

# **Salient Features of Vietnamese and Filipina Brides of American Citizens: Findings Based on the Micro Data of Recent American Community Surveys**

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## Abstract

This paper studies the educational, employment, and income status of Vietnamese and Filipina brides of American citizens, based on the merged micro data of the 2005, 2006, and 2007 American Community Surveys. We found that the Vietnamese brides tended to be much less educated than the Filipina brides. This difference, together with the fact that the former tended to be much weaker in English language ability than the latter, contributed to (1) the finding that the Vietnamese brides had a lower employment rate than did the Filipina brides, and (2) the finding that the economic niche of the employed Vietnamese brides (in the salon sector) tended to yield substantially lower wages than did the economic niche of the employed Filipina brides (in the medical service sector). Since better-educated brides had a better chance to get married to better-educated husbands, we naturally found that the husbands of the Vietnamese brides tended to be less educated than the husbands of the Filipina brides. However, the gap in educational attainment between the two groups of husbands was substantially smaller than the corresponding gap between the two groups of the brides. Underlying this gender difference was the fact that in addition to educational status, beauty and pleasant personality were also important criteria for selecting wives, and the possibility that beauty and pleasant personality were not positively correlated with educational status. With respect to household income, the gap between the two groups of brides was not large, partly because of the strong tendency of the Vietnamese brides toward hypergamy. A nice finding was that both Filipina and Vietnamese wives of American citizens were at rather low risk of being in poverty. The rather negative images of foreign brides in higher-income Asian countries conveyed by many ethnographic studies have been countered by our more sanguine finding about the Vietnamese and Filipina brides in the United States. With respect to the idea that women in lower-income countries tend

to accept hypogamy at the personal level in order to achieve hypergamy at the societal level, it was moderately supported by the Filipina cases but largely negated by the Vietnamese cases.

***Keywords: Vietnamese and Filipina brides, America, education, employment, income***

## I. Introduction

In recent decades, international marriage has been used by women from lower-income countries as an important means to become immigrants and then citizens in higher-income countries. This is especially true in East Asia where major labor-receiving countries like Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have adopted a revolving-door policy to prevent the long-term settlement of migrant workers (Douglass 2006). In 2007, there were 31,807 marriages in Japan that involved couples with a foreign wife and a Japanese husband, representing 4.4% of all marriages. The major sources of these foreign wives were China (37.5%), the Philippines (29.0%), Korea (17.6%), and Thailand (4.6%).<sup>1</sup> According to the 2000 census of Japan, 92.3% of the Filipina residents were the wives of Japanese citizens, and 89.1% of the female Thai residents were also wives of Japanese citizens (Takeshita 2010). In 2007, there were 24,700 marriages between non-Taiwanese brides and Taiwanese grooms in Taiwan, representing 18.3% of all marriages (Liaw et al. 2011). By the end of January 2010, the stock of these foreign brides has increased to 401,685, with 65.5% from China, 20.5% from Vietnam, and 6.5% from Indonesia (Ministry of the Interior 2010). In South Korea, international marriages, involving mostly foreign brides and Korean grooms, accounted for 13.6% of all marriages registered in 2005, with most of the brides being (1) ethnic Koreans from China and (2) Vietnamese (Inoue 2010; Kim 2010).

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1 Based on the data from the Portal Site of Official Statistics of Japan (<http://www.e-stat.go.jp/SG1/estat/ListE.do?lid=000001066477>), Table 9.18 Trends in marriages by nationality of bride and groom: Japan. (downloaded on April 8, 2011). Note that in the official statistics of Japan, Taiwan is subsumed into China, whereas North and South Korea cannot be distinguished.

In Canada and Australia, international marriage is also used by many women from lower-income countries as an important means to gain the status of permanent residents, even though large numbers of foreign workers, together with their spouses and dependent children, are permitted, actually welcomed, to become landed immigrants and then citizens after only a few years. In 2009, there were 43,894 immigrants who obtained the landed immigrant status in Canada as “spouses and partners,” representing 17.4% of Canada’s total intake of immigrants of that year, with 59.9% being female (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2010). In the same year, there were 45,279 foreigners who became permanent residents in Australia as “spouses and fiancées,” representing 21.7% of Australia’s total intake of immigrants and 76.2% of the immigrants in the family class. A majority of the immigrants in the family class (63.8%) were female (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2010). It is reasonable to assume that most of these spouses, partners, and fiancées were the brides from lower-income countries who got married to Canadian and Australian citizens and permanent residents. Bonifacio (2009) indicated that in Australia, more than half of the women who migrated from the Philippines arrived as marriage migrants.

As a means for women to migrate from lower-income countries, international marriage is even more important in the inflows of immigrants into the United States than in the corresponding inflows into Canada and Australia, because since the major revisions of immigration laws of these countries in the mid-1960s, family reunion, relative to the need for skilled labor, became more important consideration for the admission of immigrants in the United States than in Canada and Australia. In the fiscal year of 2009-2010, there were as many as 317,129 *spouses of U.S. citizens* who newly obtained the legal immigrant status, representing 28.0% of the

total of 1,130,818 new legal permanent residents. Furthermore, in the same fiscal year, there were many *wives of preexisting permanent residents* that were hidden in the Second Preference category (spouses, children, and unmarried sons/daughters of alien residents) that included 98,567 new legal permanent residents (Department of Homeland Security 2010). Although the sex composition of these spouses of U.S. citizens and preexisting permanent residents cannot be found in published tables, most of them were undoubtedly the brides from lower-income countries.

Although foreign brides have been an important component of the intake of immigrants in the United States, the socioeconomic status of the foreign brides in the United States remain largely unknown. Although there have been some interesting and insightful ethnographic studies of them, these studies were based on very small and non-scientific samples and hence yielded findings that were of uncertain generality (e.g., Constable 2005; Thai 2005). We have looked in vain for any study of them that was based on the micro data representative of the whole country, except for Liaw and Ishikawa (2011).

The purpose of this paper is to study the educational, employment, and income status of the Vietnamese and Filipina brides of American citizens in the United States, based on the merged micro data of the 2005, 2006, and 2007 American Community Surveys (ACSs). Implicit in our attention to the specific nationalities of the foreign brides is the assumption that the attributes of the origin societies can play an important role in determining the status of the foreign brides in the United States. Our choice of the Vietnamese and Filipina brides is related to the fact that the foreign brides of these two nationalities have often been selected for research in ethnographic studies, and the fact that our preliminary analysis of the ACS data revealed that among the couples with the wives being a recent immigrant, the

proportion with the wife being married to an American citizen was much greater for those born in these two countries than for those born in other countries that were the major sources of recent immigrants (e.g., Mexico, India, China, and Korea).

With respect to educational status, we will compare that of the foreign brides to that of their husbands and pay particular attention to the possibilities of educational hypergamy (upward marriage), homogamy (horizontal marriage) and hypogamy (downward marriage). Some ethnographic studies (e.g., Thai, 2005) have indicated that in order to achieve hypergamy at the societal level (i.e., to move from a country with a low standard of living and low female status to a country with a high living standard and high female status), a high proportion of brides from lower-income countries are willing to accept hypogamy at the personal level by marrying a citizen of the host country who has little education and low socioeconomic status. Since the strategic nature of this kind of marriage may have a lasting negative effect on the happiness of the family life and increase the risk of marital breakup, it is useful to assess the relative importance of the three types of marriages with nationally representative data for the foreign brides.

With respect to the employment status of the Vietnamese and Filipina brides, we will focus on (1) their probabilities of holding a job, and (2) the types of jobs held by those who have a job. Since many foreign brides from lower-income countries want, and feel obliged, to remit money to their families in the home country, holding a job is highly desirable, although they may not be able to do so due to problems like language barrier and lack of skills. The types of jobs can also affect the ability, the amount, and the frequency of remittances.

With respect to the income status of the Vietnamese and Filipina brides, we will compare them with all couples in the United States in terms of total household income. This comparison can show the extent of their relative economic deprivations.

The organization of the paper is as follows. In Section 2, we present a brief literature review. In Section 3, we describe the ACS data. The empirical findings are presented in Section 4. Concluding remarks are made in Section 5.

## II. Literature Review

The focus of our review is on the findings about various aspects of the international marriages involving brides from lower-income countries and husbands in higher-income countries. In other words, we focus on marriages that are hypergamy at the societal level. As stated in the introduction, most of the findings about such marriages have been obtained in ethnographic studies, which provided substantial insights but uncertain generality due to small and non-scientific samples (Constable 2005; Thai 2005). However, in recent years, nationally representative micro data from censuses and marriage and divorce registrations have been used to generate additional insights (e.g., Kim 2010; Liaw et al. 2010; Liaw et al. 2011).

One rather common finding is that the spousal age gap (i.e., husband's age minus wife's age) tends to be much larger for such international marriages than for other kinds of marriages. In her ethnographic study of 95 women in Baan Roi-Et village in northeastern Thailand who married Western (mostly Swiss) husbands, Tosakul (2010) found that the spousal age gaps were mostly about 10 to 18 years. Based on the information about the foreign brides of Korean grooms in the 2004 marriage registration data



of South Korea, Kim (2010) found that the average spousal age gaps were 7.4 years for the brides from China (mostly ethnic Koreans), 17.1 years for the brides from Vietnam, 12.6 years for the brides from the Philippines, and 10.9 years for the brides from Mongolia. Based on the information about the foreign wives of Taiwanese men in Taiwan's 2003 Census of Foreign Spouses, Liaw et al. (2011) found that the average spousal age gaps were 14.0 years for the wives from Vietnam, 12.2 years for the wives from China, 11.1 years for the wives from Indonesia, 7.2 years for the wives from Thailand, and 7.1 years for the wives from the Philippines, whereas, according to Taiwan's 2008 marriage registration data, the average spousal age gaps were only 2.7 years for all first marriages and 6.1 years for all remarriages.

There were several main reasons for the observed large spousal age gaps. First, there were many relatively old males in higher-income countries who looked for younger brides in lower-income countries to meet their sexual and care needs. An example was the European pensioners who went to Southeast Asian countries to look for presumably gentle and caring brides (Tosakul 2010). Another example was the veterans in Taiwan who were the soldiers who had retreated from China in the late 1940s and were prohibited from marriage by the government in the 1950s. When their travel to China was allowed by the government in the late 1980s, a large number of them went to China to look for a younger wife (Huang 2006). Second, a sizable proportion of males in higher-income countries, who had low socioeconomic status or resided in rural/remote areas, continued to encounter great difficulties in finding a willing native-born bride. They remained unmarried until their 30s or even 40s and became desperate. To continue the family line and to deal with a serious shortage of farm labor, they looked for brides in lower-income countries where they tended to

choose younger unmarried females (Kim 2010; Liaw et al. 2010; Wang and Chang 2002). Third, some males in Western countries with a failed marriage to a Western female fantasized about the presumably cute and non-assertive Asian females, and looked for a younger Asian woman to make another attempt at a sexually more fulfilling and less combative marital life (Constable 2005).

Another rather common finding about the brides from lower-income countries to higher-income countries was that they tended to maintain strong connections with their natal families and kin. Most of the brides were found to feel obliged to remit money and send goods back to their relatives who tended to demand, and take for granted, their remittances. Based on a survey of 624 households in six provinces of the Mekong Delta region, Nguyen and Tran (2010) found that among the reasons given by the parents for the marriages of their daughters to Taiwanese husbands, 61.6% were “to help the family,” 10.8% were “for a better life,” 6.3% were “to make parents happy,” 4.6% were “don’t like local men,” and 3.7% were “influence of friend.” Based on a survey that covered 250 marriage migrant-sending households in three rural communes in the Mekong Delta region, Bélanger and Linh (2011) stated that in some poor Vietnamese villages where the families have depended heavily on the remittances from their married daughters in Taiwan and South Korea for economic and social upgrading, villagers even expressed a preference for having girls rather than boys. In the case of the Filipina brides of Japanese citizens in Japan, Suzuki (2005) found that the heavy burden of remittances became a cause for serious hardships in their daily life in Japan and disputes with their husbands. Not only parents but also siblings and even nieces and nephews expected to be supported by the Filipina brides of Japanese husbands who were all thought to be rich.

For many of the brides, the maintenance of strong connections with the natal family was found to be based on their traditional culture. However, in light of their large spousal age gaps and the gender gap in life expectancy in favor of females, many of them could foresee the possibility of living quite a few more years after the death of their husband and would prefer spending the last stretch of their life with their natal family. Thus, the maintenance of strong connections to their natal families could be of strategic importance to their future personal benefits. As Suzuki (2005) indicated, part of the remittances of the Filipina brides were used to build houses in the Philippines for themselves. In light of the large differences in cost of living between Japan and the Philippines, it would also make good economic sense for both the brides and their husbands to relocate to their natal families after retirement. Suzuki (2005) also found that the remittances were also used to buy land and to invest in businesses. In short, there are not only cultural but also strategic and purely economic reasons for the brides to maintain strong connections to their natal families.

International marriages between the brides in lower-income countries and the husbands in higher-income countries were found to encounter serious challenges and to be at high risk of breaking up. An importance reason for this problem was the mismatch of expectations. As demonstrated in the ethnographic study of the Vietnamese by Thai (2005), this mismatch could even happen to couples in which both parties belonged to the same ethnicity. On the one hand, many Viet Kieu (overseas Vietnamese) men in the United States, especially those who emigrated as children, were found to have a strong tendency to look for their brides in Vietnam, with the belief that White females and even Vietnamese girls who grew up in the United States were too independent, assertive, and obsessed with their own career, whereas the females who grew up in Vietnam were more graceful,

submissive, and supportive. On the other hand, many females in Vietnam, especially those with better education, wanted to marry Viet Kieu men in the United States, with the expectation that they could have a more liberated life and enjoy more equality with their husbands. Thai (2005) characterized such a mismatch of expectations as a “clash of dreams.” A woman from China, contemplating divorce from an American man to whom she married a couple of years ago, stated that her husband and other Western men were wrong: “most Chinese women are very independent and strong” (Constable 2005).

The harshness of daily life and loneliness experienced by the foreign brides in the rural and remote areas of the host countries, which were often compounded by frictions with co-resident parents-in-law, were also found to contribute to a high risk of marriage breakup. Liaw et al. (2010) found that the divorce rates of the foreign brides who became the daughters-in-law in the stem families in the Tohoku region of Japan (the north part of Honshu Island) were particularly high. In the stem families there, they not only had to endure cold and very snowy winters, the hard labor of farm work, and the loneliness of isolated rural life, but also had to deal with the stress of potential or real conflicts with co-resident parents-in-law. In her ethnographic study of Chosonjok (ethnic Korean) brides from China in South Korea, Freeman (2005) reported the negative reactions of popular opinion in South Korea to the recurring disappearances of Chosonjok brides without a trace immediately after receiving their residence permit, leaving behind their heart-broken husbands and, in some cases, their young children. Some of the disappeared brides might indeed be opportunistic and lack sincerity in their marriage. But, Freeman mentioned that many of them expected to have a better life in the prosperous economy of South Korea and were not prepared for “the hard physical labor of running a farm, the

cultural imperative to serve her in-laws and husband, the isolation of living beyond the reach of public transportation, or the stigma of being treated as a foreigner” (Freeman 2005).

With respect to the educational qualifications of foreign brides relative to those of their husbands, the literature has not yielded consistent findings about the brides from lower-income countries to higher-income countries. In the non-scientific sample of 69 brides in Vietnam for the Viet Kieu husbands in the United States studied by Thai (2005), almost 70% of the brides were college-educated women, among whom 40% had advanced degrees, which enabled them to work as “doctors, lawyers, computer programmers, and the like,” whereas 80% of the husbands held low-wage and low-status jobs. This finding suggests that many foreign brides were willing to accept hypogamy at the personal level in order to achieve hypergamy at the societal level. However, using Taiwan’s 2003 Census of Foreign Spouses, Chen (2008) showed that educational hypergamy was more common than educational hypogamy for the foreign wives of Taiwanese citizens: for the wives from China, 25.6% were in hypogamy, 33.7% were in homogamy, and 40.7% were in hypergamy; and for the wives from Southeast Asian countries, 20.2% were in hypogamy, 31.3% were in homogamy, and 48.5% were in hypergamy.<sup>2</sup>

It should be very important to study the reproductive contributions of foreign brides, especially in the countries with entrenched sub-replacement fertility where the concern with the continuation of the family line has been an important reason for getting foreign brides. However, there has been a scarcity of research on this topic. Using the micro data of Taiwan’s 2003

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2 Chen (2008) used the following five educational categories: (1) Illiterate, (2) Elementary, (3) Junior High, (4) Senior High, and (5) College+.

Census of Foreign Spouses, Liaw et al. (2011) analyzed the reproductive contributions of the foreign wives from the top five source countries (China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines). Using the measure of lifetime fertility rate (LTFR), which was defined for the foreign wives with a marriage duration of 10 or more years as the average number of children ever born with their Taiwanese husbands, they found that the overall LTFR for the foreign wives from the top five source countries combined was only 1.58 children, compared with 2.29 children for all married women in Taiwan. In other words, the foreign wives in Taiwan were unable to help lift Taiwan's fertility to the replacement level. They also found that among the foreign wives from the top five source countries, those from China had the lowest LTFR, 1.40, mainly because they were more prone to marry later, have a very large spousal age gap, be separated or divorced, and have their current marriage as their second marriage. Furthermore, they found that wife's educational attainment, which had played a very important role in Taiwan's fertility transition to the replacement level, turned out to have practically no effect on the LTFR of the foreign wives. A useful policy implication of this finding is that if the government and marriage brokers try hard to find better-educated foreign wives for Taiwanese men, the effort will contribute to improving the quality of their children without sacrificing the quantity, assuming that better-educated mothers are better at raising children.

Although the micro data of the ACS do not contain the information needed for studying the reproductive contributions of the foreign brides in the United States, the work of Liaw et al. (2011) has demonstrated that by exploiting the richness and flexibility in the micro data of censuses or nationally representative large surveys, researchers have a good chance of obtaining sharper and more relevant findings. For example, with respect to average spousal age gap, we have found with little effort from the micro

data of the ACS that it was indeed much longer for the Vietnamese and Filipina brides of American citizens than for all wives in the United States: 8.5 years for the Vietnamese brides and 10.4 years for the Filipina brides, compared with 2.4 years for all wives in the United States. In other words, the micro data of the ACS can be easily used to show that with respect to spousal wage gap, the Vietnamese and Filipina brides of American citizens were similar to the foreign brides from lower-income countries to other higher-income countries. We are hopeful that our analysis of the micro data of the ACS will contribute additional insights into the international marriages in the United States.

### **III. The ACS Data**

The ACS is a monthly survey on a sample that is representative of all households and individuals of the United States. Its questionnaire is essentially the same as the long-form questionnaire of the 2000 population census. The cumulative sample size over a year is about 1% of the total population of the United States. The micro data set used in this study was created by the U.S. Census Bureau by merging the records of the surveys conducted in 2005, 2006, and 2007. The number of individual records in the data set is more than 8.8 million, which represents about 3% of the country's total population. It is important to note that the individual records contain a weight variable whose values are inversely proportional to their sampling intensities. To avoid biases, all computations and tabulations should be based on these weights.

In addition to having an extremely large sample size, the ACS data are considered to be highly reliable, because the receivers of the ACS questionnaires are required by law to complete and mail back the

questionnaires, and because the Census Bureau uses a careful follow-up procedure (e.g., using telephone calls) to deal with those who failed to mail back the questionnaires. The importance of the ACS as a major data source for socioeconomic research on many facets and many sectors of the American society is greatly enhanced by the fact that the 2010 population census of the United States discontinued the use of the long-form questionnaire. A nice feature of the ACS data set for this study is that personal records are nested under household records so that it is easy to find out the characteristics of not only the brides in question but also their husbands and households.

Our analysis of the ACS data starts with the creation of a subsample in which each record represents a couple. A couple is defined as the “Reference Person” of a household plus his/her co-resident spouse. The record of each couple is made to contain variables that represent the attributes of (1) the wife, (2) the husband, and (3) the household. For the whole nation, this file contains 1,868,847 records. Next, from the records of this file of all couples, a file that contains only the couples in which the females are new immigrant wives is created. A new immigrant wife is defined as a wife who was born outside of the United States to non-American parents, and whose year of entry into the United States was *less than five years* before the survey in which she was a respondent. This file of new immigrant wives contains 25,995 records, representing 984,019 new immigrant wives in the total population. In this file, a record in which the husband was an American citizen is defined as the record of a *foreign bride of American citizen*. Note that the reason for our imposition of the year of entry to be less than five years is to exclude from the pool of the foreign brides of American citizens the wives of the husbands who had been foreigners at the time of entry and then became American citizens by the time the ACS in question was



conducted, because it takes at least five years for the foreign husbands to acquire American citizenship after getting the status of permanent resident. This study is focused on the foreign brides of American citizens who were born in Vietnam or the Philippines. The numbers of records for these two groups of brides are 386 and 954, respectively. These records represented 13,762 Vietnamese brides and 30,749 Filipina brides in the population.

To assess the extent of hypogamy of the Vietnamese and Filipina brides of American citizens at the personal level, the brides and their husbands are classified into five educational categories: (1) less than high school, (2) high school graduation, (3) some college, (4) Bachelor's degree, and (5) Master+ (Master's, professional or doctoral degree). A marriage is defined as hypogamy, if the bride's educational category is lower than her husband's educational category. Otherwise, the marriage is either hypergamy (when the opposite is true) or homogamy (when they are in the same educational category).

To compare the income distributions of the households of these brides and the households of all couples in the United States, household income is first scaled to the 2007 real dollar and then used to define six income categories: two low income categories (less than \$25,000; \$25,000-\$49,999), two middle income categories (\$50,000-\$74,999; \$75,000-\$99,999), and two high income categories (\$100,000-\$149,999; \$150,000+).<sup>3</sup>

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3 In creating the scheme of the six categories, we start by letting the lower limit of the second lowest income category be a round number (namely, \$25,000) that is close to the poverty threshold for a family of four persons (\$22,350). We then let the lower limits of the next three higher-income categories be twice, thrice, and four times the value of this limit (namely, \$50,000, \$75,000, and \$100,000). In light of the positively skewed nature of income distribution, we let the lower limit of the highest income category be \$150,000 so that the interval of the fifth category is twice as wide as the lower categories. We then apply this scheme to the ACS data and find that the scheme is suitable for our purpose of showing clear contrasts in household income distribution between Vietnamese brides and Filipina brides as well as between each of these two groups and all couples in the United States.

## IV. The Findings

Before examining the socioeconomic status of the Vietnamese and Filipina brides, it is useful to see how the importance of the marriages to American citizens to the determination of the volumes of new immigrant wives varied among major source countries. The proportion of the new immigrant wives marrying American citizens was as high as 60.3% for those born in the Philippines and 65.2% for those born in Vietnam, compared with only 27.7% for those born in China, 22.4% for those born in Korea, 20.8% for those born in Mexico, and 12.2% for those born in India. This sharp contrast suggests that relative to other means of immigration, Vietnamese females and Filipinas were much more likely to use international marriage as a means to migrate to the United States than were the females of other major source countries.

### (1) Educational Status

Let's first examine the educational status of the Vietnamese brides of American citizens (Table 1, upper panel). In the Master+ category, about half of the Vietnamese brides (50.9%) were in homogamy, and the other half (49.1%) were in hypogamy. Among those in hypogamy, a majority married American citizens with a Bachelor's degree, whereas the remainder married those with some college education. None of the Vietnamese brides with a Master+ degree were married to an American citizen with less than some college education. Among the Vietnamese wives with a Bachelor's degree, 48.9% were in hypogamy, 37.8% were in homogamy, and 13.3% were in hypergamy. Thus, at the two highest levels of education, the extent of hypogamy was less serious than what was depicted in the ethnographic study of Thai (2005).

Table 1. Comparison between foreign brides and their husbands in educational attainments

Education Level of Wife	Education Level of Husband						Marriage Type			Total (person)
	< HS (%)	HS (%)	Some Col (%)	Bachelor (%)	Master+ (%)	Hypogamy (%)	Homogamy (%)	Hypergamy (%)		
<b>A. Vietnamese Brides of American Citizens</b>										
< High school	41.5	26.1	20.8	10.4	1.2	0.0	41.5	58.5	4,100	
High school	10.6	43.6	29.1	12.8	3.9	10.6	43.6	45.8	5,206	
Some college	4.6	14.7	43.6	29.5	7.6	19.3	43.6	37.1	2,685	
Bachelor	6.5	14.1	28.3	37.9	13.3	48.9	37.9	13.3	1,537	
Master +	0.0	0.0	21.8	27.4	50.9	49.1	50.9	0.0	234	
Total	18.0	28.7	29.3	18.4	5.6	14.1	42.5	43.5	13,762	
<b>B. Filipina Brides of American Citizens</b>										
< High school	18.0	36.4	21.0	20.2	4.4	0.0	18.0	82.0	1,593	
High school	5.3	40.4	38.5	9.0	6.8	5.3	40.4	54.3	4,146	
Some college	5.7	20.7	45.6	20.4	7.6	26.4	45.6	28.0	8,096	
Bachelor	2.9	18.7	40.0	28.5	9.8	61.6	28.5	9.8	14,825	
Master +	2.0	18.8	29.0	36.3	13.9	86.1	13.9	0.0	2,089	
Total	4.7	23.1	39.6	23.9	8.8	43.2	33.1	23.7	30,749	

Data source: PUMS of the merged 2005-2007 ACS.

What is not clear at all from Thai's ethnographic study is that most of the Vietnamese brides had modest education, and that the Vietnamese brides with modest education had a strong tendency to be in hypergamy. We found that as many as 29.8% of the Vietnamese brides of American citizens had less than high school education, among them 58.5% were in hypergamy. Furthermore, among the Vietnamese brides with a high school diploma who represented 37.8% of the Vietnamese brides of American citizens, 45.8% were in hypergamy, and only 10.6% were in hypogamy. Even among the Vietnamese brides with some college education who represented 19.5% of the Vietnamese brides in question, more were in hypergamy (37.1%) than in hypogamy (19.3%).

Since only 11.2% of the Vietnamese brides of American citizens had a Bachelor's degree and 1.7% of them had a Master's or higher degree, the hypogamies discussed in Thai's ethnographic study were a small part of the big picture. Overall, the Vietnamese brides of American citizens were much more likely to be in hypergamy (43.5%) than in hypogamy (14.1%). Figure 1 shows clearly that their husbands tended to be better educated than themselves.

Next, let's examine the situation of the Filipina brides of American citizens (Table 1, lower panel). A large majority (86.1%) of the Filipina brides in the Master+ category were in hypogamy, and a majority (61.6%) of the Filipina brides with a Bachelor's degree were also in hypogamy. Thus, at the two highest levels of education, the downward marriages of the Filipina brides were more serious than their Vietnamese counterparts.

Similar to their Vietnamese counterparts, the Filipina brides of American citizens at lower levels of education had strong tendencies to be in hypergamy. Among the Filipina brides with less than high school education, a large majority (82.1%) were in hypergamy. Among the Filipina brides who were high school graduates, many more were in hypergamy (54.3%)

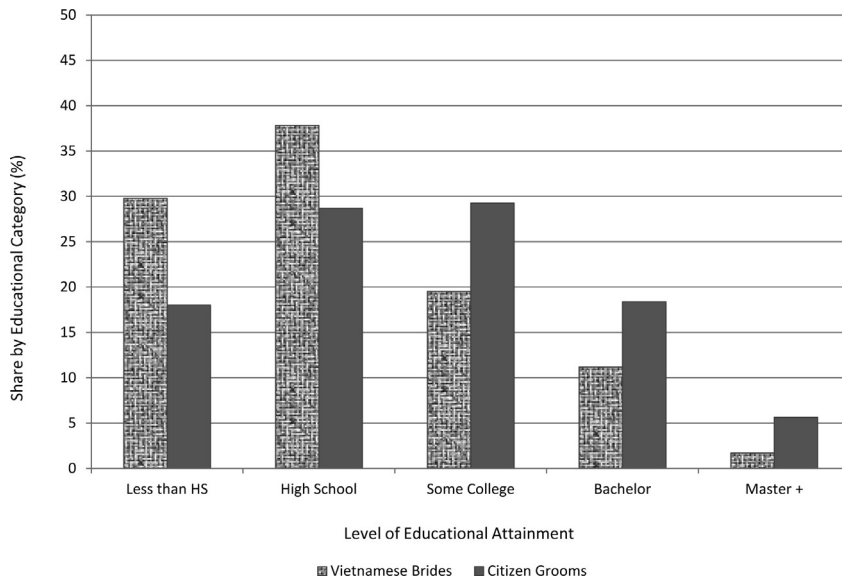


Figure 1. Educational compositions of Vietnamese brides of American citizens and their husbands: Clear evidence of hypergamy at the personal level

than in hypogamy (5.3%). Among the Filipina brides who had some college education, somewhat more were in hypergamy (28.0%) than in hypogamy (26.4%).

A sharp difference between the Filipina brides of American citizens and their Vietnamese counterparts was that the former tended to be much better educated than the latter. A very large proportion of the Filipina brides of American citizens had a Bachelor's degree (48.2%) or a Master's or higher degree (6.8%), whereas rather few of them were at the two lowest levels of education (5.2% at the bottom, and 13.5% at high school level). The high concentration in the upper levels of educational attainment contributed to the fact that ignoring education distinctions, the Filipina brides were more likely to be in hypogamy (43.2%) than in hypergamy

(23.7%). Figure 2 shows the educational compositions of the Filipina brides of American citizens and their husbands. More than half of the downward marriages were those of the brides with a Bachelor’s degree marrying husbands with some college education or a high school diploma.

A convenient index to quantify the difference in educational attainment between two populations, such as the Filipina brides versus the Vietnamese brides, is Lieberman’s net difference (ND) (Lieberman 1976). The simplest way to understand this index is to start with the question: what are the probabilities that relative to a randomly selected Vietnamese bride, a randomly selected Filipina bride will be better educated, equally educated, and less educated? Based on the educational compositions of the two populations in question, it can be shown via somewhat tedious computation

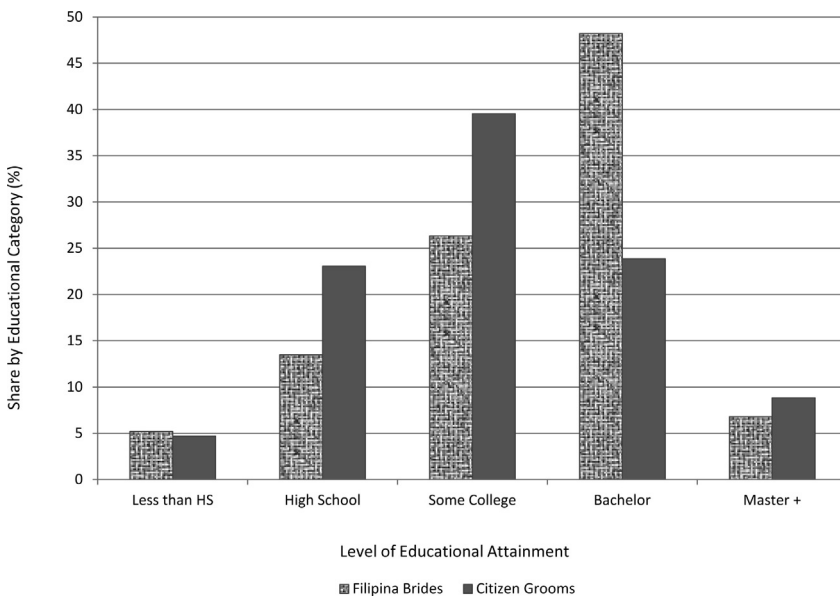


Figure 2. Educational compositions of Filipina brides of American citizens and their husbands: Some evidence of hypogamy at the personal level

that these probabilities are approximately 0.705, 0.173, and 0.122.<sup>4</sup> Lieberman's ND is defined as the first probability minus the last probability, which turns out to be 0.583. This value means that the cases in which the Filipina brides are better educated than the Vietnamese brides are 58.3% more than the cases in which the Vietnamese brides are better educated than the Filipina brides. A nice property of this index is that it has the upper limit of +1 (all Filipina brides are better educated than all Vietnamese brides) and the lower limit of -1 (all Filipina brides are less educated than all Vietnamese brides).

Two features can be found by comparing Figures 1 and 2. First, in addition to being better educated than their Vietnamese counterparts, the Filipina brides of American citizens tended to have better-educated husbands than did their Vietnamese counterparts. Second, the educational gap between the Filipina brides and Vietnamese brides was greater than the educational gap between their respective husbands. This visual impression is confirmed by the fact that Lieberman's ND for comparing the two groups of husbands (0.221) was positive, and the fact that this value was much smaller than Lieberman's ND for comparing the two groups of the brides (0.583). To the extent that better-educated females tend to have a better chance of finding a better-educated husband, the first feature seems straightforward. The second feature resulted partly from the fact that the Filipina brides at the upper levels of education were more prone to be in hypogamy than were their Vietnamese counterparts.

In light of the fact that the failure to compete in the domestic marriage market has caused many less-educated males in countries like Japan,

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4 Readers who are familiar with SAS are welcome to ask for a copy of an SAS program for computing Lieberman's ND from the first author.

Korean, and Taiwan to look for foreign brides in lower-income countries, we would like to know whether the same problem was also common in the United States. Therefore, we are motivated to ask whether the husbands of the Vietnamese and Filipina brides were also negatively selective among the American citizens. To answer this question, we first create from the ACS data a file that contains the records of all couples in which the husband was an American citizen. The educational composition of the American husbands in this file turns out to be: 11.3% with less than high school education, 28.3% being high school graduates, 27.7% with some college education, 19.6% with a Bachelor's degree, and 13.1% with at least a Master's degree. Since the value of Lieberman's ND for comparing the educational composition of the husbands of the Vietnamese brides against this composition turns out to be -0.131 (a negative value), we find that the husbands of the Vietnamese brides were indeed negatively selective. Since the value of Lieberman's ND for comparing the educational composition of the husbands of the Filipina brides against this composition turns out to be 0.079, we find that the husbands of the Filipina brides were actually somewhat positively selective. Therefore, although the American husbands of the Vietnamese brides fit into the stereotype observed in Japan, Korean, and Taiwan to some extent, most of the husbands of the Filipina brides were actually positively selective among the American citizens.

When the couples are restricted to those with the husband being a US-born citizen, the value of Lieberman's ND turns out to be 0.020 for husbands of the Vietnamese brides and 0.048 for the husbands of the Filipina brides. Thus, the US-born husbands of both Vietnamese and Filipina brides did not show the negative selectivity of the Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese husbands of the foreign wives from lower-income countries.



## (2) Employment Status: Probabilities of Being Employed

In our study, a foreign bride is considered to be employed, if she had a positive wage income and worked for at least ten weeks in the 12 months before the survey. We found that the employment rate was 45.5% for the Vietnamese brides of American citizens and 53.7% for the Filipina brides of American citizens, compared with 58.3% for the wives in all the couples in the United States. Thus, the Vietnamese brides were less likely to be employed than the Filipina brides, who in turn were less likely to be employed than the wives in all couples in the United States.

How can the employment rates of the foreign brides be improved? In order to answer this question, it is useful to identify a set of explanatory factors from the micro data of each of the two groups of foreign brides and to assess their effects in a binomial logit model. Based on the information available in the ACS data, we specify the following five potentially useful explanatory factors.

-- **Vintage length:** This is the time elapsed since entering the United States for residence. It is categorized into 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 years. We expect that the difficulty of being employed tends to be greater for the foreign brides with a relatively short vintage.

-- **Child burden:** This factor is represented by a dummy variable that assumes the value of 1 if the household of the foreign bride in question had at least one child younger than six years. We expect that those with a child burden are less able to be employed than those without.

-- **Educational level:** This factor is categorized into the five levels shown in the previous section. We expect that better-educated foreign brides are more likely to be employed.

-- **English language ability:** This factor is categorized into: (1) Very well, (2) Well, (3) Not well, and (4) Not at all.<sup>5</sup> The labels of these categories are the four listed answers to the following question in the questionnaire: “How well does this person speak English?” We expect that the foreign brides with better English language ability tend to have a better chance of being employed.

-- **Husband’s wage level:** Based on the median weekly wage of the husbands of the foreign wives of each ethnic group, this factor is represented by a dummy variable that assumes the value of 1 if the husband of the foreign wife in question had a weekly wage that was higher than the median. To the extent that higher-income husbands are more capable of supporting their wives, it may turn out that this factor had a negative effect. For the foreign brides of each ethnic group, the median is defined for their husbands with civilian jobs. It was \$749.40 for the husbands of the Vietnamese brides and \$889.69 for the husbands of the Filipina brides.

For the brides of each ethnic group, Table 2 shows the compositions of the brides in terms of each of the explanatory factors as well as the observed employment rate in each category of each explanatory factor. Relative to the observed employment rate of a chosen reference category for each explanatory factor, the observed odds ratios of being employed that are computed from the corresponding employment rates are also shown in Table 2. Note that due to having missing values for English language ability, the records of 12 Vietnamese brides and 134 Filipina brides have been deleted in this part of the analysis, causing the sample size to decrease to 374 for

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5 Unlike educational attainment which is supposed to be based on the objective evidence of completed formal education, English language ability is based on the subjective assessment of the respondent. Thus, the latter may not be as reliable as the former. However, the personal contacts of the first author with many Filipinas and some Vietnamese suggest that the sharp contrast between the two groups of foreign-born brides in English language ability revealed by the ACS data is valid.

Table 2. Observed effects of potentially useful explanatory factors on the probabilities of being employed for the Vietnamese and Filipina brides of American citizens, based on the 2005-2007 ACS data

Explanatory Factor	Vietnamese Brides of American Citizens				Filipina Brides of American Citizens			
	Inflow of Brides		Employment Rate (%)	Observed Odds Ratio	Inflow of Brides		Employment Rate (%)	Observed Odds Ratio
	Volume (person)	Composition (%)			Volume (person)	Composition (%)		
<b>Vintage Length</b>								
0 year	1,294	9.7	35.16	0.47	2,834	10.9	34.02	0.23
1 year	2,751	20.6	25.34	0.29	6,243	24.0	39.48	0.29
2 years	2,712	20.3	48.93	0.82	4,589	17.7	51.84	0.48
3 years	2,490	18.6	52.21	0.94	5,873	22.6	66.27	0.88
4 years	4,124	30.8	53.81	Reference	6,455	24.8	69.14	Reference
<b>Child Burden</b>								
Without young child	9,417	70.4	50.47	Reference	19,752	76.0	58.55	Reference
With young child	3,954	29.6	31.49	0.45	6,242	24.0	41.64	0.51
<b>Educational Level</b>								
< high school	3,992	29.9	44.64	0.63	1,396	5.4	37.82	0.31
High school graduate	5,121	38.3	37.26	0.47	3,433	13.2	38.68	0.32
Some college	2,487	18.6	53.20	0.89	6,964	26.8	47.33	0.46
Bachelor	1,537	11.5	55.56	0.98	12,522	48.2	63.10	0.88

Table 2. Observed effects of potentially useful explanatory factors on the probabilities of being employed for the Vietnamese and Filipina brides of American citizens, based on the 2005-2007 ACS data (continued)

Explanatory Factor	Vietnamese Brides of American Citizens			Filipina Brides of American Citizens				
	Inflow of Brides Volume (person)	Composition (%)	Employment Rate (%)	Observed Odds Ratio	Inflow of Brides Volume (person)	Composition (%)	Employment Rate (%)	Observed Odds Ratio
Master +	234	1.8	55.98	Reference	1,679	6.5	66.11	Reference
<b>English Language Ability</b>								
Very well	1,391	10.4	71.46	Reference	15,428	59.4	60.61	Reference
Well	2,545	19.0	59.49	0.59	8,572	33.0	49.35	0.63
Not well	6,980	52.2	39.76	0.26	1,923	7.4	30.27	0.28
Not at all	2,455	18.4	29.12	0.16	71	0.3	0.00	0.00
<b>Husband's Wage Level</b>								
<= median	8,019	60.0	44.32	Reference	16,069	61.8	57.23	Reference
Above median	5,352	40.0	45.67	1.06	9,925	38.2	50.04	0.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,371</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>44.86</b>	<b>-----</b>	<b>25,994</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>54.49</b>	<b>-----</b>

Note: The records of the brides with missing value for English language ability are removed from sample. Since 12 Vietnamese brides and 134 Filipina brides had missing value for this factor, the sample size is reduced to 374 for Vietnamese brides and 820 for Filipina brides. The median of the husband's weekly wage, defined for those with civilian jobs, was \$749.40 for the Vietnamese brides and \$889.69 for the Filipina brides. The brides whose husbands did not hold civilian jobs are put in the "<= median" wage category.

those from Vietnam and 820 for those from the Philippines. The deletion has resulted in a slight change of the overall employment rate to 44.9% for the Vietnamese brides and 54.5% for the Filipina wives.

We see in Table 2 that in addition to being much less educated than their Filipina counterparts, the Vietnamese brides tended to be much weaker in English language ability. Over 92% of the Filipina brides could communicate in English either very well (59.4%) or well (33.0%), whereas over 70% of the Vietnamese brides either could not use English well (52.2%) or did not know English at all (18.4%). We also see in Table 2 that relative to the Filipina brides, the Vietnamese brides were more likely to be of a longer vintage and to have at least one young child.

With respect to the effects on the dependent variable, we see in Table 2 that the observed employment rate tended to increase with vintage length, to be lower for those with a child burden, and to increase with educational level and English language ability. This was true for the brides of each ethnic group. For the Vietnamese brides, the highest employment rate (71.5%) was achieved by those who could speak English very well. For the Filipina brides, the highest employment rate (69.1%) was achieved by those whose vintage length was 4 years. Table 2 also suggests that husband's wage had a negative effect on Filipina bride's propensity to be employed but had no effect on that of Vietnamese brides.

The effects of the explanatory factors suggested by the employment rates in Table 2 might be somewhat misleading, because the explanatory factors were not independent of each other. For each ethnic group, vintage length and child burden were positively correlated, because those with a longer vintage were more likely to have a young child. Similarly, for each ethnic group, educational level and English language ability were also

positively correlated.<sup>6</sup> In light of such correlations, it is useful to use a multivariate statistical model to assess the effects of the explanatory factors. Since the dependent variable is a proportion, we choose a binomial logit model to be the multivariate statistical model.

The model is applied separately for each ethnic group. The goodness-of-fit of a specification of the model is represented by  $\rho^2$  (McFadden 1974).<sup>7</sup> With a minor exception, an explanatory variable is removed from the model if the magnitude of its associated t-ratio turns out to be less than 2.0. The minor exception is the retention of the dummy variable representing the ability to speak English “well,” which has a t-ratio of -1.9 for the Vietnamese brides and -1.8 for Filipina brides. The estimation result of the best specification of the model for each ethnic group is summarized in Table 3. The relative importance of an explanatory factor is represented by its explanatory power, which is its “marginal contribution in  $\rho^2$ .”<sup>8</sup>

Let’s first look at the estimation result for the Vietnamese brides. Only three explanatory factors turned out to have non-trivial explanatory powers. In descending order of the marginal contributions in  $\rho^2$ , they were English language ability (0.061), vintage length (0.056), and child burden (0.033). Educational level failed to remain in the best specification of the model, because its explanatory power was weak and overlapped to some extent

6 For the Vietnamese brides, the Spearman’s correlation coefficients were 0.18 ( $p=0.0005$ ) between Vintage length and child burden, and 0.44 ( $p<0.0001$ ) between educational level and English language ability. For the Filipina brides, the corresponding values were 0.20 ( $p<0.0001$ ) and 0.25 ( $p<0.0001$ ).

7 For a specification of the model, the  $\rho^2$  is defined as 1 minus a ratio in which the numerator is the log likelihood achieved by the specification, and the denominator is the log likelihood of the null model (i.e., the model with the coefficients of all explanatory variables set at zero).

8 The marginal contribution in  $\rho^2$  of a given explanatory factor is defined as the decrease in  $\rho^2$  as a consequence of deleting the factor in question from the best specification of the model, while holding the coefficients of the remaining variables in the model unchanged. The greater the decrease, the more important the deleted factor.

Table 3. Estimation results of using a binomial logit model to explain the Filipina brides' probabilities of being employed

Explanatory Factor	Multi-Factor Estimation Result			Marginal Contribution in $\rho^2$
	Coef.	Odds Ratio	t-Ratio	
<b>A. Model For Vietnamese Brides</b>				
Constant	1.946	7.00	4.5	
1. Vintage Length				0.056
0 year	-1.396	0.25	-3.4	
1 year	-1.300	0.27	-4.2	
2. Child Burden				0.033
With Young Child	-1.023	0.36	-3.9	
3. English Language Ability				0.061
Well	-0.901	0.41	-1.9	
Not well	-1.798	0.17	-4.2	
Not at all	-2.041	0.13	-4.2	
<b>Goodness of Fit: <math>\rho^2=0.125</math></b>				
<b>B. Model For Filipina Brides</b>				
Constant	1.872	6.50	10.0	
1. Vintage Length				0.075
0 year	-1.678	0.19	-6.2	
1 year	-1.479	0.23	-7.3	
2 years	-0.840	0.43	-3.9	
2. Child Burden				0.043
With Young Child	-1.248	0.29	-6.5	
3. Education Level				0.021
High school graduate or less	-0.897	0.41	-4.1	
Some college	-0.600	0.55	-3.3	
4. English Language Ability				0.012
Well	-0.297	0.74	-1.8	
Not well	-0.991	0.37	-3.0	
Not at all	-infinity	0.00	---	
5. Husband's Wage Level				0.008
Above median	-0.461	0.63	-2.9	
<b>Goodness of Fit: <math>\rho^2=0.137</math></b>				

Note: The computation of marginal contribution in  $\rho^2$  is based on the fixed-coefficient method.

with that of English language ability.

With “very well” being the reference category, the effects of English language ability are represented by the odds ratios of 0.41 for “well,” 0.17 for “not well,” and 0.13 for “not at all” (see the Vietnamese panel in Table 3). The odds ratio of 0.17 for “not well” means that the change from “very well” to “not well” is expected to cause the odds of being employed to decrease by as much as  $(1.00-0.17)\times 100\%=83\%$ . Since only 10.4% of the Vietnamese brides could speak English “very well” and as many as 52.2% and 18.4% of them were in the “not well” and “not at all” categories (see Table 2), a large majority of the Vietnamese brides were seriously handicapped in being employed by their lack of good English ability.

With respect to the effects of vintage length on the Vietnamese brides, the significant difference was between the relatively low level of employment for those with the vintages of 0 or 1 year on the one hand and the relatively high level of employment for those with the vintages of 2, 3, or 4 years. In other words, the serious handicap of being a new entrant to the United States persisted for nearly two years. The odds ratios in question were 0.25 for 0 year and 0.27 for 1 year (Table 3). Both were substantially less than the neutral value of 1.

For the Vietnamese brides, child burden was also a serious obstacle to being employed, although its explanatory power was weaker than those of English language ability and vintage length. This obstacle was represented by an odds ratio of 0.36, which implied that having a young child could result in a reduction of the odds of being employed by as much as 64%.

Next, let’s look at the estimation result for the Filipina brides. Partly due to a larger sample size, all five potentially useful explanatory factors turned out to have non-trivial explanatory power. In terms of the marginal contribution to  $\rho^2$ , vintage length (0.075) was most important, followed by



child burden (0.043), educational level (0.021), English language ability (0.012), and husband's wage level (0.008).

The negative effects of being a new entrant to the United States on the likelihood of being employed was more serious and persisted longer for Filipina brides than for Vietnamese brides. For Filipina brides, the odds ratios in question were 0.19 for 0 years, 0.23 for 1 year, and 0.43 for 2 years.

The negative effect of child burden on the likelihood of being employed was also greater for Filipina brides than for Vietnamese brides. The odds ratio in question was 0.29 for the Filipina brides, compared with 0.36 for the Vietnamese brides.

The positive effect of educational level on the likelihood of being employed, which turned out to be statistically non-significant for the Vietnamese brides, was significant for the Filipina brides. Among the Filipina brides, relative to those with at least a Bachelor's degree, the odds ratios were 0.41 for those with at most a high school education, and 0.55 for those with some college education.

Relative to those whose English ability was in the "very well" category, employment handicaps encountered by those in the "well" and "not well" categories turned out to be less serious for the Filipina brides than for the Vietnamese brides. The odds ratios for these two categories were 0.74 and 0.37 for the Filipina brides, compared with 0.41 and 0.17 for the Vietnamese brides. The odds ratio for the "not at all" category dropped down to the unlikely value of 0 for the Filipina brides, because in the input data all of the Filipina brides in this category did not have a job.<sup>9</sup> Since extremely few Filipina brides (0.03%) were in this category, this finding

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9 If the individuals in a category were all employed or all not employed, then this category is considered to be "completely separated." Based on the maximum likelihood estimation method, the estimated coefficient of the dummy variable representing this category is then theoretically "positive infinity" or "negative infinity," resulting in an odds ratio of either 1 or 0.

was a very small part of the big picture. In short, in the multi-factor context, the difficulty in being employed due to English language deficiency tended to be less serious for Filipina brides than for Vietnamese brides.

Unlike the Vietnamese brides whose employment tendency was not affected by the husband's wage level, the employment tendency of Filipina brides was significantly affected by husband's wage level in the multi-factor context: the odds ratio for the dummy variable representing above-median-wage was 0.63, implying that the odds of being employed for those whose husbands had above-median-wage were 47% less than that of the other brides.

A methodological issue worth discussing here is that the explanatory powers of the correlated factors of vintage length and child burden did not overlap. These two factors were actually complementary in the sense that the sum of their marginal contributions in  $\rho^2$  in the multi-factor model was actually greater than the sum of their contributions in single-factor models. For the Vietnamese brides, the former was 0.089, whereas the latter was 0.060. For the Filipina brides, the former was 0.118, whereas the latter was 0.070. An important implication of this finding is that the observed odds ratio of child burden for each ethnic group in Table 2 (0.45 for Vietnamese brides and 0.51 for Filipina brides) understates the strength of the negative effect of child burden on the chance of employment. In the multi-factor model, the odds ratio of child burden (0.36 for the Vietnamese brides and 0.29 for the Filipina brides) became further away from the neutral level of 1.

The findings of our analysis in this section can yield two policy recommendations that are likely to be well received and effective in increasing the employment rate of the foreign brides: (1) provision of inexpensive and easily accessible childcare services to reduce the negative effect of child burden; and (2) provision of free English language training

services, especially to Vietnamese brides, so that the language barrier to employment can be reduced. The taxes they pay from their future income streams may be much greater than the costs of these services.

### **(3) Employment Status: Types of Jobs**

Newly arrived immigrants tend to show concentrations in a few ethnic employment niches (Waldinger 1996). The employed Vietnamese and Filipina brides of American citizens are no exceptions.

The employed Vietnamese brides were very strongly concentrated in salons, especially nail salons, which represented a very small sector of the economy.<sup>10</sup> As many as 33.2 % of the employed Vietnamese brides were found in the salon sector, which contained only 1.1% of all employed wives in the United States. In contrast, only 0.3% of the employed Filipina brides were found in this sector. For the Vietnamese brides, the index of specialization<sup>11</sup> in the salon sector turned out to be 31.31 (Table 4). The very strong concentration of the Vietnamese brides in the salon sector reflected the fact that compared with other immigrant groups, those born in Vietnam were much more likely to find jobs in this sector. Our further analysis of the ACS data revealed that 18.7% of Vietnam-born female workers were found

10 Based on the variable INDP (Industry recode), we create the salon sector by merging two categories: (1) "8980 .SRV-BEAUTY SALONS" and (2) "8990 .SRV-NAIL SALONS AND OTHER PERSONAL CARE SERVICES." Most Vietnam-born female immigrants in this sector belonged to the second category in which they worked mainly as nail technicians. According to the 2005-2007 ACS data, as many as 40,744 Vietnam-born female workers were in the "8990" category, representing 22.2% of all female workers (both native born and foreign born) in this sector in the whole country. For comparison, the corresponding shares were 2.6% for those born in Korea, 2.5% for those born in China, 0.8% for those born in Mexico, 0.4% for those born in the Philippines, and 0.3% for those born in India.

11 For each ethnic group, the index of specialization of a sector is defined as the sector's percentage share of the total workers of the ethnic group divided by the sector's percentage share of the total workers of the whole country. For the Vietnamese brides, the index of specialization of the salon sector is  $33.15/1.06=31.31$  (see Table 4). A value much bigger than 1 for the index indicates a much stronger concentration.

Table 4. Distributions of (1) Vietnamese brides of American citizens, (2) Filipina brides of American citizens, and (3) all wives in the United States by industry: restricted to those who had a job

Industry Sector	Percentage Distribution			Index of Specialization		
	Vietnamese Brides	Filipina Brides	All Wives in the U.S.	Vietnamese Brides	Filipina Brides	Filipina Brides
Medical Service	3.16	28.16	18.44	0.17	1.53	1.53
Educational Service	2.54	7.56	16.70	0.15	0.45	0.45
Retail	10.58	15.41	9.83	1.08	1.57	1.57
Financial	4.44	7.94	9.34	0.48	0.85	0.85
Nail & Beauty Salons	33.15	0.27	1.06	31.31	0.26	0.26
Hospitality	10.13	11.15	5.46	1.86	2.04	2.04
Electronic/Electric Mfg.	9.27	1.67	1.12	8.25	1.49	1.49
Apparel Manufacturing	3.16	0.35	0.32	9.92	1.08	1.08
Other Industries	23.57	27.49	37.72	0.62	0.73	0.73
Size (person)	6,266	16,521	32,115,656	-----	-----	-----

Data source: PUMS of the 2005-2007 ACS.

in the salon sector. The corresponding proportions were only 4.2% for those born in Korea, 2.2% for those born in China, 1.1% for those born in Mexico, 0.6% for those born in the Philippines, and 0.4% for those born in India.

How can the very strong concentration of Vietnamese female workers in nail salons be explained? It does not have anything to do with the employment structure in their country of origin, because nail salons have not been important in Vietnam. The ACS data are quite illuminating in this respect. We found that among the employed Vietnamese brides of American citizens, only 3.7% of those with the vintage length being 0 years were found in the salon sector, and that this proportion increased markedly with vintage length: 14.6% for 1 year, 27.6% for 2 years, 38.2% for 3 years, and 45.3% for 4 years. This finding suggests that most of them did not have the skill to work as a nail technician upon arriving in the United States but picked up the skill rather quickly after entry.

According to a video program “Vietnam (Origin of Nail Salon Business)” on YouTube, the strong concentration of female Vietnamese immigrants in nail salons evolved from an incident in which Tippi Hedren, the leading actress in Alfred Hitchcock’s film “The Birds,” befriended Vietnamese women in a refugee camp in San Diego and wanted to help them find jobs in 1975.<sup>12</sup> She thought that an effective way was to get them trained as nail technicians. She then arranged to have her personal manicurist teach the Vietnamese women manicure at a local college, with 20 students in the first class. In less than a year, the students were able to get a license and work as nail technicians. Their success then snowballed into a large ethnic employment niche for Vietnamese immigrants: from San Diego

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12 Vietnam (Origin of Nail Salon Business). <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AN5lvIVzOHE> (Date visited: June 30, 2011).

to the rest of California, then to the rest of the United States, and even to other countries like the United Kingdom, France, and Australia (Bagwell 2008). This snowballing process involved the spread of training programs, the expansion of the nail salon markets, and the development of Vietnamese entrepreneurs.

The large expansion of the employment of Vietnamese immigrants in nail salons probably did not have a large negative impact on native-born nail technicians, because the reduction of prices by Vietnamese nail salons created a large number of new customers who previously could not afford to get manicure and pedicure services. In other words, they mainly created their own customers. Although some chemicals in nail care products are carcinogenic and can cause allergic reactions, many Vietnamese immigrants are willing to work as nail technicians, because most of them are unable to get a reasonably well-paying job due to their limited educational background and lack of English proficiency, and because the training to be a nail technician takes much less time and requires much less educational background and money than the training for other professions such as nursing. Since an overwhelming majority (95.7%) of the Vietnamese brides working in the salon sector belonged to the third wage decile, their jobs were of low status in the United States but generated a much higher income than what they used to get in Vietnam.

In addition to the salon sector, the employed Vietnamese brides of American citizens were also somewhat overrepresented in two other service sectors that did not require a high level of education: the retail and hospitality sectors,<sup>13</sup> which employed respectively 10.6% and 10.1% of

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13 The retail sector is defined to include all industry categories with the prefix of "RET," which range from 4670 to 5590. The hospitality sector is defined to include the following industry categories: (1) "8590: ENT-OTHER AMUSEMENT, GAMBLING, AND RECREATION

them. The values of their specialization index in these two sectors were 1.08 and 1.86, respectively (Table 4). In the retail sector, most of them (85.3%) were concentrated in jobs belonging to the three lowest wage deciles: 17.2% in the first decile, 47.7% in the second decile, and 20.4% in the third decile. In the hospitality sector, they were mostly in poorly paid jobs: 59.8% in the first wage decile, and 27.2% in the third wage decile.

Although manufacturing jobs were in general much less important than service jobs to them, the employed Vietnamese brides of American citizens had a strong specialization in two manufacturing sectors that did not require a high level of education: electronic/electric manufacturing and apparel,<sup>14</sup> which respectively employed 9.3% and 3.2% of them. The values of their specialization index in these two manufacturing sectors were 8.3 and 9.9, respectively (Table 4). Most of their jobs in electronic/electric manufacturing (80.0%) were in the fifth wage decile, whereas most their jobs in the apparel sector (86.9%) were in the third wage decile.

Although their jobs were much less specialized than those of their Vietnamese counterparts, the employed Filipina brides of American citizens had medical service<sup>15</sup> as their most important sector, which provided jobs for 28.2% of them. In comparison, this sector provided jobs to only 3.2%

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INDUSTRIES,” (2) “8660: ENT-TRAVELER ACCOMMODATION,” (3) “8680: ENT-RESTAURANTS AND OTHER FOOD SERVICES,” and (4) “8690: ENT-DRINKING PLACES, ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES.”

- 14 The electronic/electric manufacturing sector is defined to include the following industry categories: (1) “3360: MFG-COMPUTER AND PERIPHERAL EQUIPMENT,” (2) “3370: MFG-COMMUNICATIONS, AUDIO, AND VIDEO EQUIPMENT,” (3) “3380: MFG-NAVIGATIONAL, MEASURING, ELECTROMEDICAL, AND CONTROL INSTRUMENTS,” (4) “3390: MFG-ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS AND PRODUCTS, N.E.C.,” (5) “3470: MFG-HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES,” (6) “3490: MFG-ELECTRICAL LIGHTING, EQUIPMENT, AND SUPPLIES, N.E.C.” The apparel manufacturing sector is defined to include the following categories: (1) “1680: MFG-CUT AND SEW APPAREL,” (2) “1690: MFG-APPAREL ACCESSORIES AND OTHER APPAREL.”
- 15 The medical service sector is defined to include all service categories with the prefix of “MED,” ranging from 7970 to 8290.

of their Vietnamese counterparts and 18.4% of all employed wives in the United States. Relative to all employed wives in the United States, their specialization index in the medical service sector was 1.53 (Table 4). Their strong concentration in this sector reflected the fact that medical service has been an important employment niche for Filipina immigrants in the United States and in several other developed countries like Canada. Our further analysis of the 2005-2007 ACS data revealed that among the 635,070 female workers born in the Philippines, as many as 232,529 (or 36.6%) were employed in the medical service sector. No other foreign-born groups had such a strong concentration in this sector. The proportion of female workers in this sector was 21.8% for those born in India, 20.0% for those born in Canada, 12.3% for those born in Korea, 10.1% for those born in China, 9.3% for those born in Vietnam, and 8.3% for those born in Mexico.

The heavy concentration of Filipina immigrants in the medical sector was rooted in the fact that the Philippines used to be a colony of the United States since a war between the United States and Spain in 1898 (Karnow 1989). Before the American takeover, the Spanish colonists since 1565 had imposed the Catholic religion on the Filipinos and deliberately avoided teaching them the Spanish language in order to keep them submissive forever.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, the American government, after causing the deaths of some 200,000 Filipinos in brutal military maneuvers (Karnow 1989), wanted to remake the Philippines in the image of the United States. To help transform Filipino “savages” into decent citizens of a democracy, the American colonial power introduced universal education in English, with an emphasis on the training of nurses for the improvement of public health in the Philippines.

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16 Instead of teaching the Filipinos the Spanish language, the Spanish priests and friars learned to use their dialects. Only small numbers of Filipino elites were given the opportunity to learn Spanish, although most Filipinos were given Spanish names.



The education system that was imposed by the United States and became entrenched after the 1946 independence of the Philippines yielded a large supply of English-speaking Filipina nurses who were aware of much higher wages and better working conditions in the US and were dreaming of opportunities to see presumably exciting places there (Choy 2003). The first large outpouring of Filipina nurses to the US occurred in the 1950s after the US government introduced the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) in 1948, which was designed for educated foreigners to work and study at the sponsoring institutions in the United States for two years.<sup>17</sup> Due to serious shortages of nursing staff, many hospitals and health units in the US used the EVP to actively recruit nurses in the Philippines, and many Filipina nurses responded enthusiastically. With the creation of Medicare for the elderly and Medicaid for the poor in 1965, the strong demand for Filipina nurses in the United States persisted. Many of the Filipina nurses did not want to return to the Philippines, and used various strategies to stay in the US. One of these strategies was to marry an American citizen.<sup>18</sup>

The creation of the category of Third Preference in the 1965 revision of the Immigration Act was another change that helped to sustain the large inflow of Filipina nurses. This category allowed foreign professionals such as nurses to apply for the status of permanent residents. With the recruitment by American hospital and health units as well as the promotions by immigration and travel agents in the Philippines, many Filipina nurses, including many returned exchange visitors, entered the US as permanent residents via the Third Preference. In the meantime, Filipino entrepreneurs

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17 The EVP was part of the US cold war agenda to prevent the spread of Communism. After returning, the exchange visitors were expected to help establish a positive attitude towards the US in their own countries.

18 Another strategy was to exit through Canada or Mexico and reenter as students.

opened new schools of nursing in the provinces as well as urban areas. The number of nursing schools in the Philippines increased from 17 in 1950 to 140 in 1970 (Choy 2003).

With crushing foreign debts and a stagnant economy by the early 1970s, President Marcos resorted to the promotion of labor export as a strategy for the economic development and survival of the Philippines. In an address to the Philippine Nurses Association at its 1973 convention, he declared that “it is our policy to promote the migration of nurses” (Choy 2003), and urged them to send their earnings “back to your folks at home” (Choy 2003).<sup>19</sup> After the removal of Marcos from power in 1986, the economic malaise of the Philippines persisted, mainly as a consequence of the inability to reform the very corrupt political system and the economic system with very unequal distribution of wealth and weak employment creation capacity (Karnow 1989). It is not surprising that marriage to American citizens has been widely used by Filipinas as an effective means to migrate to the United States, where many of them have found jobs in the medical service sector.

The Filipina nurses played the pioneering role of opening up the medical service sector of the US, not only in the occupation of registered nurses but also in other occupations for other Filipinas with lower skills. Among the Filipina brides working in the medical service sector, the three most common occupations were: (1) registered nurses (24.4%); (2) nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides (21.1%); and (3) personal and home care aides (11.8%). The jobs in the first occupation were mostly in the ninth wage decile (75%) and partly in the eighth wage decile (25%). The jobs

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19 In his address, President Marcos also stated that at his order, Filipino nurses were excluded from the coverage of the RP-US Exchange Visitor Program, because as students via this program the Filipino nurses were paid less than the regular nurses.

in the second occupation were mostly in the fourth wage decile (78%) and partly in the fifth wage decile (17%) and the third wage decile (5%). The jobs in the third occupation were all in the third wage decile. Overall, the jobs for the Filipina brides in the medical service sector showed a clear by-modal pattern, with a clear concentration in the third (21%), fourth (26%), and fifth (14%) wage deciles, and another clear concentration in the ninth (19%) and eighth (8%) wage deciles. In terms of income-generating capacity, the medical service sector as an employment niche for the Filipina brides was much better than the salon sector as an employment niche for the Vietnamese brides.

Next to the medical service sector, the employed Filipina brides of American citizens were overrepresented in the retail sector (15.4%) and the hospitality sector (11.2%). The values of their specialization index in these two sectors were 1.57 and 2.04, respectively (Table 4). In the retail sector, most of their jobs were very low wage jobs: 25.8% in the first wage decile, 52.2% in the second wage decile, and 8.8% in the third wage decile. In the hospitality sector, their jobs were mainly poorly paid but partly well paid: 41.3% in the first wage decile, 16.7% in the second wage decile and 16.1% in the third wage decile on the one hand, and 9.1% in the sixth wage decile, 5.5% in the seventh wage decile, and 5.8% in the eighth wage decile on the other. With a better command of the English language than their Vietnamese counterparts, a significant proportion of the Filipina brides were able to hold better-paying managerial jobs in the hospitality sector.

It is worth noting that the employed Filipina brides of American citizens were much more likely to be working in the educational service sector than were their Vietnamese counterparts: 15.4% of them were employed in this sector, compared with only 2.5% of their Vietnamese counterparts, although their specialization index for this sector was only 0.45

(Table 4). A high proportion of the Filipina brides in this sector (41%) held jobs that were in the ninth wage decile, mostly as teachers in primary and secondary schools. Their ability to be teachers in the US is another positive legacy of the American colonization of the Philippines.

As a result of being less able to get well paying jobs, the employed Vietnamese brides had a median weekly wage of only \$321, which was 74% of the median weekly wage of the employed Filipina brides (\$422). Based on their distributions among the wage deciles, the difference in wage level between these two groups of employed brides is represented by the Lieberman's ND of 0.175 in favor of the employed Filipina brides.

#### **(4) Household Income Status**

The living standard and the sense of economic security of foreign wives depend not only on their own employment and wage but more importantly on the wage and non-wage incomes of their husbands. It is thus useful to examine the household incomes of the Vietnamese and Filipina brides of American citizens. Figure 3 shows that the distributions of these two groups of brides with respect to six categories of household income did not differ very much, with the Lieberman's ND being 0.115 in favor of the Filipina brides. The Vietnamese brides were overrepresented in the lowest two income categories and underrepresented in all other income categories. The values of the median household income were \$60,600 for the households of the Vietnamese brides and \$66,288 for the households of the Filipina brides, with former being 91% of the latter. The gap was \$5,688, which was 8.0% of the median household income of all couples in the United States.

Figure 3 also shows that the households of both Vietnamese and Filipina brides of American citizens tended to have lower household

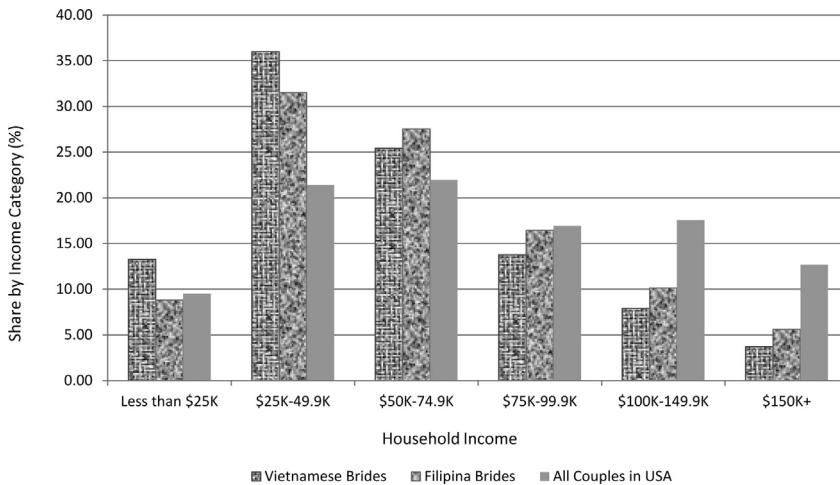


Figure 3. Comparison of the household income among (1) Vietnamese brides of American citizens, (2) Filipina brides of American citizens, and (3) all couples in the USA

incomes than the households of all couples in the whole country. Compared with the households of all couples in the whole country, the households of the Vietnamese brides of American citizens had relative surpluses in the three lowest income categories, whereas the relative surpluses of the households of the Filipina brides of American citizens were limited to the upper low income (\$25,000-\$49,999) and lower middle income (\$50,000-\$74,999) categories. The median household income of all couples in the country was \$71,100, which was \$10,500 or 14.8% higher than the median household income of the households of the Vietnamese brides and was \$4,812 or 6.8% higher than the median household income of the households of the Filipina brides. Relative to the households of all couples in the United States, the values of the Lieberman's ND for representing income inferiority were -0.267 for the Vietnamese brides and -0.168 for the Filipina brides.

An important point is that a large majority of these two groups of brides were in households that were above the poverty threshold. For 2011, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sets the poverty threshold at \$14,716 for a two-person family, \$18,530 for a three-person family, and \$22,350 for a four-person family.<sup>20</sup> Since these values are lower than the upper limit of the lowest income category in Figure 3, it can be inferred that less than 13.3% of the Vietnamese brides and less than 8.8% of the Filipina brides married into households that were below the poverty threshold. This finding yields a more positive view about these two groups of foreign brides than what has usually been depicted in ethnographic studies.

## V. Concluding Discussions

The most fundamental difference between the Vietnamese brides and the Filipina brides of American citizens was that the former tended to be much less educated than the latter. This difference was represented by a very large Lieberman's ND of 0.583 in favor of the Filipina brides. With the Philippines being an American colony for about half a century, the Filipina brides mostly enjoyed the benefits of being fluent in English, whereas the Vietnamese brides were mostly handicapped by the inability to communicate in English effectively. There were two important immediate economic implications of these differences. First, the Vietnamese brides had a lower employment rate than did the Filipina brides: 45.5% versus 53.7%. Second, the economic niche of the employed Vietnamese brides

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20 These values were taken from the website: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/11poverty.shtml> (Date visited: June 6, 2011).

(in the salon sector) tended to yield substantially lower wages than did the economic niche of the employed Filipina brides (in the medical service sector). The wage gap between the two groups of employed brides was reflected by moderately large Lieberman's ND of 0.175 in favor of the employed Filipina brides.

Our multivariate analysis of the Vietnamese and Filipina brides' probabilities of being employed revealed that the positively correlated explanatory factors of (1) vintage length and (2) child burden were complementary in explanatory power and hence should be included simultaneously in the explanatory model in order to avoid understating the importance of each of them. The analysis also yielded the inference that offering free English language training and low-cost childcare services, especially to the Vietnamese brides, could substantially raise their employment rates. Many ethnographic studies have indicated that they were likely to be highly motivated to be employed so that they could fulfill the desire and obligation to remit money back to the relatives in their home countries.

It is useful to put the above findings in the context of the broader economic literature. Based on a sample of all 21- to 64-year-old ethnic minority females ( $N=1,870$ ) and males ( $N=1,796$ ) in the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities conducted in the United Kingdom in 1994, Shields and Price (2001) found that in a multivariate probit model applied to each sex separately, the probabilities of being employed were (1) significantly enhanced by years of schooling and interviewer-assessed English language speaking fluency and (2) significantly reduced by having young dependent child. Suspecting that the assessment of wage discrimination due to lack of language proficiency without controlling for the potential discrimination in terms of labor market participation,

employment, or choice of economic sector and occupation could lead to severely biased estimates, Aldashev et al. (2008) applied a two-level econometric model to the micro data of both female and male foreign citizens in several waves of the German Socioeconomic Panel for the years from 1996 to 2005 ( $N=8,662$ ): at the lower level, the direct effects of German language proficiency on (1) labor force participation, (2) employment, (3) choice of economic sector, and (4) choice of occupation are assessed in four separate equations, each with a set of covariates; at the upper level, the direct and indirect (via the dependent variables at the lower level) effects of German language proficiency on earnings are assessed in another equation, again with a set of covariates.<sup>21</sup> Their main findings were that both labor force participation and employment were significantly enhanced by German language proficiency, and that the indirect effects of language proficiency on earnings were very strong and the direct effect was not statistically significant. These findings in the literature suggest that our findings could be generalized to other higher-income countries, and that our emphasis on studying the employment status of foreign wives is important for achieving greater insights into their earnings.

Since better-educated brides had a better chance to get married to better-educated husbands, we naturally found that the husbands of the Vietnamese brides tended to be less educated than the husbands of the Filipina brides. The gap in educational attainment between these two groups of husbands was reflected by a rather large Lieberman's ND of 0.221 in favor of the husbands of the Filipina brides. Contrary the finding of Thai (2005), the Vietnamese brides were much more likely to be in hypergamy than in

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21 In this study, language proficient is measured in terms of language spoken in the household. It has three values: (1) speaking mainly German, (2) speaking partly German and partly the language of the home country, and (3) speaking mainly the language of the home country.



hypogamy. By contrast, the Filipina brides were much more likely to be in hypogamy than in hypergamy. This difference helped account for the fact that the gap in educational attainment between the two groups of husbands (ND=0.221) was substantially smaller than the corresponding gap between the two groups of brides (ND=0.583). Underlying the substantially smaller gap in educational attainment between the two groups of husbands was the fact that in addition to educational status, beauty and pleasant personality were also important criteria for selecting wives,<sup>22</sup> and the possibility that beauty and pleasant personality were not positively correlated with educational status. Perhaps better-educated American males did not have a better ability than their less-educated counterparts to avoid the illusion that most Asian women are graceful and non-combative.

With respect to household income, the gap between the two groups of brides was not large. It was represented by a Lieberman's ND of 0.115 in favor of the Filipina brides. This value was smaller than the corresponding ND of 0.175 for comparing their wage levels and also smaller than the corresponding ND of 0.221 for comparing the educational levels of their husbands. Partly through a strong tendency to be in hypergamy, most Vietnamese brides managed to achieve fairly good household income, despite being mostly poorly educated. A nice finding was that both Filipina and Vietnamese wives of American citizens were at rather low risk of being in poverty: less than 8.8% of the Filipina brides and less than 13.3% of the Vietnamese brides lived in households below the poverty threshold. The rather negative images of foreign brides in higher-income Asian countries

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22 The validity of this statement is substantiated by the advertisements on the websites of many international marriage agencies. The home page of the agency "International Cupid" shows the banner "Find Your International Beauty." The home page of the agency "Asian Singles" declares "Beautiful Asian Women Seeking Men for Marriage...." Typically, the agencies show pictures of beautiful, cute, and smiling females.

conveyed by many ethnographic studies have been countered to a large extent by our findings about the Vietnamese and Filipina brides in the United States.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that although the Filipina brides of American citizens were more likely to be in hypogamy than in hypergamy, the hypogamy was mainly in the mild form of brides with a bachelor's degree marrying husbands with some college education. To the extent that the quality of the American education system is somewhat better than the quality of the Filipino education system, a large portion of the observed cases of hypogamy can be considered as cases of homogamy. Therefore, even for the Filipina brides, there was lack of strong support for the idea that women in lower-income countries tend to accept hypogamy at the personal level in order to achieve hypergamy at the societal level – an idea that was largely negated by the choices made by the Vietnamese brides. Taking a broader view and using the same ACS data, Liaw and Ishikawa (2011) revealed that among the foreign-born brides of American citizens, hypergamy was much more prevalent than hypogamy for Korea-born Koreans (48.6% versus 16.6%), and Japan-born Japanese (43.4% versus 20.3%), and was somewhat more prevalent than hypogamy for China-born Chinese (32.3% versus 25.0%) and India-born Indians (27.0% versus 25.4%). In general, hypergamy was more prevalent than hypogamy.

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## 美籍丈夫之越南與菲律賓新娘的特徵： 基於近期美國社區問卷調查之發現

廖高禮\* 黃汀\*\*

### 摘要

此文通過2005年至2007年美國社區問卷調查的微觀合併數據，來研究嫁給美國公民的越南和菲律賓外籍新娘的教育，工作，和收入之特徵。研究發現要點如下。由於越南新娘，在教育程度和英文能力上比菲律賓新娘低很多，所以導致了：（一）越南新娘的受僱傭率比菲律賓新娘的受僱傭率更低；（二）越南新娘在其經濟利基（沙龍業）獲得的收入比菲律賓新娘在其經濟利基（醫療服務業）獲得的收入要低。通常受過較高教育的新娘可獲得較高的機會嫁給受過較高教育的丈夫，所以越南新娘的美國丈夫之教育程度是低於菲律賓新娘的美國丈夫之教育程度。但丈夫們的教育程度之落差較新娘們的教育程度之落差則小很多。其原因是除了教育程度外，外貌和性格同時也是新郎在挑選新娘時考慮的重要因素，而外貌和性格則與教育程度無關。此兩組新娘之家庭收入差距更不大，部分原因則是越南新娘強烈地傾向於高攀婚姻。一個令人欣慰的發現是嫁給美國公民的越南和菲律賓新

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娘均很少落入貧困階層。這發現則與人種學研究常發現的那些在高收入亞洲國家的外籍新娘之不幸情況正好相反。文獻中的一個想法是，低收入國家的女性願意通過嫁給比自己的教育程度低的外籍丈夫來獲得融入高收入社會的機會。此想法在菲律賓新娘上只得到中度的支持，而在大多數的越南新娘上則是被否定。

**關鍵詞：**越南與菲律賓新娘、美國、教育、工作、收入