How does race operate among Asian Americans in the labor market?: Occupational segregation and different rewards by occupation among native-born Chinese American and Japanese American male workers

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The effect of race in the U.S. labor market has long been controversial. One posits that racial effects have been diminished since the civil rights movement of the 1960s (Alba & Nee, 2003; Sakamoto, Wu, & Tzeng, 2000; Wilson, 1980). Even if some disparities in labor-market outcomes among race groups are found, advocates of this "declining significance of race" thesis do not attribute these disparities to racial discrimination. They, instead, understand the racial gaps as a result of *class* composition of racial minority groups, classes represented by larger proportions of the working-class population (Wilson, 1980, 1997) as well as unskilled-immigrant workers (Borjas, 1994).

This position tends to ignore populations such as

Asian Americans. Asian Americans are characterized neither as the working-class-dominant group nor as the unskilled group. They have higher instances of obtaining professional occupations (Barringer, Takeuchi, & Xenos, 1990). The earnings of some Asian ethnic groups exceed the earnings of non-Hispanic Whites[1] (Shinagawa & Kim, 2008; Shinagawa & Lee, forthcoming). Because of these labor-market outcomes, Asian Americans are often cited as a supporting case for labor-market assimilation theories (Alba & Nee, 2003; Sakamoto, Wu, & Tzeng, 2000), or as an exceptional case to the persistence of racial disadvantages (Massey, 2007, p.113).[2] These perspectives are often supported by aggregate information across occupational fields on Asian Americans, which include their high median incomes and their high percentage of holding professional occupations. However, studies focusing on such aggregate information often overlook racial disparities observed in segmentation of field *within* professional occupations as well as reward differentials by the field of occupations between Asians and Whites. Within professional occupations, indeed, the levels of earnings returns vary according to the field of professional occupations; some professional occupations are characterized as high-paying fields while other professional occupations are not. According to Sakamoto and Xie (2006), Asian Americans have been segregated from non-Asian Americans occupationally and have not converged from 1960 to 2000. Particularly, highly educated Asian Americans are found disproportionately in high-paying computer, engineering, and medical occupations. Given that, we can infer that the high median and mean wages of Asian Americans are largely the reflection of the high earnings of professional workers in such lucrative science and technology fields. If there is occupational segregation between Asian Americans and Whites within professional occupations, how should we interpret that in the light of racial effects? Can we still say that Asian Americans are assimilating into the U.S. labor

market? This study aims to examine racial effects for Asian Americans and understand how, if at all, the racial effects of "being an Asian" shape Asian Americans' labor-market achievements. For this purpose, I will examine the occupational distributions of Chinese Americans and Japanese American[3] and non-Hispanic Whites in a comparative perspective and the racial effects on earnings returns at specific occupational levels. The findings of this analysis will help us understand what kinds of fields give better returns to Asian Americans, and thereby, how race affects Asian Americans in the U.S. labor market.

BACKGROUND AND THEORY

Earnings and occupations of Asian Americans

Some labor-market outcomes of Asian Americans indicate that there are no significant disparities between Asian Americans and non-Hispanic Whites in labor-market achievement. The earnings of Asian Americans are not significantly less than those of Whites as of 2000. One study found that the average earnings are $46,000 for non-Hispanic Whites and $43,000 for native-born Asian Americans. Likewise, hourly wages are similar: $23 for non-Hispanic Whites and $22 for native-born Asian Americans (Sakamoto & Xie, 2006:62). The measurement of the occupational prestige scores of Asian Americans demonstrates that native-born Asian American men achieve occupational attainments comparable to those of non-Hispanic White (Iceland, 1999). Particularly, Asian Americans have gained greater access to high-tier technical and professional occupations (Sakamoto & Xie, 2006).

There is a debate on how we should understand Asians' seemingly successful outcomes in occupations and earnings in the light of the effect of race in the labor market. One group of scholars attributes such outcomes to the overeducation of Asian Americans. That is, Asian Americans are more likely to be overeducated for the same occupation for the same level of wages as non-

Hispanic Whites (Hirschman & Wong, 1984; Min, 1995; Takaki, 1998), which veils racial disadvantages for Asian Americans. For example, in their study using the 1960 and 1970 census data and data from the 1976 Survey of Income and Education, Hirschman and Wong (1984) estimated that in 1975, average earnings of Asian Americans would decline by about $1,000 when their educational levels were adjusted to parity with the rest of the U.S. population (1984, p.599). For other scholars, however, it is problematic to consider this over-education hypothesis evidence of *racial* disadvantage for Asian Americans (*e.g.*, Zeng & Xie, 2004). If lower returns on education exist among Asian Americans, this may be due not to racial discrimination but to *immigration* effects such as the devaluation of foreign schooling (Zeng & Xie, 2004) or the imperfect transferability of immigrant's human skills (Chiswick & Miller, 2009). Comparing the earnings of three groups of Asian American male workers (foreign-born and foreign-educated, foreign-born but U.S.-educated, and U.S.-born), Zeng and Xie (2004) found that only foreign-educated immigrants were systematically underpaid, by approximately 16 percent, as compared to non-Hispanic White and the other (U.S.-born or U.S.-educated) Asian American groups. In their conclusion, Zeng and Xie (2004) remarked, "Asian Americans' earnings disadvantage is rooted in human capital differences between U.S.-educated workers and foreign-educated workers rather than in race-based discrimination (p.116)."

To eliminate these immigration effects, some studies distinguished U.S.-born Asian Americans from foreign-born Asian Americans and compared each group with Whites to explore inter-group differentials in socioeconomic attainments, often measured by earnings and occupational prestige scores. A study by Iceland (1999) revealed that neither native-born Asian American males nor females are disadvantaged in earnings, including earnings returns to their occupational status, when compared to non-Hispanic Whites. Only foreign-born Asian men

are disadvantaged relative to native-born non-Hispanic White men, although within the foreign-born Asian American group there is considerable variation by nation of origin. Another native-born-only study by Sakamoto et al. (2000), found that, for African Americans, American Indians, Japanese Americans, and Chinese Americans, the net disadvantage between 1950 and 1990 had declined by more than 50 percent, similarly concluding: native-born Asian Americans clearly faced a net racial disadvantage in the period before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but the net racial disadvantage (in wages, earnings, or occupational attainments) disappeared after the Civil Rights Act was enacted. By demonstrating that there is no racial disadvantage between native-born Asian Americans and non-Hispanic Whites in the post-Civil Rights period, these studies advocate that the disadvantages of Asian Americans shown in the over-education hypothesis are due not to their racial status but to their immigration status.

Occupational fields of Asian Americans

Do these findings, which are based on aggregate information such as median incomes or occupational prestige scores, really reflect the "declining significance of race" for native-born Asian Americans? Considering the possibility that racial effects for Asian Americans do appear neither as wage disadvantages by race nor less the procurement of prestigious occupations than Whites, we can think of a different way in which race operates among Asian Americans in the U.S. labor market. Race may affect Asian Americans in choosing similarly prestigious but different occupational fields than those the majority of Whites take. The most noticeable labor-market characteristic among Asian American workers is the high rate of professional occupations in computer, science, engineering, and medical fields. In 2000, Asian Americans appear to be overrepresented in higher-status professional occupations such as physical scientists

(15.3%), mathematicians (11.1%), nurses (6.2%), engineers (9.9%), and accountants (6.1%) (Sakamoto & Xie, 2006:67). Generally these are relatively high-paying occupations. Given the concentration of Asian Americans in high-paying occupational fields, we can infer that their higher earnings might be the consequence of their occupational distributions. Other occupations may not provide Asian Americans with earnings comparable to those earned in occupations in sciences and technology fields. If this is the case, we can see the occupational concentration of Asian Americans in certain fields. This may be a result of the system of the U.S. labor market that defines some fields as "Asianized occupations" and others as "White occupations" and then rewards Asian Americans' human capital unequally according to occupation. In this case, we may find racial effects for Asian Americans not in earnings or occupational prestige scores but in their occupational segregation and different rewards by the field of occupations.

Unequal treatment by occupational fields

Occupational choice is in general understood as a matter of individual decision-making. However, the persistence of occupational segregation by race turns our attention to the structural factors that shape the racial divisions of labor. According to Ong, Bonacich, and Cheng (1994), occupational segregation by race has been driven by the U.S. capitalist economy and neoconservative policies. This is especially true for post-1965 Asian immigrants. Tremendous increases in Asian immigration began when the United States initiated its economic restructuring plans in the mid-1960s. One goal of this economic restructuring was the pursuit of innovation. To do so, it needed a larger, highly-trained labor force. However, domestic populations within the United States could not satisfy the emerging demands for high-skilled labor in areas such as healthcare, engineering, and science. Labor shortages in these fields were exacerbated by a combination of several

factors: reductions in education spending, which created a lack of adequate funds for advanced professional training; the high-paying financial and legal sectors, which offered better individual returns per unit of educational investment; and some oppressive working conditions in healthcare, engineering, and scientific fields. The U.S. government attempted to remediate these labor shortages by importing Asian immigrants with the desired high-skills qualifications. Creating an official policy to support this goal, the U.S. Immigration Act of 1965 gave preference to individuals with the desired training and to those with capital to invest. Given the demand for highly-skilled Asian immigrants, we can expect that the United States would provide better rewards for Asian workers in these labor-short areas than in other low-demand areas, professions which were sufficiently populated by White workers. Because of these differentiated reward systems, occupations may still reflect this covertly sanctioned segregation between Asian Americans and majority Whites. In short, highly-skilled Asian Americans are more likely to be concentrated in Asian-dominated occupational fields. This is because they can maximize the returns on their human capital and resources in areas characterized by a high demand for Asian workers and reduced competition with majority Whites. The unequal rewards by fields that Asian immigrant parents have experienced may shape their children's perspectives on opportunity structures facing them.

Not only structural factors, but interpersonal factors contribute to the occupational concentration of Asian Americans in certain fields. Firstly, discrimination in hiring and in the workplace is a leading factor shaping occupational choices of Asian American individuals. In their ethnographic research, Chou and Feagin (2008) report that with regard to hiring, Asian Americans have more difficulty finding work at White-owned companies as compared to when they seek employment at Asian American-owned companies. Moreover, Asian American

individuals often have to accept below-market salaries in order to join these White companies (Chou & Feagin, 2008, p. 84). In the workplace, employed Asian Americans often face a glass ceiling (Woo, 2000; The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1988; Chou & Feagin, 2008, pp.91-96). The glass-ceiling hypothesis states that a preference for White managers, who are believed to be more competent administratively and more compatible with White workers, negatively impacts the professional attainment of Asian Americans in White-owned companies (Woo, 2000). Simultaneously, stereotypes of Asian Americans, characterizing them as "not aggressive, inarticulate in English language, and too technical to become managers," hamper promotion of Asian American individuals (Ong & Hee 1993:146-147). Relationships with co-workers also influence occupational choices for Asian Americans. White co-workers are often a problem for Asian American employees. Chou and Feagin's interviews reveal that Asian Americans "pay a heavy energy price in dealing with discrimination at the hands of White employees and employers" because of "a great array of racialized barriers and mistreatment at their places of work."(Chou & Feagin 2008: 89, 99).

All of these experiences contribute to preferences of Asian Americans to work at same racial/ethnic group-dominated workplaces. Most Asian Americans may expect that, in an Asian-dominated work setting, they will not be marginalized nor degraded based on race. Moreover, Asian Americans can expect to enjoy strong solidarity among Asian American workers at their workplaces, an unrealistic expectation in White-dominated work environments. Both better returns in high-need areas of U.S. economy and less discrimination in workplaces dominated by same racial/ ethnic coworkers play influencing roles in occupational choice for Asian American. Even though Asian Americans on average earn higher incomes, and a higher percentage of them have professional occupations, we should not simply understand this as evidence of the declining

significance of race. Instead, we should pay attention to how race operates for Asian Americans. For Asian Americans, race affects their choice of occupation in the way that being an Asian is associated with advantage in some fields and disadvantage in other fields.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study compares the occupational distributions and earnings by occupation between Asian (Chinese/ Japanese) Americans and non-Hispanic Whites in order to examine whether there are distinctive patterns by race in choosing occupations and whether there are differential rewards by race. For analytical purposes, I created two distinctive fields of occupations: "Asian-Overrepresented (AO) fields" and "White-Overrepresented (WO) fields." The AO fields refer to within-group work settings that present relatively higher rates of same racial/ethnic co-workers as compared to non-Hispanic Whites. The AO fields are presumably characterized as having a high demand for or high supply of Asian workers, or both. The WO fields, by contrast, refer to labor markets in which Whites are over-represented as compared to Asian Americans. These fields are perceived as areas where Asian workers are either less demanded or less supplied, or both.

The analysis consists of three steps. The first step is to investigate distinctive patterns by race, if any, in occupational distributions. This work provides the list of AO occupations and WO occupations. Additionally, occupational segregation is measured between Asians and Whites with the conventional measurement, the index of dissimilarity (D):

$$D = \sum_{i=1}^{j} \left| \left(\frac{A_i}{A} \right) - \left(\frac{W_i}{W} \right) \right| \times \frac{1}{2} \times 100,$$

where *J* refers to the total number of occupations, A*i* and W*i* refer to the number of Asians and Whites in the

*i*th occupation, and A and W refers to the total number of Asians and Whites among wage and salary earners in the labor force[4]. The index (D) indicates the degree of occupational segregation between Asian Americans and non-Hispanic Whites. The occupational dissimilarity index provides an intuitive measure of how much a fraction of either Asian Americans or Whites would have to change occupations for the two groups to achieve an identical distribution across occupations. The values range from zero to one. The value of zero indicates perfect occupational integration and the value of one indicates complete occupational segregation between the racial groups. The second step examines whether race – that is, being an "Asian American" – has a significant influence on choosing AO fields and WO fields. There may be many factors that differentiate the job choices of Asian Americans from those of Whites. It might be possible that the higher rate of post-secondary degrees among Asian Americans leads them to higher-paying professional occupations. It is also possible that Asian Americans may have more opportunities in these professional occupations due to their residential concentration in metropolitan areas. Likewise, occupational opportunity may depend on which region of the United States they live in. They may also be influenced by other factors such as age, marital status, or wealth status. To examine the existence of the racial effects of being Asian in individuals' occupational choice, I conducted logistic regression analyses with occupation as a dependent variable. Control variables are: race, age, marital status, metropolitan status, region, education, and homeownership (as an indicator for wealth). This logistic regression analysis examines factors predicting AO fields and factors predicting WO fields, focusing on whether significant differentials by race remain after controlling other major factors. The last step compares the wage level and the degree of racial effect on wages earned in AO fields with those earned in WO fields by *o*rdinary least squares regression analysis on factors

predicting wage. For this analysis, I used the same control variables as those used for the logistic regression analysis. This analysis demonstrates how differently Asian Americans are rewarded in AO fields as compared with WO fields.

The data for the individual workers are derived from the 2005-2007 American Community Survey (ACS) three-year sample of the U.S. Census Bureau, representing three percent of the entire U.S. population.[5] To eliminate non-racial effects such as gender, immigrant status, and human capital differentials such as educational attainment, the selected samples are limited to native-born male wage and salary earners aged 25 to 64 who had four-year-college degrees at minimum, had a non-zero income, were not enrolled in school, and classified themselves as "Chinese alone" or "Japanese alone" for the year prior to the census. I select Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans because both groups are characterized by large native-born populations and a diverse range of ages and generations. In contrast, native-born populations for other Asian ethnic groups are not large enough for consideration in this study. Additionally, other Asian ethnic groups are disproportionately young and are over-represented by second-generation individuals as compared to non-Hispanic Whites who are comprised of a multitude of generations. Most importantly, both groups provide an opportunity to examine whether returns on human-capital investment are maximized in the context of within-group work settings (*i.e.*, AO fields) or in labor markets where Asian Americans are more likely to work or compete with Whites (*i.e.*, WO fields). Chinese Americans are characterized as more prevalent in AO fields, as compared to Japanese Americans. Japanese American workers, among Asian American ethnic groups, are most integrated with Whites; that is, they are more likely to choose occupations in WO fields than other Asian ethnic groups [6] (Shinagawa & Kim, 2008; Shinagawa & Lee, forthcoming).

FINDINGS

Table 1 presents descriptive characteristics of samples selected for this research. The only selected samples are U.S.-born male wage and salary earners aged between 24 and 64 who have completed their college or post-college education.

Among the three sampled populations, Japanese Americans are oldest and Chinese Americans are youngest, as measured by median age. In regard to marital status, non-Hispanic White men are most likely to live with a spouse in a household. The rate of living together with a spouse is lowest for Chinese American men. Most Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans live in metropolitan areas (98.8% and 91.7% respectively), and to a lesser extent, so do non-Hispanic Whites. Likewise, the majority of Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans live in the West (61.0% and 86.6% respectively). Among college-educated individuals, 39.1 percent of Chinese Americans have post-college degrees. Japanese Americans are least likely to have graduate-school educations. The homeownership rate, as an approximate indicator for wealth, is the highest for non-Hispanic Whites (86.4%), and the lowest for Chinese Americans (79.0%). However, Chinese Americans earn the highest level of wage and salary incomes, while non-Hispanic Whites earn the lowest.

Occupational Segregation among the college-educated male workers

Table 2 shows that both Chinese American men and Japanese American men have occupational choice distribution patterns similar to each other. Both Asian American ethnic groups are overrepresented in professional occupations, especially in computer and mathematical, healthcare, and engineering fields. Non-Hispanic White men, on the other hand, maintain overrepresentation among management, education-related professions, and sales occupations.

Both Asian ethnic groups experience overrepresentation in the same areas but to a different extent. Chinese Americans are segregated from Whites twice as much as Japanese Americans. The index of occupational dissimilarity between Chinese American men and non-Hispanic White men is 20.7, meaning that 20.7 percent of either Chinese Americans or Whites would have to change their occupations in order for the two groups to reach identical occupational distributions. The index for Japanese American men is 9.7, indicating that 9.7 percent of either Japanese Americans or Whites would have to change their jobs for the same purpose. In computer and mathematical occupations, for example, Chinese American men are overrepresented by 7.32 percent as compared to non-Hispanic White men, while Japanese American men are only 1.13 percent overrepresented when compared to White men. By contrast, in management occupations, Chinese American men are underrepresented when compared to White men by 6.18 percent, while Japanese Americans are only 1.56 percent underrepresented.

The effect of race on occupational choice

From the table of occupational distributions, I selected the three most Asian-overrepresented fields – computer, healthcare, and engineering, and the top three White-overrepresented occupations – management, sales, and education.[7] Now, to examine the question: Is there a possibility that race for Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans affects occupational choices?

The effect of race for both native-born Chinese American men and Japanese American men is significant and positive in choosing AO occupations. In computer and mathematical occupations, the positive B value (.677) for the race variable for Chinese Americans indicates that being a Chinese American is positively associated with obtaining the computer or mathematical occupations. The

odds ratio indicates that the odds of having computer and mathematical occupations are almost two times higher for Chinese Americans than non-Hispanic Whites, all other factors being equal. Japanese Americans exhibit the same pattern but to a lesser extent. For Japanese Americans, the odds of having such occupations attributed to their ethnicity is about 1.2 times higher than for non-Hispanic Whites but this result is not statistically significant. In the other AO fields, healthcare and engineering, the results are similar to those for computer occupations. Chinese Americans are two times more likely to have a professional occupation in healthcare and 1.6 times more in engineering compared with their non-Hispanic White counterparts. These two fields also exhibit the positive effect of "being Japanese" as a race variable. Japanese Americans are about 1.5 times more likely to do work as a professional worker in healthcare and 1.2 times more in engineering than non-Hispanic Whites, all the other variables being equal. All the values of the racial effects in the three AO occupations are significant except for the racial effect of being Japanese in computer and mathematics. In short, the results of AO fields demonstrate that Asian heritage plays a positive and significant role in the selection of AO occupations.

In WO fields, race is also correlated significantly, but the effect of race is the opposite in AO fields. That is, 'being an Asian' is negatively associated with WO occupations. In management occupations, for instance, Chinese Americans are 0.8 times as often (or, 1.2 times less likely[8]) to be represented than non-Hispanic Whites. The other two WO occupations, sales and education, also supply evidence of negative associations with Chinese heritage. In education-related occupations, especially, Chinese Americans are 0.5 times as often (or 2.2 times less likely) to be employed than non-Hispanic Whites. Japanese Americans exhibit a similar negative pattern in all three WO fields but the significant association with Japanese ethnicity is found only in sales occupations.

Japanese Americans are 0.7 times as often (or 1.4 times less likely) to be found in sales occupations. In management or education occupations, there is no significant difference by race in the odds of choosing such occupations between Japanese Americans and non-Hispanic Whites. These results confirm that, regarding occupational distribution, Chinese Americans are more segregated from, while Japanese Americans are relatively more integrated with, non-Hispanic White workers.

Racial effects in earnings by occupational fields

The third part of the study compares wage and salary incomes of each occupation by race. Median incomes in Table 4 show that, in all three AO fields, both Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans earn more than non-Hispanic Whites. Japanese Americans exhibit the highest median income in each AO field, followed by Chinese Americans. However, in WO fields, no distinct pattern by race is found. Only sales occupations appear to give higher earnings to non-Hispanic Whites than to the other two minority groups.

Lastly, this study questions whether race is significant in determining wages and how much race increases or decreases wage in each of the AO fields and WO fields. For these questions, I conducted ordinary least squares regression analyses. The dependent variable is the log of annual wage and salary income; the control variables are race, age, age square, marital status, metropolitan status, education, homeownership, and region. Table 5 displays the coefficients of the racial effects on their wages for both Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans after controlling the other factors. Looking at the column of Chinese Americans, we can find significant racial effects in the two AO fields – computer and healthcare. Noteworthy is that, in these fields, Chinese heritage is positively associated with wage. That is, in these areas, the racial effect of being Chinese appears to be a type of racial *advantage* or racial premium over

non-Hispanic Whites. The highest racial premium is found in healthcare-related occupations. In this field, Chinese heritage alone increases log wage by 0.15. Computer and mathematical occupations also exhibit racial advantages of 0.07 on earnings for Chinese Americans. In architecture and engineering occupations, the association of Chinese heritage and those occupations is positive but not significant. Unlike the case of Chinese Americans, for Japanese Americans, a significant racial premium is not found in all three AO fields, although the result displays that Japanese Americans enjoy a slight racial advantage in computer and mathematical occupations while they face a racial disadvantage in health as well as architecture and engineering occupations.

In WO fields, by contrast, Chinese heritage bears no advantage in wage. In all of the WO fields (management, sales, and education-related occupations), the racial effects of being Chinese American appear as a disadvantage but only the association in sales is statistically significant. Such racial disadvantages are also found for Japanese Americans in the two WO fields - management and sales occupations. Japanese heritage alone in the field of management affects a slight, but statistically significant, decline in wage. A slight racial disadvantage is also found in sales occupations but is not statistically significant. Education-related occupations are the only field that represents the advantage of Japanese heritage in earnings, but it is statistically not significant.

CONCLUSIONS AND DICUSSION

The findings of the statistical analysis suggest that there are different patterns in the occupational choices of college-educated male workers in U.S.-born Chinese/Japanese Americans and non-Hispanic Whites. First, members of the two Asian groups more often select computer, healthcare, and engineering occupations (grouped as AO fields), but fewer individuals select occupations in *management*, sales, and education fields (grouped as WO

fields) as compared to non-Hispanic Whites. Furthermore, these segregations are nearly twice as pronounced for Chinese Americans than Japanese Americans. Second, the logistic regression analysis indicates that race matters for Chinese Americans in choosing occupations. All the other major factors remaining equal, but race (*i.e.*, having Chinese heritage), when compared with non-Hispanic Whites, is significantly and positively associated with pursuing AO occupations and is negatively associated with choosing WO occupations. The same patterns are found among Japanese Americans, but the associations of their heritage with each occupation are weaker than those found for Chinese Americans. Some of the racial effects do not represent statistically significant differences from those of non-Hispanic Whites. This result reflects that Chinese Americans are significantly segregated from Whites in the labor market while Japanese Americans are relatively more assimilated with Whites. Third, the analysis of racial effects on wages by occupation displays racial advantages on wage for Chinese Americans in two AO fields: computers and health. In the WO fields, by contrast, it appears that Chinese Americans earn a lesser wage than non-Hispanic Whites, other factors being equal, but such racial disadvantage is significant only in Sales occupations. For Japanese Americans, there is no such pattern. They do not enjoy a significant racial advantage in any of the AO fields. In the WO fields, the management field gives Japanese Americans a significant racial disadvantage, while no advantage/ disadvantage is found in the other two WO fields. In short, Chinese heritage is significantly associated with the wage differentials between AO fields and WO fields, while Japanese heritage is not. Summing up the findings of this study, race for Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans plays a role in their choosing occupational fields. The hypothesis of "differential rewards to Asians in different fields" is supported by the case of Chinese Americans but not by the case of Japanese Americans.

What do these results imply for the racial effects for Asian Americans in the labor market? One may argue that the significance of race for other Asian ethnic groups will disappear in the labor market, following Japanese Americans who do not experience significant differential rewards compared to Whites. Another may claim that race will continue to affect Asian Americans, as it does for Chinese Americans. This difference makes it problematic to treat Asian Americans as a whole. Besides, the difference in the racial effects between Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans implies that race interplays with the characteristics of each Asian ethnic community in different ways. For example, the perspectives of native-born Chinese Americans on the labor market may continue to be influenced by their ethnic heritage by way of incoming Chinese immigrants as well as the strong tie with their ethnic community, while their Japanese American counterparts may be less likely to be shaped by their ethnic community given their weak tie with their ethnic heritage. Thus, future research should examine how the effects of each ethnic community, combined with their racial status, affect Asian Americans in occupational choices and earnings.

There are several limitations in this research. Firstly, this research investigated only two ethnic groups, Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans. Given the diversity by ethnicity within Asian Americans, the findings of this research are limited to these two groups. Secondly, this research employed non-Hispanic Whites only for the reference group. We should examine whether the patterns of occupational choices and differential earnings for Asian Americans would persist or change when including other racial minority groups.

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Endnotes

1 Although "white" is mostly used in literature, I prefer using "White" (with capital W) in order to address my perspective that White Americans should be treated the same as any of the other racial groups like Black, Latino, and Asian Americans.

2 Massey (2007) argues that categorical inequality continues to persist in the United States. According to Massey, however, the racial disadvantages exist among African Americans and Latinos but no disadvantage is found among Asian Americans. He states, "The future of America would seem to be one in which various European and Asian ancestries are increasingly jumbled together in a way that makes categorical distinctions between them fade"(Massey 2007:113).

3 In this study, only Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans, both of whom are U.S.-born, are employed for the sample for Asian Americans (for the reason of selecting these two groups only, please refer to the section of 'research design' below). Although I use the term "Asian Americans" very often throughout the paper, this term used in my own analysis refers only to these two ethnic groups. Although we may find from this research some implications for Asian Americans in general, strictly speaking, the interpretation of this research should be limited to these two ethnic groups.

4 For the equation of the occupational segregation between Asians and Whites, I referred to the index of dissimilarity for occupational segregation by sex which is introduced as a conventional measurement by Charles and Grusky (2004, p.39). See Charles and Grusky (2004, ch.2) for alternative measurements of the index of dissimilarity.

5 The 2005-07 ACS dataset was provided from Minnesota Population Center (www.ipums.org). Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. *Integrated Public Use*

Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010.

6 According to a report by Shinagawa and Kim (2008), using 2006 ACS data, the top three occupations for Chinese American men aged between 18 and 64 are cooks, computer software developers, and managers and administrators in that order. The top three occupations for Japanese American correspondents are managers and administrators, supervisors and proprietors of sales jobs, and computer systems analysts and computer scientists (Shinagawa & Lee, forthcoming). My statistical analysis using 2008 ACS data shows that although Japanese Americans also exhibit a slight over-representation in AO fields like other Asian ethnic groups, they exhibit the smallest degree of overrepresentation of all Asian ethnic groups.

7 In the comparative analysis of Chinese Americans and Whites, AO fields consist of the occupations in which Chinese American men are overrepresented in comparison to non-Hispanic White men by more than 3 percent; WO fields consist of the occupations in which Chinese American men are underrepresented to non-Hispanic White men by more than 3 percent. The same AO fields and WO fields are used for comparison of Japanese Americans and Whites because Japanese Americans also exhibit overrepresentation in the same top three AO fields and underrepresentation in top three WO fields, although in these fields Japanese Americans are over/underrepresented by less than 3 percent.

8 To facilitate interpretation, odds ratios less than 1 are often inverted to new values which are equal to "1 divided by the odds ratio." For example, in the management occupations for Chinese Americans, 1 divided by .718 equals 1.39. This suggests that Chinese heritage reduces the odds of management occupations by a factor of 1.39

9 Mean wage and salary incomes by race display more complicated pattern by specific occupation within AO fields.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Selected Samples

Variable	Chinese American (N = 2,157)	Japanese American (N = 1,730)	Non-Hispanic White (N = 400,215)
Median age	38.0	47.5	46.0
Married, spouse present	56.0%	65.9%	74.5%
Metropolitan residence	98.8%	91.7%	86.6%
Post-bachelor's degree	39.1%	30.4%	35.8%
Homeowner	79.0%	84.8%	86.4%
Northeast	22.9%	3.6%	21.4%
Midwest	5.7%	3.8%	23.3%
South	10.4%	6.0%	34.2%
West	61.0%	86.6%	21.0%
Median wage and salary income	74,652	72,488	70,324

Samples: U.S.-born male wage and salary earners aged 25-64 who have college degrees and beyond but did not attend school during the year of survey.

Table 2. Occupational distributions and overrepresentation by racial/ethnic group

Occupation	Percentage of Whites out of total White population	Percentage of Chinese Americans out of total Chinese American population	Percentage of Japanese Americans out of total Japanese American population	Difference in Percentage between Chinese Americans and Whites	Difference in Percentage between Japanese Americans and Whites
Management Occupations	21.6%	15.4%	20.0%	-6.2%	-1.6%
Business Operations Specialists	3.2%	3.3%	4.3%	0.1%	1.1%
Financial Specialists	5.5%	7.2%	6.2%	1.7%	0.7%
Professional - Computer and Mathematical Occupations	6.4%	13.8%	7.6%	7.4%	1.2%
Professional - Architecture and Engineering Occupations	7.0%	10.8%	8.8%	3.8%	1.8%
Professional - Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	2.5%	3.3%	2.4%	0.8%	-0.1%
Professional - Community and Social Services Occupations	3.0%	1.2%	2.5%	-1.8%	-0.5%
Professional - Legal Occupations	2.9%	2.9%	1.9%	0.0%	-1.0%
Professional - Education, Training, and Library Occupations	10.1%	6.2%	8.1%	-3.9%	-2.0%
Professional - Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	2.9%	3.0%	2.7%	0.1%	-0.2%
Professional - Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	4.4%	8.6%	5.8%	4.2%	1.4%
Service - Healthcare Support Occupations	0.2%	0.6%	0.2%	0.4%	0.0%

Table 2. Occupational distributions and overrepresentation by racial/ethnic group

continued

Service - Protective Service Occupations	2.7%	2.0%	3.6%	-0.7%	0.9%
Service - Food Preparation and Serving	0.9%	0.6%	1.2%	-0.3%	0.3%
Service - Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	0.6%	0.3%	0.9%	-0.3%	0.3%
Service - Personal Care and Service Occupations	0.7%	0.5%	1.3%	-0.2%	0.6%
Sales Occupations	12.3%	9.1%	9.1%	-3.2%	-3.2%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	5.1%	7.4%	6.2%	2.3%	1.1%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	-0.1%	0.1%
Construction Trades	1.5%	0.4%	0.7%	-1.1%	-0.8%
Extraction Workers	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers	1.4%	0.9%	1.6%	-0.5%	0.2%
Production Occupations	2.0%	1.1%	2.1%	-0.9%	0.1%
Transportation and Material Moving	2.4%	0.9%	2.3%	-1.5%	-0.1%
Military Specific	0.6%	0.4%	0.2%	-0.2%	-0.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Dissimilarity Index (D)				**20.7**	**9.7**

Table 3. Logistic Regression Predicting Likelihood of Choosing Occupations

	Chinese American		Japanese American	
AO fields	*B* (S.E.)	Exp(*B*)	*B* (S.E.)	Exp(*B*)
Computer and Mathematical				
Asian (=1, White=0)	.677 (.063)**	1.969	.166 (.088)	1.180
Age	.046 (.005)**	1.047	.047 (.006)**	1.048
Age, squared	-.001 (.000)**	.999	-.001 (.000)**	.999
Married, spouse present (=1, else=0)	-.073 (.015)**	.930	-.069 (.016)**	.933
Metropolitan (=1, non-metro=0)	.641 (.020)**	1.899	.642 (.020)**	1.901
Post-bachelor's degree (=1, bachelor's=0)	-.444 (.015)**	.641	-.442 (.015)**	.642
Homeowner (=1, non-homeowner=0)	.139 (.020)**	1.115	.140 (.020)**	1.151
Region (reference category: Northeast)				
Midwest (=1, else=0)	-.080 (.020)**	.923	-.077 (.020)**	.926
South (=1, else=0)	.055 (.018)**	1.057	.060 (.018)**	1.061
West (=1, else=0)	.109 (.019)**	1.115	.116 (.020)**	1.124
Constant	-3.609 (.115)**	.027	-3.631 (.116)**	.026
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical				
Asian (=1, White=0)	.757 (.077)**	2.133	.383 (.109)**	1.466
Age	-.019 (.007)**	.981	-.019 (.007)**	.982
Age, squared	.000 (.000)	1.000	.000 (.000)	1.000
Married, spouse present (=1, else=0)	-.030 (.019)	.971	-.031 (.019)	.969

Table 3. Logistic Regression Predicting Liklihood of Choosing Occupations continued

Metropolitan (=1, non-metro=0)	-.177 (.019)**	.838	-.177 (.019)**	.838
Post-bachelor's degree (=1, bachelor's=0)	1.379 (.016)**	3.973	1.373 (.017)**	3.947
Homeowner (=1, non-homeowner=0)	.228 (.026)**	1.256	.236 (.026) **	1.266
Region (reference category: Northeast)				
Midwest (=1, else=0)	.102 (.023)**	1.107	.099 (.023)**	1.105
South (=1, else=0)	.128 (.021)**	1.137	.128 (.021)**	1.136
West (=1, else=0)	.014 (.024)	1.014	.016 (.024)	1.016
Constant	-3.130 (.142)**	.044	-3.147 (.143)**	.043
Architecture and Engineering				
Asian (=1, White=0)	.446 (.068)**	1.561	.164 (.083)*	1.179
Age	.008 (.005)	1.009	.008 (.005)	1.008
Age, squared	.000 (.000)**	1.000	.000 (.000)**	1.000
Married, spouse present (=1, else=0)	.113 (.015)**	1.119	.112 (.015)**	1.119
Metropolitan (=1, non-metro=0)	.101 (.016)**	1.106	.101 (.016)**	1.107
Post-bachelor's degree (=1, bachelor's=0)	-.307 (.014)**	.736	-.309 (.014)**	.734
Homeowner (=1, non-homeowner=0)	.349 (.021)**	1.418	.348 (.021)**	1.417
Region (reference category: Northeast)				
Midwest (=1, else=0)	.213 (.019)**	1.238	.212 (.019)**	1.237
South (=1, else=0)	.162 (.018)**	1.176	.160 (.018)**	1.173
West (=1, else=0)	.359 (.019)**	1.432	.357 (.019)**	1.429
Constant	-3.058 (.110)**	.047	-3.042 (.110)**	.048

WO fields	Chinese American		Japanese American
	B (S.E.)	Exp(*B*)	*B* (S.E.)
Management			
Asian (=1, White=0)	-.221 (.058)**	.802	-.096 (.060)
Age	.145 (.003)**	1.156	.145 (.003)**
Age, squared	-.001 (.000)**	.999	-.001 (.000)**
Married, spouse present (=1, else=0)	.345 (.010)**	1.412	.346 (.010)**
Metropolitan (=1, non-metro=0)	.242 (.010)**	1.274	.243 (.010)**
Post-bachelor's degree (=1, bachelor's=0)	.028 (.008)**	1.029	.028 (.008)**
Homeowner (=1, non-homeowner=0)	.245 (.013)**	1.277	.243 (.013)**
Region (reference category: Northeast)			
Midwest (=1, else=0)	-.036 (.012)**	.964	-.037 (.012)**
South (=1, else=0)	.047 (.010)**	1.048	.047 (.010)**
West (=1, else=0)	-.006 (.012)	.994	-.007 (.012)
Constant	-5.362 (.076)**	.005	-5.362 (.076)**
Sales			
Asian (=1, White=0)	-.412 (.080)**	.662	-.357 (.087)**
Age	-.008 (.004)*	.992	-.008 (.004)*
Age, squared	.000 (.000)	1.000	.000 (.000)
Married, spouse present (=1, else=0)	.068 (.012)**	1.071	.068 (.012)**
Metropolitan (=1, non-metro=0)	.345 (.013)**	1.412	.345 (.013)**

Table 3. Logistic Regression Predicting Liklihood of Choosing Occupations
continued

Post-bachelor's degree (=1, bachelor's=0)	-1.118 (.013)**	.327	-1.117 (.013)**
Homeowner (=1, non-homeowner=0)	.137 (.016)**	1.147	.138 (.016)**
Region (reference category: Northeast)			
Midwest (=1, else=0)	-.053 (.014)**	.948	-.054 (.014)**
South (=1, else=0)	-.050 (.013)**	.951	-.051 (.013)**
West (=1, else=0)	-.200 (.015)**	.818	-.202 (.015)**
Constant	-1.794 (.086)**	.166	-1.791 (.086)**
Education, Training, and Library			
Asian (=1, White=0)	-.774 (.105)**	.461	-.126 (.092)
Age	-.110 (.005)**	.896	-.110 (.005)**
Age, squared	.001 (.000)**	1.001	.001 (.000)**
Married, spouse present (=1, else=0)	-.111 (.014)**	.895	-.112 (.014)**
Metropolitan (=1, non-metro=0)	-.629 (.013)**	.533	-.629 (.013)**
Post-bachelor's degree (=1, bachelor's=0)	1.327 (.011)**	3.770	1.325 (.011)**
Homeowner (=1, non-homeowner=0)	.017 (.017)	1.018	.018 (.017)
Region (reference category: Northeast)			
Midwest (=1, else=0)	-.021 (.016)	.980	-.021 (.016)
South (=1, else=0)	-.161 (.015)**	.851	-.161 (.015)**

Table 3. Logistic Regression Predicting Liklihood of Choosing Occupations
continued

West (=1, else=0)	-.017 (.017)	.983	-.017 (.017)
Constant	-.195 (.100)	.823	-.190 (.100)

a. *p≤.05; **p≤.01

b. Samples: U.S.-born male wage and salary earners aged 25-64 who have bachelor's degrees and beyond but were not enrolled in school during the survey year.

c. For the column of Chinese American, the samples are White or Chinese only

d. For the column of Japanese American, the samples are White or Japanese only

e. Omitted category: White

Table 4. Comparisons of Wage and Salary Income by Occupation

	Median wage and salary income			Mean wage and salary income		
	Non-Hispanic White	Chinese American	Japanese American	Non-Hispanic White	Chinese American	Japanese American
AO fields						
Professional - Computer and Mathematical Occupations	75,893	76,905	81,144	81,550	79,168	90,115
Professional - Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	82,779	87,953	101,191	122,476	134,524	121,444
Professional - Architecture and Engineering Occupations	78,640	81,144	83,988	84,299	85,517	85,341
WO fields						
Management Occupations	91,963	96,131	86,553	116,828	101,647	106,941
Sales Occupations	70,324	50,595	60,714	94,392	71,346	87,007
Professional - Education, Training, and Library Occupations	48,633	41,488	51,824	52,239	45,897	55,651

Table 5. OLS Regression Predicting Wage in Each Occupation

	Chinese American		Japanese American	
AO fields	*B*	S.E.	*B*	S.E.
Computer and Mathematical				
Asian (=1, White=0)	.067*	.033	.014	.048
Age	.098**	.003	.098**	.003
Age, squared	-.001**	.000	-.001**	.000
Married, spouse present (=1, else=0)	.131**	.008	.131**	.008
Metropolitan (=1, non-metro=0)	.212**	.011	.213**	.011
Post-bachelor's degree (=1, bachelor's=0)	.132**	.008	.129**	.008
Homeowner (=1, non-homeowner=0)	.139**	.011	.139**	.011
Region (reference category: Northeast)				
Midwest (=1, else=0)	-.136**	.011	-.136**	.011
South (=1, else=0)	-.065**	.010	-.066**	.010
West (=1, else=0)	-.039**	.011	-.040**	.011
Constant	8.704**	.063	8.700**	.063
R square	.117		.116	
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical				
Asian (=1, White=0)	.151**	.056	-.057	.081
Age	.171**	.005	.169**	.005
Age, squared	-.002**	.000	-.002**	-.000

Table 5. OLS Regression Predicting Wage in Each Occupation
continued

Married, spouse present (=1, else=0)	.188**	.015	.188**	.015
Metropolitan (=1, non-metro=0)	.156**	.014	.157**	.014
Post-bachelor's degree (=1, bachelor's=0)	.603**	.012	.604**	.012
Homeowner (=1, non-homeowner=0)	.214**	.020	.210**	.020
Region (reference category: Northeast)				
Midwest (=1, else=0)	-.029	.018	-.032	.018
South (=1, else=0)	-.047**	.016	-.050**	.016
West (=1, else=0)	-.057**	.018	-.060**	.018
Constant	6.662**	.111	6.702**	.111
R square	.223		.222	
Architecture and Engineering				
Asian (=1, White=0)	.033	.032	-.046	.040
Age	.085**	.002	.085**	.002
Age, squared	-.001**	.000	-.001**	.000
Married, spouse present (=1, else=0)	.131**	.008	.133**	.008
Metropolitan (=1, non-metro=0)	.155**	.008	.155**	.008
Post-bachelor's degree (=1, bachelor's=0)	.124**	.007	.125**	.007
Homeowner (=1, non-homeowner=0)	.112**	.010	.113**	.010

Region (reference category: Northeast)				
Midwest (=1, else=0)	-.042**	.009	-.042**	.009
South (=1, else=0)	.009	.009	.008	.009
West (=1, else=0)	.124**	.009	.039**	.009
Constant	8.923**	.052	8.922**	.052
R square	.138		.138	

	Chinese American		Japanese American
WO fields	*B*	S.E.	*B*
Management			
Asian (=1, White=0)	-.007	.037	-.075*
Age	.134**	.002	.134**
Age, squared	-.001**	.000	-.001**
Married, spouse present (=1, else=0)	.192**	.007	.192**
Metropolitan (=1, non-metro=0)	.308**	.007	.308**
Post-bachelor's degree (=1, bachelor's=0)	.131**	.005	.131**
Homeowner (=1, non-homeowner=0)	.199**	.009	.198**
Region (reference category: Northeast)			
Midwest (=1, else=0)	-.128**	.007	-.128**
South (=1, else=0)	-.078**	.007	-.078**
West (=1, else=0)	-.044**	.007	-.045**
Constant	7.789**	.050	7.784**

Table 5. OLS Regression Predicting Wage in Each Occupation
continued

R square	.116			.116
Sales				
Asian (=1, White=0)	-.170*	.067		-.042
Age	.147**	.003		.147**
Age, squared	-.002**	.000		-.002**
Married, spouse present (=1, else=0)	.358**	.010		.357**
Metropolitan (=1, non-metro=0)	.353**	.011		.353**
Post-bachelor's degree (=1, bachelor's=0)	.145**	.011		.145**
Homeowner (=1, non-homeowner=0)	.265**	.013		.267**
Region (reference category: Northeast)				
Midwest (=1, else=0)	-.171**	.012		-.170**
South (=1, else=0)	-.121**	.011		-.120**
West (=1, else=0)	-.094**	.012		-.092**
Constant	7.453**			7.456
R square	.132			.132

Education, Training, and Library				
Asian (=1, White=0)	-.044	.080		.114
Age	.127**	.003		.127
Age, squared	-.001**	.000		-.001
Married, spouse present (=1, else=0)	.120**	.010		.120
Metropolitan (=1, non-metro=0)	.142**	.009		.141
Post-bachelor's degree (=1, bachelor's=0)	.296**	.009		.295
Homeowner (=1, non-homeowner=0)	.128**	.013		.129
Region (reference category: Northeast)				
Midwest (=1, else=0)	-.108**	.012		-.108
South (=1, else=0)	-.085**	.011		-.086
West (=1, else=0)	-.041	.012		-.041
Constant	7.576**	.074		7.587
R square	.098			.097

a. *p≤.05; **p≤.01

b. Samples: U.S.-born male wage and salary earners aged 25-64 who have bachelor's degrees and beyond but were not enrolled in school during the survey year.

c. For the column of Chinese American, the samples are White or Chinese only

d. For the column of Japanese American, the samples are White or Japanese only

e. Omitted category: White