

**WHY REPRESENTATION MATTERS: A LOOK INTO ASIAN
AMERICAN VOTING BEHAVIOR**

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

Why Representation Matters: A Look into Asian American Voting Behavior

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Literature Review

This thesis builds on previous works concerning voter behavior in minority groups. The findings of Jan E. Leighley and Jonathon Nagler are the main cited sources used to explain the factors that influence voting behavior. Several scholarly articles detailing Asian American political identity and behavior, such as works by Janelle Wong, Jun Xu, and Wendy K. Tam, provide a foundation for current Asian American political behavior. Works by scholars such as Kenneth J. Meier, Eric Gonzalez Juenke, Robert D. Wrinkle, and JL Polinard provide a theoretical framework for the relationships between voter turnout and racial descriptive representation. The remainder of cited sources are used to further provide insight on explanatory variables of voter turnout, compare the differences in voting behavior between citizens of different races, and present situations in which descriptive representation has increased voter turnout for a specific minority group.

Thesis Statement

I predict that if an Asian American is running for office, then the turnout of Asian Americans will be higher. The effect of descriptive representation on turnout will be the

strongest with the presence of an Asian candidate of the same party as the respondent and not as strong with Asian candidates of a different party than the respondent.

Theoretical Framework

This essay follows how descriptive representation positively affects voter turnout in other minority groups. One is more inclined to vote when a candidate looks like him or her because of the perceived similarities it implies.

Project Description

The intent of this thesis is to gain a better understanding on the voting behavior of Asian Americans by testing an often-overlooked variable: descriptive representation. The methodology consists of running a logit that controls for previously proven explanatory variables of voting behavior and introducing a new variable for descriptive representation. Data will be derived from previously recorded surveys and datasets, such as the CCES and the Social Explorer.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents, Kim and Lorlaine, whose endless sacrifices have molded me into the person I am today.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Sarah Fulton, for her patience and assistance throughout this whole process. None of this would have been possible without her, and no amount of thanks could accurately express how grateful I am to have worked with her. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Brittany Perry and my thesis cohort for believing in me and encouraging me. Lastly, thank you to all of my family, especially my parents and sister, and Yooni for their support and love.

DEFINITIONS

Asian	“Asian” and “Asian American” are used interchangeably and refer to both naturalized and native-born citizens who identify as Asian
CCES	Abbreviation for the Cooperative Congressional Election Study

INTRODUCTION

Who Votes and Why?

Previous research has shown that voting behavior is most commonly affected by several individual factors such as income, employment, occupation, religion, education, age, gender, and marital status (Leighly, Nagler 1992). Those with higher incomes, more education, and employed in professional occupations are more likely to vote (Leighly, Nagler 1992; Bass, Casper 2001). Similarly, the older someone is, the higher their chances of voting.

Ideally, voter turnout should reflect the demographics of the constituency. Asian Americans are an ever-growing minority group in the United States, yet their voter turnout is notoriously low. In the 2010 Census, Asians made up 5.6% of the total United States population. This was approximately 45.6% more than the percentage of Asians in the Census taken 10 years prior.¹ The Pew Research center has even marked Asians as the fastest growing major racial group in the United States. Despite this, though, Asians make up around 3% of voters.² At first, it might seem like this is a problem with naturalization and citizenship. After all, immigrants make up a large portion of Asian Americans, and voting is a process that requires naturalization, registration, and simply showing up to vote (Hajnal, Lee 2011). However, research has shown that Asian Americans become naturalized much earlier than any other immigrant group. They are also more likely to become naturalized than any other group. Despite increases in citizenship, Asian American voter registration and turnout is still low (Lien, Collet, Wong 2001).

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Table PL1; and 2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Table P1.

² Thom File, "The Diversifying Electorate—Voting Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin in 2012 (and Other Recent Elections)" (Bureau of the Census, 2013), available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p20-568.pdf>.

The typical socioeconomic factors used to explain voting behavior listed above, such as income, education, occupation, gender, etc., do not explain Asian American voter turnout. In fact, the results are often the exact opposite when it comes to Asian Americans. Despite high success in terms of occupation, income, and education, Asian Americans do not vote as much as research on other racial groups predicts that they should. Some studies have suggested that these factors do not explain Asian American voter turnout at all (Xu 2005). In the situations where the commonly listed socioeconomic factors do positively affect voter turnout, the effect is not great. Additionally, with immigrants, age is not a key explanatory variable, especially if one immigrated later in his or her life.

Another factor that influences voting behavior is party identification. Constituents who identify with a political party are more likely to vote due to the ability to vote along their particular party with limited knowledge of the actual candidates themselves (Green, Palmquist, Schickler 2002). This is another characteristic Asian Americans do not have. Within Asian Americans are several different viewpoints and ideologies that differ across various ethnicities and ages. For example, older, Vietnamese American citizens who fled from communism have completely different views than younger citizens who do not have anything close to that experience to relate to. This difference is heightened when comparing the attitudes of Vietnamese Americans to other ethnic groups with a completely different history (Raychaudhuri 2018). In addition, there are a variety of different languages spoken within Asians, making it a bit more difficult to have a cohesive, sense of belonging amongst all Asians (Minnis 2001). As a result, Asian Americans, as a whole, lack homogenous properties, such as a common party identification and political ideology, which makes analyzing their political behavior difficult (Diaz 2012). In fact, research has shown that they are less likely to identify with the Democratic

or Republican Party, which are the primary two parties in the United States (Hajnal, Lee 2011). Even when considering the number of Asian Americans who identify as Independents, the number of non-identifiers is still almost twice as much. This results in an underwhelming amount of political participation, incorporation, and representation (Hajnal, Lee 2011).

To aid minority representation, “majority-minority districts” can be designed to increase minority influence within a certain district. This, however, is not true for Asian Americans. Redistricting for Asian Americans tends to be highly inconsistent, with situations where Asian communities are together in districts and other situations where they are split apart. For example, California has one of the highest Asian American populations, and District 49, the first Asian American majority district in the state, is known to contain a high percentage of Asian Americans (Minnis 2011). Meanwhile, states in the Northeast also contain high populations of Asian Americans, but many Congressional districts with the potential of increasing Asian political influence due to a high proportion of Asian Americans are instead drawn to heavily represent their affluent white populations. As a result, the Asian American voice is often diluted and fragmented (Magpantay 2000). Combined with the already low voter turnout within Asian Americans, it is clear that Asian American voter turnout is not where it should be in proportion to their population size.

Previous research has noted, however, that political integration and mobilization has the possibility to increase Asian American turnout rates (Diaz 2012). Asian Americans are more likely to vote in areas with an ethnic organization and greater diversity within the Asian American community. These pan-ethnic organizations are said to play an instrumental role in the mobilization of Asian Americans. Because of their understanding of Asian American structures, they are more successful in campaign efforts during elections (Diaz 2012). Political socialization

is integral to increasing voter turnout, but this varies within generations of immigrants. First generation immigrants tend to socialize with other immigrants, while transitional (those who immigrated under the age of 21) and second-generation immigrants tend to get most of their political socialization from their (usually liberal) peers in school and college (Raychaudhuri 2018). Additionally, group-based resources, are said to increase political participation of Asian Americans at the local level (Wong, Lien, Conway 2005). However, it is also important to note that mobilization does not occur at an influential level with Asian Americans. Many political organizations have chosen to spend their money and time elsewhere due to the fact that Asian Americans are not a reliable group of voters, so even though mobilization has the possibility of increasing turnout, it does not occur at influential rates (Diaz 2012).

CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Significance of Descriptive Representation and Theoretical Framework

This thesis examines whether the presence of an Asian congressional candidate increases Asian American political participation, specifically focusing on voter turnout.

Democracy depends on the participation of citizens. To truly be “[a] government of the people, by the people, for the people,” citizens need to use their voices, participate, and be engaged in shaping policy in our nation. Therefore, it is important to understand what promotes and/or discourages citizens’ participation. Not only does this allow for a more accurate reflection of our government, but it also allows us to help those who are disenfranchised by ensuring their voices are heard.

To help explain voting patterns, this thesis focuses on descriptive representation. The term “descriptive representation” was first defined as “[the] sense of representation in which one person represents another by being sufficiently like him” (Griffiths, Wollheim 1960). This “sufficient likeness” is most commonly attributed as race and gender, but other characteristics, such as being a member of the LGBT community, can also serve as components for descriptive representation. Descriptive representation can go beyond visible characteristics; it can also be relevant to those who share similar experiences. Regardless of the characteristics that create the means for descriptive representation, though, the logic behind this concept is that a candidate who is a part of a larger group of constituents is more likely to share the same perspectives and attitudes as the group, thus making him or her more appealing as a candidate for those in that group (Mansbridge 1999).

Current literature suggests that descriptive representation helps to create political trust within communities, especially in minorities who, historically, have had lower levels of political participation (Mansbridge 1999). A study conducted by Claudine Gay on the attitudes towards descriptive representation in black and white communities reveals that descriptive representation not only plays a role in increasing trust within the community, but also in establishing the member-constituent relationship (Gay 2002). This is especially true within the black community. Thus, understanding how descriptive representation affects voter behavior also leads to understanding potential outcomes of legislators who descriptively represent a demographic within the constituency (Gay 2002).

Literature on how descriptive representation affects citizen participation mainly focuses on Black and Latinx populations. In these studies, descriptive representation directly affects the voting behavior of the respective minority groups. For example, a study conducted by John D. Griffin and Michael Keene shows that liberal African Americans are more likely to participate in elections when a candidate is African American as well. It is important to note, though, that in these situations, Republican African Americans are demobilized (Griffin, Keane 2006). Additionally, because not all African Americans are mobilized by descriptive representation, having this kind of representation is most effective in local elections. The high impact on local elections might also be attributed to the lack of African American candidates in national elections. When studying Latinx populations, support for descriptive representation and higher voter turnout is apparent as well. Descriptive representation is said to help alleviate any feelings of political alienation within the Latinx community, thus spurring participation (Pantoja, Segura 2003). This effect, however, is seen most greatly in those who are already politically informed.

Another group where descriptive representation increases voter turnout is in women. Historically, women have constantly been a marginalized group in the United States that is underrepresented in government. Research shows that candidates who are women become means of empowerment for women, thus increasing the group's political participation. In addition, many women feel that they are more likely to share the same concerns as other women, which makes them more favorable than men as representatives (Rosenthal 1995). Descriptive representation can also create more positive attitudes within women towards the government as a whole. When there are women representatives, women are more likely to trust the government, thus trusting the democratic society in which they live (Atkeson, Carillo 2011).

A few scholars have looked at descriptive representation in smaller contexts, but there is no research on the effects of descriptive representation on Asian American voter turnout on the federal level. In a study conducted by Deborah J. Schildkraut, the relationship between descriptive representation and Asian Americans/Latinx American populations was analyzed on the basis of how the respective minority groups feel about having representatives that share the same ethnicity, language, or experiences. Schildkraut asks a sample of Latinos and Asian Americans a series of questions and measures their feelings towards descriptive representation using the variables national vs. ethnic identity, perceptions of experiences with discrimination, linked fate and group commodity, and acculturation. In Latinx and Asian American populations, those whose national origin is important to how they see or identify themselves, have a shared interest with others of their national origin group, feel they have a linked fate with their national origin group, chose to take the survey in their national language, and responded as being an immigrant are more likely to find having a candidate of their national origin or who speaks the same language important to them. Her findings show that Asian Americans have positive

attitudes towards descriptive representation, so I want to see how that is actually reflected in voter turnout (Schildkraut 2013).

Another study evaluates case studies in Cupertino, Gardena, and Oakland, all of which are communities where Asian American populations are growing rapidly and compares the political incorporation of Asian Americans in each of the cities (Lai; Geron 2006). Their findings show that descriptive representation increases political incorporation in small to medium-sized suburban/urban cities because the smaller population allows for less competition within candidates and an easier reach to the Asian American community to foster support. If Asian Americans can overcome barriers they face to political incorporation, the presence of Asian American candidates is bound to be supported by the Asian American communities of these cities, thus increasing their turnout.

CHAPTER II

DATA AND METHODS

Data Sources

My data is divided into three main components: individual characteristics of the constituents, candidate characteristics, and district characteristics. Constituent characteristics are obtained from the 2018 CCES, or Cooperative Congressional Election Study,³ which is a survey taken from a sample of 60,000+ constituents in the United States during the 2018 midterm election. I also obtained the names of the congressional candidates from the 2018 election from the CCES to create a separate dataset for the candidate characteristics. This dataset includes the ethnicities and incumbency of each candidate, which is taken from individual websites of the candidates and the US House of Representatives website. A third dataset was created using data on election and candidate characteristics from Gary Jacobson and data on district characteristics from the Social Explorer.⁴ In total, there are 60,000 respondents, 42,286 of them being voters. Of these respondents, 1,799 are Asian and 58,201 are not. It is important to note that this creates an approximate 3% difference between the proportion of Asians in the sample and the percent of Asians that make up the United States population. If Asians comprised closer to 6% of the sample, the models might produce different effects and more accurate results.

Variables

³ Brian Schaffner; Stephen Ansolabehere; Sam Luks, 2019, "CCES Common Content, 2018", <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZSBZ7K>, Harvard Dataverse, V6, UNF:6:hFVU8vQ/SLTMUXPgmUw3JQ== [fileUNF]

⁴ Data Table Name (2018, ACS 1-Year Estimates). In SocialExplorer.com. Retrieved February 10 from https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/ACS2013_3yr/R12532408

My dependent variable measures whether or not the respondent voted in the 2018 election, which was taken from the CCES. It is measured as follows: 0=did not vote, 1=did vote. I have four main independent variables: whether or not there was Asian candidate in the election (0=N, 1=Y), whether or not the voter is Asian (0=N, 1=Y), whether or not the Democrat candidate is Asian (0=N, 1=Y), and whether or not the respondent identifies as Democrat and is Asian (0=N, 1=Y). These were taken from the CCES, candidate websites, and the House of Representatives website. To reflect the interaction between the voter and the candidate, I generated two variables based off of my main control variables. The first variable is the value of the race of the candidate multiplied by the race of the respondent, and the second variable is the value of the whether or not the Democrat candidate is Asian multiplied by whether or not the respondent is both Democrat and Asian. I control for factors outside of race influencing whether or not a respondent will vote by adding the following control variables from CCES: respondent's age, education, income, employment status, gender, ideology, and partisanship. In addition, I control for both political and social characteristics of the district. Political characteristics are taken from Jacobson's data and include incumbency status within the election, the relative expenditures of the candidates, and the Democrat's share of the presidential vote. The social characteristics, which include the total population, percent Asian, percent with a bachelor's degree, and the median household income, are all taken from the Social Explorer. Appendix A includes the coding of these variables.

Methodology

Because of the dichotomous nature of my dependent variable, I use a logit model to test my hypothesis. I also use robust standard errors since I am utilizing variables both at the individual and the district level. Additionally, I cluster by district to account for the fact that

individuals in this study are not randomly sampled by district. Lastly, I use respondent weights to make the sample more reflective of the actual population.

In my first test, I will generate predicted probabilities of turnout for Asian/non-Asian voters and Asian/non-Asian candidates disregarding their party identification. I will test four permutations: 1. Asian voter and Asian candidate, 2. Non-Asian voter and Asian candidate, 3. Asian voter and non-Asian candidate, and 4. non-Asian voter and non-Asian candidate. When generating these predicted probabilities, I expect $1 > 3$. Meaning, the probability of turnout for Asian voters will be higher when there is an Asian candidate than when there is a non-Asian candidate.

Because I expect partisanship of both the candidate and the voter to mediate the effects of Asian candidates on turnout of Asian voters, I will run a second model that tests the predicted probabilities of turnout for Asian Democrat/Republican voters and Asian/non-Asian Democratic/Republican candidates. The permutations are as follows: 5. Democrat Asian voter and Democratic Asian candidate, 6. Democratic Asian voter and Democrat non-Asian candidate, 7. Republican Asian voter and Republican Asian candidate, 8. Republican Asian voter and Republican non-Asian candidate, 9. Democrat Asian voter and Republican Asian candidate, 10. Democrat Asian voter and Republican non-Asian, 11. Republican Asian voter and Democratic Asian candidate, and 12. Republican Asian voter and Democratic non-Asian candidate. These permutations capture scenarios of Asian and non-Asian Democrat or Republican voters with the presence of candidates of both the same and different party/race.

I anticipate that the predicted probabilities of turnout will show that Asian Democrats will be more likely to turnout when there is a Democrat Asian candidate than a non-Asian

candidate (5>6). Similarly, Republican Asians' turnout will be greater with the presence of a Republican Asian candidate than a Republican non-Asian candidate (7>8).

When looking at voters and candidates of different parties, a Democrat Asian will be more likely to turnout to vote when there is a Republican Asian candidate than when there is a Republican non-Asian candidate (9 > 10). I also predict Republican Asian voters will be more likely to turnout when there is a Democrat Asian candidate than when there is a Democrat non-Asian candidate (11>12). This can be attributed to the fact that an Asian candidate will attract Asian voters more than a non-Asian candidate would, even if he or she is a member of a different party. In essence, Asian respondents will be more likely to turnout when there is an Asian candidate present than when there is a non-Asian candidate, and this effect will be heightened if the Asian candidate is of the same party.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

My initial model tests the likelihood of an Asian to vote when there is an Asian running for office. The results are shown in Table 1 and indicate that Asians are less likely to turnout to vote than non-Asians (-0.179). To compare the effects of my statistically significant control variables, I generated their predicted probabilities. Of the various control variables in my model, turnout seems to be most affected by age (.063); as the respondent's age increases by 10 years, turnout increases by 14.3%. The second highest influence on turnout is education (.933). When comparing turnout for respondents who are college educated versus those who are not, the likelihood of turnout for him or her increases by approximately 8.2%. Though not as great of a difference, this effect is also seen in employment, (.186), which shows a 3.4% increase in turnout when one is employed full-time. Ideology (.126) also affects turnout by a smaller amount. As the respondent becomes more liberal, turnout increases by about 1.3%. Income is statistically significant, but it does not show to have a meaningful effect on turnout. As the respondent's yearly family income increases by \$10,000 increase in turnout is less than 1%. Aside from the constant, the remaining variables were not shown to be statistically significant in this model.

When accounting for the interaction between Asian candidates and Asian respondents, the results are statistically significant and show that the interaction and the likelihood of turnout have a positive relationship (0.831). However, we must consider the actual effect of this variable. A "0" interaction means that there either a non-Asian candidate or voter is president, so for a "1" interaction to take place, there must be both an Asian candidate and Asian respondent. Therefore,

examining the coefficient is not the best measurement for analyzing the relationship the effects of having an Asian candidate on Asian turnout.

To more accurately examine the relationship between race and turnout, I generated the predicted probabilities of an Asian to vote when there is an Asian candidate. Depicted in Figure 1, the results suggest that an Asian voter is more likely to turnout to vote when there is an Asian candidate than when there is a non-Asian candidate. More specifically, when there is an Asian candidate versus a non-Asian candidate (1 vs. 3), the probability of turnout increases by approximately 6.54%. This difference is large considering the fact that I controlled for a number of variables that may have influenced the respondent's propensity to turnout to vote. However, this statistic does not show statistical significance. A surprising result is that probability of turnout for non-Asians is higher when there is an Asian candidate than when there is a non-Asian candidate (2 vs 4). The difference in probability of turnout (~0.86%) is not high, though, and it does not show statistical significance.

Table 1. Effects of race on voter turnout, model 1

	Model 1 Parameters
Asian Candidate	0.103 (0.12)
Asian Respondent	-0.179 (0.235)
Asian Candidate x Asian Respondent	0.831 (0.746)
Education	0.933*** (0.063)
Income	0.063*** (0.01)
Age	0.063*** (0.002)
Employment	0.186** (0.063)
Gender	0.044 (0.062)
Ideology	0.126*** (0.036)
Party Identification	-0.074 (0.102)
Seat Status	-0.13 (0.067)
Relative Expenditure	0.043 (0.026)
Democrat Presidential Vote	-0.004 (0.004)
Total Population	0.00 (0.00)

Table 1 continued. Effects of race on voter turnout, model 1

Percent Asian	-0.015 (0.01)
Percent with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	0.015 (0.006)
Median Household Income	-0.001 (0.054)
Constant	-2.363*** (0.426)
Number of Cases	18,800
R-Squared	18.11%

Note: The dependent variable, *Turnout*, measures whether or not the respondent voted (1) or did not vote (0) in the 2018 Congressional election. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed). Estimates are taken from the logit models with survey weights. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

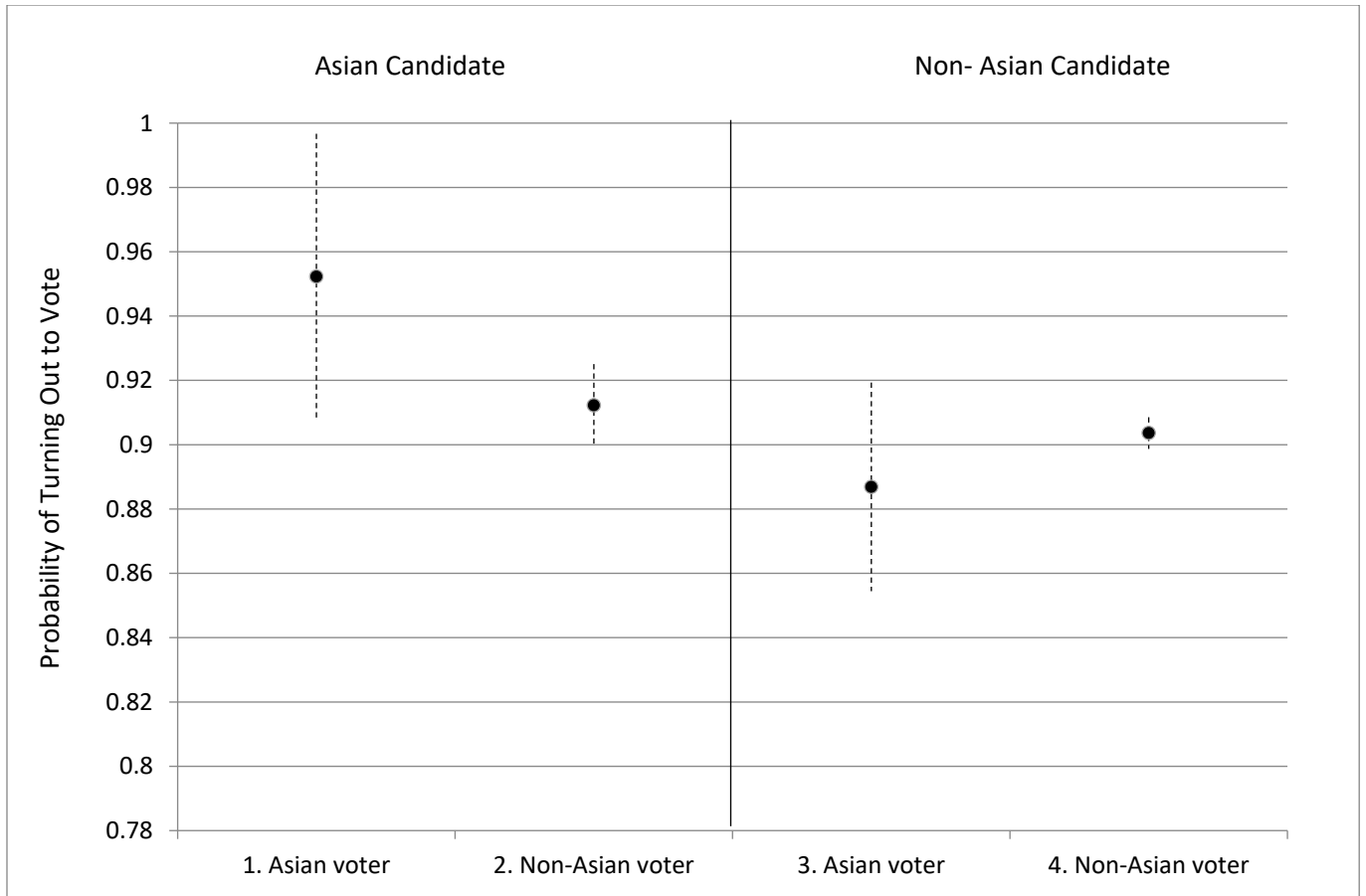


Figure 1. Predicted Probabilities

Though this test suggests that Asians are more likely to turnout when there is an Asian candidate, it does not control for party identification. Because I hypothesize that party identification has a stronger effect on turnout than race, I run a second model incorporating the party identification of both the voters and the candidates. The results of this model are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Effects of race on voter turnout, model 2

	Model 2 Parameters
Asian Candidate	-0.101 (0.227)
Asian Respondent	-0.462 (0.361)
Asian Candidate x Asian Respondent	0.302 (0.268)
Asian Democrat Candidate	-1.147 (0.819)
Asian Democrat Respondent	0.414 (0.448)
Asian Democrat Candidate x Asian Democrat Respondent	-1.143 (1.155)
Education	0.931*** (0.064)
Income	0.063*** (0.01)
Age	0.063*** (0.002)
Employment	0.184** (0.064)
Gender	0.042 (0.06)
Ideology	0.127*** (0.035)
Party Identification	-0.087 (0.1)
Seat Status	-0.009 (0.056)

Table 2 continued. Effects of race on voter turnout, model 2

Relative Expenditure	0.041 (0.023)
Democrat Presidential Vote	-0.004 (0.004)
Total Population	0.00 (0.00)
Percent Asian	-0.015 (0.009)
Percent with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	0.015* (0.006)
Median Household Income	0.002 (0.049)
Constant	-2.31*** (0.432)
Number of Cases	18,800
R-Squared	18.14%

Note: The dependent variable, *Turnout*, measures whether or not the respondent voted (1) or did not vote (0) in the 2018 Congressional election. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed). Estimates are taken from the logit models with survey weights. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

Of the control variables in this model, education, income, age, employment, ideology, total population, and percent of the population holding a bachelor's degree or higher show statistical significance. Similar to model 1, I generate the predicted probabilities of each variable on turnout to compare their effects. Several of these implications are similar to those of model 1. For instance, the effect of age (.063) on turnout is identical between the two models; per 10-year increase in the respondent's age, turnout increases by approximately 14.3%. Additionally,

college education (0.931) remains as the variable with the second highest effect on turnout. In fact, the increase in turnout is exactly the same as it is in model 1, 8.2%. The last similarity between the two models is income (0.063), which still yields an increase on turnout that is less than 0% per increase in \$10,000.

Employment and ideology still show statistical significance in model 2, but their effects vary from model 1. Full-time employment (0.184) increases turnout by only 1.6%, which is noticeably smaller than the 3.4% increase in model 1. Similarly, the effect of ideology (0.127) decreases in model 2 as well. As the respondent identifies as more liberal, turnout increases by approximately 1.2%. Lastly, model 2 includes a statistically significant variable that was not significant in model 1: percentage of the district's population with a bachelor's degree or higher. As the percentage of the population increases by 10, turnout increase by about 1.4%.

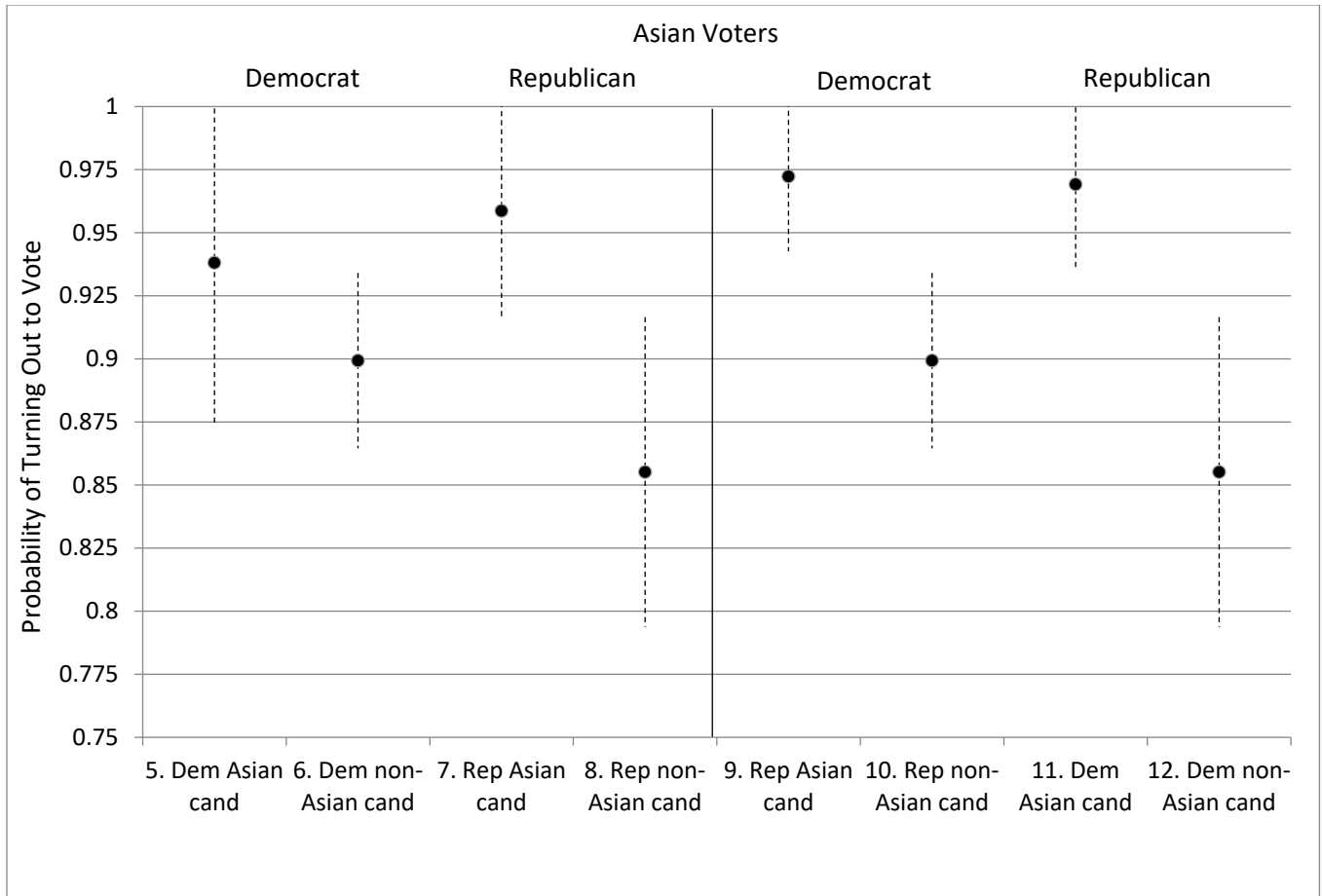


Figure 2. Predicted probabilities of turnout for Democrat and Republican Asian voters

Following model 1, I then generated the predicted probabilities of turnout for Asian Democrats and Republicans voters with the presence of Asian Democratic and Republican candidates to further my analysis. The results are shown above in figure 2. Turnout for Democratic and Republican voters follow similar patterns. As I predicted, Democratic Asian voters are more likely to turnout to vote with the presence of a Democratic Asian candidate than a Democratic non-Asian candidate (5 vs. 6; 3.9% difference). Similarly, Republican Asian voters are more likely to turnout to vote when a Republican Asian candidate is present versus a Republican non-Asian candidate (7 vs. 8; 10.4% difference). Despite the trend being the same, the effect is much higher within Republican Asian voters and candidates by approximately 6%.

Furthermore, the results of Republican Asian voters being more likely to turnout with the presence of a Republican Asian candidate (7 vs 8) shows statistical significance, while the results of Democrat Asian voters being more likely to turnout with Democrat Asian candidates (5 vs 6) is only suggestive.

When comparing between Asian voters and candidates of different parties, the results also follow my hypothesis. Moreover, the results for both comparisons show statistical significance. Democrat Asian voters are more likely to turnout with Republican Asian candidate than Republican non-Asian candidates (9 vs. 10; 7.3% difference). The same applies for Republican Asian voters; they are more likely to turnout to vote with the presence of a Democratic Asian candidate over a Democratic non-Asian (11 vs. 12; 11.4% difference). Similar to the results regarding Asian voters and candidates of the same party, the effect of race on turnout is seen to be greater in Republican Asian voters than Democrat Asian voters by approximately 4%. Despite this difference, though, both comparisons strongly affect turnout. The effect of turnout on Republican Asian voters when there is a Democratic Asian candidate over a Democratic non-Asian, for instance, is almost as high as the control variable with the greatest effect on turnout: a 10-year increase in age (14.3%). For Democrat Asian voters, the effect of a Republican Asian candidate over a non-Asian candidate on turnout is almost as high as college education, which yields an 8.2% increase in turnout.

CONCLUSION

Overall, my analysis suggests that the presence of an Asian candidate increases the turnout of Asian voters. For voters and candidates of the same party, Democrat Asians have a higher propensity to turnout to vote when there is a Democrat Asian candidate present than a Democrat non-Asian candidate. Likewise, Republican Asians are more likely to turnout to vote with a Republican Asian candidate than with a Republican non-Asian candidate. This effect, though, is not as strong as I expected. In fact, it was stronger in scenarios in which there was an Asian candidate of the opposite party, which is inconsistent with what I hypothesized. In out-party scenarios, Democrat Asians are more likely to turnout to vote when there is an Asian Republican candidate over a Republican non-Asian. Similarly, Republican Asians are more likely to turnout with the presence of a Democratic Asian candidate than a Democratic non-Asian candidate. These results actually showed statistical significance, while the results within identical parties did not.

It is important to note that not all results were statistically significant. When analyzing the effects of turnout on Asian voters with non-Asian/Asian candidate of the same party, the only result that showed statistical significance was Republican Asian voters being more likely to turnout with the presence of a Republican Asian candidate. On the other hand, both results for out-party Asian voters/candidates showed statistical significance. This could be justified by a variety of factors. Firstly, in the 2018 election, perhaps the Republican Asian candidates carried more similarities that Republican Asian voters could relate to. These same circumstances could apply to out-party Asian voters/candidates. For instance, despite being of the opposite party, the Asian candidate probably had more similarities Asian voters over their non-Asian counterparts

that Asians could relate to. The “sufficient likeness” implied with descriptive representation, though, includes a plethora of factors that differ from situation to situation, so the motivating factor for turnout for each situation could vary.

Another possibility is that the candidate was an incumbent. Generally, incumbency is a driving factor for turnout, as the incumbent usually already has a strong basis of support. More specifically, though, in the case of Asian Americans, the presence of an Asian representative increases trust within the community and establishes a good member-constituent relationship (Gay 2002). Therefore, if an Asian incumbent was running for re-election, Asian Americans are even more likely to turnout to vote despite their usual low turnout rate due to the fact that they feel like re-electing the Asian candidate is a necessity for their voices to be heard.

The last possibility is that the presence of the Asian candidate heavily increased mobilization within the Asian American community. Specific measures taken by political organizations to target Asian constituents have the possibility of increasing turnout (Diaz 2012). Thus, it is possible that the Asian candidate made the effort to reach out to the Asian American community and encourage their political participation. This could have been done in a variety of ways. Regardless of the methods, though, it could be speculated that their actions allowed the Asian community to feel included and important, which in turn, motivated them to go and vote. This is especially true for the out-party cases, since it is not as likely for turnout to be spurred by a candidate of the opposite party.

A limitation of this study that could be considered for future inquiry is that it does not account for different countries of origin within Asian Americans. Studies have shown that voter behavior is different even within groups of Asian Americans, so a more accurate analysis would account for the specific ethnicities of both the respondent and candidate (Tam 1995). Moreover,

this analysis does not account for the immigrant status or length of residency of the voters and candidates, which is also shown to impact political behavior (Xu 2005). This would also affect the ramifications of this study, as Asian immigrant voters may not be able to identify with non-immigrant Asian candidates, especially those of a younger age, due to differences in culture and ideology. Lastly, my analysis only tests a single election, the 2018 Congressional election. A more accurate analysis would warrant the use of multiple elections over a certain time period. This will gauge the overall trends of Asian American behavior as it is able to follow the differences between the characteristics of different elections.

This paper focused on analyzing the voter behavior of a complex and understudied segment of the United States population, and I conducted this study with the intention of investigating whether previous theories regarding the effect of descriptive representation on turnout applied to Asian Americans. Despite their unique characteristics, Asian Americans seem to follow trends of other minority groups in having a positive relationship between their turnout and descriptive representation. This not only poses questions for future inquiry, but also emphasizes the importance of Asian American representation in politics. An Asian running for office does not only increase diversity in our government, but it also encourages voter turnout within the Asian American community, who, traditionally, turnout in percentages noticeably lower than their population size. In my analysis, only 6.39% of the candidates were Asian. I hope my research encourages others to examine Asian American behavior in politics, but more importantly, I hope my work showcases the necessity of Asian representation in politics.

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APPENDIX A

The following provides the summary statistics for the variables in Model 1 and Model 2.

- *Income* is measure's the respondent's annual family income on a scale of 1-16 where 1 equals less than \$10,000, 2 equals \$10,000- \$19,999, 3 equals \$20,000- \$29,999, 4 equals \$30,000-\$39,999, 5 equals \$40,000-\$49,999, 6 equals \$50,000-\$59,999, 7 equals \$60,000-\$69,999, 8 equals \$70,000-\$79,999, 9 equals \$80,000-\$99,999 10 equals \$100,000-\$119,999, 11 equals \$120,000-\$149,999, 12 equals \$150,000-\$199,999, 13 equals \$200,000-\$249,999, 14 equals \$250,000-\$349,999, 15 equals \$350,000-\$499,99, and 16 equals \$500,000 or more.
- *Education* is a dichotomous variable that equals 1 if the respondent is college educated (anywhere from a 2-year institution to post-grad) and 0 if not.
- *Age* is the respondent's age measured in years
- *Full-time Employment* is a dichotomous variable that equals 1 if the respondent is employed full time and 0 if he or she is not.
- *Gender* is a dichotomous variable that equals 1 if the respondent is female and 0 if the respondent is male.
- *Ideology* is measured on a scale of -2 to 2 where -2 is very conservative, 0 is moderate, and 2 is very liberal.
- *Party identification* is a dichotomous variable that equals 1 if the respondent identifies as a Democrat and 0 if he or she identifies as a Republican.

- *Relative Expenditures (Log)* is the difference of the log of spending between the Democratic and Republican candidates; larger values show that the Democratic candidate spent more
- *Seat Status* is measured on a scale of -1 to 1 where -1 means there was a Republican incumbent, 0 means there was an open seat, and 1 means there was a Democratic incumbent.
- *Democratic Presidential Vote* is the percent of the population that voted Democrat in the previous presidential election.
- *Total Population* is the total population of each district.
- *Percent Asian* is the percent of the population of each district that is Asian.
- *Percent with Bachelor's Degree* is the percent of the population with a bachelor's degree or more in each district.
- *Median Household Income* is the median household income of each district, measured in dollars.