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Leading Asian American Women: How Ethnic, Pan-Ethnic, and Gender Identities Affect Political Participation and Leadership

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Sociology

by

Jessica J. Kang

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Ann Hironaka, Chair
Professor Judy Wu
Professor Linda Trinh Võ

2023

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DEDICATION

To my friends and family,
you were the village, the coven,
that supported and nurtured this human baby,
to produce an academic baby.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
VITA	vi
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	vii
CHAPTER 1: Introduction	1
CHAPTER 2: Asian American Identity and Political Participation	17
CHAPTER 3: Asian American Women’s Race and Politics	53
CHAPTER 4: Asian American Women’s Gender and Leadership	78
CHAPTER 5: Conclusion	104
REFERENCES	114
APPENDIX A: Interview Questions	125

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Demographics of Interviewees 10

Table 2 Demographics of Organizational Location 13

Table 3 Means, Standard Deviations, Ranges and Descriptions of Dependent Variables 29

Table 4 Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges of Control and Independent Variables 30

Table 5 Percentage of Asian Residents and Number of NAAS Respondents Per County 32

Table 6 Binomial Logistic Regression on Registered to Vote 37

Table 7 Linear Regression on Non-Electoral Political Participation 41

Table 8 Negative Binomial Regression on Non-Electoral Political Participation 44

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Last, but certainly not least, thank you to Annaliese, the next Asian American woman leader. I learned so much about time, productivity, and love because of you. Thank you and love you forever.

VITA

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Leach, Colin W., Carraro, Lucia, Garcia, Randi L., and Kang, Jessica J. 2015a. "Morality Stereotyping as a Basis of Women's In-group Favoritisim: An Implicit Approach." *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations.* 20(2): 1-20.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Leading Asian American Women: How Ethnic, Pan-Ethnic, and Gender Identities Affect Political Participation and Leadership

by

Jessica J. Kang

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Irvine, 2023

Professor Ann Hironaka, Chair

In this dissertation, I investigate the complex relationships between Asian American identity (pan-ethnic, ethnic, gender) and political participation (electoral and non-electoral). I utilize a multi-method approach with both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to understand these relationships. In chapter 1, using the National Asian American Survey in 2008, I analyzed the effects of socioeconomic status, political efficacy, social connectedness, immigrant generation, pan-ethnic identity, and ethnic identity on both electoral and non-electoral political participation. Results were supportive of previous research and hypotheses with a key highlight of pan-ethnic and ethnic identity. Pan-ethnic identity was positively related to electoral political participation and ethnic identity was positively related to non-electoral political participation. To further investigate this relationship between identity and political participation, in chapters 2 and 3 I conducted a study interviewing 13 Asian American women leaders in political non-profit organizations across the United States. In chapter 2, I found that respondents

utilized their ethnic and pan-ethnic identities to motivate and justify their careers in politics and leadership. Specifically, their understanding and connection to their family's immigration stories were critical to why they decided to study race or politics and eventually become leaders in the political arena. In chapter 3, I investigated themes of gender and race (intersectional) identity of Asian American women in how they navigated their current positions and work. I found that Asian American women, although explicitly in leadership positions, still felt constraints of gendered expectations and stereotypes both from within and outside their community. However, respondents felt a need to push on for future generations of Asian American women and to persevere despite any backlash. This dissertation will contribute to the gap in both political participation and Asian American identity literature and provide richness to understanding of how to mobilize an important and quickly growing racial group in the United States.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Asian American experience is multi-faceted and mired in deep histories of complicated immigration patterns, economic hardships, and political experiences. Coming to the United States, Asian Americans and their children face a very different political landscape. Some Asian immigrants come from war-torn countries where political advocacy and engagement are a liability and a potential target on one's back. Some are afraid to become involved because of their past experiences of political persecution, some simply cannot be involved in the electoral system because of their citizenship status. Without question, the identity of Asian Americans and the countries/experiences they came from matter in how they view and are involved in political activism in the United States. In this dissertation, I investigate the relationship between Asian American identity (pan-ethnic and single-ethnic) and political participation (electoral and non-electoral). Within three chapters, I conduct a quantitative and qualitative analysis of this relationship. I find that there is a complex picture of what and how racial identity impacts Asian American, specifically women political leaders, and what politics look like for Asian Americans.

Recently, Building Moving Project, a social justice non-profit organization released a report demonstrating the unique experiences of women of color in the non-profit sector (Biu 2019). In this report, researchers found that 41% of women of color who were working in either people of color (POC) or immigrant-identity-based organizations said that their race or ethnicity had helped their advancement in their work compared to 29% of women of color in non-identity-based organizations. However, 36% of women of color in POC-or-immigrant-identity-based organizations reported gender "had negatively impacted their careers" in comparison to 28% of women in non-identity organizations. Asian American women, in particular, constantly fought against the model minority stereotype and were told contradictory feedback on their leadership

styles. Asian American women were told that they were either too assertive or that they were not assertive enough. Despite these barriers to advancement, Asian American women are finding ways to advance in leadership positions in many Asian community organizations today. Through a preliminary investigation of the Asian American organizations in the San Francisco Bay area, I find that almost all organizations with civic engagement work have a woman as executive director, chair of the executive board, or chief executive officer. [1] Given this empowering pattern, I investigated the tactics and experiences of Asian American women in leadership positions in non-profit Asian community organizations. Through this investigation, I hope to shed light on the successes, rather than the barriers/disadvantages, of Asian American women that could be helpful to not only other Asian American women but to other women of color in other sectors as well.

Asian Americans and Political Participation

As Asian Americans quickly grow as a racial group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2016), the urgency for their voices to be heard in the political landscape is becoming more and more dire. During the 2008 and 2012 US presidential elections, then-presidential candidate Barack Obama made an effort to publicly cater to and target Asian Americans and Pacific Islander voters to vote for him and his platforms (Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee, and Junn 2011). This was one of the first times Asian Americans were seen as a political entity that was desired to sway. Despite this interest in the mainstream media, there is still a relatively small amount of sociological research on Asian Americans and political participation, with the exception of research in Asian American studies (e.g., Nakanishi and Lai 2003).

[1] Data was taken from Asian Women in Business website on Asia and Asian American organizations: http://www.awib.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewPage&pageID=831&nodeID=1

Much of this lack of research is due to the immense heterogeneity of Asian Americans in a multitude of factors (Lee and Kye 2016). Many Asian Americans are immigrants and are not eligible to vote or do not have the political knowledge to engage in electoral political participation (Okamoto 2014). Some Asian Americans are refugees from politically and socially divided and war-torn countries and seek to stay away from politically-charged participation. Additionally, non-electoral political participation such as canvassing, protesting, and joining community organizations are difficult to capture and have not yet been extensively researched amongst Asian Americans. Given the vast complexities of electoral and non-electoral political participation, I analyzed different statistical models to compare how different factors affect both types of political participation.

Asian American Identity and Political Participation

Unlike racial minorities, Latino Americans, and Black Americans, pan-ethnic (Asian American) identity for Asian Americans is not as salient and important in the political landscape (Rim 2009; Kim 2015). Like political participation, the very different ethnic groups within the umbrella term Asian American may have an impact on why a pan-ethnic identity may not predict political participation as strongly as for other racial minorities. Different ethnic groups have incredibly different immigration patterns, trajectories, and as a consequence socio-economic status in the United States. For example, Vietnamese Americans escaping a war-torn country during the Vietnam War came to the United States as refugees and were offered incredibly different opportunities than Indian Americans who voluntarily immigrated to the United States. Because of these vast differences, pan-ethnic identity may be more difficult for Asian Americans to feel a connection to.

As Asian Americans grow in numbers, however, the sense of a political Asian American identity has greater potential to grow and to mean something for Asian Americans across different ethnic groups. Historically, there have been ethnic groups such as Japanese Americans and Filipino Americans who have strong bases of people to galvanize for a cause for the ethnic group (e.g., right to vote, fairer working conditions). Research by Okamoto (2014) argues that pan-ethnic identity for Asian Americans can be derived from single-ethnic identity and that there is a connection between the two when considering the impact on political activity. Single-ethnic organizations are the impetus for the creation of greater pan-ethnic identification and mobilizations. There may also be greater participation in non-electoral political participation (Wong, Lien, and Conway 2005). Given these possibilities for both pan-ethnic and single-ethnic identification, in this dissertation, I will be focusing on the effects of pan-ethnic and single-ethnic identification and both electoral and non-electoral political participation.

Asian Women in Leadership in Politics

Social science research about Asian American women is scarce. Amongst research on Asian Americans, there has been research on major topics: health consequences, educational outcomes, segregation, and immigration patterns (Lee and Kye 2016). There is now a burgeoning field of social science research focused on Asian American political participation (e.g., Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee, and Junn 2011). However, there is a great missing gap in the experiences of Asian American leaders, particularly women, in politics. This is particularly interesting given the rich history of Asian American women as leaders in Asian American political history (Grace Lee Boggs and Yuri Kochiyama being prominent examples). Diane Fujino (2008) conducts an expansive analysis of the productive history of the Asian American Movement and how it has been studied. Now more than ever Asian American voices are active in the political landscape. In

many non-profit community organizations across the country, Asian Americans are fighting for civic engagement, housing, health access, and immigration reform. Despite previous research on the struggles of Asian American women in leadership positions in education (e.g., Liang and Peters-Hawkins 2016) and the non-profit sector (Biu 2019), Asian American women are increasing in formalized leadership in Asian community organizations.

Dissertation Studies

I conducted this dissertation using a multi-method approach with secondary data and semi-structured interviews. I analyzed data from a secondary dataset, the National Asian American Survey from 2008, and found productive results. Ethnic identity was tied to non-electoral political participation. Pan-ethnic identity was tied to electoral political participation. To further explore the landscape of Asian American non-electoral political participation and ethnic identity, I conducted semi-structured interviews with Asian American women leaders in political organizations. The semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom with 13 participants from California and New York City. Participants were recruited using the snowballing method. I will first describe chapter 2 which focuses on Asian American identity and political participation, including the variables of interest, method of analysis, and results. Second, I will detail chapters 3 and 4 where I investigated the relationship between Asian American women's racial and gender identity in their work as leaders of political organizations. Given the limitations of each type of method (quantitative and qualitative), I chose to pursue a multi-method approach to understanding the relationship between Asian American identity and politics.

Chapter 2: Asian American Identity and Political Participation

In this study, I investigated the many possible factors that affect Asian American political participation. Using data from the National Asian American Survey (2008), I conducted a

thorough investigation on the effects of socioeconomic status, political efficacy, social connectedness, immigrant generation, and ethnic and pan-ethnic identity on Asian American political participation. I ran 5 different logistic regression models to see the effects of these factors on electoral and non-electoral political participation. My research question was: What factors influence the political participation of Asian Americans in the United States? Specifically, how do factors of pan-ethnic and ethnic identity matter in contrast to traditional explanations of political participation? Given the political participation literature on the effects of socio-economic status (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; DeSipio 1996); political efficacy (Xu 2005; Wong, Lien, and Conway 2005), and social connectedness (Uslaner 1995; DeSipio 2002), I hypothesized the following:

> Hypothesis 1: Socio-economic status will be significantly associated with Asian American electoral and non-electoral political participation.
>
> Hypothesis 2: Political efficacy is not significantly associated with Asian American electoral or non-electoral political participation.
>
> Hypothesis 3: Social connectedness is significantly associated with Asian American electoral and non-electoral political participation.

Also, given the literature on the effects of the immigrant generation on Asian American behavior and attitudes (Wong, Lien, and Conway 2005; Brown and Sanchez 2017), I hypothesized:

> Hypothesis 4: Later immigrant generation status has a positive association with both non-electoral and electoral political participation, with 2nd and 2+ generation respondents more likely to participate than 1st and 1.5-generation respondents.

Finally, piecing together literature on Asian American ethnic and pan-ethnic identity (Rim 2009; Kim 2015), I focused on "connection to other ethnic or other Asians" as a marker of identity and hypothesized:

> Hypothesis 5: With greater connection to co-Asians, Asian Americans are more likely to engage in electoral political participation, particularly registering to vote.
>
> Hypothesis 6: With greater connection to co-ethnics, Asian Americans are more likely to engage in non-electoral political participation.

Overall, all hypotheses were partially or fully supported. Socioeconomic status was positively related to electoral (registering to vote) and non-electoral political participation. Political efficacy was not related to either electoral or non-electoral political participation. Religious connection, but not community organization connection was positively related to electoral and non-electoral political participation. Those who were 1.5 generation and above were more likely than 1st generation to register to vote but 2nd generation were the only ones who were more likely than 1st generation to participate in non-electoral political participation. Finally, and most striking, depending on the pan-ethnic or ethnic identity there was a positive relation to political participation. The more connected to the pan-ethnic identity respondents were, the more likely they were to register to vote. The more ethnic group identity connections respondents felt the more non-electoral political participation they were involved with. Different types of identity may trigger different kinds of political participation.

I conducted this study to understand the relationship between different factors on Asian American political participation, and in particular, how identity affected the likelihood of political engagement. As I was analyzing and interpreting this link between Asian American identity and participation, more questions about the nature of identity and what constitutes

identity kept becoming more and more important to answer. In order to understand the complex nature of the Asian American identity and how this is related to political participation, I focused on Asian Americans who are leaders in their field in political organizations. I investigated the trajectories, current dynamics, and future visions of Asian American women leaders in non-profit political organizations across the United States.

Chapter 3: Asian American Race and Politics

This study builds on previous research conducted by Dina Okamoto concerning Asian American organizational leaders (Okamoto 2014). I focus specifically on Okamoto's work on the work of active leaders and the effectiveness of leadership in organizational success. I particularly focus on Asian American women because of previous research on African American women (Robnett 1996) and because of their unique positions as Asians and women in leadership positions. I conducted an exploratory study focusing on the experiences of self-identified Asian American women and men leaders in Asian or ethnic community organizations in the three most Asian-populated areas in the contiguous United States. Given the exploratory nature of this study, I argue based on the patterns but note that there is still much more to investigate on the experiences of Asian American women leaders. This study has the following research question: How does identity affect motivations toward political participation amongst Asian American women leaders? With this research question and work on previous literature: I argue that the participants saw their immigration histories through a political lens and by doing so, their family history galvanized their need to be in positions of power in organizations that could affect social change.

Through semi-structured interviews, participants were asked questions about how they came to their position and about their ethnic identity. Asian American women leaders detailed

stories about their family immigration history and the profound impact that these histories had on their motivations to be leaders and to be part of political organizations. Further, these immigration histories were important parts of Asian American women leaders' ethnic identities, that defined their actions and shaped who they were as activists. This work could help us understand the complexities of Asian American racial and ethnic identity and the deep relationship identity has with political participation.

Chapter 4: Asian American Gender and Leadership

In this chapter, using the same interviews from chapter 3, I focused on the intersectional identities of race and gender in understanding how Asian American women navigate the gendered expectations both within and outside of their community in their current positions as leaders of political organizations. I analyzed the 13 semi-structured interviews to code for and interpret themes of gendered identity, expectations, and institutional connections to leadership trajectory and work amongst Asian American women leaders across the United States. I extend upon previous research on gendered institutions (Acker 1990) and intersectionality identities (Crenshaw 1989) by exploring the interaction of institutions and race and gendered identities amongst Asian American women leaders in non-profit organizations. I also use previous research by Robnett (1996) on African American women leaders during the Civil Rights Movement as a comparison historical point to understand how over time women leaders may be in the greater public space but still need to navigate the gendered expectations within institutions.

For this study, my research question was: how do Asian American women leaders view their intersectional identities and how do these identities affect their leadership and political participation? I argue that similar to Robnett's (1996) African American women leaders, Asian American women leaders are still facing gendered stereotypes about their leadership from both

within and outside of their community. Unlike the historical women leaders, Asian American women are explicitly labeled leaders of their community and organizations but are sometimes tokenized for their gender and sometimes treated as secretaries instead of leaders. These Asian American women leaders can use these experiences as ways to connect with younger generations of Asian American women activists and hope that the next generation of leaders are more radical and have more sway in the political landscape than their predecessors.

Representativeness of Sample in Interviews

The interviewees were a sample of 13 Asian-identified, women-identified leaders of non-profit organizations across the United States. The age, ethnic group, immigrant generation, and education levels of interviewees are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of Interviewees (Names changed for protection)

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Immigrant Generation	Highest Education Level
Vivian	73	Chinese	2nd	MD
Lisa	54	Chinese/Japanese	4th	Master's
Megan	54	Korean	2nd	Bachelor's
Hannah	54	Korean	1.5	Master's
Lindsay	50	Korean	1.75	Bachelor's
Darlene	47	Vietnamese	2nd	Bachelor's
Theresa	44	Korean	2nd	PhD
Jessica	44	Indian	2nd	Master's
Crystal	34	Hmong	2nd	Bachelor's
Claire	33	Chinese	1.75	Master's
Laurel	29	Chinese	2nd	Bachelor's
Nancy	25	Vietnamese	2nd	Bachelor's
Jennifer	25	Pakistani	2nd	Bachelor's

As noted, half of the participants were from ages 25-44 and half were from ages 47-73. Half of the participants were East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, or Korean), there were 2 South Asians (Indian, Pakistani), 2 Vietnamese, and 1 Hmong participant. All participants had a Bachelor's degree or higher in terms of education. And almost all participants were 2nd generation

immigrants or higher (9 participants). There was a certain skew in the data with participants who were East Asian, educated, and second generation plus in the sample. Additionally, all participants were located in urban areas. The representativeness of the sample is certainly not as diverse as the greater population of Asian American women and political activists, and this must be noted when considering the patterns of this data.

Context of These Studies

Historical Context

The date range of when I conducted these studies was critical, particularly the interviews. These interviews were held from September 2020 to August 2021. During this period, several events occurred. First, the most major, was the COVID-19 pandemic that was declared in March 2020. Because of the narrative of the origins of COVID-19 (starting in Wuhan, China), there was an increase in attacks on Chinese Americans, and generally upon Asians (Levin 2021.) This was noted within the interviews and certainly raised a lot of attention toward the organizations the interviewees were leading. Second, due to the increase in attacks upon Asians and the increase in negative narratives about Asian Americans, movements such as Stop AAPI Hate became prominent and shaped the priorities and exposure of Asian-led organizations across the nation (Lyu, Fan, Xiong, Komisarchik, and Luo 2023). Third, due to the Atlanta spa shootings in March 2021, the vulnerabilities and the lives of Asian women, specifically, came to national attention (Fan, Yu, and Gilliland 2021; Criss et al. 2023.) These interviews were conducted during a critical time when the identities of being Asian and of being a woman were very salient to these interviewees and to the United States. Two interviews were after the Atlanta shootings and the interviewees discussed how there was an increase in funding and motivation forward Asian women-led organizations.

Organizational

The context of the organizations was interesting to note, even though not much difference was noted in the patterns of identification and politicization amongst the interviewees of different organizations, various-sized organizations could matter in the perceptions that interviewees must face from the community and the external public. A little less than half of the organizations (4 organizations) were smaller, with about 8 to 11 employees. There was a tighter-knit community within the organization and possibly more control that the women leader could have while in a position of power. The other half of other organizations were less centralized and had many more employees (greater than 25). There were more bureaucracies that the women leader had to manage and supervise, which may not be good for some, but could mean more power for others. This information about the organizations themselves and the interaction between the type of organization and leadership style could be a potential avenue for future research.

Location

The organizations that interviewees led, serve communities within San Francisco, Southern California (Los Angeles and Orange County), and New York City. 5 organizations were national-serving organizations while 6 organizations are local-serving organizations. San Francisco, Southern California, and New York City are areas with a relatively large Asian American population and a strong history of Asian American activism. In Table 2, I present a list of the Asian American population number, percentage of the population, and the largest Asian ethnic groups in each area. I included "national" as an area because 5 organizations were national-serving organizations. I focused on the area organizations are serving, not where the organizations are headquartered because the work that Asian American women are conducting is primarily influenced by the community they are serving and working for, not where they work.

Table 2: Demographics of Organizational Location (US Census 2021)

Region/City	Asian American Population	Asian American Percentage of Population	Largest Asian Ethnic Groups
National	20.6 million	6.2% Asian in the US	Chinese, Asian Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese
Southern California	Los Angeles County- 1.5 million Orange County – 800,000	15.6% Asian in LA County 13.5% Asian in OC	Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Asian Indian
San Francisco	2 million	27% Asian in Bay Area	Chinese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Japanese, Asian Indian, Koreans
New York City	1.2 million	14.2% Asian in New York City	Chinese, South Asian, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese

Nationally, in previous literature, there has been much focus on Asian Americans' immigration status and education (Wong and Shah 2021), but there are still important issues that Asian Americans face today such as poverty/ economic fragility (Ramakrishnan, Shao, and Wong 2019) and increasing literature on the lack of healthcare access and increasing health issues amongst Asian Americans (Islam et al. 2010). Additionally, the considerations for Asian American representations in the political landscape is an increasing concern that is a focus, particularly in more local regions. Within California, Asian Americans have a long history of political movement and activism, and there are increasingly more and more Asian Americans running for political office and retaining a political stronghold in cities like San Francisco (Constante 2018). In contrast, New York City has newer immigrant groups in comparison to California (Rumbaut and Portes 2014) and a couple of major policy concerns are economic opportunity (Asian Americans for Equality 2014) and representation of the growing population of Asian Americans (Wang 2021).

Interviewees and Generation

There was a range in terms of the age of the interviewees and how long they were in their organization. Over half of the participants (8) were in their position for about 2-7 years and there was one participant who was in their position for more than 20 years. Participants had some time to acclimate to their position and to try and implement change/continue the leadership of previous leaders. A couple of participants were founders of their organizations and felt very established and sure of their position, while the other participants were the 2nd/3rd leaders in their current position. The participants who were not founders discussed how they may be different from the founder or how they had to manage perceptions of how they will lead the organization.

With such a wide range of leadership position tenure, interviewees also had a large range of ages with about half of the participants younger (ages 25-34) and the other half older (ages 44 – 73). Older participants were interested in the younger generation of new leaders coming into positions of power and felt they could potentially bring in more activists into the Asian American political movement. On the other hand, younger participants felt there was tension between themselves and the older generation of Asian American women leaders. They felt that the "old way" of leading may not be what applies to the political context now, and were chafing at the constraints of the leaderships from before. There were possible different expressions of femininity as well with older generations feeling that they needed to fight against the traditional gender stereotypes and younger generations feeling they still needed to counteract traditional gender stereotypes but also create and adhere to new ideas of femininity.

Contributions and Significance

This dissertation provides several new contributions to the existing literature in terms of methods, findings, and possible new theoretical considerations on Asian American identity and

political participation. First, by providing a rigorous test of many factors reported in previous literature to affect political participation, this dissertation contributes an exhaustive investigation of what could motivate political participation amongst Asian Americans. Second, I was able to differentiate the effects of ethnic and co-ethnic identity on electoral and non-electoral political participation via regression models. Unlike previous research (e.g., Xu 2005) that found that pan-ethnic identity may not have any relation to political participation, I found that there is a positive relationship between different types of political participation and different types of identity. This is a critical contribution to research on Asian American identity and political participation. Third, mixed methods research is often discussed but in reality, not often implemented (Denzin & Lincoln 2011), much of the research on Asian American political participation has been either quantitative or qualitative. This current dissertation provides a more comprehensive picture of the factors that affect Asian American political participation and how these factors are related to Asian American political participation with both rigorous statistical models and a deeper, explorative study of the lived experiences of Asian American women leaders in political organizations.

The current dissertation contributes exploratory results on the successes of visible Asian American female leadership and more information on community organizations within the Asian American population within the field of sociology. I provide an updated look at the active leadership in Asian American communities and particularly how Asian American women leaders remain successful and navigate their intersectional identities. I also provide a more contemporary picture after the 2016 presidential election and during the times of increasing anti-Asian sentiment because of the global pandemic caused by covid-19. Asian American political participation itself is a nascent field (Lee and Kye 2016). Much of the research on Asian

American political participation focuses on the paradox that Asian Americans are not voting or registering to vote at proportional rates (Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee, and Junn 2011). This dissertation provides a fuller picture of the leaders and organizations on the ground and the immense amount of political action not captured by electoral political participation.

Chapter 2: Asian American Identity and Political Participation

Introduction

Asian Americans were the fastest-growing racial group in the United States between 2010 and 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau 2016), but their voices are missing from the political landscape (Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee, and Junn 2011; Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989). Asian American voter turnout in 2010 was only 39 percent, compared to 44 and 49 percent of black and white voters, respectively (Pew Research Center 2014). Asian American voter registration and voting rates (along with Latino Americans) have remained the lowest in comparison to white and black Americans (U.S. Census Bureau 2016). This disparity is especially striking given that Asian Americans are the highest household income holders and one of the highest educated groups compared to any other racial group, including whites (Pew Research 2014). Such socioeconomic factors, along with citizenship, have been found to correlate with voting among other racial-ethnic groups but not among Asian Americans (Lee and Kye 2016; Xu 2005; Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989). Asian Americans' disproportionally lower political involvement fundamentally undermines their ability to achieve equality and political representation in the U.S.

Most of the previous research on political participation has focused on white, black, and Latino Americans (e.g., Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). Very little research has focused on the different factors of Asian American political participation (Lee and Kye 2016). This is partly due to the lack of data on Asian Americans, who are mostly comprised of recent immigrants and second-generation Americans. Traditionally, factors such as socio-economic status, political efficacy, social connectedness, and group consciousness have been studied amongst racial minorities in order to understand what motivates political action (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999). In the small body of research that does examine Asian American political participation, these

factors have been found less relevant than for other racial/ethnic groups (Xu 2005). Researchers have suggested, and have found some evidence for, the importance of pan-ethnic and ethnic identity as an additional important factor (Kim 2015; Okamoto 2014; Wong, Lien, and Conway 2005).

I build upon this growing work by utilizing a 2008 national sample of Asian American respondents and extensive models that allow me to test traditional models of political participation against immigrant incorporation and ethnic identity models. These tests will allow me to address my central research question: What factors influence the political participation of Asian Americans in the United States? Specifically, how do factors of pan-ethnic and ethnic identity matter in contrast to traditional explanations of political participation?

In this paper, I will re-examine these past explanations using a more recent and comprehensive data set. Based on my survey of theories and empirical work across the literature in sociology, political science, and social psychology, I broaden the scope by incorporating 5 different models of political participation. From this, I argue that factors such as social connectedness and immigrant generation are important, however for Asian Americans, *both* ethnic and pan-ethnic identity are critical factors in understanding political engagement.
My results show that immigrant generation and religious connection are positively associated with political participation amongst Asian American respondents. Additionally, there are different effects of pan-ethnic and ethnic identity on political participation. Pan-ethnic identity is positively related to registering to vote. Yet, ethnic identity is related to engagement in a number of non-electoral political participation activities (e.g., contributing to a campaign). These new findings build from previous research on political participation but also extend research on Asian American pan-ethnic and ethnic identity in important new directions. In particular, a more

nuanced inspection is necessary for pinpointing the types of political participation that pan-ethnic and ethnic identities promote.

Literature Review

For this dissertation, I investigate the relationship between Asian American identity and political participation. To first explore this relationship, I investigated the literature on possible predictors of political participation and measures of political participation. Then, I consulted the literature on Asian American identity, the connection between identity and organizations, and social movement tactics. There is sparse literature on Asian American identity and political participation in sociology, thus, I identified key relevant literature that could help address the research questions and point out the glaring gaps in between.

Understanding Political Participation

The study of political participation has a long history in political science and sociology (Brooks, Manza, and Bolzendahl 2003; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Although much of the research in political science has focused on electoral politics (e.g., Green and Gerber 2004), researchers have expanded the scope of political participation to understand non-electoral political participation as well (e.g., Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010). Electoral and non-electoral political participation may be related (such that someone who is engaged in campaigning may be more likely to vote), they are two distinct dimensions of political behavior (Min 2014; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Rim 2009). In previous research on Asian American political participation, researchers have deliberately captured electoral and non-electoral political participation separately because of their different meanings and consequences (e.g., Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee, and Junn 2011).

I briefly review five different models of political participation relevant to Asian

Americans. Three of these models dominate the social science literature for all racial groups: socioeconomic status, political efficacy, and social connectedness. The other two models are unique to the literature on Asian Americans: immigrant political incorporation and racial group consciousness. These models reside in different fields including political science, sociology, and social psychology. I will briefly explain each model and discuss how each model applies to Asian Americans with hypotheses where relevant.

Traditional Models of Political Participation

Traditionally, an individual's socioeconomic status (SES) has been a dominant factor in understanding differences in political participation rates (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978). Prominent political scientists Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) found that high levels of income and education are positively related to higher levels of political engagement. People with greater amounts of family income engaged in more political activities than people with less amounts of family income. At the individual level (income of each respondent), those with greater income engaged in more voting, campaign work, campaign contributions, contact, protest, informal community activity, and board membership were more likely to be affiliated with a political organization than were those with less income. Secondly, those who were more educated were engaged in more political activity than those who were less educated. Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995) argue that citizens with resources more closely tied to socio-economic status (like income) are more likely to be engaged in political activity, suggesting that financial resources are perhaps necessary for engagement in political activity. Those who are richer may have more leisure time, and political and financial resources available to devote to political activity.

Asian Americans, as an aggregate, have high socio-economic status and education levels

(U.S. Census Bureau 2016). Nonetheless, Asian Americans are not as politically engaged as other racial minorities (U.S. Census Bureau 2016; Pew Research Center 2014). Prior research finds that SES does not explain participation as strongly for Asian Americans as it does for other racial/ethnic groups (Milbrath and Goel 1977; DeSipio 1996). Xu (2005) found that the difference in voter turnout and voter registration between Asians and Whites was large, and it remained large even when controlling for socioeconomic status. In comparison to an acculturation model, socio-economic status was almost irrelevant to the Asian and White voter turnout/registration gap. I focus on whether socioeconomic status matters in electoral and non-electoral political participation within the Asian American population. With respect to other factors such as acculturation and group identity, socioeconomic status does not matter as much to Asian Americans. Among Asian Americans, socio-economic status may still matter, but in comparison to other racial groups, socio-economic status does not. Thus, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Socio-economic status will be significantly associated with Asian American electoral and non-electoral political participation.

Higher SES is linked to stronger feelings of political efficacy, or the "feeling that political and social change is possible and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954, p. 187). However, it has also long been shown to have an independent effect on political behavior (e.g., Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954). Citizens who believe more strongly in their political efficacy translate that into greater political participation (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 2010).

The research focused on Asian Americans, however, finds that political efficacy is often not important for understanding levels of political participation (Lee and Kye 2016; Xu 2005; Wong, Lien, and Conway 2005). Political efficacy is often not a good predictor variable for

Asian American political participation, in part because of the majority of Asians' status as immigrants. Asian Americans have been shown to have low levels of political efficacy and less knowledge about democratic processes given their status as immigrants from countries that are quasi- or anti-democracies (Xu 2005).

Additionally, political efficacy may not be a predictive factor for Asian American respondents because of the lack of Asian Americans in positions of power. For example, Fraga (2016) found that Asian American respondents were more likely to vote for political candidates that were co-ethnic candidates. Asian American respondents voted for political candidates who were the same ethnicity as the respondent (e.g., a Chinese American respondent voting for a Chinese American candidate but not a Japanese American candidate). Thus, unless there are elected Asian American elected officials, Asian American voters may not see voting as an effective tool for changing their political environment.

Based on this previous research I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: Political efficacy is not significantly associated with Asian American electoral or non-electoral political participation.

Another factor that is related to political participation is social connectedness. Social connectedness is defined as the level of connectedness between the individual and the greater social community (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999). Previous research has shown that for White Americans and for other racial minorities, less connection to the community (e.g., membership in organizations) may be related to lower levels of political participation (Putnam 1995; Uslaner 1995). Among racial minority groups such as blacks and Latinos, membership in ethnic organizations does foster political participation (Harris 1994; DeSipio 2002).

There is yet to be any definitive research on the effects of Asian American organizational

involvement and political participation. I posit that there is a positive relationship between the level of social connectedness and political participation. Wong, Lien, and Conway (2005) argued that group consciousness and belonging to a religious or community organization provide social and political resources (e.g., knowledge and awareness of politics) among Asian Americans. Accordingly, I argue that Asian Americans may be reaping socio-political resources from organizations and increasing their level of political engagement. Therefore, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3: Social connectedness is significantly associated with Asian American electoral and non-electoral political participation.

Immigration and Identity-Based Explanations of Political Participation

Despite, Asian immigration to the United States starting from as early as the 18th century, most Asian Americans today are first- or second-generation Americans (US Census Bureau 2016). Because the Asian American population consists largely of immigrants, immigrant political incorporation is a critical factor in understanding Asian American political participation. Political incorporation is one of the hallmarks of assimilation (e.g., Lee and Kye 2016). One line of research argues that the legal status of both immigrants and children of immigrants is important (Brown and Sanchez 2017). Researchers have found that mothers' legal status was negatively associated with children's political engagement (Brown and Sanchez 2017). Membership exclusion is the lack of initial societal membership that reinforces the continued structural exclusion of immigrants and children of immigrants (Bean and Brown 2014). Bean and Brown (2014) argue that without early political engagement via legal status, there are structural barriers to immigrants' socioeconomic advancement. Because of this structural barrier, first-generation and even 1.5-generation Asian Americans may have lower rates of political participation than successive generations. Further, the act of acculturation is important for Asian

American political mobilization (Xu 2005). Indeed, Wong et al (2011) find that more recent immigrants and those who were educated abroad were less politically active than those who are not. Therefore, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4: Later immigrant generation status has a positive association with both non-electoral and electoral political participation, with 2nd and 2+ generation respondents more likely to participate than 1st and 1.5-generation respondents.

Group identity and consciousness are crucial for the development of collective action by racial minorities and as a means of gaining resources from their members as a group and connecting with their group members (Wong, Lien, and Conway 2005; Alex-Assensoh and Assensoh 2001). Like Hispanic and African Americans, Asian Americans have dual identities to consider: their pan-ethnic identity (Asian American) and their ethnic identity (e.g., Chinese American). These identities are not often at odds with each other and can be primed based on the context (Rim 2009; Kim 2015). Previous research has shown that political participation was increased within contexts with greater amounts of fellow Asian Americans (Jang 2009), and the context interacted with racially linked fate (group consciousness) to increase nonvoting activities (Rim 2009).

Previously, researchers have argued that pan-ethnic identity in connection with ethnic identity is ideal for political action (Okamoto 2014; Nakano 2013). Dina Okamoto (2014) argues that pan-ethnic identity for Asian Americans is not exclusive from single-ethnic identity, but in fact, pan-ethnic identity and political activity are derived from single-ethnic identity and political activity. She refers to the murder of Vincent Chin as a prime example: Chinese American community organizations spearheaded a campaign against Asian-targeted violence that also rallied Korean American and Japanese American groups. Those who were not Chinese saw the

victimization of Vincent Chen not as solely an attack on the Chinese, but an attack on all Asians. She argues that Asian Americans can identify with the greater pan-ethnic identity *because* of single-ethnic identities. She points out that ethnicity-based organizations often create networks and share resources with multiple ethnicities (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Indian) in times of need, and that such connections allow these organizations to serve as stepping stones to greater pan-ethnic identity and civic engagement. It follows that pan-ethnic identity is just as important as ethnic identity in understanding how Asian Americans may come to mobilize politically. Both pan-ethnic and ethnic group identities confer access to resources, such as networking, social support, and educational attainment, and Asian immigrants may therefore need to utilize both types of identity.

Although pan-ethnic identity can play a major role in community mobilization, as in the Vincent Chin example, previous research has not yet shown it to affect voting behavior (Kim 2015). Min (2014) found that pan-ethnic identity increases Asian American nonvoting political participation but decreases Asian American voting rates. Min (2014) suggests that Asian Americans do not see voting as a viable or effective method in getting their policy demands, and so they turn to non-electoral political activity to get their demands across.

To better understand how identity functions with a diverse racial group, researchers turned to a different dimension of group identity: linked fate or group consciousness. Group consciousness is the awareness of "shared status as an unjustly deprived and oppressed group" (Bobo and Gilliam 1990, p.377). Group consciousness also triggers a sense of ethnic and pan-ethnic community (Dawson 1994). Previously, researchers have found that group consciousness is positively associated with non-electoral political participation among both Black Americans (Chong and Rogers 2004) and Latino Americans (Stokes 2003). Like other racial minority

groups, Junn and Masuoka (2008) suggest that depending on the context, Asian Americans may have an increased sense of racial group consciousness. Perhaps rather than consider traditional notions of identification (e.g., "How much do you identify as Asian American?") Asian Americans are more politically galvanized by their "racial consciousness." Wong, Lien, and Conway (2005) found that a higher level of ethnic group consciousness was associated with higher counts of non-electoral political participation but not electoral political participation, while a higher level of pan-ethnic group consciousness did not relate with either electoral or non-electoral political participation.

The previous research has considered ways in which pan-ethnic identity may be linked to ethnic identity, as well as the different ways that each type of identity may affect political participation. I argue that group consciousness, both pan-ethnic and ethnic, is important for Asian Americans because of their relatively small population. Like Okamoto (2014), I posit that both pan-ethnic and ethnic group consciousness is associated with higher political participation. I hypothesize (like Wong, Lien, and Conway 2005) that pan-ethnic and ethnic group consciousnesses have different effects on political participation. Feeling a strong attachment to the pan-ethnic group or the ethnic group could have vastly different meanings and motivations. Asian Americans may be more likely to engage in a more national, larger political activity (e.g., registering to vote) if they feel they are more connected to their Asian brethren. On the other hand, connecting more to their co-ethnics may have greater meaning for non-electoral political participation, because ethnic groups often handle single-issue campaigns or various non-electoral activities such as money contributions or rallies. Thus, I hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 5: With greater connection to co-Asians, Asian Americans are more likely to engage in electoral political participation, particularly registering to vote.

Hypothesis 6: With greater connection to co-ethnics, Asian Americans are more likely to engage in non-electoral political participation.

Measures of Political Participation

The study of political participation has a long history in political science and sociology (Brooks, Manza, and Bolzendahl 2003). Although much of the research in political science has focused on electoral politics (e.g., Gerber and Green 2004), researchers have expanded the scope of political participation to understand non-electoral political participation as well (e.g., Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010). Because electoral political participation is limited to activities within the electoral system (e.g., voting or registering to vote), many of the great political activities amongst groups are missing (Hooghe 2014). Activities such as protesting, rallying, picketing, putting signs on lawns, and canvassing all push people to think about issues in a particular way much like electoral political participation (Tarrow 1996). Thus, although non-electoral political participation may be intertwined with electoral political participation (in the case that one leads to another), non-electoral political participation in itself is an important aspect of a democratic society that must be considered.

Additionally, groups such as Asian Americans with a great diversity of groups of different stages of immigration and documentation have a heterogeneous political activism pathway compared to white Americans. In previous research on Asian American political participation, researchers have deliberately captured electoral and non-electoral political participation separately because of their different meanings and consequences (e.g., Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee, and Junn 2011). Much of Asian American activism started from ethnic groups rallying in local areas and then move to more national coverage in movements such as the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and the Filipino Farmers Movement. Because of the nature of

the organizing, electoral political participation does not capture the full complexity and tactics of Asian American activists. Additionally, some Asian Americans are still on the pathway to citizenship and may not be eligible for electoral politics but are still heavily involved in political activities within their communities. This is particularly important also for Asian Americans who do not have much trust in the political process and are low in political efficacy to find alternative avenues for political action. All of this would be missed in research solely on electoral political participation.

As noted before, Asian American political participation is a nascent field of research. Researchers have found that despite Asian Americans' relatively high socioeconomic status (a positive marker for high political participation) and high levels of education (another positive marker for political participation), Asian Americans are not proportionality engaged electorally (Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee, and Junn 2011). Researchers are still investigating why this paradox exists (Xu 2005; Rim 2009; Min 2014).

Methods

Data

Data are from the 2008 National Asian American Survey (NAAS); a national survey that was conducted via telephone interviews with Asian American respondents across the United States (Ramakrishnan, Junn, Lee, and Wong 2008). NAAS is unique because it is a nationally representative survey of Asian American citizens as well as non-citizens in multiple Asian languages to be accessible to diverse respondents. Other commonly used surveys (e.g., the General Social Survey or National Election Study) do not include large enough samples of Asian Americans to do adequate comparisons within the group. As a whole, the survey examines a variety of topics including “attitudes toward government, politics, and political issues, the extent

of political involvement, party affiliation, sources of political information, voting behavior, health and financial status, racial and ethnic identification, linked fate and discrimination, and religious and ethnic social networks" (National Asian American Survey 2008 website). In the NAAS 2008 survey, telephone interviews were conducted between August 12, 2008 and October 29, 2008 with 5,159 Asian American respondents in 7 different languages including Vietnamese, Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, Japanese, and Hindi (National Asian American Survey 2008).

My primary dependent variables are whether the respondent is registered to vote and the amount of non-electoral political participation the respondent engages in. Based on the five different models of political participation, I test five different sets of independent variables. For socioeconomic status, I include respondents' education and household income. For efficacy, I include a question about self-reported political efficacy. For social connectedness, I include how often respondents attend a place of worship and involvement with an organization or community group (non-religious). For immigrant political incorporation, I include immigrant generation. For group consciousness, I include pan-ethnic and ethnic group consciousness questions. I present the descriptive statistics for dependent and independent variables in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, Ranges, and Descriptions of Dependent Variables Used (Obs=2650)

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Variable Description
Register	0.791	0.407	0	1	Are you registered to vote at your current address?
NEPP	1.515	1.254	0	7	Count of how many non-electoral political participation activities R's engaged within the past 12 months

Table 4. Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges of Control and Independent Variables Used (Obs=2650)

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Female	0.44	0.50	0	1
Decade	2.91	1.58	0	6
Marital Status				
Married	0.82	0.39	0	1
Widowed	0.04	0.19	0	1
Divorced/Separated	0.04	0.19	0	1
Never Married	0.11	0.31	0	1
Employment Status				
Full-time	0.55	0.50	0	1
Part-time	0.09	0.29	0	1
Retired	0.22	0.41	0	1
Homemaker	0.05	0.22	0	1
Not in Labor Force	0.09	0.29	0	1
Political Interest	1.50	0.98	0	3
Household Income	3.51	2.03	0	7
Education				
Less than HS	0.06	0.24	0	1
High School	0.15	0.36	0	1
Some College	0.12	0.33	0	1
College	0.37	0.48	0	1
Post-Secondary	0.29	0.45	0	1
Political Efficacy				
Disagree Strongly	0.13	0.34	0	1
Disagree Somewhat	0.22	0.42	0	1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0.17	0.37	0	1
Agree Somewhat	0.33	0.47	0	1
Agree Strongly	0.15	0.36	0	1

Table 4 cont. Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges of Control and Independent Variables Used (Obs=2650)

Variable		Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Religious Connect				0	1
	No	0.43	0.50	0	1
	Yes	0.33	0.47	0	1
	Skip/Na	0.24	0.43	0	1
Community Connect				0	1
	No	0.78	0.41	0	1
	Yes	0.21	0.41	0	1
	Skip/NA	0.01	0.10	0	1
Immigrant Generation					
	First Generation	0.65	0.48	0	1
	1.5 Generation	0.21	0.41	0	1
	Second Generation	0.07	0.26	0	1
	2.5+ Generation	0.06	0.23	0	1
	Missing Generation	0.00	0.03	0	1
Asian Group Consciousness				0	1
	None	0.49	0.5		
	Not Very Much	0.07	0.26	0	1
	Some	0.3	0.47	0	1
	A Lot	0.10	0.30	0	1
Ethnic Group Consciousness				0	1
	None	0.43	0.50	0	1
	Not Very Much	0.35	0.48	0	1
	Some	0.15	0.36	0	1
	A Lot	043	0.50	0	1

Respondents in the NAAS 2008 report the counties and states that they live in. I present in Table 5 the percentage of Asian residents per the most populated counties (41 of them) to demonstrate the variability of the number of residents per county and the number of NAAS respondents per county. There is much variability in terms of the percentage of Asian residents per county. Given this variability, I have used county-level fixed effects in all my models and I clustered robust standard errors at the county level. In the analyses, there were 129 counties with a total sample of 2,650 respondents after cleaning variables and dropping missing values. In this

sample, there were 721 Chinese, 592 Asian Indians, 386 Filipino, 242 Japanese, 333 Korean, 373 Vietnamese, and 3 Other Asians represented.[2]

Table 5. Percentage of Asian Residents and Number of NAAS Respondents Per County

County	% of Asian Residents	# of NAAS Respondents
Alameda County, California	26.30%	253
Bergen County, New Jersey	14.28%	114
Clark County, Nevada	9.13%	43
Collin County, Texas	10.96%	20
Contra Costa County, California	14.72%	84
Cook County, Illinois	6.48%	44
Dallas County, Texas	5.27%	52
Essex County, New Jersey	4.63%	27
Fairfax County, Virginia	17.49%	125
Gwinnett County, Georgia	10.96%	35
Harris County, Texas	6.62%	48
Hennepin County, Minnesota	5.78%	28
Honolulu County, Hawaii	46.80%	97
Hudson County, New Jersey	13.89%	37
King County, Washington	14.55%	132
Kings County, New York	10.61%	112
Los Angeles County, California	14.80%	557
Maricopa County, Arizona	3.48%	39
Mercer County, New Jersey	8.41%	25
Middlesex County, Massachusetts	9.05%	22
Middlesex County, New Jersey	20.44%	150
Monmouth County, New Jersey	4.81%	31
Montgomery County, Maryland	14.17%	75
Morris County, New Jersey	8.74%	36
Multnomah County, Oregon	6.36%	22
New York County, New York	11.70%	49
Oakland County, Michigan	5.31%	21
Orange County, California	18.48%	203
Queens County, New York	23.06%	167
Riverside County, California	6.27%	34
Sacramento County, California	14.09%	81
San Diego County, California	11.14%	92
San Francisco County, California	32.81%	123
San Mateo County, California	25.45%	29
Santa Clara County, California	32.18%	398
Snohomish County, Washington	8.91%	22
Somerset County, New Jersey	13.48%	44
Tarrant County, Texas	4.73%	40
Travis County, Texas	5.91%	31
Union County, New Jersey	4.61%	20
Ventura County, California	6.97%	22

[2] The effect of ethnic group (compared to Chinese respondents because they are the largest group in the sample) was not consistently significant across effects and was not pursued further.

Variables of Interest

Dependent Variables

My dependent variables are two types: electoral political participation and non-electoral political participation. For electoral political participation, I used the question asking if they are registered to vote at their current address.[3] Possible responses were yes, no, not eligible, don't know, or refused. Respondents who answered "not eligible, don't know, or refused" were excluded from the analysis. Thus, the registered to vote variable is a binary variable: yes or no.

For the non-electoral political participation, I used a set of seven questions and indexed them into one count variable: non-electoral political participation[4]. The seven questions asked whether the respondent, in the last 12 months: "discussed politics with family and friends"; "worked for a candidate, political party, or some other campaign organization"; "contributed money to a candidate, political party, or some other campaign organization"; "contacted your representative or a government official in the U.S."; "worked with others in your community to solve a problem"; "visited an internet site or on-line community to discuss a candidate or issue"; or "attended a protest march, demonstration, or rally." The non-electoral political participation (NEPP) variable ranges from 0=no activities to 7=seven non-electoral political participation activities.

Independent Variables: Five Models

Model 1 Socio-Economic Status:

I included two questions to represent socio-economic status: household income and

[3] Respondents were also asked their chances of voting but this variable was dropped in the analyses because no predictors of interest had any effect on chances of voting. Chances of voting were also strongly related to register to vote. Thus, I moved forward with registered as the dependent variable of interest.

[4] I also conducted a factor analysis to see if I could truly index them into one variable, but they did not hang well together. Thus, I moved forward with a count variable instead.

highest level of education. Household income was coded as an ordinal variable ranging from "Up to $20,000" to "$125,000 to $150,000".[5] Highest level of education was coded as a dummy variable with less than high school as a reference category.

Model 2: Political Efficacy

Respondents were posed with a statement: "Public officials and politicians care what people like me think." The response options were 0="disagree strongly", 1="disagree somewhat", 2=" neither agree nor disagree", 3="agree somewhat", and 4="agree strongly."

Model 3: Social Connectedness

I included two questions to represent social connectedness. One question asks respondents: "Other than attending services or prayer, do you take part in any activity with people at your place of worship?" Respondents answered "yes", "no", or "Skip/NA." The second question asks respondents: "Other than a religious group or place of worship, is there any other group or organization in your community that you are involved with?" Respondents answered "yes", "no", or "Skip/NA."

Model 4: Immigrant Incorporation

I calculated generation variables for the immigration generation of the respondent. The generation of immigrants has been an important factor in understanding Asian American identity and experiences (Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee, and Junn 2011). The generation variable was calculated so that 1 = respondent was foreign-born and immigrated to the US after 18 years of age, 1.5 = respondent was foreign-born and immigrated to the US before 18 years of age, 2 = respondent was born in the US with two foreign-born parents, 2.5 = respondents were born in the

[5] 1,231 respondents refused to answer the pre-tax household income question. Because of this great amount of respondents missing, a simple imputation was calculated on the missing responses.

US with 1 foreign-born and US-born parent, and 3 = respondents was born in the US and both parents were born in the US.

Model 5: Group Consciousness[6]

For Asian group consciousness, respondents were asked, "Do you think what happens generally to other Asians in this country affects what happens in your life?" and "Will it affect you a lot, some, or not very much?" I collapsed these two variables so the range of answers was 0=no, 1=not very much, 2=some, and 3=a lot.

For ethnic group consciousness, respondents were asked, "Do you think what happens generally to other [R ethnic group] Americans affects what happens in your life?" and "Will it affect you a lot, some, or not very much?" I again collapsed these two variables so the range of answers was 0=no, 1=not very much, 2=some, and 3=a lot.

To check for the possibility of multi-collinearity, I first examined the relationship between Asian group consciousness and ethnic group consciousness with a simple Pearson's correlation (r=.65). Next, I calculated a variation inflation factor (VIF). VIF values for all categories of Asian group consciousness and ethnic group consciousness were below 4 and within an acceptable range (UCLA Institute for Digital Research and Education; Penn State Eberly College of Science). With acceptable VIF values, I continued the analyses with Asian and ethnic group consciousness as separate measures but will consider how to address possible multi-collinearity in future analyses.

Control Variables

[6] I had included a third variable labeled pan-ethnic identity that measured respondent's level of identification to the Asian American pan-ethnic group. This variable had no significant effect on any dependent variables and was dropped from further analyses.

Demographic: My control variables were typical demographic variables for political participation such as gender (variable name "female"), age[7] (variable named "decade"), marital status, and employment status[8] (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

Political Interest: I included control variables that were connected to political aspects of respondents' lives. The main control variable was interest in politics.[9] For interest in politics, respondents were asked, "How interested are you in politics?" and they answered, "not at all interested" = 0, "somewhat interested"=1, "interested"=2, or "very interested"=4.

County-Level Fixed Effect: Finally, I included a control variable to account for the general effect of different counties on political participation. [10]

Methods

For this study, I conducted different regressions for each dependent variable in order to understand how each model affects different types of political participation. Next, I describe how I conducted and presented each of these methods.

Regression Models for Registered and Non-Electoral Political Participation

For voter registration, I ran five binomial logistic regressions. I developed five models to see the effect of my five sets of independent variables on registered to vote. Model 1 was socio-economic variables. Model 2 included political efficacy. Model 3 included social connectedness variables. Model 4 included immigrant generation variables. Model 5 included pan-ethnic and

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[7] Age was calculated as a "decade" variable to represent what decade (e.g., 1920s, 1930s) the respondent was born as greater than 10% of the sample did not report their age in the "age" variable but responded in the "decade" variable.

[8] An additional control variable: marital status was included but had not significant effect on any dependent variable thus was dropped from analyses.

[9] Other control variables such as government trust and political ideology were analyzed but had no significant effect on any dependent variable. They were dropped from further analyses.

[10] Respondents' standard errors were clustered by the county they resided in and the county they lived in was accounted for within this county "control" variable.

ethnic group consciousness variables. All models included both political and demographic control variables. Each model included robust clustered standard errors at the county level.

For the non-electoral political participation variable, I ran five linear regressions and due to the over-dispersion of the count data also ran a negative binomial regression (Long and Freese 2014). Like registered, I developed five models to see the effect of my different models. For the negative binomial regression, I report the fifth model with all independent variables. Again, each model included robust clustered standard errors at the county level.

Findings

Logistic Regressions for Registered to Vote

In Table 6, I present the results of the series of binomial logistic regressions I conducted on the registered dependent variable. The numbers represented are raw coefficients and standard errors.

Table 6. Binomial Logistic Regression on Registered to Vote (N=2,650)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Female	0.19	0.18	0.18	0.25	0.25
	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.13)
Decade	-0.37***	-0.36***	-0.36***	-0.47***	-0.48***
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Marital Status (Ref. Married)					
Widowed	0.04	0.15	0.13	0.01	0.13
	(0.34)	(0.35)	(0.36)	(0.35)	(0.35)
Divorced/Separated	-0.48	-0.38	-0.38	-0.50	-0.48
	(0.41)	(0.41)	(0.42)	(0.44)	(0.44)
Never Married	0.98***	0.89**	0.93**	0.50	0.53
	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.30)	(0.30)
Employment Status (Ref. Full Time)					
Part-Time	0.16	0.17	0.15	0.15	0.10
	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.22)
Retired	0.64*	0.66*	0.68*	0.44	0.41
	(0.26)	(0.27)	(0.29)	(0.28)	(0.28)
Homemaker	0.18	0.18	0.23	0.08	0.06
	(0.39)	(0.40)	(0.39)	(0.39)	(0.39)
Not In Labor Force	0.28	0.27	0.28	0.26	0.23
	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.26)	(0.26)
Political Interest	0.50***	0.50***	0.50***	0.48***	0.47***
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)

Household Income	0.20***	0.20***	0.19***	0.16***	0.16***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Education (Ref. Less Than HS)					
High School	0.35	0.42	0.40	0.33	0.37
	(0.33)	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.33)
Some College	0.91**	0.97**	0.98**	0.78*	0.83**
	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.33)	(0.32)
College	0.85**	0.88***	0.84**	0.77**	0.81**
	(0.27)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.27)	(0.26)
Post-Secondary	0.88*	0.91*	0.89*	0.87*	0.90*
	(0.38)	(0.37)	(0.39)	(0.42)	(0.41)
Political Efficacy (Ref. Disagree Strongly)					
Disagree Somewhat		0.47	0.45	0.44	0.44
		(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.26)	(0.25)
Neither Agree nor Disagree		0.43	0.40	0.39	0.38
		(0.34)	(0.34)	(0.34)	(0.33)
Agree Somewhat		0.38	0.37	0.29	0.25
		(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.26)
Agree Strongly		-0.14	-0.14	-0.07	-0.05
		(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.35)	(0.33)
Religious Connect (Ref. No)					
Yes			0.43**	0.42**	0.42**
			(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.15)
Skip/NA			0.25	0.20	0.17
			(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.21)
Community Connect (Ref. No)					
Yes			0.10	0.07	0.01
			(0.23)	(0.22)	(0.22)
Skip/NA			0.43	0.14	0.13
			(0.76)	(0.80)	(0.79)
Immigrant Generation (Ref. First Generation)					
1.5 Generation				0.45*	0.43*
				(0.18)	(0.19)
Second Generation				1.28**	1.27**
				(0.41)	(0.41)
2.5+ Generation				1.82***	1.78***
				(0.44)	(0.45)
Missing Generation				0.00	0.00
				(.)	(.)
Asian Group Consciousness (Ref. None)					
Not Very Much					0.08
					(0.22)
Some					0.24
					(0.18)
A Lot					0.56*
					(0.27)
Ethnic Group Consciousness (Ref. None)					
Not Very Much					-0.39
					(0.28)

	Some					0.12
						(0.17)
	A Lot					-0.36
						(0.32)
Constant		-0.10	-0.48	-0.72	-1.08**	-0.96*
		(0.34)	(0.39)	(0.39)	(0.40)	(0.42)

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Overall, household income, education level, religious connection, immigration generation, and Asian group consciousness had significant positive associations with registered to vote.

<u>Model 1: Socio-Economic Status</u>

Both household income and education level were positively associated with registered to vote. Greater self-report household income was associated with a greater likelihood to register to vote. Respondents with some college, college, and post-secondary highest education level achieved were significantly more likely to register to vote than respondents with less than a high school education. Household income and education level remained significant across all five models. Hypothesis 1 was supported. Household income and education level were positively associated with registering to vote.

<u>Model 2: Political Efficacy</u>

Political efficacy was not associated with registered to vote. Hypothesis 2 was supported. Political efficacy is not significantly associated with Asian American electoral political participation.

<u>Model 3: Social Connectedness</u>

Social connectedness was partially significant with religious connection significantly associated with registered to vote but community organization connection was not. Respondents who said they partook in activities outside of attending services or prayer were more likely to

register to vote than those who did not partake in these activities. Hypothesis 3 is partially supported. Those who are involved with a religious organization and partake in non-religious activities are more likely to register to vote than those who do not partake in these activities. However, those who are involved in community organizations are not more or less likely to register to vote.

Model 4: Immigrant Incorporation

Immigrant generation was significantly related to register to vote. [11]Respondents who were 1.5, 2, or 3+ generation were more likely to register to vote than respondents who were first generation. Hypothesis 4 was partially supported. Even those who were 1.5 generation were significantly different from first-generation immigrants in registering to vote.

Model 5: Group Consciousness

Asian group consciousness had a significant effect on registering to vote while ethnic group consciousness did not. Those who felt what happens generally to other Asians in this country affected them a lot were more likely to register than those who felt no such connection. Hypothesis 6 was supported.

Control Variables

For the control variables, gender was significant with women more likely to register than men in Models 4 and 5. Younger respondents were more likely to register to vote than older respondents in all five models. Divorced/separated respondents were more likely to register to vote than married respondents in Models 1, 2, 3, but not Models 4 and 5. Retired respondents were more likely to register to vote than full-time working respondents in Models 1, 2, 3, but not

[11] Given the strong effects of immigrant generation, I ran interaction terms as well with immigrant generation and Asian and ethnic group consciousness. I did not find consistent results and decided not to report them here.

Models 4 and 5. Finally, those who were more interested in politics were more likely to register to vote in all five models.

Linear Regressions for Non-Electoral Political Participation

In Table 7, I present the results of the linear regressions I conducted on the non-electoral political participation dependent variable.

Table 7. Linear Regression on Non-Electoral Political Participation (N=2,650)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Female	0.01	0.02	-0.03	0.01	0.00
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Decade	0.12	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.12
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Marital Status (Ref. Married)					
Widowed	-0.01	-0.03	-0.09	-0.19	-0.10
	(0.34)	(0.33)	(0.34)	(0.36)	(0.36)
Divorced/Separated	-0.21	-0.18	-0.18	-0.24	-0.22
	(0.35)	(0.33)	(0.34)	(0.37)	(0.39)
Never Married	0.12	0.04	0.09	-0.10	-0.07
	(0.32)	(0.33)	(0.32)	(0.33)	(0.31)
Employment Status (Ref. Full Time)					
Part-Time	0.32	0.30	0.28	0.25	0.22
	(0.34)	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.34)
Retired	0.22	0.22	0.24	0.11	0.10
	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.27)
Homemaker	-0.13	-0.15	-0.10	-0.19	-0.22
	(0.37)	(0.37)	(0.36)	(0.37)	(0.37)
Not In Labor Force	0.77*	0.77*	0.79**	0.74*	0.70*
	(0.31)	(0.31)	(0.30)	(0.29)	(0.30)
Political Interest	0.69***	0.69***	0.68***	0.67***	0.65***
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.12)
Household Income	0.12***	0.12**	0.11**	0.09*	0.09*
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Education (Ref. Less Than HS)					
High School	0.63**	0.65**	0.64**	0.61**	0.65**
	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.22)
Some College	1.24***	1.25***	1.23***	1.12***	1.11***
	(0.31)	(0.33)	(0.32)	(0.33)	(0.31)
College	1.51***	1.52***	1.46***	1.45***	1.45***
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.20)	(0.19)
Post-Secondary	2.02***	2.04***	1.96***	1.95***	1.94***
	(0.29)	(0.30)	(0.28)	(0.27)	(0.28)
Political Efficacy (Ref. Disagree Strongly)					
Disagree Somewhat		-0.19	-0.22	-0.23	-0.22
		(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.34)	(0.37)
Neither Agree nor Disagree		-0.25	-0.27	-0.28	-0.29
		(0.30)	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.29)
Agree Somewhat		0.07	0.03	-0.00	-0.02
		(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.22)

Agree Strongly		-0.48	-0.49	-0.45	-0.40
		(0.29)	(0.28)	(0.32)	(0.32)
Religious Connect (Ref. No)					
Yes			0.50**	0.50***	0.45**
			(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.16)
Skip/NA			-0.01	-0.03	-0.05
			(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Community Connect (Ref. No)					
Yes			0.38	0.35	0.31
			(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.28)
Skip/NA			0.95	0.66	0.75
			(0.59)	(0.45)	(0.49)
Immigrant Generation (Ref. First Generation)					
1.5 Generation				-0.20	-0.23
				(0.22)	(0.22)
Second Generation				0.55	0.52
				(0.32)	(0.32)
2.5+ Generation				0.97	0.95
				(0.53)	(0.50)
Missing Generation				0.00	0.00
				(.)	(.)
Asian Group Consciousness (Ref. None)					
Not Very Much					0.51
					(0.53)
Some					0.14
					(0.19)
A Lot					0.36
					(0.32)
Ethnic Group Consciousness (Ref. None)					
Not Very Much					-0.28
					(0.37)
Some					0.45*
					(0.21)
A Lot					0.15
					(0.23)
Constant	-2.54***	-2.40***	-2.59***	-2.98***	-3.07***
	(0.54)	(0.56)	(0.56)	(0.58)	(0.57)

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Overall, household income, education level, religious connection, immigrant generation, and ethnic group consciousness had significant positive associations with number of non-electoral political participation activities.

Model 1: Socio-Economic Status

Both household income and education level were positively associated with non-electoral political participation. Greater self-report household income was associated with greater number

of non-electoral political participation activities. Respondents with high school, some college, college, and post-secondary as highest education level achieved were significantly more likely to be involved in more non-electoral political participation activities than respondents with less than high school education. Household income and education level remained significant across all five models. Hypothesis 1 was supported. Household income and education level were positively associated with non-electoral political participation.

Model 2: Political Efficacy

Political efficacy was not associated with non-electoral political participation. Hypothesis 2 was supported. Political efficacy is not significantly associated with Asian American non-electoral political participation.

Model 3: Social Connectedness

Social connectedness was again partially significant with religious connection significantly associated with non-electoral political participation but community organization connection was not. Respondents who said they partook in activities outside of attending services or prayer were more likely to engage in more non-electoral political participation activities than those who did not partake in these activities. Hypothesis 3 is once again partially supported. Religious connection is significantly associated with non-electoral political participation, but not community organization connection.

Model 4: Immigrant Incorporation

Immigrant generation was significantly related to register to vote for one comparison. Those who were 2nd generation were more likely to be involved in more non-electoral political participation activities than those who were first generation. Hypothesis 4 was partially

supported. Only 2nd generation Asian Americans were significantly different from 1st generation Asian Americans.

Model 5: Group Consciousness

Ethnic group consciousness had a significant effect on registering to vote while ethnic group consciousness did not. Respondents who felt they would be affected "some" by what happens to their ethnic group were more likely to be engaged in more non-electoral political activities than respondents who felt "none". Hypothesis 6 was supported.

Control Variables

For the control variables, gender, age, and marital status were not significant. Respondents not in the labor force were more likely to engage in non-electoral political participation activities than full-time working respondents in Models 1, 2, 3, but not 4 or 5. Finally, those who were more interested in politics were more likely to engage in non-electoral political participation activities than those who were less interested.

Negative Binomial Regressions for Non-Electoral Political Participation

Due to the over-dispersion and skewed nature of the non-electoral political participation count data; I also conducted a negative binomial regression for Model 5 with all independent variables. I present the results of this model in Table 8.

Table 8. Negative Binomial Regression on Non-Electoral Political Participation (N=2,650)

Female		-0.05
		(0.04)
Decade		-0.01
		(0.02)
Marital Status (Ref. Married)		
	Widowed	-0.13
		(0.09)
	Divorced/Separated	0.05
		(0.12)

Never Married	-0.01
	(0.08)
Employment Status (Ref. Full Time)	
Part-Time	0.08
	(0.08)
Retired	-0.01
	(0.06)
Homemaker	-0.05
	(0.12)
Not In Labor Force	0.15**
	(0.05)
Political Interest	0.26***
	(0.02)
Household Income	0.01
	(0.01)
Education (Ref. Less Than HS)	
High School	0.37***
	(0.1)
Some College	0.61***
	(0.12)
College	0.63***
	(0.09)
Post-Secondary	0.77***
	(0.09)
Political Efficacy (Ref. Disagree Strongly)	
Disagree Somewhat	0.01
	(0.09)
Neither Agree nor Disagree	-0.13
	(0.09)
Agree Somewhat	0.03
	(0.09)
Agree Strongly	-0.15
	(0.09)
Religious Connect (Ref. No)	
Yes	0.19***
	(0.04)
Skip/NA	0.00
	(0.05)
Community Connect (Ref. No)	
Yes	0.27***
	(0.05)
Skip/NA	0.21
	(0.11)

Immigrant Generation (Ref. First Generation)	
1.5 Generation	0.06
	(0.05)
Second Generation	0.17*
	(0.07)
2.5+ Generation	0.21**
	(0.07)
Missing Generation	0.67***
	(0.11)
Asian Group Consciousness (Ref. None)	
Not Very Much	0.07
	(0.1)
Some	0.02
	(0.06)
A Lot	0.05
	(0.07)
Ethnic Group Consciousness (Ref. None)	
Not Very Much	-0.1
	(0.13)
Some	0.13*
	(0.06)
A Lot	0.03
	(0.06)
Constant	-0.89***
	(0.21)

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Discussion

In this study, I examined the effect of five different models on Asian American voter registration and non-electoral political participation. Analyzing the 2008 NAAS, I found mixed results for these different models.

Hypothesis 1 was supported, socio-economic status as measured by household income and education level was important to both Asian American electoral and non-electoral political participation. Further analyses could be performed to test the level of difference in significance

between socio-economic status and immigrant generation or between socio-economic status and group consciousness. For Asian Americans, socio-economic status is still important for political participation, however, immigration generation and the level of group consciousness may be more important. Additionally, this finding runs counter to the real results of Asian American political participation and socioeconomic status. Despite being highly educated and earning the highest household incomes, Asian Americans have the lowest rates of voting. Perhaps additional and more recent data needs to be collected to understand the effects of socio-economic status on Asian American political participation.

Hypothesis 2 was supported, similar to previous research on Asian American political efficacy (Xu 2005), political efficacy in this study was not significantly associated with either electoral or non-electoral political participation. Political efficacy may be a mediator for other important variables such as group consciousness or immigrant generation, which is a potential direction for future research, but on its own is not significantly associated with electoral or non-electoral political participation.

Hypothesis 3 was partially supported, Asian Americans who partook in non-religious activities at a religious organization were more likely to register to vote and to engage in more non-electoral political participation activities than those who did not. Religious organizations may serve as important centers for political campaigning and resource gathering. In support of this, Cherry (2009) found that church attendees who engage in activities outside of worship (e.g., festivals, outreach, and charitable programs) were more likely to be politically active. In contrast, community organization involvement had no relationship with either electoral or non-electoral political participation. More research is needed in looking at what types of community

organizations Asian Americans are more likely to be involved in and how these community organizations are related to political activity.

Hypothesis 4 was supported, Asian Americans who were 1.5 generation and higher were more likely to register to vote than first generation. Also, Asian Americans who were 2nd generation were more likely to be involved in non-electoral political participation activities than 1st generation Asian Americans. This aligns with the work by Bean and Brown (2014) who argue that gaining legal status is a barrier to political action, which may be the reason why first-generation Asian Americans are less likely to be involved with electoral and non-electoral political participation than 2+ generations. Even 1.5-generation Asian Americans may have the benefit of being educated in the United States and gaining valuable resources in the United States in order to be able to more politically active than first-generation Asian Americans. The population of 2+ generation of Asian Americans is growing and is yet to be seen how they may be more politically engaged than their predecessors.

Hypothesis 5 and 6 were supported, pan-ethnic group consciousness indeed supported electoral political participation in the form of registration. The more connected respondents felt to the pan-ethnic group, the more they were likely to register to vote. This result runs counter to previous research that reported that pan-ethnic identity is not necessary or helpful in electoral political participation. The reason why my findings may be different from previous research is because I have clustered standard error by county across the nation while previous researchers have focused primarily on metropolitan areas (e.g., Rim 2009; Kim 2015). Accounting for county effects from previously un-investigated areas (e.g., Arizona), may have uncovered how pan-ethnic identity has a strong effect on Asian Americans who are isolated and segregated in areas with a low Asian American population.

Additionally, ethnic group consciousness was linked to a higher amount of non-electoral political participation activities. Connecting more to one's ethnic group was related to higher counts of non-electoral political participation. This result was similar to Wong, Lien, and Conway (2005) who found that ethnic group consciousness was related to non-electoral political participation. This connection between ethnic identification and non-electoral political participation may have some interesting implications about the power of ethnic enclaves. The ethnic enclaves that Asian respondents find themselves in could be integral support centers and communities in catalyzing and encouraging Asian Americans to engage in non-electoral political participation activities such as protests, marches, or contributing to a campaign.

One critical question, derived from this study, is why identification (as measured by group consciousness or linked fate) leads to political participation amongst Asian Americans. This question cannot be answered by the current study but I can begin theorizing possible mechanisms through previous literature. One possible mechanism is that identification led Asian Americans to think of the relative disadvantages of the group (e.g., discrimination, economic segregation) and in return, they become galvanized to collective, political action. This is based on the relative deprivation theory (Walker and Smith 2002), which suggests that if group members sense they are "deprived" of a resource relative to another group, this deprivation pushes group members to social movements and collective action. Another possible mechanism is that identification increases awareness of "social and political problems of the group to systemic causes that require political action in order to be resolved" (Junn and Masuoka 2008, p. 95). The ethnic or pan-ethnic identity then becomes politicized and consequentially leads to political action. Experimental research could illuminate the possible causal relationship between identification and political participation.

Limitations

Some limitations of this research are that the National Asian American Survey did not ask about the general level of socialization of respondents. Although respondents may be involved in some aspects of political activity, there may be an additional confounding factor of their general level of socialization with their neighbors.

Additionally, most of the respondents in this data reported that they are registered to vote in their current address, which indicates they may already be politically active, and a special subset of the general population of Asian Americans. The sample may not be truly representative of the isolated Asian Americans who are more disengaged from the political system. More research could be done to collect data from Asian Americans in more remote areas of the United States.

The current data set is from 2008, which in comparison to other data sets is more recent, however, is now several elections cycles behind. The addition of the impending 2016 National Asian American Survey will provide more updated results as well as provide a comparison to the results from 2008. Also, currently with the 2008 data set, I can only argue the associations between each possible social factor and political participation amongst Asian American respondents. In future research, I will investigate these factors with both the 2008 and 2016 datasets to understand potential causal relationships.

Future Directions

There are many potential future directions to derive from this current study. One next step is to effectively consider the relationship between context, identity, and political participation. Kim (2015) has investigated the effects of racial identity (measured as linked fate), racial context, and party mobilization on political participation. He found that Asians who lived in a

county with a higher density of fellow Asian Americans, who were contacted by a party and had a higher level of pan-ethnic Asian American identity were more likely to vote. A step further could be to consider how the level of segregation matters within these contexts on political participation. Is there a greater sense of community amongst Asian Americans in areas with greater amounts of Asian Americans? And are these communities due to the sheer amount of fellow Asian Americans in the area or due to the level of segregation? Residential segregation is a powerful indicator of social, economic, and political isolation of racial groups, particularly racial minorities (Massey and Denton 1993). Segregation for Asian Americans has remained moderate over the years in different cities across the United States (Frey and Farley 1996; Logan, Stults, and Farley 2004). To further understand contextual effects, I suggest it may be interesting to look at the interaction between segregation and identity on political participation amongst Asian Americans, given Asian Americans have historically concentrated and self-segregated in ethnic enclaves.

Related to contextual effects on political participation, future research could investigate the effect of identity, context, and co-ethnic candidates on political participation. As noted previously, Fraga (2016) found that for Asian American respondents, having a co-ethnic candidate on the ballot, increased voter turnout. Given, the lower number of Asian Americans overall, Fraga (2016) could not investigate the effect of a majority Asian district, however, predicted Asian Americans may behave more like African Americans who have higher voter turnout in a majority-Black district. Thus, there may be fruitful research in looking at the combination of identity, racial context, and co-ethnic candidates/incumbents in areas (smaller than districts) where there are a large number of Asian Americans. It could be further fruitful to

understand at what point, what critical mass, is needed in order for an Asian candidate to run for office and to win.

Future research could also investigate at what point non-electoral political participation transitions into electoral political participation. Although I found different predictors affect non-electoral and electoral political participation differently, there may be some link between the two types. Most interesting would be to understand at what point would non-electoral political participation tip over into electoral political participation or vice versa. What contexts have greater opportunity for either type of political activity?

Lastly, the racialized assimilation of Asian Americans must continuously be considered. Although Asian Americans, as an aggregate, are obtaining high levels of education and high levels of household income, they still face much discrimination and continued segregation (Lee and Kye 2016). In a recent study, Yazdiha (2018) found that European Muslims ironically perceived more discrimination in inclusive contexts (measured by countries with more inclusive immigration policies) and Yazdiha (2018) posited that this could hinder European Muslims from further immigrant integration like political participation. Thus, researchers must consider investing Asian American political participation not as formulaic as traditional models of political participation, but as a complicated picture of different social, historical, and contextual factors.

Chapter 3: Asian American Women's Race and Politics

Introduction

Many Asian Americans are engaged in non-electoral political participation because many Asian Americans are not eligible to vote (Wong and Shah 2021). Asian Americans consist of the non-electoral political participation landscape is crucial to understand how and why Asian Americans would be motivated to be socio-politically engaged. Okamoto 2014 found that leadership amongst Asian American organizations was a crucial step in how Asian American organized. Given the quantitative data that I had found, I undertook a deeper dive into the non-electoral participation side and conducted interviews with Asian American women leaders in political non-profit organizations. I extend Okamoto's (2014) research on Asian American organizing and leadership and Omi and Winant's argument on racialized institutions. I found that Asian American women leaders in this study were politicizing their family immigration history and racial identities in order to explain their motivations for seeking their current positions as leaders of political Asian organizations.

I interviewed 13 Asian American women leaders in the top positions of their political Asian American/ Pacific Islander organizations across the nation. I interviewed these participants via Zoom for one hour and asked them a series of questions related to their trajectory, their work, and their perspectives on political participation and identity.

My research question is this **How does identity affect motivations toward political participation amongst Asian American women leaders?** In order to understand how Asian American women leaders came to be in their current positions, I asked them about their trajectories and their experiences as Asian American women. All participants had a clear understanding and knowledge of not only their family immigration history but also the

immigration history of many ethnic Asian groups. Most participants also had experiences and memories of racial discrimination throughout their lives, both implicitly and explicitly. Both family immigration history and anecdotes of racial discrimination motivated participants to be more involved in community organizing and to step into leadership roles in these political Asian organizations. Participants saw their immigration histories through a political lens and by doing so, their family history galvanized their need to be in positions of power in organizations that could affect social change. I argue that participants' family immigration history and experiences of racial discrimination are critical components of participants' racial identity. And I argue that the politicization of these racial identities is a key component of why Asian American women become political leaders in organizations.

I build on Omi and Winant's argument and Okamoto's research by seeking to understand how Asian American women activists have politicized their identities and found avenues in community organizations to resist dominant hegemonic White policies. I tie in research on race, identity, and politics from sociology, psychology, and political science to understand the complex picture of how Asian Americans, particularly women leaders, engage in political participation. This work will be an initial step in understanding how Asian American leaders see their identities related to political participation and how they encourage others to do the same.

Literature Review

Racialized Institutions

First, I would like to explore how the concept of race is formed within the United States and how race is expressed within institutions. What is the nature of institutions? As the society in the United States has become more progressive, with rising amounts of racial minorities in positions of power, how do Asian American women function within these institutions? Currently,

there are rising members within a political office (e.g., Alexandria Ocasio Cortez) and within political social interest organizations (e.g., Black Lives Matter) who are from and fight for the issues of racial minority groups. However, the number of people of color in office or leadership positions in organizations is still not equitable (Thomas-Breitfeld and Kunreuther 2017). Because of the racialized nature of these institutions, researchers have argued that people of color are prohibited from obtaining and sustaining leadership positions.

As the society in the United States has become more progressive, with rising amounts of racial minorities in positions of power, how do Asian Americans and their racialized identities, specifically Asian American women, function within these institutions? Omi and Winant (2015) describe race in the United States as a critical structure that shapes our institutions and is an important contributor to the economic, social, and political movements in the United States. Because it is so pervasive in our society, racial effects are visible at both the macro-level of social institutions and the micro-level of individual interactions. Race has its unique role, which continues to sculpt the social, political, and cultural structures within the United States (Omi and Winant 2015).

Additionally, they argue that race is embedded within several other social movements, such as women's movements, gay liberation movements, and anti-war movements. Specifically, they argue that racial politics have shifted in the United States: earlier racial relations consisted of a *war of maneuver,* while contemporary relations consist of a *war of position. War of maneuver* was the form of politics that racial minorities engaged in under repressive conditions of dictatorship and despotism, while a *war of position* is the form of politics that racial minorities engage in under more contemporary conditions, such as the institutionalized racial system. Omi and Winant (2015) suggest that as the racial structure in the United States became more

institutionalized and hegemonic, the ways in which racial minorities strategized became more institutionalized as well. Currently, racial minorities, like Latinx, Black, and Asian Americans are finding ways to engage and resist oppressive policies conducted by the State. The macro-level social institutions are different institutions such as governing bodies, non-profit organizing, and donating foundations and the micro-level institutions consist of the non-profit organizations themselves. I posit that Asian Americans, in particular women leaders, are finding ways within institutions such as education, jobs, and immigration, to resist and tackle discriminatory policies and regulations.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (1996) agrees with Omi and Winant's (2015) stance that race is pervasive in the United States and also argues that institutions are inherently racist. To this end, he outlines previous research that has explored and explained racism, which tends to focus on three perspectives: institutional perspective, internal colonialism, and racial formation. He argues that these perspectives are limiting in understanding the function of racism in society–they do not account for a variety of factors, including the constantly changing nature of racism, how racism can be normalized, and the circular nature of racism producing more racism. He also advocates for a structural perspective of racism, which focuses on its pervasive and continuously changing nature. Unlike previous researchers, who have focused on racism as a static product of individual-level irrationality, Bonilla-Silva (1996) argues that there is a more holistic and cruel rationality to the structural racism that continues to this day.

Tactics of Resistance Amongst Racial Minority Groups

Particularly amongst Black activists, there has been plenty of evidence of resistance to hegemonic racialized institutions. One example of this process is the evolution of institutionalized tactics to resist the dominant hegemonic racial structures from 1955 to 1970 in

the United States (McAdam 1983). McAdam (1983) notes that the relationship between Black insurgents and Southern segregationists was a tactical interaction, in which a cycle of counter-adaptations resulted in an arms race of innovation in strategies for pursuing racial equity (e.g., restaurant segregation necessitates sit-ins, which in turn provoked violent arrests, and so on). Many of these developments were due to the lack of political opportunity and institutional power for Black activists.

Another effective way for activists to bring race into the public arena is through public protests. Fabio Rojas (2006) investigated student-led protests on the creation of African-American studies. Rojas (2006) finds that non-disruptive protests increased the likelihood of the creation of African-American studies programs compared to disruptive protests. Rojas (2006) argues that, unlike previous research that advocates for more disruptive protests for these racially laden protests, non-disruptive methods may be more effective in getting the outcome that students wanted. Also, given the type of framing of an issue, activists may get the effective outcomes (e.g., voting for an issue) they seek. And Asian American women may be utilizing the stereotypes that are placed on them to be meek and submissive, to their advantage. They could be flipping the script by knowing the stereotypes and enacting change in their own ways.

Although organizations have a gendered and racial nature, political and cultural organizations have helped develop pan-ethnic Asian American identity and collective action. Dina Okamoto (2014) challenges the White American perception of monolithic Asian American identity with a description of different ethnic group histories, events, and progressive activism. According to Okamoto (2014), broad social conditions such as immigration reform, access to citizenship, civil rights, and official racial categorization by the state can lead to pan-ethnic group boundaries. However, she also argues that, particularly for Asian Americans, these broad

social conditions are not enough to naturally expand ethnic boundaries or create a pan-ethnic identity. Instead, this process requires "Meso-level" factors, such as racial segregation, active leaders, and ethnic group organizing–a relationship that Okamoto calls the *racialized boundary framework*, and which is further mediated by the development of shared networks, pan-ethnic narratives, and building infrastructure.

I build on Omi and Winant's argument and Okamoto's research by seeking to understand how Asian American activists have found avenues in community organizations to resist dominant hegemonic White policies through their racialized identities. Because of the constant racism inherent within macro-level institutions, Asian American activists must find creative, non-electoral political activities in order to find leverage and power. This may include network building, building pan-ethnic identity, and active leadership building (like Okamoto). I seek to understand how as racial minorities, including Asian American women, enter into institutionalized positions of power, they engage in certain levels of tactics (a *war of position)* in order to combat the discriminatory nature of the institutions. It's possible that as Asian American activists are finding their own methods of resistance, they can find institutionalized ways (e.g., money from foundations or local government) to sustain their resistance movements. Asian American women leaders may have a particularly high number of stereotypes and discriminations placed upon them, that they navigate in order to conduct change or open pathways for future generations.

Asian American Identity and Politics

As more Asian immigrants come to the United States and more Asian Americans become eligible voters with unique needs and demands, the Asian American pan-ethnic identity has become critical in understanding political participation. Asian American pan-ethnicity has been

considered a process that connects entities and solidarities across ethnic groups, both immigrant and second-plus generations (Espiritu 1992). Researchers have started to consider pan-ethnicity for Asian Americans as an idea of "linked fate" (Min 2014). Pan-ethnic identity may help create solidarity for collective action. Dana Nakano (2013) asked the question of how pan-ethnic and single-ethnic identities relate to each other. Nakano (2013) interviewed Asian American social movement organization leaders, asking how they viewed both their pan-ethnic and single-ethnic identities. Nakano (2013) points out that pan-ethnic and single-ethnic identities are interlocking and simultaneous. Thus, both pan-ethnic and single-ethnic identities could be important to sustaining change. Additionally, Nakano (2013) argues that the changing and increasing diversity of the Asian population and the rising institutionalization of the Asian American movement drive the need for "interlocking" pan-ethnicity.

Although pan-ethnic identity is a hopeful goal, pan-ethnic identity effects alone have yet to be shown to positively affect voting behavior. Min (2014) found that pan-ethnic identity increases Asian American nonvoting political participation but decreases Asian American voting rates. Min (2014) suggests that Asian Americans do not see voting as a viable or effective method in getting their policy demands and particularly with a lack of Asian American elected officials. Fraga (2016) supports this suggestion by finding that Asian American respondents were more likely to vote for political candidates that were co-ethnic candidates. Meaning Asian American respondents voted for political candidates who were of the same ethnicity as the respondent (e.g., Chinese American respondent voting for a Chinese American candidate but not a Japanese American candidate). Junn and Masuoka (2008) find that Asian American and Latino respondents were very aware of their racial and ethnic categories, however, they did not necessarily link their racial identities with their political choices. Junn and Masuoka (2008)

suggest that depending on the context, in particular being primed with group pride, Asian Americans may have a greater connection to their racial group and “racial consciousness”. Depending on the context, pan-ethnic identity may help instead of dampen Asian American voter behavior.

Building off of previous research on the usefulness of ethnic and pan-ethnic identity, I will investigate the relationship between pan-ethnic identity, ethnic identity, and non-electoral political participation more qualitatively. I seek to understand how Asian American activist leaders use ethnic and pan-ethnic identity-building as useful tools in their work.

Immigrant Culture and Destinations

The history of Asian immigration to the United States is not continuous or linear given policies and laws regarding citizenship and immigration throughout time and space. In more modern times, there was a greater flow of Asian immigrants, particularly Asians with high education or skills, into the United States in the 1980s. Rumbaut and Portes (2014) note that Asian immigrants like Japanese and Filipino immigrants tended to migrate to places where immigrants had already settled and often there would be no migration to other cities. Traditional ports like San Francisco and New York City, thus become hubs for building Asian American societies where new and old immigrants are in constant interaction with each other. Even children of immigrants (second-generation Asian Americans) tended to stay in the environments in which they were raised even if they move away for college (Lee and Zhou 2015; Rumbaut and Portes 2001). Thus, these areas where immigrants tend to congregate build their own societies and cultures and start to assimilate or develop new cultures around Asian American organizing. Because of the unique aspects of California and New York as traditional immigration

destinations (Frey and Farley 1996), I recruited participants in Asian American organizations from these areas.

Methods

I interviewed 13 self-identified Asian American women leaders (executive directors, presidents, or chairs) in Asian-American-serving political organizations across the United States. The interviews were conducted from September 2020 to August 2021 via Zoom. I analyzed the written and audio transcripts from Zoom and developed themes based on the findings.

Participants

The 13 interviewees were recruited via snowball sampling. Snowball sampling was used by asking interviewees to contact eligible other respondents for the study (Asian American-identified executive women leaders of political non-profit organizations). This method was successful because the network amongst Asian American activists is incredibly rich and well-connected. Further, amongst Asian American women leaders, the network is small and tight-knit. The demographics of the participants will be discussed as a range, because there is a limited amount of Asian American women leaders in non-profit political organizations and the networks are very well-connected with many of the participants knowing each other.

The demographics include age, ethnic identity, immigrant generation, and educational background. The age of the interviewees ranged from 25 to 73 years old. The ethnic identities of the participants included: Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Hmong, Indian, Pakistani, and Vietnamese. Most participants (9) were 2nd generation immigrants (they were born in the United States and had immigrant parents), 3 were 1.5 generation (they immigrated to the United States as children), and 1 was 4th generation (both parents were born in the United States). About half (6) of the participants had been in their leadership position for a few years (about 2 – 4 years), 2

participants were in their position for 7 years, 3 were in their position for less than a year and 1 was in their position for more than 20 years. Two participants were founders of their organization.

Criteria for Leadership

I interviewed leaders in each organization who are at some level of senior management and leadership. Non-profit organizations usually consist of titles to indicate leadership such as executive director, associate director/deputy director, program director, chief of staff, or chief operating officer (Northern Illinois University Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies.) The respondents must have some organizational responsibility. Almost all, except the volunteers and 1 participant who was a manager, were executive directors or presidents.

Criteria for Organizations

Each interviewee was a leader in a different organization from every interviewee, except for 2 interviewees from the same organization, for a total of 11 separate organizations. 5 organizations were national-based and 6 organizations were local-based in San Francisco, Southern California, and New York City. 2 of the interviewees were volunteers at their organizations and 11 of the interviewees were working at their organizations in a professionally-salaried position. As mentioned in the literature review, I focused on these areas because of their rich and different history of immigration. The organizations themselves ranged from smaller organizations with 8- 11 employees (4 organizations) to larger organizations with 20-plus employees (7 organizations).

To protect the identity of the interviewees, the organizations will not be named here but will be described by the geographic area in which the organizations are located within. Organizations were related in some way to Asian Americans or an Asian ethnic group. Most

importantly, organizations must have some civic engagement or advocacy work in their programmatic work. Asian American organizations like the Asian American Bar Association service Asian Americans and are led by Asian Americans do not have a community building or civic engagement component and will be excluded from this study.

Data Analysis

I read through each hour-long interview and identified important and consistent codes that were apparent throughout most of the interviews. After identifying key codes, I would develop these codes into clear themes such as "effect of immigrant family background on education and political participation" by writing memos for each theme. In each memo, I included quotes, wrote how these different interviewees experienced similar events/histories, and discuss briefly how these are related to sociological theories. As this is an exploratory study, there are no comparison groups, but rather a deeper dive into the lived experiences and work of these Asian American women leaders. Through my analyses, I found some relevant themes such as the endurance and grit to get to and maintain their positions, the trials and triumphs of their positions currently, and their perceptions of the landscape of the Asian American political movement.

My lens of analysis is adapted from grounded theories perspectives and phenomenological frameworks. Grounded theory (Glaser and Straus 1967) is an interactive and interactive methodological process in which researchers first focus on data collection and then build middle-range theories (Charmaz 2006) and then back to data collection. Charmaz (2011) describes this process of grounded theory for social justice research as iterative and interactive because each process informs the next. Particularly for social justice research, it is important to understand the narratives, the social norms, and the *lived* experiences of the respondents and

engage with theories interactively. Especially for a population not often studied in Sociology, I explore and interview not as the expert researcher, but as an interviewer seeking the expertise of the population and disseminating this information to academia and the social justice community. Additionally, this particular group of participants has such unique lived experiences that I focus on the phenomenological aspects in order to illuminate how participants live rather than the process (Creswell 2007; Moustaka 1994). Because of the intersectional identities of the participants, an in-depth exploration of their work, trajectories, and perspectives is important to understand how they are shaping the Asian American political movement.

Limitations and Assumptions

There were several limitations to this approach to understanding Asian American leaders in political participation. First, as I was using snowball sampling, the participants were recruited by connections to each other, so there may be some bias in the sample of who these participants were. They may be collectively more progressive, more likely to be of a certain age group, certain philosophy of leadership. Second, given the pandemic, interviews could only be conducted via Zoom. There may be some nuances or comfort that may be lost via teleconference versus in-person interviews.

One assumption, that is quite common in small sample qualitative studies, is that I am investigating a very small subset of the population of Asian American activists and although they are key members of the Asian American political movement, they are not necessarily representative of the bigger population. The illuminations from their interviews must be taken with a grain of salt.

Findings

The non-electoral political participation aspect of Asian American organizing was particularly interesting because there was much to be explored in that area with a lot of different options for being politically active. In order to investigate political participation further, I conducted 13 interviews with Asian American women leaders in politically active organizations. Expanding on Okamoto's (2014) work with Asian American leaders, I wanted to further understand the experiences and landscapes of specifically Asian American women. With interviews, I expand upon previous research on political participation and Asian Americans and focus on non-electoral political participation. Because of the focus on ethnic groups and local context for Asian Americans, I seek to understand the processes of Asian American organizations and particularly the experiences of the leadership of these organizations. As Okamoto (2014) notes active leadership is critical in Asian American organizing and ethnic/pan-ethnic identity formation and maintenance. Unlike the quantitative portion of this dissertation, the qualitative section will be explorative as I seek to understand the lived experiences of Asian American women leaders, thus there are no leading hypotheses.

Family Immigration Stories Effect on Careers

Each one of my interviewees was intimately knowledgeable of their family's immigration stories, which is particularly surprising given many of them were not born yet when their family immigrated or they were several generations removed from the immigrating relatives. Immigration stories are stories (passed through their family members or that the interviewees themselves have experienced/witnessed) about how family members had immigrated to the United States. Every participant had information about when their families immigrated, why they immigrated, where they came to be, and insight into how this immigration story impacted their family's identity and career trajectories in the United States. This knowledge of their family

immigrant stories is an important factor in recognizing and forming the participants' racial and ethnic identities and in turn their political activism.

Interviewees were sometimes aware of their personal family's trauma and sometimes knew they were being deliberately left in the dark. Regardless of their awareness of their own family's trauma, all interviewees were very knowledgeable about their family's immigration stories and patterns. One interviewee mentioned that children of immigrants, Asian Americans, were often "digging up" their family history without prompting from family members because the history was marred by trauma and imperialism:

> I think that's something that's common amongst Asian Americans. … I think that a lot of people in the Asian American community come from histories and their own home countries that have been affected by imperialism have been affected by war and just like trauma and so digging that history up is tough sometimes because it's not necessarily offered by our parents because it's not something that's pretty… – Jennifer

In this quote, Jennifer discusses her thoughts on the effects of war and trauma on the Asian American community. She believes that a lot of the Asian American community comes from histories and countries impacted by war and trauma, thus it is difficult for parents or guardians to discuss with their children their immigration story. Children of immigrants or children who are immigrant refugees themselves may have more complicated or incomplete histories of family immigration. Almost all participants were aware of the stories of strife and trauma in their family history, even if these histories were hidden from them until adulthood.

All interviewees had a deep understanding of why their families immigrated and the hardships (if any) the families faced while living in the United States. Most interviewees were 2nd generation and had detailed information about the obstacles their parents faced, particularly

they discussed the life they had before immigrating to the United States and the life they led up to now.

> My father was actually you know, pretty successful he was working in a bank in India and was doing really well. And he's one of those stories where he came to the US and like he tried to get into the [bank in the United States], but they wouldn't let him….his academic credentials from India and you know he had a family already, you know, that was coming to the US. And so, he just took jobs wherever he could. And then eventually, like, you know, he basically did room service at the [hotel] for 40 years – Jessica

Here, the move from working as a banker in India to working in service in the United States is notable and a stark difference before and after immigration. Jessica also understood that her father's story was a similar story to other immigrants, his was "one of those stories". She knew that other immigrants similarly had stories where they could not use their education or privileges from their country of origin and transfer them to their new country. Participants pointed out that their parents or relatives were well-educated or obtained prestigious occupations back in their country of origin, but had to start over in the United States. This is an astute observation about the socio-economic differences that their family experienced, in order to survive and thrive in the United States.

> So, they came here in the late 80s and both of them actually are college graduates. They both graduated with electrical engineering, both my mom and my dad. But they no longer work as electrical engineers and my mom was in a nail salon and so I grew up in a nail salon.- Nancy

In this example, Nancy was vague about the transfer but was nodding as she spoke about how her parents came to work in a nail salon. It was important to her to note how they were electrical engineers (a prestigious major and occupation) and how they ended up working in the service industry. Again, this is another case was the respondent was knowledgeable of the class difference experienced by their family before and after immigrating to the United States.

> And their dad is basically worked in restaurants, since then, and so he spent like 35 years working in restaurants and cooking and never owned a restaurant and, although that was always you know I think an aspiration that my parents had, but never did for a variety of reasons, never had the opportunity to actually actualize and so definitely grew up very you know it's hard to characterize sometimes but I, I would now like, looking back at it say that I grew up like poor to working class.
> – Laurel

The difference in socio-economic class was a key feature that most respondents were aware of any part of the tapestry of their family history. But even more profound was the awareness that their parents did not have the aspirations or dreams at the same standards as someone who grew up in the United States could have. In the previous quote, Laurel mentions that despite over three decades working in restaurants, her parents never thought to own a restaurant (or starting their own business), which would mean an upgrade to their working-class status. And she points out that they never thought to because they never had the opportunity. These opportunities to own businesses are often difficult for immigrants and lower working-class folks to achieve due to the high risk of failure and little financial support (Lee and Zhou 2015). Additionally, Laurel notes that because of this lack of ownership and working as employees their entire lives, their children, including herself knew that they were poor to working class. This was an important detail in her later discussions of why she chose her career and a detail that she was very clear about.

The unique nuances of the immigration patterns of each family were a knowledge that interviewees were very familiar with and knew how to frame their narratives to how they live their lives today as Asian Americans.

> That's how it was sort of that whole immigration pattern of the Asian Americans from the 1800s, that they went through the towns where a lot of gold rush occurred or agriculture. – Sue

> My parents immigrated here in the mid-60s early to mid-60s, so a little bit earlier than the wave right when we had an influx of Korean immigrants. – Cynthia

These two participants knew when their own family immigrated to the United States, but also what general patterns their parents were following (or not following in Cynthia's case). Many interviewees had this understanding of general immigrant patterns as either part of their formal training or as part of the cultural knowledge they gained from their family and community.

> Essentially, my dad …. during the Cultural Revolution in China, so my dad was part of a generation that was supposedly the majority of his peers like people his age were either part of the Communist Party, or if not, they were sent to you know what they called reeducation camps, which is basically hard labor in the farms, and that was all documented and but my dad did not go and so somehow he managed to avoid that and so he was basically kind of he's part of this… I think like considered a lost generation in China, but especially so for him because he basically had a very, very much had a ceiling in how much he is like the types of jobs that he could have. - Laurel

Here, Laurel can pinpoint a very specific historical and cultural artifact of her parent's home country that affected her dad's career trajectory and perspective post-immigration to the United States. Participants were not only aware of their own personal family history but had knowledge of the broad patterns of immigration for their ethnic group. This knowledge came from their own informal investigations amongst family members or with formalized training, usually in college.

> I think it's just part of our story, right, because we're all in the same city and will grow up together so you know, I guess they ever thought about it. It's just part of our family narrative, like, oh, this is like always been in this country for this many years… my dad made a comment like a few weeks ago… in this country for 47 years and I'm still [in a lower position] right and you're like, wow, like he's now been here for longer than he ever lived in India….So I think it just becomes like woven into the stories that people share with each other. - Jessica

In this quote, Jessica mentions that its "part of our story" the story of immigration, and how even though her dad has now been in the United States longer than his country of origin, the stories "back home" still remain strong in their family narrative and lives. How families immigrated to the United States matter in shaping the professional interests of the interviewees. For example, being a refugee from a war-stricken country catapulted one interviewee to consider Asian studies in college:

> So, they're [family members] all like also the community people. I think for the most part, like what I witness is that they're overall in the community. It is very important to hold and passed down culture and traditions. Things may have shifted down … So, like anecdotally, I think that there are also like there are a lot of students who ended up majoring in ethnic studies and Asian American studies or now among American studies where wherever that exists. …. That's my observation. I think that some of that attraction is around like knowing and understanding who we are and that's a place where we can do that work. - Crystal

Crystal mentioned her family members coming from a place of passing down culture and traditions to preserve this knowledge for future generations and the general community. And she noted that a lot of students end up in ethnic or Asian American studies because of this exposure to this storytelling background and because of this "attraction" to knowing and understanding where they all came from and the histories that their families are a part of. This astute observation came from her education and own experiences with her family and community. This is a key relationship. Participants can contextualize their own family immigration stories and experiences into the larger immigration patterns of their ethnic group/Asian Americans and this deep knowledge pushes them and helps them clarify their desire to pursue Asian American studies as education and as career choices.

Racial Discrimination

Respondents were clear that they were targets of discrimination still in their daily lives, despite reaching high levels of success. Particularly in this time period of the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian Americans have been publicly targeted and there was an increase in scrutiny over the violent attacks on Asian American women.

> With covid, it's been scary because in this entire time that I've been in [city]. Up until now, I'd never really experienced outright racism but now with covid. I have heard it spoken, you know of racist words said to me or my friends. For example, if I wore a mask. People would say, you look stupid. Before covid, a woman came by and posted and she's like, I'm so glad in Australia, we don't allow you people to eat dogs and cats. – Claire

In this quote, Claire discusses the fear she feels since the COVID-19 pandemic where there has been an uptick in anti-Asian sentiment. She has experienced explicit racism to her face that she had never experienced previously. She mentioned before that she had experienced microaggressions and slights before but not outright like right now. Because of this explicit racism, she fears being in public now more than previously. Many participants had similar experiences, not only during the pandemic but generally throughout their lives. These anecdotes are understood now through the lens of racism and classism and have had a profound impact on the trajectory of participants' careers.

> I identify myself as a Chinese American. Can I just add that I'm very, very proud of being Chinese. And just being an American and sort of icing on the cake. Let me tell you a story. Saw our class went down to know Dallas, which is in Mexico. So, we return and went through the checkpoint. And so, the immigration or whoever asked, what is your nationality and I said I was Chinese. I should have said I was American. – Vivian

Here Vivian describes a specific anecdote where she was further interrogated by border police because she said that she was Chinese instead of American. She had regrets about not claiming her American nationality because she had to face further interrogation that was

embarrassing in front of her fellow students and scary for her as a child to have to face the police alone, while on a field trip. Interestingly, she spoke of this anecdote after identifying her Chinese identity with pride. She spoke about this anecdote as an example of how she was discriminated against, but despite these cases of discrimination in her life, she is proud of her heritage and perhaps she identified more strongly with her ethnic identity because of this discrimination. There is a possible connection between hardships experienced and an increase in ethnic identity.

Many participants had similar experiences, not only during the pandemic but generally throughout their lives. These anecdotes are understood now through the lens of racism and classism and have had a profound impact on the trajectory of participants' careers.

> Because obviously, I don't have to fill out these forms did you know that, like if you write that your native language is not English you will always be assumed to be an English second language learner. That's basically what happened, rather than someone who's like bilingual right. So, then I always had to like take the reading tests. Or like I got defaulted into classes that I shouldn't have been. Even though I was already also simultaneously tracked – Crystal Lee

Participants, particularly, those who were immigrants themselves or spoke English as a second language, were treated differently in school environments. In this particular quote, Crystal talks about how even though her native language (perhaps the language she first learned) was not English, she was tracked into the English as a second language class. She believed she was tracked differently because of this labeling. Tracking in schools is very important because tracking could place students into different educational outcomes despite students' actual potential and academic success (Lee and Zhou 2015). By tracking Crystal into English as a second language class, teachers have effectively placed her on a lower track and potentially suppressed her academic potential. This is a similar experience to many Asian immigrants and children of immigrants in the educational system (Lee and Zhou 2015). Crystal was able to

identify this tracking in her own life and understand how not only that impacted her but many others. This connection between her own experience and many others is an important trait that many other participants possessed to be effective leaders in their organizations.

> My own experience with discrimination I vividly remember like even an elementary school teacher scolding me because I was talking and telling me that you're not acting like the other Asian kids. Being quiet and obedient something to that effect and just thinking that that I didn't have the words or the way to you know the tools to be able to respond like hey that's really racist shit. - Megan

In this quote, Megan discusses how her school teacher admonished her because she was NOT acting like the other stereotypical Asian students. The traits "quiet" and "obedient" were expected of her because of her race, but she did not act that way. Later on, Megan mention that because she did not have those traits, she was able to come to be a better leader. However, others, like her school teacher, were trying to shape her so that she acted more like the stereotype, more the model minority. Only later in life does Megan realize that this behavior from her school teacher was racist and something that she could confront and discuss. She mentions that she only later had the tools to respond to how racist her school teacher was. She also notes that these experiences helped her to move into her education and career choices. Her education in Asian American studies and her experience as an Asian American advocate gave her the tools to realize racism in her life and to respond.

> But when I think of my identities, I usually often say, Well, I'm Chinese American that's like the number one identity because I know when people see me. They, first off, … see me as Asian, and then they see me as an Asian woman so in the past, in my earlier years I would see it almost as a little bit of a barrier. But now I see it as a gift and it's something that I need to still learn to be confident and but I feel like the confidence comes from telling my story and knowing that maybe others share similar experiences and by me talking about it. – Claire

Claire also notes, like other participants, that people will notice her race first and make assumptions and associate stereotypes with her. Seeing her as Asian and particularly, an Asian woman, meant she had double identity pressure/associations. Crenshaw (1989) would call this double stacking. Similarly, to other participants, Claire mentions that even though she had considered her identities a barrier before, she sees now that her identities are a gift. Because she can understand her experiences through deeper analysis and lens, she can tell her story. She said she was able to gain confidence from telling her story and knowing that others had similar experiences. This was a point that several other participants made. Not only did they feel they learned and gained confidence from their own experiences, they knew others had shared experiences and this gave them a greater voice to speak up and to strive towards leadership positions.

Discussion

Through qualitative semi-structured interviews, I was able to explore the trajectories, obstacles, and strategies of Asian American women leaders in political non-profit organizations across the nation. I identified key findings on how Asian American women leaders' racial identity and discrimination are utilized towards political activation and mobilization. First, the interviews with not only the personal histories of these leaders, but also the general tapestry of Asian American immigration, political participation, and career pathways. These leaders were deeply connected to their own stories and the stories of their families. Their own immigration stories and their family's immigration stories impacted how they viewed their education and career choices. Second, despite the position of power these leaders achieve, there were still experiences of discrimination throughout their careers. Often these experiences were described with how they overcame these obstacles and how these experiences helped them in their work.

Third, there were some differences between the participants who had started in corporate jobs versus those who did not. Participants in corporate jobs first had fewer mentorship networks and felt they had to break through the "bamboo ceiling" by fighting against racial stereotypes and creating positions for themselves. On the other hand, participants who started in non-profit/grassroots organizations felt there were lots of mentors and networking opportunities provided that allowed them easier access to their current position.

In connection to Asian American identity, the stories of how their families immigrated to the United States informed and contextualized the interviewees' motivations to pursue their careers. Strikingly, every participant was very aware and knowledgeable of their own family's immigration history and understood the general immigration patterns of other families of the same ethnic group (e.g., other Korean immigrants immigrating around the 1980s). This deep cultural knowledge was a catalyst for many participants to take a career in the Asian American advocacy field. Participants mostly focused on their ethnic identity (e.g., Korean American) and thought political implications of these ethnic identities in relation to other members of the ethnic identity. This would follow literature that discusses how different ethnic groups have much different historical immigration patterns that result in a variety of identification processes across ethnicity and generation (Espiritu 1992).

The idea of pan-ethnic identity was somewhat prevalent amongst these participants. The idea of any racialized ethnic identity was seen through the lens of their immigration story and stories of discrimination. And others who started in a different sector, corporate or politics, were developing volunteer/informal spaces to think about political advocacy for Asian Americans. There may be more potential for pan-ethnic identity building amongst those who came from non-profit backgrounds. This could be further researched in another line of research.

Almost all participants discussed having to face racial discrimination in their work and their past, but many of them discussed how they reframed these anecdotes as helpful motivators to pursue their careers. Interviewees faced both microaggressions and blatant racial discrimination, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic began with a generalized increase in negativity toward Asian Americans. The types of racism that participants ranged from being targeted on the streets to being stereotyped/discriminated against within institutions such as schools and jobs. Oftentimes, participants first experience racial discrimination at school by teachers or peers. How participants thought about these discriminatory acts, I argue, counts as a type of resistance maneuver. Omi and Winant (2015) argued that racial minorities in contemporary conditions engage in a war of position, where they are fighting within institutions. Similarly, Asian American women leaders in this study were politicizing their own experiences by thinking of how these experiences connected them to other Asian Americans in a social justice movement. They considered these experiences as tools for future connection and movement building.

I focused on non-electoral political participation in these interviews to understand the complexities of Asian American political activity outside of the electoral system. In chapter 2, I found that there was a difference in terms of pan-ethnic and ethnic identity in which type of political participation increased. In chapter 3, I found that Asian American women leaders were more likely to politicize their racial identities, particularly by politicizing their family immigration history. It may be that those Asian Americans who eventually become political leaders may politicize aspects of their racial identity. It's not just identifying the pan-ethnic identity/ethnic identity that is important, but viewing the identity itself as political may be the catalyst for greater Asian American political participation.

Future Directions

One line of research could be to understand better the line between pan-ethnic and ethnic identity in how they help mobilize political aspirations amongst Asian American leaders. When would identifying as Asian American versus an ethnic group (e.g., Vietnamese) mobilize Asian American leaders or help shape their strategies? How can these different identities affect the trajectories of future Asian American leaders? And would there be a gender difference in the ways in which Asian American leaders identify with their ethnic versus pan-ethnic group? These boundaries may help better understand how Asian American leaders become leaders and how they become more politically active.

Another line of research could be to investigate further the racialization of institutions such as non-profits and how they affect the tactics and strategies of activists. Deeper analysis of the tactics and strategies coupled with archival information about the historical context of these tactics (such as protests happening or acts of violence against Asian Americans) could be very insightful in understanding the relationship between racialized institutions and activist strategies.

Conclusion

Asian American women leaders reflected on their own racial identities and experiences of discrimination through a racial and political lens in order to explain why they became political leaders. I argue that because they see their racial identity as political, they are motivated toward political action and leadership. Lots more research could be extended from this initial exploratory step; however, identity and racial history are important in understanding the trajectories and motivations of Asian American women leaders in political organizations.

Chapter 4: Asian American Women's Gender and Leadership

Introduction

There has been very little research concerning Asian American female leadership or even racial minority leadership in sociology. Much of the literature on race and gender focus either on structural racism and sexism embedded amongst our institutions (Bonilla-Silva, 1996; Acker, 1990) or on race- and gender-based inequalities in occupational and educational achievement. Additionally, there is much literature on Black and White relations, but limited research on the Asian American working experience in this Black and White society. On top of these lacunae, intersectionality is largely missing from the research on the Asian American experience and identity. Further understanding is needed for the relationship between the identity and leadership of Asian Americans.

Extending upon the previous quantitative study on Asian American identity and political participation, I focus on Asian American women leaders in non-profit political organizations. I interviewed 13 self-identified Asian American women in top leadership positions in non-profit political organizations across the United States. I asked them questions about their immigrant background, their racial/ethnic identity, their trajectories to their current positions, obstacles/triumphs in their current positions, and what they saw as the future of Asian American political participation. My research question for this study was: **How do Asian American women leaders view their intersectional identities and how do these identities affect their leadership and political participation?**

I focus on how the intersectionality of race and gender affects Asian American women leaders in non-profit political organizations. For the participants in this study, their racial and immigrant backgrounds were important, however, their experiences were always tied to their

gender and the perceptions of their gender in relation to their work and leadership. In hour-long Zoom interviews, across different geographic locations, ethnic groups, and ages, there was a strong consensus in perceptions of gendered expectations in these participants' work. For most of the participants, gendered expectations defined their drive and grit to overcome obstacles and stigma to become leaders in their community.

I base my research on the literature of Crenshaw's (1989) work on intersectionality of multiple identities and Robnett's (1996) research on African American women's leadership during the Civil Rights Movement. I argue that similar to Robnett's (1996) African American women leaders, Asian American women leaders are still facing gendered stereotypes about their leadership from both within and outside of their community. Although there are more Asian American women in leadership positions than ever before, they still must overcome these obstacles and barriers of gendered discrimination. Participants are very aware of their intersectional identities as both Asian Americans and women and actively either work with or fight against the stereotypes that they face. And like the themes in chapter 2, Asian American women are aware of these constraints of gendered and racial stereotyping, and they use them either to their advantage or circumvent them in order to achieve successful outcomes.

Asian Americans are often perceived as a monolithic group with few differences between sub-groups by ethnicity or even gender. However, there are differences in stereotypes and the barriers to success. In the following sections of the literature review, I explore past work on institutional sexism in order to understand Asian American women's unique positions in non-profit organizations, as well as how they navigate the resulting barriers in order to thrive and succeed as leaders. Additionally, I outline the prevalence and effect of Asian American stereotypes and intersecting marginalized identities. With this literature background, I aim to

build the case for an investigation of the trajectories and experiences of Asian American female leaders in non-profit organizations. One possible goal of this research is to identify barriers and stereotypes within Asian American female leadership to encourage greater representation of Asian American women and other women of color in leadership roles within political action and formalized organizations.

Literature Review

Gender and Institutions

Organizations, by their very nature, are based on inequalities because of how they are formed and how they continue to differentiate different power levels (Baron and Bielby 1980; Stainback, Tomaskovic-Devey, and Skaggs 2010). For women seeking positions of leadership, the pathway toward success has many obstacles. Joan Acker (1990) argues that although feminists have demonstrated that not only is male dominance apparent in organizations, the organizational structure itself is inherently gendered. Workers are automatically assumed to be male, and how work is structured has long catered to male workers. Acker (1990) challenges previous feminist discourse's view of organizations as gender-neutral places and stresses that researchers cannot overlook gender as an ongoing process within organizations. She also argues that gender relations and processes are critical in understanding why inequalities occur in organizations.

Additionally, the context of an organization affects the representation of women in leadership positions. Acker (1990) points out several ways in which gender identity perpetuates inequality in organizations. Acker (1990) argues that the concept of "a job" is inherently gendered and most often positions men as obtainers and keepers of jobs. Over time, some researchers could argue that there are more gender-equal organizations, however, there are still

striking penalties for women, particularly mothers (Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007). Also, the size of the organization and the organizational policies matter in how women are hired and reach leadership positions (Huffman, Cohen, and Pearlman 2010). For Asian American female leaders, female stereotypes and the gendered nature of institutions (even social justice non-profit organizations) will continue to affect their ability to lead successfully. Despite reaching leadership positions, because organizations themselves continue to be gendered, Asian American female leaders may face constant and increasing barriers or difficulty in their positions or seeking avenues of success (e.g., funding).

Intersectional Identity and Leadership

The presence and visibility of Asian American women as leaders are important in order to encourage the pursuit of leadership positions among racial minorities, especially those with multiple marginalized identities. Intersectional analysis is critical to any groups that need to negotiate between multiple identities. Kimberly Williams Crenshaw (1989) first coined the term "intersectionality" to describe the experiences of Black working women and their struggle to shed light on discriminatory practices in the workplace. She points out how Black women's dual disadvantaged identities present unique and difficult barriers in categorizing the discrimination they faced, and make their court cases less likely to succeed. Additionally, Chun, Lipsitz, and Shin (2013) found that for the organization *Asian Immigrant Women Advocates*, the nexus of gender, race, and immigrant identities was important in understanding its members' struggles in the workplace and advocating for them. In this example, intersectionality served not only as a combination of identities but also as a strategy for mobilizing advocates of social justice for women of color. I argue that Asian American women leaders must constantly navigate their leadership positions and work constantly within this intersectional identity. The space Asian

American women leaders work in and their work is constantly gendered and racialized (Võ and Sciachitano 2004).

Sociologist Belinda Robnett (1996) argued that women activists serve a unique function as an interface between the community and formal organizations. She points out that women leaders serve as “bridge leaders” that connect the private and public spheres, acting as liaisons between the concerns of the community and the priorities of the social movement organizations. In particular, she investigates the roles of Black women leaders in civil rights movement organizations, and also in the civil rights movement as a whole. As bridge leaders, these women brought the desires of community activists (students, women) to the political and social leaders in order to foster bus boycotts and the development of student movement organizations. But crucially, although Black women activists were critical in their roles, they were funneled into these bridge leader positions because of the factors stopping them from obtaining more formalized leadership positions (Robnett, 1996). My qualitative research builds on this work by focusing on Asian American women who are in visible leadership positions but may conduct very different tactics than their male counterparts in order to achieve success. Additionally, my research focuses on how Asian American female leaders resist and develop tactics to maneuver within racialized and gendered formal institutions. This will be a contemporary comparison to the historical research of Robnett (1996) and a different racial group with different, new stereotypes constraining the leaders.

There has been little social science research on the influence of intersectional identity on leadership in political organizations, and what research there is underscores the importance of shedding light on Asian American leadership. Psychologist Debra Kawahara (2007) conducted a qualitative study in which she investigated the experiences of twelve Asian American women

leaders in various occupations. In semi-structured interviews, she asked participants about the general “ebb and flow” of life, their vision as leaders, their leadership styles, the challenges they faced, and the ways in which they maneuver their biculturalism. She argued that the leadership of Asian American women is unique because they must constantly negotiate between the cultures of “Asian women” and "American" (implicitly, "American women"). Asian women are stereotyped as passive, docile, and submissive, and Kawahara found that her interviewees were constantly aware of these stereotypes, and at times they resisted and fought against them. Like Robnett’s (1996) respondents, Kawahara’s interviewees were closely tied to community voices and felt responsibilities to the community at large. Although their work receives recognition in the form of promotion to formal leadership positions, this recognition does not take into account that Kawahara’s respondents routinely provide even more work than male leaders, who are not positioned as both formal *and* community leaders.

Asian American studies researcher Linda Võ conducted an ethnography in San Diego of Asian American communities in political action (Võ 2004). Võ finds that in the Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC) in San Diego, women started taking over leadership positions in part because there was a vacuum for leadership ("less male competition in 'helping' professions") and these organizations were serving as social service organizations. Thus, it was acceptable for women to be in these soft roles. This is one possible result from this dissertation is that Asian American women can achieve leadership positions because the organizations are seen as "suitable" for women because they are social services or helping professions. However, I hope that given these organizations are also involved in political action, there are also empowering narratives about Asian American women finding success not just because they were allowed to be in these leadership positions because of environmental sexism.

Asian American studies scholars argue that Asian American women can find solidarity amongst other women of color for political activities (Fujiwara and Roshanravan 2018), but much more is needed to be investigated to understand how Asian American women are currently finding leverages and power to enact their own goals and missions within their organizations. Rather than considering Asian American women as disadvantaged because of their race and gender, I pursue an investigation that looks at how Asian American women utilize their race and gender to connect with other political leaders and perhaps better enact equitable political issues (e.g., equal pay for women in organizations or finding shelter for women escaping domestic violence.) And further, how Asian American women open pathways for future generations of Asian American women leaders.

Methods

I interviewed 13 self-identified Asian American women leaders (executive directors, presidents, or chairs) in Asian-American-serving political organizations across the United States. The interviews were conducted from September 2020 to August 2021 via Zoom. I analyzed the written and audio transcripts from Zoom and developed themes based on the findings.

Participants

The 13 interviewees were recruited via snowball sampling. Snowball sampling was used by asking interviewees to contact eligible other respondents for the study (Asian American-identified executive women leaders of political non-profit organizations). This method was successful because the network amongst Asian American activists is incredibly rich and well-connected. Further, amongst Asian American women leaders, the network is small and tight-knit. The demographics of the participants will be discussed as a range, because there is a limited

amount of Asian American women leaders in non-profit political organizations and the networks are very well-connected with many of the participants knowing each other.

The demographics include age, ethnic identity, immigrant generation, and educational background. The age of the interviewees ranged from 25 to 73 years old. The ethnic identities of the participants included: Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Hmong, Indian, Pakistani, and Vietnamese. Most participants (9) were 2nd generation immigrants (they were born in the United States and had immigrant parents), 3 were 1.5 generation (they immigrated to the United States as children), and 1 was 4th generation (both parents were born in the United States). About half (6) of the participants had been in their leadership position for a few years (about 2 – 4 years), 2 participants were in their position for 7 years, 3 were in their position for less than a year and 1 was in their position for more than 20 years. Two participants were founders of their organization.

Criteria for Leadership

I interviewed leaders in each organization who are at some level of senior management and leadership. Non-profit organizations usually consist of titles to indicate leadership such as executive director, associate director/deputy director, program director, chief of staff, or chief operating officer (Northern Illinois University Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies.) The respondents must have some organizational responsibility. Almost all, except the volunteers and 1 participant who was a manager, were executive directors or presidents.

Criteria for Organizations

Each interviewee was a leader in a different organization from every interviewee, except for 2 interviewees from the same organization, for a total of 11 separate organizations. 5 organizations were national-based and 6 organizations were local-based in San Francisco,

Southern California, and New York City. 2 of the interviewees were volunteers at their organizations and 11 of the interviewees were working at their organizations in a professionally-salaried position. As mentioned in the literature review, I focused on these areas because of their rich and different history of immigration. The organizations themselves ranged from smaller organizations with 8- 11 employees (4 organizations) to larger organizations with 20-plus employees (7 organizations).

To protect the identity of the interviewees, the organizations will not be named here but will be described by the geographic area in which the organizations are located within. Organizations were related in some way to Asian Americans or an Asian ethnic group. Most importantly, organizations must have some civic engagement or advocacy work in their programmatic work. Asian American organizations like the Asian American Bar Association service Asian Americans and are led by Asian Americans do not have a community building or civic engagement component and will be excluded from this study.

Data Analysis

I read through each hour-long interview and identified important and consistent codes that were apparent throughout most of the interviews. After identifying key codes, I would develop these codes into clear themes such as "effect of immigrant family background on education and political participation" by writing memos for each theme. In each memo, I included quotes, wrote how these different interviewees experienced similar events/histories, and discuss briefly how these are related to sociological theories. As this is an exploratory study, there are no comparison groups, but rather a deeper dive into the lived experiences and work of these Asian American women leaders. Through my analyses, I found some relevant themes such as the endurance and grit to get to and maintain their positions, the trials and triumphs of their

positions currently, and their perceptions of the landscape of the Asian American political movement.

My lens of analysis is adapted from grounded theories perspectives and phenomenological frameworks. Grounded theory (Glaser and Straus 1967) is an interactive and interactive methodological process in which researchers first focus on data collection and then build middle-range theories (Charmaz 2006) and then back to data collection. Charmaz (2011) describes this process of grounded theory for social justice research as iterative and interactive because each process informs the next. Particularly for social justice research, it is important to understand the narratives, the social norms, and the *lived* experiences of the respondents and engage with theories interactively. Especially for a population not often studied in Sociology, I explore and interview not as the expert researcher, but as an interviewer seeking the expertise of the population and disseminating this information to academia and the social justice community. Additionally, this particular group of participants has such unique lived experiences that I focus on the phenomenological aspects in order to illuminate how participants live rather than the process (Creswell 2007; Moustaka 1994). Because of the intersectional identities of the participants, an in-depth exploration of their work, trajectories, and perspectives is important to understand how they are shaping the Asian American political movement.

Limitations and Assumptions

There were several limitations to this approach to understanding Asian American leaders in political participation. First, as I was using snowball sampling, the participants were recruited by connections to each other, so there may be some bias in the sample of who these participants were. They may be collectively more progressive, more likely to be of a certain age group, certain philosophy of leadership. Second, given the pandemic, interviews could only be

conducted via Zoom. There may be some nuances or comfort that may be lost via teleconference versus in-person interviews.

One assumption, that is quite common in small sample qualitative studies, is that I am investigating a very small subset of the population of Asian American activists and although they are key members of the Asian American political movement, they are not necessarily representative of the bigger population. The illuminations from their interviews must be taken with a grain of salt.

Findings

The non-electoral political participation aspect of Asian American organizing was particularly interesting because there was much to be explored in that area with a lot of different options for being politically active. In order to investigate political participation further, I conducted 13 interviews with Asian American women leaders in politically active organizations. Expanding on Okamoto's work with Asian American leaders, I wanted to further understand the experiences and landscapes of specifically Asian American women.

Facing and Overcoming Obstacles in Their Current Positions

Many participants discussed their development as a leader with obstacles such as stereotyping, limited opportunity, and lack of support/knowledge from family members. But much of this has been changing, in the course of just this generation of leaders, there has been a shift of more women in prototypically male positions of power. Male positions of power are executive-level positions that serve as the face of the organization and make executive decisions on the funding and direction of the organization. The participants were aware of their endurance and grit in pursuing and preserving their current positions. Several participants discuss how these

personality traits of being determined, persevering, and motivated helped them become the leaders they are today.

> I lived in a world where I was a minority of minorities. Because you are either black or white. So, you know, to be like a standout independent person, you know, so that was just a survival mechanism for me…To sort of rise above you had to, you know, take a personality, you know of, of being assertive. Otherwise, I probably would have already shuttered up and died. – Lindsay

Here Lindsay discusses how she had to be a "standout independent person" because she was alone in her ethnic and gender identity, as an Asian American woman. Because of this isolated experience, she fought harder and had to be more assertive in order to survive her corporate position and later leadership positions. Otherwise, she posited that she would not have made it up to her current position. But in this molding of her personality, she felt pride in her assertiveness and survival instincts. Her intersectional identity made her more assertive and outspoken, typical traits of a leader, and in turn, she felt pride in these traits in order to survive the isolation and barriers that she faced.

> … this is stuff that I've, of course, like self-reflected on there's something in my personality part of it as my, you know, my father was civically engaged. And I think that's something that… my mother was like don't think you can see the world don't think you can say the world. And I was like, I will save the world. I will save the world. – Jessica

Sometimes like Jessica, participants felt they could make a great impact on the world, and that provided the perseverance and grit in their personalities to overcome obstacles. In this quote, Jessica describes feeling drawn to politics and organizing because of her father who was civically engaged, but also feeling motivated to pursue her work and career because she felt that she could "save the world", and that she could make an impact on the world. This may even be, despite what her mother said in terms of her capacity, Jessica remembered her words and was

more determined to pursue “saving” the world. In this case that meant becoming a leader in a political community organization.

Gendered Expectations

As Claire pointed out, the participants were not only facing racial stereotypes but they have the double burden of gendered stereotypes to fight against. Being an Asian American woman, for some participants meant pushing against the stereotypes of being an Asian American and being a woman from both within and outside the Asian American community.

> Some the people like accepted more easily. But then for me, I think what it ended up being was like the expectation of being a Superwoman. Like, you have to be good in school like getting a good job and give multiple degrees, preferably but also still like uphold like all of the expectations of what it meant to be among women. And that means that like, I grew up in like a fairly traditional household.."– Crystal

Crystal speaks to all the high, unrealistic expectations for women in her community. Not only must they be high achievers academically and career-wise, but they were expected to be good wives, mothers, and children. There is this double pressure to fit the mold of a traditional Asian woman in the community as well as achieve high status to help the community. There are greater barriers towards Asian women in comparison to Asian men because of these traditional stereotypes within their own community. Even if they were to reach a position of power, these barriers are still in place and leaders must overcome them.

> So the louder you are, the more aggressive, you are, and that somehow equates to being effective. In this challenge that we face, especially as women, we downplay our expertise and our leadership, because we say oh, you know, we want to approach this work, I know I want to approach this work very humbly, and say you know sometimes anybody calls me an expert I’m like well I’m not you know. And I've been reminded, like no, I have the expertise, I know what I'm talking about and it doesn't mean that you're not humble,

> but I have way more expertise than this white guy who's talking at me right now. – Megan

Megan discusses the difficulty of being a leader as a woman because the traits of a leader are counter to the stereotypes of a woman. She notes that the more loud and aggressive you are, you are considered a better, more effective leader. However, as a woman, you could face backlash for being too loud or aggressive. So, she finds that women leaders have to downplay expertise and leadership in order to work in this space. And sometimes she has to remind herself that she IS the expert and leader in this work and she has way more expertise than “this white guy.” Participants knew that they were being compared to another category of leaders (white or Asian men) in their leadership abilities and their effectiveness.

> You know hire an Asian woman in a position of leadership and oftentimes it is after some sort of scandal or something and it's a woman of color who is asked to basically clean up the mess of a white man. This violence isn't new right, but it has been you know, I think that anti-Asian racism has always been there and been present. And so, in those ways we are and that you know the ways that we hold actions are very different, where I think security and safety is a really big piece of … of our planning so figuring out how to you know making sure that we have the capacity to have someone you know to walk with our members home after an action to make sure that we get home safely things like that and otherwise, and you know this is what we've been doing... – Laurel

Laurel notes here that she believes Asian women are hired as security for companies to showcase their diversity and to compensate for the “mess of a white man.” The new Asian women leader works as the clean-up crew and new face of the organization to absolve the previous mistakes and to give more credit to the organization for putting a woman of color in a position of power. Asian women are seen as a diversity hire to cover up the mistakes of the past and to help bolster the idea that there is more inclusivity in leadership positions.

Overall, all participants experienced obstacles and barriers on the way to and currently in their positions of leadership. These obstacles manifested as racial discrimination and gendered expectations/stereotypes from within and outside of their Asian community. How these Asian women leaders were able to learn and utilize these experiences to their advantage helped them to achieve their power today. Additionally, how they saw that their experiences were not just limited to themselves as individualized experiences but as communal experiences happening to other Asian women bolstered their passion and motivation to work in their current positions. This passion and motivation from connecting to other Asian women in turn make these Asian women leaders, effective and admired leaders.

Breaking the Glass Bamboo Ceiling and Tapped by the Network

Understanding their family immigration background was crucial because it heavily affected their career trajectories. The participants in this study were brilliant women who were excelling in their fields in order to either be tapped into their position or to create organizations that focused on providing services and bolstering political participation to other Asian American and Pacific Islanders in their local area.

Women who went through a more corporate route before starting their current positions as leaders in the non-profit space saw themselves as trailblazers and as the creators of the space for which they were existing. They felt that they had to overcome much in order to get to their positions of power.

> Not only was I the only female in the room. Oftentimes, well, but definitely the only Asian American and the only person of color. So, you know I shattered sort of not only the glass ceiling, but the bamboo ceiling on my own, and you know uplifted myself. So, I had a very successful *corporate* career. You created that space. You see the need. You see the problem. And you create that space. I'm in realizing that we had a big problem with the bamboo ceiling – Lindsay

In this quote, Lindsay pointed out that she had multiple identities that were considered a "minority." She took great pride in describing that she not only broke the "glass ceiling" but also the "bamboo ceiling." The glass ceiling is in reference to the barrier to higher positions of power on, usually corporate, organizational ladders that women face (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, and Vanneman 2001) and the bamboo ceiling is in reference to the barrier for Asian Americans (Hyun 2005). Notably, Lindsay understands and astutely highlights these academic terms in regards to the barriers that she faced while working in the corporate world. She also points out that she uplifted herself. She was the one pushing to create a space for herself and gain a seat at the table.

> Like a lot of times what I find is with Asian women. They gotta like know exactly what it's going to be. And then they have to check everything up like are we sure you know and be rest assured, and really know before they'll do something. Take a chance. And I feel like I did not do that. I might have maybe known 50 percent /60 percent of the information and then I took the risk to do it. Yeah, maybe my risk-taking is a little bit higher. From that aspect of it, granted, and as I got through the different, you know, opportunities… - Hannah

Additionally, Hannah here mentions that, unlike other Asian women, she felt her corporate background prepared her for more risk-taking and opportunity-grabbing than other types of backgrounds. She felt that with half or 60% of the information, she could make a jump to whatever opportunity was offered to her. After the company restructuring, she was demoted to a lower level with a lower salary and she decided to quit and take a severance package, which was a surprising move to the company. She had quit without another job lined up at the moment.

> How dare you underestimate estimate me so much. I have been with this company for over 28 years and I have a lot of skill sets that I have built… I've learned to speak up much more like the way I used to leverage our board as a sounding board, but I don't ask a lot of times. I don't ask for permission. - Hannah

In this quote, Hannah discusses how outraged she was over her demotion and how she felt belittled despite her experience and skillsets. Because of working in the corporate world and having this demotion experience, she felt more like she could speak up more to people in power, like the board, in her positions in non-profits. She deliberately states that she does not ask for permission. She does not seek authority figures to tell her what to do, but she leads and carves out for herself what she is allowed to do. This narrative is consistent among participants who had more corporate careers before their current positions. That they had to fight for their positions and fight for spaces where they could voice concerns and discuss in length their identities (as women, and as Asians).

On the other hand, women who began organizing spaces beforehand saw more mentorship and networking before they began their leadership positions.

> Mentors here in there. I actually don't have like a regular mentor, a coach that I check in with, but I have a few people who I consider mentors and I have some questions in there and check in with them. So, I think having that support has been really helpful. Luckily, most of them aren't involved with [organization name] there from an [US region] chapter on their former senior staff. So, you know, I'm very accustomed to seeing women in leadership positions. – Nancy

> I think that that was one type of mentorship that I have received, and another type has been a lot of, and not always Asian women, a lot of Asian women have explicitly. You know, reached out to me in very useful ways.- Laurel

In both these quotes, both participants discuss having several informal mentors who have checked in or who have been constant steady support systems while they have been seeking jobs and/or working in their jobs. Nancy, particularly, notes that because she had mentors throughout the job search process and beyond, she was very used to seeing women in leadership positions.

One participant tied in their family history of leadership to their network of leadership later in life:

> …I think this gets to leadership… all the women in my family are super strong and we're leaders. And so, my grandmother was a leader in the Chinese community, for example, because they knew. …my family knew English well. And so, everyone in Chinatown came to my grandmother's house and she, you know, during the day when there's no school, I was there because she would take care of me or my parents' work. And she was kind of the navigator and leader in the community giving information to read things to translate – Lisa

Lisa came from a family and community who were already leaders and gatherers of their community and in particular, she points out that her grandmother was a matriarch who gathered and helped others, particularly in translation. She discussed how there would be community gatherings at her grandmother's house and this was a profound impact on her perspective of community gatherings. She understood the importance and value of Asian American gatherings like this to provide services and advocate for local communities.

> After college, I worked in [city] Chinatown. I got a job with a national organization there. And at the time, all of the leaders of nonprofits were these amazing women, with real-life stories, and just life experiences and they mentored me. And so those women still mentor me but some people just struggled as single moms or whatever, and they started agencies or been students and you know we're moved up in agencies. And so, it was just this narrative and storytelling of all these women leaders who kept supporting me and, you know, and I was really curious and I was just like, how do you do this and this and this…from my own family to my professional career working in the Asian community there's been all of these women leaders who have just welcomed you know other young women. Into the fold and mentored them. – Lisa

Here Lisa discussed even outside of her own family, some constant women leaders were guiding and mentoring her throughout her career. It wasn't an anomaly to her that women were leaders in their community. Even those who were struggling as single mothers started in

organizations/agencies and were “moved up” to positions of power. This narrative of women leaders remains strong in her life and she saw repeated in future generations as well. Thus, it was natural for her to work as a founder and executive director in her organization because she had that blueprint from her childhood growing up and throughout every step of her career since then.

Oftentimes, women were seeking opportunities and in discussion with other Asian American women who are in positions of power to help them achieve their positions. Several of the participants who were interviewed mentioned being asked by someone in passing about the availability of their position. The participants were seen already as leaders in their community or had the potential of being leaders. In return, the participants thought that the future of the movements was incredibly bright with young Asian American and Pacific Islander leaders perceived to be sharp and much more vocal than previous generations. The hope for the future of the movement was mostly in the next generation of API leaders.

Future of Asian Women in Leadership

> … I have a couple like a handful of young Asian American women who are going to do something like they're gonna become either the president or something. In the future, I'm telling you these women are phenomenal. I mean there and I can't wait to see what they do but they're all in their like early 20s… that is exciting to me ... I'm like, whatever you need. Just call me because we need to make sure that you're on the right path. I get to mentor them directly. And we just decided with the board that in the past our target market was always a mid-level, the mid-level like 10 to 15 years on the job. Well, we decided, that's fine. But we're going to focus on that zero to five. You are. I said we have got to shift because we got to influence them a lot earlier.- Hannah

Hannah felt excited and hopeful for younger generations of women leaders in the political movement. She noted that in her organization, they used to look at hiring women who were mid-level with 10-15 years of experience in the job, but now she’s pushing to hire folks who have less

experience, more 0-5 years experience. She wants to mentor and bolster the participation of younger women in order to influence the younger generation.

> … And what will that look like and who will replace the folks and where will folks go if our mindset is different to say, I've done what I can and I actually think the organization will be better new fresh eyes, then it there's opportunity for a new talent pool going into something. And then there's also the idea that there'll be a new class of folks running these organizations. And what will that look like ... But … I would challenge that to look at it … way far back and say, but is that a design, is that happening, for a reason? Is it because like men have determined that this is okay? … or a more positive way to look at it is just that no more women are coming into positions of power in our decision-makers, whatever. And I think that in and of itself, surely signifies something. I mean, there's a ground swell and you have that many voices, then, you know, of course, you are, you know, have a level of power that you know have you haven't had prior – Theresa

All participants agreed that it was important to have women in positions of power to voice the movement. There is cautious optimism in the development of more women leaders in executive positions, but still questions about how permanent this development is. Here in this quote by Theresa, she wonders if women and younger women are in positions of power because men are doing something better or if men decided it was okay for women to be in positions of power. So is it really a win?

> One of the things that I’ve seen a lot of, especially after the murders … the murders of Asian women in Atlanta is a lot of young Asian cis men calling for action, calling for something to be done. And I think what it really erases … [organizations that have been doing long-term grassroots work] Doing this work, building deep relationships and community, but it really raises a lot of the leadership and the work that's already been done …and primarily by and led by Asian women to organize … what is the long-term solution that we need to get to? … the only way to get there is through long deep organizing. - Laurel

Laurel also agrees with cautious optimism and comments on the murder of several Asian women in Atlanta, Georgia. She saw a lot of young Asian cisgender men who were calling for

action for Asian women, however, she felt that this was just a brief moment of publicity. She believed that the factor in real change and progress is “long deep organizing”. When asked about this term, Laurel continued to discuss there has been a long history of Asian women in activism and real progress worked through their work.

There is a sense that the Asian American political participation movement is heading towards a net gain with more participants in general, however, there is a mixed bag in terms of where the opportunities are and when power can be gained through resources or mainstream media’s attention. Overall, participants felt that there was an increase in interest in Asian American women and political participation because of the recent current events (such as the deaths of the women working in a salon in Atlanta, Georgia), however, they still believed there is a lot of work to be done to be heard as Asian American women leaders in the mainstream. Also, it is yet to be seen whether the social movement against AAPI hate #stopAAPIhate will be successful and widespread as Black Lives Matter, but the fact that there is recognition from mainstream media may be enough of a catalyst to begin a bigger movement.

> I think when I first came to see national like, you know, three years ago after working with the local chapter and you know a lot of my friends, my friends are like the millennials/ Gen Z age and I see how they talk about being civically engaged or politically engaged. It's not a lot of potential and opportunity. – Nancy

In this quote, Nancy (who is 25 and the youngest among the participants) discusses how her friends her age do not see a lot of opportunity or potential in the political landscape. While discussing how to be more civically or politically engaged, there didn’t seem to be a clear route to opportunities in the local organizations. However, Nancy mentioned that in national organizations, there are more opportunities. She hopes that more and more young people would get involved as

the national movement with a greater coalition of other racial groups (Latinos and Black Americans) builds and gains traction.

> For organizers I think a big part of our work is to have members see themselves as protagonists right those … people who have power who can make a difference and can make a change in their lives. But I still think that there's a lot of potential right now and that I think folks are engaged politically civically socially on a level that is. A totally different level, like, I think that, in part, you know, I think that everyone, I think a lot of people have had an awakening you know I think the multiple, multiple and compounding crises have highlighted all the ways … – Laurel

On the other hand, Laurel, who is part of a local community organization, mentions that if folks saw themselves as protagonists if they saw themselves as part of the change, there would be greater political community involvement. This was a profound observation as the interviewees themselves saw themselves as agents of change and were driven to work in these leadership positions because of their perspectives on what the movement needs. Laurel believed that this is the case for folks of all ages and that if they felt that they had a part in the movement and they could make actual change, there is high potential for engagement. She sees a greater Asian American movement mobilizing but thinks it's a long, long process.

> … because of the work that I've done, not only in the advocacy work but in the work that I've done in the political system as well. And I didn't even get into any of that [exposure to Asian Americans in the mainstream media]. But there is very few Asian American sort of in mainstream, in the mainstream, that have an understanding of mainstream politics. I'm one of the only few progressive Asian candidates that understand sort of the mainstream inner workings and that's why I decided to run for office. Because we need a voice, we need somebody who understands it – Lindsay

Similarly, Lindsay points out that she wants to see a change in the political system, and she was able to identify "the work" that needs to be done. She also saw there were very few Asian Americans in the public mainstream and few who understood mainstream politics. So, she

took it upon herself to run for office and make the change she wanted to see. Like Laurel, Lindsay felt that she had to be a part of the movement/running for office in order to see the change she wanted to see. Further, she felt there were not as many Asian Americans currently in the political space who understood mainstream politics.

The interviewees observed that the landscape of the Asian American political movement was changing for the better. More young people are becoming involved in the political movement and the interviewees all felt that this shift towards younger leaders was a positive one. The younger interviewees agreed that young people's involvement is increasing but there are still obstacles in the way of greater engagement. Thus, although there is general anticipation for younger people to be involved and lead the political movement amongst Asian Americans, there are still some times yet and obstacles to the transition to be complete.

Even though much of the Asian American movement is still splintered by ethnic groups or specific issues, the interviewees felt that a move towards a more national movement was on the horizon. A national movement, seen amongst Latino Americans and Black Americans, other ethnic minority groups with immigrants and varying different experiences, could be fundamental for more political awareness and engagement amongst Asian Americans in total.

Discussion

Through thirteen semi-structured interviews, I investigated the lived experiences of Asian American women leaders of political non-profit organizations in their work and their activism. I found several key findings that spoke to the persistence of gendered stereotypes in their work and perceptions of Asian American women and how Asian Americans viewed the political movement. Interviewees had cautiously optimistic views of the landscape and future of the

Asian American movement with particular positivity towards the younger Asian American women taking charge and leading a more national movement.

Many participants faced gendered expectations in their current positions and in previous work that they have been a part of. They found ways to identify these stereotypes and expectations and use them to their advantage. Interviewees perceived gendered stereotypes/expectations both within their Asian American community and outside of the community. The intersectional stereotypes of Asian American women: to be quiet, submissive, and obedient, were abrasive to some participants as they felt they did not fit those stereotypes and experienced backlash from others due to not fitting in. Further, these gendered stereotypes ran counter to leadership traits: assertiveness and confidence. Participants voiced that they had their own grit and perseverance to overcome these obstacles of discrimination and stereotyping.

The second major finding, I found in the interviews was the complications of the Asian American political landscape. Older and younger interviewees alike looked forward to the future of the Asian American political participation movement, however, felt differently based on their age on the movement being led by young people. Older participants felt that the younger generations were well-equipped and mentored and ready to take the mantles to radicalize and transform the movement. Younger participants felt there was still a lot more to be done with opportunities for engagement and more long-term processes that need to be started in order for change to happen. Overall, participants felt that to see the change and advocacy they wanted in the movement, they needed to be a part of it. All participants felt they had the grit and determination to be leaders in their field and that these traits were necessary to be a leader in advocacy.

Future Directions

The interviews were critical to explore the lived experiences of these Asian American women leaders as the interviewees had the flexibility to discuss in further detail their career trajectory and their own identities. Given the time constraints and the difficulties of connection during the COVID-19 pandemic, not many interviews were conducted. One line of future direction could be in continuing with more interviews with more Asian American women leaders from across the nation. This study was exploratory, but with a greater number of interviewees, there could be more analysis on the comparisons between different regions of the United States. Also adding Asian American men leaders for comparison could be a good starting point for understanding possible gendered differences in leadership impact and styles.

Much more can be explored with the organizations and institutions that these Asian American women leaders work within. Okamoto (2014) focused on how factors, especially leaders, within organizations were important in political participation. More research could focus on this relationship between leaders and organizations and how with Asian American women leaders taking the helm and shaping policies, institutions may transform. A deeper investigation into the organizations themselves with archival data and interviews with other members of the organization could help understand the impact and effect of Asian American women leaders. As this is an initial explorative study, much more can be explored and investigated in understanding the work of Asian American women leaders in political participation.

Conclusion

The Asian American women leaders in this study were experts in navigating their own intersectional identities as Asian Americans and women as leaders in their work and community. Amongst the Asian American women leaders who participated in this study, almost all of them were aware of and had identified the gendered expectations and stereotypes placed upon them.

They had to navigate these stereotypes to reach success and mentor future generations of Asian American women leaders. Much more research can be extended upon this exploratory study on the trajectories of Asian American women and girls in political advocacy and non-profits.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Despite being the fastest-growing racial group in the United States (Pew Research 2014), there is still little research on Asian American/ Pacific Islanders and their political behaviors/attitudes. To cover this gap, I focus on the relationship between Asian American identity and political participation using a mixed methods approach. First, I investigated different factors that could increase both electoral and non-electoral political participation. One of the major factors I found was Asian American racial (Asian American) and ethnic (e.g., Chinese American) identity. Second, I extended upon the first study by focusing on the ways Asian American leaders, specifically women leaders, engaged within and motivated others to participate in political Asian American organizations. I focused on how identity (ethnic, racial, gender) affected the ways they became leaders, how they act as leaders, and how they strategize the future of the Asian American political participation movement.

Quantitative Study on Identity and Political Participation

It is a striking paradox that Asian Americans who are high in socio-economic status and education levels are low in political participation rates compared to other racial groups. A small group of researchers have sought to find if racial identity is a factor in bolstering Asian American political participation, but with mixed results. I investigated several different models, including racial identity, with a large data set of Asian Americans and found promising results. Socioeconomic status, religious connection, and immigration generation were all positively related to political participation. Further, pan-ethnic group consciousness was related to register to vote and ethnic group consciousness was related to non-electoral political participation. Future research investigating different types of contexts and time periods could be crucial to understanding the relationship between these individual factors and political participation.

Qualitative Study on Identity, Political Participation, and Leadership

Because of the rich nature of the Asian American identity and the variety of ways in which people can participate in non-electoral political participation, I conducted an exploratory study on Asian American women leaders in political non-profit organizations. I built off of Okamoto's (2014) work on Asian American organizing through leadership by focusing on the strategies, trials, and triumphs of Asian American women leaders in the political landscape today. I focused on Asian American women to extend Robnett's (1996) work on African American women's leadership in community organizing. I bridged these literature gaps and explored how these women came to their positions, how they strategized their leadership, and how they envisioned the future of political participation amongst Asian Americans.

Through these interviews, I argue that there is a relationship between Asian American identity and political participation and that there are multiple factors that compose the Asian American identity. The Asian American identity for these Asian American women leaders is made up of the knowledge of family immigration patterns, experiencing and utilizing discrimination and stereotyping, and understanding of the direction and tactics of the Asian American movement. Identity is more than just acknowledging a label but rather the histories and knowledge of the experiences of Asian Americans. This understanding of the greater connection to the broader group possibly sets these Asian American women leaders apart from other Asian American women and other non-profit leaders. The intersectional identity of being an Asian American woman is both a resource and a burden as women leaders are able to tap into the rich resources of their family and community for opportunities and connection, but at the same time are faced with racial discrimination and gendered expectations from both within and outside their community.

I found that through knowledge of their own family immigration history and the immigration patterns of their ethnic group, Asian American women felt a deeper connection to their own identities and felt inspired to work in advocacy fields. Additionally, Asian American women leaders all experienced racial discrimination and gendered stereotyping from within and outside of their community but used these experiences as motivation and points of connection to other Asian American women in their work. Finally, Asian American women leaders found that they were hopeful for the political movement in the hands of youth, but there are still pitfalls in which level of organization (national vs local) opportunities may arise for the youth.

This study extends and starts an exploration of the trajectories of Asian American activists and begins to look at the impact of different institutions on these trajectories. Previous researchers have argued that institutions are racialized (Omi and Winant 2015; Bonilla-Silva 1996) and gendered (Acker 1990) and in this study, I found that different institutions (education, work, community) have lasting impact on Asian American women. Years after hearing discriminatory words from a teacher or xenophobic words from a police officer, these participants recalled them with blinding accuracy. What sets them possibly apart from other non-political Asian American activists, is that they utilized these experiences to motivate them towards political leadership. Even as these Asian American women leaders continued to endure obstacles of gendered expectations, they push onwards with their work, showcasing grit and for some, a desire to pave the way for future generations of Asian American women leaders in politics.

In these interviews, I found that identity for these Asian American women leaders was a combination of their family's immigration history, their own ideas of their intersectional identities (being a woman, Asian, ethnic group), and their own experiences through

barriers/obstacles such as discrimination and gender stereotyping and opportunities through mentorship and their own grit. Identity is a combination of their experiences through all these factors and this galvanized their motivation to work as leaders in political organizations.

Intersectional Identities

Crenshaw (1989) wrote about intersectional identity as the unique experience of multiple identities at work against Black women in the workplace. She argued that the identities of women and being Black are a double disadvantage and they stack up against Black women, particularly when trying to figure out how to file harassment cases. I argue that Asian American women also have a unique experience due to their multiple identities particularly situated in the workplace. The very specific gender and racial stereotypes of Asian American women (meek, docile, submissive) still haunts them in the current socio-political climate. These leaders are incredibly aware of these stereotypes, because of their own experiences and through their education, and maneuver through their upward trajectories and work strategies with the stereotypes in mind. Sometimes they utilize these stereotypes to their advantage, but often times they must counteract these stereotypes to continue completing their leadership work.

Limitations

As noted before, there are limitations in capturing the whole of the Asian American population given the vast diversity of the different ethnic groups, immigrant generations, and geographic areas. The survey participants were recruited via telephone and may not be representative of the whole population. Additionally, certain ethnic groups such as Chinese, are largely more represented than other ethnic groups such as Hmong. The presentation of questions and the questions asked in English may be a barrier to accurately capturing Asian Americans who do not speak English or are recently immigrated to the United States. The sample itself may

have selection bias and skew the data towards more liberal Asian Americans from urban areas. These were caveats that were considered while still recruiting the biggest Asian American sample in a survey, more than ever before.

The interview participants were recruited through snowball sampling, through the network that they knew, so there are possibilities of sample bias as the participants may have very similar backgrounds and attitudes about leadership because they knew each other. Surprisingly, there was a wide range of ethnicities, socio-economic status, and ages amongst participants which alleviated some concerns about the homogeneity of the sample.

Representativeness of Sample in Interviews

As noted previously, most of the participants were East Asian, second-generation immigrants or more, and well-educated with at least a Bachelor's degree. Furthermore, the interviewees and their organizations were all located in urban areas. Because of this skew in the data, the representativeness of the sample shows a certain picture (limited to these types of leaders in these organizations). Future research on expanding to more rural or suburban areas could be helpful to better understand the types of leadership in different political organizations.

Context of These Studies

Historical

I conducted these interviews from September 2020 to August 2021, during a critical time period of Asian American identity salience, and attention towards Asian American women, in particular, was heightened. The COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in vitriol-fueled, violent attacks against Asian Americans, regardless of ethnicity, both frightened and emboldened the interviewees of this study. The attacks themselves and heightened anti-Asian sentiment forced the interviewees to consider their racial identity, the perceptions of others, and thoughts of their

safety. The Atlanta shooting made the interviewees consider their combination of multiple identities as Asian and a woman in how they were going to lead their organizations and how their identities could help bring in more publicity and funding for their causes. Interviewees still wondered in the interviews if these events were a flash in a pan moment that they had to ride out or if they could try to make these events catalysts for longer, sustained movement building for all Asian Americans' betterment. This is particularly relevant for other movements, such as the #MeToo movement, that are related to considering changing feminism for women in the workplace. Although the #MeToo movement was not a topic of conversation in these interviews and the movement itself has a restricted view of womanhood, excluding women of color (Onwuachi-Willig 2018-2019), the publicity and longevity of the #MeToo movement could be instrumental to the Asian American women's movement.

Organizational

As noted previously, organizational context may be important in understanding the leadership styles and trajectories of Asian American women leaders. There was a range of organizational sizes amongst the organizations the interviewees led. There were some smaller organizations with about 8-11 employees and larger organizations with about 25 and more employees. Although there were no explicit differences between the professional trajectories and identification amongst the Asian American women leaders based on their organization, the context of the type of organization they lead may affect how they lead. The size of the organization certainly meant different centralization of power and control amongst the interviewees. The interaction between the size of the organization and Asian American women leading could certainly be a fruitful area for future research with a greater investigation of the type of organization in size, impact, and topic areas of focus (e.g., politics, social services.)

Location

The locations of the Asian American community served are important to consider what the priorities and scope the Asian American women leaders are focused on. The organizations served communities nationally, within San Francisco, Southern California (Los Angeles and Orange County), and New York City. Half of the organizations served the national Asian American community while the other half of the organizations were more local, serving the local community in their geographic area. Each area has a distinct socio-political history of Asian American activism and policies. Overall, there is still much concern about immigration reform and education, however, more and more there is interest in Asian American political participation. Specific, interests in how Asian Americans vote/politically engage and how Asian Americans can be better represented in political offices across the nation. This seems to be a concern in long-standing Asian American political communities in San Francisco and New York City. Further delving into the interaction between the history of these organizations and the increase in the political power of Asian Americans in specific locations may yield fruitful lines of research.

Interviewees and Generation

In this study, there was a spectrum of ages in the interviewees, ranging from mid-20s to early 70s. There was an interesting difference between the older interviewees (those older than 44 years old) and younger interviewees (those younger than 40). Older interviewees felt there was excitement and anticipation for future generations to pick up the traditions and hopefully disseminate more of the movement to the general public (via social media platforms). Younger interviewees felt there was tension between younger and older Asian American women leaders because of the difference in leadership styles. There were two founders amongst the interviewees

and they were very excited for the next generation of Asian American women to lead, however, younger interviewees or 2nd or 3rd generation leaders, felt they were constrained by the founder of an organization or by the older generation in how to lead.

Future Directions

As there is still much more to be known about Asian Americans and their political behavior, there are many future directions for this research. Continuation of the qualitative study on Asian American women could be very fruitful with more women from other geographic locations and different types of non-profit organizations. Additionally, an ethnographic study with archival information from different organizations in addition to the interviews could provide great context for how Asian American women leaders are changing and affecting organizations from within.

More surveys are being conducted right now on Asian American political participation as Asian Americans continue to rise in prominence in the political sphere as politicians and as important constituents. Still, more investigation can be conducted on how Asian Americans are involved in non-electoral political participation. Protests over #AAPIHate, increasing participation in community organizing, canvassing, and increasing political knowledge amongst Asian American youth call for more research on the complex and diverse ways Asian Americans are engaging in politics outside of the electoral system.

Connection to the broader world

Discrimination and hate groups against Asian Americans have long been persistent throughout United States history. Up until recently, the Chinese were the sole ethnic group to be barred from entering the United States based on their ethnicity (Chinese Exclusion Act). Japanese Americans were the only Americans to be incarcerated in internment camps throughout

the United States based on their ethnicity. After Japanese residents were declared not eligible to become naturalized citizens, Bhagat Singh Thind brought a case to the US Supreme Court but lost as the Court declared Asian Indians ineligible for citizenship as they were not considered "whites." [12]Throughout recent history, there have been policies and cases put on record to bar Asians and Asian Americans from integrating and advancing in the United States. Thus, the act of political movements and participation amongst Asian Americans is a profound one.

Also, catalyst events such as the increase in hate towards Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders during the COVID-19 pandemic have forced Asian Americans to become more vocal and public in the American political landscape. Asian Americans have become increasingly more public-facing in mainstream media, politics, and education. Particularly with an increasing number of Asian American elected officials, younger Asian Americans are aspiring to become political advocates.

Concluding Thoughts

Given the increasing number of calls to understand the Asian American experience, this research on Asian American identity and political participation is more important than ever. I am sometimes asked, usually by non-activists, why we care about Asian Americans in the political landscape, given they are a smaller percentage of the general US population than other racial groups. This seems like a fundamentally flawed question. If we are to seek equity amongst all Americans, regardless of their race, then how many of their racial group should not apply in demanding for their voices to be heard and understood? Now more than ever, understanding the complexity and diversity of Asian American life is important as the US becomes ever more multiracial and heterogeneous. What it means to be American and engaged in political action is

[12] https://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5076/

integral to every American resident, and in particular to Asian Americans, who for so long, have been barred from political participation.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Hello my name is Jessica and I'm a doctoral Sociology student at UCI. My research focuses on Asian American women leadership in non-profit organizations. It is very explorative, so I will be asking broad questions about your experiences, your work, and your background to understand generalized themes. If it's ok with you, I will be taking notes and recording our meeting. Is that alright?

Demographic Information

1. Could you please give me your title and position at your organization?
2. How long have you been in your current title and position?
3. What is your education level?
4. What is your race/ethnicity?
5. How old are you?
6. Are you from the area? Where did you live before?
7. Could you describe a bit about your family background? (gain information about generation, marital status, immigration story)
8. Tell me a bit about your family's immigration story. Did your parents or grandparents or you immigrate here? How old were you when you immigrated? What about your siblings?

Description of how they reached this position (development arc)

9. How do you see yourself in your current work? As a leader? As an activist? As a service provider?
10. What made you start this work?
11. Can you describe your trajectory in getting to your current position? What was your very first job? What other jobs have you had?
12. Did you have a first political experience? If so, what was it?
13. Were there people who helped you along the way getting to your current position?

Description of individual leadership style and tactics

14. Let's talk about the current leadership in Asian community organizations now. Are there more men or women in leadership positions? Why do you think there are so many women leaders in Asian American community organizations?
15. How does being a woman affect your leadership style or work? How does being a woman affect other people's perception of you as a leader?
16. How does being an Asian American affect your leadership or work? How does your racial/ethnic identity affect your connection to your own community? How does it affect your connection to people outside of your community?
17. What was the previous leader of this organization like?
18. What would you describe as success in your work?
19. What kind of strategies have you employed for success?
20. What is an action that you are most proud of as an activist? As a leader? As an Asian American? As a woman?

21. What is the most recent success for you?
22. When have you failed?

Description of organizational work

23. Describe to me what the mission of your organization is.
24. Which organizations or individual do you tend to collaborate with and why?
25. Which people or organizations do you want to connect with to support your work? What has it been difficult to build these ties?
26. What are the current issues that you are focusing on?
27. Why are these the issues that you are focusing on?
28. How does an organization decide what issues get a focus?
29. How supportive is the Asian American community to the work that your organization does? What kinds of support or criticism do you get from the community?
30. Have you ever worked with local government? What is it like to work with the government?
31. How localized are the issues of your organization? Are they specific to San Francisco, Orange County, New York City? If you were in a different area would you be working on different issues?

Asian American organizing

1. What do you think about the term "Asian American"?
2. What do you think are the most pressing issues for Asian Americans today? These don't have to necessarily to align with your organization's issues.
3. What are the disagreements or tensions within your community? What about in the organization? Why do you think these disagreements exist?
4. What are your thoughts on how we can address these issues?
5. What do you think is the best thing that has happened for the Asian American community in your lifetime?
6. If you had a ton of money, what kind of organization or foundation would you build? What would be the big win that would let you retire?