

## Biracial Asian and white: Demographic and labor market status

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**Abstract.** This paper examines the socioeconomic status of biracial Asian/White Americans using American Community Survey data for the six largest Asian ethnic groups from 2009-2013. Are Asian/White Americans treated like Asian Americans, are they able to “pass” as White Americans, or do they have their own unique experiences? Along many dimensions like average earnings, years of education, geographic concentration, Hispanic identification, and nativity, the biracial Asian/White experience falls between the Asian alone and White alone experiences. Biracial Asian/White Americans have better labor market outcomes than Asian alone Americans. In particular, there is no evidence of a glass ceiling for Asian/White Americans as there is for Asian Americans. But along dimensions like industry and occupation distribution, we cannot reject the hypothesis that these distributions are completely random.

**Keywords:** labor market discrimination, minorities, race, Asian-Americans, bi-racial, multi-racial, glass-ceilings.

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## Introduction

For over three centuries, from 1661 until 1967, anti-miscegenation laws in North America aimed to keep the social taboo of racial intermixing to a minimum. And the “one-drop rule<sup>(1)</sup>” of hypodescent automatically assigned the children of mixed race unions to the group with the lower status. However, in the half century since *Loving vs Virginia*, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of mixed race Americans. The number of Americans identifying with two or more races increased by 32% from 2000 to 2010, from 6.8 million to 9.0 million Americans according to the U.S. Census. And instead of the “one drop rule”, the phenomenon of “racial passing” is used to describe people of mixed-race heritage assimilating into the White majority. For example, the Philip Roth novel, *The Human Stain*, describes a professor of classics, a man of Creole mixed-race ancestry, who spends his adult professional life passing as a European-American Jewish intellectual.

There has been good qualitative research on mixed-race Americans. See, for example, Maria Root (1996) and Reene Romano (2006). But the quantitative research has been quite limited, especially regarding mixed race Asian Americans. See, for example, Kao (1999), Shih and Sanchez (2005), Freyer, Kahn, Levitt, and Spenkuch (2012), and Pew Research Center (2015). Historically the Bureau of the Census did not recognize the multiracial background of Americans. But since the 2000 Census, Americans have been allowed to identify with more than one race. This paper focuses on Americans who self-identify as both Asian and White. The paper examines the demographic and labor market characteristics of Asian Americans, Asian/White Americans, and White Americans using American Community Survey data from 2009-2013.

Biracial Asian/White Americans may experience a world like Asian Americans because of the “one drop rule”. They may experience a world like White Americans because of the phenomenon of “passing”. Or they may experience a world which is uniquely their own. Anna Holmes<sup>(2)</sup> writes about being “Black with (some) white privilege.” This paper asks if biracial Asian/White Americans experience a labor market space between and/or orthogonal to the labor market space of Asian Americans and the labor market space of White Americans. Do they experience more, less or different labor market discrimination than single race Asian Americans? While the answer is that it depends, it is clear that race does matter.

## I. Multiracial America

In the 2010 Census, approximately 2.9%<sup>(3)</sup> of Americans reported being multiracial. Among White Americans, alone and in combination, 3.2% (7.49 million) report being multiracial. Among Asian Americans, alone and in combination, 15.3% (2.64 million) report being multiracial. Most multiracial Americans (91.7%) reported being of two races, as opposed to three, four, or more races. And the majority of multiracial Americans (57.7%) reported being White/Black (1.8 million), White/Some other race<sup>(4)</sup> (1.7 million), or White/Asian (1.6 million).

The majority (61.3%) of multiracial Asian Americans reported being biracial Asian/White. The Asian/Some Other Race and Asian/Black groups were much smaller with 8.9% and 7.0% of the multiracial Asian American population respectively.

The Asian American population consists of people from a diverse range of Asian ethnic groups. The American experiences of East Asian immigrants, South Asian immigrants, and Southeast Asian immigrants have significant similarities and significant differences. Thus it is important to disaggregate the Asian American category. The six largest Asian ethnic groups by population are the Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, and Japanese, in that order. But the six largest multiracial Asian American ethnic groups are Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, Asian Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese. These are the same six ethnic groups, but in a different order driven by their different histories.

In order to examine the experiences of these diverse ethnic groups, we turn to data from the American Community Survey. The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing statistical survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, sent to approximately 250,000 addresses monthly (or 3 million per year or approximately 1% of the U.S. population). It regularly gathers information previously contained only in the long form of the decennial census. It is the largest survey other than the decennial census that the Census Bureau administers. Americans are legally obligated to answer these survey questions as accurately as possible. The 1% sample over a five year period from 2009-2013 gives us a 5% sample of all Americans. The ACS 2009-2013 gives us an estimate of 2,597,387 multiracial Asian Americans. This is basically the same as the 2010 Census estimate of 2.6 million multiracial Asian Americans.

For the six largest Asian American ethnic groups, the dominant share of the multiracial population is biracial Asian/White. About 39% of multiracial Asian Indians are biracial Asian/White, and about 72% - 75% of multiracial Koreans and Vietnamese are biracial Asian/White. The biracial Asian/Black share ranges from 4.0% of multiracial Chinese to 8.1% of multiracial Asian Indian. The biracial Asian/White population from these six Asian ethnic groups account for 48.7% of all multiracial Asian Americans.

This study compares and contrasts the demographic and labor market experience of White Americans, Asian Americans, and multiracial Asian/White Americans. Do multiracial Asian/White Americans occupy a space between or orthogonal to the space of Asian Americans and White Americans? The Pew Research Center (2015) hints at some answers. In the survey 60% of Asian/White Americans say they are the subject of slurs or jokes, but 58% say it is an advantage to be multiracial. Asian/White Americans say they have more in common with White Americans than they do with Asian Americans, and are more likely to feel accepted by White Americans than by Asian Americans. They have closer ties with their White relatives, and more likely to have close friends who are White.

## II. Biracial Asian/White

### *Demographics*

We begin by comparing the demographic characteristics of the biracial Asian/White population with both the White population and the Asian population. On many dimensions, we might expect the Asian/White population to fall between the Asian population and the White population. This is true for the percent of the population who self-identify as Hispanic. For example, 14.5% of Whites report being Hispanic, 2.7% of Filipinos report being Hispanic, but 13.9% of Filipino/Whites report being Hispanic. For all six Asian ethnic groups, the Asian/White group is more likely to be Hispanic than the Asian alone group, but less likely than the White alone group. See Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Demographic Characteristics*

ACS 2009-2013	Age	% Native born	Speaks English very well	Only English at home	Married	Same house 1 year ago	Hispanic	Sample Size
White	39.3	90.4	60.5	84.9	42.7	85.9	14.5	11,933,636
Filipino	38.9	30.8	66.9	33.3	47.6	85.6	2.7	126,797
Filipino/White	19.1	90.0	84.7	91.1	16.2	86.1	13.9	19,508
Japanese	47.7	57.9	47.0	55.9	51.0	86.5	2.3	41,328
Japanese/White	24.5	86.6	83.9	85.0	23.7	82.6	8.2	14,763
Chinese	37.9	29.5	43.7	18.3	48.8	83.5	0.7	171,997
Chinese/White	18.3	90.7	80.8	81.3	14.9	84.2	10.0	11,258
Asian Indian	32.7	27.7	73.3	20.9	54.4	80.0	0.4	129,992
Asian Indian/White	18.8	84.0	74.8	80.6	16.5	84.8	6.7	5,111
Korean	37.2	24.2	43.3	22.1	47.7	80.2	0.7	64,750
Korean/White	18.3	85.9	82.8	87.8	17.2	81.1	5.29	8,496
Vietnamese	35.2	30.6	39.7	12.6	44.0	87.0	0.6	77,204
Vietnamese/White	17.1	85.1	69.7	76.5	15.2	83.0	8.1	3,599

The Asian ethnic groups are predominantly foreign born (except for the Japanese), while the Asian/White ethnic groups are predominantly native born. Anywhere from 24.2% to 57.9% of the Asian alone ethnic groups are native born, but 84.0% to 90.7% of the Asian/White ethnic groups are native born. The Asian/White groups are more likely to be foreign born than the White group, but less likely to be foreign born than the Asian alone group.

But along other dimensions, this relationship does not hold. The Asian alone ethnic groups are substantially older than the Asian/White ethnic groups, and consequently more likely to be married. The average age of Asian/White ethnic groups are anywhere from 17.1 to 24.5 years. But the average age of the Asian alone ethnic groups range from 32.7 to 47.7 years. Consequently only 14.9% to 23.7% of Asian/White ethnic groups are married, but anywhere from 44.0% to 54.4% of the Asian alone ethnic groups are married. The Asian/White ethnic groups are more likely to speak English well than their respective Asian ethnic group, *and* relative to White Americans. The Asian alone ethnic groups are more likely to speak a language other than English at home compared to their Asian/White counterparts. But White Americans are more likely to speak a language other than English at home than White/Filipino, White/Japanese and White/Koreans. The mobility rates seem to be about the same for all the groups without any particular patterns. Anywhere from 80.0% to 87.0% of these groups lived in the same house a year ago.

*Geographic Concentration*

Asian Americans are geographically concentrated in the United States. The majority of single race Asian Americans actually live in just four states (CA, NY, TX, and NJ) while less than a quarter of non-Hispanic White Americans live in the top four states of CA, TX, NY and FL. The four state concentration ratio, the percentage of the population who live in the four states with the largest population shares, is 54.3% for Asian Americans, but 24.7% for non-Hispanic White Americans. The four state concentration ratio is the largest for Hispanic/Latino Americans at 61.6% (CA, TX, FL, NY).

Another measure of geographic concentration is the Herfindahl index. The Herfindahl index is a weighted average of the population shares across the 50 states. More specifically, the Herfindahl index is the sum of the squares of the population shares across the 50 states where the population shares are expressed as fractions. The larger the index, the more concentrated is the population. The Herfindahl index for Asian Americans is 1355, larger than for any other racial group. Hispanic/Latino Americans are close behind with an index of 1308. The Herfindahl index for non-Hispanic White Americans is much smaller at 346. Non-Hispanic White Americans are really spread out across the 50 states.

Multiracial Asian Americans are more geographically concentrated than White Americans, but less than single race Asian Americans. Multiracial Asian Americans have a Herfindahl index of 965, and a four state concentration ratio of 47.5%. They are concentrated in the states of CA, HI, NY, and TX.

When biracial Asian/White Americans are disaggregated by ethnic group, the picture remains the same. The geographic concentration of Asian/White ethnic groups falls between the geographic concentration of the Asian alone ethnic groups and White Americans. Asian/White Americans are more concentrated than White Americans, but less concentrated than Asian Americans. Five of the six Asian alone ethnic groups are more geographically concentrated than any of the Asian/White ethnic groups. Among the Asian alone ethnic groups, the Filipinos and the Japanese are the most geographically concentrated. It is interesting that these groups also have the highest multiracial percentages. One might expect high geographic concentration to lead to a smaller share for the multiracial population. But apparently other stronger forces offset this factor. Among the Asian alone ethnic groups, the Asian Indian population is the least geographically concentrated. And among the Asian multiracial groups, the Korean/White ethnic group is the least geographically concentrated. While 31.5% of Korean Americans live in California, only 15.5% of Korean/White Americans live in California.<sup>(5)</sup>

*Earnings and Education*

In order to examine labor market experiences, the paper focuses on individuals with a strong attachment to the labor force. Thus the ACS sample is restricted to individuals who are 25-64 years of age, and work at least 30 hours a week for at least 40 weeks out of the year. We also separate men and women. For this subsample, we measure wage and salary, years of education, percent native born, and age. See Table 2a for men and Table 2b for women. Since the ACS data are collected over a five year period, all the wage and salary

figures are adjusted for inflation during the period. By restricting the sample to people with strong attachment to the labor force, the sample sizes become smaller. For four of the Asian/White groups, our sample sizes fall below 1,000. The averages are also weighted averages using the Census weights for each observation. Standard deviations appear in parentheses.

**Table 2a. ACS 09-13. Socioeconomic Characteristics: Men**

	Earnings	Education	Native	Age	Sample size
Filipino	\$59,272 (49,021)	14.51 (2.29)	22.3%	42.8 (10.6)	22,199
Filipino/White	\$62,378 (53,274)	14.29 (2.19)	80.7%	36.8 (9.3)	1,759
Japanese	\$88,185 (77,901)	15.47 (2.41)	59.0%	45.4 (10.2)	7,345
Japanese/White	\$77,905 (70,965)	14.81 (2.33)	79.6%	40.3 (9.9)	2,117
Chinese	\$80,627 (74,892)	15.29 (4.03)	18.4%	43.1 (10.4)	30,939
Chinese/White	\$80,361 (66,875)	15.58 (2.48)	81.8%	38.1 (10.4)	912
Indian	\$97,160 (80,286)	16.50 (2.60)	7.3%	39.7 (9.8)	31,375
Indian/White	\$99,251 (95,165)	16.13 (2.79)	58.3%	40.1 (9.6)	415
Korean	\$76,964 (76,506)	15.66 (2.64)	15.2%	41.8 (10.0)	9,670
Korean/White	\$71,506 (64,218)	14.73 (2.20)	71.8%	35.9 (8.1)	840
Vietnamese	\$58,338 (53,787)	13.20 (3.92)	9.2%	42.7 (9.9)	13,110
Vietnamese/White	\$67,573 (53,874)	14.19 (3.32)	56.8%	37.0 (7.1)	307
White	\$70,006 (67,023)	13.89 (2.86)	87.3%	43.5 (10.8)	1,890,185

Standard deviation in parentheses.

Among the men, we notice some “regression toward the mean.” When the Asian alone group has earnings above those of White Americans (Japanese, Chinese, Indian, and Korean), the Asian/White group generally sees lower earnings than the Asian alone group though still higher than White Americans. In the case of Asian Indians, the point estimates go in the other direction, but the standard errors are so large, these differences are statistically insignificant. But when the Asian alone group has earnings below those of Whites (Filipinos and Vietnamese), the Asian/White group sees higher earnings. The same pattern holds for educational attainment. When the Asian alone group has more education than White Americans, the Asian/White group generally obtains less education, on average, than the Asian alone groups, though more than White Americans. The point estimates for Chinese/Whites are an exception, but a statistically insignificant one.

**Table 2b. ACS 09-13. Socioeconomic Characteristics: Women**

	Earnings	Education	Native	Age	Sample size
Filipina	\$55,835 (40,242)	14.88 (2.30)	15.5%	44.1 (10.6)	28,230
Filipina/White	\$50,602 (34,330)	14.65 (2.35)	78.4%	37.4 (9.6)	1,639
Japanese	\$61,408 (48,045)	15.40 (2.30)	58.7%	45.0 (10.6)	6,526
Japanese/White	\$57,570 (41,370)	15.12 (2.22)	78.6%	40.4 (10.4)	1,775
Chinese	\$64,941 (57,477)	15.11 (3.80)	17.0%	42.7 (10.3)	28,211
Chinese/White	\$64,467 (51,604)	15.97 (2.35)	79.6%	37.1 (9.7)	880
Indian	\$70,035 (59,212)	16.11 (2.82)	10.4%	39.8 (10.0)	18,170
Indian/White	\$72,341 (63,816)	16.37 (2.55)	68.2%	37.4 (9.4)	337
Korean	\$57,997 (54,834)	15.01 (2.82)	13.8%	42.1 (10.7)	9,317
Korean/White	\$57,936 (49,954)	15.17 (2.12)	70.2%	35.9 (8.2)	777
Vietnamese	\$45,104 (41,849)	12.85 (4.24)	9.5%	41.7 (10.0)	11,338
Vietnamese/White	\$50,254 (37,719)	14.60 (3.25)	59.5%	36.2 (7.5)	292
White	\$49,319 (41,635)	14.26 (2.59)	90.0%	43.9 (10.9)	1,601,539

Standard deviation in parentheses.

Among the women, we also notice this “regression toward the mean” more often than not, though there are a number of exceptions. Even though Indian women earn more than White women, Indian/White women earn slightly more than Indian women. But the standard errors more than dominate this difference in size, so the actual differences may go the other way. And while Chinese, Indian and Korean women are more educated than White women, biracial Chinese, Indian, and Korean women actually get even more education than their Asian alone counterparts, though the differences are still not statistically significant. For all the other Asian ethnic groups and variables, the tendency for “regression towards the mean” holds quite well among the women.

#### *Industry Distribution*

We looked at the industry distribution of these six different Asian ethnic groups across 18 different industries<sup>(6)</sup>, separating men and women. We might expect the industry shares of the Asian/White groups to lie somewhere between the industry shares of the Asian alone group and the White group. For example, 3.22% of Filipino men work in construction, 6.94% of Filipino/White men work in construction, and 9.72% of White men work in construction. However, this pattern only holds about 24% of the time, and you cannot reject the hypothesis that these industry distributions are completely random. Most of the time this pattern does not hold<sup>(7)</sup>. For example, the Asian/White groups are much more likely to be in the military than either the Asian groups or the White group. About 1.15% of White men are in the military, 2.19% of Filipino men, and 4.10% of Filipino/White men. Since

the U.S. has had a large military presence in Asia, White Americans in the military have been more likely to have been stationed in Asia than White Americans in general. Consequently it makes sense that their offspring might be more inclined to enter the military as well.

Overall, the Asian/White men move out of manufacturing and transportation, and move into administration and military industries relative to their Asian alone counterparts. The Asian/White women move out of manufacturing and wholesale, while moving into construction and administration relative to White women. But Asian/White Americans generally do not fall in the space between Asian Americans and White Americans.

#### *Occupational Distribution*

More than 10% of Chinese men have an occupation in food (think Chinese restaurants), but Chinese/White men are much less likely to have this occupation, though more so than White men. The same is true of the food occupation for Japanese, Korean, and Filipino men. We explored the occupational distribution of the various Asian ethnic groups across 25 occupational categories<sup>(8)</sup>, separating men and women. In terms of the occupational distribution, we might expect the occupational shares of the Asian/White groups to lie somewhere between the occupational shares of the Asian group and the occupational shares of the White group. For example, 8.05% of Japanese men work in engineering, 6.03% of Japanese/White men work in engineering, and 3.85% of White men work in engineering. However, this only happens about 42% of the time at this level of disaggregation.<sup>(9)</sup> Most of the time, this pattern does not hold. For example, 10.71% of White women are in management, 11.89% of Japanese women are in management, and 14.54% of Japanese/White women are in management. We cannot reject the hypothesis that these occupational distributions are completely random.

Overall, Asian/White men tend to move into legal, protective, and military occupations while moving out of engineering relative to their Asian alone counterparts. Asian/White women tend to move into management, community, and protective occupations, while moving out of cleaning and production occupations relative to the Asian alone counterparts. But there is no overall pattern to these occupational distributions. Asian/White Americans do not occupy the space between Asian Americans and White Americans when it comes to occupation.

#### *Labor Market Discrimination*

Current labor market discrimination exists when equally productive workers are treated differently because of their race, ethnicity, or gender. The two prominent forms of current labor market discrimination are wage discrimination and occupational discrimination. Wage discrimination is evident when two equally skilled groups of workers doing exactly the same job under the same working conditions are paid different wages. Occupational discrimination is evident when two equally skilled groups of workers are given different access to certain occupations. When these occupations are more prestigious and higher-paying, we refer to this as a glass ceiling problem. But occupational discrimination can be a much broader issue.

Since we take the productive characteristics as given, the methodology here ignores the effects of pre-market discrimination and past labor market discrimination. We explore the degree of current labor market discrimination faced by various Asian ethnic groups as defined above with ACS data. The ACS data do not allow us to measure the differences in earnings due to discrimination from pre-market or past labor market discrimination.

*Wage Discrimination*

We first explore the issue of wage discrimination. In 2013 the median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers was \$884 for White men, \$1059 for Asian American men, \$722 for White women, and \$819 for Asian American women<sup>(10)</sup> The median hourly earnings of wage and salary workers paid hourly rates was \$14.24 for White men, \$14.24 for Asian American men, \$12.21 for White women, and \$13.04 for Asian American women. Some Asian American ethnic groups earn more than White Americans, and some earn less. But we cannot measure the degree of labor market discrimination unless we control for differences in the productive characteristics of these ethnic groups. Different groups may have more or less education or more or less experience. They also have different kinds of jobs. Everything else being the same, people earn more if they work longer hours or have “dirty, dangerous, and demanding” jobs. Differences in earnings may result from differences in average levels of productive characteristics and/or labor market discrimination. After controlling for productivity, we test to see if it makes a difference if someone is Asian alone, or biracial Asian/White.

We estimated wage regressions with controls for education, potential experience, potential experience squared, industry, occupation, region, age of arrival to the United States (0 if native born), marital status, English language ability, Hispanic origin, weeks worked per year, and hours worked per week using American Community Survey data from 2009-2013. Regressions were run with and without industry and occupation controls. We test to see the effect on earnings of being Asian alone or being biracial Asian/White relative to being White alone. The dependent variable is the log of annual earnings.

On Table 3a we present the results comparing Asian alone men and biracial Asian/White men to White alone men. Filipino alone men earn about 17-19% less than comparable White alone men, while Filipino/White men earn about 2-4% less than comparable White alone men. Korean alone and Vietnamese alone men also earn less than comparable White alone men. However, biracial Korean and biracial Vietnamese men have earnings which are comparable to White alone men. For five of the six ethnic groups, the biracial Asian/White men have a better labor market outcome than their Asian alone counterpart. In the one possible exception, Asian Indian alone men may earn more than comparable Asian Indian/White men, though the difference is not statistically significant.

**Table 3a.** ACS 09-13. Wage Discrimination relative to White Men

Men		no industry/occupation controls	with industry/occupation controls
Filipino	Biracial	-0.0194	-0.0392*
		(0.0160)	(0.0152)
	Asian	-0.1898*	-0.1680*
		(0.0007)	(0.0054)
		1,913,625	

Men		no industry/occupation controls	with industry/occupation controls
Japanese	Biracial	0.0240	0.0018
		(0.0161)	(0.0154)
	Asian	0.0124	0.0045
		(0.0116)	(0.0089)
		1,899,077	
Chinese	Biracial	0.0555*	0.0346
		(0.0216)	(0.0205)
	Asian	0.0259*	-0.0082
		(0.0051)	(0.0046)
		1,919,887	
Asian Indian	Biracial	0.1026*	0.0463
		(0.0411)	(0.0344)
	Asian	0.1440*	0.0497
		(0.0065)	(0.0053)
		1,919,388	
Korean	Biracial	-0.0037	-0.0242
		(0.0322)	(0.0252)
	Asian	-0.1017*	-0.0905*
		(0.0137)	(0.0103)
		1,899,178	
Vietnamese	Biracial	0.0284	0.0114
		(0.0408)	(0.0364)
	Asian	-0.0378*	-0.0556*
		(0.0080)	(0.0066)
		1,902,833	

\* Significant at the 5% level.

Standard error in parentheses. Number of observations.

On Table 3b we compare the experience of Asian and Asian/White women relative to White women. By comparing women to other women, we are looking at the effects of race without confounding the effects of gender. Asian alone women earn at least as much as comparable White alone women. Japanese/White women and Korean/White women do better than their Japanese alone and Korean alone counterparts. But the Chinese alone, Asian Indian alone, and Vietnamese alone women have higher earnings than their Asian/White counterparts. Thus the overall results are quite mixed here.

**Table 3b. ACS 09-13. Wage Discrimination relative to White Women**

Women		no industry/occupation controls	with industry/occupation controls
Filipina	Biracial	0.0276	0.0234
		(0.0178)	(0.0150)
	Asian	0.0504*	0.0067
		(0.0052)	(0.0044)
		1,630,926	
Japanese	Biracial	0.0669*	0.0375*
		(0.0156)	(0.0143)
	Asian	0.0102	-0.0110
		(0.0085)	(0.0079)
		1,609,559	
Chinese	Biracial	0.1115*	0.0694*
		(0.0249)	(0.0222)
	Asian	0.1644*	0.0821*
		(0.0050)	(0.0046)
		1,629,369	
Asian Indian	Biracial	0.0143	-0.0006
		(0.0353)	(0.0305)

Women		no industry/occupation controls	with industry/occupation controls
	Asian	0.1653*	0.0521*
		(0.0065)	(0.0058)
		1,619,138	
Korean	Biracial	0.1405*	0.0960*
		(0.0202)	(0.0191)
	Asian	0.0854*	0.0580*
		(0.0088)	(0.0079)
		1,610,655	
Vietnamese	Biracial	-0.0069	-0.0246
		(0.0602)	(0.0494)
	Asian	0.0880*	0.0666*
		(0.0078)	(0.0067)
		1,612,510	

\* Significant at the 5% level.

Standard error in parentheses. Number of observations.

Since we only have earnings data for women who are working, we might worry about possible bias in our estimates resulting from any correlation between productivity characteristics and the decision to enter the labor force. Thus we estimated these wage regressions with the Heckman correction for sample selection bias. But the qualitative results were the same with and without the sample selection correction. Once you control for productive characteristics, Asian/White men generally have higher earnings than comparable Asian alone men. The results for Asian women were mixed.

*Glass Ceilings*

In addition to being paid less for doing the same work, Asian American ethnic groups may be less likely to receive promotions into managerial positions. Asian Americans may be denied equal access to the higher rungs of the managerial or corporate ladder. To the extent that such discrimination exists, Asian Americans may be excluded from spheres of power and influence along with the associated pecuniary earnings.

Probit models were estimated to explain the factors that affect the probability of someone holding a managerial position. The explanatory variables included years of education, potential experience, potential experience squared, disability status, marital status, Hispanic status, rural area, language ability, age at immigration, number of kids (children), and whether or not the person was of Asian descent. Furthermore, controls were included for industry and region of residence because the percent of the labor force in managerial positions may differ by industry and region for reasons independent of race. To conserve on space, we only report the coefficient estimates for the biracial and Asian dummy variables. All the other coefficient estimates were of the expected magnitude and sign.

Table 4a shows the probit results for the Asian, Asian/White and White men. Asian men are generally less likely to hold managerial positions than comparable White men. Furthermore, all the point estimates suggest that Asian/White men are more likely to hold managerial positions than comparable Asian men. Asian/White men do as well as, if not better, than White men in securing managerial positions. The results are similar with and without industry controls.

**Table 4a. ACS 09-13. Glass Ceiling Probits relative to White Men**

Men		no industry controls	with industry controls
Filipino	Biracial	0.0682	0.0811
		(0.0644)	(0.0682)
	Asian	-0.3564*	-0.3221*
		(0.0191)	(0.0195)
		1,913,625	
Japanese	Biracial	0.0289	0.0418
		(0.0529)	(0.0569)
	Asian	0.0213	0.0290
		(0.0224)	(0.0223)
		1,899,077	
Chinese	Biracial	0.0514	0.0609
		(0.0598)	(0.0608)
	Asian	-0.1679*	-0.1770*
		(0.0140)	(0.0139)
		1,919,887	
Asian Indian	Biracial	0.0155	0.0186
		(0.1071)	(0.1088)
	Asian	-0.0563*	-0.0468*
		(0.0128)	(0.0128)
		1,919,388	
Korean	Biracial	0.1227	0.1498*
		(0.0732)	(0.0752)
	Asian	-0.0439*	0.0055
		(0.0220)	(0.0217)
		1,899,178	
Vietnamese	Biracial	0.1471	0.1537
		(0.1281)	(0.1311)
	Asian	-0.3689*	-0.3420*
		(0.0242)	(0.0241)
		1,902,833	

\* Significant at 5%.

Standard error in parentheses. Number of observations.

On Table 4b we present the results for Asian, Asian/White and White women. For all six ethnic groups, the Asian women are less likely to have a managerial position than comparable White women. Asian women are also less likely to have a managerial position than comparable Asian/White women. The Asian/White women are generally equally likely to hold a managerial position as comparable White women, though Filipina/White women are less likely and Korean/White women are more likely.

**Table 4b. ACS 09-13. Glass Ceiling Probits relative to White Women**

Women		no industry controls	with industry controls
Filipina	Biracial	-0.1286*	-0.1658*
		(0.0484)	(0.0502)
	Asian	-0.2566*	-0.2335*
		(0.0175)	(0.0179)
		1,630,926	
Japanese	Biracial	0.0347	0.0233
		(0.0445)	(0.0447)
	Asian	-0.0651*	-0.0946*
		(0.0281)	(0.0295)
		1,609,559	
Chinese	Biracial	0.0839	0.0392
		(0.0621)	(0.0634)
	Asian	-0.0405*	-0.0988*

Women		no industry controls	with industry controls
		(0.0143)	(0.0146)
		1,629,369	
Asian Indian	Biracial	-0.0646	-0.0514
		(0.0935)	(0.0953)
	Asian	-0.0706*	-0.0892*
		(0.0172)	(0.0175)
	1,619,138		
Korean	Biracial	0.2084*	0.1699*
		(0.0782)	(0.0773)
	Asian	-0.0014	-0.0282
		(0.0240)	(0.0244)
	1,610,655		
Vietnamese	Biracial	-0.0346	-0.0376
		(0.1128)	(0.1141)
	Asian	-0.2203*	-0.2344*
		(0.0250)	(0.0257)
	1,612,510		

\* Significant at 5%.

Standard error in parentheses. Number of observations.

These probits were also estimate with Heckman corrections for sample selection issues. The qualitative results were the same as the results without the correction.

The glass ceiling issue is a major issue for Asian Americans. Both Asian American men and Asian American women are less likely to hold managerial positions than comparable White men and women. Biracial Asian/White American men and women are more likely to break through the glass ceiling than single race Asian men and women.

## VI. Discussion and conclusion

Do Asian/White Americans occupy a space between the space of Asian Americans and White Americans? When it comes to general characteristics like average earnings, years of education, geographic concentration, Hispanic identification, and being native born, the answer is generally yes. Japanese Americans have higher earnings than Japanese/White Americans who have higher earnings than White Americans. Filipino/a Americans have more education than Filipino/a/White Americans who have more education than White Americans. Chinese are more geographically concentrated than Chinese/White Americans who are more geographically concentrated than White Americans. White Americans are more likely to identify as Hispanic than Asian/White Americans who are more likely than Asian Americans.

When it comes to industry and occupation, the answer is generally no. There are some exceptions. About 8.8% of Filipino men are in entertainment, 8.1% of Filipino/White men, and 5.4% of White men. About 23.4% of Vietnamese women are in personal care, 6.4% of Vietnamese/White women, and 2.6% of White women. In these cases, Asian/Whites fall between the proportions of Asian Americans and White Americans. But in general, biracial Asian/White Americans do not. Japanese/White Americans are less likely to be in manufacturing than either Japanese Americans or White Americans. And Chinese/White

Americans are more likely to be in the military than Chinese Americans or White Americans. We cannot reject the hypothesis that these distributions are random.

In terms of labor market discrimination, biracial Asian/White Americans generally have better labor market experiences than comparable single race Asian Americans. The evidence is most uniform regarding the glass ceiling. Asian Americans, men and women, are less likely to hold managerial positions than either comparable White Americans or biracial Asian/White Americans. In terms of wage discrimination, Asian American men generally earn less than comparable Asian/White men, and Asian/White men have earnings which are comparable to White men. The labor market evidence here supports the phenomenon of “passing” rather than the “one-drop rule.” Perhaps this is why 58% of Asian/White Americans report that being multiracial is an advantage. The wage results for women were more mixed. Japanese/White American women earn more than comparable Japanese American women, but Vietnamese American women earn more than comparable Vietnamese/White American women.

The advantage of this study is the large sample sizes provided in the American Community Survey which allow us to disaggregate the largest Asian American ethnic groups. But there are at least two limitations. First, we have no information on the physical appearance of individuals in our sample. We have assumed that physical appearance affects the way individuals are treated in our society. And second, the individuals in our sample have self-reported themselves as being bi-racial. However, most multiracial Americans seem not to self-identify as multiracial. See Pew Research Center (2015). And there is some evidence that bi-racial Americans with higher socio-economic status are more likely to self-report being bi-racial than those with lower socioeconomic status. See Townsend, Fryberg, Wilkins and Markus (2012).

Thus along many dimensions, biracial Asian/White Americans find themselves somewhere between Asian Americans and White Americans. But the story is clearly much more complicated when we try to understand the occupation and industry distribution of the labor force. These mixed results are consistent with the Pew Research Center (2015) survey which examined experiences and attitudes of multiracial Americans. The survey found that Asian Americans want bigger government with more services, White Americans want smaller government with fewer services, and Asian/White Americans fall in the middle. Asian Americans want more gun control, White Americans want less gun control, and Asian/White Americans fall in the middle. Asian/White Americans are less likely to be a Democrat than Asian Americans, but more so than White Americans. But on the issue of abortion, Asian/White Americans are more supportive of abortion than either Asian Americans or White Americans. This may be a reflection of the younger average age of Asian/White Americans.

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## Notes

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- (1) See the Racial Integrity Act of 1924 in Virginia.
- (2) Anna Holmes, “Black with (Some) White Privilege,” *The New York Times*, Sunday Review, February 10, 2018.
- (3) The Pew Research Center (2015) survey found that 6.9% of adults in the United States were multiracial, based on either how they identify themselves, or by having parents or grandparents of different races. The majority of multiracial Americans do not seem to self-identify as multiracial.
- (4) We note that the Hispanic/Latino category is defined as an ethnic group in the Census, and not a racial category. The majority (53.0%) of Hispanic Americans report being White, and more than a third (36.7%) report being of “Some other race”.
- (5) Detailed tables are available from the author.
- (6) Agriculture, extraction, utilities, construction, manufacturing, wholesale, retail, transportation, information, finance, professional, education, medical, social assistance, entertainment, service, administration, and military using NAICS codes.
- (7) Detailed tables are available from the author.
- (8) Management, business, financial, computer, engineering, science, community, legal, education, entertainment, medical, health, protective, food, cleaning, personal care, sales, office, farming, construction, extraction, repair, production, transport, and military using OCC codes.
- (9) Detailed tables are available from the author.
- (10) “Highlights of Women’s Earnings in 2013”, BLS Reports, December 2014.

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