Generational differences in the fertility of immigrant populations in the United States

Sarah Walchuk Thayer
University of California Berkeley
Joint Program in Sociology and Demography

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the determinants of fertility differentials among immigrant populations in the United States. The first section of the paper examines fertility differentials across generations and across Hispanic, Asian, and European origin groups. I find that the patterns of childbearing often do not follow what assimilation theory would predict, particularly among second generation women of Hispanic origin. This provides the context in which to examine second generation Americans more closely. The second part of the paper focuses on the second generation specifically, in an examination of whether and how cultural values from the origin country interact with the U.S. context to affect fertility outcomes. In this section I examine how community and school characteristics, parent immigrant "composition", parent characteristics, parent preferences, and the individual's own expectations influence their family formation outcomes.

I argue that the matrices, or contexts in which the second generation grows up create a number of material and mental paradoxes that they must negotiate in everyday life, which can affect many outcomes, including childbearing. Some might argue that *all* children, no matter the national origin of their parents, can experience incongruities between material resources or values that their parents hold (and attempt to imbue in their children) and those of the wider community. Yet the second generation often encounters a configuration of social structure--immigrant neighborhoods, family businesses, travel between home and the "home" country, speaking a native language, cultural events, remittances, parents' naturalization proceedings--that

native born individuals to native born parents do not. These configurations interact with the social structure more common to everyone in American society, such as high school, to create unique ways in which the second generation interprets and lives in the world. Rumbaut argues that the second generation is "situated within two cultural worlds, [and] they must define themselves in relation to multiple reference groups (sometimes in two countries and in two languages) and to the classifications into which they are placed by their native peers, schools, the ethnic community, and the larger society" (Rumbaut 2001:848). To date, little research has examined how these "two worlds" affect fertility.

BACKGROUND

Most studies of the intersection of migration and fertility have focused on immigrants themselves, for a number of reasons. Some authors have used studies of fertility to provide a unique perspective on understanding the selection process for immigration (Carter 2000;Kahn 1994). Fertility has also been used to understand the disruption effects of migration (Mayer and Riphahn 2000). Most often, fertility outcomes have been studied as a window into assimilation processes, based on the theory that over time and with increased contact, the immigrant population will become similar to the native population in the destination country. Thus, many authors have examined fertility differentials between immigrants and the native born or immigrants and their descendents (Bean, Swicegood and Berg 2000;Blau 1992;Espenshade and Ye 1994;Ford ;Forste and Tienda 1996;Swicegood et al 1988).

There is also a basic demographic reason for the focus on immigrants. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the fertility of immigrants had little significance to overall population growth of the United States, due to either similar or lower fertility than native born women. However, beginning in the late 1960s, the composition of immigrants began to change, and many

arrived from countries with relatively high fertility rates (Kahn 1994). Therefore, immigrant fertility became important for population projection purposes.

In contrast, little is known about the fertility behavior of the children of immigrants, leaving a gap in our knowledge about family formation across generations. This dearth of research is most likely due to the relatively young ages of the post-1965 cohorts of the second generation. The foreign born in the United States have a younger age structure than the general population, meaning that their children are young and have only recently begun entering into the ages when we can observe life events related to family formation.

There is also a lack of data available with which to analyze family formation events for the second generation. Since 1970, the census has not asked parents' nativity, making it difficult for researchers to identify second generation households. While many investigators are now beginning to collect data around vital events for all U.S. young people, the second generation is often a very small part of the sample. For example, the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (ADD Health) has collected Wave III, which begins to look at family formation behaviors. However, children of immigrants are often too small of a sample with which to present robust findings on their own (see Harker 2001, however, for an analysis of generational status and adolescent well-being using ADD Health data). Portes and Rumbaut have collected data specific to the second generation in the third wave of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), yet the data will not be publicly available for another year or so.[1] Up until now, the CILS study has focused mainly on language, ethnic self-identification and

[1] The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) is a sample of second generation individuals in Miami and San Diego whose parents come from 77 countries. The first wave took place in 1992 and had a sample size of 5,262 students whose mean age was 14. A second wave took place in 1995-1996 and a third in 2001-2002 (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:23-24).

school achievement (Portes and Hao 2004;Portes and MacLeod 1996;Portes and Rumbaut 2001;Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2005;Zhou and Xiong 2005).

Analyses that have sought to explain immigrant and subsequent generation outcomes have largely been informed by theories of assimilation. The concept of assimilation was developed by scholars who studied the great migration waves to the United States in the early 20th century. One of the defining features of assimilation theory was the idea that adaptation was an irreversible linear process toward cultural and socioeconomic similarity that took place over immigrant generations, until the later generations could not be distinguished from the native population. Robert Park and his colleagues at the Chicago school provided the classic formulation (Park and Burgess 1921) pp. 757-758:

> In America it has become proverbial that a Pole, Lithuanian, or Norwegian cannot be distinguished, in the second generation, from an American born of native parents … As a matter of fact, the ease and rapidity with which aliens, under existing conditions in the United States, have been able to assimilate themselves to the customs and manners of American life have enabled this country to swallow and digest every sort of normal human difference, except the purely external ones, like color of the skin.

This view was supported by other researchers of the European migration waves, who saw assimilation as a process of cultural, psychological (in terms of self-identity), and structural (in terms of residential, employment, and intermarriage) adaptation to the Anglo-American mainstream (Gordon 1964;Warner and Srole 1945). Waters (1990) showed that as each successive European cohort born in the United States became integrated through social mobility and intermarriage, the saliency of ethnicity decreased to the point that ethnic identity became symbolic and optional (Waters 1990).

Alba and Nee (2003) have recuperated the assimilation framework for more recent waves of migrants. In an analysis that looks at language assimilation, residential patterns,

socioeconomic status, and intermarriage, they argue that recent migration waves have much in common with the great European migration waves at the turn of the century. They contend that modes of incorporation are very similar, even though the concept of what immigrants are assimilating to—the American "mainstream"—has moved from a largely Anglo view to one that absorbs many of the cultural elements that immigrants bring with them.

Assimilation theories have often been used to create explanatory models of fertility change among immigrant generations (Blau 1992;Ford ;Kahn ;Swicegood et al 1988), but they have often fallen short in their explanatory or predictive power. Many of these studies have found that Mexican and Central American immigrant women have persistently higher fertility than native born or non-Hispanic white reference groups. In a study of Mexican-origin women, Bean et al. (2000) found that the fertility of the second generation women is lower than foreign-born Mexican women, and closer to that of the majority population (defined as non-Hispanic white). Using 1986 and 1988 CPS data, Bean and colleagues found a curvilinear relationship, and that by the third and higher generation, Mexican-origin women had *higher* fertility than the second. Kahn (1994) found the same curvilinear pattern. In sum, assimilation theory has garnered little empirical support.

In recent years, immigration scholars have developed more nuanced theories to drive their empirical models of traditional benchmarks of incorporation, such as language assimilation or socioeconomic status. Segmented assimilation theory starts from the standpoint that recent migration waves to the United States (post-1965) are qualitatively different from the early 20th century migrations. Recent migrations have shifted from European origin countries to largely Latin American and Asian countries. In addition, government legislation, which effectively cut off immigration in 1924, has not occurred for recent waves. This has resulted in successive and

sustained cohorts of new immigrants in the U.S. Finally, the structure of the U.S. economy has changed dramatically in the past thirty years, moving from an industrial to a more knowledge based economy, in a context marked by globalization. Portes, Rumbaut and Zhou, the major proponents of this theory, contend that these factors will have varying effects on different origin groups. Groups will assimilate to different sectors of American society, with some following the traditional assimilation path toward entrance into mainstream middle-class society and others becoming a permanent part of a marginalized, often racialized, group at the bottom (Portes and Zhou 1993;Portes and Rumbaut 2001;Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2005). The major determinants of these differential outcomes are theorized as the context of reception, physical appearance (conceptualized as race), labor markets, the human capital that parents bring, the differential pace of acculturation of parents and children, the culture of school and community, and the co-ethnic community resources (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS: GENERATION AND ORIGIN

The paper focuses on second generation groups of Hispanic and Asian descent, in reference to first and third generations of the same origin, and in reference to non-Hispanic white women. The first group of interest is the children of immigrants from Mexico and Central America (excluding the Caribbean).[2] Immigrants from Mexico and to a lesser extent, other countries in Central America are the only foreign born group to have been part of an immigration flow lasting for over a century. Unlike most contemporary immigrant groups, they therefore have a longer history of second and third generations in the U.S. (Portes and Rumbaut 2001;Waters and Jimenez 2005). According to Portes and Rumbaut (2001), this migration history coupled with relatively low human capital (due to lower barriers to entry to the U.S. because of the

[2] I follow convention (Hill and Johnson 2004) in grouping immigrants from Central American countries with Mexico, but excluding countries in the Caribbean.

shared border) and a long history of contested incorporation into U.S. society (often through government policy or political campaigns) have created unique consequences for the children of Mexican (and Central American) immigrants. These consequences include a higher likelihood (relative to other second generation groups) to maintain their parents' national identity as their own (186), relatively low educational expectations, and relatively low self esteem (278). Parents of the second generation also have the lowest educational aspirations for their children relative to other immigrant groups (104).[3]

The second group of interest is children of Asian immigrants. Immigrants from Asia are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States, with an increase in population from 1.4 million in 1970 to 11.9 million in 2000 (Zhou and Xiong 2005:1119). Far from being a homogenous group, they often have come to the United States under very different circumstances, from immigrants from Cambodia and Laos, of whom less than 5 percent have college education, to immigrants from Taiwan, of whom over 60 percent have college degrees (Zhou 1997:66). They are often discussed as a pan-ethnic group, and held up as an assimilation "success story" due to their high average earnings, high percentage of two-parent families, and high educational attainment (Zhou and Xiong 2005). While the grouping of immigrants from Asia is not ideal, it is often done due to small sample sizes and I will follow others by adopting this approach in my analysis.

There is a practical methodological reason for choosing these two groups as well, since they comprise the largest post-1965 migration flows to the United States. Their differing characteristics provide fertile terrain for exploring how the second generation experiences and negotiates the values of their parents and communities and how it plays out in their family formation behavior.

[3] A parent interview was completed in the second wave of the CILS (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:31).

Following previous research, I define the second generation as children born to at least one parent who is foreign born (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). I will also include in this group children born outside of the US, but moved to the US before age 5.[4]

DATA AND METHODS

The first part of the analysis uses pooled 2000, 2002, and 2004 CPS June Fertility Supplements to assess the determinants and levels of fertility differentials by generation status and ethnic origin.). The CPS has an advantage over recent Census data in that it asks parent nativity, allowing me to distinguish the second generation from immigrants and third and higher generations.

In the second part of the analysis, I focus more closely on the second generation. I use the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS). This study is unique because it captures the unique period between 8th grade and young adulthood and because it over sampled Hispanic and Asian students. NELS began with a cohort of students who were in eighth grade in 1988 and conducted follow-up interviews in 1990, 1992, 1994, and 2000. The study asks detailed questions about student characteristics, educational and family aspirations, school and community characteristics, family background, educational and family outcomes. It also interviewed parents during the 1988 and the 1992 waves, which allows me to construct measures of intergenerational relationships. Finally, the study allows me to distinguish immigrant generation status. The study has been used in numerous studies related to education, ethnicity, and generation status (Glick and White 2003;Glick and White 2004;Hagy and Staniec 2002;Kao 2004).

[4] Waters and Jimenez (2005) use age 13 as the cutoff for the 1.5 generation. Zhou (1997) includes those under age 5 with the second generation.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the characteristics of women ages 15 to 44 by generation and origin group. As expected, non-Hispanic white women born to native parents are by far the largest group.[5] Second generation Asian and Hispanic women are the youngest groups, and therefore their educational achievement may be truncated to a greater extent than the other groups. In addition, because of their young ages, these women are less likely to be married than women of other generations. Women of Asian and European backgrounds have the greatest educational attainment, which is reflected in the mean household incomes. As we would expect, both Asian and Hispanics of all generations predominantly live in the western region of the US.

Overall, second generation women of Asian and Hispanic descent have the lowest average number of children. This is most likely a product of their young mean age, but once we disaggregate by age, an interesting pattern occurs. Across all ages, second generation Hispanic women have higher fertility than non-Hispanic white women (Figure 1). However, relative to both first generation *and* third generation Hispanic women, the second generation has lower fertility. The pattern is less clear for women of Asian origin (Figure 2).

The multivariate analysis of children ever born show that the patterns displayed by the generation groups of Hispanic origin women hold, even when controlling for age, marital status, education, income, region (Table 2). Second and third generation Asian women have slightly higher average number of children than non-Hispanic white women, but these results are not statistically significant. However, first generation women have significantly fewer children than the reference group. As a comparison, first and second generation women of European descent have measurably lower fertility than non-Hispanic white women.

[5] I have excluded non-Hispanic black and native American women from this analysis.

In a preliminary analysis of the factors that affect second generation fertility, I find that having a foreign born mother, relative to having both parents foreign born, measurably affects fertility outcomes. Community and school context also appear to influence outcomes. These will be explored in depth in the final paper.

Table 1. Weighted characteristics of women 15-44 by immigrant generation and origin status (June CPS)

Generation/Origin	3rd Gen Non-Hispanic White	3rd Gen Hispanic^	3rd Gen Asia	2nd Gen Europe	2nd Gen Hispanic	2nd Gen Asia	1st Gen Europe	1st Gen Hispanic	1st Gen Asia
Characteristic									
Number of Observations	47,892	1,430	457	1,929	1,709	812	768	3,061	1,514
Mean Age	30.3	28.5	28.6	31.0	24.7	25.3	32.8	30.9	33.2
Lives in West (%)	19.3	41.3	79.7	25.8	57.9	52.8	22.8	53.5	49.7
Education (%)									
Less than high school	16.2	31.2	18.4	12.3	38.4	20.0	7.8	62.2	10.4
High school or GED	57.8	58.4	55.4	52.5	52.2	46.7	50.5	33.2	43.3
BA or higher	26.0	10.3	26.2	35.3	9.4	33.3	41.7	4.6	46.4
Mean Household Income	$56,985	$42,821	$61,033	$63,685	$39,501	$66,319	$61,979	$30,467	$55,350
Marriage Status (%)									
Ever-married	61.7	56.2	49.6	60.5	40.0	33.7	77.0	75.4	73.1
Mean Number of Children	1.14	1.44	0.98	1.00	0.97	0.61	1.19	1.96	1.12

Note: Pooled data from 2000, 2002 and 2004 June CPS with Fertility supplement for civilian women 15-44. Women born in, or parents born in Puerto Rico or U.S. outlying areas are excluded.

^ 3rd generation Hispanic women not identifiable by individual country origin, except Mexico

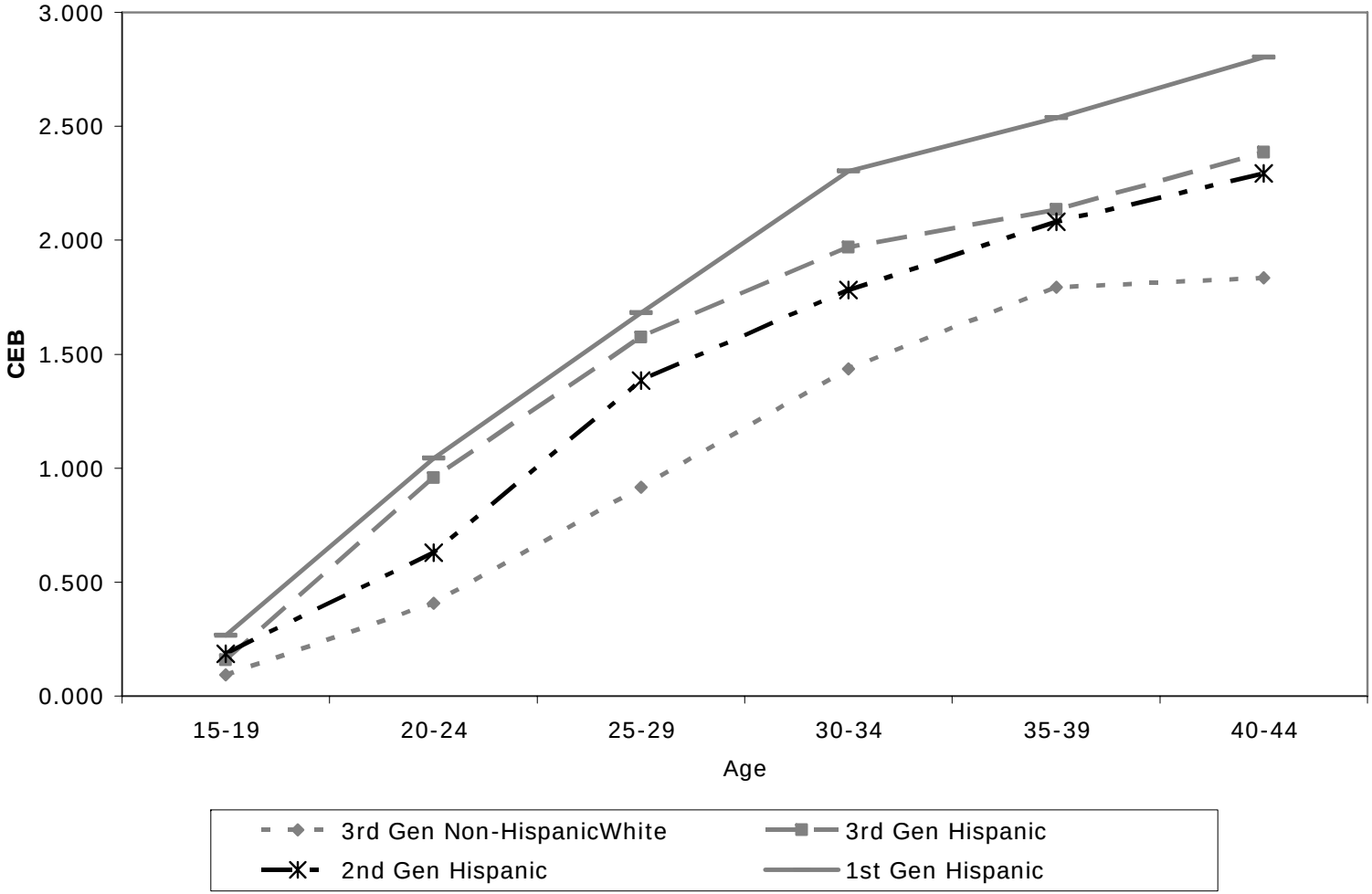
Origin:

Asia: Burma, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea/South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam

Hispanic: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Central America.

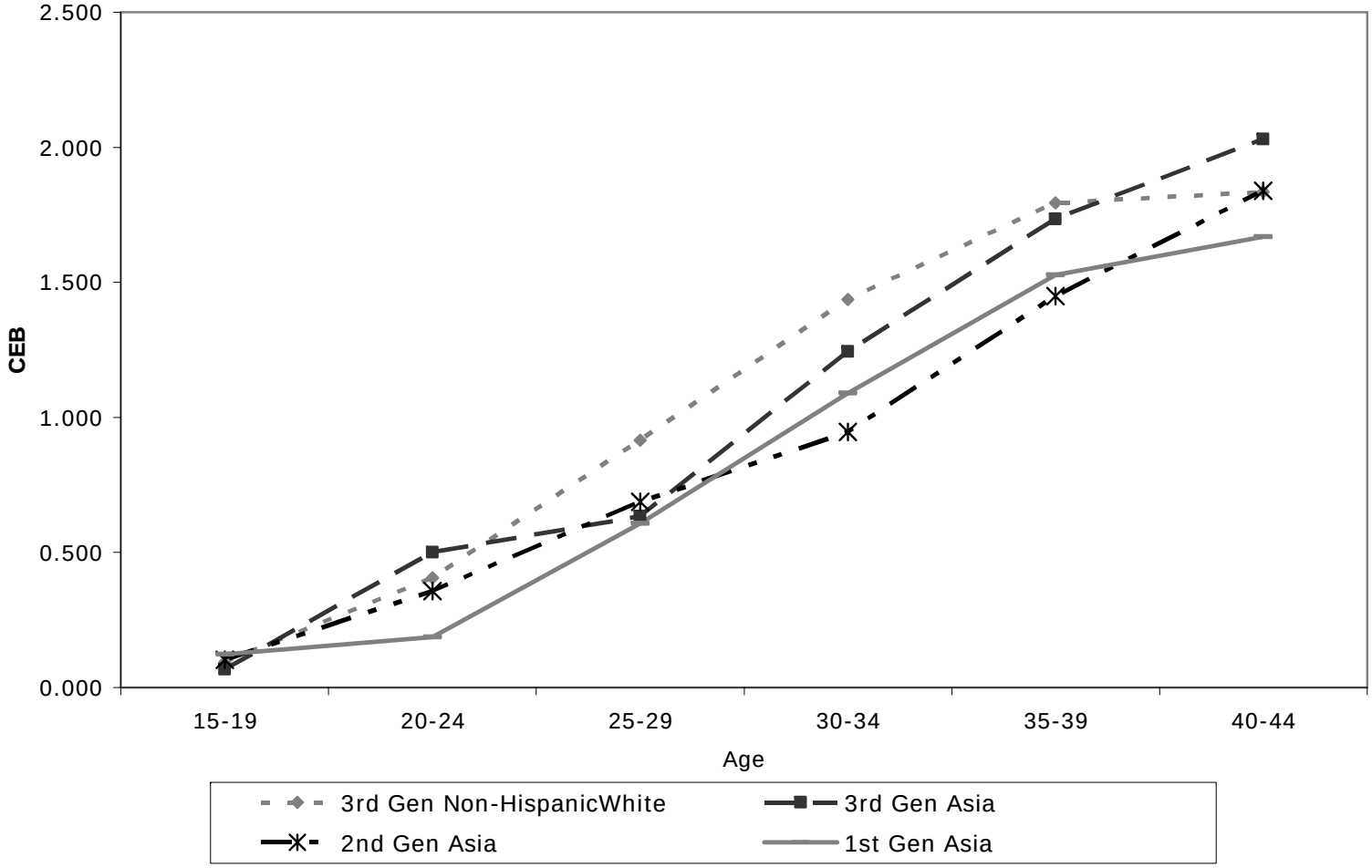
Europe: Western and Central Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand

Figure 1. Mean number of children ever born to Non-Hispanic white and Hispanic origin U.S. women age 15-44, by generation status



Data source:2000, 2002, 2004 pooled June CPS

Figure 2. Mean number of children ever born to Non-Hispanic white and Asian origin U.S. women age 15-44, by generation status



Data source:2000, 2002, 2004 pooled June CPS

Table 2. Unadjusted and Adjusted Differences in Mean Number of Children Ever Born Between Generation/Origin Groups of Women and Non-Hispanic White Women ages 15-44, June CPS

Generation/Origin	Children Ever Born All Women	
	Unadjusted	Adjusted[1]
3rd Gen Non-Hispanic White		
3rd Gen Hispanic^	0.301	**0.315**
3rd Gen Asia	-0.157	0.025
2nd Gen Hispanic	-0.168	**0.169**
2nd Gen Asia	-0.525	0.035
2nd Gen Europe	-0.138	**-0.114**
1st Gen Hispanic	0.827	**0.262**
1st Gen Asia	-0.013	**-0.230**
1st Gen Europe	0.051	**-0.142**

Note: Pooled data from 2000, 2002 and 2004 June CPS with Fertility supplement for civilian women 15-44. Women born in, or parents born in Puerto Rico or U.S. outlying areas are excluded.

[1] OLS regression models control for age, female education, marital status, region of residence, and household income – significance tests conducted only on adjusted differentials.

Bold indicates that values are significantly different at the .001 level

† indicates that values are significantly different at the .01 level

^ 3rd generation Hispanic women not identifiable by individual country origin, except Mexico

Origin:

Asia: Burma, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea/South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam

Hispanic: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Central America.

Europe: Western and Central Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand

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