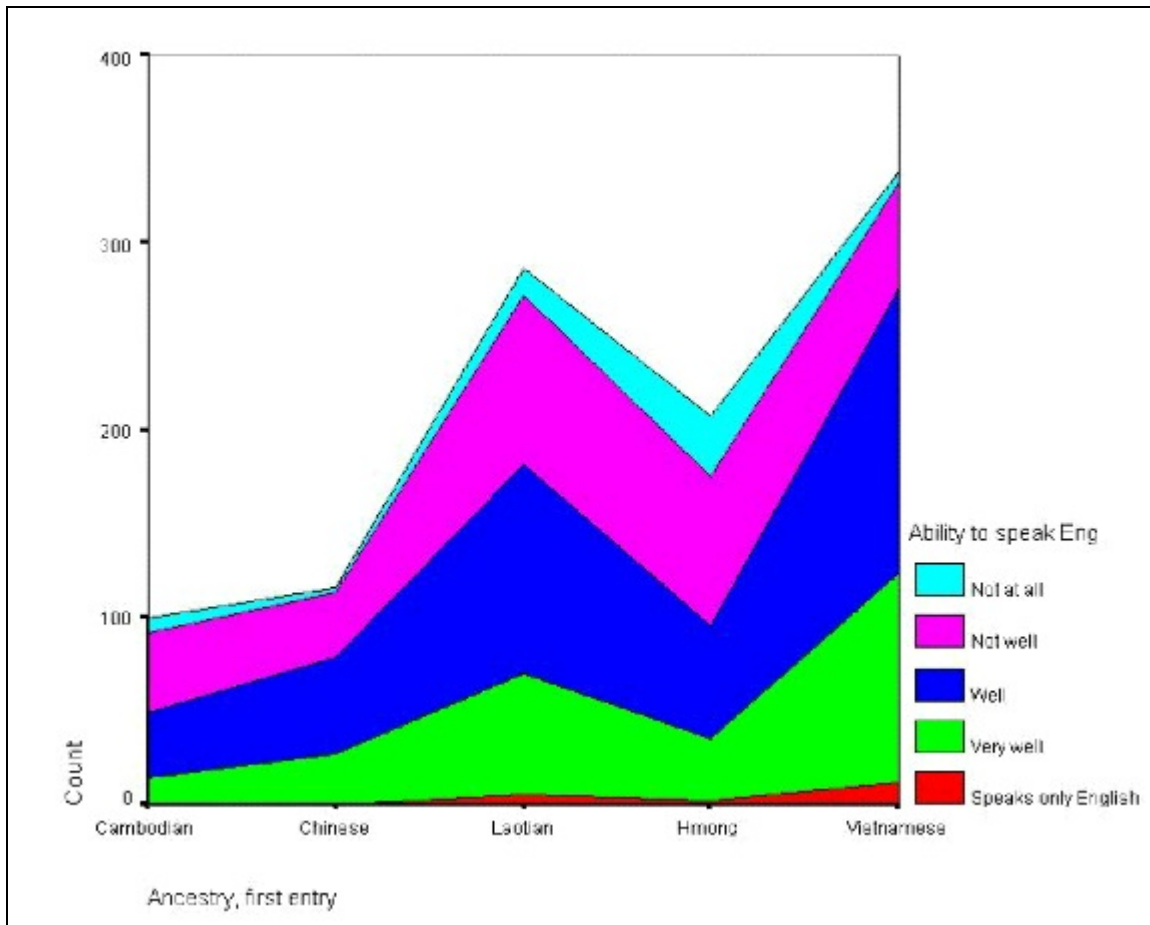
<b>VELP:</b>	NONE	NOT WELL	WELL	VERY WELL	ONLY ENGLISH	n
KIM'S SAMPLE	24%	45.5%	14%	14.5%	2%	789
THIS SAMPLE	5.2%	27.6%	40.5%	24.8%	1.8%	953

**Unemployment figures across studies by ancestry:**

<b>ANCESTRY</b>	CAMBOD.	HMONG	LAO	VIETNAM.	CHINESE
KIM'S SAMPLE	48.8%	46.2%	29.9%	23.7%	--
THIS SAMPLE	7.7%	9.6%	5.8%	4.8%	6.6%







[29]

The improvement shown in the present circumstances over those observed in Kim's study renew the question, "to what extent are social, personal, and economic adaptation inter-related?" Improved economic adaptation has been demonstrated but we do not know if the social and personal dimensions have come along in the same fashion. In the same vein, we still do not know whether or not higher levels of labor-force participation are barred by preference, ability, discrimination, or simply the passage of time.

[30]

Although no single study can be decisive, the intuitively pleasing theoretical prediction connecting language and labor force participation has been duplicated empirically again. However, we still do not know the extent to which differences between sample populations are related to culturally mandated choices. The fact that choice may play a strong role in

income determination has important ramifications for policy. If labor-force participation levels differ largely due to choice rather than, for example, language deficiency, then it will be to no avail that we fund language training at refugee camps and points of entry beyond the status quo (which may actually be too much). On the other hand, if choice plays only a moderate or small role in the determination of income compared to language skill, for example, then far more effort should be put into the improvement of language training as that would be key to fulfilling the federal government's stated purpose of making refugees self-sufficient as fast as possible.

[31]

Ignoring the problems posed by the possibility of a choice-generated labor-force participation "handicap" in analysis is fundamentally encouraged by two typical assumptions. First, the units of observation (people) are thought to be *rational* agents. Second, it is presumed rational to pursue high income and things leading to high income, in general. That is, there exists a "more is better" lens through which outcomes of studies similar to this might be interpreted and consequently when anybody isn't making as much as someone else, it is assumed that this is an unhappy state of affairs that rational agents strive to the best of their abilities to remedy.

[32]

In general, the study of non-native populations introduces a wide variety of analytical problems. An accurate treatment for either descriptive or predictive purposes will probably require multidisciplinary work because the interpretation based on fundamental economic theories such as human capital theory are culturally biased and the relevant factors for the analysis of any particular group may not be readily available in a quantified or quantifiable format. This is not to say that there is no hope for fruitful analysis of non-native populations. On the contrary, there is an enormous amount of valuable research that is possible. However, sample populations should be divided by detailed ethnic groups and the interpretation of findings should be informed by historical and social factors relevant to the population

being examined that may have nothing to do with the history and social factors relevant to the theory being applied.

---

## END NOTES

{1} This paper is a summary of the first of two empirical studies completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my master of arts degree at the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. The author gratefully acknowledges the input and guidance provided by his advisor, Professor Dorothee Schneider and the other members of his thesis committee, Professors Jerry Ferris and Lisa Jordan, as well as Professors Wallace Hendricks and Kevin Hallock for insights gained during discussions with them in the course of writing my thesis. The author also wishes to thank the editors for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Many thanks to [Marie Williamson](#) for helping convert this document to HTML. Inquiries should be sent to [hberkson@uiuc.edu](mailto:hberkson@uiuc.edu), or in writing via the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations (see [www.ilir.uiuc.edu](http://www.ilir.uiuc.edu)). [Return to text.](#)

{2} U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. [Return to text.](#)

{3} Kim, pp. 96 to 102 [Return to text.](#)

{4} Chan, p. 43; Haines (1982), p. 10; Haines (1989), p. 3; Bach & Bach, p. 34; Stein, pp. 28, 30 [Return to text.](#)

{5} Bach & Bach, p. 35; Kibria, p. 11 [Return to text.](#)

{6} Bach & Carroll-Seguin, p. 382 -- they refer to the Hmong's cultural origins as "novel". [Return to text.](#)

{7} Chan, pp. 4 to 11 [Return to text.](#)

{8} Chan, pp. 11, 55 [Return to text.](#)

{9} Haines (1982), p. 12; see also: Dunning, p. 72; Stein, pp. 32 to 35; Latkiewicz & Anderson, p. 19; Finnan p. 165;

Bach & Carroll-Seguin, p. 387. [Return to text.](#)

{10} In particular for the later refugees due to the short-term "self sufficiency" policy embodied in the Refugee Act of 1980. See also Latkiewicz & Anderson, p. 15; Finnan p. 162; Bach and Bach, p. 31; and Stein, p. 35. [Return to text.](#)

{11} U.S. Department of Commerce, p. 216 of the documentation -- there are a variety of inadequacies with this variable. One reason why some authors may have suggested that literary skills appear more important than speaking skills is because the measurements of literary skills are more accurate. The problem posed by questions such as, "What does a self-report of verbal English language proficiency mean when given by an individual who is not fluent" are difficult to resolve. This is one problem that future research in the area should tackle: obtaining higher accuracy in VELP measurement. The census form is frequently filled out by only one household member so the reports for some individuals will be based on another individual's possibly incompetent and certainly biased perception. [Return to text.](#)

{12} Bach & Carroll-Seguin, pp. 382 to 391 [Return to text.](#)

{13} Bach and Carroll-Seguin, pp. 386 to 387 [Return to text.](#)

{14} U.S. Department of Commerce, p. 175 of the PUMS documentation [Return to text.](#)

{15} Bach & Carroll-Seguin, p. 388; Chan, p. 51; Haines (1982), p. 12 [Return to text.](#)

{16} Bach & Carroll-Seguin, p. 396 [Return to text.](#)

17 U.S. Department of Commerce, p. 195 of the PUMS documentation [Return to text.](#)

{18} Bach & Carroll-Seguin, pp. 395 to 400 [Return to text.](#)

{19} Bach & Carroll-Seguin, p. 400 [Return to text.](#)

{20} The antilog of a logistic regression coefficient gives the multiplicative effect of the variable on the odds ratio; the ratio of the probability that the individual participates in the labor-force to the probability that the individual

does not participate in the labor-force. [Return to text.](#)

{21} An increase in the scale means an increase in the number of children per working adult. [Return to text.](#)

{22} There are several instances of households with more than two adults throughout the dataset. [Return to text.](#)

{23} The correlation and test of means between the second cohort and labor-force participation for the entire sample population:

The Pearson correlation coefficient in an analysis of the relationship between being a member of the second cohort and participating in the labor-force is negative and significant at all levels.

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

COHORT TWO  $-.0939^c$

Significance is at the .01 level.

(n=1046)

The hypothesis that the mean level of participation between the cohorts is the same must be rejected.

Labor-force participation:

Number

of Cases Mean SD SE of Mean

First Cohort 471 .8025 .398 .018

Second Cohort 575 .7217 .449 .019

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= 38.785  
P= .000

The possibility of obtaining this difference of means, assuming the population means are not significantly different, with unequal variance is .002 [Return to text.](#)

{24} The comments made regarding education concerning the model displayed in table 5.2 apply here. Note that VELP is also related to education, making the observation of VELP as the dominant significant variable even more important than might have been thought by some researchers. [Return to text.](#)

{25} See GAO/PEMD-93-10R for an assessment of the process rather than the outcomes. CWC provides a model of factors influencing refugee achievement on page 151. [Return to text.](#)

---

## REFERENCES

The complete references section from my thesis is included here.

Abraham, Katherine G. and Medoff, James L "Length of Service and Promotions in Union and Nonunion Work Groups", *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, volume 16, 1981.

Bach, Robert L. & Bach, Jennifer B "Employment Patterns of Southeast Asian Refugees", *Monthly Labor Review*, volume 103, number 10, 1980.

Bach, Robert L. & Carroll-Seguin, Rita "Labor Force Participation, Household Composition and Sponsorship Among Southeast Asian Refugees", *International Migration Review*, volume 20, number 2, 1986.

Becker, Gary S. *Human Capital: A Theoretical And Empirical Analysis, With Special Reference To Education*, 2nd edition, Columbia University Press, New York, 1975.

Blaug, Mark "The Empirical Status of Human Capital Theory: A Slightly Jaundiced Survey", *Journal of Economic Literature*, volume 14, number 3, 1976.

Borjas, G. "The Economic Status of Male Hispanic Migrants and Natives in the United States", *Research in Labor Economics*, edited by Ehrenberg, Ronald G. JAI Press, Greenwich, CT, 1984.

Carliner, G. "Wages, Earnings and Hours of First, Second, and Third Generation American Males", *Economic Inquiry*, volume 18, 1980.

Chiswick, Barry R. "Schooling, Screening, and Income", *Does College Matter?* Edited by Solomon, Lewis, and Taubman, Paul, Academic Press, New York, 1973.

Chiswick, Barry R. "The Effects of Americanization the Earnings of Foreign-Born Men", *Journal of Political Economy*, volume 86, 1978.

Chiswick, Barry R. "The Economic Progress of Immigrants: Some Apparently Universal Patterns", *Contemporary Economic problems*, Edited by Fellner, W. American Enterprise Institute, Washington, DC.

Chiswick, Barry R. "Human Capital and the Labor Market Adjustment of Immigrants", *Research in Human Capital Development*, volume edited by Oded Stark, volume 4, JAI Press, Connecticut, 1986.

Chiswick, Barry R. "The Endogeneity Between Language and Earnings: International Analysis", *Journal of Labor Economics*, volume 13, April 1995

Conick, John E. "Effects of Non-Clustering of Refugees", *Migration Today*, volume XI.

Dunning, Bruce B. "Vietnamese in America: The Adaptation of the 1975-1979 Arrivals", *Refugees as Immigrants*, Editor David W. Haines, Rowman And Littlefield Publishers, Inc. New jersey, 1989

England, Paula "The Failure of Human Capital Theory to Explain Occupational Sex Segregation", *The Journal of Human Resources*, volume XVII, 1982.

England, Paula Communications with Polacheck, Solomon W: *The Journal of Human Resources*, volume XX, 1985.

Finnan, Christine R. "Community Influences on the Occupational Adaptation of Vietnamese Refugees", *Anthropological Quarterly*, volume 55, number 3, 1982.



Grenier, G. "The Effects of language Characteristics on the Wages of Hispanic-American Males", *Journal of Human Resources*, volume 19, 1984.

Gwartney, J.D. & Long, J.E. "The Relative Earnings of Blacks and Other Minorities", *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, volume 31, 1978.

Haines, David W "Southeast Asian Refugees in the United States: an overview", *Migration Today*, Volume XI, 1982.

Haines, David W "Introduction:", *Refugees as Immigrants*, editor David W. Haines, Rowman And Littlefield Publishers, Inc. New jersey, 1989

Hung, Nguyen Manh. "Vietnamese", *Refugees in the United States: A Reference Handbook*, edited by David W. Haines, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1985.

Kibria, Nazli *Family Tightrope: The Changing Lives of Vietnamese Americans*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1993

Kim, Young Yun "Personal, Social, and Economic Adaptation: 1975-1979 Arrivals in Illinois", *Refugees as Immigrants*, editor David W. Haines, Rowman And Littlefield Publishers, Inc. New jersey, 1989

Kossoudji, S.A. "English Language Ability and the Labor market Opportunities of Hispanic and East Asian Immigrant men", *Journal of Labor Economics*, volume 6, 1988.

Latkiewicz, John & Anderson, Colette "Industries' Reactions to the Indochinese Refugees as Employees", *Migration Today*, Volume XI.

Lazear, Edward P. "Culture and Language", *Working Paper Series*, National Bureau of Economic Research, Incorporated, working paper 5249, September, 1995.

McManus, Walter S "Labor Market Costs of Language Disparity: An Interpretation of Hispanic Earnings Differences", *The American Economic Review*, 1985.

McManus, Walter S "Labor Market Effects of Language Enclaves:

Hispanic Men in the United States", *The Journal of Human Resources*, volume XXV, 1990.

Medoff, James L. & Abraham, Katherine G "Experience, Performance, and Earnings", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, volume 95, 1980

Medoff, James L. & Abraham, Katherine G "Are Those Paid More Really More Productive: The Case of Experience", *Journal of Human Resources*, volume 16, 1981

Polacheck, Solomon W Communications with England, Paula: *The Journal of Human Resources*, volume XX, 1985.

Polacheck, Solomon W "Occupational Segregation Among Women: Theory, Evidence, and a Prognosis", *Women in the Labor Market*, Editors Cynthia Lloyd et al, Columbia University Press, New York, 1979.

Polacheck, Solomon W "Occupational Segregation: An Alternative Hypothesis", *Journal of Contemporary Business*, volume 5, 1976.

Polacheck, Solomon W "Sex Differences in College Major", *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, volume 31, 1978.

Reimers, Cordelia "Labor Market Discrimination Against Hispanic and Black Men", *Review of Economics and Statistics*, volume 65, 1983.

Reimers, Cordelia "A comparative Analysis of the Wages of Hispanics, Blacks, and non-Hispanic Whites", *Hispanics in the US Economy*, edited by Borjas & Rivera-Batiz, Academic Press, Orlando, Fl. 1985.

Rivera-Batiz, Francisco L. "English Language Proficiency and the Economic Progress of Immigrants", *Economics Letters*, volume 34, 1990.

Stein, Barry N "Occupational Adjustment of Refugees: The Vietnamese in the United States" -- *International Migration Review*, volume 13, Spring 1979, Center for Migration Studies, NY.

Tainer, Evelina "English Language Proficiency and the

Determination of Earnings Among Foreign-Born Men", *Journal of Human Resources*, volume 23, 1988.

United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing, 1990 [United States]: Public Use Microdata Sample: 5-Percent Sample [Computer File] 2nd Release*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census [producer], 1993. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 1993.

United States General Accounting Office: "Vietnamese Amerasian Resettlement: Education, Employment, and Family Outcomes in the United States" -- *Report to Congressional Requesters* (GAO/PEMD-94-15). [{25}](#)

Whitmore, John K. "Chinese from Southeast Asia", *Refugees in the United States: A Reference Handbook*, edited by David W. Haines, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1985.

---

Howard Berkson completed his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy in 1994 at the University of Washington. His Master's thesis was defended in 1996 at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, where his work focused on economic outcomes of Southeast Asian refugee-immigrants. At the time of this writing, he is continuing his studies at the Institute in their doctoral program, focusing on organizational politics. Research interests include diverse areas ranging from inter-group dynamics among small, competing, work groups; human resource composition of high technology and communications organizations; the distribution of computing and communication infrastructure in the United States; and a continuing interest in the special analytical problems posed by non-native born populations in labor economics.

[Return to top.](#)