

Immigrant Selectivity, Economic Integration, Diasporic Formation: Chinese and Indians in the United States

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Chinese and Indians are the two largest Asian immigrant groups in the United States. They are both highly selected with disproportionate numbers of college graduates. While they show similar patterns of economic integration, especially through STEM fields and entrepreneurship, there is a remarkable tendency of divergence in diasporic formation. For example, Chinese immigrants are more likely than their Indian counterparts to establish social networks based co-ethnicity and rooted in diasporic communities, such as the ones in new Chinatowns or Chinese ethnoburbs. Indian immigrants, in contrast, tend to develop social networks (e.g., networks of mentors and angel investors) that are more diverse and diffuse, penetrating the corporate old-boy network of whites. Moreover, Indian immigrants, such as those working in high-tech industries in the Silicon Valley, often see India as their second home and tap into a growing mobile market and a huge pool of technical professionals in the outsourcing industry in India to pursue their transnational opportunities, but such developments and transnational linkages are either absent or underappreciated among Chinese immigrants who often consider the US as their new home. This comparative study aims to explain the reasons for such divergence. It will examine how immigrant selectivity shapes patterns of economic integration and diasporic formation.