Examining the Asian Gender Pay Gap in the United States:

A Kitagawa-Blinder-Oaxaca Decomposition

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Abstract

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Asians in the United States have been overlooked in issues of pay inequality and discrimination because they are often portrayed as achieving high levels of education and economic success. Although they currently have the highest median income of all racial groups, they also have the greatest income inequality. Asian workers have the largest gender pay gap of all racial groups; the top 10% of Asian workers earn almost 11 times more in annual income than Asians in the bottom 10th percentile. Despite these large income gaps, there is a lack of research on Asian economic inequality. Social work practitioners and scholars must address this as part of an overall strategy to achieve racial and gender equity in pay. This study contributes by examining how factors such as immigration, citizenship, and discrimination affect the Asian gender pay gap. *Methods:* This paper uses an exploratory design comprised of stakeholder interviews and

analysis of microdata from the most recent 5-year American Community Survey (2013-2018). *Analyses*: I use Kitagawa-Blinder-Oaxaca (KBO) decomposition—a methodology often used to analyze pay gaps between groups—to decompose mean differences in income for Asian men and women into two parts: an "explained" part accounted for by group differences and an "unexplained" part which is often used as a measure for discrimination. *Results:* I found that the gender pay gap between Asian men and women differed dramatically depending on birthplace and citizenship status. US-born Asian women earned 89 cents for every dollar a US-born Asian man earned; foreign-born, non-citizen women made only 72 cents compared to their male counterparts; and foreign-born, non-citizen women earned only 54 cents for every dollar their male counterparts received. Although explanations for the pay gaps varied depending on subgroup, the "unexplained" portion of each gap was significant. This means that human capital factors such as level of education and occupational choice could not completely account for the pay differential. *Conclusions:* These findings highlight the importance of critically investigating issues of inequality and discrimination within Asian subgroups. Asians constitute a rapidly growing portion of the workforce and are the fastest growing minority population in the United States. By 2055, they are projected to be the largest immigrant group in the nation. This study helps build knowledge on the intersectionality of gender, race, and immigration so that social workers can advocate for equitable policy solutions to address the root causes of these pay disparities and better support vulnerable and marginalized populations concealed under the giant "Asian American" monolith.

Keywords: gender pay gap, income inequality, gender wage gap, labor studies

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Introduction

For decades, researchers have studied income inequality in the United States. Two areas of research that have received much attention in both the academic and public discourse are the differences in pay between working men and women, called the gender pay gap, and the differences in income between racial groups in the United States. But missing from the larger conversation are the differences in earnings between men and women of the same racial groups.

Because Asian Americans are often portrayed as achieving high levels of educational and economic success, they are often a group that is overlooked in issues of inequality and discrimination. Asian Americans have been framed as the "model minority" attributing their seemingly high levels of achievement solely on their ability to sacrifice, be frugal, and work hard (Crystal, 1989, pp. 405). This insidious myth implies that other minority groups should simply work harder in order to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" like Asian Americans have, without considering longstanding histories of oppression and economic discrimination. It also lumps all Asian Americans together despite large differences in income and educational inequalities amongst the many diverse populations grouped under the "Asian American" monolith.

Although Asian Americans currently have the highest median income of all racial groups in the United States (Semega et al, 2019), they also have the greatest income inequality (Kochhar and Cilluffo, 2018). According to Kochhar and Cilluffo, the top 10% of Asian Americans earned 10.7 times more in annual income than Asians in the bottom 10th percentile. Combining over two dozen different Asian ethnicities together overlooks stark differences in pay between various subgroups. For example, Chinese women may earn 103 cents for every dollar that a white, non-Hispanic man earns, but Burmese women earn only 50 cents per dollar (US Census, 2018).

Additionally, if we take an even closer look, we find that the pay gap between Asian men and Asian women is the most unequal of all racial groups.

Table 1

Median Annual Income and Gender Earnings Ratio for Asians by Educational Attainment

	Total	High School Graduate	Bachelor's or more	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Professional Degree	Doctorate Degree
Men	$72,109	$40,501	$95,869	$81,390	$102,483	$150,784	$120,374
Women	$46,678	$25,880	$62,110	$52,047	$71,322	$110,657	$95,081
Female to Male Earnings Ratio	0.65	0.64	0.65	0.64	0.70	0.73	0.79

Age 25 years and older, worked full-time, year-round
Author analysis using data from 2018 American Community Survey

In 2017, the overall gender pay gap based on median annual earnings for full-time, year-round workers of all racial groups in the United States was 80.5% (Hegewisch and Hartmann, 2019). But as shown in Table 1, Asian women earned only 65% of the annual income of Asian men in 2018 (US Census, 2018). Asian men's median annual incomes were $72,109, while Asian women's median annual incomes were only $46,678. The pay gap begins to improve only after Asian women obtain graduate-level degrees but never reaches full parity with the overall gender pay gap, even after Asian women receive doctorate degrees.

Literature Review

Gender Pay Gap

The difference in median annual earnings between all full-time, year-round working men and women—called the gender pay gap—improved significantly from 1970 to 1990 because of

women's increased labor force participation and educational attainment but has remained relatively flat since the early 2000s (Blau & Kahn, 2007). Currently, data show that on average a woman earns around 80 cents for each dollar earned by a man, or that women earn 80% of what men earn (Semega et al, 2019).

This "unadjusted" gender pay gap compares men and women's pay holistically by taking the difference between the median pay for all working men and women. However, men and women differ on observable characteristics associated with pay. Blau & Kahn (2016) found that after accounting for human capital factors like education, years of experience, and geographic region, the partially "adjusted" gender pay gap shrinks slightly to 82%, meaning that women earn roughly 82 cents per dollar that men earn. And after additional controls for industry, occupation, and union coverage are added, they found that the fully "adjusted" gender pay gap shrinks to about 8%. This demonstrates that even after controlling for a myriad of variables associated with income, a pay gap between men and women continues to exist.

To measure the gender pay gap, researchers generally use one of two approaches. The first method, called "ordinary least squares" regression (OLS), gives a measure of the pay gap after accounting for worker differences to statistically compare similar workers. Researchers start with the "unadjusted" pay gap**, t**hen add statistical controls for factors like differences in education, years of work experience, job title, etc. But one major limitation to this method is that it assumes the labor market treats men and women the same in the workplace. But in actuality, research shows the labor market rewards men and women differently for an extra year of experience, a college degree, etc. (Gould et al, 2016).

The second method uses a decomposition technique that was originally developed by sociologist and demographer Evelyn Kitagawa (Kitagawa, 1955). It is more widely known as the

Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition and it allows researchers to break down the difference between male and female earnings into "explained" and "unexplained" parts (Oaxaca, 1973), (Blinder, 1973). It is currently one of the most commonly used methods in labor economics to detect a presence of group differences, such as gender or racial discrimination in the labor market. This method of analysis allows worker characteristics and their "coefficients"—the estimated rewards the labor market gives to different worker characteristics—to vary. Additionally, it differentiates how much of the gender pay gap can be explained by differences in worker and job characteristics, and how much is left "unexplained" (which reflects differences in the way the labor market rewards men and women with identical characteristics in the data due to discrimination, bias, or other unobserved factors). Although most gender pay gap studies state that the unexplained portion of the gap is evidence of discrimination, it is but one of many possible explanations (Tharp et al, 2019). Other factors not included in analyses—such as psychological traits or other unobservable characteristics that would be difficult to include in a model—may also be contributing to the unexplained portion of the pay gap.

Explanations and Causes

Occupational Segregation. The largest contributor to the gender pay disparity is that men and women enter into different jobs, called occupational selection, with men generally choosing to pursue higher paying careers (Shauman, 2006).

The separation of men working in high paying professions and women working in low paying professions is one example of occupational segregation, which is the distribution of workers across and within occupations that pay differently (Hegewisch, 2014). In 2016, the rate of occupational segregation between genders was 49%, which means that about half of all women would need to move from their female-dominated roles to male-dominated ones. Or

alternatively, half of all men in male-dominated roles could move to female-dominated ones (Weeden et al, 2018). However, studies show that when women do begin to move into higher-paying, male-dominated occupations, compensation in those occupations begins to decrease (Levanon, 2009). But when men move into female-dominated occupations, compensation begins to rise.

Since 1950, rates of occupational segregation have changed dramatically. From 1950 to 1970, segregation increased (Weeden et al, 2018). However, immediately following this increase, the next two decades (the period between 1970 and 1990) saw the greatest decline—or integration of genders into occupations—of 13 percentage points. The rate of integration then declined from 1990 to 2010 to only three percentage points. And although the rate of integration has recently shown signs of increasing after the Great Recession, it is still estimated that it would take 320 years for full integration to occur. Although integration has improved, its effects on the gender pay gap have been stifled because wage disparities between occupations typically considered "male" and "female" have intensified in the past several decades.

There are many reasons for men and women to enter male or female-dominated occupations. When selecting a career, multiple factors are usually considered such as individual endowments, constraints, and personal preferences (Anker, 1997). But researchers must take a more nuanced view of factors that contribute to this occupational sorting as it reflects a multitude of complex social pressures that disproportionately steer women into lower-paid jobs. This occupational sorting starts early, and sorts men and women into different college majors and career tracks.

Before entering the workforce, college students must first select a major that aligns with their post-graduation goals. But research show that men and women value different factors when

choosing a college major (Shauman, 2006). Shauman showed that men tend to favor college majors with higher earnings potential in the labor market whereas women tend to pursue college majors that lead to careers with more schedule flexibility and include intrinsic rewards such as job satisfaction.

Because women still tend to do the greater share of housework and childrearing, they may opt to pursue college majors and careers that allow more flexibility for part-time work and to take extended breaks in their careers (Gronau, 1988). Careers that allow for this type of flexibility, like the ability to quit and return to work after an extended period of time without considerable retraining, are typically low paying jobs (Polacheck, 1975).

Gender Norms. Additionally, larger systemic issues also affect which jobs and careers women pursue. Many high-wage professions require long, inflexible hours. But traditional gender norms place a disproportionate responsibility of housework and child/elder care onto women, which pressures them into more flexible jobs with lower pay (Goldin, 2015).

Vella (1994) found that women's attitudes towards working women developed early in their youth and can result in substantial reductions in human capital investment, labor supply, and rates of return to education.

Women Negotiate Less Than Men. Another theory that is often cited in gender pay disparity literature is that women negotiate less often than men for higher salaries and are less skilled at these salary negotiations (Babcock et al, 2006). Babcock et al (2006) found that men were eight times more likely than women to negotiate salary offers. Failing to negotiate on salary offers can have tremendous consequences on future earnings. Research show that people who fail to negotiate on a first salary offer lose about $500,000 over their working careers compared to those who negotiated their initial offers (Babcock, 2003).

Leibbrandt and List (2012) found that certain environments can influence whether women negotiate wages. In their field experiment of 2,500 job seekers, they found that men were more likely to negotiate wages when there was no explicit mention of wages being negotiable. But when told there was a possibility that wages were negotiable, women tended to negotiate as much and sometimes even more than men. Therefore, men tend to negotiate more in job environments where wage negotiations are more ambiguous.

Gender Discrimination. "Gender discrimination in the labor market is defined as a situation in which equally productive men and women are rewarded differently, making it necessary to correctly measure differences in productivity in order to pin down the discrimination residual" (Azmat & Petrongolo, 2014, pp. 35). Some argue that because the adjusted gender pay gap is considerably smaller than the unadjusted gap that discrimination does not play a major role in explaining the gap anymore. However, the adjusted pay gap can greatly underestimate the effects of discrimination on women's pay because discrimination occurs throughout a woman's life—from adolescence to selecting a college major and into their careers—not just when workplaces determine pay for employees. By the time a woman enters the workforce, "her occupational choice is the culmination of years of education, guidance by mentors, expectations set by those who raised her, hiring practices of firms, and widespread norms and expectations about work–family balance held by employers, co-workers, and society… even though women disproportionately enter lower-paid, female-dominated occupations, this decision is shaped by discrimination, societal norms, and other forces beyond women's control" (Gould & Schieder, 2016).

Asians in the Workplace

Asian Americans and Wages

Barringer, Takeuchi, and Xenos (1990) examined data from the 1980 Census in an effort to explain Asian American wages. They considered several theories such as Assimilation Theory, Human Capital Theory, and Structural Theories to try and explain Asian American wages. Although Asian Americans are more educated than other groups in the United States, they do not reach wage parity with whites. In fact, Asian Americans approach parity with whites because of their overachievement in educational attainment (Herschman and Wong, 1984).

Xie and Goyette (2003) investigated the social mobility process of Asian Americans and suggested a "strategic adaptation" framework. They proposed that Asian Americans consciously choose occupations where they will be able to cope with the potential discrimination and disadvantages by achieving marketable credentials. They found that Asian American youth tended to choose occupations with a high representation of Asians with high average earnings educational requirements.

Personality, Culture, and Pay

In the United States, traits like assertiveness and extroversion are valued. But these are in stark contrast to many Asian cultural values. In many Asian cultures non-confrontational styles, interpersonal harmony, and deep respect for authority are highly valued (Chung, 2000). Research comparing American and Asian values have consistently demonstrated a deep divide between cultures.

One such model, developed by Dutch social psychologist Gerard Hendrik Hofstede in 1980, compares cultural values between countries across six different dimensions. When using it to compare differences between the United States and India, we see vastly different scores across dimensions (Adya, 2008). For example, one important dimension with significant workplace implications is power distance, or the "extent to which a culture accepts and expects inequalities

in its society" (Adya, 2008, pp. 605). On this dimension, the United States scored a 40, whereas in India, the score was almost twice as high (77), indicating that people from India are much more accepting of disparities in society and of unequal power distributions. One way this acceptance of power distance can manifest in the workplace is a greater acceptance of workplace hierarchies and acceptance of inequalities in pay. And because of the patriarchal nature prevalent in many Asian systems and cultures, it can have compounding effects for Asian women when it comes to salary negotiations, leading to the acceptance of lower salaries. Nyhus & Pons (2012) found that 11.5% of the unexplained portion of the overall gender pay gap might be explained by personality differences. Traits like agreeableness, which tends to be higher in females, generally results in lower wages.

Another strong American value is individualism, or the "degree to which a culture reinforces individual rights versus collective rights" (Adya, 2008, pp. 605). The United States scored a 91 while India scored a 48. India, like many other Asian countries, is a highly collectivist society where individuals are expected to remain loyal and committed to their employers. Americans, however, believe that they are responsible for their own success and outcomes, fueling a more aggressive and competitive spirit in the workplace as compared to collectivist societies, which may contribute to higher rates of salary negotiations.

Chavez (2020) found that Asian job applicants received a "personality penalty" in hiring decisions as employers viewed them as lacking assertiveness and social skills.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected and complex nature of an individual's social categorizations such as race, gender, and sexual orientation, which create overlapping systems of oppression, discrimination, and disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1991). It emerged from the Black

feminist analysis that race and gender are inseparable for Black women, and can be applied to understanding oppression among other women of color. It is a useful framework for understanding how people are disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression, and that the challenges faced by these overlapping identities are not simply additive, they are compounded and made worse.

Intersectionality theory can also be a helpful framework for understanding the oppression faced by Asian women living in the United States. By using an intersectional lens, we can explore how factors such as immigration status, intergenerational trauma, language barriers, and the hypersexualization of Asian women are all interconnected, and have compounding negative effects on Asian women (Ho, 1990).

State of Current Research

Current studies have addressed the gender pay gap in fields like science and engineering (Shen, 2013) as well as contributing factors such as occupational selection and the disproportionate impact of having children and caregiving on women (Buffington et al, 2016). But missing from the literature is a study exploring distinctive factors contributing to the Asian gender pay gap and why this gap is highest among all racial groups in the United States. To date researchers have not yet conducted a study that explores unique factors like immigration and culture that may contribute to the largest between-group gender pay gap in the United States.

Asian Americans constitute a fast-growing portion of the United States' workforce and are the fastest growing minority population in the United States. From 2000 to 2015, the Asian population grew from 11.9 million to 20.4 million—or by 72%—the fastest growth rate of all major racial groups in the United States (Lopez et al, 2017). And by 2055, they are projected to be the largest immigrant group in the nation (Lopez et al, 2017).

This study draws attention to an under-researched labor studies issue and the need for societal and public policy solutions to address the causes of gender pay inequities. These findings offer policy implications aimed to close the gender pay gap between working Asian men and Asian women in the United States.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Occupational Segregation. Asian men are more likely to be employed in STEM (i.e. higher paying) careers than other men in the US. Asian men may have higher incomes due to their occupational choice and overeducation. But like many other women in the US, Asian women bear a greater burden of household and caretaking responsibilities, forcing them into lower paid roles or into underemployment. Thus, the disparity between Asian men and women is greater than other races because Asian men self-select into higher-paying occupations at higher rates than Asian women.

Hypothesis 2

Immigration. The majority (73%) of adult Asians in the US are foreign-born (Pew Research Center). The two main immigration pathways are through family ties or employment. Highly skilled (i.e. highly paid) Asian men may immigrate to the US through work with their wives who are underemployed in the US.

Asian women also immigrate to the US as wives of non-Asian men at a higher rate than Asian men immigrate with non-Asian women. These women may also be underemployed in the US.

Hypothesis 3

Culture. The traditional Asian culture may place additional burdens on Asian women—especially Asian immigrant women—as husbands endorse stronger patriarchal beliefs than other men, expecting women to take on a greater share of household and caretaking responsibilities while maintaining standards of beauty, compared with other groups of American men who may have adopted more egalitarian views.

Hypothesis 4

Gender and Racial Discrimination. Asian women face unique challenges of discrimination at work due to the racialized, hyper-sexualization of Asian women combined with the generalized Asian stereotypes of passivity and modesty. This may prevent them from entering leadership roles, greater obstacles to enter certain highly paid fields, and lower offers of pay for doing the same work.

Methodology

Prior to performing analyses of ACS data, I first conducted interviews to help inform the development of the study.

Key informant interviews with experts in academia and workforce professions

I interviewed four key informants with specialized knowledge related to the gender pay gap and specifically, working Asian men and women. These interviews helped to establish the study's priorities, factor considerations, operationalizations of important concepts, and informed the subsequent research design and analysis. My goal during this phase was to gain a deeper understanding of the problem and to gain insights from key informant perspectives to set the foundation for further study during later analyses. Information learned from these interviews informed my hypotheses, deepened my analyses, and enriched my findings as they related to the key themes in my hypotheses.

After generating a list of potential interviewees, I emailed recruitment letters (see Appendix A) to inquire about participation. Prior to beginning the interview, I emailed the Informed Consent document from Appendix B to participants. All interviews used the attached interview guide in Appendix C, were audio recorded and transcribed.

Secondary data analysis of Census Bureau data

Data

The data for this study comes from the most recent 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) sample for years 2013-2018. The ACS is an ongoing survey conducted by the Census Bureau to provide annual data on the United States and the people living there (US Census, n.d.). The Census Bureau randomly samples households from every state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico to obtain information about employment, educational attainment, home ownership, and other topics of interest.

This study only uses data about people who identified as Asian alone in the ACS—specifically, people who have origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent—as to only capture data about the Asian population in the United States and avoid confusion with data from other racial groups. Examples of countries represented are Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Exclusion Criteria. Self-employed individuals were excluded from this study because the existing literature on the gender pay gap focuses mostly on employed wage earners and studies show that there is often great variability and unreliability in self-reported income among self-employed individuals.

I also restricted the sample to adults age 25-54, which the Bureau of Labor Statistics considers "prime working age," and only those who reported an income great than $0 in the previous year.

To stay consistent with the existing gender pay gap literature I ran analyses for full-time, year-round workers first. However, because many of the factors that affect an individual's ability to work full-time also influence the gender pay gap (such as child or elder caretaking responsibilities), I ran additional analyses that included part-time and seasonal workers to capture a more complete understanding view of the situation for working Asians.

A Note About Gender. Because data on the gender pay gap largely only captures information about cisgender individuals who identify as either male or female, this paper will also use the terms "men" and "women" to stay consistent with the existing literature, even though acknowledgement is made that gender is not a dichotomous variable. The US Census (n.d.) currently collects information for only two genders: male and female. The Census Bureau intends to capture information about "a person's biological sex" but acknowledges that "ambiguity of concepts of sex and gender interferes with accurately and consistently measuring what we intend to measure—the sex composition of the population."

Variables

Dependent Variables. Annual income was self-reported as a continuous variable in the ACS. Respondents were asked to report their total pre-tax personal income or losses from all sources for the past year. Specifically, the question asked "What was this person's total income during the past 12 months? Add entries in questions 47a to 47h; subtract any losses. If net income was a loss, enter the amount and mark the 'loss' box next to the dollar amount" (IPUMS USA).

To remain consistent with the existing literature on gender pay gap studies, I used the natural log of annual income as the dependent variable. The natural log of income corrects for the skew that normally occurs at the upper and lower ends of the income spectrum (Benoit, 2011). Findings remained consistent after performing additional analyses using unlogged income as the dependent variable, indicating that results from the primary analyses were robust.

Independent Variables.

Sex. Sex was self-reported as a dichotomous variable—male or female. Specifically, the ACS asked respondents, "What is Person X's sex?"

Age. In the ACS, age was self-reported as a continuous variable in years as of the last birthday. Specifically, respondents were asked, "What is Person X's age and what is Person X's date of birth?" Responses were then recoded into a dichotomous variable—25 to 40 years and 41 to 54 years.

Education Level. Educational attainment was self-reported as the highest year of school or degree completed. Specifically, respondents were asked, "What is the highest degree or level of school this person has completed? Mark one box. If currently enrolled, mark the previous grade of highest grade received." Responses were then transformed into the following categories for analysis: "less than high school", "high school", "some college or associate's", "bachelor's", and "graduate or professional degree".

Marital Status. Marital status was self-reported as a categorical variable then transformed into a dichotomous (married/not married) variable for analysis.

Children. Respondents were asked to report the number of children that were currently residing with them. Biological children, step-children, and adopted children of any age and

marital status were all included. Responses were transformed into the following categories for analysis: “no children”, “children four and under”, and “children five and older.”

Birthplace and Citizenship Status. Respondents were divided into three categories for analysis: “US-born”, “foreign-born citizens”, and “foreign-born non-citizens.” US-born individuals included those born in a US state or outlying US area/territory.

Hours Worked. In the ACS, weekly working hours were self-reported as a continuous variable. Specifically, respondents were asked, “During the past 12 months (52 weeks), in the weeks worked, how many hours did this person usually work each week?” Responses were transformed into a dichotomous variable for analysis—part-time (34 hours or less) and full-time workers (35 or more hours).

Weeks Worked. In the ACS, respondents were asked how many weeks they had worked during the previous calendar year. Responses were given in intervals of 13 weeks or less, 14 to 26 weeks, 27 to 39 weeks, 40 to 47 weeks, 48 to 49 weeks, or 50 to 52 weeks. Specifically, respondents were asked, “How many weeks did this person work, even for a few hours, including paid vacation, paid sick leave, and military service?” Responses were then recoded into a dichotomous variable separating year-round (40 to 52 weeks worked) from seasonal workers (39 weeks or less).

Occupation. In the ACS, respondents were asked, “What kind of work was this person doing?” We aimed to capture respondents’ primary occupations, which was usually the one in which they earned the most income. If respondents reported more than one occupation, only the first one listed was used. Unemployed respondents were left out of the analyses. Responses were then transformed into 11 categories for analysis: “*Management, Business, and Finance,”* “*Transportation and Material Moving,” “Computer, Engineering, and Science*,” “*Education,*

Legal, Community Service, Arts, and Media," "*Healthcare Practitioners and Technical,"* "*Service,"* "*Sales and Related,"* "*Office and Administrative Support," "Farming, Fishing, and Forestry," "Construction and Extraction," "Installation, Maintenance, and Repair," and "Production*."

Analysis

Stata SE 16.1 was used for all analyses (StataCorp, 2019). I analyzed the data using the Kitagawa-Blinder-Oaxaca (KBO) decomposition—a methodology often used to study labor-market outcomes and to analyze wage gaps between groups (Jann, 2008)—to decompose mean differences in income based on linear regression models. Although the technique was first developed by sociologist and demographer Evelyn Kitagawa (Kitagawa, 1955), it is widely known as the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition and is one of the most used methods in labor economics to detect a presence of group differences, such as gender or racial discrimination in the labor market.

I used the standard, three-fold decomposition technique to analyze the pay gap between Asian men and women by separating them into two parts: an "explained" part due to group differences in characteristics like education level or occupation and an "unexplained" part that cannot be explained by these group differences, which is often used as a measure for discrimination.

This method of analysis allows worker characteristics and their "coefficients"—the estimated rewards the labor market gives to different worker characteristics—to vary. Additionally, it differentiates how much of the gender pay gap can be explained by differences in worker and job characteristics, and how much is left "unexplained" (which reflects differences in

the way the labor market rewards men and women with identical characteristics in the data due to discrimination, bias, or other unobserved factors).

The KBO decomposition first estimates a linear regression model for each gender separately, then follows with a decomposition of the pay gap between men and women.

Results

Descriptive Results

Descriptive statistics for the sample are included in Tables 2A and 2B. The full sample included 271,051 respondents. The sample was 49% women, majority married (68%), college-educated (65%), foreign-born (79%), and had children living in the home (54%). The median age was 39 years. I ran analyses on the full sample and on three subgroups from the full sample including: US-born Asians, foreign-born American citizens, and foreign-born non-citizens.

The sample of US-born workers was the smallest of the three birthplace/citizenship subgroups analyzed and included 57,683 respondents (21% of the full sample); was made up of 48% women, majority unmarried (54%), college-educated (68%), with no children (64%). This group had the youngest median age of 33 years, was the only subgroup with a majority that were unmarried and without children, and had a median annual income of $56,558.

The sample of foreign-born, US-citizens was the largest of the three subgroups analyzed and included 128,229 respondents (47% of the full sample) with 53% women, majority married (74%), college-educated (61%), and had children living in the home (63%). The median age was 43 years and median annual income was $56,073.

The sample of foreign-born, non-citizen workers included 84,666 respondents (31% of the full sample); was 44% women, majority married (75%), college-educated (70%), and had

children living in the home (54%). The median age was 37 years and median annual income was $50,809.

Median income. As shown in Table 2B, the median annual income for all respondents in the sample was $54,306; men had a median income of $63,890 and women had a median income of $46,900. US-born Asians had a median income of $56,558; foreign-born citizens had a median income of $56,073; and foreign-born non-citizens had the lowest incomes of the three subgroups with a median annual income of $50,809.

The overall gender pay gap for all working Asians (including part-time and seasonal workers) was 73%, compared to 79% for full-time, year-round workers. The gender pay gap for US-born Asian workers was 89%, 72% for foreign-born citizens, and 54% for foreign-born non-citizens, which was considerably worse than other groups analyzed in this study.

Education. The majority of the sample (65%) held a Bachelor's degree or higher (65% of women, 66% of men). I found that the gender pay gap grew as the level of education rose. The pay gap between Asian men and women without a high school degree was 78%, with a high school degree was 77%, with some college or an Associate's was 76%, with a Bachelor's degree was 74%, and with a graduate or professional degree was 73%.

Additionally, I found that US-born Asian women were more educated than their male counterparts at the Bachelor's level and more likely to have a graduate or professional degree (31% women compared to 24% men), but still earned less income than US-born men. The pay gap between Asian men and women with a Bachelor's degree was 85% (median income was $62,421), and with a graduate or professional degree was 76% (median income was $86,754).

Table 2A

Sample Characteristics

			Level of Education (% of Sample)					Employment Status (% of Sample)		Marital Status (% of Sample)		Children (% of Sample)		
	% of Sample	Median Age	Less than HS	HS	Some College or Associate's	Bachelor's	Graduate or Professional	Part Time Workers	Full Time Workers	Married	Not Married	No	Yes, 4 Years and Under	Yes, 5 Years and Older
All Asians														
All	100%	39	6%	10%	18%	35%	31%	13%	87%	68%	32%	46%	19%	36%
Men	51%	39	6%	10%	18%	33%	33%	8%	92%	68%	32%	47%	21%	32%
Women	49%	39	7%	10%	18%	36%	29%	19%	81%	68%	32%	44%	16%	40%
US-Born														
All	100%	33	2%	8%	21%	41%	27%	13%	87%	46%	54%	64%	17%	19%
Men	52%	33	2%	10%	24%	41%	24%	10%	90%	44%	56%	67%	16%	16%
Women	48%	33	2%	6%	19%	42%	31%	16%	84%	49%	51%	61%	18%	21%
Foreign-Born Citizens														
All	100%	43	7%	11%	21%	35%	26%	13%	87%	74%	26%	37%	16%	47%
Men	47%	43	7%	11%	21%	33%	28%	7%	93%	75%	25%	38%	18%	44%
Women	53%	43	7%	12%	20%	36%	25%	18%	82%	73%	27%	35%	14%	51%
Foreign-Born Non-Citizens														
All	100%	37	9%	10%	11%	30%	40%	15%	86%	75%	25%	46%	23%	30%
Men	56%	36	8%	9%	9%	29%	45%	9%	91%	75%	25%	46%	26%	28%
Women	44%	37	10%	11%	14%	31%	35%	22%	78%	74%	26%	46%	20%	34%

Note: author analysis using data from 2013-2018 American Community Survey; includes part-time, seasonal workers. Part-time workers defined as working 34 hours or less per week.

Table 2B

Sample Characteristics

		Level of Education					Employment Status		Marital Status		Children		
	Median Income	Less than HS	HS	Some College or Associate's	Bachelor's	Graduate or Prof. Degree	Part Time Workers	Full Time Workers	Married	Not Married	No	Yes, 4 Years and Under	Yes, 5 Years and Older
All Asians													
All	$54,306	$22,542	$27,931	$36,989	$63,511	$92,217	$15,370	$63,320	$62,842	$43,399	$50,000	$70,000	$56,767
Men	$63,890	$25,900	$31,739	$41,895	$74,096	$104,737	$15,500	$71,725	$78,000	$44,777	$52,369	$81,971	$78,897
Women	$46,900	$20,313	$24,591	$31,755	$55,000	$76,848	$15,243	$55,015	$48,700	$42,340	$46,109	$56,355	$42,340
Gender Pay Gap	73%	78%	77%	76%	74%	73%	98%	77%	62%	95%	88%	69%	54%
US-Born													
All	$56,558	$25,616	$31,421	$37,705	$62,421	$86,754	$16,928	$62,842	$72,269	$46,574	$51,232	$72,066	$70,000
Men	$60,000	$27,521	$32,500	$40,985	$67,728	$100,548	$15,000	$65,000	$82,800	$46,084	$51,232	$82,000	$87,979
Women	$53,216	$21,509	$29,638	$34,547	$57,605	$76,213	$19,150	$60,000	$63,479	$47,133	$51,232	$63,479	$58,189
Gender Pay Gap	89%	78%	91%	84%	85%	76%	128%	92%	77%	102%	100%	77%	66%
Foreign-Born Citizens													
All	$56,073	$25,404	$30,000	$40,000	$66,601	$104,737	$15,900	$63,479	$61,478	$45,000	$51,232	$63,479	$59,776
Men	$66,601	$30,739	$35,000	$46,109	$77,872	$123,846	$16,000	$71,942	$76,213	$46,551	$52,926	$72,109	$80,447
Women	$48,179	$21,517	$26,184	$34,790	$60,000	$87,856	$15,878	$57,000	$50,274	$44,000	$48,691	$53,514	$46,156
Gender Pay Gap	72%	70%	75%	75%	77%	71%	99%	79%	66%	95%	92%	74%	57%
Foreign-Born Non-Citizens													
All	$50,809	$20,300	$23,276	$27,514	$61,478	$82,000	$12,702	$62,842	$57,131	$37,912	$44,457	$75,823	$42,319
Men	$66,653	$21,995	$26,463	$31,527	$76,848	$94,005	$14,977	$74,058	$76,848	$40,985	$52,899	$89,143	$68,769
Women	$35,971	$17,986	$20,357	$24,769	$41,895	$65,000	$12,385	$47,633	$36,658	$34,838	$36,658	$52,926	$29,002
Gender Pay Gap	54%	82%	77%	79%	55%	69%	83%	64%	48%	85%	69%	59%	42%

Note: author analysis using data from 2013-2018 American Community Survey; includes part-time, seasonal workers. Part-time workers defined as working 34 hours or less per week.

Marital Status. Most respondents in the full sample reported they were currently married (68%). The median annual income for married respondents was higher than for unmarried respondents ($62,842 versus $43,339).

US-born Asians were the only subgroup with a majority of respondents unmarried (54%). The gender pay gap for unmarried US-born respondents was 102%, meaning that unmarried, US-born Asian women earned more than their male counterparts. This was the only instance in my analyses in which women earned more than men. The gender pay gap for married US-born respondents was 77%. Married US-born Asians had a significantly lower gender pay gap compared to the married foreign-born Asians in this study.

The gender pay gap for married foreign-born citizens was 66% and was 95% for unmarried respondents.

The gender pay gap for married foreign-born non-citizens was 48%, one of the worst pay gaps found in this study. Unmarried respondents had a gender pay gap of 85%.

Children. The gender pay gap for all working parents with young children (under five years old) was 69% and was 54% for parents with older children (five years and older). The gender pay gap was consistently worse for parents of older children than younger children across all subgroups and was significantly better for working non-parents compared to working parents.

Working Hours. The median number of weekly hours worked was 40. The majority (87%) of respondents in the full sample worked full-time hours (defined as 35 or more hours per week). The median annual income for full-time workers was $63,320; with men earning a median income of $71,725 and women earning $55,015. Women were significantly more likely to work part-time (19% of women reported working part-time hours compared to 8% of men).

Birthplace and Citizenship. Most respondents were born outside of the United States (79%). Only 21% of respondents were born in the United States, 47% were foreign-born citizens, and 31% were foreign-born non-citizens. More Asian women reported having citizenship (72%) compared to men (66%).

Male Regression Analyses

All variables included in the analysis were statistically significantly associated with men's income ($p < .001$) and explained 53% of the variation in Asian men's income. Unmarried men earned 15% less than married men ($p < .001$). Fathers with young children (four years and under) earned 16% more than men with no children ($p < .001$), and fathers with older children (five years and older) earned 13% more than men with no children ($p < .001$). Foreign-born citizens earned 5% less than Asian men born in the US ($p < .001$) and foreign-born non-citizens earned 18% less than Asian men born in the US ($p < .001$).

Female Regression Analyses

All variables included in the analysis were statistically significantly associated with women's income ($p < .001$) and explained 54% of the variation in Asian women's income. Unmarried women earned 2% less than married women ($p < .001$). Mothers with young children (four years and under) earned 16% more than women with no children ($p < .001$), and mothers with older children (five years and older) earned 5% more than women with no children ($p < .001$). Foreign-born citizens earned 5% less than Asian women born in the US ($p < .001$) and foreign-born non-citizens earned 20% less than Asian women born in the US ($p < .001$).

Kitagawa-Blinder-Oaxaca Decomposition Analysis

When decomposing the gender pay gap using the Kitagawa-Blinder-Oaxaca (KBO) decomposition method, three regressions were performed as part of the decomposition to analyze

the associations between respondent characteristics and log income (See Tables 3 and 4 for a summary of results).

Table 3

Results from KBO Decomposition

Results	All Asians			US-Born Only		
		95% Confidence Interval			95% Confidence Interval	
	Coefficient	Low	High	Coefficient	Low	High
Men's Log Income	10.9638***	10.9585	10.9690	10.9097***	10.8982	10.9212
Women's Log Income	10.6125***	10.6069	10.6181	10.7715***	10.7601	10.7829
Difference	0.3513***	0.3436	0.3590	0.1382***	0.1220	0.1544
Explained	0.1647***	0.1580	0.1714	-0.0160*	-0.0302	-0.0017
Unexplained	0.1822***	0.1763	0.1881	0.1389***	0.1264	0.1514
Interaction	0.0044†	-0.0003	0.0091	0.0153**	0.0049	0.0256

*Note: †p < .1, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .0001.*

Table 3

Continued

Results	Foreign-Born Citizens			Foreign-Born Non-Citizens		
		95% Confidence Interval			95% Confidence Interval	
	Coefficient	Low	High	Coefficient	Low	High
Men's Log Income	11.0426***	11.0350	11.0502	10.8975***	10.8884	10.9067
Women's Log Income	10.6769***	10.6694	10.6844	10.3739***	10.3625	10.3854
Difference	0.3657***	0.3550	0.3764	0.5236***	0.5089	0.5382
Explained	0.1641***	0.1547	0.1735	0.3339***	0.3213	0.3465
Unexplained	0.2030***	0.1945	0.2114	0.1845***	0.1736	0.1953
Interaction	-0.0013	-0.0084	0.0057	0.0052	-0.0031	0.0135

*Note: †p < .1, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .0001.*

The Kitagawa-Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition method separates the observed pay gap into two main parts. The "explained" pay gap reflects the portion of the pay differential that is due to group differences between men and women in the predictor variables (i.e. education, marital status, having children, etc.). The coefficients display the mean increase in women's income if they had the same characteristics as men in the sample.

The "unexplained" portion of the pay gap reflects the disparity in the way the characteristics included in the model are translated into men and women's earnings. It displays outcomes for women if they were treated like men given the same characteristics.

An interaction term is also included which acknowledges that differences in the explained and unexplained portions exist simultaneously between men and women in the sample.

Table 4

Results from KBO Decomposition: Explained and Unexplained Pay Gaps

Results	All Asians	US-Born Only	Foreign-Born Citizens	Foreign-Born Non-Citizens
Explained (% of the Pay Gap)	47%	-12%	45%	64%
Unexplained (% of the Pay Gap)	52%	101%	56%	35%

Note: results may not equal 100% due to interaction term.

All Workers Regressions (Includes Part-Time and Seasonal)

Men's mean income was 42% higher than women's mean income. Women's mean income would increase by 16% if they had the same characteristics as men in the sample. In this model, 47% of the income differential between Asian men and women was explained and 52% was left unexplained.

US-Born Citizens

Men's mean income is 15% higher than women's mean income. In this model, the unexplained portion of the pay gap is larger than the total observed pay gap, meaning that the unexplained portion of the gap is reflecting more than the total observed pay gap because women in this sample are more educated than men (i.e. more "qualified"). The observed pay gap is not larger than what was observed here because the women were more educated than men in this sample.

Foreign-Born Citizens

Men's mean income is 44% higher than women's mean income. Women's mean income would increase by 37% if they had the same characteristics as men in the sample. In this model,

64% of the income differential between Asian men and women was explained and 35% was unexplained.

Foreign-Born Non-Citizens

Men's mean income is 69% higher than women's mean income. Women's income would increase by 33% if they had the same characteristics as men in the sample. In this model, 45% of the income differential between Asian men and women was explained and 56% was unexplained.

Discussion

This study uses an exploratory approach to identify and analyze unique factors contributing to the Asian gender pay gap and why it is the highest of all racial groups in the United States. My analyses showed that the gender pay gap between Asian men and women differed dramatically depending on birthplace and citizenship status. US-born Asian women earned 89 cents for every dollar a US-born Asian man earned; foreign-born, non-citizen women made only 72 cents compared to their male counterparts; and foreign-born, non-citizen women earned only 54 cents for every dollar their male counterparts received. Although explanations for the pay gaps varied depending on subgroup, the “unexplained” portion of each gap was significant. This means that human capital factors such as level of education and occupational choice could not completely account for the pay differential, and points to the likelihood of discrimination. Additionally, I found that the majority of the largest pay gaps could be explained by factors included in my analyses, while smaller pay gaps were more likely due to “unexplained” factors or discrimination.

For example, the pay gap between US-born Asian men and women was the smallest of the three subgroups analyzed but was wholly attributed to unexplained factors. The unexplained

portion of the pay gap was actually larger (101%) than the total observed pay gap between US-born Asian men and women because women in this sample were more "qualified" (i.e. educated) than men. It is due to women's high levels of education in this sample that the pay gap was not even greater than what was observed in this analysis. Women in this sample had greater human capital factors than men and were employed in similar occupations as their male counterparts, yet a pay gap persisted. It is reasonable then to conclude that the pay gap between US-born Asian men and women is due to issues of discrimination.

The pay gap between foreign-born, non-citizens was much larger than the pay gap between US-born Asians but most of the gap was explained by factors included in my analyses, such as level of education (men had higher levels of education) and occupational choice. However, we cannot simply attribute the differences in pay between men and women in this group to human capital factors or choice of occupation without acknowledging the mechanisms behind these outcomes. The patriarchal nature prevalent in many Asian systems and cultures has historically led to worse outcomes for Asian women compared to men. Compared to their male counterparts, Asian women face more barriers to education, greater burdens and expectations of child and elder caretaking, and have less family support when pursuing occupations in higher-paying fields such as STEM (Dutta, 2017). These, in addition to many more factors starting from birth, accumulate and compound over time to influence the educational attainment, occupational choices, and other outcomes observed in this study that drive the gender pay gap.

Review of Theories

Theory 1: Occupational Segregation

Based on the existing gender pay gap literature, I hypothesized that occupational segregation was a significant contributor to the Asian gender pay gap, as it does for the overall

gender pay gap (for all races). However, results from these analyses showed that occupational segregation did not account for a significant portion of the observed gender pay gap between Asian men and women who were US citizens in this study but did play a role in explaining the pay gap between Asian men and women who were not US citizens. After analyzing the top two occupational categories for Asian men and women in all three immigrant/citizenship groups, I found that Asian men and women citizens were likely to work in the same occupational categories and that there was significant overlap in their top two occupational categories (see Table 5 for a summary of results). The pay disparities and occupational differences between the top occupational categories for non-citizens were significant. Men were mostly employed (37%) in the "Computers, Engineering, and Sciences" category while women were mostly employed in "Service" (19%) jobs, which are notoriously low paid, labor-intensive, vulnerable to economic downturns, and often lack access to benefits like paid sick leave.

As displayed in Table 5, the most common occupational category for all working Asians was "Computers, Engineering, and Sciences" (20%). The second most common was the "Management, Business, and Finance" category (19%). This mirrored the first and second most common occupational categories for men: "Computers, Engineering, and Sciences" (27%) and "Management, Business, and Finance" (19%). Asian men employed in "Computers, Engineering, and Sciences" made a median income of $98,441, had a median Duncan score of 65, and worked 40 hours per week. Asian men in "Management, Business, and Finance" made a median income of $96,557, had a median Duncan score of 68, and also worked 40 hours per week. The most common occupational categories for women were "Management, Business, and Finance" (19%) and "Service" (16%). Asian women employed in "Management, Business, and Finance" made a median income of $72,000, had a median Duncan score of 68, and worked 40

hours per week. Asian women employed in “Service” made a median income of $20,631, had a median Duncan score of 16, and also worked 40 hours per week.

Table 5

Most Common Occupational Categories for Working Asians

Occupations	All Asians			US-Born Only			Foreign-Born Citizens			Foreign-Born Non-Citizens		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
Overall Median Duncan Score	65	65	60	65	65	65	61	65	51	65	61	61
Most Common Job	Comp, Eng, Science	Comp, Eng, Science	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Comp, Eng, Science	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Comp, Eng, Science	Comp, Eng, Science	Service
% of Sample Employed	20%	27%	19%	22%	21%	23%	20%	24%	20%	29%	37%	19%
Median Income		$98,441	$72,000		$83,790	$73,316		$105,620	$74,096		$95,266	$18,000
Median Duncan Score		65	68		68	68		65	68		65	16
Median Hours Worked		40	40		40	40		40	40		40	40
Second Most Common Job	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Service	Comp, Eng, Science	Comp, Eng, Science	Healthcare, Technical	Comp, Eng, Science	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Healthcare, Technical	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Comp, Eng, Science
% of Sample Employed	19%	19%	16%	14%	19%	18%	16%	20%	17%	17%	17%	18%
Median Income		$96,557	$20,631		$83,790	$70,174		$102,642	$79,348		$100,000	$79,348
Median Duncan Score		68	16		65	48		68	46		68	65
Median Hours Worked		40	40		40	40		40	40		40	40

Note: author analysis using data from 2013-2018 American Community Survey; includes part-time, seasonal workers.

Theory 2: Immigration

As hypothesized, immigration and citizenship status played a major role in the Asian gender pay gap. US-born Asians had an observed gender pay gap of 89%, foreign-born citizens had a gender pay gap of 72%, and foreign-born non-citizens had a gender pay gap of 54%. This emphasizes the importance of considering immigration and citizenship status as an important predictor of income disparities in future studies.

Theory 3: Culture

Although I hypothesized that Asian culture plays a role in the gender pay gap between Asian men and women, factors associated with culture were unable to be assessed in this study. Culture-related factors were not available in the ACS and elements of culture were not discussed during key informant interviews. This is an area of potential future study.

Theory 4: Discrimination

By using the Kitagawa-Blinder-Oaxaca Decomposition method, I was able to break the observed pay gaps down into "explained" and "unexplained" portions (see Table 6 for results). The unexplained portions of the pay gap usually reflect discrimination in the way men and women are treated in the labor force (i.e. discrimination). From my analyses, I found that discrimination plays a significant factor in the Asian gender pay gap, and most affected US-born Asian women since the unexplained portion of the pay gap between US-born Asian men and women was larger than the total observed pay gap.

Table 6

Asian Gender Pay Gaps (Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's)

Characteristics	All Asians	US-Born	Foreign-Born Citizens	Foreign-Born Non-Citizens
Overall (%)	73	89	72	54
Highest Education Completed				
Less than HS Grad	78	78	70	82
HS Grad	77	91	75	77
Some College or Associate's Degree	76	84	75	79
Bachelor's Degree	74	85	77	55
Graduate or Professional Degree	73	76	71	69
Hours Worked Per Week				
Part Time, 34 Hours or Less	98	128	99	83
Full Time, 35 Hours or More	77	92	79	64
Marital Status				
Married	62	77	66	48
Not Married	95	102	95	85
Children Living in the Home				
No Children	88	100	92	69
Yes, Children 4 and Under	69	77	74	59
Yes, Children 5 and Older	54	66	57	42

Note: author analysis using data from 2013-2018 American Community Survey; includes part-time, seasonal workers.

Limitations, Ethical Considerations, and Future Research

Limitations

The key informant interviews included in this study were conducted within the University of Washington faculty networks. All four interviewees had completed their graduate education at the University of Washington School of Social Work or were working at the University of Washington. Because of time and resource constraints, interviews were conducted via Zoom video conference. Future studies must include a more diverse group of interviewees across industries and occupations to capture the experiences of Asians working in the United States.

The Kitagawa-Blinder-Oaxaca (KBO) decomposition method is widely used in labor studies to analyze pay gaps between groups. However, one limitation of this approach is that it offers no insights into the unexplained portion of pay gaps—it only shows they exist (Sen, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

Current work and/or immigration status of subjects may be unknown. Therefore, care and privacy must be granted to study subjects to safeguard and protect any vulnerable individuals or groups included in the study. Additionally, because data on the gender pay gap largely only captures information about cisgender people who identify as male or female, this paper uses the terms "men" and "women" to stay consistent with the literature. Acknowledgement of gender identities beyond the male/female binary are made and hope to be included in future studies.

Future Research

Consistent with the overall gender pay gap literature, this study also found that the gender pay gap significantly increases after individuals became parents. Future studies must go further to examine the mechanisms contributing to this pay disparity among working Asians. For example, what role does Asian culture play in exacerbating the pay disparities between working men and women? Since many Asian ethnic subgroups have vastly different cultural norms and values, future studies must investigate how these various cultures affect pay gaps.

Additionally, because respondents in this study were concentrated in the "Management, Business, and Finance" occupational category. Future studies can investigate how pay gaps differ for working Asians in specific occupations falling under this category.

And lastly, one key finding of this study was that birthplace and citizenship play a major role in the Asian gender pay gap. It is imperative for scholars and social work practitioners to work to understand the negative consequences that intersecting marginalized identities have on Asian immigrant women's pay and the compounding effects it has in all other areas of their lives.

Conclusion

The Asian gender pay gap's negative effects extend beyond working Asian women. This earnings inequality not only results into lower pay for working Asian women but can also mean less income for families, especially families of female-headed households. By identifying leading contributors to the pay gap, this study offers policy implications aimed to close the gender pay gap between working Asian men and women in the United States.

These findings highlight the importance of critically investigating issues of inequality and discrimination within Asian subgroups. Asians constitute a rapidly growing portion of the workforce and are the fastest growing minority population in the United States. By 2055, they are projected to be the largest immigrant group in the nation. This study helps build knowledge on the intersectionality of gender, race, and immigration so that social workers can advocate for equitable policy solutions to address the root causes of these pay disparities and better support vulnerable and marginalized populations concealed under the giant "Asian American" monolith.

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Tables

Table 1. Median Annual Incomes between Asian Men and Women in the United States by Educational Attainment

	Total	High School Graduate	Bachelor's or more	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Professional Degree	Doctorate Degree
Men	$72,109	$40,501	$95,869	$81,390	$102,483	$150,784	$120,374
Women	$46,678	$25,880	$62,110	$52,047	$71,322	$110,657	$95,081
Female to Male Earnings Ratio	0.65	0.64	0.65	0.64	0.70	0.73	0.79

Age 25 years and older, worked full-time, year-round
Author analysis using data from 2018 American Community Survey

Table 2A

Sample Characteristics

			Level of Education (% of Sample)					Employment Status (% of Sample)		Marital Status (% of Sample)		Children (% of Sample)		
	% of Sample	Median Age	Less than HS	HS	Some College or Associate's	Bachelor's	Graduate or Professional	Part Time Workers	Full Time Workers	Married	Not Married	No	Yes, 4 Years and Under	Yes, 5 Years and Older
All Asians														
All	100%	39	6%	10%	18%	35%	31%	13%	87%	68%	32%	46%	19%	36%
Men	51%	39	6%	10%	18%	33%	33%	8%	92%	68%	32%	47%	21%	32%
Women	49%	39	7%	10%	18%	36%	29%	19%	81%	68%	32%	44%	16%	40%
US-Born														
All	100%	33	2%	8%	21%	41%	27%	13%	87%	46%	54%	64%	17%	19%
Men	52%	33	2%	10%	24%	41%	24%	10%	90%	44%	56%	67%	16%	16%
Women	48%	33	2%	6%	19%	42%	31%	16%	84%	49%	51%	61%	18%	21%
Foreign-Born Citizens														
All	100%	43	7%	11%	21%	35%	26%	13%	87%	74%	26%	37%	16%	47%
Men	47%	43	7%	11%	21%	33%	28%	7%	93%	75%	25%	38%	18%	44%
Women	53%	43	7%	12%	20%	36%	25%	18%	82%	73%	27%	35%	14%	51%
Foreign-Born Non-Citizens														
All	100%	37	9%	10%	11%	30%	40%	15%	86%	75%	25%	46%	23%	30%
Men	56%	36	8%	9%	9%	29%	45%	9%	91%	75%	25%	46%	26%	28%
Women	44%	37	10%	11%	14%	31%	35%	22%	78%	74%	26%	46%	20%	34%

Note: author analysis using data from 2013-2018 American Community Survey; includes part-time, seasonal workers. Part-time workers defined as working 34 hours or less per week.

Table 2B

Sample Characteristics

		Level of Education					Employment Status		Marital Status		Children		
	Median Income	Less than HS	HS	Some College or Associate's	Bachelor's	Graduate or Prof. Degree	Part Time Workers	Full Time Workers	Married	Not Married	No	Yes, 4 Years and Under	Yes, 5 Years and Older
All Asians													
All	$54,306	$22,542	$27,931	$36,989	$63,511	$92,217	$15,370	$63,320	$62,842	$43,399	$50,000	$70,000	$56,767
Men	$63,890	$25,900	$31,739	$41,895	$74,096	$104,737	$15,500	$71,725	$78,000	$44,777	$52,369	$81,971	$78,897
Women	$46,900	$20,313	$24,591	$31,755	$55,000	$76,848	$15,243	$55,015	$48,700	$42,340	$46,109	$56,355	$42,340
Gender Pay Gap	73%	78%	77%	76%	74%	73%	98%	77%	62%	95%	88%	69%	54%
US-Born													
All	$56,558	$25,616	$31,421	$37,705	$62,421	$86,754	$16,928	$62,842	$72,269	$46,574	$51,232	$72,066	$70,000
Men	$60,000	$27,521	$32,500	$40,985	$67,728	$100,548	$15,000	$65,000	$82,800	$46,084	$51,232	$82,000	$87,979
Women	$53,216	$21,509	$29,638	$34,547	$57,605	$76,213	$19,150	$60,000	$63,479	$47,133	$51,232	$63,479	$58,189
Gender Pay Gap	89%	78%	91%	84%	85%	76%	128%	92%	77%	102%	100%	77%	66%
Foreign-Born Citizens													
All	$56,073	$25,404	$30,000	$40,000	$66,601	$104,737	$15,900	$63,479	$61,478	$45,000	$51,232	$63,479	$59,776
Men	$66,601	$30,739	$35,000	$46,109	$77,872	$123,846	$16,000	$71,942	$76,213	$46,551	$52,926	$72,109	$80,447
Women	$48,179	$21,517	$26,184	$34,790	$60,000	$87,856	$15,878	$57,000	$50,274	$44,000	$48,691	$53,514	$46,156
Gender Pay Gap	72%	70%	75%	75%	77%	71%	99%	79%	66%	95%	92%	74%	57%
Foreign-Born Non-Citizens													
All	$50,809	$20,300	$23,276	$27,514	$61,478	$82,000	$12,702	$62,842	$57,131	$37,912	$44,457	$75,823	$42,319
Men	$66,653	$21,995	$26,463	$31,527	$76,848	$94,005	$14,977	$74,058	$76,848	$40,985	$52,899	$89,143	$68,769
Women	$35,971	$17,986	$20,357	$24,769	$41,895	$65,000	$12,385	$47,633	$36,658	$34,838	$36,658	$52,926	$29,002
Gender Pay Gap	54%	82%	77%	79%	55%	69%	83%	64%	48%	85%	69%	59%	42%

Note: author analysis using data from 2013-2018 American Community Survey; includes part-time, seasonal workers. Part-time workers defined as working 34 hours or less per week.

Table 3

Results from KBO Decomposition

Results	All Asians			US-Born Only		
		95% Confidence Interval			95% Confidence Interval	
	Coefficient	Low	High	Coefficient	Low	High
Men's Log Income	10.9638***	10.9585	10.9690	10.9097***	10.8982	10.9212
Women's Log Income	10.6125***	10.6069	10.6181	10.7715***	10.7601	10.7829
Difference	0.3513***	0.3436	0.3590	0.1382***	0.1220	0.1544
Explained	0.1647***	0.1580	0.1714	-0.0160*	-0.0302	-0.0017
Unexplained	0.1822***	0.1763	0.1881	0.1389***	0.1264	0.1514
Interaction	0.0044†	-0.0003	0.0091	0.0153**	0.0049	0.0256

*Note: †p < .1, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .0001.*

Table 3

Continued

Results	Foreign-Born Citizens			Foreign-Born Non-Citizens		
		95% Confidence Interval			95% Confidence Interval	
	Coefficient	Low	High	Coefficient	Low	High
Men's Log Income	11.0426***	11.0350	11.0502	10.8975***	10.8884	10.9067
Women's Log Income	10.6769***	10.6694	10.6844	10.3739***	10.3625	10.3854
Difference	0.3657***	0.3550	0.3764	0.5236***	0.5089	0.5382
Explained	0.1641***	0.1547	0.1735	0.3339***	0.3213	0.3465
Unexplained	0.2030***	0.1945	0.2114	0.1845***	0.1736	0.1953
Interaction	-0.0013	-0.0084	0.0057	0.0052	-0.0031	0.0135

*Note: †p < .1, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .0001.*

Table 4

Results from KBO Decomposition: Explained and Unexplained Pay Gaps

Results	All Asians	US-Born Only	Foreign-Born Citizens	Foreign-Born Non-Citizens
Explained (% of the Pay Gap)	47%	-12%	45%	64%
Unexplained (% of the Pay Gap)	52%	101%	56%	35%

Note: results may not equal 100% due to interaction term.

Table 5

Most Common Occupational Categories for Working Asians

Occupations	All Asians			US-Born Only			Foreign-Born Citizens			Foreign-Born Non-Citizens		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
Overall Median Duncan Score	65	65	60	65	65	65	61	65	51	65	61	61
Most Common Job	Comp, Eng, Science	Comp, Eng, Science	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Comp, Eng, Science	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Comp, Eng, Science	Comp, Eng, Science	Service
% of Sample Employed	20%	27%	19%	22%	21%	23%	20%	24%	20%	29%	37%	19%
Median Income		$98,441	$72,000		$83,790	$73,316		$105,620	$74,096		$95,266	$18,000
Median Duncan Score		65	68		68	68		65	68		65	16
Median Hours Worked		40	40		40	40		40	40		40	40
Second Most Common Job	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Service	Comp, Eng, Science	Comp, Eng, Science	Healthcare, Technical	Comp, Eng, Science	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Healthcare, Technical	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Mgmt, Business, Finance	Comp, Eng, Science
% of Sample Employed	19%	19%	16%	14%	19%	18%	16%	20%	17%	17%	17%	18%
Median Income		$96,557	$20,631		$83,790	$70,174		$102,642	$79,348		$100,000	$79,348
Median Duncan Score		68	16		65	48		68	46		68	65
Median Hours Worked		40	40		40	40		40	40		40	40

Note: author analysis using data from 2013-2018 American Community Survey; includes part-time, seasonal workers.

Table 6

Asian Gender Pay Gaps (Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's)

Characteristics	All Asians	US-Born	Foreign-Born Citizens	Foreign-Born Non-Citizens
Overall (%)	73	89	72	54
Highest Education Completed				
Less than HS Grad	78	78	70	82
HS Grad	77	91	75	77
Some College or Associate's Degree	76	84	75	79
Bachelor's Degree	74	85	77	55
Graduate or Professional Degree	73	76	71	69
Hours Worked Per Week				
Part Time, 34 Hours or Less	98	128	99	83
Full Time, 35 Hours or More	77	92	79	64
Marital Status				
Married	62	77	66	48
Not Married	95	102	95	85
Children Living in the Home				
No Children	88	100	92	69
Yes, Children 4 and Under	69	77	74	59
Yes, Children 5 and Older	54	66	57	42

Note: author analysis using data from 2013-2018 American Community Survey; includes part-time, seasonal workers.

Appendix A

Phase 1: Recruitment Email to Key Informant Interviewees

Subject: UW MSW Student Thesis on Asian Gender Pay Gap

Message: Dear (insert interviewee name),

My name is Jessica and I am a Master of Social Work student at the University of Washington. I am conducting key informant interviews as part of my master's thesis exploring the gender pay gap among Asian Americans. I am interested in exploring how factors such as immigration, culture and discrimination affect the pay gap. I believe you have unique insights because of your expertise/experience in [insert expertise here] and would love the opportunity to speak with you about your thoughts on this topic.

The interview would take around 20-30 minutes and can be conducted over a video conferencing platform like Zoom or by phone, whichever is most convenient for you. If you have any availability to meet in the next few weeks, it'd be greatly appreciated.

I'm very much looking forward to hearing from you and interviewing you if your schedule allows. Thank you for your time in advance!

Sincerely,

Jessica Pak Mortega

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form for Key Informant Interviews

Principal Investigator: Jessica Pak Mortega

Organization: University of Washington

Sponsor: Jennifer Romich, PhD

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

• Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)

• Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

I am a Master of Social Work student at the University of Washington. I am doing research on the gender pay gap between Asian men and women in the United States. I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research. Before you decide if you'd like to participate, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research. Please also ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain if you have any questions.

Purpose of the research

The gender pay gap is the difference in pay between working men and women. Currently, this gap is largest between Asian men and women in the United States. I want to find out why. I

believe you can help me by telling me what you know about working in the United States and Asian culture.

Type of Research Intervention

This research will involve your participation in an individual, 20-30 minute interview with me via video conferencing or by phone.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because we feel that your experience as a key informant in labor and/or Asian American culture can contribute much to our understanding of the pay gap.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. The choice that you make will have no bearing on your job or on any work-related evaluations or reports. You may also change your mind later and stop participating in the interview even if you agreed earlier.

Procedures

A. I would like you to help me learn more about the Asian gender pay gap. I am inviting you to take part in this research project. If you accept, you will be asked to complete a 20-30 minute individual interview with me via video conferencing or by phone.

B. The interview will ask questions about your expertise and experience in labor and/or Asian culture and give you time to share your knowledge. The entire interview will be audio recorded and transcribed by software, but no one will be identified by name on the tape. The information recorded is confidential and no one else but me will have access to the tapes.

Risks

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. However, we do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the interview if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more about the gender pay gap and will help inform policy implications aimed to narrow the gap.

Reimbursements

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research.

Confidentiality

I will not be sharing information about you to anyone outside of the research team. The information that is collected from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. Only the researchers will know what

your number is and I will lock that information up with a lock and key. It will not be shared with or given to anyone except the researchers on this study.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so and choosing to participate will not affect your job or job-related evaluations in any way. You may stop participating in the interview at any time that you wish without your job being affected. I will give you an opportunity at the end of the interview to review your remarks, and you can ask to modify or remove portions of those, if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact me at pakjm@uw.edu.

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by the University of Washington Human Subjects Division, which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find about more about the IRB, contact hsdinfo@uw.edu.

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Printed Name of Participant_____ Date_____

Signature of Participant _____

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily. A copy of this Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent_____

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____

Date _____

Appendix C

Guide for Key Informant Interviews.

The interviews will be conducted via Zoom video conferencing and will average 20-30 minutes in length. Respondents were not compensated for the interviews. The semi-structured interview guide used for these interviews is presented on the following pages. All interviews were conducted in English and were digitally recorded for later analysis.

Introduction. Thank you (participant name), again, for agreeing to participate in this interview. Before we begin, I just want to give you a brief overview of my study and goals for this interview. For my master's thesis, I am exploring the gender pay gap between Asian men and women in the United States. Currently, this gap is the largest of all racial groups (Asian women earn 65% of what Asian men earn, compared to the overall gender pay gap of around 80%) and I am exploring how unique factors like culture and immigration contribute to the pay disparity.

I'm hoping to learn about your experiences and insights into this pay gap and factors you think might be contributing to it. This interview should take less than half an hour. As mentioned in the statement I sent you by email, I would like to record all interviews, so they can be transcribed later. The transcripts will be anonymized, and I will be the only one to have access to the recordings and transcripts. Is it ok with you if I record the conversation? Do you have any questions before we begin?

(Begin recording now).

1. Tell me about your background and how you have come to the work setting that you are currently in.

   a. Follow-up probe (if not answered in first question): How would you describe your background and/or expertise as related to the Asian gender pay gap?

2. What do you think about the fact that Asians have the largest pay gap between men and women in the US?
   a. What are some factors you believe contribute to the gap? Why?
   b. What do you think needs to be done in order to close the gap?
3. Have you personally experienced or noticed a pay gap among Asian American men and women?
   a. Can you share a story about this?
4. Do you know anyone else I should interview? Could you connect me?

Conclusion.

Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything I didn't ask that I should have or anything you'd like to add?

Thank you again for your time (participant name). This has been very helpful. It's been a pleasure speaking with and learning from your expertise.