



## RESEARCH ABSTRACT

### HURDLING BARRIERS:

#### Labor and Employment Experiences of Asian Americans with Disabilities

Asian Americans with disabilities are an invisible minority within an invisible minority. Approximately 12% of the Asian American population of 14.6 million has a disability. Unfortunately, this population has attracted very little attention in the research literature on disability policy and Asian American studies. In particular, the labor market experiences of Asian Americans with disabilities have received virtually no mention in the academic literature of immigrant labor markets and ethnic enclave economies. This is largely due to cultural, religious and language stigma associated with Asian Americans with disabilities, that people with disabilities should be kept out of the public view.

This research began with the identification and explanation of the challenges faced by Asian Americans with physical and developmental disabilities in their attempts to access the U.S. labor market. Conceptual models were used to delineate the challenges and barriers Asian Americans with disabilities face in trying to find employment. The methodological approach utilized was a parallel mixed-methods design. Focus groups of English and non-English speaking Asian Americans with disabilities were conducted to gain insight into their labor market experiences. Data gathered from the focus groups was used to inform and formulate questions for the individual interview stage.

The second part was an analysis of PUMS 2005 census survey data measuring the effects on employment and income, given disability, English-speaking ability, race, gender and location. The third part of the research consisted of open-ended qualitative interviews with 18 Asian Americans with disabilities to collect text data to further explain the causal relationships revealed by the focus groups and PUMS analysis.

The results of this research revealed that disability has a significant effect on labor market opportunities for Asian American with disabilities. Further, gender and English-speaking ability also have significant measurable effects. Arguably, disability, gender and English-speaking ability in combination produced the clearest results of labor market disparities.

The study concluded with recommendations for future research and implications for policy makers and practitioners. We endeavor to share these important findings with disabilities and their families, community-based organizations, federal employment programs, work search programs, mainstream disability service organizations, legislators and planners.