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ASIAN AMERICAN POLITICS AND ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION: A STUDY OF
ASIAN AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL VOTING

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ABSTRACT

This paper begins with a theoretical discussion and literature review of Asian American politics and participation. It includes a general survey of Asian American population including demographic and geographic information as well as information concerning factors that influence their level political engagement. This paper hypothesizes that Asian Americans with higher levels of community socialization will tend to vote for the Democratic Party while those with lower levels will vote Republican. Furthermore, lower levels of authoritarianism of Asian Americans' ethnic homeland will lead to Asian Americans voting more Democratic, while higher levels of authoritarianism will influence them to vote more Republican. The analysis uses the 2000 Pilot National Asian American Survey as well as Polity IV data reporting information on the level of democracy for all independent states with greater than 500,000 total population. Multiple Regression analysis is performed to determine if the dependent variable, Asian American vote in presidential elections, is influenced by two independent variables: community socialization (or acculturation), which I operationalize as the use of English in the home, and the level of authoritarianism of Asian American's ethnic homeland, which I operationalize as their Polity IV score.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Asian American politics is a relatively little studied area of American politics, yet Asian Americans are an increasingly important part of the American electorate. During the 2012 election, Barack Obama's successful election campaign was contingent on high numbers of minority voters and their relatively high participation rates. Without that, and their high participation rates, Barack Obama would not have won the election and be serving as President of the United States today.

In the aftermath of the election, there was much public debate and discussion about the growing effect that minority voters have on the American political process. However, almost all of this debate and discussion centered on the two largest minority groups: Latinos and African Americans. An overwhelming majority of Latinos and African Americans came out to support the Democratic Party, and political scientists have pointed out the impact a growing minority constituency will have on America's political system in future elections. Asian Americans, America's third largest minority group, were notably and egregiously left out of this discussion. The allegiance of African Americans to the Democratic Party is of long standing, and Latinos more recently have voted overwhelmingly Democrat, but Asian American party loyalties are thought to be still up for grabs. With their growing prominence and population in America, as well as their high education and economic levels, Asian Americans are poised to make an impact on the political landscape, and both major political parties are chomping at the bit to scoop them up.

Which party do Asian Americans traditionally support? Are they involved politically?

What factors influence their vote choice? There are a lot of unanswered questions on the political involvement and voting habits of the Asian populace in the United States. Because they have historically been a small group, political scientists have not been too interested in studying them. Even now, they are small enough that few Asian Americans will be captured in random national surveys. However, just because they are a small group does not mean that they should be ignored. More work must be done by political scientists to understand more about them, especially as their numbers continue to grow

Asian Americans are the fastest growing minority group in the United States and as their culture has begun to spread and develop within the United States, Asian Americans have become much more politically active. US Census data tells us that, among minority groups in the United States, Asian Americans have the highest median income, the highest level of education, and one of the highest levels of community involvement (Lien 2001, 27). In the coming years, Asian Americans will affect the American political system more and more, so as political scientists it is important to analyze what that impact will be. This research has the potential to help political parties determine how they can utilize this rapidly growing group through determining what factors influence their vote choice. Political parties could potentially use this research to alter their platform to be more inviting to the average Asian American voter.

The research will center on identifying the motivational factor of Asian Americans participation and vote choice in Presidential elections. By breaking down Asian Americans into five distinct ethnicity groups – Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, Korean Americans, Vietnamese Americans, and Filipino Americans – it will be easy to distinguish the key voting factors for each group and how these factors influence each ethnicity differently. The

first part of the research will examine levels of, and motivations for, Asian Americans' electoral participation. Then I will examine the effect that ethnicity and community socialization, or acculturation, have on individual vote choice.

The following sections of this paper will address these issues. First, I will describe the Asian American population and then examine the literature about the politics of each group. After examining the literature, I will propose a unique theory attempting to answer the questions surrounding the motivational factors of Asian American politics. I will use survey data as a basis for analysis. Next, I present the analysis and draw conclusions from my results. Finally, I will discuss how the results give insights into Asian American politics.

Chapter 2

The Asian American Population

Asian Americans are a very diverse group because the term “Asian” refers to a continent composed of many different ethnic groups. To be considered an Asian by the US government, a citizen must be of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, or Filipino origin (Lien 2001, 50). Using that definition, the Census website indicates that there are 15 million people currently living in the United States who identify themselves as “Asian”. Of the 15 million, two-thirds, or around 10 million people, were born outside of the United States.

Language, Education and Income

Given the large proportion of first generation immigrants it is not surprising that about 80% of the Asian population does not speak English at home but instead, their own native language (Census 2012). This demonstrates that there is a language barrier not only between Americans, but also between different Asian ethnic groups.

Asian Americans are the wealthiest minority group, with in a mean family income of \$67,000 (Census 2012). They are also the most educated race in America. 48% of Asians living in the United States have a Bachelor’s degree or higher, while only about 30% of Caucasians – the next highest group – have received the same level of schooling (Aoki 2008, 24).

Asians are a far from homogeneous group. For example, citizenship status varies among each ethnicity. As of a 2004 Census survey of the Asian American community, significant differences can be spotted among each group. 75.8% of Korean Americans, 70.5% of

Vietnamese American, 69.8% of Chinese Americans, 66.2% of Filipino Americans, but only 41.9% of Japanese Americans are first generation citizens.

Furthermore, education level also differs amongst each ethnicity. Although around 40% of Asian Americans as a whole have a bachelor's degree or higher, this number is just somewhat skewed by the Vietnamese American population. Only 24% of Vietnamese Americans have achieved a bachelor's degree, which is less than the national average of 27%. However, 50.8% of Korean Americans, 50.2% of Chinese Americans, 47.9% of Filipino Americans, and 43.7% of Japanese Americans have completed college. Will this mean that Vietnamese Americans will be less likely to vote?

Finally, although Asian Americans have the highest level of median income as a whole, Korean Americans are actually below the national average of \$44,684, with a median household income of \$43,195. The median income of Filipino Americans was the highest totaling \$65,700, followed by Chinese Americans at \$57,433, Japanese Americans at \$53,763, and Vietnamese Americans at \$45,980 (Census - The Asian Community, 2004).

With these income and education levels one might expect Asian Americans to vote at high rates because participation increases with income and educational levels (Kernell et Al, 2012). Since Asian Americans are America's wealthiest and most educated group, why are they not very involved in politics? Means, motive, and opportunity are three concomitants of voting. Census data indicates that Asian Americans have the means and opportunity— as long as they are citizens – to be politically active, so they must lack the motive or opportunity. For an Asian American to participate in politics, other factors must contribute much more. Because those who are not citizens are ineligible to vote and lack the opportunity to participate in US elections, my

analysis focuses on those who are citizens. Here I expect that vote choice and participation are a function of level of authoritarianism and prior political involvement.

The majority of Asian American immigrants to the United States in their 30s or later, so they attend school in their homeland. Socialization usually occurs early in adolescence and early adulthood, by parents, family, friends, and at school. These are all powerful forces that socialize most Asian Americans to different political system than the United States. Parents and family have a very large impact on the way a person develops their political ideology. Thus, Asian Americans who are socialized in the United States from birth, are socialized by parents who were also socialized to a different political system. It is then essential when considering Asian American political socialization considering ethnicity, overall ethnic voting and ideological trends, and language within each ethnic group. It is also useful to consider the type of government Asian Americans immigrated to the United States from, as their exposure and possible engagement in that system could impact how they view politics as a whole.

The process of developing an interest in politics among Asian Americans is different than it is for groups where most people are born in the U.S.; indeed, time of residence in the United States is a better predictor than wealth or education. Characteristics such as how exposed an Asian immigrant is to the American political system and American way of life serve as factors for what political party an Asian Americans will join. However, age does not correlate to length of residence in most cases for Asians, because 2/3 of the America's Asian population was born outside of the country. Most Asian Americans arrive in the United States in their thirties, so although they are older, they have not experienced the same amount of socialization as someone in their thirties born in the US. Thus, the majority of Asians are not involved in politics because they have not been socialized to be involved in politics (Wong 2000, 343).

Length of residence and community involvement seem to be the defining factors in individual participation but language seems to be an important factor as well. The Census indicated that almost 80% of Asians speak their native language regularly at home. Furthermore, Asians tend to live in proximity to other Asians who come from the same region (i.e., many Chinese people live in Chinese neighborhoods and Japanese people live in Japanese neighborhoods) (Wong 2001, 360). An analysis of metropolitan residential segregation in multi-ethnic America revealed that Asian and Hispanic community segregation has experienced slight increases. Political scientists hypothesize that that the growth in segregation among these groups is likely related to population growth that “buttressed ethnic enclaves” (Iceland, 2003, 264). This is due to comfort and a strong sense of cultural and racial identity throughout the Asian culture.

While groups like African Americans largely live in segregated neighborhoods, their levels of electoral participation are higher than Asian Americans. This is partially because Asian Americans do not have a long history of involvement in the US political system, while African Americans have been involved in political and social movements for around two centuries. African American turnout rates have increased over time, so hypothetically the same will occur for Asian Americans. Low levels of Asian American voter turnout are also characteristic of other ethnic groups when they first arrived, and non-white ethnic groups today. Asians Americans tend to focus on local issues related to their neighborhoods while other ethnic and racial groups focus more on national issues (Masuoka 2006, 994).

Like other Americans, Asian Americans are motivated to become politically active through labor organizations, religious organizations, non-profit organizations, and ethnic organizations. Ethnic organizations tied to the community are the most successful organizers

because of the centrality of the community. Community elites have a lot of influence and therefore, can mobilize a wide range of ethnicities. Political and community elites are very important influences of political involvement in the general framework of politics yet these elites are the least successful in the Asian American community. Despite the effort of elites, Asian Americans still have the lowest voter turnout rate among all minorities (Wong 2000, 360).

Political elites are only effective if they focus their efforts on improving political participation locally. Because the parties are distracted with national get out the vote measures, party elites and leaders do not reach out to the Asian American community individually as they do other minority groups (Ong et al, 122). The difference is however, that many of the issues of other majority groups are national issues as well, so political organizers and attract multiple constituencies. Focusing on local issues among Asian Americans is viewed as a waste of time and money for the major parties, so Asian Americans are often left out of the political discussion (Aoki 2008, 20). Asian Americans are historically small, and historically discriminated group in the United States. Some political scientists argue that this has caused the community to come closer together and associate less with national US issues. (Kim 2007, 89). However, a study indicates though that contacting Asians through mail or by phone drastically improves turnout rates by almost two times the average amount, which is inline with other ethnic and cultural groups (Wong 2005, 108).

While voter turnout rates are low compared other groups, Asian Americans have the highest rate of naturalization (as high as non-Hispanic whites) as well as the largest population of foreign-born citizens and thus the most eligible voters. Among Asian Americans, Filipinos have the highest rates of naturalization, followed by the Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese and Japanese American populations. Because a high number of Asian Americans are naturalized, they are able

to participate in elections at higher rates than other immigrant populations. Naturalization takes time, but it is also influenced by ethnicity, age, and level of education (US Census Bureau 2010). Among immigrant-registered voters, Asian Americans have the highest turnout rate; however, overall group numbers for Asian Americans are still the lowest among minority groups (Ong 2003, 126).

Party identification is developed through socialization, which occurs throughout childhood, usually resulting in a child supporting the same party as their parents. A person's party identification is influenced by their surroundings growing up and adult experiences usually but not always reinforces that allegiance. However, party identification can change after a traumatic event (Aoki 2008, 100). Nonetheless, Asian Americans have voted in favor of Democrats by a 2/3 margin in the past few elections (Kim 2007, 98). The National Asian American Survey stated that prior to the 2012 election, 43% of Asian Americans favored Obama, while 24% favored Romney and 32% were still undecided. The survey indicated 33% of Asians identify as Democrat, 14% as Republican and 51% as non-partisan (Ramakrishnan, 2012).

Because most Asian Americans are not socialized in the United States or by parents who support one of the major parties, it takes them much longer to develop their party identification. While the majority of Asian Americans voted Republican 20 years ago, many were actually independent. As socialization occurs, Asians have slowly become more Democratic (Aoki 2008, 123).

Although there is not much research concerning socialization in different cultures, using the model I have already discussed, childhood and later adult socialization shapes voting patterns and political leanings. Due to Asian Americans mostly immigrating to the United States later in life, their socialization primarily occurs in their country of origin. As discussed earlier, the

majority of Asian American immigrants to the United States in their 30s or later, so they attend school in their homeland. Socialization usually occurs early in adolescence and early adulthood, by parents, family, friends, and at school. These are all powerful socialization forces that socialize most Asian Americans to different political system than the United States. As a result, the political landscape of their country of origin would affect how Asian Americans were socialized, and in turn, how they react to socialization once they come to America. This would extend to second, and even third generation Asian Americans, as parents would socialize their children according to their established political views. There is a gap in the research to how this affects Asian American voters and it could prove to be an important socialization factor in how Asian Americans vote. Does a more authoritarian state cause their views to be conservative?

In summation, as the Asian American minority has grown and increased its political capital over the past few decades, more and more political scientists are beginning to study the group. Prior research about Asian American politics indicates that most have not spent enough time in the United States to become interested in American politics. The majority of Asians who are politically active and join a political party are community elites. Asian Americans also are more involved in local politics because their communities are mostly composed of people with similar ethnic identities. Additionally, country of origin seems to play a role in party identification. All of these conclusions have led me to believe Asian American vote choice is influenced most by the level of authoritarianism of their country of origin and community socialization in America, or, as I have operationalized it, use of English in the home. Although community socialization implies a broad range of characteristics, due to limitations in my data I choose the use of English as a primary measure of acculturation

Chapter 3

Expectations and Hypothesis

All of these conclusions have led me to believe that political participation and party identification among Asian Americans is influenced most by country of origin, income, community involvement, and prior political involvement.

If my expectations concerning cultural influence of one's home country is true, I will expect Asian Americans from the Philippines, Japan, Korea and the South Pacific Islands identify as Democrats because their home countries are more democratic (as measured by Polity IV scores, ranging from 10, most democratic, to -10, least democratic). I expect that Asian Americans from China and Vietnam will identify as Republican due to the fact that authoritarian regimes are more concerned with economic policies rather than social issues. I will test this hypothesis controlling for my community acculturation variable (use of English in the home), gender (women are more likely to vote Democratic), and age (young people are more likely to be Democrats but vote less).

I also hypothesize differences in turnout with Asian Americans from the Philippines, Japan, and Korea having higher turnout rates than those from China or Vietnam. To test this basic hypothesis I will also take into account other factors that are known to promote higher levels of voting in other populations, such as gender and age. Like in my previous hypothesis, I will also observe the use of English in the home. The purpose of the research is to examine if Asian American ethnicity is a good predictor of Asian American voting turnout and voting choice.

This research will also provide the two major political parties with information that may help them take the Asian American vote in the next election.

Chapter 4

Theory

H₁ → Asian American vote choice in Presidential elections is a result of the level of authoritarianism of their homeland's government. The higher the level of authoritarianism, the more like an Asian American is to vote Republican and vice versa.

H₂ → Asian American vote choice in Presidential elections is a result of community socialization. Asian Americans who are socialized by their community well enough to use English will have closer ties to the larger community, leading them to vote Democratic.

H₃ → Asian American levels of turnout in Presidential elections is a result of the level of authoritarianism of their homeland's government. The higher the level of authoritarianism, the less likely and Asian American from that country will turn out to vote in the election.

Level of Authoritarianism → Asian American Presidential vote

Community Socialization → Asian American Presidential vote

Level of Authoritarianism → Voter Turnout

Here are the equations that will be used to test the hypotheses:

$$AAVC = \alpha + \beta(E) + \beta(LoA) + \beta(age) + \beta(gen) + \beta(PID) + \epsilon .$$

$$AAVC = \alpha + \beta(E) + \beta(CS) + \beta(age) + \beta(gen) + \beta(PID) + \epsilon$$

$$TURNOUT = \alpha + \beta(E) + \beta(LoA) + \beta(age) + \beta(gen) + \beta(CS) + \beta(PID) + \epsilon$$

Here is the meaning of each the variables listed in these equations:

E= Ethnicity: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese and Filipino.

LoA= Level of Authoritarianism (Polity IV): China -7, Vietnam -7, Korea 8, Philippines 8,

Japan 10

CS= Community Socialization: English, Mixed, Native Language

Age= Age group: young Under 35, middle aged 35-59, old Over 60

Gender= Female & Male

PID= Political Ideology: Very Liberal, Somewhat Liberal, Middle-of-the-road,

Somewhat Conservative, Very Conservative

The control variables for the analysis are age, gender, and political ideology as all three controls are key factors in determining how people vote in elections.

Chapter 5

Data and Methods

The data used to test my hypotheses on what motivates Asian American party identification and political involvement is from the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey following the 2000 presidential election. This survey attempts to gauge the political attitudes and behaviors of Asian Americans on a national scale. The survey sampled Asian Americans from five major metropolitan areas of the United States, Chicago, IL, Los Angeles, CA, San Francisco, CA, New York City, NY, and Honolulu, HI, where about 40% of the nation's Asian American population resided after the 2000 census. These cities are representative of the five largest Asian ethnicities living in the United States: Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese. The sample was selected so that everyone who was surveyed was a US citizen.

The phone survey investigated ethnic identity, acculturation+, homeland politics, voting and other types of political participation, political ideology, political partisanship, opinions on various social issues, social connectedness, racial integration, and group discrimination. It contains 1,241 completed personal phone interviews with members of all Asian ethnicities.

From this representative sample of America's Asian population, a clearer picture of Asian American political identity and involvement comes together. From the 141 variables of the survey, I used a subset for my analysis. I used SPSS to conduct my statistical analysis.

Variables

I will examine the impact of Asian ethnicity on three dependent variables, Presidential Vote Choice in 2000, voter turnout, and political ideology. Presidential Vote choice is measured by who the respondent voted for in the 2000 election, voter Turnout is measured by if the respondent voted in the 2000 election, and political ideology is measured on a 1-5 scale that asked the respondents to rate their own political views from very liberal to very conservative.

The independent variables I will be examining are ethnicity, language, age, and gender. The key independent variable in my analysis is ethnicity. *Table 1* is a breakdown of the distribution of the sample by ethnicity. This descriptive statistic table demonstrates that the survey creators were able to achieve significant numbers of each Asian ethnicity. In the survey, there are 308 Chinese Americans, 168 Japanese Americans, 137 Korean Americans, 198 Vietnamese Americans, and 266 Filipino Americans. Chinese Americans are the largest group sampled, accounting for 28.6% of the total survey participants.

Table 1: Asian American Ethnicity by Group (2000)

	Frequency	Percent
Chinese	308	28.6%
Japanese	168	15.6%
Korean	137	12.7%
Vietnamese	198	18.4%
Filipino	266	24.7%

a. *Pilot National Asian American Political Survey, 2000*

As *Table 2* demonstrates, different Asian American groups differ in their party affiliation. Previous data had shown that socialization occurs differently among different Asian American

groups. Most Asian American ethnic groups identify themselves as Independent, but as socialization occurs they lean to one of the two major parties.

The Chinese (32%) and Vietnamese (12%) are least likely to be Democrats. This is partially because the majority of people in these groups are people who are “unsure/ undecided” (Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, 11). This means that they are not affiliated with a major party. I examined the partisan affiliation of several Asian American subgroups (see Table 2). The dependent variable was party identification and the independent variable was ethnicity. The table indicates that 55% of Chinese Americans, 45% of Korean Americans, 40% of Japanese Americans identify themselves as weak Democrats. For Filipinos, the majority identifies as strong Democrats. Interestingly, Vietnamese Americans are the only group who have a majority, albeit small, who identify themselves as Independents. Overall, counter to my hypothesis, Chinese Americans are the most Democratic group.

However, as expected, the Vietnamese are the least Democratic ones, only 42% claim to be Democrats. The other three groups are in the middle.

Table 2: Party Identification by Ethnicity

	Chinese	Korean	Vietnamese	Japanese	Filipino
Strong Democrat	18%	10%	10%	16%	28%
Weak Democrat	58%	50%	19%	53%	32%
Independent	2%	10%	29%	10%	6%
Weak Republican	18%	28%	16%	20%	24%
Strong Republican	4%	2%	26%	1%	9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

a. Pilot National Asian American Politics Survey, 2000

The second dependent variable I will examine is participation in the 2000 election, again with ethnicity as my primary independent variable. Overall, about 45% percent of the Asian American citizens in this sample voted. Although much of the literature that I read indicated that

Asian Americans are much more apolitical than other ethnic groups, the overall voter turnout in 2000 was 51.0%, meaning that Asian Americans only participated about 6% less than the rest of the population. However, when this percentage is compared to other minority groups, the results are a bit more telling. For instance, 55% of African Americans turned out to vote in 2000, which is a 10% more than Asian American numbers (US Census, 2011). Furthermore, Latinos, a group that Asian Americans are often compared to politically, had a turnout of 49%.

Table 3 is a cross-tabulation of Asian ethnicity and if they voted in the presidential election. If the respondent did not vote in 2000, they received a “0”, while they received a “1” if they did participate in the electoral process. Those who could not remember were counted as missing. There are significant differences among the Asian groups. By far, Vietnamese Americans were the most politically active group, having a turnout rate of 63.3%, which is much higher than the national average that year. Conversely, Japanese Americans had the lowest turnout rates among the Asian ethnicities, as only 33.9% voted in the 2000 election. Both Chinese and Korean Americans had turnout rates that lingered around 40% while Filipino Americans were slightly above the group average with a turnout rate of 47.3%. These numbers are perplexing to me. For example, if voting by Asian Americans is a product of the level of authoritarianism in their cultural homeland, why did Vietnamese and Chinese Americans, whose mother countries are known for being authoritarian, participate greater than Japanese and Korean Americans? Japan and Korea are considered very strong democracies, so this may be something to consider when studying my hypothesis relating to authoritarianism.

Table 3: Voting Rates in 2000 by Asian Ethnicity

	% Who Voted	N (Total by Ethnicity)
Chinese	41.00%	307
Japanese	33.90%	168
Korean	39.40%	137
Vietnamese	63.30%	254
Filipino	47.30%	264
Total	45.30%	1072

a. *Pilot National Asian American Political Survey, 2000*

After examining who voted, I observed how each group voted. In order to do this properly, I had to recode the variable to create a simple dummy variable coded 1 if they voted Democratic and 0 if they voted Republican. Of those surveyed, there are only 393 valid cases because those are the only people who voted, so the sample size is not ideal.

After operationalizing the data, I cross-tabulated ethnicity by Democratic vote and labeled it *Table 4*. First, 69.2% of Asian Americans who voted selected the Democratic candidate. This number is much higher than the national average for the 2000, and overwhelmingly demonstrates that these Asian ethnicities were more Democratic than Republican in 2000.

There were significant ethnic differences though a majority of each voted Democratic. Furthermore, 73% of Chinese Americans, 71% of Vietnamese Americans, 61% of Filipino Americans, 58% of Korean Americans, and 57% of Japanese Americans voted with the Democratic Party. About three-quarters of the Chinese and Vietnamese voted Democratic, while only about 60% of Koreans and Japanese did. The Filipinos were in the middle.

Table 4: Ethnicity by Vote Choice (2000)

		Did Not Vote	Democrat Candidate	Republican Candidate	Other Candidate	Total	
Ethnicity	Chinese	Count	181	81	26	4	292
		% within Ethnicity	62.00%	28.00%	8.90%	1.10%	100.00%
	Japanese	Count	111	25	18	1	155
		% within Ethnicity	71.60%	16.10%	11.60%	0.70%	100.00%
	Korean	Count	83	29	19	2	133
		% within Ethnicity	62.45%	21.85%	14.50%	0.20%	100.00%
	Vietnamese	Count	72	69	21	8	170
		% within Ethnicity	42.40%	40.60%	12.00%	5.00%	100.00%
	Filipino	Count	141	68	37	7	253
		% within Ethnicity	55.60%	26.70%	15.00%	2.70%	100.00%
Total		Count	588	272	121	22	1023
		% within Ethnicity	57.50%	26.70%	12.60%	2.20%	100%

a. Pilot National Asian American Political Survey, 2000

The final cross tabulation, labeled *Table 5*, is ethnicity by political ideology in order to study how the self-identified political views of each ethnicity differ. The variable contained several missing values that needed to be recoded and operationalized so it could be used. Ideology is measured on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being “very liberal”, 2 being “somewhat liberal”, 3 being “middle of the road”, 4 being “somewhat conservative”, and 5 being “very conservative”. Originally, ideology included the answer “refused” and “not sure”. I recoded the “refused” as missing and did not include it in the final analysis. Also, I took some liberty with the data and coded “not sure” as “middle of the road”, because I believed that it indicated that the respondent did not have firm political views. However, it is possible that these respondents could have any ideology and just choose not to share that information with the surveyor. After the recoding, I had 1073 cases to analyze. The data yielded some surprising results. Overall, 44.2% of Asian Americans claim that they have a middle of the road ideology. 25.9% of Asian Americans are

somewhat liberal and 19.1% are somewhat conservative. Only 7.0% of Asian Americans are very liberal while 3.8% are very conservative. This demonstrates that Asian Americans are a very moderate political group, not really ideologically aligned with one of the two major parties. As demonstrated by previous analysis however, they still tend to vote for the Democratic Party.

56.5% of Chinese Americans identify as middle of the road, but 35.1% of Chinese Americans claim to be some degree of liberal. This goes against my hypothesis that Chinese Americans are more likely to be Republican. Intriguingly, Japanese Americans are the most conservative group, but there are still more liberal and middle of the Japanese Americans than there are conservatives. However, the group is nearly evenly divided between the three ideologies. Korean Americans are the most middle of the road group, and they are also the least conservative, as only 9.5% were very or somewhat conservative. 41.6% of Vietnamese Americans are middle of the road, and overall they are more liberal than conservative. Filipinos were more liberal than conservative, and only 24.6% of Filipinos were middle of the road, meaning that they were the most political Asian ethnic group surveyed. In conclusion, this table demonstrates that Asian Americans are more a very middle of the road political group when it comes to their ideology. However, when they are voting, they tend to vote more Democrat. This is also evidenced by the fact that all of the ethnic groups were more liberal than conservative. These results lead me to conclude that Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Filipino Americans were more liberal than conservative in the 2000 election, however, it is not conclusive enough to confirm that they are more liberal as a whole. Again, these results may be a bit muddled by my recoding of not sure into middle of the road, but it is still interesting that when those cases are concluded, the majority of ethnic groups have a “middle of the road” ideology.

Table 5: Ethnicity by Political Ideology (2000)

			Very Liberal	Somewhat Liberal	Middle-of-the-road	Somewhat Conservative	Very Conservative	Total	
Ethnicity	Chinese	Count	12	81	174	35	6	308	
		% within Ethnicity	3.90%	26.30%	57%	11.40%	1.90%	100%	
	Japanese	Count	7	48	60	45	7	167	
		% within Ethnicity	4.20%	28.70%	35.90%	26.90%	4.20%	100%	
	Korean	Count	17	14	93	7	6	137	
		% within Ethnicity	12.40%	10.20%	67.90%	5.10%	4.40%	100%	
	Vietnamese	Count	17	50	82	40	8	197	
		% within Ethnicity	8.60%	25.40%	42%	20.30%	4.10%	100%	
	Filipino	Count	22	85	65	78	14	264	
		% within Ethnicity	8.30%	32.20%	24.60%	29.50%	5.30%	100%	
	Total		Count	75	278	474	205	41	1073
			% within Ethnicity	54.70%	45.30%	100%	19.10%	3.80%	100%

a. *Pilot National Asian American Political Survey, 2000*

I have combined all of this information into one table in order to make it easier to read and analyze. This table is a cross tabulation of ethnicity by the Polity IV score, % voted, % voted Democratic, and percent liberal or very liberal. Recall that the Polity IV scores are a measure of democracy-authoritarianism, with a higher score more democratic and a lower one more authoritarian.

Table 6: Ethnicity by Polity Score, % Voted, % Voted Democrat and % Liberal or Very Liberal (2000)

	Polity IV	% Voted	% Voted Democrat	% Liberal or Very Liberal
Chinese	-7	41.0%	26%	30%
Japanese	10	34%	15%	33%
Korean	8	39%	21%	23%
Vietnamese	-7	63%	35%	34%
Filipino	8	47%	26%	41%

a. *Pilot National Asian American Political Survey, 2000*

After creating these cross tabulations, I ran two regressions to analyze voting habits. The voter turnout was the dependent variable in the first regression and vote choice in the second. In addition to the key independent variables of ethnicity, I controlled for political ideology, age, gender (1=female, 0=male), and whether the respondent spoke English or both English and native language in their home. These language factors operationalized the community socialization variable – to show comparisons within the data.

These multiple regressions analyses involved quite a bit of recoding in order to create dummy variables to run the model. Thus, ethnicity had to be recoded to separate each group. I created a set of dummy variables with Filipino being the omitted category. Chinese Americans were coded as a 1, and everyone else was coded as zero. This process was repeated for Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese Americans, while I left Filipino as the other variable that I was testing against for ethnicity.

Furthermore, I also created dummy variables to test for age. Originally, age was just a number on the survey, so I recoded it into three categories. Young are people 34 or under (young), middle are 35-59 (midage), and the omitted group were people over 60. These were coded as dummy variables. Finally, I also recoded the language variable. I created dummy variables for those who speak only English at home, those speak a mix English and their Native Language, and left the final variable, those who only speak their native language, out of the regression. Ideology is coded from 1-5, with 1 being very liberal, 3 being middle-of-the-road, and 5 being very conservative.

Only a few variables proved to be significant in this voter turnout regression. See Table 7. Political ideology was shown to be significant, as people who are more liberal vote more often. Asian American women were also more likely to vote in elections than men, and middle

aged people were more likely to vote than young or old Asian Americans, which fits traditional voting characteristics. Filipinos were shown to be more likely to vote than Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans, but Vietnamese were the most likely to participate in elections. However, none of these differences is significant at the .05 level. However, language spoken at home has a big impact on turnout. As I would expect, those who spoke English are about 21% more likely to vote in elections and those who spoke a mix of English and their native language were 16% more likely.

Table 7: Voter Turnout Regression (2000)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.574	.070		8.190	.000
Political Ideology	-.036	.015	-.067	-2.324	.020
Chinese	-.008	.048	-.007	-.167	.867
Japanese	-.080	.052	-.058	-1.533	.126
Korean	-.009	.056	-.006	-.158	.875
Vietnamese	.072	.049	.056	1.484	.138
Young	-.329	.038	-.301	-8.585	.000
Women	.061	.029	.061	2.098	.036
English	.207	.048	.186	4.273	.000
Mixed	.156	.042	.128	3.719	.000
Midage	-.099	.035	-.098	-2.798	.005

a. Dependent Variable: Vote in 2000

b. Pilot National Asian American Political Survey, 2000

The second regression used Democratic vote choice, recoded as demvote, as the dependent variable in the regression analysis but included the same control variables (age, gender, political ideology) as the first regression model. The only significant value in this regression is ideology (see Table 8). The results expectedly find that those who are more liberal are going to vote for the more Democratic candidate. However, once controlling for political ideology, none of the other variables are significant. This means that political ideology is the only variable that I selected that had a significant impact on Asian American vote choice.

Table 8: Vote Choice Regression (2000)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.132	.102		11.102	.000
Political Ideology					
Chinese	-.111	.023	-.240	-4.882	.000
Japanese	.019	.072	.019	.266	.790
Korean	-.126	.087	-.085	-1.452	.147
Vietnamese	-.118	.086	-.085	-1.381	.168
Young	.135	.076	.123	1.778	.076
Women	-.112	.066	-.096	-1.677	.094
English	-.035	.047	-.038	-.750	.454
Mixed	-.147	.078	-.152	-1.886	.060
Midage	-.081	.063	-.075	-1.279	.202
Midage	-.058	.052	-.063	-1.114	.266

a. Dependent Variable: Demvote

b. Pilot National Asian American Political Survey, 2000

The majority of each Asian American group voted Democratic. Liberal Asian Americans vote for Democrats while conservative ones vote for Republicans, just like everyone else. While the values are not significant, the regression indicates that the Vietnamese are the most likely ethnic group to vote for the Democratic Party, while the Japanese are the least likely. This counters my first hypothesis by showing that countries with the highest levels of authoritarianism are actually the most democratic voters of the Asian American community while the opposite is also true for those with the lowest levels. Those who speak English are less likely to vote for the Democratic candidate, which goes against my second hypothesis.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

In the beginning of my thesis I had hypothesized three different theories to examine how Asian Americans voted and turned out in elections:

H₁ → Asian American vote choice in Presidential elections is a result of the level of authoritarianism of their homeland's government. The higher the level of authoritarianism, the more like an Asian American is to vote Republican and vice versa.

H₂ → Asian American vote choice in Presidential elections is a result of community socialization. Asian Americans who are socialized by their community well enough to use English will have closer ties to the larger community, leading them to vote Democratic.

H₃ → Asian American levels of turnout in Presidential elections is a result of the level of authoritarianism of their homeland's government. The higher the level of authoritarianism, the less likely an Asian American from that country will turn out to vote in the election.

After conducting my analysis, it is clear that I must alter my original hypotheses; indeed, the models yielded no very few statistically significant results. While I have gained insights into the political ideology and voting habits of the different Asian American ethnic groups, I must alter my theories to explain Asian American politics.

My first hypothesis was disproven, as Asian Americans who come from the most authoritarian governments (China and Vietnam) are the most closely associated with the Democratic Party, voting for the highest percentage of Democrats. The group who voted for the Democratic Party the least were the Japanese, who have the most democratic government among

the whole group, followed closely by Korean Americans who hail from another strong democracy. The only Asian ethnic group to fit my model were Filipinos, who voted for Democrats at the same rate as the Chinese. I hypothesize that these findings are a result of many Chinese and Vietnamese populations living in the United States for a long time. This has naturalized them more to the political process, ultimately becoming more Democrat as they are further socialized into the US political system.

My second hypothesis is also a null hypothesis, as vote choice does not seem to be a product of community socialization. Part of the problem may have been that the variable I operationalized to measure community socialization was not broad enough to capture the variable properly. Community socialization was calculated by considering ethnicity, overall ethnic voting and ideological trends, but mostly which language is used at home within each ethnic group. Each group was widely split and did not seem to have a clear, concise favorite ideology or party. The vote choice regression analysis demonstrated that those who speak English at home are less likely to vote Democrat. This directly contrasts with my original theory, but can possibly explained by another common factor in political socialization – education. If an Asian American voter is able to speak English, they have more exposure to the media and political debates than those who do not have a full grasp of the language, which can cause the group to have polarizing beliefs. As demonstrated by the voter cross tabulations, Asians as a whole are mostly Democrat, and favor voting for the Democratic Party.

My third hypothesis also proved to be a null hypothesis. Asian Americans who came from a more authoritarian country actually were the most likely to vote in elections. For example, 63% of Vietnamese Americans and 41% of Chinese Americans voted in the 2000 election compared to just 39% for Korean Americans and 34% for Japanese Americans. Filipino

Americans are again the only group consistent with my original theory, as 41% of their population voted.

However, the link with turnout and community socialization (specifically English language use) was quite strong since both language values in *Table 7* were statistically significant. There is a strong correlation between Asian Americans participating in presidential elections and them speaking primarily English at home and those who speak a mix of English and their native language at home. Asian Americans who speak some form of English at home would again have more access to media concerning elections and would be more motivated to vote than those who are unable to comprehend this information.

I believe it is essential that political scientists continue to study Asian American politics and improve the literature on the topic. Unfortunately, the surveys that are currently produced concerning Asian American politics are full of gaps that make operationalizing them difficult due to missing variables and small sample sizes. I encountered this problem as I worked on my thesis, and was constantly wondering when new survey data would be available. Currently, there is a 2012 Survey conducted by the National Asian American Survey that has not been released to the public. I had emailed the directors of the project, but they unfortunately never responded to my requests to access the data. I would have liked to see a better breakdown of community demographics as well as more relevant questions relating to individual ethnic groups. The focus of the survey was Asian American's in general, but I feel breaking down ethnicity, rather than grouping everyone together, would be more useful for this type of research.

Nonetheless, the 2000 Pilot National Asian American Survey provided me with valuable insights. First, Asian American middle-aged women are the most group most likely to participate in elections, as they did in 2000. English speakers are also high turnout voters.

Second, most Asian Americans consider their political ideology to be middle-of-the-road, but generally speaking they are more liberal than conservative. This is also reflected in their vote choice, as most preferred the Democratic Candidate to any other electoral participant, if they voted at all.

Finally, the level of authoritarianism of an Asian American's homeland government does not influence how they vote in presidential elections, and the inverse may be true. I feel my results would have been aided if more Asian Americans voted in elections, but until a larger survey is produced, little can be done

In conclusion, my thesis has led me to conclude that level of authoritarianism and community socialization do not impact Asian American politics as much as I had hypothesized in the beginning of my project, but their effect cannot be ruled out completely. While my research did not accomplish what it set out to do, I believe that it also enables people to see that Asian American politics are complex and underexplored field of political science worthy of more study. As time passes and Asian Americans become a larger group in America, participation levels will most likely increase. If the current trends continue, then that means the Democratic Party will be able to capitalize on its success and build a powerful voter base in the future.

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ACADEMIC VITA

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EDUCATION

Schreyer Honors College – The Pennsylvania State University University Park, PA
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Bachelor of Arts: *Political Science & Chinese Majors, History Minor* Dean's List: All Semesters
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East China Normal University Shanghai, China
International Business, Language & Culture Program Summer 2013

Honors Societies:

Pi Sigma Alpha – National Political Science Honors Society Fall 2013 – Present
National Society of Collegiate Scholars Fall 2012 – Present
Paterno Fellows Program Fall 2011 – Present

EMPLOYMENT

The Pennsylvania State University, Department of Political Science University Park, PA
Research Analyst Fall 2014 – Present

- Collected and analyzed survey and newspaper data for a current department research project studying the effect of the media's presentation of the economy over time and how that presentation affects the way citizen's vote

US House of Representatives, Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Washington, D.C.
Railroads, Pipelines & Hazardous Materials Subcommittee Intern Summer 2014

- Assisted the committee staff by answering phones, attending meetings and lectures, drafting memos, and writing bill summaries for members.
- Conducted several research projects on topics related to the committee; specifically, Class I railroads, petroleum & pipelines.

Shanghai Broadway Packaging and Insulation Materials Co., Ltd. Shanghai, China
Human Resources Internship Summer 2013

- Multinational company traded on the Singapore Stock Exchange, whose clients include Apple and GM.
- Updated the English version of Shanghai Broadway's website content including case studies and descriptions of their products and services they offer.
- Taught Broadway executives advanced business English and designed a course curriculum to teach employees how to make a business presentation.

Health Advocate Plymouth Meeting, PA
Client Services Internship 2012 – 2013

- Assistant administrator of the *Riverside Health* campaign. Developed and implemented tracking procedures to determine if members had filed the forms necessary to receive health benefits. Collected and organized the survey data results in an Excel spreadsheet format.
 - Organized backlogged cases by their medical condition. Coordinated this information with the client's previous medical history so that their health information was more readily accessible.
-

ORGANIZATIONS & ACTIVITIES

Sigma Chi Fraternity, Alpha Chi Chapter

State College, PA

Brotherhood Liaison

Fall 2013

- Selected out of 95 members to lead 25 new members through initiation. Responsible for success, management and motivation

Derby Days (Philanthropy) Chair, Event Planner

Spring 2013

- Worked to secure local and national sponsorships for Sigma Chi's annual philanthropy event – 'Derby Days'
- Designed and executed fundraising events that raised over 15,000 dollars for the Huntsman Cancer Foundation

Scholarship Chair

Fall 2012 – Spring 2013

- Helped to develop and establish a mentorship program that provides academic support for younger Fraternity brothers
- Organized, scheduled & mentored academic study sessions to assure the strong academic performance of our members

Mock Trial, Pennsylvania State University

Fall 2011 - Present

- Currently serving as a lawyer for Pennsylvania State University's American Mock Trial Association team
- Developed a further understanding of legal system, formulating a logical legal argument through case law.

SKILLS & INTERESTS

- Successfully completed four semesters of Mandarin Chinese and currently taking advanced level language courses
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