

**The Status Attainment Structure for Immigrants in Japan:
An Empirical Analysis Comparing Native Japanese with
First- and Second-Generation Immigrants**

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Abstract

In this paper, we investigate the structures for status attainment of immigrants living in Japan through comparison with Japanese natives. Compared to empirical researches in Europe and American societies, fewer empirical studies have employed a quantitative approach. In addition, previous studies in Japan have not focused on the status attainment structure for immigrants. We focus on the straight-line assimilation hypothesis, which predicts immigrants' socioeconomic situation becomes similar to that of natives as their generation progresses. Based on this hypothesis, in this study, we examine whether the status attainment structure of immigrants differs from Japanese natives' one. The results of empirical analysis using multi-group SEM show that the straight-line assimilation hypothesis is supported for the male sample. For the female sample, there is little difference in the structure of status attainment between Japanese people and immigrants. For immigrant men in Japan, the status attainment structure for second-generation immigrants is more similar to natives than that of first-generation immigrants. It seems that an empirical approach based on assimilation theory is still effective. Based on the framework of assimilation theory, second-generation immigrants have likely experienced structural assimilation, and there are also implications that they continue to face challenges in attaining status. Using larger and more nationally representative data, it will become possible to grasp more accurately the socioeconomic circumstances particular to immigrants in Japan.

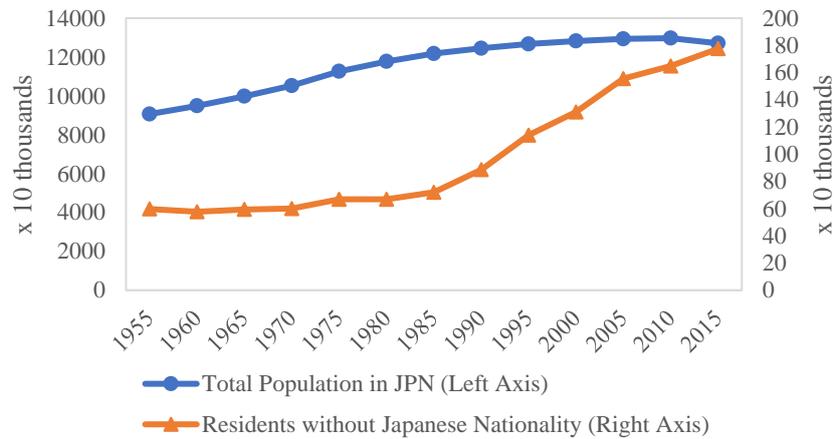
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1. Introduction

This paper aims to investigate the characteristics of the status attainment structure for immigrants¹ living in Japan through comparison to that of native Japanese. While empirical analysis using micro data from the national census of Japan has already been conducted (e.g., Korekawa 2012), in this paper, we focus on immigrant assimilation and examine whether immigrants' status attainment pattern becomes similar to that for Japanese natives as their assimilation progresses. Compared to empirical researches in Europe and American societies, fewer empirical studies have employed a quantitative approach. In addition, previous studies in Japan have not focused on the status attainment structure for immigrants. Japanese society is currently facing a population decrease, and there have been a number of policy discussions about accepting immigrant workers to make up the labor shortfall (e.g., Fujiwara and Nakajima 2014). This is a fundamental aspect whereby immigrants are positioned in the opportunity structure of the host society, and the status attainment process is closely related to the opportunity structure.

In 1990, the qualifications for remaining in Japan were restructured in accordance with amendments to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law, and the "long term resident" qualification was created. Under this status, third-generation immigrants of Japanese descent may now work in Japan, and as a result, many people of Japanese descent from Southern and Central American countries such as Brazil, have moved to Japan. The number of Chinese and Korean immigrants has also increased, and the immigrant population has expanded rapidly since the 1990s. Figure 1 shows the population scale of Japan as a whole and the changes in population scale of foreign residents living in the country. In the 2015 census, the foreign population exceeded 1.7 million, accounting for 1.4% of the total population. In the 25 years since 1990, the percentage of the population consisting of immigrants has doubled. Thus, with the overall population shrinking, the presence of immigrants living in Japan is increasing at least quantitatively.

¹ The definition of an immigrant may vary according to purpose. In this paper, we define as immigrants those who live primarily in Japan without Japanese citizenship.



Source: Population Census in Japan

Figure 1. Total Population and Residents without Japanese Nationality in Japan

Table 1. Percentages of Immigrants by Nationality in 1990 and 2015

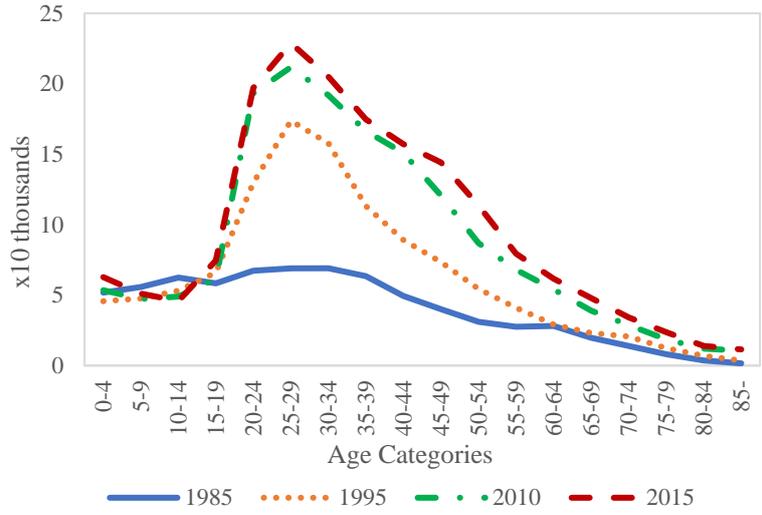
	Korea	China	Philippines	United States	Other
1990	63.8%	13.5%	4.8%	3.9%	13.9%
2015	21.5%	29.2%	9.8%	2.4%	37.1%

Source: Population Census in Japan

Within which groups of immigrants has there been growth? Table 1 shows the percentages of immigrants by nationality in the 1990 and 2015 censuses.² Over the course of these 25 years, the proportion of Korean immigrants decreased by approximately one-third, while the number of Chinese, Philippine, and other nationalities, but not Americans, more than doubled. Half of immigrants are from East Asia, although overall the ethnic composition of immigrants in Japan has become more diverse.

According to the Statistical Survey of Registered Foreigners from 1996 and the statistics on registered foreigners from 2015, the distribution of residence status among immigrants can also be seen to have largely changed. The biggest change comprises the increase in the number of permanent residents. As a percentage of immigrants as a whole, immigrants in this category comprised 5% in 1996, but had risen to six times that, at 31.4%, by 2015. The real number has increased tenfold from approximately 70,000 to 700,000.

² In the 2015 census, we are able to access information on more detailed classifications for nationalities. However, for comparison, they have been set to fit with the nationality categories for the 1990 census.



Source: Population Census in Japan

Figure 2. Immigrant Population Distributions by Age Category

The age distribution among immigrants is shown in Figure 2, using censuses from 1985, 1995, 2010, and 2015. It can be seen that the number of immigrants ranging in age from 15 to 64—or the working age cohort—has increased. As of 2015, 83.2% of the immigrant population were of working age, while the percentage for native Japanese people was just 60.7%. This indicates the socioeconomic condition is important for most of immigrants in Japan.

From the results of the macro data, it is clear that, since the 1990s, as the number of immigrants to Japan has increased, the range of their nationalities has diversified, and as they continue to settle in Japan, the majority fall within the working age. For immigrants whose foundation in life is in Japan, opportunities for status attainment in Japan affect not only their current standard of living, but also, in the case of starting a family, it can be assumed to also affect the opportunities of their children.

In order to examine the detailed mechanisms related to status attainment for immigrants in Japan, we need a large-scale survey data. However, there are currently no survey data in Japan that are entirely satisfactory.³ Therefore, in this paper, we focus on the following four factors that are fundamental to the status attainment structure: the socioeconomic status and education of immigrants in Japan and of their parents. In this paper, we cannot examine the complicated mechanisms, so these will need to be addressed as a future subject. However, we have gathered a small number of empirical findings on the status attainment structure for immigrants in Japan and in order to specify what characteristics of this structure are specific to immigrants, it is necessary to compare them with those of natives. A small number of studies have directly examined the differences between native Japanese and immigrants. In

³ For example, although it is possible to use micro data from censuses after necessary procedures, in addition to the limited questions asked by the census, since there are no questions regarding parents, it is difficult to verify any direct correlation between socioeconomic background and status.

this paper, by connecting immigration research with status attainment research, we can contribute to developing the discussion surrounding the socioeconomic circumstances of immigrants in Japan.

In the following sections, the status attainment model, which plays a central role in this paper, is introduced, along with assimilation theory. We organize the findings of related existing research and present the issues and hypotheses tested in this paper. The data used to examine those hypotheses, along with the methods employed, shall be shown in the results of the empirical analyses.

2. Analytical Framework

2.1 Status Attainment Model

In this study, we used the “status attainment model” proposed by Blau and Duncan (1967), as a framework for analysis. A research question from this model is the following: Which is more critical to one’s occupational attainment: socioeconomic background (ascription) or the status earned by oneself in an earlier life course stage (achievement)? In many industrial societies where there is no explicit class system, it is thought to be unlikely for the ascription principle to completely define the status that an individual achieves. However, the notion that what a person attains is entirely based on personal performance is also overly idealistic. The level of status attained is, to a certain extent, both ascription-based and achievement-based. In the status attainment research, it is an empirical issue to ascertain the relative importance of these two principles in a given society.

Another important agenda of the status attainment model is to understand the status attainment process from a structural perspective. Figure 3 shows one example of a status attainment model used in Blau and Duncan (1967). Ascription-based factors mainly comprise parents’ educational level and occupational status, while achievement-based factors comprise the educational level earned by oneself and one’s occupational status at labor market entry. The paths connecting these five factors display a causal relationship,⁴ and the entirety of the path diagram expresses the structure of the status attainment process. Through a structural approach to the process of status attainment, in addition to simply comparing the influence (direct effect) of ascription-based and achievement-based factors, it is also possible to examine the degree to which the effects of ascription-based factors on status attainment are mediated by achievement factors.

⁴ The term “causal relationship” here is not meant as a “causal effect” as used with regard to causal inference, but is meant more in a conceptual sense.

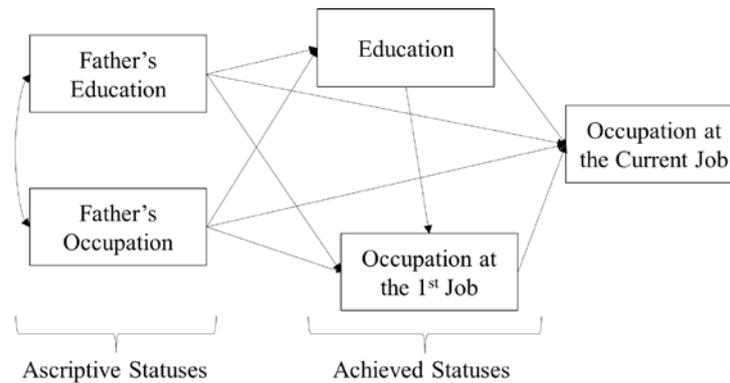


Figure 3. An Example of the Status Attainment Process

The Blau-Duncan model is regarded as a baseline model for analysis of the status attainment structure, and it continues to be used while taking into account various factors (e.g., De Graaf and Kalmijn 2001; Pfeffer 2011). Various examinations of the status attainment model have also been conducted in Japan, and the main route to achieving status in Japan has been found to follow the trajectory of “Social Background→Educational Achievement→Occupational Status at the 1st Job→Occupational Status at Current Job” (Hara and Seiyama 1999; Nakao 2011; Ishida 2017). We cannot simply conclude, however, that status attainment in Japan is meritocratic. The educational level achieved by individuals, which affects their socioeconomic status, is, in turn, affected by ascription-based status. Using the status attainment model, it becomes possible to evaluate which factors are more important at what stage of the life course. By adding other factors to the baseline model from Figure 3, the model can be expanded to investigate various mechanisms involved in the status attainment process. This comprises the main advantage of using the status attainment model.⁵

We applied the status attainment model to the analysis of the socioeconomic success of immigrants in Japan. Many previous empirical studies that have used this model have not taken an interest in international migration. Within these frameworks for research, both parents and children are thought to be embedded into the same social structure. However, this assumption does not always hold true for immigrants. Although one may enjoy a high status in one’s country of origin by mobilizing various resources from one’s parents, the status achieved in the birthplace may not be evaluated in the same way following migration to a host country. Put differently, when immigrants move to a host society and their children are born and raised there, it is not readily apparent that their resources are useful for their children’s status attainment. These research concerns indicate that there are differences in the status attainment structures pertaining to natives and immigrants in the same society, and that this is an empirical matter. At least in Japan, however, there are few empirical studies

⁵ In a prior study, path analysis was used to verify the influence of significant others in relation to the attainment of status (Sewell et al. 1969).

that examine the status attainment structure for immigrants. Thus, in this paper, we will fill the existing research gap between status attainment research and immigrant research.

2.2 Assimilation Hypothesis

In order to investigate the structure of the socioeconomic status attainment of immigrants living in Japan, in this research, we focus on the assimilation hypothesis.⁶ The main proposition of this hypothesis is that, as immigrants' lifestyles become similar to those of natives, various types of opportunity in the life course will reach the same level as those of natives. A study on the assimilation of immigrants in the United States since the mid-twentieth century sought to grasp the motivation of the framework that led to the large inflow of immigrants into cities. What this previous research found is that, as immigrants settle into a country, their lifestyles come to resemble those of natives.

However, the assimilation concept, and thereby the assimilation hypothesis, has been criticized on the basis that its logic is ethnocentric. In early pioneering research focused on assimilation, it was pointed out that ethnic groups differ in their similarities to the socioeconomic status and lifestyle of the majority, and that each group takes a different amount of time to reach the level of the majority (Warner and Srole 1945). Moreover, in his study, Gordon (1964) discussed the assimilation process and hypothesized that conflicts do not arise between assimilated immigrants and the natives of the host society in the final stage of assimilation.

The assimilation process, as conceptualized by Gordon (1964), occurs over the course of generations. In discussions that associate assimilation with generations, it has been hypothesized that assimilation into the host society will occur with the progress of the generation following immigration (Sandberg 1973; Gans 1979). This hypothesis is called the "Straight-line Assimilation Hypothesis," with immigrants who start living in a host society defined as the first generation and their children as the second. After further generations, it is predicted that there will be little difference between the immigrant group and the majority (natives) in various respects.

This classical assimilation hypothesis has been criticized mainly from two directions. One source of criticism comes from the standpoint of normativity. This criticism toward the assimilation hypothesis states that this model, which shows immigrants gradually improving their status, is based on the culture of the majority being imposed upon them.⁷ The other source of criticism relates to empirical validity, in stating that assimilation does not necessarily occur as generation progresses. An oft-cited phenomenon is "third-generation return," whereby the third generation expresses its

⁶ The assembled discussion that follows is all based on research focused on American society. In this paper, it is assumed that it is possible to use the framework of the assimilation hypothesis for empirical research for other industrial societies, including Japan.

⁷ Alba and Nee (2003) have conducted a review on this point.

original, ethnic culture more than the second generation (Gans 1979; Alba and Nee 2003). It has also been found that the status attainment mechanisms that occur from first- to second-generation immigrants are not universal among all immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

Based on these criticisms, in recent years frameworks for replacing the classical assimilation hypothesis, such as Transnationalism (Schiller et al. 1992, 1995) and Segmented Assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), have been proposed. Transnationalism approach is that, as immigrants settle into a host society, they simultaneously maintain connections to their origin societies. This perspective, unlike the assimilation model, hypothesizes that actively maintaining ethnic roots will lead to social and economic opportunities in the life course in the host society. Segmented Assimilation, another alternative framework, hypothesizes that the status attainment and challenges faced by second-generation immigrants will differ, depending on how their parents (the first-generation) were incorporated into the host society (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 63).

These alternative approaches have been proposed in response to the fact that, today, motivations for migration are so diverse and cannot be explained solely by economic reasons⁸. Furthermore, it is much easier than was previously the case to move between the origin and host countries and to communicate with friends and relatives in the country of origin from the host country. In addition to the criticisms of the Straight-line Assimilation Hypothesis, changes in the socioeconomic environment surrounding immigrants have also lent to the context for creating a new analytical framework.

Despite criticisms of the classical approach and the change in circumstances surrounding immigrants, in this study we examine the structures of status attainment for immigrants, relying on the framework of Straight-line Assimilation. In the following, we offer a response to these criticisms and explain our rationale for using the “classical” model in this research.

First, whether the assimilation hypothesis is prescriptive or normative depends on the context of the discussion. The results of empirical analysis based on the assimilation hypothesis do not promote or criticize assimilation on their own. Discussion is necessary to ensure the theoretical consistency of the results of empirical analysis and their interpretation, and thus it cannot be said to be constructive to question the normativity of the hypothesis itself.⁹

Second, the “classical” model is a baseline hypothesis that should be tested even now. The Transnationalism and Segmented Assimilation frameworks have their own hypotheses, which undoubtedly contribute greatly to the development of research on the status attainment and social integration of immigrants. However, these frameworks provide alternative perspectives on research issues that cannot be explained by the “classical” model and their use should not indicate that the

⁸ For instance, the “Lifestyle Migration” approach is proposed and emphasizes socio-cultural aspects of migration (Benson and O’Reilly 2009).

⁹ For example, research that points to a gender wage gap does not promote gender inequality.

“classical” model does not possess explanatory capability.

Third, what we examine in this paper is the structure, not the level, of status attainment. For instance, it is possible to examine the straight-line assimilation model and the transnationalism model simultaneously, if researchers are interested in the level of status attainment. We can compare the effects of generational stages and connections to the origin country in the same model, by using, for example, a regression equation. However, what is meant by the structure of status attainment is the pattern of linkage between socioeconomic background and status attainment, as shown in Figure 3. Whether the status attainment structure is similar to the majority population in the host society, developed by successive generations, is an empirical question to be addressed under the Straight-line Assimilation Model. In this argument, there is an assumption that immigrants experience “Structural Assimilation” in the host society through successive generations. However, the status attainment process is beyond the scope of the transnationalism framework. The transnationalism model goes against the assimilation proposition, while its research interest in how immigrants are incorporated into the social structure of the host society is relatively low.

The segmented assimilation model allows for more detailed analysis than the straight-line assimilation model, but it is also necessary to conceptualize how segmentation occurs in each host society. The segmented assimilation approach is useful when the status attainment for immigrants cannot be well explained by the straight-line model. However, before applying a more complex model, a simpler model should first be examined.

For these reasons, we will conduct an empirical analysis on how immigrants earn socioeconomic status in Japan based on the Straight-line Assimilation Model, focusing on generational succession. As discussed below, due to the limitations of the data used in this study, there are some concerns in generalizing the empirical results. However, these results will be useful in discussing the meaning of immigrants embedded within the systems of Japanese society as well as the related social issues. Empirical limitations can be resolved by accumulating a larger nationally representative data.

3. Related Previous Empirical Findings and Hypotheses in the Current Study

The intergenerational socioeconomic status attainment of immigrants has previously been investigated in immigration research. However, there is a difference in the definition of generation between sociology and immigration research. Immigration research uses each ethnic group as a unit of analysis, and examines the relationship between the average socioeconomic statuses of first- and second-generation immigrants (Borjas 1993; Hammarstedt and Palme 2012). The average socioeconomic status of second-generation immigrants, at a certain point in time, is taken as the dependent variable, while the average status of first-generation immigrants from 20 to 30 years

previously is taken as the independent variable. Considering the average status of first-generation immigrants as characteristic of their backgrounds in their origin countries, if the coefficients of the regression model are positive, then second-generation immigrants have a high socioeconomic status, and also experience a higher status attainment.

Many previous studies have been based on this framework and claim a positive relationship between socioeconomic background in the origin country and the attainment of status among second-generation immigrants (Borjas 1993; Hammarstedt and Palme 2012). In addition, in empirical analysis of educational attainment utilizing micro data, it has been found that parents' occupational status and educational level influence the status attainment of immigrants (Bauer and Riphahn 2007).

For immigrants in Japan, few status attainment studies have been conducted that focus on their socioeconomic backgrounds.¹⁰ However, among those that do exist, it has been made clear that the socioeconomic status of immigrants' parents affects the status attainment of their children. In an empirical study using the micro data of the Japanese census conducted in 2000, it was found that when it came to opportunities to go on to high school, there was an inequality among the children of immigrants¹¹ due to children's socioeconomic backgrounds (Korekawa 2012). Furthermore, by analyzing a web survey data submitted by immigrants who had been settled in Japan for three or more years, Takenaka et al. (2016) found a positive association between immigrants' wages and the years of education of their parents. The findings of these previous studies support the concept that background factors from their origin countries influence immigrants' status attainment.

To the existing body of research, this study adds the following contribution: the simultaneous analysis of educational achievement and occupational attainment for immigrants in Japanese labor market, which were analyzed separately in previous studies. Since the designated outcomes depend on the objectives of the research, the approach of previous research was not problematic. However, unlike prior studies that focused on the effect of a specific variable, this study considers the relationships among socioeconomic background, educational achievement, and status attained together. In this way, it is possible to investigate the main route whereby immigrants attain status in Japan, and this is a point that existing research has not yet considered.

One further aspect of this study is its more explicit examination of the assimilation hypothesis than has previously been conducted. In the preceding research mentioned here, it has not been considered whether status attainment differs between natives, first-, and second-generation

¹⁰ Here, apart from the research that is referred to, sociological empirical research in Japan is gradually increasing with regard to focusing on generational social mobility structures (Takenoshita 2005) and examining the influences of employment practices in Japan on the earnings of human capital for immigrants (Holbrow and Nagayoshi 2016).

¹¹ Since only information on nationality can be used from the Japanese census, here "children of immigrants" refers to children who are not Japanese nationals.

immigrants. Our approach is similar to that of Bauer and Riphahn (2007), which compares the educational opportunities of natives and second-generation immigrants. However, their findings were obtained by analyzing native and second-generation samples separately. It can be investigated more directly whether the impact of socioeconomic background differs between natives and second-generation immigrants.

These empirical issues have been partially examined. For instance, Kim (2003) examined the status attainment model using nationwide survey data on Korean men in Japan. He found that, in Japanese society, Koreans' experiences are not the same as the majority—that is, the status attainment process that the native Japanese experience. In the Korean sample, the effect of father's occupational status on an individual's educational achievement is weaker than in the Japanese sample. Moreover, their own educational level and correlation of their first job to their current status at work is also weaker than in the Japanese sample. From these findings, it can be pointed out that there is a possibility that Koreans living in Japanese society are excluded from the opportunity structures for status attainment.

Kim's (2003) findings on the status attainment structure of immigrants are trailblazing. However, in Kim (2003), further questions arose from the empirical results from each cohort, as defined by their birth year. The magnitude of the influence of socioeconomic background and status of the first job on the current status was shown to be greater the younger the cohort (Kim 2003: 12). These results may be explained by the fact that the younger cohorts are mainly composed of Koreans of the second generation and beyond, which would indicate that they are likely to experience a life course that is almost the same as native Japanese. At the same time, however, there are some "newcomers," or first-generation immigrants, included in the younger cohort. If the impact of socioeconomic background is reflected by "newcomers," then it can be interpreted that socioeconomic resources are interchangeable between the Japanese and Korean labor markets. This question can only be further examined using an assimilation hypothesis. Additionally, as far as the technical aspects of empirical analysis are concerned, it is also possible to directly test the equality of the path coefficients across the status attainment models.¹²

For both immigrants and natives, it can be predicted that socioeconomic background affects the individual's educational and occupational attainments. However, the way in which that background has its effect may depend on the degree of assimilation. Therefore, in this study, the straight-line assimilation hypothesis is examined using the status attainment model. The following

¹² It has been made clear, in a study directly examining the intergenerational mobility structures of natives, first-, and second-generation immigrants, that the structures of social mobility are similar between these groups in Israel (Yaish 2002). This approach is similar to our approach, although the research objectives are different. Whereas Yaish (2002) is interested in testing the equality of opportunity, the purpose of this research is to examine whether the influence of socioeconomic background on status attainment differs between immigrants and natives.

empirical hypotheses are investigated through data analysis:

H1: The more advantageous the socioeconomic background, the greater the educational achievement and level of occupational status attainment.

H2-1: The relationship between socioeconomic background and status attainment is similar between immigrants and natives.

H2-2: The relationship between socioeconomic background and status attainment is different between immigrants and natives.

H2-3: The relationship between socioeconomic background and status attainment is similar between second-generation immigrants and natives but differs from first-generation immigrants.

H2-4: The relationship between socioeconomic background and status attainment is different between first-generation immigrants, second-generation immigrants, and natives.

H1 is based on the findings of status attainment research thus far. If H1 is supported, then hypotheses H2-1 to H2-4 will be important in examining whether the strength of the relationship differs between immigrants and natives. H2-1 hypothesizes that there is no difference in the status attainment structure for immigrants and natives. If the model for H2-1 is the most suitable, it would mean that socioeconomic resources are compatible between Japan and other countries.

H2-2 predicts that the status attainment structure will differ depending on nationality. Immigrants suffer from lack of career opportunities, regardless of whether they are first- or second-generation. Second-generation immigrants are born and raised in Japanese society, but are excluded from the opportunity structures of natives and are positioned as a minority. This will also hold true for the first generation. This hypothesis can be said to be similar to the one used by Kim (2003) in his study.

H2-3 corresponds to the straight-line assimilation hypothesis based on the framework of the assimilation hypothesis. First-generation immigrants move to the host society sometime after being born, and at that time, their parents live in the origin country (or a third country). Even if first-generation immigrants grew up in an advantageous socioeconomic background, the ability to make use of their parents' resources in the host society is less than that of natives and second-generation immigrants. However, second-generation immigrants have lived in the host society continuously from birth. Thus, although they may encounter sociocultural conflicts, they are embedded in various contexts of the host society under the same conditions as natives. For that reason, it is considered that the structure of their status attainment is more similar to natives than that of first-generation immigrants.

H2-4 combines H2-2 and H2-3. Expressed using empirical analysis, this is what is called a "Saturated Model," which is used to estimate all parameters uniquely. Although both ethnicity and

assimilation have an effect on status attainment for immigrants, it is not possible to identify which is more significant in this model. H2-1 is the simplest, and H2-4 the most complicated model, while H2-2 and H2-3 are positioned in between. In this research, we examine which hypothesis is the most suitable based on the indices used for comparison between statistical models.

4. Data and Method

4.1 Survey Design

To examine these hypotheses empirically, we will use the survey data for immigrants living in Japan and Japanese nationals. The survey was conducted by a web-based questionnaire in February 2017, amongst survey respondents who were registered at a research company. The planned sample included 500 immigrants and 500 Japanese nationals, both men and women, who were working and who ranged in age between 25 and 59. In the immigrant portion of the sample, “Korea,” “China (including Taiwan),” “Philippines,” “Other Southeast Asia,” “South America,” and “Other Country” were assigned to be proportional to the demographics seen among foreign workers in the 2010 census.¹³ When the actual sample size of a certain group did not meet the planned sample size, its shortfalls were compensated evenly among other groups.¹⁴ For the Japanese portion of the sample, we adjusted the demographic distribution in terms of age, academic background, and gender so as to be proportional to the 2010 census. Table 2 shows the composition of nationalities. The main group of second-generation immigrants was Korean, while the main group of first-generation immigrants was Chinese. Given the historical background, whereby Koreans settled into Japanese society after World War II, this is not an unusual outcome. Moreover, the large number of first-generation Chinese immigrants is consistent with changes in the foreign population distribution following the revision of related laws in 1990.

¹³ Since we were unable to use the information from the 2015 census, when planning the survey, we used information from the 2010 census.

¹⁴ The South America sample did not reach the number of subjects initially assigned.

Table 2 Ethnic Composition of the Sample

Nationality	Native	Second Generation	First Generation
Japan	100%	0%	0%
Korea	0%	83%	10%
China (including Taiwan)	0%	10%	43%
Philippine	0%	0%	7%
Other Southeast Asia	0%	1%	11%
South America	0%	1%	4%
Other Countries	0%	4%	24%
Total	500	157	343

A critical problem with this survey is that it was conducted in Japanese language for the entire sample.¹⁵ As a result, there will be a bias towards those with Japanese skills, as only immigrants who could respond in Japanese were able to participate. What could be predicted in advance is a bias in the direction of the native and immigrant status attainment structures being similar. Immigrants who can use Japanese are, to an extent, socioeconomically successful in Japanese society (Takenaka et al. 2016), and there is a possibility of experiencing a life course under similar conditions to those of Japanese nationals.

Nevertheless, empirical analysis using this survey is useful for elucidating the structure of status attainment for immigrants in Japan. Firstly, both nationality and place of birth can be understood, and there is little public data that can be used for comparison with Japanese people. The census micro data are very high quality, and there has been empirical research regarding immigrant occupational and educational achievements (Chitose 2005; Korekawa 2012). However, to examine the assimilation theory, information on the place of birth of immigrants and their parents is required, but that information cannot be taken from the census in Japan. In addition, socioeconomic background is also indispensable for empirical analysis of status attainment, but there is little existing data on the parents of immigrants. As for any bias, there were issues with the language used and the web monitor. Nevertheless, the nationality distribution shown in Table 2 does not differ greatly from that found in the census (e.g., Table 1). Since it is possible to predict to a degree the direction in which the bias will trend, the results of the empirical analysis can be interpreted with that in mind. The validity of the findings of this study will need to be further investigated in the

¹⁵ This survey design was used primarily due to budget constraints. In addition to translation into multiple languages, there is also great expense and work required in then aligning the meaning of words between those languages.

future with more appropriate data.

4.2 Variables

In the empirical analysis, we used the following six variables: gender, immigrant generation, years of education, socioeconomic status, as well as parents' years of education and socioeconomic status. As shown in Table 2, the immigrant generation consists of three possibilities. The native category is defined as a group where both the respondents and their parents were born in Japan. Second-generation immigrants comprise respondents who were born in Japan, but, at least, either their father or mother was born in a country other than Japan. Lastly, first-generation immigrants comprise a group in which respondents were born in countries other than Japan. Years of education are coded according to the most recent educational level completed by respondents.¹⁶

Socioeconomic status involved assigning an ISCO 88 code based on the occupation title of the respondents and both the SIOPS (Standardized International Occupational Prestige Score) and ISEI (International Socio-Economic Index) corresponding to each ISCO code were used.¹⁷ Parents' years of education and socioeconomic status were also defined using this procedure. Whichever of the father or mother had a higher status was used as the variable of respondents' background socioeconomic status. The descriptive statistics for the variables for natives, first-generation, and second-generation immigrants are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Variables Used

	Native			Second-generation			First-generation		
	Obs.	Mean	Std.	Obs.	Mean	Std.	Obs.	Mean	Std.
			Dev.			Dev.			Dev.
Respondents' SIOPS	494	40.0	11.4	152	42.4	13.3	337	45.6	12.6
Respondents' ISEI	494	45.3	12.8	152	46.8	15.4	337	51.6	14.4
Respondents' Years of Education	500	13.5	2.2	153	14.2	2.4	335	16.1	1.9
Parent's Highest SIOPS	476	40.2	10.0	147	39.5	12.6	327	46.5	13.9
Parent's Highest ISEI	476	44.1	12.0	147	44.2	14.1	327	51.0	16.0
Parent's Highest Years of Education	445	12.2	2.6	136	12.1	3.1	330	13.2	3.1

¹⁶ Elementary school is coded as 6 years, middle school as 9, high school as 12, post-secondary school as 14, 4-year university as 16, and graduate school as 18. Although coding was conducted according to the education system in Japan, this is considered to be a common way of dividing up schooling by educational level in many societies.

¹⁷ See Ganzeboom et al. (1996) for details.

4.3 Method

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will be employed in the following empirical analysis.¹⁸ Compared with a standard regression analysis (e.g., OLS), SEM has two advantages. The relationship between the variables from Table 3 are shown in Figure 4. First, although only one dependent variable is analyzed in a regression model, multiple endogenous variables¹⁹ can be analyzed simultaneously in SEM. Second, SEM allows for flexible parameterization when compared with a typical regression analysis. In order to examine whether or not the path coefficients shown in Figure 4 between natives, first-, and second-generation immigrants are equal, a multi-group SEM can be used. Comparing the constrained models with the saturated model that estimated all parameters uniquely, and by using model fit indices, it is possible to investigate whether data can be expressed in a parsimonious way for an empirical model based on any of the hypotheses. Additionally, with flexible parametrization, the status attainment structures can be empirically expressed along with hypotheses.

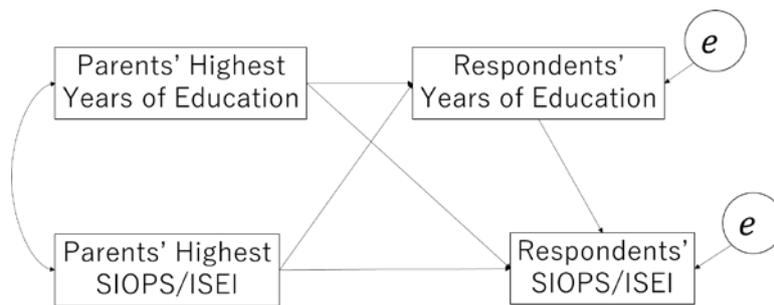


Figure 4 Status Attainment Path Model

The subjects were divided by gender. Since the sample size available for use in the empirical analysis below was small, and further decreased due to the missing values so that the errors became larger, we estimated the parameters by Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML). FIML is a way to use all available cases while taking missing values into account. In this study, except for one male respondent whose values for all variables were missing, the data of 569 men and 430 women were analyzed as shown below.

In the multi-group analysis, the following constraints were set for each parameter according to the hypotheses. Of the path coefficients shown in Figure 4, each instance of \mathbf{b}_{Native} , $\mathbf{b}_{2nd-gen}$, and $\mathbf{b}_{1st-gen}$ comprised a coefficient vector of natives, second-generation, and first-generation immigrants respectively. We did not define constraints on the correlation between parents' years of education and their SES and error terms on endogenous variables.

¹⁸ For details on this method, refer to Kaplan (2009) and Wang and Wang (2012).

¹⁹ Dependent and independent variables are called “endogenous” and “exogenous” variables in structural equation modeling.

$$H2-1: b_{Native} = b_{2nd-gen.} = b_{1st-gen.}$$

$$H2-2: b_{Native} \neq b_{2nd-gen.} = b_{1st-gen.}$$

$$H2-3: b_{Native} = b_{2nd-gen.} \neq b_{1st-gen.}$$

$$H2-4: b_{Native} \neq b_{2nd-gen.}, b_{Native} \neq b_{1st-gen.}, b_{2nd-gen.} \neq b_{1st-gen.}$$

5. Empirical Results

5.1 Socio-Economic Background and Status Attainment

First, we examine the empirical results in relation to the hypothesis (H1) that people's socioeconomic background impacts their status attainment. Figure 5 shows the results of the SEM, without distinguishing between those for natives and immigrants (path coefficients are standardized).

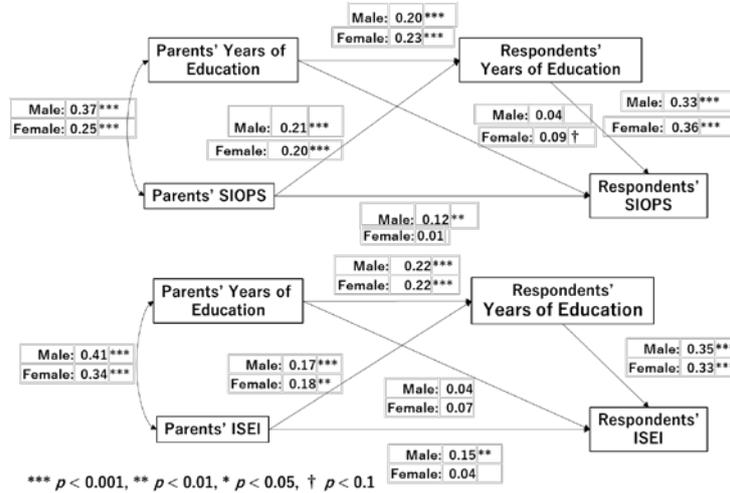


Figure 5 Status Attainment Structure for H1

Regarding educational achievement, the coefficients of socioeconomic background (parents' years of education and occupational/socioeconomic status) are significantly positive for both the male and female sample. This means that people from more advantageous socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to achieve higher levels of education.

As for occupational status attainment, the largest path coefficient for both male and female was their own educational level. This means that, even more than socioeconomic background, the academic background an individual earns for her or himself is important for subsequent status attainment.

There is a difference in the impact of socioeconomic background between male and female. On the one hand, the effect of parents' years of education is not significant at the 5% level for both the male and female sample. On the other hand, parents' SIOPS/ISEI is positively significant for

male (SIOPS: 0.12 ($p < 0.01$), ISEI: 0.15 ($p < 0.01$)), but insignificant for female. For hypothesis 1, what has been found by previous studies is replicated, and the status attainment process is confirmed in the form of “Socioeconomic Background→Educational Achievement→Attainment of Occupational Status.” However, the relationship between occupational status of parents and children depends on gender.

5.2 Examination of the Straight-line Assimilation Hypothesis

The SEM reveals the positive effects of socioeconomic background on status attainment. The remaining empirical question is whether and how the status attainment structures differ between Japanese natives and first- and second-generation immigrants. Table 4 shows model fit indices of H2-1 to H2-4.

Table 4 Model Fit of Each Empirical Model for SIOPS

		H2-1	H2-2	H2-3	H2-4
Male	LR test (Model vs. Saturated)				
	<i>Chi-sq</i>	22.642	11.289	3.57	0
	<i>d.f.</i>	10	5	5	0
	<i>p-value</i>	0.012	0.046	0.613	-
	RMSEA	0.082	0.081	0.000	0.000
	AIC	13543.133	13541.780	13534.061	13540.491
	CFI	0.883	0.942	1.000	1.000
	TLI	0.824	0.825	1.040	1.000
Female	LR test (Model vs. Saturated)				
	<i>Chi-sq</i>	11.431	4.305	3.371	0
	<i>d.f.</i>	10	5	5	0
	<i>p-value</i>	0.325	0.506	0.643	-
	RMSEA	0.032	0.000	0.000	0.000
	AIC	10022.937	10025.811	10024.877	10031.506
	CFI	0.984	1.000	1.000	1.000
	TLI	0.975	1.024	1.056	1.000

The model fit was best for the male sample in H2-3 and for the female sample in H2-1. With the results of the LR (Likelihood Ratio) test with the Saturated Model, these models are not statistically significant and can express data more parsimoniously. For the male sample, H2-3 was not statistically significant. In the female sample, all of H2-1, H2-2, and H2-3 were not statistically significant.

The RMSEA (Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation) is an index with a value from 0 to 1. This model indicates poor model fit, while 0.05 or less is desirable. H2-3 and H2-4 for the male sample and all models for the female sample meet this criteria. AIC (Akaike Information Criteria) is a relative index where the smaller the value, the better the model fit, and the value also increases when the model is redundant. The male sample H2-3 and female sample, H2-1, had the smallest AIC values.

The CFI (Comparative Fit Index) and TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index) comprise indices ranging from 0 to 1, and the closer to 1, the better the model fit.²⁰ If both indices have a value of 0.95 or more, the model is considered to be fit well. The H2-3 for the male sample and all the models for the female sample meet this criterion (since H2-4 is a saturated model, the CFI and TLI values are always 1).

Table 5 comprises a summary of empirical models whose socioeconomic outcome is ISEI. For ISEI as well as SIOPS, the best model fitting for men was H2-3 and for women it was H2-1. In the male sample, H2-3 was preferable for all indices. For women, H2-2 and H2-4 met the criteria for the LR test, RMSEA, CFI, and TLI, but the value for AIC was the smallest in H2-1.

Table 5 Model Fit of Each Empirical Model for ISEI

		H2-1	H2-2	H2-3	H2-4
Male	LR test (Model vs. Saturated)				
	<i>Chi-sq</i>	27.992	12.575	4.143	0
	<i>d.f.</i>	10	5	5	0
	<i>p-value</i>	0.002	0.028	0.529	-
	RMSEA	0.097	0.089	0.000	0.000
	AIC	13880.189	13874.772	13866.340	13872.197
	CFI	0.851	0.937	1.000	1.000
	TLI	0.776	0.812	1.021	1.000
Female	LR test (Model vs. Saturated)				
	<i>Chi-sq</i>	11.719	4.809	3.914	0
	<i>d.f.</i>	10	5	5	0
	<i>p-value</i>	0.304	0.440	0.562	-
	RMSEA	0.035	0.000	0.000	0.000
	AIC	10195.084	10198.174	10197.278	10203.364
	CFI	0.976	1.000	1.000	1.000
	TLI	0.964	1.008	1.045	1.000

²⁰ By definition, it is possible for TLI to exceed 1.

With regard to SIOPS and ISEI, Tables 6 and 7 show the estimation results for the path coefficients for the most suitable model. For men, the status attainment structures for natives and second-generation immigrants are similar to what is shown in Figure 5. Both parents' years of education and SIOPS/ISEI are positively related to educational achievement, but only parents' SIOPS/ISEI are positively related to attaining occupational status (SIOPS/ISEI). However, for the structure of status attainment for the first-generation immigrants, what is common to both SIOPS and ISEI is only that the path coefficients are positively significant to respondents' years of education. In the SEM using ISEI as an outcome, the parents' ISEI coefficient does not have a significant effect on educational achievement.

As for women, because the model of H2-1 is adopted, where the path coefficients among natives, first-generation, and second-generation immigrants are equal, every group has the same status attainment structure. As with the female path model in Figure 5, although both parents' years of education and SIOPS/ISEI are positively significant toward respondents' educational attainment, only the path coefficient of their own years of education is positively significant in terms of attaining occupational status.

Table 6 Preferred Models for SIOPS

Endogenous Var.	Exogenous Var.	Male: H2-3 (Native = 2nd Gen.)			Female: H2-1 (Native=2nd Gen.=1st Gen.)		
		Native	2nd Gen.	1st Gen.	Native	2nd Gen.	1st Gen.
SIOPS	Years of Education	0.29 ***	0.26 ***	0.27 ***	0.32 ***	0.34 ***	0.31 ***
	Parents' SIOPS	0.16 **	0.19 **	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03
	Parents' Yrs. of Education	0.10	0.10	-0.02	0.09	0.10	0.10
	Intercept	0.73 *	0.67 *	1.46 *	0.63	0.74	0.48
Years of Education	Parents' SIOPS	0.11 *	0.15 *	0.22 **	0.13 **	0.11 **	0.15 **
	Parents' Yrs. of Education	0.23 ***	0.27 ***	0.01	0.22 ***	0.22 ***	0.24 ***
	Intercept	4.15 ***	4.27 ***	8.48 ***	5.83 ***	5.03 ***	6.37 ***
Mean of Exogenous Var.							
	Parents' SIOPS	4.07 ***	2.93 ***	3.34 ***	3.95 ***	3.76 ***	3.38 ***
	Parents' Yrs. of Education	4.77 ***	4.04 ***	4.48 ***	4.78 ***	3.68 ***	4.10 ***
Residual Variance							
	SIOPS	0.84	0.83	0.93	0.87	0.85	0.87
	Years of Education	0.92	0.88	0.95	0.92	0.93	0.90
Variances and Correlation							
	Parents' SIOPS	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Parents' Yrs. of Education	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	cor(Prnts' SIOPS, Prnts' Yrs of Educ.)	0.23 ***	0.28 **	0.45 ***	0.16 *	0.14	0.31 ***

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Standardized coefficients are shown in the table.

Table 7 Preferred Models for ISEI

Endogenous Var.	Exogenous Var.	Male: H2-3 (Native = 2nd Gen.)			Female: H2-1 (Native=2nd Gen.=1st Gen.)		
		Native	2nd Gen.	1st Gen.	Native	2nd Gen.	1st Gen.
ISEI	Years of Education	0.30 ***	0.26 ***	0.32 ***	0.26 ***	0.32 ***	0.25 ***
	Parents' ISEI	0.23 ***	0.25 ***	-0.04	0.05	0.05	0.05
	Parents' Yrs. of Education	0.05	0.05	0.07	0.07	0.09	0.08
	Intercept	0.53	0.40	0.45	1.34 **	1.42 **	1.16 **
Years of Education	Parents' ISEI	0.10 *	0.12 *	0.13	0.13 *	0.10 *	0.14 *
	Parents' Yrs. of Education	0.24 ***	0.28 ***	0.05	0.21 ***	0.21 ***	0.23 ***
	Intercept	4.20 ***	4.33 ***	8.63 ***	5.94 ***	5.07 ***	6.45 ***
Mean of Exogenous Var.							
	Parents' ISEI	3.72 ***	2.98 ***	3.17 ***	3.66 ***	3.61 ***	3.23 ***
	Parents' Yrs. of Education	4.76 ***	4.03 ***	4.46 ***	4.77 ***	3.67 ***	4.08 ***
Residual Variance							
	ISEI	0.81	0.83	0.89	0.91	0.87	0.91
	Years of Education	0.92	0.89	0.98	0.92	0.93	0.90
Variances and Correlation							
	Parents' ISEI	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Parents' Yrs. of Education	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	cor(Prnts' ISEI, Prnts' Yrs of Educ.)	0.30 ***	0.27 **	0.50 ***	0.24	0.41 ***	0.24

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Standardized coefficients are shown in the table.

6. Discussion

In this paper, we investigated the structures for status attainment of immigrants living in Japan through comparison with Japanese natives. The results of empirical analysis using multi-group SEM show that the straight-line assimilation hypothesis is supported for the male sample. For the female sample, there is little difference in the structure of status attainment between Japanese people and immigrants.

For immigrant men in Japan, the status attainment structure for second-generation immigrants is more similar to natives than that of first-generation immigrants. This implies that resources, which are key to educational achievement and attaining status in the labor market, work similarly between natives and second-generation immigrants. This is because they experience a life course under the same institutional context as native children. Nevertheless, among the first-generation immigrants, their life course includes international mobility experience. Attaining status from parents' socioeconomic status, as a resource, is not always compatible between various societies. Thus, first-generation immigrants must rely on their own human capital.

This begs the question: Is the second generation of male immigrants at a greater advantage than the first generation? Just because the status attainment structure is similar to native Japanese this does not necessarily mean that the second generation has an advantage. Since the influence of socioeconomic background is also large for natives, second-generation immigrants are faced with

challenges in their status attainment process when they are from a disadvantaged background. The expected values for the parents' standardized SIOPS/ISEI and years of education are lowest for the second-generation immigrants in both Table 6 and Table 7. Second-generation immigrants experience structural assimilation in Japan, but that means that they must compete with natives under the same socio-cultural conditions. Unlike first-generation immigrants, the second generation becomes more disadvantaged due to their embeddedness in the Japanese social structure.

From the analysis results of the female sample, it should not be concluded that status attainment opportunities for immigrants are catching up with those of natives. Rather, it should be noted that parents' socioeconomic resources are not mobilized in the status attainment process for Japanese women. In Japan, it is still likely for women's careers to be interrupted by marriage and childbirth. In Japanese companies, employment practices also operate on the premise that everyone will work the way that men work (Gottfried and Hayashi-Kato 1998; Hirata 2011). Japanese women must rely on their own human capital in the labor market. This is also the case with second-generation immigrant women because they are assimilated into Japanese society. First-generation immigrant women cannot mobilize their parents' socioeconomic resources, but the context is different from the other groups. This is because they move to Japan after being born in their origin countries and their parents' socioeconomic resources are not compatible.

In these discussions, it seems that an empirical approach based on assimilation theory is still effective. We should distinguish the theoretical viewpoint from the canonical issue as to whether immigrants should assimilate and match the majority in the host society. Based on the framework of assimilation theory, second-generation immigrants have likely experienced structural assimilation, and there are also implications that they continue to face challenges in attaining status. Using larger and more nationally representative data, it will become possible to grasp more accurately the socioeconomic circumstances particular to immigrants in Japan.

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