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How does perceived discrimination affect voter turnout
among registered Asian Americans?

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How does perceived discrimination affect voter turnout
among registered Asian Americans?

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Abstract

With National Asian American Survey 2016 Post-Election Survey data, this research addresses the gap in our understanding of voting behavior among native-born and naturalized Asian Americans when faced with two types of perceived discrimination: 1) chronic or everyday discrimination and 2) acute discrimination. The logistic regression results show that perceived chronic discrimination does not affect voting turnout among registered Asian Americans net of other factors. Concerning the effect of perceived acute discrimination, those who reported experiencing more than one event have a higher propensity to report voting than those who reported not experiencing acute discrimination. Native-born Asian Americans are more likely than naturalized citizens to report voting in the 2016 presidential election regardless of their experiences of chronic or acute discrimination, and when considering its interaction effect with perceived acute discrimination.

Keywords: Asian American, voting, discrimination

Introduction

This research focuses on the voting participation of Asian Americans. There is a large body of research investigating voting behavior, but only few of them include Asian Americans as a focal group. Asian Americans have become a crucial voting bloc being the fastest-growing population compared with other races and ethnicities, and they have doubled their population doubled from 2000 to 2020 (Budiman 2020). Lee and Ramakrishnan (2019) view Asian Americans as the "new face of immigration" in the United States. Vice President Kamala Harris' identity as a second-generation Asian Indian gained a lot of attention during the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Nativity status should be included as a factor while analyzing Asian Americans' voting behavior. Asian Americans are unique compared to other racial and ethnic groups because they have the highest foreign-born population across U.S. racial and ethnic groups. Among Asian American eligible voters, 90 percent are either first- or second-generation Americans (Lee and Ramakrishnan 2019), and 67 percent are foreign born (Budiman 2020).

Dubbed the name "the model minority," Asian Americans are continuously stereotyped as inherently successful, smart, and problem-free. However, Asian Americans have faced discrimination and social exclusion for a long time. They have been scapegoated for disease, illness, and economic downturns since Chinese migrants, hired as cheap labor, came to the U.S. in the 1800s to build the transcontinental railroad. Flooded entry of workers into the U.S. spurred xenophobia and early anti-Chinese sentiments with these Chinese workers labelled as carriers of "filth and disease."¹ A series of federal laws also contributes to this discrimination. For example, the Naturalization Act of 1870, a U.S. federal law, while extending the naturalization process to blacks, denied the naturalization process to Chinese Americans and other Asian groups. The

¹ Trauner, Joan B. "Chinese as Medical Scapegoats, 1870 to 1905." *California History Magazine* 1978. Retrieved May 10, 2021 ([Chinese as Medical Scapegoats, 1870-1905 - FoundSF](#)).

page Act of 1875 denied the entry of Chinese women. Seven years later, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act banned Chinese men immigrants. Geary Act of 1892 requires that all Chinese in the U.S. to carry a resident permit, and people not carrying the permit at all times will be punished by a year of hard labor or deportation. At the same time, Chinese were banned to receive bail in habeas corpus and bear witness in court. Japanese internment camps are another example that are implemented at the country level. More recently, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are reported to face some of the strongest barriers to assimilation (Yogeeswaran and Dasgupta 2010), and Asian Americans are continuously portrayed as foreigners from the political scandal “Asian Donorgate” (Chang 2004) and indicating that the Olympic medalist Michelle Kwan is not American although she was born and raised in the U.S.

The anti-Asian sentiment during the Covid-19 pandemic makes their situation even worse, especially with former President Donald Trump’s referencing the 2019 coronavirus pandemic as the “Chinese virus.” According to the released information from STOP AAPI Hate reporting center (Jeung, Horse, Popovic, and Lim 2021), there were 3,795 received anti-Asian incidents from March 19, 2020, to February 28, 2021, with verbal harassment (68%) and the deliberate avoidance of Asian Americans (21%) comprising the two largest proportions of the total reported incidents, and physical assault (11%) making up the third largest group of the total incidents. The report also shows that businesses were the primary setting where discrimination occurred (35.4%), followed by public streets and public parks (35.1). For example, the New York Times reports (2020) that a Japanese individual got beaten up in the street of New York by a group of young people. The police made no arrests and claimed this was not a hate crime, even though the victim recalled that at least one of the attackers referred to him as "Asian" and "Chinese" associating these terms with profanity. The 2021 Atlanta spa shooting led to

widespread rallies and marches in the United States for Asian Americans to resist anti-Asian racism. While some scholars (Le 1992; Masuoka and Junn 2013; Okamoto 2003, 2006) have investigated panethnicity and political participation broadly defined, and Wong, Lien and Conway (2005) find a bivariate positive relationship between having an Asian American group consciousness and their electoral participation, I have found no study that examines the relationship between experiences with discrimination and civic and political participation. This study therefore will utilize what is known about panethnicity and political participation to inform what is salient to understand how experiencing discrimination affects Asian Americans' voting behavior. There is a need to address the gap in this field. This research therefore examines the effect of perceived chronic and acute discrimination, as well as nativity status on Asian Americans' likelihood of voting in the 2016 presidential election while considering other possibly related demographic and socioeconomic factors.

What affects the voting behavior of Asian Americans

Previous research has found that Asian Americans have a lower propensity to vote than other major racial-ethnic groups in the United States (Bass and Casper 2001a). However, other studies (Logan Darrah, and Ho. 2012; Xu 2005) report that this disparity in voting between whites and Asian Americans no longer exists if Asian Americans overcome structural barriers such as naturalization and registration, indicating that difference in voter turnout between whites and Asian Americans will disappear once Asian Americans become citizens and get registered to vote. For example, Xu (2005) finds that the difference in voter turnout between whites and Asian Americans becomes insignificant among eligible voters who are registered to vote. Asian Americans vote at comparable rates as whites when considering eligible (i.e., registered) voters. Logan et al. (2012) underscores the importance of generation in the United States for shaping

voting behavior among Asian Americans, finding that the lower propensity of voting between Asian Americans and whites disappears when comparing third-generation Asian Americans to third-generation whites.

Some scholars (e.g., with CPS data, see Bass and Casper 2001b; with NAAS data, see Yoon 2015) find that Asian Americans who are more established and have higher socioeconomic status in society, such as older individuals, those with higher levels of educational attainment and higher incomes, are more likely to vote, which is in line with previous research studying voting behavior for the U.S. population in general. However, other studies (Junn 1999; Lien 2004; Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee, Junn 2011; Xu 2005) suggest that socioeconomic status may not affect the likelihood of voting among Asian Americans overall, as it does for the U.S. population in general. For example, using a registered citizen sample from the Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey data, Masuoka, Ramanathan, and Junn (2019) find that higher socioeconomic status does not predict electoral participation when considering a sample of registered voters. These mixed results suggest that researchers should continue to include socioeconomic factors in models when analyzing the electoral participation of Asian Americans.

Several scholars (Le 1992; Masuoka and Junn 2013; Okamoto 2003, 2006) suggest that the concept of panethnic Asian American is important to understand political participation because (1) the dominant culture in U.S. society treats Asian Americans by a hierarchical ordering as an inferior group compared to whites, and (2) a sense of linked fate with others exist of the same racial group. In line with this, Wong, Lien and Conway (2005) found a bivariate positive relationship between having an Asian American group consciousness and their electoral participation, with the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS). The recent surge in discrimination and hate crimes against Asians, especially since the pandemic, has raised

awareness of linked fate for Asians and Asian Americans. The term Asian American was coined in the late 1960s when college activists adopted the panethnic identity for Asian Americans to fight against discrimination treatment and push for equality and reform as racial minorities. This research increases our understanding of the relationships across identifying with an Asian American panethnic identity, having experienced discrimination, and advocating for oneself in the political sphere through participation in voting. Moreover, this research has implications for the Stop Asian Hate movement in U.S. society today, which advocates for more Asians and Asian Americans to stand together and push for equality.

Discrimination

Krieger (1999) defines discrimination as inferior treatment by individuals, groups, or political institutions. Discriminating against is an act of treating an individual as distrustful, inferior, or undeserving of equality. Discrimination is multifaceted and can be carried on by different actors, including individuals such as neighbors, nonstate institutions such as restaurants, and the state and its institutions such as the criminal justice system. An increased body of research shows that political institutions' discrimination leads to increased political participation (Barreto and Woods, 2005; Cho, Gimpel, and Wu, 2006; Dawson, 1995; Ramakrishnan, 2005; Ramirez, 2007; Stokes, 2003; Valenzuela and Michelson, 2016). Groups faced with treatment that they perceive as unequal participate in politics to change policies that are associated with their status in society (Oskooii, 2016; Stokes, 2003), especially those who are victims of crime (Bateson, 2012; Blattman, 2009).

Scholars have found that discrimination by political institutions leads to increased political participation among racial and ethnic minorities (Parker 2009; Ramakrishnan 2005;

Ramirez 2007). When those who experience discrimination become aware of their status as the target of unequal treatment, they experience an increased sense of group consciousness (Barreto and Woods 2005; Cho, Gimpel, and Wu 2006; Ramakrishnan 2005; Ramirez 2007). With increased group consciousness, group members tend to support each other based upon ideological agreement and engage in political participation to confirm their loyalties to the group (Tate, 1994; Whitely, 1995). As an example, Barreto and Woods (2005) report that anti-immigrant legislation spurred increased voter registration and voter turnout among Latino immigrants in Los Angeles County.

In contrast, scholars suggest that people who have experienced underserved treatment due to their race, ethnicity, or religious affiliation, may feel inferior and powerless (Finch, Kolody, and Vega 2000; Maciejewski et al. 2000; Whitbeck, McMorris, Hoyt, Stubben, and LaFromboise 2002), and they tend to question their efficacy in making a change by political involvement (McCluskey, Deshpande, Shah, and McLeod 2004; Michelson 2000). Krieger (1999) posits that those who feel socially rejected by continuously encountering negative interpersonal interactions may have a lower likelihood of political participation because they internalize negative evaluations of themselves and thus have a lowered sense of self-worth, confidence, or belonging. One of the severe consequences of negative experiences is the feeling that one lacks the ability to change social and political lives (Jost 1995). Sometimes, marginalized groups may not realize the discrimination due to contexts they live in (Vorauer and Kumhyr 2001) and may be further stigmatized if they resist discrimination (Maass, Cadinu, Guarnieri, and Grasselli 2003). These studies point to possibility that having experiences with discrimination may decrease the sense of self and one's ability to affect one's environment through civic or political participation.

Adding to this division in the literature on how discrimination might affect civic and political participation, other scholars (Williams 1997; Krieger, Smith, Naishadham, Hartman, and Barbeau 2005; Oskooii 2016) contend that many prior studies have not distinguished between various types of discrimination and only presented one side of a multidimensional phenomenon by utilizing only a single-item global measure of discrimination. In response to this issue, a growing number of recent studies have provided more comprehensive evaluation of discrimination by capturing discrimination in a variety of life domains (Landrine and Klonoff 1996; Thompson 1996; Ren et al 1999). For example, Ren et al (1999) utilize a scale developed by Krieger (1999) that assessed discrimination under seven conditions: at work, job hire, at school, getting medical care, housing, with the police or in the courts, in a public setting or on the street. Essed (1991) suggests that discrimination includes not only major stressful experiences but ongoing and chronic irritations in day-to-day situations, such as attending public events, eating at a restaurant, or walking on the street. Oskooii (2016) posits that all types of discrimination can be collapsed into two categories: societal discrimination and political discrimination. Societal discrimination, also called interpersonal discrimination, typically refers to discriminatory interactions carried out by individuals in private or public spaces, such as being treated as unintelligent, dangerous, dishonest, or inferior. Another more violent example of societal discrimination can be harassment or physical threat. Political discrimination, also called systematic or institutional discrimination, refers to discriminatory practices, policies, campaign messages, or laws implemented by state or private institutions and/or their affiliated actors. Examples of political discrimination in the U.S. include Jim Crow Laws authorized in the late 19th and early 20 centuries in the Southern United States, and the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Williams and his colleagues (Williams and Williams-Morris 2000; Williams, Neighbors, Jackson 2003; Williams, Gonzalez, Williams, Mohammed, Moomal, and Stein 2008) constructed their measure of exposure to discrimination: chronic discrimination and acute discrimination. Chronic discrimination was created from an expanded version of the everyday discrimination scale established by Williams, Yu, and Jackson (1997). The original scale included nine items that evaluate the frequency of experiencing chronic discrimination. By adding a 10th item, Williams' measure (Williams et al. 2008) of perceived chronic discrimination contains the following items: receive less courtesy; receive less respect; treated with poor service; people act as if you are not smart; people act as if they are afraid of you; people act as if you are dishonest; people act as if they are better than you; called names; threatened; and followed around in stores. On the other hand, acute discrimination is measured as an ordinal categorical variable to measure nine major unfair treatment areas, such as workforce, education, housing, and interactions with the police that individuals had experienced over their lifetime (Kessler, Mickelson, Williams 1999; Williams et al. 1997). Williams' measure (2008, p. 445) of perceived acute discrimination contains the following items: fired from job; not hired for job; not given promotion; hassled by police; discouraged by teacher; prevented from renting/ buying home; neighbors made life difficult; denied bank loan; received inferior service. Williams' measure of perceived chronic or acute discrimination does not indicate race-related discrimination, but a following-up question provides reasons why individuals think that they are discriminated against, including racial discrimination.

Scholars also suggest that different types of discrimination may affect the same outcome differently (Williams et al. 2008; Oskooii 2016). For example, Oskooii (2016) found that among American Muslims, although the perceived political discrimination, such as being singled out by

airport security, links to a higher propensity of political participation, perceived social rejection (i.e., being physically threatened or attacked, being called an offensive name, or being treated suspiciously) links to a lower likelihood of political participation.

Nativity status

A large body of literature showed that naturalized citizens have a lower likelihood to vote compared with native citizens (Bass and Casper 2001; Cho 1999; DeSipio 1996; File 2008; File and Crissey 2010). Some scholars explained this different voting pattern by nativity status by suggesting that social connectedness and investment have a positive impact on people's political engagement such as voting (Brady, Cogan, and Fiorina 2000; Cho 2006; Putman 2000), therefore immigrants tend to be less likely to participate in political behavior due to their less social connectedness and investment (Alba and Nee 1997; Cain, Kiewit and Uhlaner 1991; DeSipio 1996). Other reasons were offered to explain the nativity gap in voting behavior, which include socioeconomic status, cultural influence, and institutional barriers like speaking a different language (Fraga and Segura 2006; Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004; Segura, Nicholson, and Pantoja 2006; Xu 2005). On the other hand, other scholars provided the mixed results of how nativity status relates to voter turnout (Logan et al. 2012; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001).

However, some scholars (Bedolla 2014; Pantoja, Ramirez and Segura 2001) contended that voter turnout for naturalized citizens who are racially minorities in the U.S. does not remain the same, rather, it has changed over the past decades. Early studies found that naturalized Asian Americans and Latinos exhibited a lower propensity of voting compared with their native-born counterparts (DeSipio 1996; Tam Cho 1999). This voting pattern might have changed under the influence of the passage of Proposition 187 in California in 1994 for Latino Americans (Bedolla

2014). Pantoja et al. (2001) found that Latino Americans who naturalized in California during the climate of anti-immigrant legislation had a much higher probability to have voted during the 1996 election than other Latino Americans in California, whereas naturalized Latinos in Texas or Florida did not show the same voting pattern. Suggesting that this pattern extends to the present, Barreto (2005) found that naturalized Latino Americans in California were more likely to vote than native-born Latino Americans in the 2002 election.

Imperative of this Research

Although many articles have documented that by spurring the feeling of threat, nativist legislative proposals mobilized political participation among immigrants, especially Hispanics and Latinos (Pantoja, Menjívar, and Magaña 2008; Zepeda-Millán 2017), little research has been done to examine the impact of nativity status on voting behavior among Asian Americans, especially when faced with discrimination. Prior studies (Lien 2004; Xiao and Bass 2021) found that nativity status is not significantly related to voter turnout among registered Asian Americans. But no research has been done to examine Asian Americans' voting behavior by including the experience of discrimination and nativity status in the analysis at the same time. To fill this gap, this research therefore tests how nativity status moderates the effect of perceived discrimination, both chronic discrimination and acute discrimination, on voting behavior among registered Asian Americans.

Despite the fact that inegalitarian ideologies and practices are crucial for shaping political domains in the U.S. (Smith 1993), our understanding of how discrimination affects sociopolitical behavior is still limited. Discrimination is rarely considered a major factor in studying civic and political participation among minorities (Oskooii 2016). This research therefore includes discrimination as a focal explanatory factor for the first time in understanding the political

behavior of Asian Americans as a panethnic group. Moreover, this research utilizes Williams' (2008) measure of perceived discrimination, this research includes two types of perceived discrimination, 1) chronic or everyday discrimination, and 2) acute discrimination, to examine their effects on Asian Americans voting behavior. Accordingly, the first research question is: How does perceived discrimination affect voter turnout among registered Asian Americans?

In addition, Asian Americans have doubled their population from 2000 to 2020 (Budiman 2020) and now become fastest-growing population and have the highest foreign-born population compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Specifically, among Asian American eligible (i.e., registered) voters, 67 percent are foreign born (Budiman 2020), and 90 percent are either first- or second-generation Americans (Lee and Ramakrishnan 2019). Even though naturalized citizens compose of the majority of the Asian American population and this group is still growing rapidly, no research has been done to examine the effect of discriminatory experiences on voting behavior for both native-born and naturalized Asian Americans. This research therefore includes nativity status as another focal explanatory variable to examine how it affects Asian Americans' voting behavior and how it moderates the effect of perceived discrimination to affect Asian Americans' voting behavior. Accordingly, the second research question is: How does nativity status affects voter turnout and how does it moderate the effect of perceived discrimination to influence voter turnout among registered Asian Americans?

Methodology

Data

This research uses the 2016 National Asian American Survey (NAAS) Post-Election Survey to investigate the voting behavior across racial ethnic groups in the U.S. This survey collects nationally representative data of Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, whites, African

Americans, Latinos, and other ethnic groups in the U.S. with a telephone interview. The NAAS asks respondents questions that include their demographic information and their behaviors and attitudes toward the social issues. The NAAS has several advantages which include conducting interviews in several different languages, recruiting respondents from ethnic enclaves and places Asian Americans spread over, and collecting nationally representative characteristics of Asian Americans, and using a sample weight weighting the data (Ramakrishnan et al. 2009). The survey also serves as a quality resource because of its intent to reach out to a robust number of Asian American ethnic sub-groups in the U.S. It surveyed Bangladeshi and Pakistani American voters for the first time in the U.S. Previous research examining Asian Americans with a general national sample typically produces high sampling error (Kennedy and Ruiz 2020). The NAAS explicitly focuses on having an adequate number of Asian Americans and its ethnic subgroups. This is a strength of this data resource that helps us better understand the living situation of Asian Americans.

Conducting telephone interviews from November 10, 2016, to March 2, 2017, the NAAS collected information from 4,393 individuals identified as having a family background from Asia and identified as Asian. The survey includes 10 Asian ethnic groups: 475 of Chinese origin, 320 of Bangladeshi origin, 401 of Cambodian origin, 505 of Filipino origin, 504 of Asian Indian origin, 351 of Hmong origin, 499 of Korean origin, 517 of Japanese origin, 320 of Pakistani origin, and 501 of Vietnamese origin. Since this research examines voter turnout among registered Asian Americans, Asian Americans who are U.S. citizens and, at the same time, who registered to vote will be included in the analysis. Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for the variables in this analysis. This study includes 3,274 Asian Americans (observation cases) in the sample of analysis.

The data are weighted to the U.S. population using the NAAS sample weight variable, which utilizes a raking method and the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey data to generate nationally representative estimates by nativity, race, age, education, and state of residence (Ramakrishnan et al. 2017; Wong et al. 2011). Weighted percentages are presented for categorical variable in Table 1, whereas weighted mean and standard deviation are presented for the continuous variable. The population size for the sample of analysis is 2,514,597.

Methods

Dependent variable

Voting among registered Asian Americans

Survey participants, who reported registering to vote, were asked whether they voted in the 2016 presidential election. This research treats those who reported voting in the election as the group of interest and those who reported not voting as the reference group. Table 1 shows that 2,629 cases and 79.7 weighted percent of registered Asian Americans reported voting in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The NAAS estimate for voter turnout among the registered Asian Americans is higher than the registration rate but lower than the voter turnout rate from the CPS Voting Supplement, according to which 65.1 percent of Asian American citizens reported registering to vote and 87 percent of registered Asian American citizens reported voting in the 2016 presidential election.

Independent Variables

Chronic or Everyday Discrimination

Participants completed nine items that assess whether they had experienced a variety of forms of mistreatment in their day-to-day encounters by choosing yes, no, don't know, or

refused. These items are developed based on Williams' questions (Williams et al. 1997; Williams et al. 2008; Krieger, Smith, Naishadham, Hartman, and Barbeau 2005) that measure perceived everyday discrimination among African Americans. Williams items were framed concerning perceived discrimination and made no reference to race (Williams, Yu, Jackson, and Anderson 1997). Krieger et al. (2005) suggested that Williams' measures had much greater reliability than single-item measures and advocated the use of multi-item questions for the future research.

NAAS 2016 Post-Election Survey includes five items from Williams' (2008) questions that measure everyday discrimination (i.e., You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores; People act as if they are afraid of you; People act as if they think you are dishonest; You are called names or insulted; You are threatened or harassed). Besides keeping the previous five items of Williams' questions, the survey also adds four more items to measure mistreatment in Asian Americans' day-to-day encounters (i.e., People act as if you don't speak English; People mispronounce your name; People assume you are good at math and science; People assume you are not a creative thinker). In terms of the item of English speaking, the NAAS included Fisher, Wallace, and Fenton's (2000) item, "People assumed your English was poor" as a measure of discrimination.

Given the fact that Williams' measure has been treated as both a unidimensional scale (Williams et al. 1997; Kessler et al. 1999) and a two-factor scale (Guyll, Matthews, and Bromberger 2001), also that the 2016 NAAS adds four more items to the measure of everyday discrimination, the author conducted an exploratory factor analysis to see if these nine items can be scored as a unidimensional scale as the conventional method suggests. Principal-components factor analyses with varimax rotation of these nine items shows that there are two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. Table 2 presents the factor analysis results. After combining six items

with high factor loadings on Factor 1, the newly created scale shows a good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha = 0.74.² But combining two items with high factor loadings on Factor 2 does not indicate a good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha=0.38). The last item (i.e., People assume you are not a creative thinker) does not show a high loading on Factor 1 and has a relatively high level of uniqueness (0.6675). Moreover, because these last three items do not indicate discrimination like other items, I did not include them in the analysis.

Therefore, the newly created scale for chronic/everyday discrimination includes the following items: You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores; People act as if you don't speak English; People act as if they are afraid of you; People act as if they think you are dishonest; You are called names or insulted; and You are threatened or harassed. The scale ranges from 0 to 1, the order of which indicates the increased degree of reported chronic/everyday discrimination. In the analytic sample, 1,909 individuals (58.4 percent using a weighted sample) reported that they had experienced the least amount of chronic/everyday discrimination, corresponding to 0 on the scale. On the other hand, 47 individuals (1.1 percent) reported that they had experienced the worst-case scenario of chronic/everyday discrimination in their day-to-day encounters, corresponding to 1 on the scale. Table 1 shows that mean and standard deviation for the scale of everyday is 0.15 and 0.22, respectively.

Acute or Major Experiences with Discrimination

² This research uses the stata command alpha and its option generate (*newvar*) to create a scale and get its Chronbach's alpha. According to *Stata Multivariate Statistics Reference Manual Release 14*, "alpha computes the interitem correlations or covariances for all pairs of variables in *varlist* and Chronbach's α statistic for the scale formed from them." The command generate (*newvar*) specifies that the scale constructed from *varlist* be saved in *newvar*... Unlike most Stata commands, generate () does not use casewise deletion. A score is created for every observation for which there is a response to at least one item (one variable in *varlist* is not missing). The summative score is divided by the number of items over which the sum is calculated." Retrieved May 10, 2021 (<https://www.stata.com/manuals14/mv.pdf>).

Participants completed six items that assess whether they had experienced major discrimination by choosing yes, no, don't know, or refused. These items are framed based on Williams' questions (Williams et al. 1997; Williams et al. 2008; Krieger et al. 2005) that measure perceived acute or major experiences of discrimination among African Americans, which include: unfairly denied a promotion; unfairly fired from a job; not been hired for a job due to unfair reasons; unfairly stopped, searched, questioned, physically threatened or abused by the police; unfairly prevented from moving into a neighborhood by the landlord or a realtor; neighbors made life difficult. All these items can be found in Williams et al (2008)'s measure of perceived acute discrimination. While Williams' measure was developed as it was relevant for African Americans, this measure has been used across different racial-ethnic groups to operationalize and measure discrimination.

Different from using Cronbach's alpha to measure internal reliability of items for chronic/everyday discrimination (Williams et al. 1997; Williams et al. 2008), Williams et al (2003) contended that it is not appropriate to measure internal reliability to assess acute/major discrimination. Rather, they hold that "daily hassles," also referred to as chronic or episodic irritations, are ongoing problems that are role related. However, the items that measure acute discriminatory experiences are not intended as alternatives of a single underlying construct. Because the experience of one acute discriminatory experience does not indicate encountering another, a high internal reliability may indicate the problem of item redundancy.³In line with Williams' measure of perceived major discrimination coding items that assess perceived acute discrimination into an ordinal categorical variable (Williams et al. 2008), this research creates an

³ Williams, Gonzalez, Williams, Mohammed, Moomal, and Stein (2008) in their article create an ordinal categorical variable out of items that assess perceived acute discrimination into three categories: experienced none of these events, experienced one of these event, experienced more than one of these events.

ordinal categorical variable out of these six items into the following three categories: experienced none of these discriminatory events; experienced one of them; experienced two or more discriminatory events. As Table 1 shows that in the analysis, 2,148 (65.7 percent) Asian Americans reported experiencing none of these events, 576 (17.3 percent) Asian Americans reported that they experienced one of these events, 550 (17.0 percent) Asian Americans reported experiencing two or more discriminatory events.

Nativity status

To examine whether nativity status affects Asian Americans' voting behavior, this research measures it as a dummy variable with foreign born as the group of interest (coded 1) and native born as the reference group (coded 0). Foreign born includes people who were not born as U.S. citizens but were naturalized to have become U.S. citizens. The group of native born is composed of those born in the U.S. and those born in other countries to a U.S. citizen parent or parents. From Table 1, the nativity status variable shows that there are 77.0 percent native-born Asian Americans and 30.0 percent naturalized Asian Americans in both samples of the analysis.

Control variables

This research includes other factors as control variables traditionally known to affect voting behavior in the analysis. Control variables consist of gender, marital status, age, education, household income, and employment status. Gender is measured as a dummy variable, with females treated as the group of interest and males as the reference. Marital status is measured with dummy variables ever married (i.e., separated, divorced, or widowed) and single, with those married or cohabiting as the reference category. In line with previous studies (Logan

et al. 2012), age is measured as a categorical variable, with those 18 to 34 years old as the reference group and three dummy variables: 35 to 49, 50 to 64, 65 to 100 years old.⁴

Education is measured with a high school diploma or less as the reference category, with dummy variables indicating some college, bachelor's degree, and advanced degree. Household income is measured by a dummy variable with annual household income greater than \$50,000 treated as the group of interest and annual household income less than \$50,000 as the reference category. Employment status is measured as a dummy variable, with being employed treated as the group of interest and being unemployed as the reference category. Religious affiliation is measured as dummy variables, Christian and non-Christian (Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, etc.), with those not religious as the reference group. The frequency of worship is measured as monthly attendance with less than monthly attendance as the reference category.

Analytical design

This research utilizes binary logistic regression models to analyze the data because the dependent variable, voting behavior, is a binary category variable with reported voting coded as 1 and reported not voting coded as 0. Our model is presented as:

$$\ln\left(\frac{\Pr(Y_i = 1)}{1 - \Pr(Y_i = 1)}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_i X_i$$

Where Pr stands for the probability that respondents reported voting in the 2016 presidential election ($Y=1$). β_0 is the intercept. X_i is a vector of independent variables with the

⁴ Prior studies treated the variable differently when predicting voter turnout: as a categorical variable; as a continuous variable; as a curvilinear relation. The curvilinear relation between age and voter turnout is not significant across models.

corresponding β_i , a vector of regression coefficients. This model predicts log odds of respondents who reported voting in the 2016 presidential election, which will be converted into odds ratio in the following section while interpreting the results.

Results

Table 3 shows the propensity to vote in 2016 presidential election among registered Asian Americans. Model 1 tests for the effect of chronic/everyday discrimination and acute/major discrimination without controlling for other factors. Model 2 adds nativity status. Model 3 adds demographic and socioeconomic variables including gender, marital status, age, education, income, and employment status, as well as religion and frequency of worship. Model 4 adds an interaction effect of nativity status and perceived chronic discrimination based on Model 3. Model 5 adds an interaction effect of nativity status and perceived acute discrimination based on Model 3.

Results show that chronic discrimination is insignificant from Model 1 through Model 5, indicating that chronic discrimination does not affect voting behavior among registered Asian Americans. However, in terms of acute discrimination, individuals who reported that they had experienced more than one acute discriminatory events are more likely to reported voting in the 2016 presidential election than those reported experiencing none of the events that assess acute discrimination. Specifically in Model 3 whiling control other factors, the odds of voting for registered Asian Americans who reported experiencing more than one acute discriminatory events is 1.79 as great as that of those reporting no exposure to acute discrimination.

Another independent variable, nativity status, becomes significant in Model 3 when controlling other factors, indicating that registered native-born Asian Americans are more likely

to report voting in the 2016 presidential election than their foreign-born counterparts regardless of whether they experience chronic or acute discrimination. Specifically, in Model 3, the odds of voter turnout for foreign born is 0.65 times as great as that of native-born Asian Americans.

This research also tests for the interaction effect of nativity status and perceived chronic discrimination on Asian Americans' voter turnout, by adding an interaction term between nativity status and perceived chronic discrimination, as shown in Model 4. The results indicate that for native-born Asian Americans who are registered, the degree of exposure to chronic discrimination does not affect people's likelihood to vote. The model also shows that the interaction term between perceived chronic discrimination and nativity status is insignificant, but it does not mean that we cannot draw conclusions about statistical interactions.⁵ Figure 1 provides us with a more straightforward story, from which we can tell that native-born Asian Americans tend to have a higher probability of voting with increased level of perceived chronic discrimination compared to that of naturalized Asian Americans, but the 95% confidence interval of these two groups overlap a lot. Adjusted Wald test shows that there is no significant difference in voting between native born and the naturalized when faced with chronic discrimination.

Moreover, this research tests for the interaction effect of nativity status and perceived acute discrimination on Asian Americans' voting turnout, as shown in Model 5. Results show that for native-born Asian Americans, those who reported that they experienced more than one acute discriminatory event tend to be more likely to report voted compared with those who reported no exposure to acute discrimination. Specially in Model 5, among registered native-born Asian Americans, the odds of voting for those who reported experiencing more than one event

⁵ Mustillo, Lizardo, and McVeigh (2018) in their article *Editors' Comment: A Few Guidelines for Quantitative Submissions* published in *American Sociological Review* suggest that "The case is closed: don't use the coefficient of the interaction term to draw conclusions about statistical interaction in categorical models such as logit, probit, Poisson, and so on."

that access acute discrimination is 2.04 times as great as that of those who reported no exposure to acute discrimination. The model also shows that for Asian Americans with no reported experience of acute discrimination, naturalized ones are less likely than native born to vote in the 2016 presidential election. To be specific, in Model 5, among registered Asian Americans reporting no exposure to acute discrimination, the odds of voting for naturalized individuals is 0.61 times as great as that of native born.

Model 5 shows that the interaction term between perceived acute discrimination and nativity status is not significant, but we can still look to Figure 2 to illustrate this statistical story.⁶ In line with results from results from Table 3, Adjusted Wald test shows that registered native-born Asian Americans are more likely than their naturalized counterparts to report voting in the 2016 presidential election for those with no reported experience of acute discrimination, and for those who reported that they experience more than one event that access acute discrimination. It also shows that for registered native-born Asian Americans, those reporting no exposure to acute discrimination are less likely to report voting than those reporting experienced more than one acute discriminatory event. Moreover, for registered naturalized Asian Americans, those with no perceived acute discrimination tend to have a lower probability to report voting than those reporting experiencing one acute discriminatory event and those reporting experiencing more than one acute discriminatory event, respectively (add significant at which level in the later article). Impactful or substantial experiences with discrimination spur one to be more likely to vote.

⁶ Mustillo, Lizardo, and McVeigh (2018) in their article *Editors' Comment: A Few Guidelines for Quantitative Submissions* published in *American Sociological Review* suggest that "The case is closed: don't use the coefficient of the interaction term to draw conclusions about statistical interaction in categorical models such as logit, probit, Poisson, and so on."

As for the control variables, Model 5 of Table 3 shows that among registered Asian Americans, compared to those under the age of 35, individuals who are at the age of 65 or above tend to have higher propensity to report voting in the 2016 presidential election. Moreover, those with some college, bachelor's degree, and advanced degree are more likely than those with high school or below education to report voting. Individuals with annual household income greater than \$50,000 are more likely than those whose annual household income less than \$50,000 to report voting. Non-Christians are more likely than those who are not religious to report voting in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Discussion

Agreeing with Oskooii's (2016) findings that various types of discrimination affect people's sociopolitical participation differently, our results show that perceived chronic/everyday discrimination and acute/major experiences of discrimination shape Asian Americans' voting behavior in distinct ways. Specifically, chronic/everyday discrimination does not affect the propensity to voting in the 2016 U.S. presidential election among registered Asian Americans, which is not in line with previous scholarship (Barreto and Woods, 2005; Cho, Gimpel, and Wu, 2006; Finch, Kolody, and Vega 2000; Maciejewski et al. 2000; McCluskey, Deshpande, Shah, and McLeod 2004; Valenzuela and Michelson, 2016; Whitbeck, McMorris, Hoyt, Stubben, and LaFromboise 2002) that suggests either positive or negative relationship between negative experiences and the political participation likelihood. This may be due to the fact that previous research examining the effect of discrimination on political behavior did not treat the measure of perceived discrimination as a scale created from multiple items. This may be also caused by the inconsistent measure of perceived discrimination in prior research. Finally, the Williams' (2008)

measure was not specifically created for Asian Americans as a pan-ethnic group, so it may be limited to capture everyday forms of discrimination that might be specific to Asian Americans.

This research shows that acute discrimination significantly affects the odds of voting across models. Specifically, among registered Asian Americans, those who reported exposure to more than one acute discriminatory events are more likely to reported voting in the 2016 U.S. presidential election than those reported exposure to none of the events that assess acute discrimination. This is in line with the scholarship that suggest a positive association between experiences of political institutions' discrimination and people's political participation (Barreto and Woods, 2005; Cho, Gimpel, and Wu, 2006; Dawson, 1995; Ramakrishnan, 2005; Ramirez, 2007; Stokes, 2003; Valenzuela and Michelson, 2016), especially among racial and ethnic minorities (Parker, 2009; Ramakrishnan, 2005; Ramirez, 2007). This research also finds that among registered native-born Asian Americans, those reporting experiencing no acute discrimination are less likely to report voting than those reporting experiencing more than one such type of event. What's more, among registered naturalized Asian Americans, those reporting exposure to none of acute discriminatory events are less likely than those reporting experiencing one acute event and those reporting exposure to more than one events to report voting in the 2016 presidential election. Although the results are in line with the scholarship that suggests a positive association between institutional discrimination and individuals' tendency of political participation (Barreto and Woods, 2005; Cho, Gimpel, and Wu, 2006; Valenzuela and Michelson, 2016), the measure of perceived institutional discrimination is inconsistent across the studies. Future research should consider developing a more consistent measure of perceived discrimination that can be applied to different racial and ethnic groups.

This research finds that among registered Asian Americans, the native born are more likely than naturalized citizens to report voting regardless of their experiences with chronic and acute discrimination. When considering its interaction effect with perceived acute discrimination, the results show that among registered Asian Americans, the native born tend to have a higher propensity of voting than their naturalized counterparts for those who reported exposure to no acute discrimination, and for those who reported experiencing more than one acute discriminatory event, respectively. The higher propensity of voter turnout among native born than naturalized Asian Americans when controlling for other factors or considering its interaction effect with perceived acute discrimination may be related to the fact that naturalized Asian Americans are more marginalized and marginalized groups might not recognize the discrimination because of contexts they live in (Vorauer and Kumhyr 2001) and might face more severe stigma if they speak up to discrimination (Maass, Cadinu, Guarnieri, and Grasselli 2003). The effect of nativity status should be continuously included in future studies because Asian Americans are the fastest-growing population in the U.S. in recent years, and their political participation may change with more second and third generations.

Concerning demographic and socioeconomic relationships, Model 5 shows that age, education, income, and religious affiliation are all associated with the reported voting among registered Asian Americans. Those who are 65 years and older are more likely to report voting in the 2016 presidential election compared with those 18 to 34 years old. Furthermore, the odds of voting are higher for those with some college, bachelor's degree, and advanced degree than those with a high school or less education level. The findings for how higher ages and higher educational levels associate with voting agrees with previous research of Bass and Casper (2001a) with CPS Voting Supplement data, as well as Xiao and Bass (2021) and Yoon (2015)

with NAAS data. Although employment status does not affect voter turnout, results show that Asian Americans with annual household income greater than \$50,000 are more likely to report voting than those whose annual household income less than \$50,000. This research also finds that those non-Christian (e.g., Buddhist, Muslim) have a higher propensity to report voting than those who are not religious.

The findings contribute to the field by addressing the gap in voting behavior among Asian Americans while considering discrimination as a focal influencing factor. This research suggests that there is a need to distinguish different types of discrimination and create a multi-dimensional scale rather than using a unidimensional global measure to assess a variety forms of discrimination. What is more, this research confirms the scholarship contending that increased exposure to negative discriminatory experiences positively affects people's political behavior (Parker 2009; Pantoja, Ramirez and Segura 2001; Pantoja, Menjívar, and Magaña 2008; Ramakrishnan 2005; Ramirez 2007; Zepeda-Millán 2017), and it extends these findings to an Asian American sample while teasing out the nuance between chronic/everyday discrimination and acute or major experiences with discrimination. Although the measure of discrimination in this research does not refer to racial discrimination directly, the results that acute or major experiences with discrimination are positively associated with reported voting still fill the gap in studying Asian Americans. Adding to this, future studies should develop more valid and consistent measures to assess perceived chronic/everyday discrimination.

Conclusion

This research addresses the gap in our understanding of Asian Americans' voting behavior when faced with discrimination. It examines the effects of perceived chronic/everyday

and acute/major discrimination, as well as nativity status on the propensity to vote in the 2016 U.S. presidential election among registered Asian Americans. Results show that perceived chronic or everyday discrimination does not affect voter turnout among registered Asian Americans. But for perceived acute or major experiences of discrimination, the research finds that among registered native-born Asian Americans, individuals who reported no exposure to acute discriminatory events are less likely to report voting than those who reported that they experienced more than one acute discriminatory event. This research also finds that among registered naturalized Asian Americans, individuals who reported no exposure to acute or major discriminatory events exhibit a lower propensity to report voting compared with individuals who reported exposure to more than one acute or major discriminatory and compared with individuals who reported experiencing more than one acute discriminatory event.

Regarding the influence of nativity status, naturalized Asian Americans are less likely to report voting compared with their native-born counterparts regardless of their experiences of chronic or acute discrimination. Similarly, among registered Asian Americans who reported exposure to no acute discrimination and who reported experiencing more than one acute discriminatory event, naturalized citizens are less likely to report voting than native born. Future studies should continue to include nativity status when examining voting behavior among Asian Americans because of their fastest-growing population in recent years.

As for demographic and socioeconomic factors, this research finds that those who are over the age of 65 compared to individuals less than 34 years old, people with some college, bachelor's degree, and advanced degree than those with less than higher school, people with more than \$50,000 annual household income than those with \$50,000 or less annual household

income, non-Christians than those not religious, are more likely to report voting in the 2016 presidential election.

This study contributes to the field by examining an understudied topic, the impact of discrimination on voter turnout, with an understudied group, a nationally representative sample of Asian Americans. Concerning the debate over the impact of discrimination on individuals' political participation, the results confirm the scholarship that perceived acute discrimination is positively associated with increased voter turnout. The results suggest that discrimination should be further investigated to test its effect on voting behavior and other types of sociopolitical participation. Also, future studies should continue examining and developing better measures of perceived discrimination that can be applied to different racial and ethnic groups. Even though Asian Americans have lower likelihood of voter turnout rate than other major races, widespread movements around the U.S. in 2021 after Atlanta shooting indicate that this might be a turning point for Asian Americans to be more active to engaged in sociopolitical activities. With its rapid population growth rate, Asian Americans are becoming a crucial voting bloc and their voting behavior needs to be further studied in the future.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables in this Analysis

	Number of observations	Weighted Percent/Mean	SD
Vote			
No	645	20.3	
Yes	2,629	79.7	
Chronic/Everyday Discrimination			
Acute/Major discrimination	3,274	0.15	0.22
No	2,148	65.7	
One	576	17.3	
More than one	550	17.0	
Nativity Status			
Native-born	936	30.0	
Naturalized citizens	2,338	77.0	
Gender			
Male	1,765	47.0	
Female	1,509	53.0	
Marital Status			
Married/ cohabitation	2,165	61.6	
Ever married	399	11.0	
Single	710	27.4	
Age in Years			
18 to 34	792	32.9	
35 to 49	548	12.4	
50 to 64	837	21.2	
65 to 100	1,097	33.5	
Education			
High school	1,058	27.3	
Some college	421	13.1	
Bachelor's degree	1,131	37.3	
Advanced degree	664	22.4	
Household Income			
Up to \$50,000	1,467	41.1	
More than \$50,000	1,807	58.9	
Employment status			
Unemployed	1,493	43.8	
Employed	1,781	56.2	
Religion			
Not religious (R)	673	27.3	
Christian	1,219	40.9	
Non-Christian	1,382	31.7	
Frequency of worship			
Less than monthly attendance (R)	1,725	55.0	
Monthly attendance	1,549	45.0	

Note: Observation cases for the sample of analysis is 3,274.

Weighted percentages are presented for discrete variables; weighted mean and standard deviation are presented for the continuous variable. The weighted data population size for the sample of analysis is 2,514,597.

Source: 2016 Post-Election National Asian American Survey (NAAS).

Table 2. Factor Loadings of Principal-Components Factor Analysis of the Perceived Chronic/Everyday Discrimination Items

Discrimination Item	Factor Loadings	
	Factor 1	Factor 2
You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores.	0.6127	0.1589
People act as if you don't speak English.	0.6130	0.1481
People act as if they are afraid of you.	0.6479	-0.0118
People act as if they think you are dishonest.	0.7140	-0.0675
You are called names or insulted.	0.6951	0.1515
You are threatened or harassed.	0.6541	0.0663
People mispronounce your name.	0.1494	0.7502
People assume you are good at math and science.	0.0391	0.7862
People assume you are not a creative thinker.	0.5468	0.1832

Note: Results reflect principal-components factor analysis with varimax rotation, extracting factors with eigenvalues > 1.0. Eigenvalues = 2.915, 1.294.

Table 3. Asian Americans' Propensity to Vote

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE
Chronic discrimination	0.80	0.36	0.80	0.36	0.98	0.38	1.62	0.63	0.97	0.38
Acute discrimination										
No (R)										
One	1.20	0.19	1.19	0.19	1.33	0.21	1.34	0.21	1.00	0.40
More than one	1.98**	0.23	1.97**	0.23	1.79*	0.24	1.78*	0.24	2.04+	0.43
Nativity										
Native-born (R)										
Naturalized			0.89	0.18	0.65*	0.21	0.71	0.24	0.61*	0.26
Chronic discrimination * naturalized							0.52	0.75		
One acute discriminatory event * naturalized									1.48	0.47
More than one acute discriminatory events * naturalized									0.83	0.49
Gender										
Male (R)										
Female					1.26	0.15	1.25	0.15	1.26	0.15
Marital status										
Married/cohabitation (R)										
Ever married					1.05	0.22	1.04	0.22	1.05	0.22
Single					0.69	0.28	0.68	0.28	0.69	0.28
Age										
18 to 34 (R)										

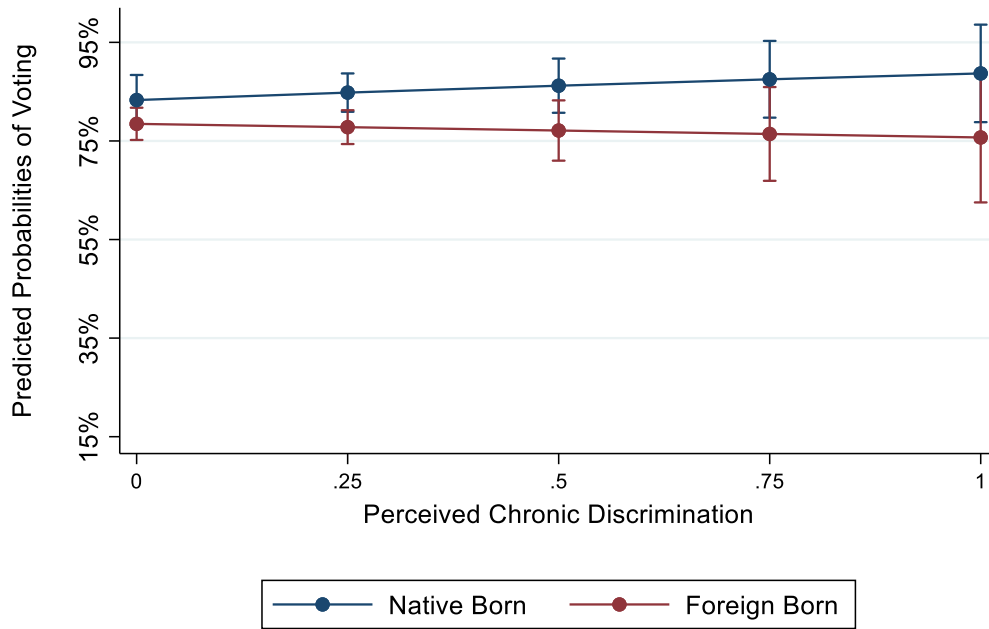
35 to 49	1.42	0.28	1.42	0.28	1.43	0.28
50 to 64	1.54	0.29	1.55	0.29	1.55	0.29
65 to 100	2.07*	0.35	2.06*	0.34	2.07*	0.35
Education						
High school (R)						
Some college	1.93**	0.23	1.93**	0.23	1.96**	0.23
Bachelor's degree	2.75***	0.20	2.76***	0.20	2.77***	0.20
Advanced degree	2.64***	0.26	2.64***	0.26	2.67***	0.26
Income						
Up to \$50,000 (R)						
More than \$50,000	1.65**	0.18	1.66**	0.18	1.65**	0.18
Employment status						
Unemployed (R)						
Employed	1.01	0.21	1.00	0.21	1.00	0.21
Religion						
Not religious (R)						
Christian	1.32	0.22	1.32	0.22	1.32	0.22
Non-Christian	1.64*	0.21	1.64*	0.21	1.64*	0.21
Frequency of worship						
Less than monthly attendance (R)						
Monthly attendance	1.01	0.17	1.01	0.17	1.01	0.17
N	3,274	3,274	3,274	3,274	3,274	3,274

Note: ***Significant at 0.001 level. **Significant at 0.01 level. *Significant at 0.05 level. +Significant at 0.10 level. R = reference category.

The population size is 2,514,597.

Source: 2016 National Asian American Survey (NAAS), Post-Election Survey.

Figure 1: The Effect of Chronic Discrimination on Voting Among Registered Asian Americans



Source: 2016 Post-Election National Asian American Survey (NAAS).

Figure 2. The Effect of Acute Discrimination on Voting Among Registered Asian Americans

