

THE ASIAN PUZZLE: STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION WITHOUT POLITICAL  
INCORPORATION?

by

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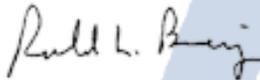
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## ABSTRACT

It has been widely found that Asian Americans, despite their relative economic and educational success, lag behind other racial groups in their levels of political participation (Uhlener, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989, Lien 1997, Krogstad 2014). This dissertation seeks to evaluate the continuation of this empirical pattern into the 21st century, statistically evaluate the impacts of alternative explanations, and identify new potential mechanisms through interviews.

Study 1 seeks to address the question of whether or not the voting disparity between Asians and other racial groups has continued into the 21st century, using 11 biannual waves of the Current Population Survey between 2000 and 2020. Despite the increased length of stay of earlier immigrants and a large number of Asian immigrants moving into the second generation, Asian voter turnout disparities endure, even controlling for income and education. Moreover, when restricting the data to foreign-born respondents, it is clear that Asian voting disparities are also present relative to immigrant-only groups with other racial backgrounds.

Study 2 seeks to test new approaches to the puzzle via group consciousness and political socialization measures using the 2016 National Asian American Post-Election Survey. While group consciousness measures have a significant effect on voting, political socialization measures are largely insignificant. Despite the significance of these findings, Asian respondents continue to exhibit a significantly lower likelihood of voting relative to other racial groups, particularly Whites. Rather, the disaggregation of Asian into national heritage subgroups demonstrates the high internal variation of Asians' political participation and acts to validate closer analysis on this basis in study 3.

In study 3 I seek to uncover some possible new explanations to the enduring question of Asian voter turnout. To do so, I conduct 84 interviews with Japanese, Chinese, and Indian

Americans in the greater Los Angeles area. Two frameworks for findings arose. First, immigrants are dually embedded in that their behavior is shaped both by the lessons about political engagement learned in the sending country and the context of their reception in the U.S. As immigrants, they emphasize the importance of prioritizing economic stability for their families while experiencing fairly few sources of new political socialization by either the US government or other potentially mobilizing organizations. For nonvoters, politics may seem either a distraction from these priorities or even as potentially threatening activities. Second, Japanese Americans' narratives of political mobilization after WWII and internment suggests a threat hypothesis of political mobilization. Narratives of early generations of Japanese Americans depict a similar mentality of trying to "make it" while avoiding contentious politics, while the current third generation speaks more openly about the mobilizing role of historical events in their narratives and the ways their own political awakening intersected with the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam anti-war movement. The contrasts suggest the powerful role of overt threats to economic and bodily security as the triggers for political mobilization in the U.S.

Finally, in the conclusion, I look at common theoretical elements across the three papers, drawing together the three areas of study in studies 1 and 2, namely civic skills, political socialization, and group consciousness, and relating them to the way they were reconceptualized in the interviews in study 3 as civic tool kits, habitus, and group position, respectively. Readdressing each of these three areas using the nuanced findings in the interviews provides insights into how they operate in the experiences of specific Asian American heritage groups. Finally, returning to the resource model, suggestions are provided for the ways in which it can be amended to better incorporate the pattern of Asian American political participation.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Starting with the removal of national origin quotas under the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the racial and ethnic composition of US-bound immigrants shifted from European to predominantly Hispanic and Asian. In 1965, Hispanics comprised 4% and Asians 1% of the population, however, by 2015 they comprised 18% and 6%, respectively (Brown 2015). Respective to their size, Asians are now the fastest growing immigrant group (Budiman and Ruiz 2021). “New immigrants” of the post-mid 1960s differ from earlier waves in their racial and ethnic composition, their potential for maintaining transnational ties, the continued replenishment of these populations, and their experiences of reception in the host country. In addition to their distinctiveness from past waves of largely European immigrants, the arrival of the new immigrants has been met with fears that the new immigrants will fail to assimilate into American civil society over the long term.

Political incorporation has long been held to be a key aspect of assimilation (Gordon 1964). Assimilation implies that immigrants adopt the values, behaviors, and socio-economic status of natives. As a subset of assimilation, political incorporation implies not only naturalization, but the sense that new immigrants become actively engaged in political and public life. Indeed, such participation in civic community is, in the ideals of American exceptionalism, seen as central to effective democracy (Tocqueville 1835). Academics today agree that citizen participation and civic engagement are seen as lying at the heart of healthy democratic institutions (Putnam 2007; 2015; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

Political incorporation of the new immigrants also poses a theoretical challenge in that their experiences of public life are distinct from the native population in two ways. First, there

are a set of immigrant-specific factors that shape the process of incorporation. Second, the new immigrant experience is distinct from previous waves of immigrants in ways that may hinder or reshape the process of incorporation. In the former, immigrants faced the challenges of obtaining citizenship, overcoming language barriers, becoming familiar with American political parties and political institutions, becoming socialized to norms of American political participation, balancing ties back home with social ties in the receiving country, overcoming barriers to economic mobility, and, quite often, arriving with fewer economic resources and less human capital than natives (Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989; Lien 1994; Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). In the latter, the challenge of new immigrants' assimilation lies in the ways they represent a population distinct from earlier waves of European immigrants. Earlier immigrants of largely European heritage benefited from a shared racial category<sup>1</sup>, political machines that rapidly mobilized their vote, ease of access to citizenship, and an end to replenishment of migrant populations. In contrast, new immigrants are faced with greater institutional hurdles in obtaining citizenship, in some cases face greater language barriers, have local populations that have been continuously replenished, and have greater potential for maintaining transnational ties (Wong et al. 2011; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999). New theories of assimilation have arisen in order to model this process for the new immigrants and it constitutes an ongoing area of research.

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that racialization and discrimination against the late 19th and early 20th century waves of Eastern European immigrants was not present. As Guglielmo (2003) argues, race in the popular imagination at the time likely held a much looser correspondence between race and color. Fox and Guglielmo (2012) suggest that Southern and Eastern European immigrants may have been perceived as simultaneously White and racially inferior. Nevertheless, as Rigby and Seguin (2018) note, the formal legal treatment of race did not distinguish European immigrants as a separate racial category (with some notable exceptions), thereby providing the “myriad formal legal protections of whiteness” to these groups (Rigby and Seguin 2018, 440).

Historical comparisons of intergenerational rates of assimilation have suggested that rapid and full political incorporation are not a foregone conclusion (Telles and Ortiz 2008; Fox and Guglielmo 2012). This finding, in combination with the unique conditions of the new immigrant experience, provide both theoretical and substantive questions for how new immigrants will be politically integrated in the long term.

One of these questions is the puzzle of Asian Americans' lower rates of voting and registration despite their higher socioeconomic status relative to other migrant groups (Uhlaner, Cain, Kiewiet 1989). Theories used to explain political participation and mobilization in the native population have emphasized the role of individual resources, namely time, money, and civic skills (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Immigrants of Asian descent have been relatively successful in terms of educational attainment and household income relative to Whites, yet these have not translated to equal rates of participation as Whites (Lien 1997). Earlier studies of Asian participation found that Black, White, and Latino racial and ethnic background had little effect on political participation when socioeconomic status, age, and gender were taken into consideration. Even when taking these into account, Asian ethnicity was still associated with lower rates of participation (Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989, Lien 1997). Finally, in one of the most recent surveys of Asian Americans, Wong et al. (2011) found that among Asian Americans, political participation rates are low across socioeconomic strata.

Formal analyses with exclusive focus on this pattern of Asian participation have not been conducted on data since the 2000 Current Population Survey, save for descriptive analyses and analyses on Asian-only datasets. It is, therefore, important to take a second look at the Asian puzzle given that Asians constitute the fastest growing immigrant population and the fact that earlier surges of migrants in the mid-1960s and 70s are now in their second and third generations

(Budiman and Ruiz 2021). Thus, this study investigates Asian American political participation in three phases. First, in study 1 I revisit the Asian puzzle using multiple waves of the Current Population Survey between 2000 and 2020 in order to evaluate the continuity of the empirical pattern of Asian voting disparities. Second, given the potential for wide variation in participation by country of origin, in study 2 I look at the role of national origin effects using the 2016 National Asian American Survey. Additionally, I use this opportunity to evaluate the potential for group consciousness and political socialization measures to address the Asian puzzle. Lastly, in order to identify new potential mechanisms for the Asian puzzle, I conduct 84 interviews with Japanese, Chinese, and Indian Americans, focusing on the topics of civic habitus, group position, and civic tool kits. Study 1 suggests that Asian voter turnout continues to be significantly lower than Whites and, notably, lower than Latinos, the other high percentage recent immigrant group. Study 2, although group consciousness measures do have a significant effect, finds the effect of “Asian” to be highly robust despite the inclusion of new measures of migration. Furthermore, the high internal variability within Asian suggests the need for a closer case-by-case investigation along national origin heritage group lines. Study 3 suggests a framework of dual embeddedness, capturing both the effects of the sending countries via civic habitus and the effects of the receiving country, noting both the socioeconomic priorities many nonvoting immigrants emphasize given their tenuous position and the relatively scarcity of new political socialization in the new context. Finally, contrasting cases between Japanese narratives of mobilization after internment and the current experiences of Indian and Chinese interviewees suggests a threat hypothesis of mobilization in an environment in which the state otherwise takes little role in politically incorporating new settlers.

### *Resource Theories of Political Participation*

Models of political participation originating in the field of political science have framed voting as the product of individualized rational choice, stressing the vote as an outcome of a process of an individual's cost-benefit analysis (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Voting, as a group effort that produces public goods, represents a collective action problem in which free-riding is a serious threat to non-participation (Olson 2009). The work within political science has therefore focused heavily on reducing the costs of individual participation (means and resources), psychological engagement with politics (interest and motive), and mobilization of voters by organizations and political parties (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

When this framework is applied to the native-born population of American voters, the most robust findings lie in individual-level resources, such as income, education, and homeownership, and demographic characteristics, notably age and gender (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Individual resources have been hypothesized to impact means through a number of mechanisms. Those that are better educated are assumed to be more familiar and better informed on political policies and issues, thus reducing informational barriers to engagement. Others emphasize the importance of psychological payoffs, such as feelings of fulfillment of civic duty associated with higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Still others have framed socioeconomic resources as increasing the availability of individuals, implying that those with higher SES and education are more available to be mobilized by others (Uhlener, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Regardless of the specific mechanism at play, all result in an expectation of a positive association between socioeconomic resources and political participation.

### *Migration and Political Participation*

Despite their relative effectiveness at explaining political participation in the native population, resource-centric theories overlook the hurdles that immigrants face. Race and migration scholars argued for the need to consider both the role of migration in political incorporation and the place of other racial groups besides Blacks and Whites in the political field. Immigrants can face significant hurdles to political participation due to a lack of personal resources on arrival, unfamiliarity with the political system, language barriers, sparse connections to political organizations, and formal and informal institutional exclusion from the political process (Uhlener, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989; Lien 1994; Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). The assertion that immigrants have experiences and constraints that are distinct from the native population raises the possibility that the traditional mechanisms associated with SES may operate differently for immigrants.

Although these may pose significant barriers to political participation, earlier models based on European-origin immigration were quite optimistic. Classical theories of assimilation were largely fit to previous waves of largely European immigrants that were believed to follow more linear trajectories of assimilation (Park 1950; Lieberman 1980). As such, classical assimilation theory can generally be characterized as assuming a straight path in which immigrants enter at a lower socioeconomic status and gradually move upwards to reach the same status as natives (Zhou 1997; Portes and Zhou 1993). It was widely held that over the course of assimilation, immigrants' socioeconomic status would improve, they would adopt the cultural values of natives and develop a sense of civic responsibility in line with American attitudes about political participation. Although immigrants felt themselves strained between the culture of origin and the host culture, they were expected to eventually abandon old cultural and behavioral

patterns in favor of those of the host country. This was seen as ultimately beneficial given that old cultural ways, native languages, or ethnic enclaves were considered sources of disadvantage (Zhou 1997, 977). The theories of assimilation therefore assumed a zero-sum arrangement between the immigrants' culture of origin and the host culture and that the host culture would eventually "win out" as immigrants assimilated.

Following the shift in immigrant origins in the mid-1960s, however, trajectories of assimilation began to change. First, differences between the host and immigrant population persisted across generations more noticeably in comparison to previous waves of immigrants (Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004; Telles and Ortiz 2008; Fox and Guglielmo 2012). Second, divergent rather than convergent outcomes appeared to be the trend, with some immigrants entering and staying at high SES across multiple generations and others entering and staying at low levels of SES across generations (Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 1997). Finally, differential rates of assimilation appeared to occur on a field-by-field basis, as immigrants selectively incorporated into different spheres of social and political life (Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004). For the waves of immigrants arriving in the 1960s and afterwards, neither could it be presumed that immigrants would integrate fully into American life nor could it be presumed that assimilation progressed evenly in all spheres of life. To understand how and why, it is necessary to understand the sources of distinction between new wave immigrants of Asian and Latino descent arriving since the 1960s and the earlier wave of Eastern European migration that slowed to a trickle by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The new immigrants of largely Asian and Latino racial/ethnic background experienced migration and assimilation in ways that are distinct from earlier waves of immigrants with regards to their racial phenotype, their national origins and cultural background, their treatment

under immigration policy, their contact (or lack thereof) with political parties, their capacity to maintain transnational ties, and their formal and informal experiences of exclusion from the political process (Lien 1997; Kim 1999; Cho 1999; Wong et al. 2011).

First, race plays a role in both shaping the patterns of legal restrictions on immigrants' entry and naturalization as well as their status within a racialized system. Whereas the era of mass migration from Eastern Europe was eased by a lack of restrictions on entry, minimal requirements for obtaining citizenship, and the existence of local political machines, migrants from Asia and Latin America were met with migration quotas, stricter requirements for obtaining citizenship, and little contact and mobilization by political parties compared to their earlier European counterparts (Lee and Kye 2016). These distinctions in treatment under the law were both on the basis of national origin and as a result of racial classification. Race also plays a role informally through status positions of different racial groups. Asian immigrants' location in this field can be understood through their model minority label. This label consists of both relative valorization for perceived success in socioeconomic position and civic ostracism through the construction of a myth of immutable cultural differences and unassimilability (Kim 1999; Xu and Lee 2013). They are termed the "model minority" due to their strategic use as a tool of comparison against Blacks by contrasting their perceived economic success and minimal political voice with Blacks' relatively low SES but high degree of political mobilization (Kim 1999).

Second, the differences in their national origins implies a number of distinctions from European migrants with regard to their personal resources, familiarity with the democratic system, their experiences of relocation, the maintenance of their transnational ties, and the norms they carry with them with regard to public sphere activity. These can generally be lumped

together as the resources they arrive with—whether as human, cultural, social, or economic capital—that are related to their place of origin. The new immigrants, particularly in the case of Asians, display a wide range of internal variation with regard to these resources, thus making further investigation into the role of national origin an imperative for furthering our understanding of their transition into the American political system (Finifter and Finifter 1989; Brettell and Reed-Danahay 2011; Wong et al. 2011).

Theories of assimilation have adjusted to recognize the role that these factors play in the trajectories of migrants' integration. Contemporary theories of assimilation when applied to the area of political participation therefore emphasize the role of migrant origins and experiences of formal and informal exclusion. The case of Asians, in particular, highlights the deficiencies of the predominant resource-centric models of participation when explaining migrant political integration. In the section that follows, I will elaborate on the puzzle Asian migrants' patterns of political participation pose for the resource model. However, beyond a simple critique of the resource model, I will also discuss the ways in which the Asian case has yet to be fully answered by the current migration literature and the areas that are ripe for further investigation.

### *The "Asian Puzzle"*

What is striking about the case of Asian Americans' political participation is the failure of the typical measures of income and education to explain political participation. When compared to Latino immigrants and Blacks, Asian immigrants have relatively high levels of income and education (Lien 1997) yet lower levels of registration and voting than Whites and Blacks. This is further surprising given Asians' relative success in attaining citizenship, thus removing the most significant legal barrier to participation (Lien et al. 2001). To further

problematize this issue, one also finds that there is no common set of variables for both Hispanics and Asians with which to explain political participation. Early analyses comparing political participation across Asians, Whites, Blacks, and Latinos found that although income and education were sufficient to remove the significance of race on political participation for American citizens of Black, White, and Latino race, the Asian race category continued to have a significant negative association with voting and registration (Uhlener, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989, Lien 1997).

In response to the minimal explanatory power of income and education for Asian political participation, scholars have turned towards migration-related variables while reframing the role of SES in political participation as an important but insufficient condition for participation. Given the recent arrival of the bulk of the Asian American population, migration-related factors are often found to have an impact on participation (Cho 1999; Wong et al. 2011). Migration-related factors, such as language proficiency, country of origin, and duration of stay can influence the ease or difficulty with which migrants become attuned to the American political system and their place in it. Thus, migration has been interpreted as shaping the process of migrants' acculturation to the norms of political and civic life of the US. This has also been supported by the fact that informal participation bears little in relation to formal participation (voting) among Asian migrants (Wong et al. 2011).<sup>2</sup> That is, the factors that predict informal participation are quite different from those that predict formal participation. Moreover, Cho (1999) found that in a cross racial comparison, Asian ethnicity had a significant negative effect on formal participation but not on informal participation. The Asian American "civic

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<sup>2</sup> Informal participation in the survey data used by Wong and her colleagues (2011) here refers to things such as donating money to political campaigns, working with others in your community to solve a problem, attending a protest, signing a petition, boycotting a product or service, attending public meetings, and/or donating to other organizations, among other things.

acculturation” story has been most forcefully presented by Cho (1999). Cho argues that although income and education may increase participation for natives, they may have little effect on migrants that are not yet socialized into the efficacy of voting and democratic ideals. Under this framing, although SES is associated with the resources needed to participate, that participation does not manifest if it faces the barrier of a lack of political socialization.

Although migration-related variables have begun to shed light on the Asian puzzle, there is reason to doubt that these previous studies satisfactorily answer the Asian puzzle. First, the most theoretically comprehensive cross-racial study of political participation that I have found, by Leighley and Vedlitz (1999), confirms the uniqueness of the Asian case despite the inclusion of some relevant migration variables. They use migration-related variables of place of birth and English proficiency in combination with models for five of the major theories of political participation—socioeconomic status, psychological resources, social connectedness, group consciousness, and group conflict. They find that despite the inclusion of both migration variables and accounting for a wide range of theoretical models, Asian ethnicity continued to exhibit a significant negative association with voting although it exhibited no associations with informal forms of participation such as contacting officials or donating money to campaigns. The authors were able to remove the significance of the Asian effect via an interaction term of Asian and political interest to produce a significant negative coefficient. What is interesting about this interaction effect is that the magnitude of its effect was roughly equal to the effect of political interest in the entire cross-racial sample though in the opposite direction. This suggests that for some reason not elaborated upon by the authors, political interest appears not to be associated with political participation for the Asian respondents in their sample.

The focus within the migration literature on foreign-born status or language proficiency also finds difficulty in explaining the participation deficits among second and later generation Asian Americans for whom these mechanisms should not be as important. That is, although native born or second-generation Asian Americans are more likely than first-generation migrant Asians to vote, their levels of political participation continue to lag behind individuals of other racial groups of equivalent income and education (Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). The continuation of a participation deficit into the second generation as well as the finding of the non-effect of political interest on Asians' participation by Leighley and Vedlitz (1999) suggest that the likely culprit for the Asian puzzle, aside from migration variables, may be related to some as yet unidentified externally imposed barriers to participation.

## Chapter 2: Areas of Investigation in the Current Study

### *National Origin*

Although SES and migration-related variables such as length of residence are thought to play a major role in migrants' political participation, several studies have found that national origin still has a separate effect (Alba and Nee 1999; Despot 1998; Sierra et al. 2000; Bueker 2005; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Generally speaking, national origin is thought to shape political incorporation in two ways: 1) individual immigrants are shaped by the sending country in terms of the civic skills or civic tool kits they develop and the enduring feelings about political engagement that arise during the formative years spent in the sending country, and 2) the historical context of the forces that drove immigration initially create path-dependent patterns of civic engagement and political participation for people of different national origins.

The former is often articulated as the "translation" argument (Finifter and Finifter 1989) in which the skills and experiences with the political system of the home country are translated, with varying degrees of success, to the context of their destination. Several scholars have emphasized the role of national origin in shaping ethnic organizations' behavior and the resources they make available for political participation (Fennema and Tillie 2001, Togeby 1999, Shaw, de la Garza, and Lee 2000, Fennema and Tillie 2001). At a very simple level, migrants who were accustomed to voting in their country of origin may readily exercise their franchise in their new home. Furthermore, Fennema and Tillie (1999, 2001) theorized that the effects of nationally distinct civic tool kits and skills could be identified in the associational patterns of ethnic organizations. Migrant groups whose ethnic organizations displayed highly interconnected networks, via board interlocks, were more likely to exhibit trust in leadership and formal

institutions. They found that Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, and Antillean migrants to Amsterdam varied by national origin in the patterns of the networks of their civic communities. The mechanism through which national origin had an effect, they claimed, was the previous experiences with politics back home. Many of the cleavages they observed in the sending country were reproduced within their own ethnic communities of their new homes. As such, they claim that the civic virtues and social capital seem to have migrated together with each national origin group.

The other major process associated with national origin relates to the historical push and pull forces motivating migrants' departure from their homes and arrival in the United States. The reasons migrants leave their homes shapes the demographic and socioeconomic portrait of those that arrive in the States. In some ways, these factors are not wholly distinct from the factors shaping civic skills and experiences with politics. Consider the role of refugee status; scholars contend that refugees are less likely to participate not due to lack of experience but because of state-sponsored oppression and lack of trust in government institutions in their country of origin (Portes and Rumbaut 2006, Fennema and Tillie 1999). In the case of Asian Americans, there is wide variation in their reasons for coming to America which may be relevant to their low levels of participation.

Previous studies of Asian American political participation frequently lump Asians into a singular racial category when conducting cross-racial comparison. However, as elaborated above, there is reason to believe that national origin plays a significant role in the process of political incorporation and therefore different national origin groups would be expected to exhibit wide variation in rates of political participation. As a result, a test of the Asian puzzle without consideration of this internal variation is likely to result in two errors: 1) it is possible

that the majority of the effect of the Asian puzzle is the result of a subset of Asian national origin groups and 2) it is possible that the effects of typical mechanisms within the Asian racial group vary by national origin.

### *National Origin–Political Socialization and Civic Habitus*

There are several means of considering the role of the sending country and how it shapes immigrants' civic skills and general orientation toward politics. In order to do so, I draw on the concepts of political socialization and civic habitus. Political socialization refers to the process by which individuals come to learn and internalize norms of how they can and should behave in the political institutions in which they live (Glasberg and Shannon 2010). As such, political socialization theories stress that immigrants from less democratic countries would be less likely to adopt norms of citizenship that result in political participation in the receiving country (Chaudhary and Mai 2021). Immigrants in general would be expected to possibly exhibit skills and political orientations that are distinct from the native population given how they are socialized in their sending countries (Lee and Kye 2016). Typically, this has been modeled by individuals' location of educational attainment, arguing that it fosters civic knowledge and political tolerance (Campbell 2008; Campbell, Levinson, and Hess 2012). However, empirical findings suggest that high levels of education among Asians may not be positively associated with civic participation (Wong et al. 2011), possibly due to the high degree of education with which many Asian immigrants enter the United States. Such individuals have therefore received the vast majority of the potential political socialization and civic training they would have received in school overseas (Nee and Holbrow 2013). In contrast, Latinos, the other group constituting a large percentage of recent immigrants, have far fewer educational and economic

resources as well as more frequently having a precarious legal status (Drouhot and Nee 2019; Zhou and Gonzales 2019). Another factor to consider within the process of political socialization is the individual's exposure and socialization into to a political regime other than the United States. These emphasize the importance of political socialization during individuals' formative years spent in the sending country (Easton, Dennis, and Easton 1969). Studies have typically looked at the democracy scores of sending countries and their regime types, linking them to trust in government, political efficacy, and likelihood of voting (Gitelman 1982; McAllister and Makkai 1992; Rice and Feldman 1997; Bueker 2005; Ramakrishnan 2005).

While political socialization is useful in focusing on individuals' institutional engagements and their relation to political participation, I wish to draw on the concept of civic habitus to broadly capture interviewees' enduring feelings and dispositions towards political participation in study 3. Habitus refers to the durable, transposable dispositions and attitudes relating to one's sense of place in a social context (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Sallaz and Zavisca 2007). Adoption of the term civic habitus is to suggest that individuals can form these attitudes and dispositions specific to the field of politics and public engagement. It arguably adheres to all three senses of a field identified by Martin (2003); as "a topological space of positions, a field of relational force, and a battlefield of contestation" which are organized by field-specific rules and norms for legitimate action (Martin 2003 in Sallaz and Zavisca 2007, p. 24). For one to express their civic habitus therefore entails discussing their feelings about politics or civic engagement broadly, as well as a sense of oneself in relation to the field of politics.

While both political socialization and civic habitus relate to the effects of immigrants' formative experiences in the sending country, the change in conceptualization (which primarily

occurs between study 2 and study 3) serves several purposes. Firstly, civic habitus is conceptually broader as it is shaped by the interaction between the sum of experiences that shape feelings about politics in the sending country and the new contexts in which immigrants find themselves in their place of settlement. Second, as a concept, civic habitus helps to emphasize the enduring nature of the impact of the sending country despite the relocation into a wholly new political regime. Finally, in the context of interviews rather than as measures or direct observations of organizational and institutional engagements, civic habitus meaningfully directs one to identify the feelings and dispositions towards politics expressed in the narratives of immigrants' experiences. Thus, for the purposes of an interview, it provides a more practical means of thinking about how these past experiences and engagements are vocalized.

### *Group Consciousness and Group Position*

In order to consider the impacts of the context of reception on psychological engagement with politics, I draw upon concepts relating to group consciousness and the group position of Asian Americans. Notably, both relate to perceptions of racial discrimination, collective identity, and stereotyping, and therefore have significant overlap. Group consciousness is largely applied here in the context of surveys (study 2) whereas group position is the preferred concept applied in the context of interviews. Group consciousness refers to the sense that individuals' membership to a group, either as a matter of their personal assertion of an identity or as a result of being assigned a category or label, has an impact on their position in society (Martinez and Gonzalez 2021). Typically, it is thought that feelings of similarity as a product of common sociodemographic characteristics (such as common language, religion, and socioeconomic status), external pressure through government classification and racial discrimination, and

instrumental inter-ethnic alliances all contribute to group consciousness (Lopez and Espiritu 1990, Martinez and Gonzalez 2021). Whereas group consciousness closely relates to identification of common interests with ethnic, racial, or other categories, group position I conceptualize as a broader catch-all term incorporating the effects of Asian Americans' racialized position via the model minority stereotype, the identities interviewees assert, and their status as immigrants operating under a different set of priorities and uncertainties from the native multi-generational population.

It should first be noted that immigrants may express many different forms of group identification which can include use of national origin, American, hyphenated-American, and panethnic labels (Jang et al 2021). Panethnicity refers to the construction of a new categorical boundary such as around ethnic or national origin groups (Okamoto and Mora 2014). In the case of Asian immigrants, these refer to Asian and Asian American. Although Asian is the new racial category assigned to them by both the state and informally, many continue to use national origin labels as their preferred identity category (Martinez and Gonzalez 2021; Jang et al. 2021). As Asian immigrants to the U.S. increasingly perceive the effects of discrimination along racial lines, their racial classification by both the state and informally, and as they become increasingly aware of the value of interethnic alliances around these racial categories, we would expect that they both express higher group consciousness and express panethnic identities (Martinez and Gonzalez 2021, Okamoto 2003, 2006). As such, those who assert an Asian or Asian American identity over national origin would be expected to be more likely to participate in politics.

However, a conceptualization of panethnicity as being shaped by feelings of common structural, linguistic, and religious elements may hinder Asian American political mobilization around a panethnic identity (Lopez and Espiritu 1990). Lopez and Espiritu (1990) note the

significant differences between Asian and Latino immigrants, which poses certain challenges particularly for Asian American panethnicity. Unlike Latinos, Asians lack a widely used language and come from diverse religious affiliations. Furthermore, Asian Americans are now the most economically divided group in the US by income (Kochhar and Cilluffo 2020; Drouhot and Garip 2021). If these internal differences are impactful for the formation of group consciousness, we would expect that Asian Americans are less likely to mobilize around a panethnic identity and thus be less likely to be engaged in formal politics.

The formation of group consciousness is also strongly shaped by individuals' sense of discrimination and exclusion (Martinez and Gonzalez 2021). In order to access these feelings, one may address the extent to which individuals recognize how they are stereotyped. The most common stereotyping of Asian Americans in the contemporary period relates to their being framed as a "model" minority. Essentially, Asians are treated as the "model" for their perceived socioeconomic success while also being politically passive. In the education literature, this has largely focused on expectations of educational success of Asian students and has been studied with regard to its shaping of collective Asian or Asian American identity (Lee 2015). Kim (1999) argues that this stereotype of Asians places them in a position in which Whites valorize their socioeconomic success relative to other minority groups, notably Blacks, while civically ostracizing them and treating them as culturally immutable.

It is challenging, however, to evaluate if the model minority stereotype has a direct impact on the mental calculus of decisions to participate politically. One might suggest that this position comes with perceptions of associated tradeoffs between civic engagement and racial valorization. However, a more likely impact comes in the form of perceptions of discrimination emanating from the impacts of this stereotype. Group consciousness can act as a signifier of both

an awareness of racial categorization, discrimination, and marginalized status and therefore, it has been argued, motivates individuals to act collectively to gain access to political resources (McClain and Stewart 2003; Miller et al. 1981; Stokes 2003). Perceptions of discrimination and the importance of race have often been studied in terms of their effects on mobilizing around collective identities. Perceptions of discrimination and the importance of race are thought to shape group consciousness, the extent to which individuals recognize placement or categorization to a group as impactful for their own position in society (Martinez and Gonzalez 2021).

### *Civic Skills and Civic Tool Kits*

More than time or money, the resource model identifies civic skills as the most important resource for political engagement. Civic skills refer to those practical skills needed to engage both formally and informally and are formed through skills acts made available by virtue of individuals' involvement in institutional or organizational environments (Brady, Schlozman, and Verba 1995). In the case of immigrants, a great deal of these skills are learned overseas, presenting a potential problem of mismatch between the civic skills learned in the sending country and those which are useful in the receiving country. In lieu of directly observing the skill acts in the contexts in which they are learned, I draw on the broader concept of civic tool kits to capture a similar aspect of those resources useful in political participation verbalized in interviews. Civic tool kits draw on Ann Swidler's (2013) use of the term as repertoires of action, although in this case referring to how these are applied when individuals must engage with civic life. As such, focus is less upon directly observing skill acts and more upon individuals' capacity to engage meaningfully with political topics, frame and explain their political behaviors, and

draw on either citizenship norms common to the American mainstream or present wholly distinct citizenship norms that may be unique to their own group.

By studying how interviewees make sense of or otherwise justify their political engagement, one can get a sense of what they perceive to be legitimate or effective tools. These can be compared to mainstream citizenship norms as well. Dalton (2008) identifies two common patterns of citizenship norms—duty-based citizenship and engaged citizenship—referring to the “shared sets of expectations about the citizen’s role in politics” (Dalton 2008, 78). Whereas duty-based citizenship norms emphasize norms of social order (obeying the law, reporting a crime, or serving in the military), engaged citizenship emphasizes supporting the worse off, being active in voluntary groups, being active in politics and forming your own opinions. Contrasting these items to patterns in interviewees’ responses illustrates both their awareness of the more widespread norms of citizenship and their capacity to wield those resources.

### *Revisiting the Resource Model*

How might the case of Asian Americans aid in addressing the resource model? The resource model in its entirety depicts a causal chain linking individuals’ institutional involvements (occupational, organizational, nonprofit or religious, and educational) to their skill opportunities and acts which are then linked to their resources measured as civic skills, income, and education which are the final predictors of political acts (Brady, Schlozman, and Verba 1995; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Meanwhile, political interests are treated as largely the product of education but are, more importantly, treated as endogenous with political acts. The case of Asian Americans’ potential for mismatch between the contexts of political socialization in the sending country and political acts in the receiving country reveals that the resource model simply assumes a correspondence between any institutional involvements and political acts.

Alternatively, it appears that there is a quality of civic skills that is not captured in the current resource model when considering the case of Asian Americans. Currently, the resource model focuses on skills such as working with groups, English fluency, and public speaking. We would expect that well-educated Asians employed in professional contexts speaking English with coworkers would develop these skills. However, as Wong and colleagues (2011) found, education does not appear to affect participation. Thus, if civic skills are the issue, there may be other qualities of civic skills to be considered. Additionally, the resource model largely overlooks the potential for other aspects of psychological engagement with politics. The modeling of this aspect exclusively as political interest and its dismissal due to endogeneity results in overlooking important elements of psychological engagement. These include groups' sense of collective identity and collective interests as well as the way their interests are framed relative to what they perceive politics to be.

### **Chapter 3: Outline of the Appendices**

The following section describes three studies found in Appendices A, B, and C that address the puzzle of Asian voter turnout. Studies 1, 2, and 3 correspond to Appendix A, B, and C, respectively. They logically progress in a linear order. In a sense, the studies move from a narrow theoretical focus to the broadest applications of the theories utilized in the dissertation to capture as many of the significant elements of Asian Americans political participation as possible. This entails the movement from a narrow focus on resources (resource model in study 1), to group consciousness and political socialization (study 2), to the reconceptualization of these elements as civic tool kits, group position, and civic habitus, respectively, in study 3. In more specific detail, the first study seeks to address the question of whether or not the voting disparity between Asians and other racial groups has continued into the 21st century despite controlling for socioeconomic resources and some migration-related factors. It does this using multiple biannual waves of the Current Population Survey to look at race and voter turnout over time between 2000 and 2020. The findings suggest that Asian voter turnout disparities endure despite expectations of political incorporation over time.

The second study disaggregates Asian into specific heritage subgroups to emphasize the internal variation within the Asian category between national origin groups. The data set utilized, the 2016 National Asian American Survey, also allowed for the testing of some contemporary theories that might explain political participation at the individual level. These include measures relating to group consciousness and political socialization. However, the effects of variables related to these mechanisms remains inconclusive and insufficient to explain away disparities in

voter turnout. Ultimately, this second study suggests the need for closer investigation of specific Asian heritage subgroups.

The final study, a series of 84 interviews with Japanese, Chinese, and Indian Americans in the greater Los Angeles area, are an attempt to uncover some possible new explanations to the enduring question of Asian voter turnout. Easily the most ambitious study of the three, it draws on concepts of civic habitus, civic tool kits, and group position in an attempt to capture Asian Americans' lived experiences in both formal and informal political participation. While Indian and Chinese were chosen on the basis of their lower voter turnout relative to socioeconomic status, Japanese Americans were chosen for their higher voter turnout. By contrasting the experiences between the three Asian heritage groups and between voters and nonvoters within these groups, two frameworks for findings arose. First, immigrants are dually embedded in that their behavior is shaped both by the lessons about political engagement learned in the sending country and the context of their reception in the U.S. In this regard, as immigrants they emphasize the importance of prioritizing socioeconomic stability for their families while experiencing fairly little sources of new political socialization by either the US government or other potentially mobilizing organizations. Second, contrasting the experiences of Japanese Americans' political mobilization after WWII and internment to the other two interviewee groups paints a grim picture for Asian American political mobilization. Narratives of early generations of Japanese Americans depict a similar mentality of trying to "make it" while avoiding contentious politics, while the current third generation speaks more openly about the mobilizing role of WWII experiences, internment, and the way their moment of political awakening intersected with Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam anti-war movement. I suggest it

is a grim picture because the contrasts suggest the powerful role of overt threats to economic and bodily security as the triggers for political mobilization in the U.S. context.

*Appendix A: Revisiting the Asian Puzzle: Reconsidering Resource Models in the Case of Asian American Voting Behavior*

As its title suggests, Appendix A (i.e. study 1) was intended to verify the continuity of the pattern of the disparity in Asian voter turnout relative to other racial groups. The predominant theory of political participation, the resource model (Brady, Schlozman, and Verba 1995), emphasizes the role of individual resources of time, money, and civic skills as the last step in a longer causal chain for predicting political participation. Typically, applications of this model rely upon income and education and have reliably found these to be significant predictors of participation in the U.S. (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). However, when directing this model more specifically to the immigrant population, particularly in the case of Asians, these resources are both less powerful and insufficient (including controls for migration-related factors) to explain away disparities in Asian voter turnout with other racial groups (Uhlener, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989; Lien et al. 2001; Lien 1994). This study is an effort to evaluate if the trend in voting disparity continues or has reduced into the 21st century. While we would expect successive generations of Asian Americans and the duration of time spent in the U.S. to result in gradual political incorporation over time, this is not a foregone conclusion. Segmented assimilation, which applies to both socioeconomic and acculturation outcomes, suggests that gradual incorporation is just one of three possible trajectories (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). The others are downward assimilation and upward mobility with selective biculturalism, both of

which result in either rejection of the mainstream or selectively adopting the mainstream culture while retaining elements of one's parents' culture (Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

To address this question, this study uses biannual waves (every 2 years) of the Current Population Survey between 2000 and 2020 to conduct cross-racial comparisons of voter turnout, including migration variables for nativity, parental nativity, and years lived in the US among the foreign-born. This study also provides many supplemental analyses useful in establishing a descriptive groundwork for understanding how Asian Americans compare to other racial groups in the US. Two major sets of analyses are conducted, one comparing voter turnout across every presidential election and the other combining data for all years (2000-2020 or 11 waves). Comparing Asian to other racial groups in the surveys across years shows Asians to be both significantly less likely than Whites to vote and that Asian has a stronger suppressive effect on voting than Hispanic across every election except the Trump v. Biden year. Combined across years, Asian has the strongest suppressive effect among any of the racial categories in the data (White, Black, American-Indian, other). Ultimately, I find that Asians' formal political participation is, if anything, marked by continuity rather than political incorporation. However, the Trump v. Biden election shows a significant increase in Asian voter turnout. Although beyond the temporal scope of this dissertation, it is possible that recent focus on immigration and the increase in anti-Asian hate crimes in the period since COVID-19 present significant motivators for public mobilization among Asian Americans.

*Appendix B: Asian American Political Participation: Contemporary theories and national origin effects*

Whereas the first study sought to establish the continuity of the Asian puzzle, the second study (found in Appendix B) sought to problematize it by both demonstrating intra-Asian variation in political participation along heritage or national origin subgroups and the continuing challenges of some contemporary theories to fully resolve the cross-racial voting disparity. The two aforementioned theories here refer to the mechanisms of political socialization and group consciousness. Political socialization refers to the process by which individuals come to learn and internalize norms of how they can and should behave in the political institutions in which they live (Glasberg 2010). The recency of Asians' migration relative to other groups combined with the frequently non-democratic national origins of several Asian groups raises the likelihood that many end up with political interests and civic skills that may not match the context of the receiving country (Chaudhary and Mai 2021). We would expect that those who received a greater percentage of their education overseas and who lived in less democratic countries would have developed orientations towards political engagement that may reduce their likelihood of voting in the U.S. (Campbell 2008; Campbell, Levinson, and Hess 2012). Group consciousness refers to the extent to which individual members within a social identity group recognize placement within that group as impactful for their own position in society (Martinez and Gonzalez 2021). Group consciousness can be associated with political participation when ethnic and political leadership draw on collective identities as a means of mobilizing broader groups, as in mobilizing Asians as a broader racial or panethnic category rather than by Asian heritage subgroups (Okamoto 2003, 2006). Furthermore, group consciousness may signify awareness of racial categorization, discrimination, and marginalized status, and, therefore, motivates individuals to act collectively to gain access to political resources (McClain and Stewart 2003; Miller et al. 1981; Stokes 2003). With this in mind, we would expect that those who claim

experiences of discrimination and/or who believe race affects them strongly to be more likely to vote.

To evaluate these theories, I use the 2016 National Asian American Post-election Survey, a nationally representative dataset which also includes sizable samples of other racial groups, enabling both cross-racial comparison of voting patterns and the disaggregation of Asian into immigrant national origin subgroups. Group consciousness-related measures include answers to the question of if race affects you and a sum total of the number of discriminatory experiences respondents claimed over multiple questions. Political socialization related items include a measure of the percentage of respondents' education completed outside the U.S. and a Freedom House Index score assigned to foreign-born respondents based on an average of the scores for the sending country across the ten years prior to their arrival in the U.S.

Education overseas does not have a significant impact on respondents' likelihood of informal political participation whereas foreign-born respondents' assigned Freedom House Index scores are significant but in the opposite of the expected direction (albeit only significant in one of four models). In the latter case, we would expect respondents from more democratic countries to be more likely to participate, yet the opposite seems to be true. In contrast, both measures of group consciousness—whether race affects you and discrimination experiences—both increase the likelihood of voting, as expected. However, the inclusion of these variables does not reduce the magnitude of effect of Asian on voting relative to Whites.

Successive models were run where both race and Asian were disaggregated, the latter by national origin groups. Disaggregating race in these models helps to demonstrate the continuing significance of Asian despite the inclusion of new measures while disaggregating Asian into national origin groups shows the high level of internal variation within the Asian category. Asian

heritage subgroups range widely in their levels of political participation such that some national origin groups exhibit no difference from Whites (Wong et al. 2011), while only about half of the Asian national origin groups appear to be responsible for most of the effect of Asian voting disparities. In particular, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Hmong, and Cambodian were among the least likely to vote. These findings emphasize the importance of specific Asian heritage subgroups or national origin groups in shaping voting trends and the need for specific heritage group investigation, particularly those that have the lowest likelihood of voting.

*Appendix C: From Their Eyes: Understanding Asian American Political Participation Through 84 Interviews with Japanese, Indian, and Chinese Americans in the Greater Los Angeles Area*

This study attempts to return to the aforementioned mechanisms of civic skills, group consciousness, and political socialization, reconceptualizing them as civic tool kits, group position, and civic habitus in order to uncover new potential mechanisms that would help explain the puzzle of Asian American voter turnout. In order to do this, 84 interviews with Japanese, Indian, and Chinese Americans were conducted in the greater Los Angeles area over the summer and fall of 2020. Chinese and Indian were chosen given their identification as exemplars of the Asian puzzle of low turnout relative to SES (Lien 2001), although patterns of turnout among Indian Americans appear to have changed significantly in the years since (as seen in Appendix B Tables 1 and 2), allowing an interesting comparison between groups. Japanese were included given their high rates of political participation, which is comparable to Whites, for which their long history in the U.S. may play a significant role.

Interview questions sought to capture public sphere engagement using the concepts of group position, civic habitus, and civic tool kits. Group position initially focused on

interviewees' perceptions of racial position relative to other groups, discrimination, and the model minority stereotype (or valorization for socioeconomic success while experiencing civic ostracism). However, group position gradually expanded conceptually to include items related to their position as immigrants, such as what they feel they have to prioritize, and attitudes adopted in response to their tenuous status. Civic habitus refers to individuals' dispositions towards public engagement (formal or informal) which are shaped by processes of political socialization more often experienced during the formative years. As a product of the emphasis on its development in youth, many first-generation immigrants would be expected to have had their civic habitus strongly shaped by their experiences in the sending country. Finally, civic tool kits refer to the ways that individuals justify or frame their political behaviors. Specifically, this section sought to compare patterns of responses to questions about why or why not they engaged in certain public activities to common citizenship norms identified by Dalton (2008). Japanese Americans also presented a distinct diversion in the interviewee schedule given the need to address both their longer history and the possible impact of those events on the Japanese American political narrative. As such, additional questions were directed towards their ancestors' narratives of settlement in the US, with follow up questions specifically directed toward WWII, internment, and Asian American Movement.

Asian Americans' political participation is ultimately a product of a dual embeddedness in both the sending country—from which many of the core lessons about the benefits, though more often risks, of political engagement are learned—and the receiving country in which individuals, acutely aware of their tenuous status as immigrants, are hesitant to stir the murky political waters while in pursuit of the “American Dream” of economic prosperity for their families. These strategies of action are then passed across generations via parental guidance and

familial socialization, helping to explain the continued gap in voter turnout across successive generations.

In the case of Japanese Americans, narratives of their ancestors' experiences depicts these early immigrants as initially following a strategy of political avoidance, similar to some of the patterns in Indian and Chinese responses. Specifically asking about histories of WWII and internment, Japanese American interviewees depicted these as key events in both the need to mobilize politically and as elements in the political awakening. What we are left with is a rather grim outlook on the conditions under which the state motivates immigrants to mobilize politically. When threats to economic and physical wellbeing are unavoidable rather than an imagined distant potential for contentious engagement, then political mobilization is a necessity. Cultivating political resources become necessary when other avenues to prosperity are threatened. Yet the current experience of Asian Americans may better fit a contradictory metaphor of smooth sailing through murky waters—while the current trajectory appears successful, their tenuous immigrant and minority status hems in their paths to the American Dream, just beyond which lie challenges to their status that the current majority of Asian Americans may have yet to discover. In light of the immigrant-focus in the Trump election years and the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian American attitudes about the necessity of political mobilization may be changing.

### **Chapter 3: Conclusion**

This section seeks to draw together the major findings across the three studies to evaluate and elaborate upon the contributions of the dissertation as a whole. Furthermore, where certain conflicting findings appear, specifically regarding the contradictory findings of political socialization and civic habitus across studies 2 and 3, it seeks resolution by clarifying these mechanisms. Rather than discussing the contributions by paper, sections are divided by theory and key mechanisms. I also use this section to discuss some of the broader implications for theory that did not fit well into any single paper but are meaningful in the discussion of Asian American political incorporation as a whole. In brief, the contributions section below include the following: 1) The empirical evidence of the enduring question of Asian voting disparities, 2) The implications for theories of political socialization in light of findings of civic habitus in the sending country, essentially relating the two concepts meaningfully together, 3) Implications for group consciousness and immigrant priorities, and, finally, 4) How to return to and amend the resource model for Asian immigrants' political incorporation.

#### *Contributions and Theoretical Implications*

##### *Asian puzzle: Enduring Empirical Patterns*

While the Asian puzzle of voting disparities was first identified by Uhlener and colleagues in 1989 and later supported by Lien (1994, 1997), empirical verification of this pattern had not been conducted on a nationally representative dataset since the early 2000s. While there are expectations that Asian Americans may become more politically involved over time as the migrant generations move into later generations and earlier immigrants live longer in

the US, the findings from study 1 suggest that this has not happened. Asian Americans continue to be the racial group least likely to vote in the US despite having a median income higher than Whites (Wong et al. 2011). Although the magnitude of the suppressive effect of Asian on voting dipped in the 2020 election, it is still nearly twice the effect of Hispanic, the other racial group constituted by a large percentage of recent immigrants. These findings suggest the need to return to this empirical pattern.

### *Political Socialization: Implications and Contributions*

The findings of the effect of political socialization in study 2 and the effect of civic habitus in study 3 at first appear contradictory. Study 2 briefly finds that immigrants from countries with a better Freedom House Index score are less likely to vote. Meanwhile study 3 argues that civic habitus plays an important role in shaping feelings about political engagement, with patterns of responses among mainland Chinese demonstrating an acute anxiety about political engagement. One would expect that civic habitus, which is in part shaped by individuals' early political socialization, to show consistent patterns with the Freedom House Index scores, this is not the case. Admittedly, there are many potential methodological explanations, such as the challenges of comparing mechanisms across separate studies using different methods and measures. There may be significant issues with the measurement employed by Freedom House which, as a country-level measure, cannot be perfectly attributed to individuals given high intra-country variation. The Freedom House Index is also not perfectly comparable to individuals' feelings about politics as it simply measures the formal institutional regime's openness and adherence to democratic policies. There are also likely strong migration-related elements that select for individuals within the sending country population that shape their

orientation towards politics in ways that may cause them to behave differently from the general population of the sending country. Overall, the seeming inconsistency between the effects of political socialization as measured in the survey and civic habitus as identified in interviews speaks to the potentially greater conceptual breadth of civic habitus. Immigrants arrive and form feelings about politics—its inherent risks and possible utility—in ways that are shaped by both their experiences in the sending country and the context of their reception. Moreover, these feelings can be shaped by a multitude of factors in both contexts that are ultimately poorly captured by a democracy score. What the findings imply for the study of political socialization’s effect is that what aspects of the sending country environment most matter for feelings about politics and how is still very much underspecified by current theory.

### *Group Consciousness and Immigrant Priorities*

Group consciousness is thought to increase political participation given its utility for ethnic and community leaders and organizations to draw on broader collective identities to mobilize groups and given that those who experience discrimination are more motivated to collective action to gain access to political resources (Miller et al. 1981; Okamoto 2003; 2006). Barriers to effective group consciousness and its potential for broader Asian American political mobilization have largely focused on the internal diversity within the community, such as those that theorize group consciousness as a product of commonality along socioeconomic lines or linguistic and religious lines (Lopez and Espiritu 1990). The findings from study 3 demonstrate additional challenges to the formation of group consciousness among Asian immigrants in that many nonvoters do not initially perceive discrimination nor do they see their core interests as politically related. Group consciousness and its subsequent impact on broader mobilization

around a panethnic “Asian” category requires that these interests are *both* politicized *and* thought to be organized along racial or panethnic categories. For example, immigrants may perceive politics to have little overlap with their core interests, such as securing a home, a stable income, and their child’s education. Additionally, group consciousness may be unnecessary for political mobilization if access to key interests and resources are not perceived as racialized or organized around collective categories but *are* perceived as being crucially shaped by politics. Adopting a highly individualized mentality, one may perceive politics to play a significant role in their personal socioeconomic status, yet do not see race or potential panethnic categories playing a role in this process. It has also been these challenges that motivated the transition from the use of the term group consciousness to group position in order to capture both the more typical elements of one’s racialized position through racial discrimination and stereotyping and those elements relating to immigrant positions which emphasize socioeconomic priorities and possible anxiety about threatening tenuous legal status. Thus, through the concept of group position, one gets a better sense of how these elements together shape Asian Americans’ sense of their place within the political sphere and their mental calculus of their interests from it.

#### *Civic Skills, Civic Tool Kits, and Amending the Resource Model*

The resource model focuses heavily on the civic skills and other resources formed in specific contexts, linking those institutional engagements to political participation. However, across the studies in this dissertation, I find evidence that these resources can be disconnected from the contexts that produce them as in the case of immigrants. Focus on the experiences of mainstream native residents overlooks the unique conditions of immigrants. Furthermore, *the model mistakenly clusters all three resources—time, money, and civic skills—together as highly*

*intercorrelated*. However, for Asian immigrants this is clearly not the case given their high SES yet expressing original repertoires of civic skills distinct from the mainstream population. This was particularly evident in the course of interviews when civic tool kits were addressed. Not only did many of the professionally occupied and economically well-off interviewees not express some of the more common mainstream citizenship norms but instead used wholly distinct justifications to explain and frame how they engaged in the civic sphere. Future application of the resource model should more carefully distinguish between these resources when considering the political acts of those groups in unique institutional or organizational contexts.

A final critique can be raised of the resource model regarding the lack of attention given to *psychological engagement* (Brady, Schlozman, and Verba's (1995) term) with politics, or the things which shape political interest itself. By its own admission, the resource model pays less attention to the role of *psychological engagement* than resources, citing the endogeneity problem in the relation between political interests and political acts. However, the end result has been a simplistic modeling of psychological engagement as political interest (in community and national politics and affairs). Such a model overlooks other important aspects of psychological engagement that shape decisions to engage in political acts. Interview results suggest that other things, such as individuals' perceptions of overlap between politics and personal or community interests or individuals orientations toward solving problems (admittedly simultaneously civic skills and political interests) are important factors.

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## APPENDIX A

### The “Asian Puzzle” Revisited: Voting Patterns of Asian Americans in the 21st Century

#### *Abstract*

In 1989, Uhlaner and colleagues first identified an unexpected pattern in Asian Americans’ voting behavior—low turnout levels relative to Whites and Blacks despite their relatively high socioeconomic status. This was surprising given that the predominant theories of political participation relied heavily on individual resources—namely education and income—to explain voter turnout. There are reasons to suspect that this disparity will diminish with time as subsequent generations of Asian Americans acculturate to the political environment. This paper will seek to both provide useful descriptives of the Asian American population and evaluate whether the Asian puzzle has endured into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To do so this study uses the Current Population Survey across 11 waves (2000-2020). The empirical findings suggest that Asian voting patterns have not changed significantly in the time since Uhlaner and colleagues’ initial finding (1989). The results reaffirm not only the inability of individual resource models to explain away the disparity in Asian Americans’ voting, but also the failure of a simple assumption of recent arrival to account for low voting rates. If anything, the inclusion of migration-related measures such as foreign birth and year of arrival suggest that the puzzle of Asians’ voting behavior is not simply resolved by either the passage of time or the shift towards a second and third generation of Asian Americans.

#### *Introduction*

In 1989, Uhlaner and colleagues first identified an unexpected pattern in Asian Americans’ voting behavior—their low turnout levels relative to Whites and Blacks despite their

relatively high socioeconomic status. In follow-up studies of Asian Americans political behavior, Lien (1994; 1997) referred to this phenomenon as a theoretical puzzle, which I from here onwards refer to as the “Asian puzzle.” Socioeconomic status, according to the dominant theories of political participation applied to the native population, was one of the most robust predictors of voting and registration. Uhlaner and colleagues’ (1989) analysis showed that although Black, White, and Latino racial background had little effect on participation when socioeconomic status, age, and citizenship status were taken into consideration, Asian racial heritage was still associated with lower rates of participation. Additional analyses (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Cho 1999; Lien et al. 2004; Lee and Kye 2016) often found that income had either no significant effect on voting or had a weaker effect on voting for Asians. It might also be presumed that Asians have been hindered by access to citizenship. However, relative to other migrant populations, notably Latinos, Asians have high rates of naturalization (Lien et al., 2001).

In the decades since Uhlaner and colleagues’ (1989) initial finding, the Asian population has continued to grow rapidly, constituting the fastest growing migrant population relative to its preexisting numbers (Budiman and Ruiz 2021). At the same time, the initial mass influx of Asian migrants, which occurred in the mid-1960s, has by now produced a second and third generation of Asian Americans. The Asian American population, with both significant individual resources and having overcome the most significant legal barriers to voting, would be expected to acculturate to the American political environment over time by expressing either higher rates of turnout than in the past or a reduction in the effect of Asian racial background on participation between now and Uhlaner’s study (1989). The possibility of acculturation thus suggests the need to revisit the earlier puzzle of Asian voting.

In this paper, I revisit Uhlaner et al.'s "Asian puzzle" using 11 waves of the Current Population Survey across 2000-2020. The empirical findings suggest several interesting patterns. Contrary to an assumption of political incorporation, Asian heritage respondents continue to demonstrate a lower likelihood of voting than other racial groups when income, education, and migration-related factors are taken into consideration. Moreover, these voting disparities appear to be fairly robust over time, with the notable exception of the most recent 2020 Trump-Biden election. However, the recency of Asian migration (which is much more likely than any other racial group to be in their first generation) is not a sufficient explanation for Asian Americans' voting disparities. In foreign-born restricted samples, Asian heritage respondents still demonstrated a significantly lower likelihood of voting than foreign-born Whites. Finally, when comparing across racial group samples, I find that the magnitude of the effect of income and education on voting is smaller for Asians than any other racial group in the survey. Together, these findings suggest that the Asian puzzle is an enduring empirical and theoretical quandary, and that resources either operate in distinct ways for Asian Americans or face other barriers in their translation to political engagement.

### *Resource Theories of Political Participation*

Models of political participation originating in the field of political science have framed voting as the product of individualized rational choice, stressing the vote as an outcome of a process of an individual's cost-benefit analysis (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Voting, as a group effort that produces public goods, represents a collective action problem in which free-riding is a serious threat to non-participation (Olson 2009). The work within political science has therefore focused heavily on reducing the costs of individual participation (means and

resources), psychological engagement with politics (interest and motive), and mobilization of voters by organizations and political parties (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Edwards and McCarthy 2004).

When this framework is applied to the native population of American voters, the most robust findings lie in individual-level resources, such as income, education, and homeownership, and demographic characteristics, notably age and gender (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wilson 2000; Blais 2006), e.g., older people and men are more likely to vote. Individual resources have been hypothesized to impact means through a number of mechanisms. Those that are better educated are assumed to be more familiar and better informed on political policies and issues, thus reducing informational barriers to engagement (Crowder-Meyer, Gadarian, and Trounstein 2020; Feddersen and Pesendorfer 1997; Palfrey and Poole 1987). Others emphasize the importance of psychological payoffs, such as feelings of fulfillment of civic duty associated with higher socioeconomic backgrounds (Blais and Achen 2019; Jones and Hudson 2000). Still others have framed socioeconomic resources as increasing the availability of individuals, implying that those with higher income and education are more available to be mobilized by others (Brady, Schlozman, and Verba 1995; Blais 2006; Leighley and Nagler 2013). Regardless of the specific mechanism at play, all result in an expectation of a positive association between socioeconomic resources and political participation.

### *The Asian Puzzle*

What is striking about the case of Asian Americans' political participation is the failure of the typical measures of income and education to explain political participation. Framed another way, it is a failure of resource measures to remove the differences in rates of voting and

registration between Asians and other racial groups, notably Blacks and Whites. When compared to Latino immigrants and Blacks, Asian immigrants have relatively high levels of income and education (Lien 1997) yet lower levels of registration and voting than Whites and Blacks. This is further surprising given Asians' relative success in attaining citizenship, thus removing the most significant legal barrier to participation (Lien et al. 2001). To further problematize this issue, one also finds that there is no common set of variables for both Latinos and Asians with which to explain political participation. Early analyses comparing political participation across Asians, Whites, Blacks, and Latinos found that although income and education were sufficient to remove the significance of race on political participation for Black, White, and Latinos, Asians continued to have a significant negative association with voting and registration (Uhlener et al. 1989, Lien 1997).

### *Migration and Acculturation*

In response to the limited explanatory power of income and education for Asian political participation, scholars have turned towards migration-related variables while reframing the role of SES in political participation as an important but insufficient condition for participation if it is not paired with political socialization (Cho 1999). Theories of immigrant acculturation, or the process by which immigrants assimilate into their new place of settlement, generally stress the role of migration-related factors, such as language, length of stay, and generation (Lee and Kye 2016). Duration of stay, acquisition of English fluency, and generational progression are expected to increase the ease with which migrants become attuned to the American political system and their place in it (Wong et al. 2011). Wong and colleagues in the 2008 National Asian American Survey find that more recent immigrants and earlier generations of immigrants are less

likely to vote, consistent with other studies of Asian political participation (Lien 1997; Lien et al. 2001). Given the recency of arrival of the bulk of the Asian American population, we would expect that migration-related factors are often found to have an impact on political participation. Asian Americans also display one of the fastest rates of naturalization relative to other immigrant groups (Lee and Kye 2016; Lien et al. 2001), thus removing one of the most significant barriers to voting.

Immigrants are thought to have a rational interest in acculturating over time as well. Theories of acculturation also stress that it facilitates immigrants' access to goods and services within American society (Berry 2002 in Tucker and Santiago 2013). As found by Fraga and colleagues (2010), Latino immigrants via their engagement in their workplace and educational institutions over time come to adopt behaviors and practices that help them get ahead. Implicit in these practices is the sense that acculturating serves a rational personal interest in that it enables individuals to progress in these environments (Fraga et al. 2010). Under this logic, decisions to acculturate politically serve individuals' interests in gaining access to those resources relating to the state and its policies. The increased duration of stay and successive generations in the US would be thought to increase the opportunities to acquire the skills and practices needed to gain access to these resources.

The doors to the vast majority of Asian American immigration were opened starting in 1965 with the Immigration and Nationality act by removing *de facto* discrimination barring Asian immigrants from legally settling in the U.S. As Asian Americans' length of residence in the US has increased in the half-century since and as Asian Americans have now moved into their second and, possibly, third generations, we would expect Asian Americans to politically acculturate over time. As such, the voter turnout of Asian Americans, particularly for those of

later generations, would look increasingly similar to other US-born racial groups. Furthermore, if migration-related factors were a barrier to the capacity for income and education to act as resources for political engagement, we would also expect that the effects of these resources on Asian American voting to be higher for native born than foreign-born respondents.

In the period since many of these studies on the Asian puzzle were first conducted (before 2000), recent studies have largely been reliant on U.S. regionally restricted data or Asian-exclusive survey data. This fact, combined with the passage of nearly sixty years since Asians' initial arrival *en masse*, suggests the need to reevaluate the extent to which the Asian puzzle endures into the current period. Currently, assuming a straight-line model of political incorporation which mirrors Asian Americans' largely upward socioeconomic integration, we would expect that Asian Americans' voting disparities relative to Whites decrease over time. To evaluate these claims, this study draws on 11 waves of the Current Population Survey and its November Voting and Registration Supplement between the years of 2000 and 2020. The data also allow for comparison of cross-generation patterns of political participation between multiple racial groups.

We begin by testing resource based and generational based theories of political participation. The logic is to see if the extant theory can explain away or solve the "Asian puzzle." That is, if we take into account resources and migration-related differences, we should be able to neutralize any ethno-racial effects.

*Proposition 1: The inclusion of resource and migration-related variables should reduce the significant disparities between Asian and Whites' voter turnout.*

As the duration of stay in the US increased, we would expect that the magnitude of the effect of Asian heritage on voting relative to Whites' voting to reduce over time across successive elections.

*Proposition 2: The magnitude of the effect of Asian heritage on voting relative to Whites' voting will be less over time across successive elections.*

Extending Proposition 2 to focus specifically on foreign born, we would expect that Asians would come to vote in similar ways to other ethno-racial groups over time.

*Proposition 3: Among the foreign born, the magnitude of the effect of Asian heritage on voting relative to Whites' voting will be less over time across successive elections.*

Extending Proposition 1, we see if immigrant generation and years in the U.S. has a similar effect on the likelihood of voting for all ethno-racial groups.

*Proposition 4: Immigrant generation and years in the U.S. will have a significant impact on the likelihood of voting for all ethno-racial groups with Asians being no different than other groups.*

## *Data*

Each wave of the Current Population Survey is comprised of responses from two sets of survey questionnaires, the Current Population Survey itself and the November Voting and Registration Supplement (United States Department of Commerce).<sup>3</sup> The Current Population Survey is conducted by the Census Bureau to provide estimates of the general labor force and

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<sup>3</sup> Both the Current Population Survey and its November Voting and Registration Supplement can be accessed on the Census Bureau's website at: [https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/cps/cps-supp\\_cps-repwgt/cps-voting.html](https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/cps/cps-supp_cps-repwgt/cps-voting.html). The years available at the census bureau website include biannual waves (every 2 years) from 2010 to 2020. For previous waves of the supplemental survey (waves for the years 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008) see US census bureau submissions to the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research: <https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/RCMD/studies/3182>

employment, estimates of the population as a whole, and various subgroups of the population. It is conducted monthly. The November Voting and Registration Supplement is collected with the intent to monitor trends in the voting and nonvoting behavior of United States citizens. The supplement was designed to be a proxy response supplement, meaning that individual respondents could respond in place of other members of their shared household. Proxy respondents in the supplement are US citizens of 18 years of age or older. As such, although the proxies are citizens, they can provide data on other members of the household that do not meet these requirements. Questions asked included such topics as voting in the recent election, registration to vote, method of voting, reasons for not voting, and basic economic and demographic characteristics. The November Voting and Registration Supplement is conducted biannually, every two years on congressional and presidential election years in November. The survey data is cross-sectional, not longitudinal. Although the Current Population Survey conducts multiple waves of the same households for four months at a time, these households are no longer the same households at the 2-year intervals at which November Voting and Registration Supplement is conducted.

Respondents were selected using a multistage probability sample based on the results of their respective waves of the most recent census. The sample universe is all persons in the civilian noninstitutional population of the United States (50 states and District of Columbia) living in households. The unit of observation is individuals within housing units. The CPS uses a probability sample based on a stratified two-stage sampling scheme. Primary sampling units are selected from which sample housing units are then sampled. In general, this uses lists of addresses obtained from the Master Address File which receives updates from the USPS twice each year. In order to get a sense of missingness, the following is a description of the number of

houses selected for interview versus the number of households eligible for interview: the 2020 CPS assigned 72,000 housing units for interview each month, of which about 60,000 are occupied and eligible for interview. Non-eligible units are those that are vacant, destroyed, converted to other uses, or ineligible for other reasons. Of the 60,000 occupied households eligible for interview in a given month, about 10% were not interviewed for a number of reasons due to unavailability or noncooperation. The total number of individuals contained in the resulting monthly sample is roughly 108,000 persons 15 years and older and 27,000 children 0-14 years old.<sup>4</sup> Although the main portion of the current population survey asks questions about all residents in the household, the analyses are interested in the activities of adult members. As such, apart from some of the descriptive analyses, all modeling of political participation uses individuals 18 years or older in this study.

Interviews were conducted via telephone or as a computer-assisted personal interview. Each survey year had between 48,000 and 56,000 households. Given that each household can consist of multiple residents, the number of respondents is roughly double this number. After dropping non-adults from the data, the number of observations for each year are as follows: 2000 (89,217), 2002 (106,141), 2004 (104,206), 2006 (102,110), 2008 (100,008), 2010 (101,750), 2012 (102,011), 2014 (103,771), 2016 (101,406), 2018 (95,603), 2020 (87,961). This brings the total number of observations across years to 1,094,184. Greater detail of the racial composition and descriptives are available in the “Descriptives” section.

*Variables: resource theory measures*

*Income:* For resource theories, measures of *income* and education (*educ*) are included as ordinal variables. *Income* is a measure of household combined income. *Income* was coded into

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<sup>4</sup> For a brief description of weights, see appendix A-1

four categories: <\$25k (coded using the original survey categories of under \$5,000, \$5k-7,499, \$7.5k-9,999, \$10k-12,499, \$12.5k-14,999, \$15k-19,999, \$20k-24,999), \$25-<\$50k (coded using the original survey categories of \$25k-29,999, \$30k-34,999, \$35k-39,999, \$40k-49,999), \$50-<75k (coded using the original survey categories of \$50k-<\$60k and \$60k-<\$75k), and >\$75k (coded using the original survey categories of \$75k and over in the 2000 and 2002 waves, while the 2004-2020 biannual waves used \$75k-<100k, \$100k-<150k, and \$150k and over). Dollar values are not standardized to a common year and, as such, should be interpreted in the context of the year respondents were contacted.

*Education:* Education was coded into five categories from multiple response categories in the survey: category 1: less than a high school diploma (includes no schooling or preschool, category 2: grades 1-12 but no diploma), category 2: HS diploma, category 3: some college but no diploma, associate degree-occupational/vocational, associate degree-academic program, category 4: bachelor's degree, category 5: master's degree, and category 6: professional school degree or doctoral degree. In tables these are represented as less than HS or <HS, HS, some college, BA, MA, and professional.

*Variables: immigrant generation*

*Gen, forborn, yearsinus:* For theories about the effect of migration, such as immigrant generation, nativity, and years lived in the U.S., the variables generation (*gen*), foreign born (*forborn*), and years in the U.S. (*yearsinus*) are included. Generation is constructed using respondents' birthplace and their parents' birthplace and has four categories: respondent foreign born, both parents foreign born, one parent foreign born, and both parents born in the U.S. Foreign born is constructed using the foreign-born category of immigrant generation. Years in the U.S. is constructed using the year of the survey and the year that foreign-born respondents

entered the U.S. Values on the year of entry before 1950 were coded as 1949 in the original surveys.

*Variables: Race*

*Race:* Race was recoded from the original survey and took on 6 values: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, American-Indian, and Other. Respondents were read a list of five racial categories (Hispanic origin was not included): White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. White and Black refers to non-Hispanic Whites and non-Hispanic Blacks, as respondents identified as Hispanic were later placed exclusively in the Hispanic category. Follow up questions for Asian and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander specified country or other place-based categories such as Korean and Filipino for Asian and Samoan or Guamanian for Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Hispanic was constructed in response to a question of respondents being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin with a follow up question about identification using country-based identities, ethnic identities, other place-based identities, or general ethno-racial identities. These include categories such as Mexican, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and other Spanish/Latino/Hispanic, among others. The 2000 and 2002 CPS use a single Asian/Pacific Islander category, but in 2004 onwards use an Asian only category, separating Pacific Islander/Hawaiian into a separate category, at the same time that Asian national origin categories are recorded for the first time (starting in 2004).

To reiterate, the current recoding thus fits the survey responses into the 6 aforementioned values: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, American-Indian, and Other. Other includes Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders and multiple mixed-race categories from the original survey codes, although Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders are included as Asian in the 2000 and 2002 surveys.

*Variables: Demographic Controls (Female, Age)*

*Gender:* Gender (*female*) was coded as 1 if female and 0 if male. Survey responses in the questionnaire were limited to these two categories.

*Age:* Age (*age*) was coded as numeric values between 0 and 80. Values greater than 80 were recoded to 80 due to variation in the way age was recorded across separate waves of the CPS.

*Dependent Variable: Vote, Registered*

*Voted:* One outcome of interest is respondents' claim to have voted in the most recent presidential or midterm elections of that year (*vote*), a binary variable. Respondents were asked if they voted on election day (early November) that year, the annual day for general elections of federal public officials. This variable is not limited to those that were registered to vote in the respective November election of the year each wave was conducted. The universe for this question is restricted to respondents that were both 18 or older and U.S. citizens.

*Registered:* Respondents that responded to the question of whether or not they voted with "no," no response, don't know, or refused, were asked a follow-up question of whether or not they were registered to vote in the November election of the year of the survey. *Registered* is coded using respondents' answers to the question of whether or not they voted ("Yes" is coded as registered) and their response to the follow-up question asking if they were registered to vote in the November election ("Yes" is coded as registered). *Registered* is a binary variable of 0/1, with a value of 1 being registered and 0 being not registered.

*Descriptives*

[Table 1 about here]

Table 1 presents the ethno-racial composition of the Current Population Survey across federal elections years between 2000 and 2020. It is important to note that the racial categories available in the survey changed between the 2002 and 2004 waves. Asian and Pacific Islander were not treated as separate categories for the 2000 and 2002 waves, although these were treated as distinct starting in the 2004 wave. Despite this split in the categories, Asians composed 4.1% of the survey in 2000 and 5.6% of survey in 2020. Such findings of growth are consistent with others that recognize Asians as the fastest growing racial group in the US in the 21<sup>st</sup> century relative to their earlier size (Budiman and Ruiz, 2021).

[Table 2 about here]

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the six racial groups in *race* for all survey waves combined. It includes average age, proportion female, average education, average income, and average immigrant generation (with consideration that these are all ordinal variables). The table can compare scores across racial groups as well as how these comparisons change between the 2000 and 2020 waves of the survey. Income, education, and age noticeably increase for all major racial groups. Average generation, however, decreases from a score of 1.8 to 1.69 between 2000 and 2020, respectively, the only group apart from American Indians to do so. It is also the lowest among all racial groups. This seems to suggest that, although earlier waves of Asian immigrants are aging, there is a significant inflow of new Asians into the survey universe. Again, it is important to note that inclusion in the survey universe does not require citizenship except for the proxy respondent that can provide information on other household members, so it is possible that a significant percentage of Asian heritage respondents may intend to be sojourners.<sup>5</sup> The drop in average generation and the subsequent continuing recency of Asian immigrants therefore

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<sup>5</sup> Percentages of missing values in the descriptives are available in Appendix A-2. This includes missing values for voting as well.

may result in less change in average rates of voting if recency of immigration is, in fact, an important factor shaping voting.

[Table 3 about here]

Table three presents the voting rates within each racial group for the 2000 wave, the 2020 wave, and as an average across all 11 waves in the dataset (years 2000-2020).<sup>6</sup> These are presented in the table separately for the full sample, for US-born respondents, and for foreign-born respondents. There are two key points of interest in this table. First, the percentage of eligible Asian heritage respondents that voted in the 2020 federal election appears to have grown substantially compared to those that voted in the 2000 federal election, although there are notable increases for all racial groups. To some extent, this provides some support for a proposition of gradual Asian political incorporation (Proposition 2). Asian voter turnout averaged across all years, however, does appear to demonstrate notable disparities with White and Black turnout in the pooled data (across all waves), suggesting that this increase in Asian turnout is only recent . Second, the foreign-born within each racial group are not demonstrating substantially different voting rates relative to the US-born within the same racial group. The differences in voting rates between native born and foreign born within the same racial group are smaller than those between different racial groups. Given the importance that nativity and migration are expected to play, one would have expected a greater difference between foreign and US-born voting rates in the tables.

### *Analysis and Results*

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<sup>6</sup> Wherever voting is used, such as in models with voting as the dependent variable, the data is restricted to US citizens only.

In order to address the role of immigrant generation in shaping and possibly eliminating Asian disparities in voting, I run several multiple logistic regressions across multiple survey waves. These are available in Table 4 which presents the log-odds regression coefficients for voting in a base model and a generational effects model.<sup>7</sup> These models are run using the combined waves dataset (all biannual waves between 2000-2020) and again for the 2000 and 2020 waves in order to observe change over time. The base model includes variables for race (White as reference category), SES, and demographic characteristics, while the generational effects model adds the generation variable that accounts for respondents' birthplace and the birthplace of their parents. Moving from the base to the generation model in the "all years" columns of Table 4, we find little support for Proposition 1. Although income effects and being foreign born all have the predicted effects, e.g., respondents of later generations (2 parents foreign born, 1 parent foreign born, and both parents native born) are all significantly more likely to vote than the foreign born. However, Asian heritage in both the base (all years) and generational model (all years) are significantly less likely to vote than Whites (log odds are -.842 and -.606, respectively). So, while the inclusion of resource and generational effects do appear to have had an effect on voting, it is still insufficient to render Asian voter turnout similar to Whites. Looking at the models applied to the 2000 and 2020 waves of the survey, we see the same pattern of significant effects for resources and generation and a slight decrease in the effect of Asian on voting relative to Whites, yet Asian respondents continue to be significantly less likely to vote than Whites. Moreover, Asians were the least likely to vote relative to Whites among all racial groups in both the combined years data and in the 2000 wave, with the notable

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<sup>7</sup> The same models are repeated in Appendix A-3 using the same data except using registration as the dependent variable. The relevant patterns are consistent with those in Table 4. If anything, Asian disparities in registration may be even greater than those in voting.

exception of the 2020 election in which American-Indian respondents were the least likely to vote.

[Table 4 about here]

Given that Table 4 only presents the results for the combined waves data, 2000, and 2020, I run a multiple logistic regression with resources and generation included on each of the waves of the presidential election years between 2000 and 2020, separate for each election year. Table 5a presents the log-odds regression coefficients of voting across separate waves on these years.<sup>89</sup> Repeating the model for separate waves on presidential election years also allows us to test proposition 2 and see how Asian voting patterns relative to Whites may have changed over time as well as the opportunity to situate these patterns within the context of their relative electoral contests. As expected, resources and generation have a significant, positive effect, with respondents who are native born more likely than foreign-born respondents to vote. Across all the models—i.e., each presidential election year wave in the table—we see that although resources and generation are significant, it is insufficient to remove the significant suppressive effect of Asian on voting relative to Whites, with Asian demonstrating a significant, negative log-odds regression coefficient across all waves in the model. However, values for the negative coefficients of voting among Asians relative to Whites appear to decrease consistently across each wave starting in the 2004 election. In 2004, the Asian coefficient is -1.006 and by the Trump/Biden election it is -.385. These findings are to some extent consistent with Proposition 2's expectation that Asians' voting disparities with Whites should diminish over time.

[Table 5a about here]

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<sup>8</sup> Missing values in all logistic regression models (presented in tables 4, 5, and 6) are handled with listwise deletion.

<sup>9</sup> As for the previous table, the models presented in Table 5a are repeated but with registered to vote as the dependent variable, available in Appendix A-5. Again, the patterns here are consistent with those in their corresponding table.

Do the changes in the coefficient for Asians' voting relative to Whites significantly change across elections? In order to address this question, I fit a logistic regression with an interaction term for the interaction between the year of the survey and the race of respondents (including previous controls and immigrant generation). After fitting the logistic regression, I obtain predictive margins for each of the levels in the interaction of these variables. An easy way to look at the interaction is to graph it, presented in Table 5b.<sup>10</sup> Table 5b presents these predictive margins for each of the levels in the interaction of year and race with a 95% confidence interval. Each line represents one of the racial groups, essentially allowing us to evaluate whether the coefficients significantly varied between any two elections based on whether or not the 95% confidence interval overlapped on the Y axis for the same line (i.e., racial group). Unlike Table 5a, non-presidential federal election years are included in the graph (2006, 2010, 2014, 2018), which account for the repetitive troughs in the racial category lines in voting probability. Table 5b's 95% confidence intervals for Asian in the 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016 elections all demonstrate overlap, suggesting that the coefficient of Asian did not differ significantly between these periods. However, in the 2020 Trump v. Biden election "Asian" is significantly higher than previous elections. These patterns suggest that, although the magnitude for the coefficient of Asian voting likelihood relative to Whites decreased in Table 5a starting in 2004, this is not supported by the predicted margins model which instead suggests that only the 2020 election was significantly different. As such, it is challenging to suggest that this is a trend toward changes in voting, suggesting rather, that the 2020 presidential election was uniquely mobilizing for Asian respondents relative to previous elections.

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<sup>10</sup> The years 2000 and 2002 were not included in the predictive margins graphs given that the race category changed between 2002 and 2004, negating the possibility of running an interaction effect between year and race. American-Indian and "Other" race are hidden in the graph to facilitate viewing.

[Table 5a about here]

Another measure of migration or acculturation effects, duration of stay in the U.S. (measured in years), requires restricting the data to foreign-born respondents. Table 6a does just this, presenting a base model (race, demographic variables, and SES) and a duration of stay model which adds the number of years respondents lived in the U.S. These models are run using the combined waves data, the 2000 wave, and 2020 wave, the results of which are presented in their respective order in Table 6a. Again, these models use multiple logistic regression and listwise deletion. Moving from the base to the duration of stay model allows us to observe the effects of inclusion of duration of stay on the magnitude and significance of the coefficient for Asian. Consistent with Proposition 3, the number of years foreign-born respondents lived in the US is significantly and positively associated with their likelihood of voting in both the combined years model and the 2000 and 2020 waves. The movement from the base model to the duration of stay model does show a decrease in the Asian coefficient across the combined years, 2000, and 2020 waves. Foreign-born Asians remain less likely to vote in the pooled-years model and in 2000, however, in the 2020 model, Asian no longer demonstrates a significant coefficient for difference in likelihood of voting relative to Whites. The findings in the combined years model and the 2000 wave showed that foreign born Asian immigrants among all other immigrant groups were the least likely to vote relative to White immigrants. However, in the 2020 wave, moving from the base model (which exhibited a significant negative coefficient for Asian) to the duration of stay model removed the significance of Asians' likelihood of voting relative to Whites.

[Table 6a about here]

As in the patterns demonstrated across Tables 5a and 5b, it behooves us to ask if this change in Table 6a in the foreign-born Asian coefficient in 2020 is consistent across a longer timeline of a decrease in the suppressive effect of Asian voting likelihood or if the 2020 election is unique as an outlier. In order to address this, I first fit a logistic regression predicting voting including an interaction term between the year of the survey and the race of respondents and include controls for demography, socioeconomic status, and years lived in the US. This model was run on an exclusively foreign-born dataset including all biannual waves between 2004 and 2020, dropping 2000 and 2002 due to the change in the way racial categories were coded. As in 5b, I obtain predictive margins for each of the levels in the interaction of these variables (year by race). Table 6b presents these predictive margins for each of the levels in the interaction of year and race with a 95% confidence interval.<sup>11</sup> Interpreting 6b, similarly to 5b, demonstrates that Asian was not significantly different across presidential election years until the spike in higher likelihood of voting in the 2020 election.<sup>12</sup> Again, this pattern suggests not a gradual trend towards a higher likelihood of voting for Asians but the uniqueness of the 2020 presidential election in mobilizing their participation.

[Table 6b about here]

Although both immigrant generation and years lived in the US among foreign born demonstrated significant positive coefficients in support of migration/acclimation theories of participation, Asian continued to exhibit a significantly lower likelihood of voting except in the 2020 election. Theories of acculturation that consider the effects of Asian Americans' recency of arrival do help in reducing the disparity in the effect of Asian on voting but are insufficient to

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<sup>11</sup> As in Table 5a, in Table 6a the results for American-Indian and "Other" race categories are hidden in the graph so as to improve legibility.

<sup>12</sup> This is demonstrated in Table 6a by the overlap of confidence intervals between 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016 election years.

fully resolve this disparity. Moreover, the analyses of only foreign-born seem to suggest that even when Asians are compared to immigrants of other races and accounting for their duration of stay in the US, they continue to exhibit a significantly lower likelihood of voting. An argument could be made that this is changing as evidenced by the seeming shift in the 2020 election. However, as both Table 5b and 6b have shown, the predictive margins for Asian in 2020 are marked by their exception rather than continuation of a gradual trend. Thus, it doesn't seem that resources and generation reduce the Asian effect, thus calling into question propositions 1-3, rather it seems that Asian patterns of voting are converging with White patterns in this last election for other reasons.

Proposition 4 asks: are the coefficients for generational effects and duration of stay significantly different between Asians and non-Asians? Tables 7 and 8 attempt to address this possibility. Again, I fit a logistic regression model predicting voting using an interaction effect between immigrant generation and race with controls for SES and demographics using the pooled waves<sup>13</sup>. Table 7 presents the predictive margins of immigrant generation by race with a 95% confidence interval. This graph allows us to evaluate if the effects of generation on voting are significantly different between racial groups based on the [lack of] overlap of their 95% confidence intervals. Looking at the predicted margins shows that, for Asians, immigrant generation has significantly less effect than it does for Black and White respondents and are significantly different from Hispanics with regards to the effects of being foreign born and both parents foreign born.<sup>14</sup>

[Table 7 about here]

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<sup>13</sup> Once again 2000 and 2002 were excluded due to the change in the way race was recorded between 2002 and 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Keep in mind the generation values of 1, 2, 3, and 4 are not 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> etc. generation. 1 is foreign born, 2 is both parents foreign born, 3 is 1 parent foreign born and 4 is both parents born in the US.

Turning now to the effects of duration of stay in the U.S., I fit logistic regression model predicting voting using an interaction effect between years lived in the US and an Asian binary variable including demographic and socioeconomic controls using the pooled data (2000 and 2002 excluded). An Asian binary variable here was used over the six-category race variable to reduce visual clutter and aid interpretation. Table 8 presents the predictive margins of years lived in the US by Asian (0, 1) with a 95% confidence interval. Overlapping CIs between the Asian and non-Asian lines in the graph would suggest no significant difference in the effect of that year value between Asians and non-Asians on voting. However, the graph suggests a pattern of difference between the two groups, with duration of stay in the US having less impact on the likelihood of voting for Asians than non-Asians (wider confidence intervals are present in the higher values of *years in US* due to fewer observations).

[Table 8 about here]

What Tables 7 and 8 effectively suggest is that although immigrant generation and years lived in the US are significant in the logistic regression model of voting, there is a high likelihood that the magnitude of their effect on voting is less for Asians than it is for other racial groups thus providing little support for Proposition 4. These patterns suggest not that mechanisms of acculturation are not occurring in the process of Asians' political incorporation, but rather that there may be some other barrier to greater formal participation that is not captured in the current model.

### *Conclusion*

Overall, the findings across the models suggest that there is little support for propositions 1-4, because Asian disparities in voting persist. The only exception was the 2020 Biden-Trump election. But for the most part Asian heritage respondents continue to demonstrate significantly

lower voting rates than other racial groups even after resource and acculturation theory-based factors are accounted for. Moreover, even within the immigrant only sample, Asian immigrants demonstrated significantly lower likelihoods of voting than other foreign-born immigrants. Despite the seeming change in Asian voting disparities across presidential elections in the logistic regression model, the predicted margins suggested, rather, greater continuity in the likelihood of Asian turnout and that the 2020 election was an exceptional case. These findings are also supported by supplementary analyses available in appendices A-3 through A-7. Appendices A-3, A-4, and A-5 present models that replicate those in tables 4, 5a, and 6a, respectively, with the distinction that registration to vote is used as the dependent variable. The findings here are consistent with those in the aforementioned tables, with Asians less likely to register to vote than Whites. Similarly, where Tables 5b and 6b present the predictive margins for the migration variables by race interaction, Appendices A-6 and A-7 do the same for resource variables (i.e. SES), presenting predictive margins for the income by race interaction and the education by race interaction. Consistent with the findings of Tables 5b and 6b, these suggest that income and education have less effect on voting for Asian respondents.

The relatively small size of the Asian American population and the complexity of current models of political participation have made it difficult to gather data that includes both a sizable cross-racial sample and a wide range of measures of theoretical mechanisms that impact political participation. What this study has attempted to do is to evaluate Asian American acculturation to the field of politics over time by including measures relating to migration and looking at the changes in Asian voting over time. What it finds is that the Asian puzzle is resilient to acculturation models as much as it is to resource models. While resources and migration-related factors do indeed matter for Asians, their effects are insufficient to fully erase the disparity in

Asian American voter turnout. Looking across the multiple waves of the CPS and relating the findings to pre-21<sup>st</sup> century studies, the patterns here suggest a story of relative continuity with the possibility for some change in recent events. Closer examination of the impact of the recent Trump-Biden presidential election may provide insights into the motivations and causes of the recent spike in Asian voter turnout. Indeed, mobilization in one presidential election may have momentum for future mobilization, as in the case of Black respondents continuously high rates of voter turnout after the first Obama election.

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Table 1: The Changing Ethnoracial Composition of the CPS Across Federal Election Years (2000-2020)

	Year										
Race	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
<i>White</i>	73.1% (87,290)	73.7% (103,730)	72.0% (100,963)	70.7% (96,189)	70.1% (93,109)	69.1% (92,695)	68.5% (91,387)	67.5% (91,266)	66.7% (87,632)	66.8% (81,989)	66.3% (74,282)
<i>Black</i>	10.8% (12,860)	10.3% (14,503)	9.7% (13,533)	9.5% (12,953)	9.7% (12,859)	10.1% (13,557)	9.9% (13,215)	10.5% (14,187)	10.3% (13,481)	9.8% (12,015)	10.5% (11,786)
<i>Hispanic</i>	10.6% (12,648)	10.2% (14,329)	11.0% (15,386)	11.9% (16,227)	12.2% (16,182)	12.7% (17,063)	13.1% (17,479)	13.0% (17,629)	13.6% (17,799)	13.8% (16,956)	13.7% (15,399)
<i>Asian**</i>	4.10% (4,869)	4.3% (5,987)	3.6% (4,976)	4.0% (5,440)	4.3% (5,727)	4.6% (6,106)	4.7% (6,237)	5.0% (6,805)	5.3% (6,972)	5.4% (6,651)	5.6% (6,272)
<i>Am-Ind</i>	1.50% (1,774)	1.5% (2,135)	1.2% (1,692)	1.2% (1,581)	1.1% (1,516)	1.0% (1,399)	1.2% (1,533)	1.4% (1,940)	1.5% (1,990)	1.4% (1,673)	1.3% (1,456)
<i>Other***</i>	N/A N/A	N/A N/A	2.7% (3,727)	2.7% (3,656)	2.6% (3,419)	2.5% (3,359)	2.7% (3,576)	2.6% (3,485)	2.7% (3,515)	2.8% (3,460)	2.6% (2,902)
<i>Total</i>	119441	140684	140277	136046	132812	134179	133427	135312	131389	122744	112037

\*Note: All percentages rounded to one decimal point. This table includes non-adults.

\*\*Note: coding of Asian changed in 2004 to be distinct from Pacific Islander. See data section for details.

\*\*\*Note: “Other” includes mixed race and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. These categories were not available in the 2000 and 2002 waves of the CPS.

Table 2: Comparing Descriptives for Racial Groups

Between 2000 and 2020

	<b>Avg. age</b>		<b>Proportion female</b>		<b>Avg. educ</b>		<b>Avg. income</b>		<b>Avg. gen</b>	
Year	2000	2020	2000	2020	2000	2020	2000	2020	2000	2020
<i>White</i>	47	51.4	0.51	0.51	2.71	3.06	2.26	2.89	3.77	3.82
<i>Black</i>	43.5	47.5	0.55	0.54	2.34	2.69	1.78	2.33	3.75	3.6
<i>Hispanic</i>	38.7	42.7	0.51	0.51	1.93	2.34	1.77	2.49	2.17	2.35
<i>Asian</i>	41.5	46.2	0.52	0.53	2.94	3.38	2.28	3.06	1.8	1.69
<i>Am-Indian</i>	41.9	45.2	0.5	0.53	2.16	2.39	1.76	2.32	3.72	3.67
<i>Other</i>	N/A	42.9	N/A	0.49	N/A	2.6	N/A	2.68	N/A	3.41

\*Note: this table includes non-adults (<18 years of age).

Table 3: Voter Turnout Within each Racial Group for all Generations, Native-Born, and Foreign-Born Presented for the 2000 Wave, 2020 Wave, and Combined Across All 2000-2020 Biannual Waves (11 Waves).

Years	All			Native			Forborn		
	2000	2020	Avg all yrs	2000	2020	Avg all yrs	2000	2020	Avg all yrs
<i>White</i>	41,021	42,028	462,280	39,739	40,755	448,495	1,156	1,253	13,246
	69.64%	82.13%	67.65%	69.73%	82.24%	67.79%	66.74%	78.56%	63.28%
<i>Black</i>	4,839	5,346	54,276	4,647	4,914	50,980	178	429	3,218
	67.12%	78.95%	66.27%	67.24%	78.93%	66.47%	64.03%	79.30%	63.80%
<i>Hispanic</i>	2,247	4,135	31,559	1,432	2,859	20,533	789	1,271	10,927
	50.40%	66.21%	49.59%	48.94%	66.71%	48.65%	53.17%	65.18%	51.58%
<i>Asian</i>	964	2,203	15,043	427	862	6,072	520	1,333	8,888
	51.03%	75.57%	53.24%	51.82%	78.58%	58.20%	51.38%	73.85%	50.50%
<i>Am-Indian</i>	494	483	4,986	478	462	4,808	16	21	170
	50.77%	59.26%	49.04%	51.51%	59.08%	49.28%	35.56%	63.64%	42.71%
<i>Other</i>	N/A	975	7,929	N/A	874	7,158	N/A	101	755
	N/A	71.53%	56.49%	N/A	71.88%	57.00%	N/A	68.71%	52.39%

Table 4: Log-Odds Regression Coefficients for Voting in a Base Model and a Full Model Including Immigrant Generation, Repeated for Combined Data (2000-2020 waves) and the 2000 and 2020 Waves (Proposition 1).

		base	+gen	base	+gen	base	+gen
		all years	all years	2000	2000	2020	2020
<b>Race</b>	(ref: White)						
	Black	.421***	.436***	.395***	.400***	.288***	.309***
	Hispanic	-.227***	-.101***	-.200***	-.150***	-.339***	-.223***
	Asian	-.842***	-.606***	-	-.915***	-.619***	-.385***
	Am-Indian	-.206***	-.202***	1.033***	-.270***	-.608***	-.601***
	Other	-.171***	-.142***	N/A	N/A	-.225**	-.198**
<b>Income</b>	(ref: <25k)						
	25-49	.395***	.400***	.510***	.511***	.390***	.395***
	50-<75	.641***	.646***	.816***	.820***	.673***	.679***
	>=75	.880***	.885***	1.003***	1.004***	1.011***	1.017***
<b>Educ</b>	(ref: <HS)						
	HS dipl	.716***	.702***	.760***	.756***	.701***	.677***
	some coll	1.310***	1.296***	1.370***	.1365***	1.475***	1.448***
	BA	1.823***	1.818***	2.000***	2.000***	2.097***	2.082***
	MA	2.070***	2.067***	2.290***	2.290***	2.510***	2.493***
	professional	2.050***	2.058***	2.061***	2.072***	2.543***	2.536***
<b>Age</b>	(max:80)	.035***	.036***	.038***	.039***	.029***	.029***
<b>Female</b>		.098***	.100***	.149***	.149***	.125***	.128***
<b>Gen</b>	(ref: forborn)						
	2 parents forborn		.308***		.245***		.329***
	1 parent forborn		.416***		.262***		.527***
	both native		.375***		.208***		.380***
constant		-2.681***	-3.062***	-	-	-	-2.280***
n		823,311	821,991	63,731	63,469	69,284	69,236
r^2		0.135	0.136	0.146	0.146	0.152	0.154

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

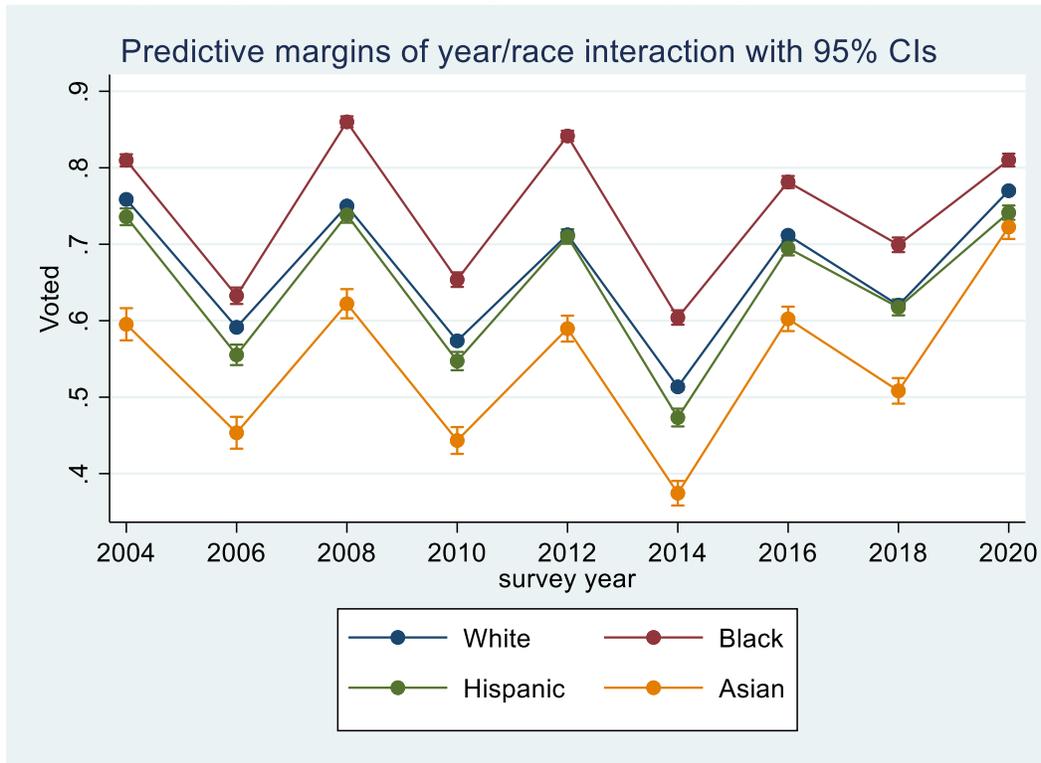
Note: All years includes non-presidential federal election years.

Table 5a: Log-Odds Regression Coefficients of Voting Across Separate Waves: Presidential Election Year Waves Between 2000 and 2020 (Proposition 2).

YEARS:		2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020
		Bush vs. Gore	Bush vs. Kerry	McCain vs. Obama	Romney vs. Obama	Trump vs. Clinton	Trump vs. Biden
<b>Race</b>	(ref: White)						
	Black	.400***	.396***	.858***	.897***	.425***	.309***
	Hispanic	-.150***	-.134**	-.139***	-.029	-.175***	-.223***
	Asian	-.915***	-	-.898***	-.713***	-.697***	-.385***
	Am-Indian	-.270***	1.006***	-.262**	-.208**	-.448***	-.601***
	Other	N/A	-.332***	-.272***	-.185**	-.276***	-.198**
<b>Income</b>	(ref: <25k)						
	25-49	.511***	.419***	.375***	.335***	.378***	.395***
	50-<75	.820***	.739***	.678***	.602***	.608***	.679***
	>=75	1.004***	1.044***	1.007***	.916***	.917***	1.017***
<b>Educ</b>	(ref: <HS)						
	HS dipl	.756***	.776***	.734***	.677***	.716***	.677***
	some coll	1.365***	1.515***	1.476***	1.358***	1.362***	1.448***
	BA	2.000***	2.103***	2.169***	1.978***	2.002***	2.082***
	MA	2.289***	2.549***	2.483***	2.275***	2.288***	2.483***
	professional	2.072***	2.403***	2.425***	2.354***	2.326***	2.536***
<b>Age</b>	(max:80)	.039***	.032***	.030***	.035***	.029***	.029***
<b>Female</b>		.149***	.173***	.236***	.177***	.181***	.128***
<b>Gen</b>	(ref: forborn)						
	2 parents forborn	.245***	.177**	.354***	.316***	.243***	.329***
	1 parent forborn	.262***	.442***	.361***	.403***	.336***	.527***
	both native	.2078***	.342***	.283***	.373***	.296***	.380***
constant		-	-	-	-	-	-
n		2.879***	2.521***	2.403***	2.779***	2.489***	2.280***
r^2		0.146	0.150	0.151	0.149	0.141	0.1537

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Table 5b: Predictive Margins of Year by Race Interaction with 95% Confidence Intervals (Predicting Voting), (All Waves Except 2000, 2002) (Proposition 2).



Note: The biannual dips in voting are due to non-presidential election years having lower turnout.

Table 6a: Log-Odds Regression Coefficients for Voting Among the Foreign-Born in a Base Model and a Model Including Years Lived in the US, Using the Full Combined Dataset (All Waves 2000-2020) and Repeated for the 2000 and 2020 Waves (Proposition 3).

foreign born voting		base	+yearsinus	base	+yearsinus	base	+yearsinus
		all years	all years	2000	2000	2020	2020
<b>Race</b>	(ref: White)						
	Black	.324***	.455***	0.237	.447**	.328*	.453**
	Hispanic	0.038	.098***	-.004	0.113	-.142	-.095
	Asian	-.512***	-.398***	-.681***	-.474***	-.236**	-.150
	Am-Indian	-.214	-.186	-.786*	-.691	.285	-.252
	Other	-.120*	-.092	N/A	N/A	-.096	-.060
<b>Income</b>	(ref: <25k)						
	25-49	.179***	.160***	.313**	.309**	0.17	0.151
	50-<75	.372***	.338***	.478***	.439***	.298**	0.266
	>=75	.620***	.571***	.698***	.654***	.582***	.540***
<b>Educ</b>	(ref: <HS)						
	HS dipl	.406***	.381***	.326**	.310**	.299**	.268**
	some coll	.888***	.841***	.858***	.835***	1.024***	.975***
	BA	1.080***	1.075***	1.280***	1.288***	1.290***	1.272***
	MA	1.373***	1.373***	1.366***	1.376***	1.735***	1.715***
	professional	1.400***	1.398***	.993***	1.001***	1.807***	1.784***
<b>Age</b>	(max:80)	.029***	.020***	.033***	.023***	.024***	.016***
<b>Female</b>		0.013	0.014	-.072	-.075	0.053	0.063
<b>Yearsinus</b>			.018***		.023***		.016***
constant		-2.121***	-2.178***	-1.962***	-2.150***	-1.354***	-1.362***
n		62,409	62,391	3,875	3,873	6,071	6,068
r <sup>2</sup>		0.079	0.0854	0.094	0.102	0.102	0.097

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Note: All years includes non-presidential federal election years.

Table 6b: Predictive Margins of Year by Race Interaction with 95% Confidence Intervals, Foreign-Born Only (Proposition 3).

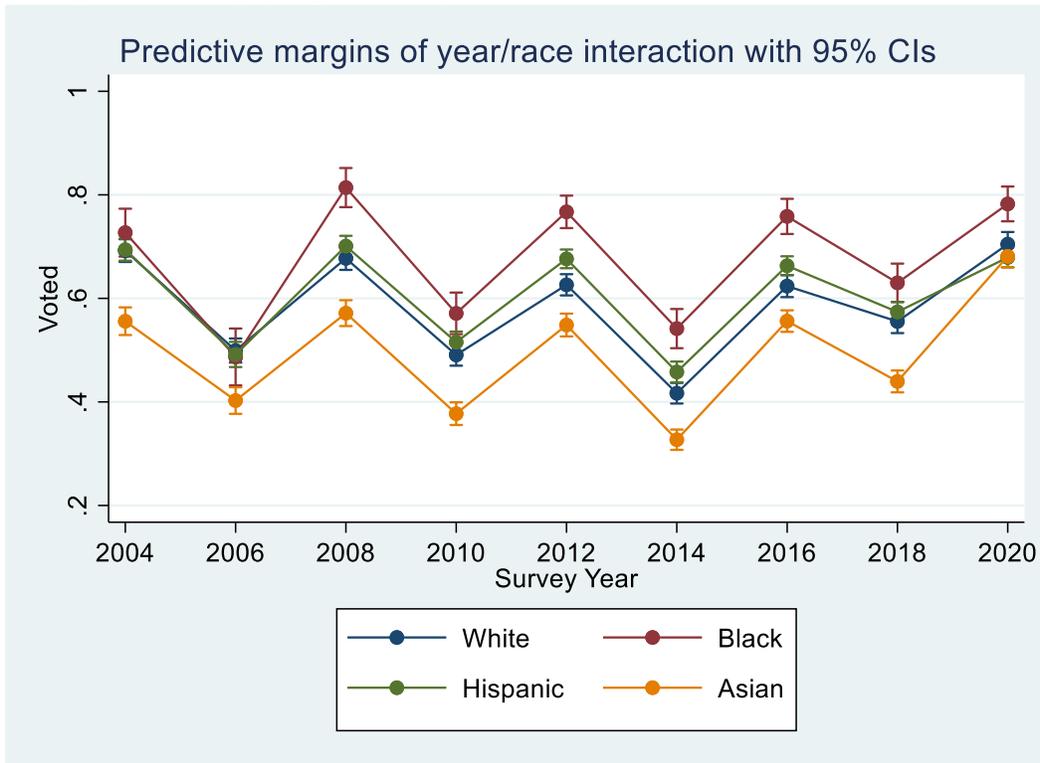


Table 7: Predictive Margins of Generation by Race Interaction with a 95% Confidence Interval, Using Combined Waves Except 2000 and 2002 (Proposition 4).

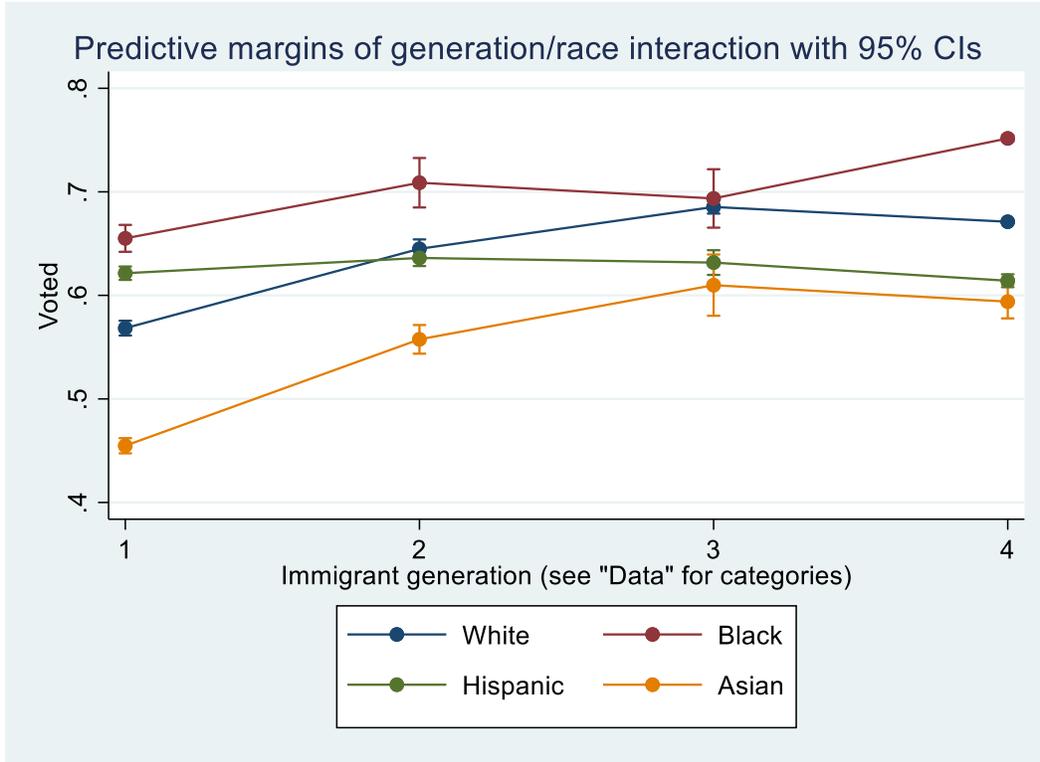
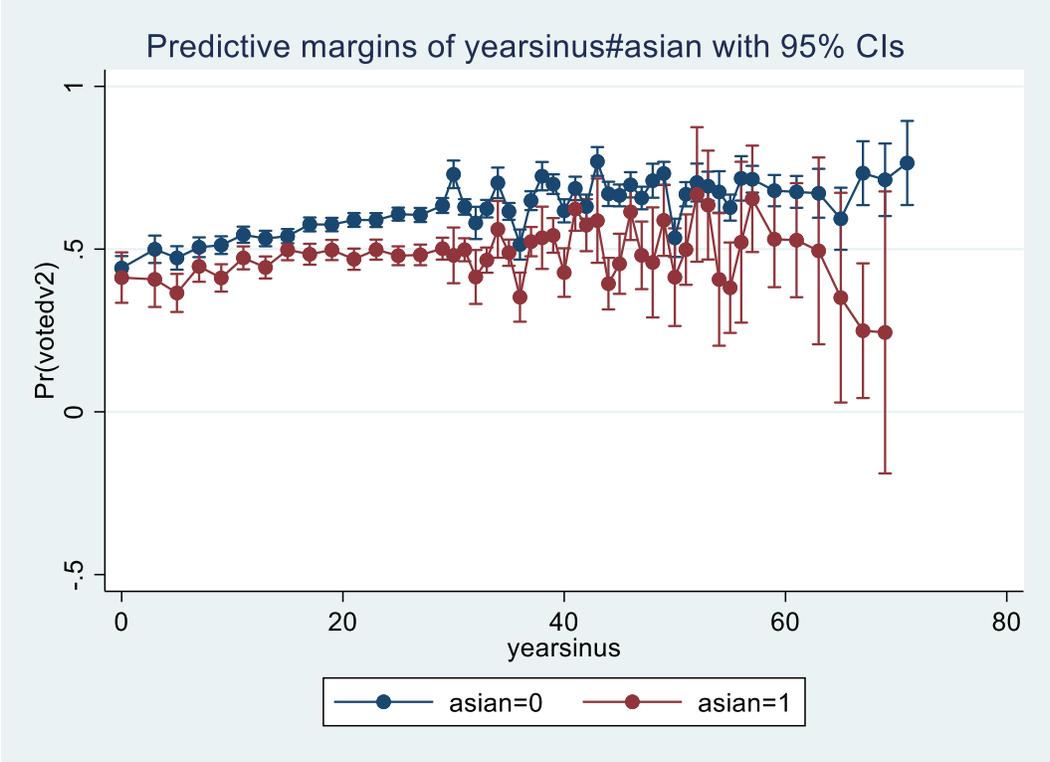


Table 8: Predictive Margins of Years Lived in the US (Foreign only) and Asian (Binary) Interaction with a 95% Confidence Interval Using Combined Waves Except 2000 and 2002 (Proposition 4)



## Appendix A-1

The following is an extract of the description of how data are weighted provided in the technical documentation of the Current Population Survey 2020, November Voting and Registration Supplement:

“Under the estimating methods used in the CPS, all of the results for a given month become available simultaneously and are based on returns for the entire panel of respondents. The CPS estimation procedure involves weighting the data from each sample person. The base weight, which is the inverse of the probability of the person being in the sample, is a rough measure of the number of actual persons that the sample person represents. Almost all sample persons in the same state have the same base weight, but the weights across states are different. Selection probabilities may also differ for some sample areas due to field subsampling, which is done when areas selected for the sample contain many more households than expected. The base weights are then adjusted for noninterview, and the ratio estimation procedure is applied” (United States Department of Commerce 2020, p. 2-4).

Appendix A-2: % Missing Values in Descriptives Across Racial Groups, Combined Years

<b>% missing</b>	<b>income</b>	<b>gen</b>	<b>years in US</b>	<b>voted</b>
<b>Year</b>	All years	All years	All years	All years
<i>White</i>	8.14%	0.19%	0.04%	11.82%
<i>Black</i>	9.52%	0.39%	0.11%	17.51%
<i>Hispanic</i>	6.91%	0.53%	0.03%	16.65%
<i>Asian</i>	8.54%	0.87%	0.02%	20.22%
<i>Am-Indian</i>	6.34%	0.15%	0.00%	14.09%
<i>Other</i>	5.17%	0.36%	0.03%	13.94%

\*Note: educ, fem, and age all had no missing. Voted was restricted to adult US citizens.

Appendix A-3: Log-Odds Regression Coefficients for Registration to Vote in a Base Model and a Full Model Including Immigrant Generation, Repeated for Combined Data (2000-2020 waves) and the 2000 and 2020 Waves.

Registered to vote (regardless of nativity)		base all years	+gen all years	base 2000	+gen 2000	base 2020	+gen 2020
<b>Race</b>	(ref: White)						
	Black	.464***	.482***	.392***	.402***	.352***	.375***
	Hispanic	-.313***	-.144***	-.230***	-.119**	-.446***	-.286***
	Asian	-1.085***	-.778***	-	-.914***	-.834***	-.543***
	Am-Indian	-.147***	-.138***	-.197	-.184*	-.349***	-.335***
	Other	-.265***	-.222***	N/A	N/A	-.215**	-.176*
<b>Income</b>	(ref: <25k)						
	25-49	.310***	.317***	.365***	.369***	.343***	.351***
	50-<75	.577***	.585***	.674***	.681***	.606***	.614***
	>=75	.857***	.864***	.866***	.872***	.908***	.914***
<b>Educ</b>	(ref: <HS)						
	HS dipl	.711***	.693***	.676***	.666***	.694***	.666***
	some coll	1.416***	1.399***	1.327***	1.318***	1.561***	1.530***
	BA	1.978***	1.975***	1.976***	1.978***	2.250***	2.235***
	MA	2.303***	2.302***	2.243***	2.244***	2.671***	2.653***
	professional	2.231***	2.242***	2.037***	2.056***	2.636***	2.630***
<b>Age</b>	(max:80)	.034***	.035***	.036***	.037***	.028***	.028***
<b>Female</b>		.162***	.165***	.161***	.163***	.139***	.143***
<b>Gen</b>	(ref: forborn)						
	2 parents forborn		.408***		.459***		.288***
	1 parent forborn		.529***		.433***		.627***
	both native		.488***		.397***		.442***
constant		-1.692***	-2.194***	-	-	-	-1.640***
n		818,077	816,766	63,389	63,127	68,926	68,878
r^2		0.140	0.142	0.133	0.134	0.151	0.153

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Appendix A-4: Log-Odds Regression Coefficients of Registration to Vote Across Separate Waves: Presidential Election Year Waves Between 2000 and 2020.

YEARS:		2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020
registered to vote		Bush vs. Gore	Bush vs. Kerry	McCain vs. Obama	Romney vs. Obama	Trump vs. Clinton	Trump vs. Biden
<b>Race</b>	(ref: White)						
	Black	.402***	.439***	.721***	.785***	.518***	.375***
	Hispanic	-.119**	-.069	-.115**	-.097*	-.249***	-.286***
	Asian	-.914***	-.994***	-.891***	-.802***	-.867***	-.543***
	Am-Indian	-.184*	-.061	-.174	-.028	-.356***	-.335***
	Other	N/A	-.277***	-.225**	-.302***	-.206**	-.176*
<b>Income</b>	(ref: <25k)						
	25-49	.369***	.344***	.315***	.268***	.266***	.351***
	50-<75	.681***	.660***	.589***	.489***	.489***	.614***
	>=75	.872***	.925***	.914***	.871***	.780***	.914***
<b>Educ</b>	(ref: <HS)						
	HS dipl	.666***	.715***	.753***	.685***	.734***	.666***
	some coll	1.318***	1.511***	1.514***	1.435***	1.486***	1.530***
	BA	1.980***	2.052***	2.208***	2.121***	2.176***	2.235***
	MA	2.244***	2.645***	2.622***	2.425***	2.503***	2.653***
	professional	2.056***	2.406***	2.609***	2.353***	2.733***	2.630***
<b>Age</b>	(max: 80)	.037***	.033***	.030***	.034***	.029***	.028***
<b>Female</b>		.163***	.177***	.248***	.202***	.188***	.143***
<b>Gen</b>	(ref: forborn)						
	2 parents forborn	.459***	.284***	.490***	.431***	.390***	.288***
	1 parent forborn	.433***	.587***	.462***	.464***	.512***	.627***
	both native	.397***	.501***	.421***	.477***	.445***	.442***
constant		-2.145***	-1.995***	-1.880***	-2.097***	-1.858***	-1.640***
n		63,127	73,842	68,353	82,225	80,254	68,878
r <sup>2</sup>		0.134	0.142	0.145	0.150	0.147	0.153

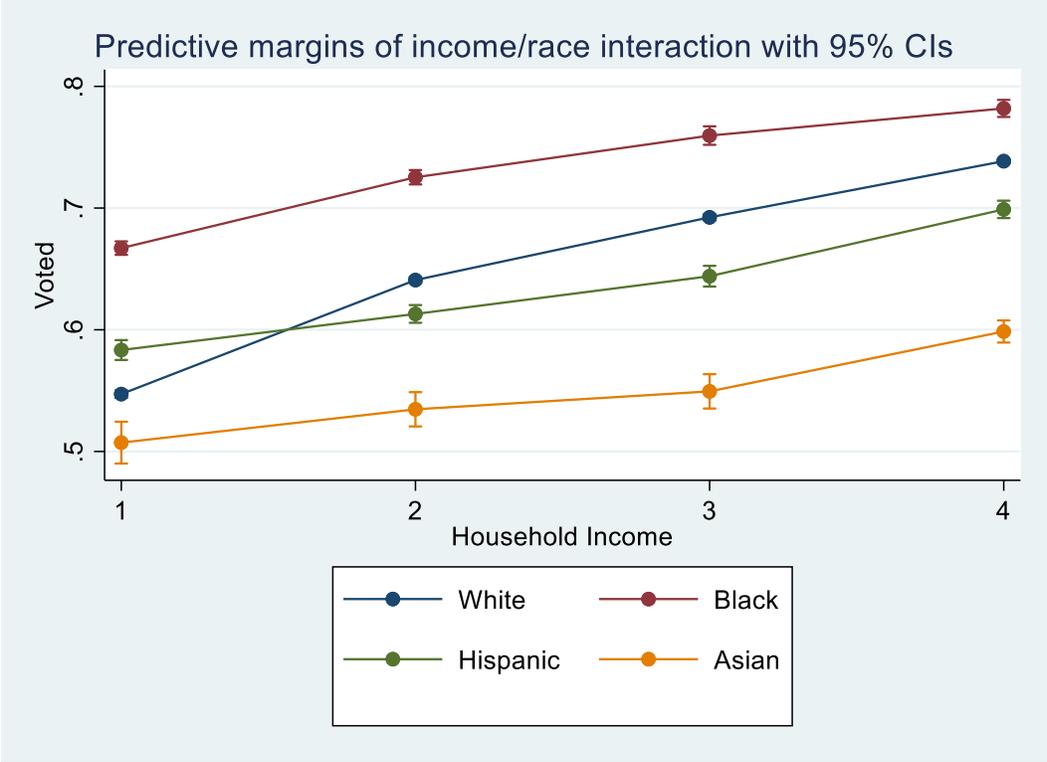
\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Appendix A-5: Log-Odds Regression Coefficients for Registration to Vote Among the Foreign Born in a Base Model and a Model Including Years Lived in the US, Using the Full Combined Dataset (all waves 2000-2020) and Repeated for the 2000 and 2020 Waves.

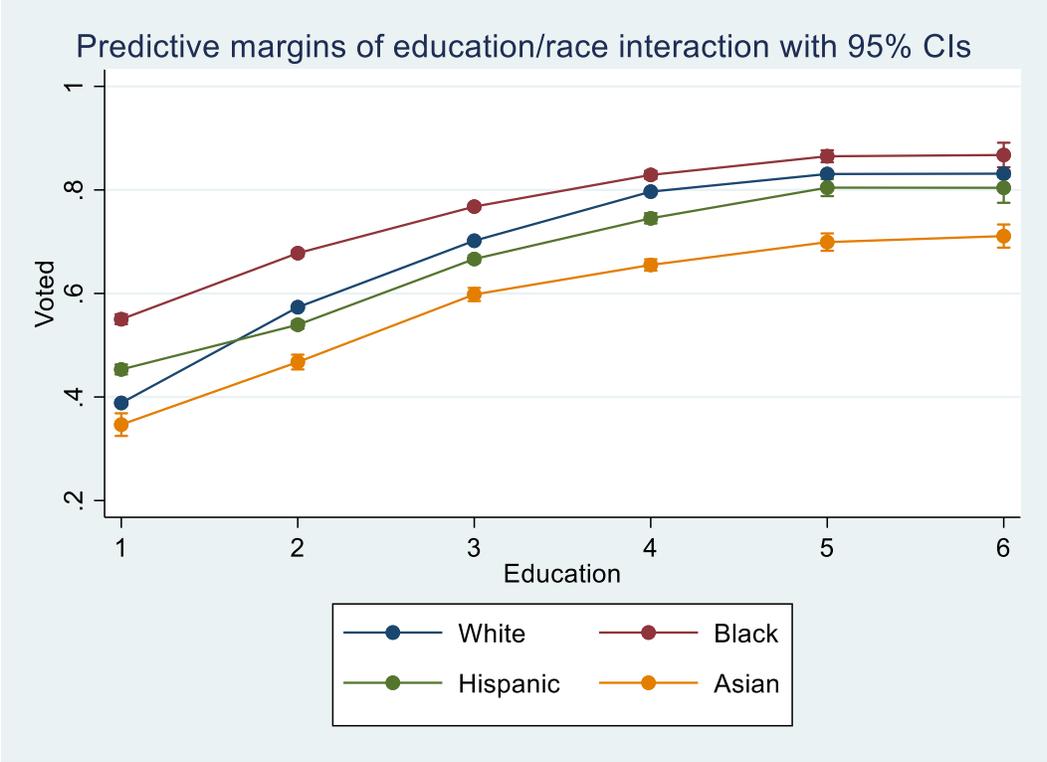
foreign born registered to vote		base all years	+yearsinus all years	base 2000	+yearsinus 2000	base 2020	+yearsinus 2020
<b>Race</b>	(ref: White)						
	Black	.325***	.498***	0.026	0.286	0.267	.360*
	Hispanic	-.002	.078**	-.037	0.107	-.242*	-.199*
	Asian	-.571***	-.425***	-.655***	-.398***	-.422***	-.346**
	Am-Indian	-.209	-.170	-.634	-.529	-.101	-.073
	Other	-.210**	-.168**	N/A	N/A	-.217	-.176
<b>Income</b>	(ref: <25k)						
	25-49	.177***	.156***	.255**	.247*	.212*	0.196
	50-<75	.416***	.376***	.447***	.396**	.322**	.293*
	>=75	.654***	.592***	.653***	.597***	.608***	.569***
<b>Educ</b>	(ref: <HS)						
	HS dipl	.443***	.414***	.313**	.291**	.231*	.200*
	some coll	1.005***	.950***	.910***	.881***	1.038***	.992***
	BA	1.221***	1.219***	1.279***	1.285***	1.412***	1.395***
	MA	1.584***	1.590***	1.366***	1.380***	1.885***	1.864***
	professional	1.607***	1.609***	1.239***	1.247***	1.857***	1.832***
<b>Age</b>	(max:80)	.029***	.017***	.032***	.020***	.025***	.017***
<b>Female</b>		.045*	.050**	-.047	-.050	0.047	0.058
<b>Yearsinus</b>			.025***		.029***		.015***
constant		-1.467***	-1.563***	-1.435***	-1.665***	-.853***	-.861***
n		61,867	61,849	3,851	3,849	6,013	6,010
r <sup>2</sup>		0.088	0.099	0.091	0.102	0.101	0.105

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Appendix A-6: Predictive Margins of Household Income by Race Interaction with a 95% Confidence Interval Using Combined Waves Except 2000 and 2002



Appendix A-7: Predictive Margins of Education by Race Interaction with a 95% Confidence Interval, Using Combined Waves Except 2000 and 2002



**APPENDIX B**  
**Asian American Political Participation:**  
**Contemporary Theories and National Origin Effects**

*Abstract*

Contemporary theories of political participation, particularly those addressing immigrant or minority groups in the US, have focused on the role of political socialization and group consciousness as possible individual-level explanations. Composed of a large percentage of recent immigrants, political socialization in the sending countries may play a role in Asian Americans' political participation. Group consciousness, which is shaped by perceptions of racial discrimination and often measured as the extent to which race, or another collective category affects one's life, is thought to motivate individuals to collective action on the basis of these collective identities. In order to evaluate these theories, this study uses the 2016 National Asian American Post-election Survey, which allows for both cross-racial comparison and the disaggregation of Asian into national heritage subgroups. Both group consciousness measures are found to be significantly associated with voting. Political socialization measures included overseas education and democratic origins scores for immigrants' sending countries. Neither the proportion of one's overseas education nor the democratic origins score of the sending country appear to have a significant impact on voting. Although measures for these theories are included in the model, they ultimately appear to contribute little towards reducing Asian heritage respondents' disparities in political participation relative to Whites. However, disaggregating Asian into its national heritage subgroups reveals a national origin story—that there is both significant variation along these heritage groups' lines and that a handful of the largest of these groups are likely responsible for the majority of the observed voter turnout disparities.

## *Introduction*

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Asian Americans' disparity in political participation relative to other racial groups has proven surprisingly resistant to explanation. In particular, the resource model of political participation which emphasizes individual income, time, and civic skills appears insufficient to eliminate the significance of Asian national origin and, in some analyses, even appear to have no significant effect (Wong 2000; Wong et al. 2011; Lien 2004). However, this is not to say that scholars have not sought to address this apparent quirk in the extant literature. As covered in the previous chapter, initial assumptions about these disparities sought to explain them as a product of Asians' recent migration relative to other groups (Cho 1999). Inclusion of multiple migration-related variables, although significant in their effects and demonstrating utility in explaining the disparity in political participation, have still proven insufficient to eliminate the significant negative association of Asian origin (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999).

In light of the inefficacy of the resource model, this chapter explores the possibility that experiences in the sending country and collective consciousness in the U.S. might explain away the 'Asian effect.' However, while these individual-level theories attempt to provide a unifying or single-variable theory to explain voting disparity they often gloss over the high degree of internal variation among Asian Americans. Indeed, the final section of this chapter demonstrates that although some Asian heritage groups are emblematic of the non-voter turnout puzzle, others have voting behavior indistinguishable from Whites. This variation suggests the need for closer consideration of the roles of the differential experiences of Asian immigrants. Appendix 3 of the dissertation proposes some potential mechanisms shaping the variable experiences of political incorporation (or lack thereof) of three Asian heritage groups.

Two contemporary individual-level explanations for Asian voting disparity have focused heavily on the role of political socialization in the sending countries and barriers to the formation of Asian group consciousness in the receiving country as possible explanations (Wong 2000; Chaudhary and Mai 2021; Min 2014; Okamoto 2003). Political socialization theories stress that the recency of Asians' migration relative to other groups combined with the frequently non-democratic national origins of several Asian groups which results in political interests and civic skills that do not match the receiving country (Chaudhary and Mai 2021). To put this process into the language of the resource model, although Asians may be high in income and education, the institutional involvements in which these resources are generated are distinct from the institutional involvements that produce these same resources for the native population (Brady et al. 1995). As such, the simple presence of individuals' high educational attainment or income does not imply that they have the civic skills to engage in politics nor the necessary degree of political interest.

In tandem, group consciousness has been proposed as an explanation for lower voter turnout among Asians. Group consciousness refers to the extent to which individual members within a social identity group recognize this placement within that group as impactful for their own position in society (Martinez and Gonzalez 2021). Common experiences of discrimination and exclusion under a common racial label such as Asian as well as similarity in characteristics, be they linguistic, religious, socioeconomic status, or other cultural factors, are thought to aid in the formation of group consciousness (Lopez and Espiritu 1990). Ultimately, group consciousness can become a politically mobilizing tool when ethnic and political leadership draw upon panethnic or racial categories to mobilize broader groups (Okamoto 2003, 2006). Some have argued that the high variability in Asian socioeconomic status, lack of a common language

and religion, much unlike the case of Latinos, has hindered the formation of broader group consciousness for Asians and, by extension, limited their political mobilization (Okamoto 2003).<sup>15</sup>

It is this same internal diversity which also motivates my focus on national origin groups and the need to compare and contrast national origin groups to understand their variable experiences of political incorporation. While the category of Asian itself demonstrates significant difference in turnout from other racial groups, the national origin groups within it range widely in their levels of political participation such that some national origin groups exhibit no difference from Whites (Wong et al. 2011). As noted before, Asians are highly diverse with regard to their linguistic and religious diversity and have higher socioeconomic stratification than that of Latinos, the other panethnic group with a large percentage of recent immigrants (Lopez and Espiritu 1990). Finally, the specific histories of migration play a significant role in the behavior of Asian immigrants as the reasons for migration range from seeking working-class jobs, fleeing political and religious turmoil, attending higher educational institutions, to job-seeking in some of the most highly skilled industries. Such variation in migration and national histories, as even the reasons for migration within a sending country change over time, have a significant impact on both what they bring with them and their reception in the U.S.

The aim of this paper is therefore to both test the efficacy of two contemporary individual-level approaches in explaining the Asian puzzle and to demonstrate the continued need for a more nuanced understanding of group-level effects via national origin. To do so this

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<sup>15</sup> Another potential dimension to this argument concerns low feelings of efficacy resulting from perceptions of insufficient numbers to affect elections and policy. One might expect that local concentrations of Asian Americans would increase the likelihood of participation in those areas. However, Wong and colleagues (2011) do not find that geographic concentration is associated with participation. Both Diaz (2012) and Cho, Gimpel, and Dyck (2006) in looking at the effects of neighborhood contexts find that there are other factors that can lead them to be both mobilizing and de-mobilizing.

study draws upon the 2016 National Asian American pre-election survey and post-election survey (NAAS) and considers the effects of two measures of political socialization (percentage of education outside the US and democracy scores of respondents' sending country) and two measures of group consciousness (experiences of discrimination, perception that race affects you). Finally, in an exploratory analysis Asian is disaggregated in the full models to consider the impact of separate national origin groups. Findings suggest that neither group consciousness nor initial attempts to model political socialization are sufficient in their current forms to significantly explain the ongoing disparity in Asian political participation. Moreover, the high variability in the effects of national origin on political participation point to the need for a more nuanced consideration of the Asian story of political incorporation and possibly the selection of specific cases for further analysis.

### *Political Socialization*

Political socialization refers to the process by which individuals come to learn and internalize norms of how they can and should behave in the political institutions in which they live (Glasberg 2010). Within the predominant theory of political participation, the resource model places processes of political socialization as key to individual resources by causally tracing civic skills and political interests to the institutional involvement through which they are learned (Verba et al. 1995; Brady et al. 1995). However, immigrants, by virtue of moving between political environs, are often politically socialized in ways that develop skills and orientations that are distinct from the native population and may fail to aid in their political incorporation (Lee and Kye 2016). Immigrants' political socialization can be considered both in terms of the extent to which their educational training occurs through US or foreign institutions

and the extent to which the formal democratic institutions of their sending country differ from those of the United States.

Whereas individuals' educational attainment overall is a primary predictor for many forms of civic participation, the extent to which one is educated overseas can lower one's likelihood of participation. Research studying the effects of educational contexts suggests that they foster civic knowledge and political tolerance (Campbell 2008; Campbell, Levinson, and Hess 2012). However, when looking at the case of Asian Americans, a common finding is that high levels of education alone may not be positively associated with civic participation. Janelle Wong and colleagues (2011) in their study of the 2008 election found, paradoxically, that high levels of education among foreign-born Asians were associated with lower rates of both formal and informal political participation. The high selectivity of some Asian American groups (Lee and Zhou 2015), particularly those that fit well into the "model minority" stereotype of high income and education, means they frequently arrive with professional and doctoral degrees. Such individuals have therefore received the vast majority of the potential political socialization and civic training they would have received in school overseas (Nee and Holbrow 2013). In contrast, Latinos, the other group constituting a large percentage of recent immigrants, have far fewer educational and economic resources as well as more frequently having a precarious legal status (Drouhot and Nee 2019; Zhou and Gonzales 2019). Thus, it is less likely that their political behaviors would be imprinted by schooling in their country of origin.

Another factor to consider within the process of political socialization is the individual's exposure and socialization into to a political regime other than the United States. The dominant perspective on political socialization emphasizes the early years in childhood during which individuals form political beliefs and values that become resistant to change as they age (Easton

and Dennis 1969). Empirical support has bolstered this perspective, suggesting that government turnover and regime performance have significant effects on political support (Bilodeau et al. 2010). Studies comparing immigrants to Israel from Western democracies and the USSR found that migrants from the USSR were less trusting of government and had a lower sense of political efficacy but more respect for authority than their counterparts from the US (Gitelman 1982). Similar findings have been produced for immigrants to Australia (McAllister and Makkai 1992) and in studies of the World Values Survey (Rice and Feldman 1997). The extent to which the sending country is democratic also is seen to be associated with immigrants' likelihood of voting in the receiving country as confirmed in studies by Bueker (2005) and Ramakrishnan (2005). When this mechanism is considered for immigrants to America, Asian-origin immigrants present some of the highest variability. Of the six largest Asian national heritage groups, two—China and Vietnam—are designated as “unfree” by the Freedom House Index, while others, such as Korea and Japan, score similarly to Western European countries, and several have seen significant change in political regimes over the lifetime of immigration from those countries.

### *Group Consciousness*

Group consciousness refers to individuals' feelings and beliefs that their membership to a group, either as a matter of their personal assertion of an identity or as a result of being assigned a category or label, has an impact on their position in society (Martinez and Gonzalez 2021). Typically, it is thought that feelings of similarity as a product of common characteristics (such as common language, religion, and socioeconomic status), perceptions of discrimination, and sense of shared circumstance all contribute to group consciousness (Lopez and Espiritu 1990). In the context of racial group identities group consciousness can play a role in mobilizing group members for political action. Group consciousness can act as a signifier of both an awareness of

racial categorization, discrimination, and marginalized status and therefore, it has been argued, motivates individuals to act collectively to gain access to political resources ((McClain and Stewart 2003; Miller et al. 1981; Stokes 2003). Group consciousness when it coalesces around an identity can also provide a resource that ethnic and racial leaders and organizations draw upon for broader mobilization (Okamoto and Mora 2014). Much of the initial study of racial group consciousness has focused on its role in encouraging political participation within the African American community (Dawson, 1994; Tate, 1994; Verba and Nie, 1972). Group consciousness has also been found to impact participation for Latinos (Sanchez 2006). In the context of Asians, group consciousness is studied in terms of its role in motivating panethnic identification or identification through labels such as “Asian” or “Asian American” as opposed to their national origin identities (Masuoka 2006; Junn and Masuoka 2008).

There are reasons to suspect, however, that group consciousness is not yet a significant factor for Asian American political participation. As has been argued by advocates of group consciousness’s role in political participation, it is the awareness of disadvantaged status among minority groups that motivates their participation. However, Asian Americans are among the highest socioeconomic status group in America which may somewhat dampen the need to politicize group consciousness (Wong et al. 2011). Another significant hindrance to group consciousness is the challenge of forming a cohesive identity around the Asian panethnic label. For group consciousness to act as an effective resource for collective mobilization it requires coherent identities or labels around which individual members organize (Lopez and Espiritu 1990). In contrast to Latinos who for the most part share a common language and religion, Asians are highly linguistically and religiously diverse as well as occupying more highly stratified socioeconomic positions (Drouhot and Garip 2021). Under the predominant model of

panethnic identity, such internal variation is likely to hinder the formation of group consciousness around the panethnic or racial category of “Asian” or “Asian American.” If Asian Americans’ low group consciousness is the cause of lower political participation, we would expect that consideration of group consciousness in a cross-racial comparative model would reduce Asian Americans’ voting disparities relative to other groups.

### *National Origin*

Although the Asian political participation gap has been studied as an identifiable phenomenon, the aggregation of a highly diverse number of national origin groups under the Asian label obscures a significant amount of internal variation. As noted earlier, there are reasons to both suspect that these contemporary theories remain insufficient to eliminate the disparity in political participation between Asians and other racial groups as well as the need to consider the specific national origin groups and their histories of immigration. National origin captures a significant amount of variation not included in existing controls and helps to recognize the significant variation in participation between Asian subgroups of national origin. Indeed, as found later in this study, the variation within Asian national origin groups includes those that closest hold to the pattern of low participation and those whose levels of participation are indistinguishable from native-born Whites.

Although Asian immigrants to the U.S. hail from a significant number of countries, six national origin groups account for 85% of the adult Asian American population in the United States (US Census Bureau). In order of size of their US resident populations, these are Chinese, Indians, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Koreans, and Japanese. It is these six national origin groups whose histories of immigration I will briefly cover in the sections below.

A useful starting point for understanding the impact of national origin first lies in U.S. migration policy, citizenship rules, and state classification. State classification processes are pivotal in public policymaking and the treatment immigrants receive from civil society groups (Ngai 2014). State classification is perhaps most influential in determining the terms of eligibility for migration to the United States. Immigrants of “Asian” national origin were the primary targets of national origin policies starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the 1924 National Origins Act which allowed for a limited quota system favoring migrants from western European countries and, finally, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (Hart-Celler Act) which abolished the National Origins Act, accounting for the arrival of the vast majority of current Asian American immigrants (Wong et al. 2011). As argued by Wong and colleagues (2011), the effect of these national origin-centered migration policies and subsequent government classification has bolstered Asian self-identification along national origin groups rather than racial or panethnic labels. Since 1965, despite the removal of absolute barriers to immigration from Asian nations, the criterion for mobilization is filtered through three categories: family reunification, professional skills, and refugee provisions. As such, the vast majority of recent Asian immigrants are disproportionately highly skilled professionals or, if belonging to a working-class background, are likely the result of family sponsorship (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965).

### *Six Asian Heritage Groups*

Chinese Americans constitute the largest Asian national origin group at nearly 3 million (Wong 2011). Although Chinese were some of the first to arrive in the U.S. in large numbers following the Gold Rush and building of the transcontinental railroad, their population was nearly halved following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (Takaki 1989). Of the current

Chinese American population, the pre-1965 arrivals constitute less than 5% of the total. In the wake of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act the vast majority of Chinese immigrants arrived in the US. In many ways these recent immigrants are some of the closest to the “model minority” stereotype that Asians are of high income and education with nearly half in professional occupations, a trend which continues into the present (Takaki 1989). Apart from the professional pathways to US visas, many Chinese are sponsored by family already living in the US, introducing a degree of variation in socioeconomic backgrounds.

Asian Indians (henceforth Indians), the second largest Asian national origin group, similarly arrived largely after 1965, their population prior ranging only from 6,500 to 8,000 (Takaki 1989; Sheth 1995). Even more so than the Chinese American population, Indians overwhelmingly belong to professional occupations, resulting in the highest average income of any immigrant group. Of the six Asian origin groups listed, Indians also have the highest percentage of recent immigrants and continue to maintain the highest growth rate (US Census 2008). This recency, some have argued, has resulted in a greater focus on sending-country politics and activities than U.S. politics relative to other Asian immigrant groups (Mishra 2009; Sheth 1995).

Filipinos, the third largest group, are distinct from other Asian national-origin groups as they initially arrived as subjects of a US territory (US sanctioned the Philippines in 1898) although thousands of these early migrants returned to the Philippines following the Philippine Repatriation Act, the Great Depression, and the establishment of Filipino independence (Ngai 2014). As such, the majority of current Filipino migrants are similarly recent post-1965 arrivals. Although many Filipinos come to the US as professionals, a significant proportion of Filipino immigrants are undocumented and struggle financially (Wong et al. 2011).

Japanese Americans are the earliest to arrive in the U.S. in significant numbers and maintain a majority of their current population as descendants of these early immigrants, with the majority arriving prior to the 1924 National Origins Act. These early immigrants arrived to work as farmers in California and Hawaii (Chan 1991). In contrast to the treatment of Asian immigrants post-1965, early Japanese immigrants found themselves targeted by both new migration laws inhibiting new immigrants and laws expressly passed to prohibit Japanese immigrants from owning land in California (1913 California Alien Land Law) (Wong et al. 2011). As such, many worked as tenant farmers, producing much of the consumer agriculture for southern California. Immediately following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt passed an executive order calling for the internment of Japanese Americans and immigrants. Contemporary Japanese American political participation therefore must be understood through a generational lens indicating the distance from the experience of internment. Whereas first generation Japanese Americans (*Issei*) were hesitant to address their experiences of internment, the second and third generation (*Nisei* and *Sansei*) were responsible for the organization of the Asian identity movement and fight for reparations after internment (Chan 1991; Takezawa 1991). The current Japanese American population is predominantly in their third and later generations with relatively few recent first-generation immigrants.

Korean Americans are both majority post-1965 arrivals and have a high percentage with a professional background. Unlike other immigrant groups, Korean migration appears to have slowed significantly since 2000 (Wong et al. 2011). Despite many having a college education or former employment as professionals, many experienced discrimination and licensing restrictions. Many turned to self-employment by opening small businesses as a result, with a significant number of southern Californian liquor and grocery stores owned by Koreans (Min 2006). Such

businesses shaped inter-ethnic relations between Korean shop owners and the often-Black communities they served. Korean business in Los Angeles and New York have been subjected to boycotts by the local African American communities. Most notably, Korean-owned stores were targeted during the L.A. riots, resulting in the burning and/or looting of more than 2,300 Korean-owned establishments (Kitano and Daniels 2001). This event triggered greater formation of Korean American ethnic organizations to address consumer boycotts and communal violence and has had a lasting impact on their political attentiveness (Min 2006). Finally, it should be noted that since 1965, Korea has undergone significant transitions both economically and politically. Korea now stands as the 12<sup>th</sup> largest economy (World Bank) and transitioned from an autocratic government to a democracy in 1987. Given the slowing of recent Korean immigrants, the majority of Korean Americans with US citizenship arrived prior to many of these significant changes in their origin country.

Vietnamese Americans are distinct from the other aforementioned groups in that the majority arrived in the U.S. as political refugees or family members of refugees, many of whom arrived immediately following the fall of Saigon in 1975 with more arriving in the following years fleeing the country in small boats (Kitano and Daniels 2001). Their refugee status also distinguishes them in terms of their received support from the US government. This support came largely in the form of refugee assistance programs which settled Vietnamese throughout the country (although many have since remigrated to concentrate in ethnic enclaves) (Baker and North 1984). Their refugee status as well as exceptions made for family reunification resulted in Vietnamese largely bucking the trend of Asian high socioeconomic status, with 25% living in poverty (Chuong and Ta 2003). Vietnamese have one of the highest rates of naturalization,

similar in many ways to the other Latino refugee group, Cubans. Similarly, among their racial counterparts they are exceptionally Republican-leaning (Collet and Seldon 2003).

### *Propositions*

Political socialization is thought to play an important part in developing both the civic skills individuals need to effectively engage in formal and informal politics and their general interest in engaging in politics and collective issues. This study uses two measures of political socialization: the percentage of one's education that occurred overseas and the democracy scores of respondents' sending country. While these measures are theoretically important for capturing the myriad processes of political socialization, they still fall far short of wholly capturing its effects on participation.

*Proposition 1a: Political socialization: The greater the percentage of an individual's education in an overseas institution, the lower their likelihood of political participation.*

*Proposition 1b: Political socialization: The higher the average democratic origin score of a 1<sup>st</sup>-generation Asian immigrant's country of origin in the 10 years prior to their arrival in the U.S., the higher their likelihood of political participation.*

Group consciousness is commonly thought to play an important role in motivating minority political participation as greater recognition of shared interests along racial lines and experiences of discrimination increase individuals' willingness to contribute to collective actions. Asian Americans have faced significant challenges to forming group consciousness given their high internal linguistic, socioeconomic, and religious variation, not to mention diverse histories of migration. There are two general propositions regarding group consciousness:

*Proposition 2a: Group consciousness—measured as both experiences of discrimination and perceptions of shared fate—increases the likelihood of political participation across all groups.*

If group consciousness has significant impacts on political participation and Asian Americans have lower political participation, we would expect that the inclusion of group consciousness measures to remove the significant disparity in Asians' likelihood of voting relative to other groups (i.e. Whites).

*Proposition 2b: Inclusion of group consciousness measures will render “Asian” not significantly different from Whites in likelihood of voting.*

Finally, while specific propositions are not provided, the disaggregation of Asian into distinct national origin groups will be used to investigate the broad variation along these lines. As noted in the national origins section, there is significant diversity between these groups with respect to their cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and histories of migration.

### *Data*

This study draws upon the National Asian American 2016 post-election survey or NAAS (N=6448) (Ramakrishnan et al. 2020). The post-election survey was conducted between November 17, 2016, and March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017. It consists of nationally representative samples of respondents who identified as Asian/Asian American, Latino, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (NHPI), African American/Black, and Multiracial. Specific count data for these groups are available in appendix B-1. Sizable samples of Asian American national origin groups were included for the post-election survey: Chinese, Cambodian, Filipino, Hmong, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Vietnamese. Specific count data for these groups are

available in appendix B-2. In addition to questions that capture basic demographic information, respondents were asked about their social identities, social attitudes, political behavior, policy attitudes, and immigrant backgrounds. Respondents were randomly selected for telephone interviews from a national listed sample stratified by race and national origin. In addition to this sample, the post-election survey drew an additional sample of Latino respondents in California using the same method limited to state residents. Interviews were typically 25 minutes in duration and conducted in 11 languages chosen according to the interviewees' preference. The response rate of the pre-election survey was 21.8% and roughly 20% for the post-election survey (Ramakrishnan et al. 2020).<sup>16</sup>

#### *Dependent Variable*

Political participation is conceptualized simply as voting which is measured by asking respondents if they had voted in that November's (2016) presidential election with responses recoded as either yes (1) or no (0) (*Voted in presidential election*). Missing data for voting is presented by racial group in appendix B-1 and by Asian national origin group in appendix B-2. To consider how the mean of voting changes with the removal of missing observations, Table 1 presents these means if missing for age is removed and if missing for the question about the extent to which race affects you is removed.<sup>17</sup>

[Table 1 about here]

#### *Independent Variables*

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<sup>16</sup> The NAAS 2016 post-election survey data can be publicly accessed on ICPSR at: <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR37380.v1>.

<sup>17</sup> Voted has a missing rate of 10.67% in the full sample and 9.17% for Asians. Based on my experiences in the interview process (see Appendix C), I strongly suspect that those less likely to respond to questions about voting are themselves less likely to vote given that both are likely shaped by anxiety toward political engagement.

To capture group consciousness, two variables are used. *Racial consciousness* is a variable intended to capture the most typical conceptualization of group consciousness as a matter of perceptions of shared fate and common group interest, in this case along racial lines (Okamoto 2003). Respondents were asked the question “Do you think what happens to other [RESPONDENT’S RACE] in this country affects what happens in your life?” with a follow question for those that responded “yes” asking if it affected them “a lot, some, or not very much.” Using these answers, I created a variable that assigns respondents a score of 1 for “no,” 2 for “not very much,” 3 for “some,” and 4 for “a lot.” *Experience of discrimination* is a count variable of the total number of types of unfair treatment respondents claim to have experienced from a list. These include poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores, people acting as if you do not speak English, people acting as if they are afraid of you, people acting as if they think you are dishonest, being called names or insulted, being threatened or harassed, and having your name mispronounced.

To look at political socialization, two variables are included. *Democratic origins* is a measure intended to capture the democracy score of the political regime of the respondent’s sending country. It is constructed using the Freedom House Index’s “Freedom in the World” (FIW) report scores for the political rights and civil liberties in countries.<sup>18</sup> The FIW report has been made annually since 1972 and presents the best option for assigning a political socialization score to respondents given the long time period over which the reports have been conducted relative to other comparable measures. The civil liberties and the political rights of each country are evaluated on a 1-7 scale with 7 being “not free” and 1 being “full democracy.” Between the years of 1972 and 2016, each Asian country of origin in my sample was assigned a democracy

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<sup>18</sup> The Freedom House Index’s country ratings are available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>.

score for the average of the combined civil liberty and political rights score whose averages would range from 1 to 7. These values were then reverse coded to be more intuitive so that higher scores would signify that a country was more democratic and had greater rights and civil liberties. Foreign-born respondents were then assigned democracy scores based on the average democracy score of their country of origin over the ten years prior to their arrival in the United States. Ten years were selected rather than the single score of the year of departure given that political socialization is a process of political norm adoption and therefore takes time to develop. Many countries in the sample also saw rapid changes over the 1972-2016 period, and sudden historical shifts—such as the transition to democratic voting in Korea in 1987—result in significant and sudden changes in annual democracy ratings for some countries. *Democratic origins* scores could not be attributed to Hmong respondents given that they are dispersed across multiple countries. *Democratic origins* scores could also not be calculated for non-Asian respondents as respondents of other racial groups were not asked about national origin. A theoretical weakness in the current construction of the *Democratic origins* variable is that it does not match the democracy scores to the age at which political socialization is most impactful for long-term attitudes (Easton and Dennis 1969 in Bilodeau et al. 2010). Furthermore, whereas the FIW report produces scores using countries' adherence to formal laws it does not directly measure individuals' attitudes about politics such as trust in government or political efficacy.

*Overseas education* is a measure of the percentage foreign born respondents' education obtained outside the US. It divides the score on the question for the highest level of education obtained outside the US by a respondent's score for their highest degree or level of schooling obtained overall. *Overseas education* is calculated this way as a measure of the extent to which

the socialization in the educational system occurred in a non-US school. Notably, however, there is no indication that international schools are considered in the question wording.

### *Controls*

Socioeconomic status was captured in the variables *Income* and *Education*. To capture *Income*, respondents were asked “which of the following best describes the total income earned by everyone in your household last year?” Respondents were then presented with seven income value ranges denoted in thousands of dollars; <20, 20-50, 50-75, 75-100, 100-125, 125-250, >=250. In order to increase the response rate<sup>19</sup>, a follow-up question was asked presenting broader ranges for those refusing to answer the initial question. These ranges were less than \$50k, \$50-100k, and greater than \$100k annual combined household income. The measure for income ultimately used in analyses combines these questions in order to increase response rates, recording answers to the first question (using more precise ranges) using the broader income ranges in the second question. To capture *Education*, respondents were asked “what is the highest degree or level of schooling you have completed?” with respondents able to select from a number of ranges ordered from no schooling completed to graduate or professional degree.<sup>20</sup>

Certain demographic and migration related variables were treated as controls in the models. The demographic controls are common across all stages of analysis and are composed of a variable for *Age* and a variable for gender (*Female*). *Age* was calculated from a question asking respondents what year they were born and a follow-up question asking non-responders on the

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<sup>19</sup> The original measure of income before being combined with the follow-up question on income, had a missing rate of 17.51% whereas the new measure of income described above, which combines responses from the follow-up question on income, has a missing response rate of 12.83%. Appendix B-4 can be used to compare the missing response rate for income across racial groups.

<sup>20</sup> The survey questionnaire instructs interviewers to terminate the survey if respondents refused to answer or “did not know” in response to questions about education, gender, and nativity. As such, there were no missing for these three variables.

first question about age to specify their age using broader age ranges. Due to an 11.77% missing response rate on the first question of age, the final age variable fits responses from the first age question to the 5 age ranges offered in the follow-up question: 18-24, 25-34, 35-49, 50-64, and greater than or equal to 65. The final measure of age has a 4.34% missing response rate. For gender, respondents were asked simply “what is your gender” with response categories restricted to male or female. If respondents answered that they did not know or refused to answer the survey interview was terminated. In the models, the variable *Female* is used, coded as 1 if respondents identified as female and 0 if identified as male. Migration related variables include *Foreign born* for whether respondents were foreign or native born, and *English interview* for whether the interview was conducted in English. *Foreign born* was coded as a 1 if respondents answered that they were not born in the U.S. and 0 if they were. For the English interview variable, interviewers coded whether the interview was conducted in English or another language, with 1 coded as English and 0 as some other language. *Years since arrival* was included to take into consideration how long first-generation immigrants have lived in the US. It is calculated using respondents’ reported year of arrival subtracted from the year the survey was conducted, 2016.

*Race and ethnicity* of respondents are included, which include racial subgroups such as White, Black, Asian, Latino, and Asian national origin groups such as Korean or Indian. *Race and ethnicity* is created using several questions on self-identified race and ethnicity and which racial group respondents “most identified with.” The resulting categories in the post-election survey are Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (NHPI), White (non-Hispanic), Black, Latino, and 11 Asian national origin groups; Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong (technically ethnic, not national), Indian, Japanese, Korean, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Vietnamese. Descriptive

statistics for variables used in the study are available in Table 1. Descriptive statistics by separate racial groups are available in appendix B-1 and by separate Asian national origin groups in appendix B-2. The descriptive statistics in these tables provide mean, standard deviation, and variable type and/or range for the variables used in the following analyses. A correlation matrix to see how voting correlates to other key variables and controls is available in Table 2 and the same correlation matrix is reproduced for an Asian respondent-only sample in Table 3.

[Tables 2 and 3 about here]

#### *Analysis: Group Consciousness and Political Socialization Models*

In order to consider the effect of group consciousness and political socialization, two tables are presented which apply measures for these theories, respectively. Table 4, which focuses on the effects of group consciousness on voting, presents the log odds regression coefficients for voting presenting multiple models organized in the table columns 1-3. Column 1, the base model, includes basic demographic, migration, and socioeconomic status measures including *race*, which allows us to get a sense of the existing racial disparities in voting prior to the addition of group consciousness measures. Column 2 presents the same model with the addition of the two measures of group consciousness—*Racial consciousness* and *Discrimination experiences*. Finally, column 3 presents this expanded model while disaggregating Asian into Asian national origin groups. This final model allows us to see the distinctions in voting along separate Asian heritage groups.

Table 5, which focuses on political socialization effects on voting, presents the log odds regression coefficients for voting in multiple models.<sup>21</sup> Column 1 (or model 1) includes all the

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<sup>21</sup> To clarify which respondents are included in which models in Table 5: Columns 1-3 include only foreign born, and columns 4-6 are foreign-born Asian respondents (with the exception of Hmong) only.

typical controls (demographic, socioeconomic, race, and English interview) as well as one measure of political socialization—*Overseas education*. The second model, column 2, presents the same model with the inclusion of *years since arrival*. Given that the political socialization measures are both restricted to the foreign born, inclusion of *years since arrival* is now possible. Column 3 presents a model identical to the second except with Asian disaggregated into national origin groups. Column 4 presents the basic controls with the inclusion of *Democratic origins*. Note that since non-Asian respondents were not asked about their national origin, the sample is restricted to Asian foreign-born respondents that identified national origin heritage (to the exclusion of Hmong respondents). Asian is also disaggregated for all models that included *Democratic origins*. The reference category in these models is Indian, given that their voter turnout was not significantly different from Whites in model 3 (column 3) of the table. Column 5 repeats the model of column 4 with the addition of *years since arrival*. Finally, column 6 presents the full political socialization model including both *Democratic origins* and *overseas education* as well as the control for *years since arrival*.

[Table 4 about here]

Looking at Table 4 in column 1 in the base model gives us a sense of the initial disparity in voting rates between Asian and White respondents, with a significant negative coefficient for Asian (-.501, significant at the .05 level). Moving from column 1 to column 2 adds the effects of both measures of group consciousness. In this model, respondents that report that race affects their lives “some” or “a lot” being significantly more likely than those that claim that race does not affect their lives. Similarly, respondents that reported higher counts of discrimination experiences in different areas were significantly more likely to vote. The addition of these measures did not render “Asian” significantly less likely than White respondents to vote,

although the coefficient's magnitude decreased from -.501 to -.446. So while there is support for proposition 2a, in that greater group consciousness does increase the likelihood of voting, proposition 2b is not supported or inconclusive, given that Asians are still significantly less likely to vote relative to Whites. Moving from column 2 to column 3, Asian is disaggregated into national origin groups (Hmong, admittedly, being an ethnic group), and we see both that the group consciousness measures are still significant and that there is high variation within the Asian category along these national origin lines. With White as the reference category, column 3's model shows that many Asian national origin groups are actually not reporting voting rates significantly different from Whites, such as Japanese, Indian, and Vietnamese to name those that belong to the six largest Asian subgroups. Furthermore, it would appear that the majority of the effect of Asian overall voting disparity relative to Whites results from just a few groups, namely Chinese, Koreans, Cambodians (who all demonstrated negative coefficients significant at the .01 or lower level), and possibly Filipinos and Hmong (whose coefficients were only significant at the .05 level). The disaggregation of Asian into national origin groups also improves model fit, with pseudo r-squared increasing from .109 in column 2 to .129 in column 3.

[Table 5 about here]

Turning now to Table 5 to look at political socialization measures we find in columns 1 and 2 that the coefficient for *overseas education* is not significant either before or after the addition of *years since arrival*.<sup>22</sup> The reference category in both these columns (as well as in column 3) is no longer White but Latino due to small numbers of White foreign-born respondents. Using Latino as the reference category, one might expect voting disparities with Asians would be somewhat muted relative to Asians' voting disparities with Whites given

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<sup>22</sup> Keep in mind that the inclusion of the political socialization variables implies that the data used in these models is restricted to foreign-born only.

Latinos' somewhat lower voting rates than Whites (as reported in Study 1). However, as demonstrated in columns 1 and 2, the coefficient for Asians' likelihood of voting relative to Latinos is negative and significant at the .001 level despite inclusion of *overseas education* and *years since arrival*. In column 3 Asian is disaggregated into national origin groups to identify how these groups vote relative to Latinos. *Years since arrival* is now significant at the .05 level although *overseas education* continues to have no significant effect. We see that there is variation by Asian national origin groups but all but two, Indian and Bangladeshi, are significantly less likely to vote than Latinos. The patterns in columns 1-3 therefore do not provide any notable support for proposition 1a, that the more one's education is completed overseas the less likely they would be to vote.

Moving to column 4, the inclusion of *democratic origins* restricts the data to foreign born Asians, thus other racial groups are no longer in the model. Surprisingly, in column 4 the coefficient for democratic origins is negative, significant at the .05 level. In columns 5 and 6, *years since arrival* and *overseas education* are added one after the other. The coefficients for both measures of political socialization—*overseas education* and *democratic origins*—are not significant in these columns, and *democratic origins* is now positive. Thus, *democratic origins* is only significant in the most limited political socialization model, found in column 4. However, some of the most significant disparities in Asian national origin group voting relative to Indians persist into the full political socialization model (column 6). These are, namely, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, and Cambodian, all of which were significantly less likely than Indians to vote.

Overall, whereas the group consciousness theory measures were well supported in the models of Table 4, the political socialization theory measures did not find much support in the models of Table 5. Of the original propositions, then, only proposition 2a demonstrated

consistent support across multiple models. What is, perhaps, most striking about the models in both tables is the extent of internal variation within Asian demonstrated when Asian is disaggregated into national origin groups. Many of the disparities in voting between national origin groups are quite consistent across models. Therefore, the findings suggest further investigation of specific national origin groups and may be used to identify useful cases for comparison.

### *Discussion*

This study has sought to resolve the Asian puzzle by applying theories of group consciousness and political socialization. Both variables of group consciousness behaved as expected, increasing the likelihood of voting although they were insufficient to fully remove Asians' disparity in voting relative to Whites in Table 4 or Latinos in Table 5 (columns 1-3). In contrast, of the two measures of political socialization, only one was significant in one of the three models in which it was included and demonstrated the opposite of its expected relationship with voting. While these contemporary theories seek to explain Asians' voting behavior through universal individual-level mechanisms, the internal variation within Asian along national origin group lines suggests the need for closer analysis. While some demonstrate patterns of voting that are emblematic of the Asian puzzle of lower turnout, such as Chinese, still others, such as Japanese, are more comparable to White respondents in their voting behaviors. Such patterns turn our attention to the national origin group-level and the possibility of finding new mechanisms within national heritage groups that help to explain this variation. The challenge for contemporary scholars may be to reconsider how their mechanisms change with the inclusion of

these national heritage groups or how the group-level captures a significant degree of the factors that co-influence their causal mechanism.

Returning to the specific cases of the six major national origin groups, there is still significant need for greater investigation along heritage group-level lines. While some national origin groups' behavior is more predictable, as in the case of Vietnamese as a largely refugee group and Japanese having undergone multiple generations in the U.S. and the experience of internment, others have histories of migration that do not immediately lend one to an easy prediction of high or low political participation. One might expect Indian and Filipino immigrants to participate at roughly similar levels given higher degrees of English fluency, shared histories of western colonial occupation, and comparable democratic origins scores yet Indians were found to exhibit rates of participation similar to Japanese while Filipinos did not.

A skin-deep analysis of Asian heritage group effects through regression analysis, however, may be deceptive as to our conclusions about the common or differential causes for high and low voter turnout. The cases of Japanese, Vietnamese, and Indian immigrants are all distinct and, while they all may exhibit high rates of participation, they are likely for very different reasons given their variable histories of immigration and reception.

In the next chapter, I follow upon the need for investigation of heritage group-level mechanisms through a series of interviews with 3 distinct Asian heritage groups—Japanese, Indian, and Chinese Americans. I propose to utilize concepts of culture (civic habitus, group position, and tool kits) to consider the mechanisms by which immigrants from several distinct heritage groups have been differentially politically incorporated. Such concepts aid in theorizing how understandings of political engagement in the sending country are replanted and reformulated within a wholly new political and social environment.

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Table 1: Descriptives (Mean, Standard Deviation, % Missing, Mean if Missing Removed) for Key Variables, All Races, NAAS 2016 Post-Election

	Mean	SD	% missing	Range	Mean if age!=.	SD	Mean if income!=.	SD	Mean if raceaffectsyou !=.	SD	Mean if voted!=.	SD
income	1.731	0.804	12.83%	3 cat	1.737	0.804	N/A	N/A	1.749	0.808	1.775	0.809
education	4.039	1.51	0	5 cat	4.027	1.494	4.046	1.502	4.089	1.478	4.143	1.464
age (num)	53.981	19.19	11.77%	18-100	N/A	N/A	53.749	19.028	53.544	19.244	54.007	19.438
age (cat)	3.648	1.288	4.34%	5 cat	N/A	N/A	3.642	1.28	3.621	1.299	3.65	1.303
female	0.503		0	0/1	0.5		0.497		0.489		0.491	
foreign born	0.623		0	0/1	0.606		0.617		0.612		0.587	
English	0.621		0	0/1	0.628		0.621		0.624		0.661	
racial consciousness	2.346	1.202	8.65%	1-4 scale	2.35	1.201	2.358	1.201	N/A	N/A	2.356	1.2
discrim. exp.	2.095	1.905	0.12%	0-9	2.096	1.885	2.125	1.902	2.157	1.922	2.136	1.908
voted	0.829		10.67%	0/1	0.831		0.829		0.835		N/A	N/A

Note: read "if VARNAME!=" as if VARNAME is not missing. This shows how the mean changes when missing are removed.

Note: interviews were terminated if respondents answered questions about female, nativity, and education with a refusal or "don't know" response, hence the 0 missing.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Variables Used in Models, 2016 NAAS Post-Election

	income	educ	age (num)	age (cat)	female	foreign	English	race affects you	discrim	voted	democ. origins	educ outside US
income	1											
educ	.492*	1										
age (num)	-.179*	-.165*	1									
age (cat)	-.144*	-.151*	.	1								
female	-.122*	-.156*	.036*	.036*	1							
foreign	-.161*	-.211*	.225*	.234*	0.004	1						
English	.343*	.433*	-.292*	-.287*	-.105*	-.546*	1					
race affects you	-.008	0.021	-.112*	-.112*	.056*	-.031*	.037*	1				
discrimination	.070*	.124*	-.190*	-.173*	-.079*	-.066*	.165*	.195*	1			
voted	.167*	.250*	.053*	.053*	-.034*	-.095*	.160*	.054*	.069*	1		
democracy scores	-.344*	-.485*	.252*	.246*	.055*	.	-.553*	-.069*	-.258*	-.143*	1	
education outside US	-.195*	-.228*	.335*	.320*	.074*	.	-.257*	-.022	-.103*	-.052*	-.022	1

Note: democracy scores and education outside the US are restricted to foreign-born only. Age (cat) is used in analytical models. Age (num) refers to the continuous, numerical measure of age and is included for descriptive purposes here but is not used in the logistic regression models.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Variables Used in Models, Restricted to Asian Respondents, 2016 NAAS Post-Election

	income	educ	age (num)	age (cat)	female	foreign	English	race affects you (scale)	discrim	voted	democ. origins	educ outside US
income	1											
educ	.509*	1										
age (num)	-.209*	-.176*	1									
age (cat)	-.169*	-.162*	.960*	1								
female	-.106*	-.182*	0.0003	0.005	1							
foreign	-.183*	-.211*	.336*	.345*	0.02	1						
English	.361*	.432*	-.366*	-.357*	-.124*	-.437*	1					
race affects you	0.031	.051*	-.157*	-.156*	.044*	-.065*	.079*	1				
discrim	.117*	.187*	-.212*	-.197*	-.074*	-.088*	.219*	.193*	1			
voted	0.193*	.283*	.037*	0.031	-.068*	-.082*	.184*	.050*	.107*	1		
dem scores	-.343*	-.484*	.251*	.245*	.057*	.	-.552*	-.067*	-.258*	-.142*	1	
educ outside US	-.176*	-.193*	.381*	.363*	.075*	.	-.211*	-.046*	-.113*	-.051*	0.022	1

Note: democracy scores and education outside the US are restricted to foreign-born only. Age (cat) is used in analytical models.

Table 4: Log-Odds Regression Coefficients of Voting Using Post-Election Survey Presenting a Base Model, Group Consciousness Model, and Combined Model Disaggregating Asian into National Origin Groups

DV: Voted		1	2	3
		base model	group consc. vars	Asian disaggregated
<b>Ivs:</b>				
Income	(ref:<\$50k)			
	50-100	.268*	.275*	.269*
	>100	.560***	.574***	.567***
Educ	(ref:none)			
	some, no hi	0.287	0.271	0.086
	high, GED	.531**	.552**	.240
	some coll.	1.242***	1.259***	.941***
	coll/BA	1.478***	1.463***	1.131***
	grad/prof.	1.689***	1.667***	1.306***
Age	(ref:18-24)			
	25-34	0.158	0.218	0.27
	35-49	.704***	.762***	.737***
	50-64	1.109***	1.208***	1.198***
	>=65	1.192***	1.317***	1.306***
	Female	0.003	-.010	0.031
	Foreign Born	-.066	-.084	.033
	English interview	.428***	.373**	0.232
Race affects you	(ref: "no")			
	not much		0.244	0.263
	some		.317**	.330**
	a lot		.351**	.334**
	Discrimination exp.		.064**	.051*
Race	White (ref)	(reference)	(reference)	(reference)
	Asian	-.501*	-.446*	N/A
	NHPI	-.512	-.697	-.849*
	Black	-.007	-.097	-.081
	Latino	0.397	0.387	.252
Asian heritage	Chinese			-1.034***
	Korean			-.893**
	Japanese			0.296
	Vietnamese			-.127
	Indian			-.273
	Filipino			-.560*
	Hmong			-.627*
	Cambodian			1.317***
	Pakistani			-.383
	Bangladeshi			0.126
constant		-.832**	-.676*	-.212
n		4617	4617	4645
pseudo r2		0.103	0.109	0.129

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Note: Multiracial is included in estimation but hidden in the table (36 cases). Reference category when race and Asian heritage are disaggregated is White (columns 1-3).

Table 5: Log Odds Regression Coefficients for Voting in the 2016 NAAS Post-Election Survey, Political Socialization Variables

DV: Voted		1	2	3	4	5	6
		overseas educ	+years since arrival	Asian disaggregated	democ scores	+years since arrival	full pol social
Ivs:							
Income	(ref:<\$50k)						
	50-100	0.194	0.171	0.129	0.186	0.166	0.148
	>100	0.254	0.225	.190	0.374	0.343	0.311
Educ	(ref:none)						
	some, no hi	.505**	.503**	0.292	0.149	.140	0.051
	high, GED	.718***	.720***	0.316	0.355	0.349	0.224
	some coll.	1.187***	1.175***	.788**	.735*	0.726*	0.538
	coll/BA	1.397***	1.392***	.964***	1.047***	1.035***	.886**
grad/prof.	1.562***	1.559***	1.012***	1.140***	1.124***	.955**	
Age	(ref:18-24)						
	25-34	0.187	0.155	0.265	0.187	0.175	0.295
	35-49	.698*	.617*	.664*	0.587	0.546	.760*
	50-64	.955***	.818**	.898**	.774*	.682*	1.001**
	>=65	1.087***	.902**	.956**	.951**	.839*	1.132**
Female		-.111	-.117	-.048	-.047	-.046	-.071
English interview		.505***	.490***	0.287	.403*	.380	0.382
Education outside US		-.122	-.087	-.201			-.373
Years since arrival			0.007	.014*		0.008	0.005
Democracy scores					-.195*	0.152	0.162
Asian heritage	Chinese			-1.583***	-1.648***	-1.503**	-1.550***
	Korean			-1.289***	-.964**	-.948**	-.955**
	Japanese			-1.123*	.122	-.253	-.271
	Vietnamese			-.559*	-.730	-.559	-.656
	Indian			-.472	(ref cat)	(ref cat)	(ref cat)
	Filipino			-1.137***	-.876**	-.843*	-.863*
	Hmong			-1.242***	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Cambodian			-1.919***	-1.913***	-1.794***	-1.995***
	Pakistani			-.633*	-.416	-.332	-.427
Bangladeshi			0.059	0.292	0.357	0.335	
Race	White	-1.323	-1.351	-1.170			
	Asian	-1.307***	-1.251***	N/A			
	NHPI	-.226	.225	-.134			
	Black	-1.418	-1.370	-1.155			
	Latino	(ref cat)	(ref cat)	(ref cat)			
constant		0.625	0.502	0.582	-1.114	-.909	-.746
n		2760	2760	2760	1900	1900	1900
pseudo r2		0.092	0.0924	0.121	0.121	0.121	0.124

p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Note: Reference category for Asian heritage in columns 4-6 is “Indian” and denoted by “(ref cat).”

Appendix B-1: Descriptives (Mean on Each 1<sup>st</sup> row, SD, % Missing) for Key Variables, Major Ethnoracial Groups, NAAS 2016 Post-Election

	count	income	educ.	age (num)	age (cat)	female	foreign	English int.	racial consc.	discrim. exp.	voted
Asian	4,362	1.781	4.127	53.64	3.619	0.47	0.749	0.569	2.316	2.084	0.802
SD		0.822	1.567	19.465	1.311				1.182	1.849	
% missing		12.56%	0	12.91%	4.29%	0	0	0	9.35%	0.07%	9.17%
NHPI	115	1.934	4.226	55.387	3.712	0.461	0.182	1	2.538	2.243	0.84
SD		0.808	1.207	18.816	1.253				1.181	1.994	
% missing		7.83%	0	7.83%	3.48%	0	0	0	9.57%	0.87%	7.83%
White	408	1.878	4.431	58.771	3.977	0.556	0.083	0.982	1.802	1.559	0.899
SD		0.783	1.169	18.665	1.181				1.086	1.568	
% missing		13.48%	0	7.11%	3.68%	0	0	0	13.24%	0.49%	2.94%
Black	401	1.635	4.119	56.834	3.839	0.594	0.047	0.998	2.818	2.611	0.889
SD		0.761	1.207	18.654	1.231				1.176	2.261	
% missing		14.71%	0	9.73%	5.74%	0	0	0	5.49%	0.75%	1.25%
Latino	1,126	1.479	3.481	52.65	3.587	0.581	0.598	0.503	2.445	2.113	0.889
SD		0.689	1.394	18.198	1.231				1.245	2.016	
% missing		13.68%	0	10.21%	4.53%	0	0	0	5.51%	0.98%	23.27%
Multiracial	36	2.206	4.861	42.906	3.028	0.611	0.111	1	2.571	2.806	0.972
SD		0.729	0.833	16.567	1.253				1.145	2.266	
% missing		5.56%	0	11.11%	0	0	0	0	2.78%	2.78%	0.00%

Appendix B-2: Descriptives (Mean on Each 1<sup>st</sup> Row, SD, % Missing) for Key Variables, Asian Heritage Subgroups, NAAS 2016 Post-Election

	count	income	educ.	age (num)	age (cat)	female	foreign	English	racial consc.	discrim. exp.	voted	overseas education	democ. origins
Chinese	489	1.64	3.992	58.621	3.911	0.536	0.853	0.168	2.234	1.732	0.717		
SD		0.797	0.1479	18.976	1.197				1.12	1.744			
% missing		23.93%	0	25.56%	8.38%	0	0	0	12.68%	0.20%	8.79%	0.72%	22.78%
Korean	500	1.811	4.522	56.677	3.777	0.53	0.816	0.314	2.567	2.004	0.785		
SD		0.813	1.222	20.349	1.339				1.146	1.633			
% missing		5.00%	0	6.60%	1.40%	0	0	0	1.60%	0	7.80%	0.49%	13.48%
Japanese	521	2.059	4.816	60.844	4.031	0.47	0.213	0.834	2.229	2.013	0.942		
SD		0.806	1.067	19.585	1.191				1.137	1.595			
% missing		9.21%	0	7.87%	2.50%	0	0	0	3.84%	0	13.24%	0.90%	52.25%
Vietnamese	502	1.518	3.669	58.18	3.976	0.402	0.904	0.108	2.87	1.761	0.839		
SD		0.712	1.308	16.62	1.133				1.248	1.505			
% missing		8.17%	0	4.78%	1.20%	0	0	0	7.57%	0	6.18%	3.74%	12.33%
Indian	511	2.426	5.274	48.781	3.362	0.358	0.777	0.994	2.347	2.591	0.907		
SD		0.735	0.978	17.692	1.244				1.176	1.728			
% missing		15.07%	0	17.03%	8.22%	0	0	0	7.44%	0	7.63%	5.04%	21.41%
Filipino	512	1.876	4.541	52.927	3.547	0.516	0.623	0.945	2.249	2.636	0.847		
SD		0.796	1.066	20.807	1.415				1.142	2.139			
% missing		10.35%	0	8.59%	5.08%	0	0	0	8.20%	0.20%	6.84%	3.45%	28.53%
Hmong	351	1.361	2.413	45.483	3.223	0.581	0.829	0.462	2.751	2.41	0.66		N/A
SD		0.601	1.467	17.158	1.251				1.059	2.144			N/A
% missing		7.69%	0	15.10%	0.57%	0	0	0	22.22%	0	5.41%	0.69%	N/A
Cambodian	401	1.231	2.139	57.903	3.948	0.576	0.905	0.312	1.988	1.055	0.518		
SD		0.541	1.416	15.325	1.051				1.208	1.681			
% missing		8.23%	0	4.74%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	15.96%	0.25%	21.95%	1.65%	3.03%
Pakistani	320	2.019	4.775	46.951	3.216	0.356	0.834	0.734	2.209	2.194	0.855		
SD		0.828	1.264	18.745	1.340				1.233	1.894			
% missing		18.13%	0	22.50%	7.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0	7.50%	0.00%	7.19%	5.24%	16.48%
Bangladeshi	320	1.777	4.666	37.312	2.524	0.366	0.775	0.959	2.413	2.6	0.873		
SD		0.813	1.078	15.978	1.255				1.224	1.993			
% missing		22.81%	0	21.88%	8.13%	0.00%	0.00%	0	11.56%	0.00%	4.38%	4.84%	15.73%

## Appendix C

### **From Their eyes: Understanding Asian American Political Participation Through Interviews with Japanese, Indian, and Chinese Americans in the Greater Los Angeles Area**

#### *Abstract*

This chapter seeks to identify new potential explanations for differences in Asian voter turnout by considering the unique lived experiences of three different Asian American groups, Japanese, Chinese, and Indian Americans. To do so, a total of 84 interviews are conducted in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area. Whereas the previous studies focused on the civic skills discussed in the resource model and group consciousness and political socialization in the survey data of study 2, these are reconceptualized as civic tool kits, group position, and civic habitus, respectively, which are treated in a broader manner in order to capture more completely the experiences of these groups in the field of civic engagement. Whereas Chinese and Indians were selected on the basis of earlier studies that found they exhibited lower turnout, Japanese were included given their exceptionally high turnout and unique history in the US. The patterns of responses across the three groups reveals a great deal of variation in Asian Americans' political experiences. Chinese interviewees varied widely between mainland Chinese, Hong Kongers, and Taiwanese, with mainlanders demonstrating greater anxiety and hesitancy to engage in politics. Indian interviewees demonstrated both a strong desire to vote and a great deal of interest in politics, although with a notable distinction between professionals and those engaged in small business, the latter being more hesitant and frequently voicing wariness of corruption. In the case of Japanese respondents, narratives of political participation and mobilization focused heavily on the role of historical events, such as internment, WWII, and the intersection of the Asian identity movement with the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War. Asian Americans' political participation is ultimately a product of a dual embeddedness in both the sending country—from

which many of the core lessons about the risks and benefits of participation are learned—and the receiving country in which individuals, acutely aware of their tenuous status as immigrants, are hesitant to stir the murky political waters while in pursuit of the “American Dream” of economic prosperity for their families. Taking these mentalities expressed by Indian and, more so, by Chinese interviewees into account with the unique case of Japanese Americans’ political narratives’ constructed around historical events of incarceration and subsequent political awakening, we are left with a grim hypothesis emphasizing threat. When pathways to the American Dream are blocked by threat or explicitly by coercion, political mobilization is a necessity rather than a vaguely uncertain alternative to prosperity.

### *Introduction*

Between 2000 and 2019, the Asian American population has grown from 10.5 to 18.9 million, the fastest growing racial group relative to their original population in the U.S.<sup>23</sup> (Budiman and Ruiz 2021). Despite being an increasingly significant group of voters, their turnout relative to other racial groups continues to lag behind even when controlling for migration-related factors, as demonstrated in chapter 1. The predominant theory of political participation, the resource model, draws heavily on the key resources of skills, time, and money for predicting participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). However, resources, often measured as socioeconomic status, are the product of individuals’ embeddedness in the contexts, networks, and organizations that produce the civic skills and political interests that mobilize individuals (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995).

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<sup>23</sup> Although, notably, Latino immigrants are both greater in number and demonstrated a 70% increase over the same time period (Budiman and Ruiz 2021).

While such a model presents a better fit for those whose main socializing experiences occurred in the United States or in mainstream U.S. institutions, the variable experiences of immigrants in these regards may be a source of lower formal political participation and adopting different forms of informal participation. Asian Americans of different heritages contend with a number of factors that result in the formation of civic skills and political interests that differ from other groups. These include their group position as both a racial minority and as an immigrant group, the contexts in which they develop feelings and enduring attitudes towards politics, which for first generation immigrants may largely occur in the sending country, and their civic skills which may be learned in contexts and organizations that differ significantly from mainstream Americans' experiences. Moreover, Asian Americans as a group are not uniform in this regard. As noted, particularly in study 2, there is great variation between the six major Asian American national origin groups based on the context of their migration and reception, the political regimes of the sending countries, and their internal diversity with regard to language, religion, and socioeconomic status. Thus, greater investigation is needed in the unique and diverse experiences of different Asian American groups as they engage with the public sphere.

In order to do so, this paper investigates the ways in which Asian Americans engage in the public sphere through a series of 84 semi-structured interviews with LA residents of Japanese, Chinese, and Indian heritage. As established in study 2, Asian Americans demonstrate significant variability in their voter turnout. Indian and Chinese respondents were initially selected on the basis of their identification as the two groups best demonstrating the puzzle of high SES but low turnout (Lien 2001). More recently, Indian respondents demonstrated increasingly high levels of reported voting while Chinese have stayed roughly the same, making the two groups an interesting source of comparison (Ramakrishnan et al. 2012; Ramakrishnan et

al. 2016). In contrast, Japanese Americans were chosen for their exceptionally high rates of voter turnout, which are comparable to Whites, and due to their long and unique historical experiences in the US (Ramakrishnan et al. 2012; Ramakrishnan et al. 2016). While the vast majority of Japanese Americans are in their 3rd and later generations, Indian and Chinese Americans largely arrived after 1965, as did the vast majority of other Asian heritage groups.

In order to capture Asian Americans' experience with the public sphere, interview questions were structured around the concepts of civic tool kits, civic habitus, and group position. Civic tool kits are defined using Ann Swidler's conception of cultural tool kits (1986; 2013) as the repertoires individuals use to construct strategies of action. One may look at tool kits in the ways individuals justify or explain their political action or inaction. Civic tool kits can be considered an adaptation of the resource model's civic skills to the interview context in that it captures individuals' ability to engage with political topics and their own sense of how to be a "good" citizen. Habitus refers to a system of "durable, transposable dispositions" (Bourdieu 1982, p. 53) rather than active, conscious strategies. When limited to the field of civic engagement they would be expressed as general feelings and attitudes about political participation. Civic habitus is unique in the case of first-generation immigrants in that these attitudes are "durable" or continue over time and "transposable" in that they are carried with them as they move into different contexts. While one's civic habitus may be produced in an immigrant's early socialization in the sending country, the general feelings formed about political engagement and the public sphere are carried with them and are also shaped by their sense as new immigrants. In this sense, civic habitus addresses political socialization in the interview context in that it captures the effects of experiences in the sending country on feelings about politics but can also be shaped by experiences in the receiving country as immigrants.

Finally, group position refers to both the racialized position of Asian Americans and the position immigrants find themselves in with regard to how they prioritize their individual and collective goals. A sense of racial group position draws on Blumer's (1958) concept of race prejudice as a sense of group position, drawing on interviewees' perceptions of racial discrimination and the model minority stereotype to gauge their sense of racial group position (Kim 1999; Xu and Lee 2013). Perceptions of discrimination diverge by immigrant generation, however, with first generation immigrants reporting far less discrimination than their subsequent generations (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). As such, I also take into consideration the unique sense of position and priorities for new immigrants in that many report a stronger focus on economic stability as well as an acute awareness of their tenuous status as recent immigrants. Group position as it is used here therefore seeks to capture elements relating to group consciousness, such as preferred identity and sense of shared fate along those identity lines, or experiences of racial discrimination and stereotyping, but, going beyond this, it also captures the sense of position arising from immigrant status and priorities.

Asian Americans' political participation is ultimately a product of a dual embeddedness in both the sending country—from which many of the core lessons about the risks and benefits of participation are learned—and the receiving country in which individuals, acutely aware of their tenuous status as immigrants, are hesitant to stir the murky political waters while in pursuit of the “American Dream” of economic prosperity for their families. These strategies of action are then passed across generations via tight kinship networks and parental oversight, helping to explain the continued gap in voter turnout across successive generations.

When contrasting the cases of Japanese Americans to Indian and Chinese Americans, I find evidence to suggest that early generations of Japanese immigrants initially followed a

strategy of working hard and not becoming involved politically until the events of WWII and Japanese Internment by the US government. In the narrative constructed around these events, these served as key events in the need to mobilize politically. Ultimately, the evidence from the cases presented here leaves us with a grim hypothesis emphasizing the role of threat—or experiencing explicit coercion—in generating political engagement. When the familiar avenues for pursuing the American Dream are blocked overtly, political avenues become a necessity rather than a vaguely uncertain option B for pursuing prosperity.

### *Literature Review*

#### *Problematizing the Resource Model*

In 2019, the median household income of Asian Americans was nearly \$25k greater than the US national median income<sup>24</sup> (Budiman and Ruiz 2021). Measures of socioeconomic status are often found to correlate closely with voter turnout. The predominant theory of political participation, the resource model, emphasizes the role of resources conceptualized as civic skills, time, and money in increasing the likelihood of voting (Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Although SES measured as income and education are often used to predict participation, the resource model specifies that resources are part of a broader causal chain by which individuals—via their organizational memberships, networks, and other institutional involvements—are exposed to environments that provide skill opportunities and skill acts as well as develop political interest (Brady, Schlozman, and Verba 1995). Resources, commonly represented as SES in applications of the resource model, is the last link in the causal

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<sup>24</sup> Although Asians in the US also have the highest income inequality of any racial group (Kochhar and Cilluffo 2018).

chain for predicting political participation. To some extent, the application of this model to the case of immigrants is not mistaken. Rather, it is the exclusive dependence upon SES to predict political participation that overlooks this broader causal network. The ineffectiveness of SES in explaining Asian American political participation, as shown in studies 1 and 2, suggests that these contexts need to be reconsidered as they relate to Asian Americans, and the possibility that there are other unrecognized barriers to participation for these groups.

### *Asian Americans: Sources of Distinction*

What is unique about the case of Asian Americans in this regard? First, Asian Americans contend with a racial minority position best expressed through the model minority stereotype (Kim 1999; Xu and Lee 2013). The model minority myth refers to a set of stereotypes whereby Whites valorize Asians relative to Blacks on cultural or racial grounds in order to dominate Blacks while simultaneously constructing Asians as immutably foreign and unassimilable (Kim 1999). Although it has been identified in the histories of exclusion from politics for certain Asian groups (Kim 1999) and studied by education scholars as it relates to engagement in school settings (Lee 2015), if or how it shapes individual political participation is not fully understood. If Asians recognize the model minority as demonstrated by Kim (1999) as simultaneous racial valorization and civic ostracism, then the benefits of the former may be held at the expense of the latter. Furthermore, for Asian migrants anxious about being lumped together with Blacks and Latinos, the model minority status may be welcomed as a source of distinction from other groups (Xu and Lee 2013).

Second, Asian Americans as an immigrant group are highly diverse which has raised the possibility of being a significant barrier to the realization of broader Asian racial group

consciousness (Lopez and Espiritu 1990). Few Asian immigrants have any single language in common with one another and practice a wide variety of religious affiliations (Lopez and Espiritu 1990). Another aspect of Asian internal diversity relates to the diverse political regimes of the sending countries, with the six largest Asian immigrant groups hailing from countries of both highly authoritarian and highly democratic backgrounds (Budiman and Ruiz 2021). Such contexts may be thought to shape the early socialization in school for those that moved to the U.S. in adulthood, producing attitudes towards political engagement that endure despite relocating (Glasberg 2010; Campbell 2008; Campbell, Levinson, and Hess 2012). Finally, their cause for immigration and reception in the U.S. distinguish them from the native population. With the exception of Vietnamese Americans, many of whom arrived as political refugees (Kitano and Daniels 2001), most Asian Americans move for economic reasons. Under such circumstances, the mental calculus is clear – securing a material economic basis for their family is a priority. Moreover, if the resources needed to pursue an “American Dream” are available or this pursuit proves fruitful, there may be little impetus for exposure to the social contexts, organizational memberships, and networks that might otherwise generate political engagement.

The circumstances of Asian immigrants, which include their racial minority status, diverse national origin groups, and immigrant status likely result in the formation of skills, feelings of collective position, and feelings about politics that are distinct from the mainstream native population. This paper seeks to uncover some potential explanations for the disparity in Asian American voter turnout by investigating the way they think about political participation in the U.S.

*Civic Tool Kits, Civic Habitus, Group Position*

For the purpose of conceptualizing how Asian Americans think about and engage with the public sphere, I draw on three concepts: civic tool kits, civic habitus, and group position. While not directly observing the contexts in which these are formed nor the acts of formation themselves, these concepts provide a good sense of how Asian Americans perceive their own positions and identities, think about their actions, and what their own priorities and interests may be. As such, they are indicators of the experiences and socializing interactions individuals have had in those contexts that is the last step in shaping their political action according to the resource model. Furthermore, verbalizing their own political action in this way pursues an inductive approach to reveal new forms of political action and public sphere formation even when those voicing such actions may not identify them as explicitly “political.”

Civic habitus is a term combining Bourdieu’s concept of habitus as “durable, transposable dispositions” within the field of civic and political engagement (Bourdieu 1991). Habitus, rather than being a set of active, consciously adopted strategies are internalized dispositions and preferences (such as one’s disposition toward the act of protest), often relating to one’s sense of placement within a social context and have often been used to signify individuals’ sense of group boundaries and allegiances (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Habitus is thought to be the product of individuals’ socialization, particularly during the formative years of one’s life, although other powerful experiences and environments later in life can and do have an effect (Sallaz and Zavisca 2007). Given that it is durable and transposable, or enduring and moves across social contexts, when immigrants raised in the sending country move to the U.S. in adulthood they carry their dispositions and attitudes toward civic and political engagement with them.

To append the term civic to the concept of habitus is also to suggest that individuals can form a habitus specific to a field. Martin (2003) identifies three senses of the concept of field—“a topological space of positions, a field of relational forces, and a battlefield of contestation” (Martin 2003 in Sallaz and Zavisca 2007, p. 24). The field of civic engagement or field of politics has groups in contest with one another in certain positions of power and resources relative to one another, whose actions are structured by the rules of the field. Most importantly, it is the rules and norms which shape legitimate action within the field (Sallaz and Zavisca 2007). A field-specific habitus is possible given that the way individuals interact with fields varies by the wide range of factors that constitute each field including the individuals’ position within those fields, the varying rules structuring action in each field, and the specific contests of power that vary by field.

What is enlightening about the concept of a civic habitus is that it carries with it the possibility for a mismatch between the internalized dispositions and sense about the rules of the game for a field of action and the field in which they currently find themselves. In other words, when immigrants carry their civic habitus across contexts, from the field of the public sphere in the sending country to that of the receiving country, they may find themselves operating under assumptions—conscious or not—about the legitimate principles of the field of political engagement that no longer match the new context. Alternatively, if they experience persecution, discrimination, or harassment upon arrival in their new land this can create dissonance especially if the country of destination is the U.S., supposedly the bastion of freedom and the rule of law.

The concept of civic habitus is used in the context of interviews in order to capture a more complete picture of individuals’ experiences and attitudes towards the public sphere than political socialization measures can reveal. Whereas political socialization in its application

directs focus towards specific institutional involvements, such as schools, media, and religion, civic habitus captures the end product of both these and the sum of other factors shaping the feelings towards political engagement. If Asian American groups' experiences are indeed unique, then attempting to capture as broad a picture of their lived experiences is likely to be more enlightening with regards to their political behavior.

Tool kits are defined by Ann Swidler (2013) as repertoires of action. Brady, Schlozman, and Verba (1995) in discussing the resource model define civic skills as “those communications and organizational capacities that are so essential to political activity” (p. 271). Generally, their work focuses on skill acts as indicators of civic skills, such as attending or planning a meeting in one's workplace or nonprofit, and language proficiency acts such as writing a letter or making a speech or presentation. In lieu of directly observing these acts, I draw on individuals' sense of efficacy in voting and the way individuals talk about their civic engagement as indicative of their civic tool kits. Tool kits, as defined by Ann Swidler, refer to the “repertoire of habits, skills, and styles from which individuals construct strategies of action” (Swidler 1986, p 273). It is from these strategies of action that one can identify persistent patterns of ordering action over time.

By looking at how interviewees explain or justify their civic engagement or that of their community one can get a sense of what they perceive to be legitimate or effective tools. By comparing these to norms of citizenship identified in the mainstream, one may get a rough approximation of the extent to which immigrants have been politically acculturated or express wholly different justifications of action. Dalton (2008) identifies two common patterns of citizenship norms—duty-based citizenship and engaged citizenship—referring to the “shared sets of expectations about the citizen's role in politics” (Dalton 2008, 78). Duty-based citizenship emphasizes norms of social order such as reporting a crime, obeying the law, serving on a jury,

and serving in the military, while engaged citizenship emphasizes supporting the worse off, being active in voluntary groups, being active in politics and forming your own opinions. Contrasting immigrants' justifications for political [in/]action and what it means to be a good citizen provides a measure of both their awareness of the more widespread norms of citizenship and their capacity to wield those resources. Indeed, as suggested by Brettel and Reed-Danahay (2011), immigrants may also pursue a framing of "cultural citizenship," under which immigrants utilize their own forms of cultural expression to assert rights, claim recognition, or challenge the norms of the dominant national community. Such a practice has been interpreted as the assertion of the right to belong in the public sphere but do so in one's own fashion (Benmayor and Flores 1997). Another framing of alternative immigrant conceptualization of citizenship is social citizenship, referring to the pursuit of social rights alongside political and legal rights, such as active participation in the political community and exercising of civic responsibilities (Marshall 1964; Schiller and Caglar 2008).

To sum up, the use of the concept of civic tool kits here can be understood as a means of adapting and extending the concept of civic skills to the interview context. Rather than trying to measure specific skills from a predetermined list of skill acts, having interviewees demonstrate their civic tool kits through how they talk about their own civic engagement helps to capture a more complete picture of their lived experiences. Furthermore, by comparing norms of citizenship one can get a sense of the extent to which Asians have adopted civic tool kits more common in the mainstream or have adopted ones that are more unique.

Finally, group position here is a broad catch-all term incorporating: 1) the effects of Asian Americans' racialized position via the model minority stereotype, 2) the identities interviewees assert, and 3) their status as immigrants operating under a different set of priorities

and uncertainties from the native multi-generational population. In the case of Asian Americans, the model minority stereotype is perhaps the most widely identified stereotype (Xu and Lee 2013, Kim 1999, Lee and Kye 1990). Kim (1999) suggests that Asians' racial position is triangulated via their position to Blacks and Whites along the dimensions of foreigner/insider and superior/inferior status. As immigrants, Asians are seen as cultural outsiders relative to Blacks and Whites yet on the superior/inferior dimension they occupy a higher status than Blacks though somewhat lower than Whites. The effect of this position as expressed through the model minority myth is to racially valorize Asians relative to Blacks while civically ostracizing them. The model minority myth therefore serves the dual purpose of critiquing Blacks' lower socioeconomic status while also depicting Asians as relatively passive politically. Recognition of this position may come attached with perceived expectations that Asians assume a low profile politically, avoid contentious politics, and perhaps even stay away from the polls. Furthermore, for Asian migrants anxious about being lumped together with Blacks and Latinos, the model minority status may be welcomed as a source of distinction from other groups (Xu and Lee 2013). Recognition of the model minority myth may also be indicative of broader cross-Asian subgroup interests and racialization through the Asian label as well as a recognition of the way Asian Americans are positioned by the stereotype relative to Whites and Blacks.

At the same time, it is also important to note that measurement of group position through perceived subjection to stereotyping is also dependent upon the extent to which individuals identify themselves using those labels. For example, Asian Americans may choose to identify under a racial or panethnic label as Asian or Asian American, or they may identify under the broad label of American, or under a hyphenated-American label (e.g. "Korean-American) or simply by national origin, by far the most common among Asians and Latinos (Flores 2017;

Budiman and Ruiz 2021). As such, any attempt to identify awareness of being stereotyped should also recognize the extent to which individuals assert those identities to which those stereotypes are attached.

Identities are indicators of the self in relation to others, emphasizing feelings of solidarity and emotional attachment as well as possible evidence of exclusion and social boundaries. They are a product of an individual's embeddedness in multiple contexts and, as such, are likely to be a negotiated outcome of relations with multiple groups (Lien et al. 2004; Brettell and Danahay 2011). Considering the many potential identities Asian Americans may assert, one realizes the many ways respondents may wish to position themselves relative to the sending and receiving countries as well as their status as a racial minority. The precise meaning of any one identity is complex given the variable reasons for asserting an identity and the contextual and often overlapping nature of identities (Kukutai and Callister 2009). It is commonly found that the majority of 1st generation Asian and Latino immigrants identify using their national origin/ethnic heritage, but subsequent generations adopt either an American or panethnic identity, suggesting a transition and sense of embeddedness in the new context (Flores 2017; Budiman and Ruiz 2021; Jang et al. 2021).

Panethnic identities are a collective category that ties together various ethnic, religious, or national origin groups (Okamoto and Mora 2014). In the U.S. context, assertion of a panethnic identity signals a stronger sense of racial group consciousness under the Asian label. Group consciousness here refers to individuals' feelings and beliefs that their membership to a group, either as a matter of their personal assertion of an identity or as a result of being assigned a category or label, has an impact on their position in society (Martinez and Gonzalez 2021). Typically, it is thought that feelings of similarity as a product of common sociodemographic

characteristics (such as common language, religion, and socioeconomic status), external pressure through government classification and racial discrimination, and instrumental inter-ethnic alliances all contribute to group consciousness (Lopez and Espiritu 1990, Martinez and Gonzalez 2021). Higher group consciousness in individuals, therefore, is thought to motivate collective action to gain access to political resources (Miller et al. 1981).

In contrast, “American” is far more challenging to evaluate. As Martinez and Gonzalez (2021) note, it can suggest a national identity, an ethnic identity, or both and in many ways its interpretation hinges upon what individuals imagine the American mainstream to be. At the very least, the claim of an “American” identity to the absence of panethnic or national origin identities implies both the decline of ethnic distinction (Alba and Nee 2003) and a lack of reactive identity formation in response to the American mainstream (Martinez and Gonzalez 2021). To summarize, panethnic identities—Asian/Asian American—are presumed to be the most strongly mobilizing as they are indicative of higher group consciousness under a racialized label, national origin or ethnic heritage—Chinese/Indian/Japanese—suggest a weaker sense of embeddedness in the US context, and “American” is thought to signal acceptance of the American mainstream, however it may be imagined.

Lastly, their recent immigrant status places them in a position both of high uncertainty and an arrangement of social and economic priorities that diverge from the general population. The forceful role of immigrant position and priorities in shaping behavior was both unexpected yet completely understandable. Immigrants often possess significant disadvantages which necessitate the direction of greater effort towards establishing themselves economically (Portes and Manning 2018, Sassen-Koob 1980). These include their legal vulnerability, lack of experience in the new country, and the fact that foreign-earned human capital may be less valued

by US employers (Sassen-Koob 1980; Stinchcombe 1990; Sanders and Nee 1996). A common pattern of response to these conditions has been a significantly higher likelihood of starting a business than the native population (roughly 80% higher) (Azoulay et al. 2022) and turning to kinship and intra-community ties for resources (Sensenbrenner and Portes 2018; Portes and Zhou 1992).

To sum up group position, I conceptualize it as drawing on group consciousness but also capturing other aspects of position revealed in interviewees' lived experiences. As such, it touches upon things that are thought to shape group consciousness, such as perceptions of racial discrimination and being stereotyped, as well as the identities individuals assert, the meanings of those identities and the extent to which they may be politicized. Finally, it also captures other aspects of individuals' sense of position which were unforeseen prior to the interview process. Most notably, it was the position of my subjects as immigrants and all the feelings of life priorities and vulnerabilities that may accompany it.

## *Methods*

### *Interview Questions*

Items in the interview schedule were initially structured to separately capture elements of tool kits, habitus, and group position. However, the overlapping nature of these concepts and the semi-structured character of interviews resulted in many patterns of responses that could easily be captured in multiple concepts simultaneously. Additionally, insights from initial interviews resulted in changes to the interview schedule over time, with some questions added later and

others dropped entirely. With this in mind, the section below provides an overview of the questions asked and what aspects they were initially intended to capture.<sup>25</sup>

The early phase of interviews sought to build rapport with interviewees and get a sense of their demographic background and how they constructed their narrative of coming to the United States (see Appendix C-1, 1a-1d).

Tool kits were captured in questions regarding political and civic engagement in the sending country and in the U.S. Questions regarding the sending country included how people get the state to respond to their needs, how people talk about politics, how active interviewees were civically or in formal political matters, and what it meant to be a citizen there (see Appendix C-1, 3a-3d). Similar questions were repeated for their experience in the US, including what it means to be a good citizen and, as a follow up, what aspects were important to being a good citizen, referring to lists of items in Dalton's (2008) duty-based citizenship and engaged citizenship models (see Appendix C-1, 4a). Additionally, I asked how individuals might generate status within their communities (4b1). Tool kits were often captured also in justifications for other questions about attitudes towards public sphere engagement or politics, being often expressed in questions originally intended to capture civic habitus (4a-iv). Rather than directly asking interviewees' justifications for their political actions, oftentimes the most fruitful line of questioning was to explain the actions of members of one's own ethnic or immigrant community (4ai).

Civic habitus questions focused on attitudes toward voting, politics, politicians, government, community participation, and other informal political participation (4a-v, 4b). Some questions about civic tool kits using Dalton's citizenship items also elicited general

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<sup>25</sup> For the full interview schedule, see Appendix C-1.

attitude responses, such as feelings about protesting, disruptive action, or following the law and obeying authorities (4ai). Given my initial impressions of strong parental guidance with regard to their children's civic orientation, I added the question of how they would feel if their kid[s] said they wanted to become a politician, or how younger 2nd generation interviewees' parents would feel if they wanted to become a politician (4bii, iii).

Group position initially focused exclusively on racial position captured in perceptions of discrimination and responses to the model minority myth. This section included questions about identity, such as selection from among numerous possible identity labels including Asian, Asian American, [national origin]-American, [national origin], or American (1b, 1c). These were often related to questions about sense of position relative to other racial groups, such as which racial groups Asians felt closest to (2b). Upon discovery of unexpected new patterns of responses relating to the positional conditions of immigrants, the focus expanded to immigrant priorities. Rather than being captured in a specific set of questions, immigrant priorities arose out of patterns of responses to other questions.

Lastly, Japanese Americans specifically were asked about their parents', grandparents', and, possibly, great grandparents' experiences coming to and living in the U.S (5a). Using this approach, narratives of family histories easily crossed into discussion of WWII, internment, and the Asian identity movement that followed in the decades after. Attention was directed to understanding generational change and what role these historical events played in the possible political mobilization of Japanese Americans. Some questions added later include clarification of the difference between *Issei*, *Nisei*, *Sansei*, and *Yonsei* (1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> gen) identities and the distinction between the terms internment and incarceration (5b).

### *Japanese, Indian, Chinese as Case Study Groups*

Chinese, Indian, and Japanese Americans were selected for a number of reasons. Although Asian immigrants hail from a significant number of countries, six national origin groups accounted for 85% of the adult Asian American population in 2019 (Budiman and Ruiz 2021), with Chinese and Indian constituting the first and second largest groups, respectively. Chinese and Indian were chosen as the strongest examples of the Asian puzzle, exhibiting low voting rates relative to their respective income and education level (Lien 2001). Whereas most Japanese immigrants arrived in the early 20th century, the vast majority of both Indian and Chinese immigrants arrived after the 1965 Immigration Act, which removed de facto discrimination against Asians from immigration policy (Takaki 1989; Sheth 1995; Wong et al 2011)<sup>26</sup>. Despite the removal of this barrier, the criterion for entry was still filtered through three categories: family reunification, professional skills, and refugee provisions. As a result, post-1965 a great number of immigrants are disproportionately highly skilled professionals or, if belonging to a working-class background, are likely the result of family sponsorship.

Although they exhibit one aspect of the Asian puzzle, Indians and Chinese do vary with regard to their absolute rates of political participation, with Indians registering and voting at higher rates over time (Lien 2001; Ramakrishnan et al. 2016). Furthermore, they differ with regards to a number of important variables. These include their median income and the education level of current immigrants, and the political systems of the sending countries. Even more so than the Chinese American population, Indians overwhelmingly belong to professional occupations, resulting in the highest average income of any immigrant group (Budiman 2022).

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<sup>26</sup> Chinese were the first Asian group to enter the United States in large and persistent numbers during the construction of the transcontinental railroad, although these numbers were significantly reduced as a result of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to the point that their descendents constitute only a small percentage of the total Chinese American population (Lien et al. 2004, Takaki 1989)

Of the six Asian origin groups listed, Indians also have the highest percentage of recent immigrants and continue to maintain the highest growth rate (Budiman 2022). Finally, over the course of the years since 1972, India has maintained a higher average Freedom House Index score (Freedom House 2022)<sup>27</sup> than China although it is still lower than those of developed Western states (Freedom House 2022).<sup>28</sup>

Japanese Americans were chosen less as a group comparable to Chinese and Indians and more due to their unique history and exceptionally high rates of political participation (Lien 2001; Wong et al. 2011). Japanese Americans diverged from most Asian immigrants in their earlier period of arrival and histories of exclusion. The majority of Japanese immigrants arrived in the early 20th century prior to the 1925 National Origins Act which subsequently halted the flow of immigrants from many Asian countries. These early working-class immigrants settled in California and Hawaii (Chan 1991). The first generation of Japanese immigrants found themselves the target of new migration laws and the 1913 California Alien Land Law prohibiting them from owning land (Wong et al. 2011). Many worked as tenant farmers, responsible for a significant portion of agricultural products in southern California. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt immediately passed an executive order calling for the internment of Japanese Americans and immigrants. Contemporary Japanese American political participation therefore must be understood through a generational lens indicating the distance from the experience of certain historical events such as WWII and internment. Whereas first generation Japanese Americans (*Issei*) were hesitant to address their experiences of internment, the second and third generation (*Nisei* and *Sansei*) were more directly responsible for the

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<sup>27</sup> The Freedom House Index provides scores on the political rights and civil liberties of countries. 1972 is used here given that it is the earliest that the index was published.

<sup>28</sup> India in 2022 scores 66 “partly free,” China scores 9 “not free,” and the U.S. scores 83 “free” (Freedom House 2022).

organization of the Asian identity movement and fight for reparations after internment (Chan 1991; Takezawa 1991). The current Japanese American population is predominantly in their third generation with the first generation no longer present.

### *Selection and Recruitment*

Interviews were conducted in the greater Los Angeles Metropolitan Area. Restriction to Los Angeles County or to the city of Los Angeles alone would overlook significant concentrations of the interviewee pools in neighboring areas, particularly those to the south and east of the city. Interviews were conducted during six trips over an 8-month period, primarily over the summer and fall of 2020. Interviews were restricted to individuals 18 years old and above claiming some amount of Indian, Japanese, or Chinese heritage. This includes individuals of mixed ethnic heritage as well as formerly Taiwanese-citizenship carrying individuals. It should also be noted that, in the case of several Indian heritage interviewees, the United States is the second or even third country they had moved to in their lifetime.

The methods of generating interviewee contact varied significantly across groups given the differences in their patterns of residence<sup>29</sup>, their organizational memberships, the distribution of ethnic businesses, and the means of generating trust and connecting with community brokers.

I found the Chinese residential community to be distributed with regard to their socioeconomic background, generation since arrival, and between Taiwanese, Hong Kong, and mainland China origins.<sup>30</sup> The earliest working-class Chinese and Taiwanese immigrants settled

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<sup>29</sup> Although no longer available at the time of writing (2022), I used the Racial Dot Map (Demographics.coopercenter.org 2022) in order to locate concentrations of Asian residences in L.A. The map uses 2010 Census data in its construction.

<sup>30</sup> With respect to the asserted identities of Taiwanese respondents, I will treat Chinese as a catch-all term to include Taiwan-originating, Hong Kong originating, and China mainland-originating individuals.

closer to downtown Los Angeles in the area around Chinatown, although many have since moved. Although by this time the California Alien Land Law of 1913 restricting Asian immigrants from owning land had been struck down, in the narrative of Chinatown given by one of my contacts, Chinatown represented a significant accomplishment for the community in both securing land and businesses in a contiguous arrangement forming a coherent block. Subsequent generations and later arrivals settled in neighborhoods east of Chinatown, namely Monterey Park, Alhambra, and Arcadia. Of these, Monterey Park and Alhambra are predominantly middle-class neighborhoods wherein many of the second generation and new middle-class arrivals can be found. Arcadia is largely settled by upper middle class or above, with several of my interviews here being with 1st generation immigrants in highly skilled professions.<sup>31</sup>

Although Chinese communities often featured high residential concentrations, securing interviews proved the most challenging, particularly for mainland Chinese. Attempts to secure interviews at cafes, Chinese ethnic businesses, and door-to-door visits proved unsuccessful (0 interviews) without a mutual contact between interviewer and interviewee (these include attempts in spoken Mandarin). Of the three national/ethnic groups interviewed (mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, Hong Kongers), Chinese mainlanders required the greatest investment in building trusted contacts and community exposure to gain access to interviews. These included multiple visits at religious organizations and community events. Such visits would not have been possible without first contacting community figureheads or network contacts of interviewees who could vouch for me. In this regard, recruitment occurred either through a community figurehead or through individuals' close personal networks. One distinguishing pattern of recruitment between the Chinese interviewees and the other interviewee pools was that once

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<sup>31</sup> Redfin.com (Redfin 2022), a real estate data aggregator, prices the median Monterey Park, Alhambra, and Arcadia home at \$979k, \$825k, and \$1.5 million in 2022, respectively.

access had been granted by a recognized community broker or by a close mutual contact, the “floodgates” to successive interviews are essentially opened, with many more interviews likely to follow. Moreover, those referrals provided by personal networks (as opposed to community brokers) resulted in the longest chains of referrals and the greatest number of personal referrals. Noting this phenomenon in conversation, some interviewees suggested this as indicative of *guanxi*, referring to the networks often studied in business contexts but also present in friendship networks (Luo 1997).

In total, I interviewed 19 mainland Chinese, 5 Taiwanese, and 9 Hong Kongers. As noted above, many potential interviewees were hesitant to interact with me relative to some of the other groups in the interviewee pool. In subsequent interviews, I found significant overlap between willingness to initiate the interview and to talk about political matters. As such, recruitment likely attracted a disproportionate number of high political participators than in the true population. This is also a potential explanation for the high numbers of Hong Kongers and some Taiwanese in the sample.

The Indian community in Los Angeles is perhaps the most residentially integrated and geographically dispersed, likely a product of their relatively high average incomes. As such, finding neighborhoods of Indian immigrants proved challenging, with the majority of efforts directed towards restaurants and businesses, religious groups (Hindu and Sikh temples), community and religious events, and senior centers.<sup>32</sup> In this regard, there are clear differences in recruitment patterns between those employed in or owning businesses and those contacted through community and religious organizations. Frequently in ethnic businesses, requests for

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<sup>32</sup> An obvious limitation of this methodology is that it oversamples those that are more civically involved, while a significant percentage may operate exclusively between their home and workplace. However, religious holidays and community activities drastically increase the potential to meet such individuals given their otherwise low frequency of attendance in such spaces.

interviews elicited a response frame of a desire or willingness to help someone in need, a frame upon which this interviewer was keen to capitalize in later recruitment. In community and religious organizations, verification that I had been confirmed with the organizational figurehead was a prerequisite for interviews, although beyond this point access varied by individuals' willingness to talk. Elderly members also exhibited significant concern regarding personal data, recalling their experiences with phone and email scams. Compared to those in the interview pool hailing from professional backgrounds, Indian ethnic small business owners and employees were both more hesitant to be interviewed and demonstrated greater hesitancy to discuss politics and voting in breadth and depth. It should also be noted that much of the business-owner/professional background split extended also to regional origins in India, with both groups citing the educational and socioeconomic differences between regions (Punjab and Gujarat as a north-south divide). Of those I interviewed, 19 were engaged in or formerly engaged in professional occupations and 8 were engaged in small businesses or other occupations.

Of the three groups interviewed, Japanese Americans required the least investment to build rapport or verify my credibility. The majority of interviews occurred on the same day as initial contact. Japanese Americans were contacted in religious organizations (Buddhist, Protestant), museums, community centers, and businesses. Like Indian respondents, they demonstrate a similarly high level of residential dispersion. Unlike Indian and Chinese interviewees, most Japanese interviewees were 3rd or later generation immigrants, the 3rd generation being generally elderly and many of whom lived through the second world war. The generational distribution therefore includes both direct experiences of internment up to the grandchildren of those interned. In total, I interviewed 3 second-generation, 17 third-generation, 2 fourth generation and 2 "new first generation" Japanese Americans. Although many of the

locations were in organizations directly related to Japanese American history and identity, even those engaged in businesses or religious organizations reported a high level of involvement in these organizations.

To sum up, of the 84 interviewees, 27 were of Indian heritage, 33 of Chinese heritage, and 24 of Japanese heritage. The greater variability within Chinese respondents between Taiwanese, Hong Kongers, and mainlanders led me to pursue greater numbers of interviews for this group. Of the heritage groups studied, Indians by far had the greatest proportion male, with 17 male and 10 female respondents (although this proportion is roughly consistent with that found in the 2016 NAAS, see study 2). In contrast, the Chinese interviewee pool was more evenly split with 17 women and 16 men. There were 14 male and 10 female Japanese interviewees. Indians also had the largest numbers of 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewees (23) and lowest number of interviewees with US citizenship<sup>33</sup> (21), whereas Chinese included 20 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewees and 30 citizens, and Japanese included 2 1<sup>st</sup> gen interviews (“new 1<sup>st</sup> gen”) and one non-US citizen. Finally, Indian and Japanese had large elderly samples, with sixteen Indian interviewees over 50 and fifteen Japanese interviewees over 50, whereas only 10 of the Chinese interviewees fell in this age range. The large elderly sample of Japanese interviewees is intentional given the focus on historical narratives. However, in the case of Indian interviewees, it is likely a source of sampling bias introduced from a high response rate of members of a temple and ethnic community center. Members were also overwhelming former professionals and expressed willingness to talk about politics. This, as mentioned earlier in the case of Chinese interviewees, has been a significant source of potential selection bias in that those most willing to engage with the researcher are likely also suspected to be the most willing to participate

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<sup>33</sup> In which cases, questions on voting were reframed as desire to vote if one could.

politically. Given, also, the lack of Indian residential concentration and continued failed attempts at door-to-door meetings in Chinese neighborhoods, selection for these groups puts strong bias on those that are already engaged in other ethnic community activities. One can imagine that the “super non-participators” or those that live exclusively between work and home would have difficulty finding a way into the interviewee pool.

### *Interview Process and Analysis*

Although interviewees were first met in a wide array of locations, the interviews themselves were conducted in public locations such as cafes and parks. Before the interview was conducted, the conditions of the interview were explained, including the fact that the audio of the interview would be recorded, interviewees names would be anonymized and the recordings themselves would be stored securely and exclusively by the researcher. Furthermore, interviewees could withdraw or request that their records be destroyed at any time. Before the interview itself began, consent forms were presented and their contents explained. Consent forms were also available in Mandarin. Interviewees were compensated for their time with a \$20 gift card.

Interviews were transcribed and hand-coded (N=84). The interview schedule was constructed to be deductive in that questions were written with the intent to capture civic tool kits, group position, and civic habitus, as well as the historical narratives of Japanese American political participation. However, in the initial coding I sought to avoid forcing codes (much less responses to specific questions regardless of what those interview questions were intended to capture) into one of these pre-determined categories, instead preferring to see how certain codes hung together. Moving between patterns of codes and their theoretical categorization led me to

the current conceptualization of civic tool kits, group position, and civic habitus as used in this study. In particular, group position was expanded significantly from its original focus on racial group consciousness and discrimination to also encapsulate experiences relating to immigrant position. As the interview period stretched over multiple visits to Los Angeles, I periodically returned to the interview schedule to amend or append it along avenues of questioning that appeared fruitful or which required clarification. These changes are noted in the interview schedule available in Appendix C-1.

*Results: Civic Tool Kits, Group Position, Civic Habitus*

*Tool Kits: Civic Duty and Economic Priorities*

Patterns of responses to questions about civic engagement and political participation were compared to Dalton's (2008) citizenship norms of duty-based citizenship and engaged citizenship. Interviewees were also asked why or why not they chose to vote or otherwise engage politically. Rather than placing responses solely into one of these categories, I also looked for new justifications for voting or not voting and what is omitted in individuals' justifications. Such comparisons may demonstrate the extent to which they have developed the tools of justifying action similar to the mainstream population or have generated wholly new frames for justifying action/inaction, and, finally, the brevity or depth of responses suggests the extent to which these repertoires are developed. Table 1 presents the common themes within civic tool kits, the groups that voiced them, and some idealized examples of these themes. Idealized examples represents statements from transcriptions that were rewritten for brevity and to present an idealized form. It should be noted that greater attention was given to patterns of non-voter responses from which it

can be inferred that these are the sources of difference between voter and non-voter responses. Where this is not the case or where non-voters present explanations about non-voters in their community, the table specifies this by including voter responses. Generally, responses are divided between voters, non-voters, and the way voters speak about non-voters in their ethnic communities. Non-voters or those that claim not to have voted are most heavily composed of mainland Chinese and Indians in small businesses. Voters were more frequently Hong Kongers, Taiwanese, Japanese, and Indians in the highly skilled professions. In this section as well as those about group position and civic habitus, patterns in the responses of non-voters are given greater attention in order to identify insights into potential explanations for lower political participation.

[Table 1 about here]

Perhaps one of the strongest indicators in differences of responses between nonvoters and voters was brevity. Those that claim not to vote generally gave shorter answers when asked to explain their reasoning on questions about political activity or feelings about politics. Patterns of response also reflect greater pauses, filler words, and time before response. Inquiries into this topic also resulted in fewer follow-up questions given interviewees' apprehension toward the line of questioning. In contrast, voters' responses demonstrated greater duration and resulted in more follow-up questions.

In terms of themes in explanations for either less interest in "politics" or less activity, I found that both the reasoning for nonparticipation given by nonvoters speaking of themselves and voters speaking of non-voting in their own ethnic community was similar. In many ways, these attitudes reflected what is also described in the civic habitus and group position sections as immigrant priorities—a sentiment that places a low priority on voting while one is directing

significant time and resources towards the socioeconomic future of oneself and one's children.<sup>34</sup>

Merun, an Indian mother working at two ethnic community organizations yet does not vote says this:

“Because you don't have time and you don't think about those things when you come here, there's so much involvement in family and work. So you really don't think about those things.”

This mentality was also present in voters when speaking of their own ethnic community, such as in the case of Hong Kongers and Taiwanese speaking either about Chinese in general or mainlanders in particular. Fred Feng, a 2nd generation mainlander, helps to explain the priorities of both his parents and Chinese immigrants in general:

“First of all, they're trying to get established, trying to just get the basic life necessities in place to be involved in that, but beyond that, second generation or people who are more established-- The joke is who has time to protest. ‘Look at them marching in these protests. Look at them. Why aren't they working?’ That's the first question some people ask. It's like number one, you can't have the luxury to protest.”

Later in the course of my interview period I added the question of how the interviewee would feel if their children said they wanted to be a politician or get involved in politics. Although brief in response, these questions usually highlighted some of the starkest contrasts in attitudes towards politics and its perceived utility for their lives. While some of the highest voting groups, such as Japanese and many of the Indian professionals responded in the affirmative, Chinese mainlanders, the least likely to vote, strongly advised against it. The latter

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<sup>34</sup> Such findings are consistent with a 2010 Current Population Survey that found that even among registered voters, 37% of Asian Americans chose “too busy” as a reason for not voting, as compared to about a quarter of registered Hispanics, Whites, and Blacks (Krogstad 2020)

responses are often marked by their brevity and the strength and consistency of their position on the matter suggest the potential for strong intergenerational transmission of such attitudes.

Voters among the Taiwanese, Hong Kongers, and Indians most frequently espoused a duty-based citizenship frame, citing civic duty, following the laws, and talking of voting as a matter of individual responsibility. The other citizenship frame identified by Dalton as engaged citizenship, which stresses norms of solidarity, active participation, and political [ideational] autonomy, is noticeably absent in most responses from Indian and Chinese interviewees. Most notably, the duty-based citizenship norms are most strongly espoused by those individuals distinguishing themselves from non-voting members of their communities. Olivia, a 1st gen mainland Chinese immigrant and her husband Stephen, a 1.5 gen Hong Konger, in talking about Chinese feelings toward politics draw on duty-based citizenship norms to distinguish their attitudes from Chinese that do not vote:

Olivia: “It's a very different level depending on how people feel like they're connected to their country of origin. I would say Chinese in general don't really talk about politics a lot.”

Stephen: They don't talk about it. I think we're different because I grew up here. I vote every election here. I practice civic duty. If I was in Hong Kong, I might not do that but here since we were training and educated, all my schooling here. ...Just because the fact that you grew up here, they always tell you voting is a privilege. It's a right. I feel bad people just don't vote and they throw away their voice. Yes, people die, soldiers die to defend your right to vote and to defend this country so that you can have a system of government that gives you the opportunity to express your opinion, even though you

don't like this president. In China you speak bad about the Premier, you'll be taken away and you only know where you are. Disappear, gone.”

Similarly, David, a middle-aged 2nd-generation Chinese American man drew on duty-based citizenship norms when explaining the shift in voting behavior between his mom and him:

“Even though she was a naturalized US citizen, her view was when it came to voting for someone like president, it should be someone more knowledgeable than her should be in that decision making. Although she became a citizen, she was reluctant to be part of that decision. I didn't live that. I needed my, I need to fulfill my role and voting, um, as a citizen.”

When asked what it meant to be a good citizen, he responded with: “Oh, so abiding by the laws is one thing. And then promoting laws that are good for the country, good for the community. And even if the social norms start leading in the wrong direction, I need to vote for what I consider to be the right.”

These attitudes were also present among Indian respondents. Anand, an elderly 1st generation Indian American, says:

“I do believe in the older generation trying to abide by the laws, not necessarily break it and feel good about it. ...Again, as I said, I'm from the older generation. I do feel that we have a public duty to respect the law and order. I will not join in protest like I said. Obviously, younger people will do that and they don't care what the consequences are sometimes. A lot of agitations are currently going on in India too, if you have been reading a little bit about it.”

What can be said by contrasting the civic tool kits captured in the justifications for voting between groups? The fact that both voters and nonvoters recognize a lack of time and

prioritization of family and work as reasons for not voting or not demonstrating interest in politics, suggests that these are serious concerns in the community. Politics as it is currently communicated or marketed to these groups may not sufficiently demonstrate intersecting interests or how it shapes those interests, such as how it affects education and housing. This is not to say that interviewees were wholly absent from the public sphere—indeed, many of the points of initial contact were through ethnic community organizations. Rather, in the justifications for action, it is clear that “politics” is not perceived to cater to the core issues for immigrants.

Unsurprisingly, the difference in brevity between voters and nonvoters, with nonvoters generally providing more abbreviated responses to questions of political participation, suggests a strong relationship between voting and civic tool kits. Usually, individuals that have experienced a certain degree of political socialization might be expected to be more likely to both engage in formal political activities and develop a repertoire of tools for thinking about and justifying action. The differences in brevity of responses may suggest a contrasting level of development in the civic tool kits between voters and nonvoters. Some possible explanations for brevity include a hesitancy to speak more openly about a topic, self-censorship given the knowledge that one may be unfamiliar with the socially desirable ways of justifying action, an acute awareness of lower participation as socially undesirable, or simply the fact that it is not a subject one has considered often or in detail. In any case, although these forms of talk are not mandatory prerequisites to voting, talk of politics and one’s political action may be useful for individuals if they wish to engage in communities and social networks that do engage politically.

The fact that most Indian and Chinese voters appear to have more heavily utilized a duty-based citizenship norm than a norm of engaged citizenship is consistent with other findings about

immigrants' sense of priorities in the following results. Specifically, a citizenship model that emphasizes following rules and cooperating with authorities may join well with many immigrants' desire to avoid socially and politically disruptive activities in their new home. Duty-based citizenship may, therefore, help to avoid “rocking the boat” in a way that is also disruptive for other members in one’s own ethnic community. It may also be a more comfortable form of citizenship for those that find themselves dually placed as both immigrants with certain priorities and as citizens fulfilling civic responsibilities.<sup>35</sup>

*Group Position: as Racial Minority, as Immigrants*

Group position questions initially focused exclusively on questions regarding racial discrimination, such as recognition of the model minority stereotype. However, as the interview schedule evolved and patterns emerged in responses over time, gradually I came to include the effects of individuals’ position as immigrants in this category. Immigrant position here refers to immigrants’ own perceptions of their situation as immigrants, particularly for 1st generation immigrants. This recent immigrant status shapes their sense of entitlement (or lack thereof), what they consider to be discrimination or stereotypes, their attitudes about self-sufficiency over using appeals to government to access resources, and their sense of economic priorities. Table 2 presents the themes within group position as well as the groups that vocalized them and some idealized examples. Again, these patterns of responses are espoused more frequently either by mainland Chinese interviewees and non-professional Indians or, sometimes, by those recognized as high participators speaking of non-voters in their own groups. This latter case of high

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<sup>35</sup> These can be contrasted more clearly with the sentiments of some later generation Japanese Americans (see section on Japanese American narratives) about petitioning the state for change and standing up against racial inequality.

participants speaking of low participation in their own ethnic communities often came in the form of Hong Kongers or Taiwanese speaking about mainlanders or in several cases of Indian professionals that have lived in the U.S. for a long period. Other cases include intermarriage such that voting is learned through spousal relations as told by the interviewee or cases in which the interviewee works for the U.S. government.

[Table 2 about here]

While the model minority myth is widely recognized by scholars of Asian American political history and in studies of racial stereotypes (Kim 1999, Xu and Lee 2013), its connection to political participation is tenuous. While many Indian and Chinese respondents might recognize parts of the model minority stereotype, particularly academic success, it was almost never recognized in its entirety or for the implications of civic ostracism that it carries as theorized by Kim (1999). More often than not, responses about the model minority stereotype, after my explanation of its contents, would veer towards discussing the intra-community or family pressures to succeed academically or materially. Roly Chen, a 2nd gen Chinese heritage man in his sixties had this to say in response to a question about his response to model minority stereotypes:

“Asians are considered to be more studious, more academically doing well, however, as more and more Asians immigrated into the US, um, not all Asians do well academically, not all the Asians fit what people are accustomed to. Um, some are not, and then, uh, parents, they, they they've picked up on the, um, the thinking that if you're well educated, you'll do better. And in my mind, my mother only made it to, I think, second grade school. And I don't know about my father, my father did farming. So, um, but they always promoted education. So even though they did not know what could happen, but

they think they kind of had an idea that life would be better. Um, but again, uh, not all Asians are that smart, a fair number are, but not all that smart.”

Similar to the challenges in tying the model minority myth to political participation, preferred identities (e.g. Asian, A-American, American, national origin, national origin-American) were difficult to meaningfully connect to political participation. Chinese and Indian interviewees, in response to questions about identity, more frequently focused on intra-ethnic or intra-national distinctions, such as regional differences in India (e.g. specifying Punjab or Gujarat) or HK, Taiwan, or mainland China among Chinese interviewees.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, Japanese were most likely to express a hyphenated-American identity. Follow-up questions focusing on the meaning of selected identity labels/categories did not identify meaningful connection to political alliances or how these could be meaningfully related to political mobilization. At the very least, the low frequency of using broader panethnic labels (Asian American, Asian) suggests that inter-ethnic group consciousness is low, consistent with lower perceptions of discrimination. Alternatively, it may be that panethnic labels are more contextually dependent for my interviewees and are asserted when Asian is more politicized. The spike in anti-Asian hate crimes in 2020 and 2021 raises the possibility that these have since changed.<sup>37</sup>

Instead of drawing on elements of racial discrimination, awareness of stereotyping, or demonstrating connection between preferred identity labels and political participation, many interviews revealed patterns which I identified as relating to their position as recent immigrants.

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<sup>36</sup> If anything, these patterns of identity preferences for these groups seem to suggest that internal distinctions are considered primary or meaningful in the context of the interview.

<sup>37</sup> FBI statistics (FBI 2022) record a rise from 158 cases in 2019 to 279 in 2020. The following year, from 2020 to 2021, the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism (Yam 2022) recorded a 339% increase in anti-Asian hate crimes.

One of these is an internal focus (i.e., intra-ethnic community focus) or, in other words, a greater focus on sources of intra-ethnic community status than on status markers outside the community. For example, whereas discussing party preferences or political issues might be useful for communicating values to a broader political community, the markers of status in one's own ethnic community are very different. Chinese and Indian interviewees noted a strong concern for community reputation and, particularly among Indian interviewees, remarked how often back home people were "in each other's business." Guoli Wang, a 1st gen woman close to retirement, spoke of reputation this way: "She was saying that the same people, they're all linked all together. When you do bad in one part, when you do bad in church and then school will know, that family will know that, your business partner will know that. 'Oh, he's so bad in church, don't talk to him, don't deal with him.'" Similarly, Pranaav Prichita, a young 1st generation Indian heritage man had this to say about reputation: "Reputation as in I'm saying they don't want their reputation to be spoiled so if someone comes and talks s\*\*\* or maybe talk bad stuff about you. So my parents like I'm saying they have a business and someone's like, 'Oh, they don't have good food or they sell bad stuff,' or whatever. Whatever the reason, I don't know, because like I said, if one person knows it goes to the whole damn community."

Many reported a focus on drawing status from their communities via signifiers of socioeconomic success, such as job status, income, or children's educational attainment. When asked about status within the Indian community, Arnav, an elderly 1st gen Indian man, had this to say:

"Status is always the situation. Status in India used to be based on your intellectual level or your study level, but now the status symbol has become money. The higher you are on

the money ladder, the higher you are in status. It has become whereby too, a person with the more money within the same society gets more respect.”

Apart from internal community and the importance of reputation in those communities, internal focus also relates to a desire to acquire resources through personal effort rather than by political petition. Alfred Kang, a 2nd generation Chinese American, mentioned this in a question regarding how you get resources: “...Internally focused and you can handle it yourself. Right. It's my problem. [First generation dads] work in restaurants or they work as a way of moving up, to get as far as they can. So that's the strategy and that's your strategy. And we have a nanny that's also first generation and she's getting more and more hours, you know, that's how she moves up to more money.”

Similarly related to the lack of perceived discrimination is the absence of entitlements or, alternatively, a lack of injustice or unfair treatment frames. Sometimes, even clearly discriminatory treatment is not treated as necessitating broader societal or political change. Perhaps the best example of this came as a story related to me from members of a Sikh temple. Sikhs, having internal rules regarding dress and appearance for many members, such as the wearing of a turban and a common practice of growing out one's beard, made them common targets after the September 11 attacks. Sikhs are not Muslim but are often mistaken as such. In one such incident, a man living in a house neighboring the Sikh temple spray painted a rude message targeting them as Muslim. Having maintained close ties with the local police, the members of the Sikh temple successfully secured their support in finding the man responsible. The way in which this story is recounted, however, is one of reconciliation between the perpetrator and the temple members, with the man apologizing for his actions and no charges pressed against him. Ultimately, this account of events was recalled not as a matter of demanding

broader societal and political change but as a story communicating the Sikh community's desire to pursue harmonious relations with their broader surrounding community.

In many cases in which interviewees utilized government resources or noted common neighborhood or community concerns such as robbery or gun violence, these were not framed as political matters or issues requiring change in policy. Within the mainland and 1st generation Chinese immigrant community and much of the Indian interviewees engaged in small businesses there is clear anxiety about gun violence, robbery, and scams. Although mentioned by non-voters, this anxiety was also clearly present in early attempts to meet individuals when going door-to-door and in accounts given by high-participants speaking of members in their own communities' feelings about voting and politics. Albert Chen, a 1.5 gen Chinese American from Hong Kong now working in government, in speaking about other Chinese people's attitude toward political participation helps to weave together immigrant priorities, perceptions of voting, and the lack of overlap between "politics" and welfare benefits:

"Even what you would consider as the lower, in China they could very well be in middle working class just like we are, but then when they come here, because the language barrier, they can't really do very much, and therefore, they can only work low paying jobs and different things like that. Therefore, because of their low income, they are eligible to apply for government benefits. To them, what is the point of voting when it doesn't impact them very much? I still don't feel like it's so much about being careful of consequences, but more about what impacts them. They only care about what impacts them." He continues, by saying "Yet they complain later on. We say, "Hey, remember this proposition," whatever it is. 'We have to raise our tax one cents because we have to

fix the road,' they said. I said, 'See, if you voted and say no, we may have not happened.'  
I told them, 'That's what happened. You didn't go. You didn't vote.'"

Within the same story, Albert therefore tells us of the way in which the Chinese community does access government resources, such as welfare, yet these are not considered as directly shaped by politics. Clearly there is a sense that these resources are useful and matter for their lives, yet, at least in Albert's depiction, they do not tie this access to voting.

Richard Wang, a 2nd generation Chinese American with heritage from Hong Kong also working in government<sup>38</sup> also mentions Chinese Americans' frequent utilization of public services though these do not seem tied to overt forms of political request:

"They do have needs. They need it just, like, especially the foreign ones, they have more needs. They will have like, well I need Medicare. I need welfare, free housing or stuff, English to pass my, uh, citizenship. So they have all these needs and they will call the other Asians to ask them to learn from them. And then they will learn how to apply other Chinese. ... You ask another, this person in your own race say, 'Hey, hi, Hey, you kind of, you have Medicare, how did you come to get this? How'd he get it?' I do ask other people that already get that service from the government. So they would rely on their own people to get government services. They wouldn't go to the government directly because of language barriers."

The general impression from the interviews about many 1st generation Indian and Chinese non-voters is that the way the structure is set is simply the way it is set. Police services, welfare services, Medicare, and so forth are available but are not the subject of petitions for change. Furthermore, the un-politicized perception of these resources suggests a clear lack of

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<sup>38</sup> These two cases of interviewees working in government were rare and appear to be strongly associated with high political participation.

perceived overlap between what “politics” is and what immigrants see as their priorities. Often times, these priorities entail first securing an economic foothold and avoiding other issues that might threaten this stability. Hardeep Singh, an elderly first gen Indian man, notes this sense of economic priority and avoidance of conflict:

“Once you pick up the attitude of not making too much noise and you're making ‘enough’ money to survive in relatively better environment and you don't have any issues and qualms with the current laws and regulations and you are going to abide by it, you don't have any issues to raise hell with anybody for that matter. You want to keep a certain level of calmness in your life. Anytime you get agitated you have to have certain amount of unrest in your own mind which needs to be calmed down. As we grow older, we have to learn how to cope with the system in a more harmonious way.”

What to make of these attitudes altogether? In many ways, the model minority myth as the racialized position of Asian Americans I sought out has been almost wholly replaced by the importance of aspects of the immigrant position identified among Chinese and some Indian interviewees. The pattern appears to be one of perceiving the broader environment very much as a fixed quantity, with the rules and structure set beforehand. Combined with this is the sense that there is little overlap between what “politics” is and their priorities as immigrants. The logic for immigrants, then, within such circumstances may be to strive to gain a foothold within the game as it is structured rather than challenging the rules of the game. Discrimination is often unrecognized if it does not pose a direct threat to socioeconomic wellbeing. Even though government resources are utilized, entitlements do not extend to requests for broader political change or necessitating broader mobilization.

### *Civic Habitus: Feelings About Politics and Civic Engagement*

Civic habitus refers to the general feelings and dispositions interviewees demonstrated towards politics and civic engagement. Once again, there are clear differences between the ethnic groups sampled and those that claim to vote and not to vote within those groups. Taiwanese and Hong Kongers, as the more frequent claimants of voting, express a greater sense of efficacy and desire to engage in politics. In contrast, mainland Chinese and Indians not engaged in the highly skilled professions, who demonstrated the lowest likelihood of voting, express either a lower sense of efficacy or lower perception of necessity of engaging with politics. In this section, I focus more exclusively on the attitudes expressed by non-voters. This section identifies a few central themes about non-voters' feelings about politics. First, recognized in both the process of meeting interviewees and in responses, many express a generalized anxiety towards engaging outside their community or in engaging in politics. In the case of Chinese mainlanders and other Chinese interviewees speaking broadly about the Chinese community, this often was related to anxiety about online discussion and other forms of electronic communication. Second, for some, this general anxiety was tied to seeing engaging in politics as a threat to their socioeconomic priorities, an attitude also used by high-participants to explain the behavior of low-participants in their own ethnic communities. Finally, statements of concerns with inefficacy often had subthemes of hopelessness and, particularly in the case of Indian respondents, perceptions of corruption. Table 3 here presents the common themes, the groups that voiced them, and some idealized examples for those themes.

[Table 3 about here]

Feelings about “politics” and voting, however these are defined among non-voting interviewees, demonstrate a generalized anxiety as evident in the interview attainment process, a

perception of politics as distraction from the American Dream, and as ineffective either due to a general sense of hopelessness or corruption. To discuss the generalized anxiety about politics, I want to recall here the patterns of recruitment and how they diverged between the communities with the highest and lowest likelihood of voting. Among Japanese Americans, recruitment usually required the least amount of initial effort, often with very little need for a community broker or extensive community exposure. As a result, the majority of interviews were conducted on the same day as our meeting. These constituted the group with the highest likelihood of voting and demonstrated a comfort with talking about politics and interacting with strangers in public settings. Following them are Hong Kongers as well as Taiwanese and many of the older Indian professionals and young Indians in their 2nd generation. Interviews for these groups required slightly greater utilization of brokers, verification of my credentials, or exposure to the community. In these groups and in the least likely to vote groups, interviewees made greater effort to read the consent form in detail. Finally, mainland Chinese respondents and a significant portion of Indian small business owners and employees (also those groups with whom I had the highest failure rate for attaining contact) required the greatest investment in time and social connections to secure interviews. For these groups, there appears to be a greater generalized anxiety about interaction in public spaces with strangers. The overlap between generalized public trust and willingness to engage in the sphere of politics may suggest a broader general anxiety about activity outside one's immediate community.

Particularly among the Chinese American community, this anxiety was also expressed in hesitancy to talk about politics on social media or even through interpersonal chatting apps, such as WeChat, a messaging app common among Chinese users. Marleen Chow, a young second gen Hong Konger, notes the way social media is censored in China: "Yes, they banned WhatsApp

because the owner and creator of WhatsApp wouldn't let Chinese government get access to an individual's conversations.” Phil Huang, a 1st gen Hong Konger, notes the feelings about speaking about politics and the consequences perceived by many mainlanders: “You talk to mainland Chinese people, that's something that they will not talk about because of the implication or the consequences that might follow after that. Even though it's more open now and everything else, they learn there are some things you don't talk about, it's politics and their government.”

This generalized anxiety toward the public space may also be communicated through a broader non-confrontational mentality when it comes to challenging social norms as well. Joe Zhang, a 2nd gen Chinese American whose parents hailed from mainland China, mentions this attitude when it comes to politics:

“In general, I feel just from the perspective of the Chinese in a way, the idea is that one, don't rock the boat, don't bring family shame, do well, and don't get in trouble. Those are all very, not submissive, but conformist-type things.”

Similarly, Rajesh, a 1st generation Indian American, displays a similar sentiment about social conflict:

“We don't want to disturb the status quo too much. We don't want to be creating waves. We don't want to be picked out. Actually, there are 13 houses in which I live in. I don't want to be the bad apple of some person or another. We tend to stay below the horizon, we call it, below the radar. We don't want to be trouble for anybody. We treat our neighbors fairly and squarely. We don't want to be troublemakers there. That way, it's [our] general attitude because of our background and our upbringing.”

Often, similar to the brevity of civic tool kit responses, responses to questions about

feelings of politics would be brief among nonvoters. Instead, respondents generally felt more comfortable when asked to explain how their ethnic heritage group felt about politics. Oftentimes some of the most illuminating responses came from high-participating spouses speaking on behalf of their partners, second generation immigrants speaking of their parents, or Hong Kongers (who identify as Chinese) talking about Chinese mainlanders' attitudes toward politics. John Kang, a 2nd gen Chinese describes the general negative impression of politics left on many Chinese based on their experiences in the sending country:

“Not just political involvement, but political impact to their families. Some of them are persecuted through politics from their family directly or indirectly, and as a result, they have bad taste. Not to say that they have no idea of what politics is but that the impression is so negative. There's no desire or want to be involved or encourage themselves to pursue interest in politics.”

Inefficacy was a common theme in both Indian and Chinese nonvoters and in the way voters in these groups talked about their own community's feelings about politics and voting. Again, there are cross-cutting aspects in which the perception of government as either a fixed entity or beyond the reach of the layperson apply to both the immigrant position and general feelings about voting. Prakita, a 2nd gen Indian American woman, when asked about politicians and what the government does had this to say: “It's like whatever's going to happen is going to happen. We can't really change it even if people care for it. My generation, obviously, we care and we want to vote but older than us, they're just like-- It's just there.” Some of this sentiment is echoed also in Hwang's, a naturalized 1st gen Chinese mainlander, statement about politics back in China: “It's totally different for China and here. It's like a totally different thing. It's really hard to say. In China, they always talk about [policies]; the leaders, the government, they always talk

about [policies], but we never get any real benefit.” Many former Hong Kongers spoke quite openly about their ethnic community’s attitudes and feelings of disregard for politics. Al Ming, a 1.5 gen Chinese American (HK), speaking of his community mentions these sentiments: “And there's a lot, I wouldn't say distrust, I'll say, like, apathy. Like, they don't really care. Don't care about it. Cause they don't think anything will come out of it. Why even protest if nothing happens?”

Particularly among Indian interviewees perceptions of corruption seem to be widespread and are a potential source of feelings of low efficacy. Although Indian interviewees did clarify that corruption, particularly at the level of common state agents, such as policemen, was less in the U.S., they spoke of corruption as a universal matter regardless of place. Aseem, an elderly Indian man notes the perceptions of corruption back in India:

“I think when we grew up, slowly there was a frustration among the common people that none of the political leaders who were representing our constituencies were good enough. Most of them are corrupt, and there is no point in casting a vote for anyone.”

This sense of corruption as ever-present, even if not visible at the lowest level, is expressed by Raanesh, a 1st gen Indian man,

“The corruption is there in most of the developing countries and India is no exception. Particularly in India when the politicians gain their coveted position, they tend to misuse it more than they can use it in the way they planned it. Instead of people's welfare, they look at their own welfare and whatever means it takes, they do it. It's like a person who wants to steal something and as long as nobody's seeing it and he knows he cannot be caught, they steal....I'm very sure the corruption is here also but on a day-to-day life, the corruption is not affecting the common man.”

For first generation immigrants and, by intergenerational transmission, second generation immigrants, experiences in the sending country shape enduring attitudes towards political participation that they carry with them and shape their perception of the utility of political engagement as well as the challenges and potential risks of doing so.

Although this section has more heavily focused on identifying the attitudes of non-voting groups and how they shape their reasoning towards political engagement, the attitudes of high-voting groups can offer a useful contrast. Hong Kongers overall demonstrated a greater sense of efficacy and willingness to discuss politics, as also demonstrated in the civic tool kits section. In many cases, a certain level of political interest or excitement tied the topic to political events back home, as these interviews occurred during the Hong Kong protests. Similarly, voters in the Indian community also demonstrated a strong interest simultaneously in both US and Indian politics, with strong awareness of the current political events surrounding the changing political power between the dominant parties in India (such as Congress Party and Indian People's Party).<sup>39</sup> To some extent, these general feelings towards politics reflect a mentality whereby changing perceptions of political opportunity in the sending country simultaneously shaped feelings of efficacy in their new home.

### *Narratives of Japanese American Political Engagement*

Japanese Americans exhibit voting rates comparable to and frequently higher than White Americans (Wong et al. 2011). The question for this group is, therefore, a matter of explaining

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<sup>39</sup> Higher participators among the Indian population actually expressed a strong awareness of politics back in India, the perception of change in government corruption over time especially with younger generations, and a palpable excitement about political change relating to recent politics noting the fact that the Congress Party, the ruling party for decades, has failed to maintain its dominance as the largest single party starting in the 90s and have been supplanted by the BJP colloquially referred to as the Indian People's Party.

why they exhibit such high levels of voting and what sets them apart from the more typical cases of Asian [non]voters. In this matter, the multi-generational composition of the vast majority of Japanese Americans cannot be overstated, with most Japanese Americans arriving in the early 20th century as farmers and laborers in California and Hawaii (Chan 1991). In contrast to post-1965 immigrants, these early arrivals were subjected to greater legal discrimination and land ownership restrictions, to say nothing of the events of WWII and Japanese internment, during which the War Relocation Authority forcibly incarcerated more than 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry (United States 1946). Although the interview schedule addressing Japanese Americans matches the question items in core areas for the other interviewee pools, special attention was given to Japanese American historical narratives. These narratives paint a strong picture of generational transitions in political identity and engagement over time in response to historical events and changing political opportunities.

Unlike Indian and Chinese American interviewees, Japanese Americans voluntarily included generational terms in identity statements. *Issei*, *Nisei*, *Sansei*, *Yonsei*, or 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> generation are frequently mentioned without request from the interviewer.<sup>40</sup> Of these groups there were 3 *Nisei*, 17 *Sansei*, 2 *Yonsei*, and 2 “new *Issei*” (recent 1<sup>st</sup> generation Japanese immigrants). The majority of the Japanese American population are now in their 3<sup>rd</sup> and beyond generations and, as a result, *Sanseis* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen) comprise the majority of the Japanese American interviewee pool. That this practice was so common among Japanese Americans suggests strong generational identification and, possibly, differences between generations over time. *Issei* (although no original 1<sup>st</sup> gen are now available for interview) would indicate the earliest group of immigrants in the early 1900s who largely worked as farmers, while *Nisei* (2<sup>nd</sup> gen) and possibly

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<sup>40</sup> *Issei* (1<sup>st</sup> gen) is included here for demonstration of generational names, although no original *Issei* (1<sup>st</sup> gen) are included in the interviewee pool.

*Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen) include those who experienced WWII and internment in their early adulthood or childhood. Some *Nisei* (2<sup>nd</sup> gen) and, more generally, *Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen), were those that went through higher education during the time of the Civil Rights Movement and the Asian Identity Movement. Finally, *Yonsei* (4<sup>th</sup> gen) and beyond represent the youngest generation. These generational differences also highlight the way narratives of Japanese American identity and political mobilization change over time. Moreover, contrasting the narratives of major historical events across generations helps to illustrate the role of these events in shaping mobilization at different points in time.

While the original *Issei* (1<sup>st</sup> gen) have almost wholly passed, their experiences are still captured in following generations' talk of their parents and grandparents. Despite experiencing overt discrimination that largely limited their labor to tenant farming, narratives of *Issei* (1<sup>st</sup> gen) given by their offspring describe them as pursuing a strategy not dissimilar to many nonvoters in my other interviewee pools. These include both a general reluctance to stir the waters or speak out politically as well as to direct one's energies towards economic stability, much like the immigrant position priorities expressed among Indian and Chinese interviewees. In the case of several *Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen) interviewees, they noted that their grandparents and parents even neglected to mention that they were incarcerated during WWII.

Dianne Nakamura, a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Japanese American, when asked about her parents' feelings about political participation had this to say:

“I think that he didn't feel like they had any kind of political, um, power. So I think they had no, no interest in politics. I mean, they weren't allowed to own property. You know, they weren't citizens, so they couldn't vote and most of them didn't speak any English anyway. So I think politics was the last thing on their minds.”

Interestingly, the *Nisei* response to incarceration told in the narratives of the *Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen) is one mixing the shame of incarceration with the desire to prove their loyalty and be good citizens. As told by Shelly, a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Japanese American speaking of the *Nisei*:

“The *Nisei* wanted to prove themselves to be good Americans, but that didn't mean getting involved in politics. I mean, that was not really something that was encouraged. You know, you do something sensible. Do you have a job that will benefit you and your family, but don't, don't go into things like art or politics or, you know, things that are kind of riskier. .... I didn't really know many politically active *Nisei*. And I don't know if you're familiar with that book, *The Quiet Americans*, um, Bill Hosokawa wrote that about the *Nisei* and it's about them being, um, quiet, not really talking about their internment experience, being good citizens, but not, not being that politically active, you know, just working hard, going to school, giving you know, being good family families, raising your children and educating them. That kind of was the emotion, I would say for the *Nisei*, that they wanted a better life for their kids. And, um, they kind of, a lot of that was instilled in them by the *Issei* who really emphasized education.”

Interestingly enough, this mentality of wanting to avoid disturbance is also reflected in Miko, a 1<sup>st</sup>-generation “new *Issei*” Japanese immigrant’s feelings about political participation:

“Probably the Japanese personality, uh, I cannot really generalize the Japanese personality because now as young people are different, but, uh, I can tell like, well, we don't want to disturb people. We went to do things very quietly, you know, that's the way they are, but Westerners have a different right. They have to really appeal.”

In many cases the *Issei* (1<sup>st</sup> gen) and *Nisei* (2<sup>nd</sup> gen) did not proactively discuss their experiences with the children and grandchildren that were not present in the period of internment

and WWII. In recalling their parents' feelings about the period, many experienced internment as a mark of shame. As told by Jess Morita, a *Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen), in her rediscovery of her parents' experiences:

“Um, so for me, what has changed is that Asian American studies class that I took as an 18-year old, I had never heard about the camps, you know? And so, I remember going back to the dorms, calling my mother, telling her, ‘You won't believe what happened to Japanese people on the West coast.’ I said, ‘They were, you know, taken to these camps out in the desert.’ And then she said, ‘Oh, I was there. You know, me and Dad were in another post.’ And I said, ‘You never tell us that this happened to you.’ And then, you know, she said, ‘It wasn't that important.’ And then in the same class, or a couple of weeks later, I learned about the 442nd, the [all Japanese] segregated army battalion. And so, then I ran home again and called and I said, ‘You won't believe what happened to *Nisei*.’ And then she said, ‘Oh yeah, dad was in the 442. He was in France and Italy.’ Wow.”

While the *Nisei* (2<sup>nd</sup> gen) generation were hesitant to be vocally political while also focused on proving their loyalty,<sup>41</sup> it is clear that the *Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen) generation marked a clear shift in political vocality, particularly in ways that might have been perceived as contentious by previous generations. Interview narratives in this regard demonstrate the critical role of the intersection of civil rights movements in college and the rediscovery of their history. Bob Tanaka, a *Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen) that experienced internment in early childhood but whose adulthood intersected with the civil rights movement recalls this shift:

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<sup>41</sup> Indeed, it may be argued that the *Nisei* generation, in pursuit of demonstrating themselves as good citizens and loyal Americans, pursued voting also as a civic duty despite hesitancy to engage in disruptive forms of political expression.

“My parents never talked about it, but I lived through it, so they didn't really have to talk about it. Yeah. But I don't recall anybody ever talking about it. Um, you know, when we were younger. You know, it's only after we were adults during the civil rights movement that we really started talking about it. So even in the Japanese community, it wasn't talked about too much until the civil rights.”

Ken Suzuki, a self-identified *Sansei* (although arguably 2.5gen), also discusses the intersection of the Japanese American political awakening and the civil rights movement:

“Well, what happened to us then? Then we knew that voting was very important. Yeah. That's when they realized that voting is very important. And, uh, and so we, we learned, we got involved in civil rights and the *Nisei* were old enough now, so that they were enough of them to make a difference early on.”

For many Japanese Americans reaching adulthood in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War, these periods acted as a time of realizing collective voice and a willingness to make demands, with one interviewee referring to these experiences in college as being born again. John Yoshida, a *Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen), describes his feelings about what impact the civil rights movement had on him and how it also shaped attempts to get Asian studies courses included in schools:

“And, uh, so all of those groups are trying to form ethnic studies at the same time. ... Yes. I think, uh, I think Asian Americans, uh, becoming political people becoming involved in causes, um, one was the black civil rights movement was a big influence. Having to, you know, confront and make demands was not a culturally variational thing to do. But the civil rights movement, I think, taught people to, to stand up and, you know, including civil disobedience, including a lot of, you know, like large demonstrations of advocacy,

all of that, all the tactics and techniques, but as well, just the idea of individual minority groups, having rights in this country, right? To learn their own history, you know? To be able to tell their own history, all those things were things that we learned from the civil rights movement, but also I think the impact of, uh, the, the Vietnam war and the anti war movement where, you know, it happened to be that the Vietnam War was televised on a daily basis.”

One important demonstration of this shift in attitudes about the historical role of internment in shaping Japanese Americans’ place in the US comes from challenges to shift the terminology from internment to incarceration. While *Issei* (1<sup>st</sup> gen) and *Nisei* (2<sup>nd</sup> gen) largely used the terms “camps” or “internment camps,” this framing shifted over time both within the *Nisei* (2<sup>nd</sup> gen) and challenged by the *Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen). Particularly for *Nisei* (2<sup>nd</sup> gen) and *Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen) who wished to assert their citizenship, “incarceration” became the preferred term for the camps given that “internment” refers to the detention of “enemy aliens” in times of war. Judy Suzuki, a *Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen), in correcting my initial exclusive use of the term internment had this to say:

“When we grew up they called them internment camps. Our parents called them camps. And now I’m using the term incarceration that I am a recipient of that, uh, I’m a recipient of that legacy to have your rights taken away. So I think it’s more accurate to use the term incarceration, but I know that people of a different generation might call them internment camps.” “And I think that that’s, in some ways, in my opinion, it’s a protection because if you admit that you’re incarcerated, it means you did something wrong. And so there’s a lot of pride and shame and a lot of things that are buried, at least in my family.”

In the current period, the history of internment and the intersection of the civil rights movement with the Asian identity movement are not lost. *Yonsei* (4<sup>th</sup> gen) and *Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen) vocalized norms of engaged citizenship, emphasizing active participation, norms of solidarity, and supporting the worse off.<sup>42</sup> Unlike interviewees from other ethnic groups, these included strong calls for greater cross-ethnic solidarity and mobilization as requirements for broader Asian American success. Jane Kimura, a younger *Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen), had this to say about the importance of supporting other communities and their experience with diversity:

“...Doing racial justice work on my own in order to, um, just in order to really understand what inclusivity means, because it's such an overused word right now and diversity, what does that really mean to be truly inclusive? Um, understanding how identity can shift and be fluid. So I'm listening more to, um, and learning more about that through family and through friends and through communities that I'm involved in. ... So I think that there's a big education that's going on, but it needs to be bigger and wider. Yeah. So I would say that those are kind of like the main, and then also just speaking up more, so being more of a voice for the voiceless and being more of a voice for marginalized people in communities and, um, pointing out white supremacy and white privilege. Um, so I'm pushing, um, you know, just like pushing some buttons now, whereas before I think I saw that in the title somewhere, maybe [Buddhist reverend<sup>43</sup>] mentioned the model minority and that's been a way to assimilate and it's been a way that my parents' generation survived and how my generation has, um, survived in a way.”

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<sup>42</sup> This is not to say that duty-based citizenship is excluded, rather these along with the importance of voting are layered together

<sup>43</sup> Reverend was the preferred term rather than monk.

While the majority of Japanese Americans are in their third generation—as reflected in the interviews—the narratives told about their parents and grandparents is one of major shifts in political vocality. While the first generation and much of the second generation are portrayed as expressing a mentality of avoidance, the third generation sharply transitions towards addressing historical injustice and petitioning for Asian American historical recognition. Although *Nisei* (2<sup>nd</sup> gen) are generally portrayed as avoiding politics, there is clear mention of the role of demonstrating oneself as a good and loyal citizen after the events of WWII and internment. By the time the third generation was reaching maturity and enrolled in higher education, much of the historical experiences were uncovered and reevaluated, intersecting at a crucial juncture with the perceived political opportunities generated by the civil rights movement. What can be said by contrasting both the generation experiences of Japanese Americans before and after the war and with other immigrant groups? Admittedly, the cases are not comparable given that neither Indians nor Chinese (save for a very few) have moved into their 3<sup>rd</sup> and beyond generations. The unique historical experiences of Japanese Americans may point to the role of overt threats to collective wellbeing may motivate political action as a necessity or, as seen in the case of later generations, a resource for mobilization and calls for redress of grievances. Furthermore, the greater historical context in which the political opportunity structure shifts may increase the potential for greater vocality and political mobilization of formerly untapped groups.

### *Discussion and Conclusion*

What can differences in talk tell us about political action? While the interview process is subject both to social desirability bias and lacks the capacity for causal statements, its utility lies in its potential for identifying new lines of inquiry into the Asian puzzle of voter turnout. This

study has attempted to utilize three concepts to uncover Asian Americans' thinking about politics, voting, and those aspects of their lives that affect both. Civic tool kits were used to capture the logic individuals operate under, such as those that capture their justification or their community's justification for engaging in politics and voting. Group position, while initially focused on the effects of racial position and discrimination, expanded to include those elements relating to immigrant position—their perceived priorities, vulnerabilities, and mentality as recent immigrants. Finally, civic habitus was intended to capture general feelings about politics, voting, and other forms of engagement.

The patterns demonstrated in these areas suggest the importance of perceiving immigrants as dually embedded in both the sending and receiving country. I found a great deal of variation between sending countries and, in the case of China, between Hong Kong and Taiwan in one group and the mainland in the other. National origin and even regional variation is thought to be shaped by immigrants' enduring, transposable civic habitus which is shaped by their early socialization into norms of civic engagement in the sending country. Furthermore, the point of origin may also be related to factors for initial immigration, such as those working-class immigrants pursuing greater opportunities or those that move to escape persecution.<sup>44</sup>

In the receiving country, we find that many immigrants have not adopted mainstream citizenship norms or civic tool kits. Many non-voters turn towards their community or personal networks for resources. As recent immigrants, many focus more exclusively on business, occupation, and their children's education as a means of securing a stable socioeconomic foothold. Despite the fact that many immigrants may receive welfare and other government services, these are treated as fixed quantities, with less willingness to frame these as "political"

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<sup>44</sup> In a number of Taiwanese and Hong Kong interviews, subjects clearly stated that they or their parents had initially lived in mainland China but moved to Hong Kong or Taiwan after WWII or during the following period.

matters. From the side of the government, other studies help to elaborate the relatively non-paternalistic approach of the U.S. in incorporating immigrants. Wong and colleagues (2011), note that Asian Americans have far less contact from political parties or other potentially mobilizing organizations. Bloemraad (2006), in contrasting settlement policies in the US and Canada, finds that whereas the US treats settlement as a private concern (with the exception of refugees), Canadian policies pursue mobilization of immigrants' kinship, ethnic, and community networks and organizations in aid of their political incorporation. The contrast in policies here highlights the relatively hands-off approach the US state adopts towards immigrants. So from the perspective of government and political parties, Asians have largely flown under the radar. Meanwhile, from the perspective of many Asian Americans, the path towards the American Dream is hemmed in by both the murky waters of the uncertainty of how or why to engage in politics and by a perception of government and its policies as fixed entities.

Combining these factors—both relating to the sending country and the context of reception—we have a story of immigrant priorities for many non-voters. These priorities are demonstrated in the focus upon individual or familial economic stability (as well as educational outcomes) and either a general anxiety or avoidance of disruptive political engagement given its potential to threaten economic well-being. Moreover, these priorities are perceived to currently have little overlap for nonvoters, with attempts to change political policies or leadership as unnecessary for the current focus on upward economic mobility. These priorities are also most strongly demonstrated by those with fewer resources, such as Indian American small businesses and a larger percentage of mainland Chinese Americans. Such groups ultimately focus more on their internal communities or kinship ties as means of acquiring resources.

Comparing both Indians and Chinese Americans to the case of Japanese Americans is challenging given the unique historical experiences of the latter and the lack of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generations of Indian and Chinese Americans. As such, the possibility for rapid upward political incorporation for these groups is not altogether closed. However, looking within the Japanese narratives, we find depictions of early Japanese immigrants similar to many non-voters among the Chinese and Indian interviewees, adopting a strategy of avoidance towards politics. Following WWII and internment, this narrative changes, as many Japanese Americans draw on these historical experiences at a point in which their political awakening intersected with the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War protests. If these historical events are, in fact, sources of mobilization, then it raises the possibility that overt threats (i.e. physical violence and state-sanctioned coercion) to collective wellbeing may motivate political action as a necessity. In other words, under a threat hypothesis, when pathways to economic resources or bodily security are threatened, alternative pathways such as investing in developing political or other alternative resources may become increasingly desirable if not necessary.<sup>45</sup> In the period since the completion of interviews, anti-Asian hate crimes rose dramatically in the period since the outbreak of covid-19 (FBI 2022). As a form of overt physical threat, it is possible that these events have since motivated Asian Americans to invest in greater political resources to secure their safety.

Finally, returning to our three theoretically organizing concepts of civic tool kits, group position, and civic habitus, there are two questions to address: 1) What can be said about the

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<sup>45</sup> A potentially fruitful avenue for future research entails expanding the interviewee pool to include Latinos. As a group frequently targeted by political discourse on immigration policy and with nearly four in ten Latinos reporting concern that they or someone they know may be deported (Moslimani 2022), their lived experience is much closer to the overt threat hypothesis mentioned here. Contrasting this image to that of the current generation of Asians as flying under the radar may help to evaluate the threat hypothesis in the present period.

effectiveness of each of these concepts at explaining political participation, and 2) In what ways can the findings from these areas be used to amend the resource model?

Civic tool kits are learned through exposure and interaction with various social environments, organizations and institutions, thus they may be some of the quickest to learn in an environment with close social ties and deeply impactful experiences. For interviewees to use them requires the combination of both a sense of proficiency with the types of civic tool kits that they feel are useful in the political sphere and placement in situations in which those tool kits have utility. In many ways, the novelty of the civic tool kits expressed by non-voters communicates that they currently lack the experiences and environments that would have produced both of these conditions.

Group position appears to generate much of its impact through the priorities immigrants feel they must place on economic wellbeing and their kids' education. The Asian model minority stereotype seems to have been of little importance as either a matter of clear recognition or a politically mobilizing source of group consciousness. This is somewhat expected as many early generation immigrants are less likely to recognize sources of discrimination (Portes and Zhou 1993) much less tie those experiences to a sense of broader cross-ethnic (i.e. panethnic) identification and the need for political mobilization. If we were to think of group position primarily as a matter of immigrant needs, then a Maslow-type (1958) hierarchy of needs framework would suggest that if the second generation is raised with sufficient material security then matters of political expression (if these are indeed forms of self-actualization) would be of greater interest. To some extent, this may help to explain the more rapid change in Indian participation between earlier studies and this one, given the high numbers of professionals in the sample.

Civic habitus as it was captured in the interviews demonstrates the strong sense of anxiety, inefficacy, and distaste which color feelings about politics among the non-voters. Moreover, these attitudes are clearly related to experiences in the sending country, as in the cases of corruption, censorship, and other victimization by state entities.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, civic habitus as a deeply imbedded feeling can be over-encompassing in its conceptual breadth, hindering our capacity to connect specific social variables to the specific action of voting.

What implications do the findings from these concepts hold for the resource model? There is still significant evidence that the resource model continues to provide a useful framework for understanding the formation of civic skills, such as elderly Indian professionals that have spent a great deal of time in integrated workspaces or *Sansei* (3<sup>rd</sup> gen) Japanese Americans that had abundant skill development opportunities via their experiences in college during the civil rights movement and Vietnam War protests. However, two major critiques of the resource model can be suggested: 1) that resources can be disconnected from the contexts that produce them, and 2) “psychological engagement” with politics, which Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995) model simply as political interest, is not given sufficient attention.

First, the resource model’s focus on civic skills presumes some sort of skill matching between mainstream institutional involvements and political participation. Yet in the case of Asian Americans there may be a mismatch. Turning from civic skills to civic tool kits, we find novel forms of citizenship norms and clear divergence from the mainstream which are likely the product of engagement in contexts that differ from the mainstream. Consistent with this point are the civic habitus feelings of anxiety and inefficacy toward politics produced in the sending

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<sup>46</sup> Although the three groups are not perfectly comparable, one might ask, if all three groups are to some extent victimized by the state then at what level of mistreatment does avoidance of oppression turn into action against oppression? Although beyond the scope of this paper, perceptions of political opportunity and how these vary by states may be useful path of investigation.

country which endured despite the resettlement to a new political environment. Features of Asian immigrants challenges the resource model's assumption that all three types of resources—money, education, and civic skills—will be closely intertwined. In the case of Asian Americans and possibly other immigrant groups, these resources, particularly civic skills, may need to be considered separately.

Second, although the resource model models psychological engagement simply with political interest,<sup>47</sup> it overlooks other important aspects of psychological engagement that shape decisions to engage in political acts. Here civic habitus and group position can be drawn upon to inform areas of development for psychological engagement as an important factor. Interview results suggest that other things, such as individuals' perceptions of a lack of overlap between politics and personal or community interests or individuals' orientations toward solving problems (admittedly simultaneously civic skills and political interests) are important factors.

Ultimately, the resource model has faced significant challenges in its application to the experiences of specific Asian American heritage groups. The unique experiences of these groups in many ways casts the resource model as overfitted to the case of the mainstream experience and requires expanding in the way it considers how these other groups form their civic skills and “psychological engagement” with politics.

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<sup>47</sup> Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995) suggest that there are serious endogeneity issues in the relationship between psychological engagement and political acts.

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Table 1: Civic Tool Kits—Groups, Themes, and Idealized Examples

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Idealized examples</b>
Non-voters: Chinese mainlanders, Indian small businesses	Lesser capacity to discuss politics: brevity, pol. Knowledge	"No, I never really thought about it." "I don't know that stuff very well"
	New justifications for non-engagement	"It doesn't matter." "I am always busy with family and work, I don't have time."
Voters (HK, Taiwan) speaking of community non-voters:	New justifications for non-engagement	"They're trying to get established first." "They don't have the luxury of protesting"
Voters (HK, Taiwan, Indian professionals):	Citizenship norms: duty-based citizenship	"I vote, I practice civic duty." "We have a duty to respect law and order."
Voters: Japanese, particularly <i>Sansei</i> (3 <sup>rd</sup> gen)	Citizenship norms: duty-based and engaged citizenship	"We need to speak up more." "We need to be a voice for the voiceless." "I might fight it if I felt it was unjustified."

Note: Idealized examples present what an idealized case would look like. They are constructed by rewriting quotes in the transcript for brevity. Also of note is that greater focus is placed on patterns of non-voter responses.

Table 2: Group Position—Groups, Themes, and Idealized Examples

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Idealized examples</b>
Non-voters: Chinese mainlanders, Indian small businesses	Model minority stereotype: slight recognition, unpoliticized	"Asians are known for being smart, I guess"
Voters: HK, Taiwanese, Indian (prof), Japanese	Model minority stereotype: recognized, challenged but unpolitical	"Not all Asians do well academically" "They don't all fit what people expect"
All	Identities (Asian/Asian American never majority ID)	"Japanese-American," Indian (regional ID), Chinese (Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland)
Non-voters: Chinese mainlanders, Indians	Intra-community focus, community status	"When you mess up, everyone will know" "It's important to save face" "My parents say 'don't marry him'"
	Sources of status (economic, family, education)	"They look at what school they went to, oh that's a good family" "The more money, the more status"
	Immigrant priorities	"You have to make enough to survive first." "What is the first thing? Obviously, it is a job"
Voters (HK, Taiwan) speaking of community non-voters:	"Non-political" access of public resources, lack of overlap b/t politics and interests	"Sure, they get benefits, but they don't vote. They think it doesn't impact them"

Note: Idealized examples present what an idealized case would look like. They are constructed by rewriting quotes in the transcript for brevity. Also of note is that greater focus is placed on patterns of non-voter responses.

Table 3: Civic Habitus—Groups, Themes, and Idealized Examples

Groups	Themes	Idealized examples
Non-voters: Chinese mainlanders, Indian small businesses	Generalized anxiety toward contact outside community	Recruitment process: highest investment in securing brokers, exposure to community, building ties
	Anxiety about online political discussion (Chinese mainlanders)	Hong Kongers speaking of Chinese: "They won't talk about it, it's just something you can't talk about [on WeChat]"
	Non-confrontational mentality, avoidance of social disturbance	"Don't rock the boat" "Don't disturb the status quo" "Don't make waves"
	Inefficacy: corruption (Indian small businesses)	"Some of them have bad experiences back home, so their feeling about it is bad"
	Inefficacy: fixity of outcomes (Chinese mainlanders)	"Whatever is going to happen, it will happen"
Voters speaking of their communities (Chinese, Indian):	Ethnic community distaste for politics	"Some of them have bad experiences back home, so their feeling about it is bad"

Note: Idealized examples present what an idealized case would look like. They are constructed by rewriting quotes in the transcript for brevity. Also of note is that greater focus is placed on patterns of non-voter responses.

## APPENDIX C-1

### **Interview Guide:**

Note: The interview schedule was simplified from the original to more closely reflect the semi-structured nature of interviews. I found that strict adherence to the interview schedule limited responses and my capacity to initially build rapport with interviewees. As a result, I made efforts to simplify the interview schedule and, in practice, used fewer, simpler questions which provided more opportunities for follow-up questions.

“Let me start by introducing myself. I am a researcher interested in how Asian Americans participate in their local communities and in politics. I want to ask you some questions about your own political participation and your thoughts on Asian Americans’ political behavior. Before I begin, are there any questions about myself that I might answer for you?<sup>48</sup>”

1. Topic: introduction, generating rapport, and understanding migrants’ backgrounds
  - a. Demographic questions:
    - i. Age (or general approximation), class identification or occupation (avoid if sensitive), education (drop if sensitive)
  - b. Aim: to understand migrants’ identity
    - i. Question: There are many ways that people of Asian origin have described their identity. These include things like Asian, Asian-American, Indian/Chinese, and even American. How do you identify yourself?

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<sup>48</sup> This is merely a loose introductory script. In practice, strict adherence to such a script would result in jolted, overly formal interviews rather than building the initial rapport needed to conduct them.

1. Follow-up: Why? Would other people you know identify in a similar way?
  - ii. Question: If I say Asian, who do you think falls in this category?
- c. Aim: to understand what they perceive as their ethnic community, both locally and transnationally
  - i. Question: How do you feel connected to your ethnic identity?
    1. Follow-up: Do certain relationships you have connect you to that identity? If so, which?
    2. Follow-up: Do you maintain any relationships to people in [*national origin*]?
- d. Aim: to establish birthplace and migration experience
  - i. Question: Where were you born?
  - ii. Question (if born outside the US): What was your experience coming here?
  - iii. Question (if born in the US): What was your family's experience coming here?
2. Topic: ethnic and racial identity in a racialized field as it relates to feelings of civic ostracism (later changed to focus on racial discrimination, Asian stereotypes, and sense of Asian
  - a. Early period of interview questions:
    - i. Model minority stereotype:
      1. Question: Are you familiar with the term "model minority"?

*Popular definition of “model minority”:* “There is a common generalization about Asians as hardworking, successful, and non-disruptive. This, combined with perceived success in income, education, low crime rates, and family stability, have led to Asians being called the ‘model minority.’

2. How do you feel about the model minority myth? Do you feel it has affected your life in any way?

b. Later period of interview questions:

i. Model minority stereotype + racial position questions

1. Added: where do you see Asian Americans relative to other groups, such as Black, White, or Latino?
2. With which group do you see Asians as closest?

3. Topic: What migrants bring with them (civic habitus): norms of political participation in the nation of origin.

a. Aim: to understand what sorts of conceptions of public engagement and political behavior migrants bring with them and how these are informed by their national origins.

i. Question

1. (If raised outside the US): When you were in India/China, were you politically active? (why/why not?)
2. (If raised in the US): Are you currently politically active? What about your parents? Did they ever talk about their political experiences in India/China?

- ii. Question (if raised outside the US): Thinking more generally, how do other people talk about or engage in politics in India/China?
    - 1. Follow-up: For example, how do people get the government to respond to their needs and how do people in your country keep political leaders accountable?
  - iii. Question: Continuing to think about political behavior in *national origin*, how do people get involved in their communities and neighborhoods? How do they feel that these forms of participation relate to broader, national politics?
  - iv. Question: What does it mean to be a citizen of *national origin*? What sorts of expectations and obligations do you feel come with it?
4. Topic: norms of political participation after moving to the United States, civic tool kits captured in questions of what it means to be a good citizen and justifications for political actions or inactions.
- a. Aim: to capture what one sees as the norms of political participation in the mainstream.
    - i. Question: What does it mean to be an American citizen? What about being a “good” citizen? Is it similar or different from being a citizen back home?
      - 1. Discuss duty-based citizenship and engaged citizenship.
        - a. Duty-based citizenship items:
          - i. Reporting a crime, obeying the law, serving in the military, serving on a jury
        - b. Engaged citizenship items:

- i. Active in voluntary groups, be active in politics, support the worse off, form your own opinions
  - ii. Question: What does it mean to participate in politics to you?
  - iii. Question: Are you involved in or a member of any organizations or nonprofits not related to business?
  - iv. Question: How did you view acts of political participation when you first arrived in the US? And now?
    - 1. Do you talk about politics with others?
  - v. Question (also capturing civic habitus): How do you feel about politics?
- b. Aim: to capture attitudes towards political participation within one's ethnic community (civic habitus)
  - i. Question: How do you think other members of your ethnic community see things like voting or registering to vote? What about protesting, contacting a representative, donating money to a campaign or working for a political campaign?
    - 1. What sorts of things might generate status in [ethnic heritage] community? What sorts of things do they recognize as important?
  - ii. Added later: Question: How would you respond if your kid[s] said they wanted to become a politician?
  - iii. Added later: Question: How do you think your parents would feel if you said you wanted to be a politician?
  - iv. Question: Are you familiar with any [*heritage group*] politicians in L.A.?

5. Topic: Japanese American internment and its potential impacts upon political mobilization
  - a. (Based on age): Question: What were your parents' and/or grandparents' experience coming to the US like?
    - i. Based on generation:
      1. Ask about parents, grandparents, and/or personal experiences during WWII and experiences of internment. Opportunity to also ask about previous generations' political involvement and feelings about politics here.
      2. Ask about the impacts of experience/learning about internment/parents/grandparents experiences.
      3. Ask about Asian Identity Movement and possible involvement
    - b. Added later:
      - i. What is the difference between *Issei*, *Nisei*, *Sansei*, *Yonsei*?
      - ii. What is the difference between internment and incarceration?