

A Senior Honors Thesis

The Political Consequences of Experiencing Conditional Status in the United States During the
COVID-19 Pandemic: From Racial Discrimination to Political Mobilization

Zabrina Xuli Richards
Political Science Department
Clark University
April 27, 2025

Acknowledgments

As a Chinese American adoptee, this project was deeply personal. The process of writing and researching acts as documentation of the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic had on Asian Americans in the United States. During a time when academic freedom is fragile, this research highlights the experiences of this diaspora. Despite the political climate that has forcibly prevented some researchers from focusing on race, racism, and white supremacy.

I would like to thank my thesis committee: Professor Silber Mohamed, Professor Szekely, and Professor Ghosh. I would also like to thank Professor Scoggins who was gracious enough to help me with the sample surveys. I have been exceptionally lucky to work under the wisdom and guidance of Professor Silber Mohamed who has shown patience, curiosity, and enthusiasm throughout my thesis. Thank you for all of the suggestions, emails, and meetings.

In addition, I would also like to thank the individuals who have shaped the scholar I am today:

Enyue Li, Brad Lopes, Jeff Noh, Jie Park.

To Carlos Pérez-Gazca, for always believing in and supporting me.

To my mom, who has always encouraged my curiosity and has supported my endeavors.

Lastly, thank you to everyone who participated in my research: survey and interviews. I could not have done this project without you. Thank you for trusting me with your experiences. This research is dedicated to you.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	3
Chapter 2: Methods	17
Chapter 3: Literature Review & Theoretical Framework	27
Chapter 4: Racialization of Asian Americans and COVID-19	48
Chapter 5: Accounts from East and Southeast Asian Americans' Regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic and Political Mobilization	72
Chapter 6: Conclusion	111
Bibliography	121
Appendix A: Survey	124
Appendix B: Interview.....	128

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter will introduce my thesis and research questions. Additionally, this chapter will provide background information about the Asian American diaspora in the United States. This chapter will also set the context of how the COVID-19 pandemic came into the United States and its effects on Asians and Asian Americans. In addition, this chapter will introduce the following concepts: panethnic linked fate and group consciousness. Although these concepts are not argued to be experienced amongst East and Southeast Asian American young adults during the pandemic, it could explain why some individuals chose to become politically engaged. Lastly, this chapter will provide an overview of the rest of the chapters. The purpose of this chapter is to provide background context of who is considered Asian American, more specifically East and Southeast Asian Americans, and the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States.

The start of the COVID-19 pandemic brought forth more than the fear of contracting a virus, it instilled a fear within many East and Southeast Asian Americans. The pandemic acted as a reminder to East and Southeast Asian Americans of our conditional status in the United States. A history of exclusion, othering, and violence has become masked by “positive” stereotypes. However, this illusion of acceptance of Asian Americans in the United States was challenged when there were hate incidents and crimes occurring one after another. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how quickly non-Asian Americans in the United States were quick to scapegoat an entire group of people. In response to the increased anti-Asian sentiment, Asian Americans combated the hate by participating in activism. My research questions that will direct this research are: (i) how did the spike of anti-Asian racism in the context of COVID-19

pandemic in the U.S. impact Asian Americans politically? (ii) Did the possibility of experiencing discrimination increase one's likelihood to politically mobilize? To answer my questions, I utilized a mixed-methods approach and conducted an anonymous Qualtrics survey and confidential interviews.

Asian Americans are the fastest-growing racialized group in the United States (Le et al., 2020). In addition, this group has become an important voting bloc in U.S. politics (Le et al., 2020). Therefore, this research is important because it seeks to understand how factors like discrimination can impact political mobilization (or the lack thereof). Additionally, this research is significant because it disaggregates between different Asian subgroups, which is not done in many national surveys. Later, in this thesis, the surveys will demonstrate findings from Chinese, Southeast, and other East Asian Americans. I chose to separate these groups to understand if there were any significant differences between their observations of the increase in anti-Asian sentiment and the way they combated it. If I had not chosen to disaggregate the data, then I would not have been able to find the way different Asian subgroups reacted and combated anti-Asian sentiment they observed. Given the small sample from the anonymous survey and confidential interview, I cannot make generalizations about East and Southeast Asian American young adult individuals. Rather, this is understanding how the individuals who participated in this research felt and reacted to the rise in anti-Asian sentiment, and their general political participation before and after the pandemic.

Demographics: Who are Asian Americans?

Asian Americans have historically been one of the least politically involved racial groups in the United States. This racial group has had one of the lowest voter turnout in federal, state,

and local level elections. Low voter turnout could be due to structural barriers and limited outreach to address the needs of Asian Americans (Nicholson Jr. & Mei, 2023). The term, “Asian American” is significant because it is the first time the racialized group claimed a panethnic identity in the 1960s (Espiritu, 1992). Before “Asian American”, this group was referred to as “Mongoloid” and “Orientals”, both of which had derogatory sentiment— and many Asian Americans identified with their ethnic identity and/or national origin instead. Research has demonstrated it is possible the increase of hate crimes and rise in anti-Asian sentiment, in response to COVID-19, has seemed to change this narrative of Asian Americans being the least politically involved racial group (Le et al., 2020).

My research will focus on East (Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese, Japanese) and Southeast Asian American young adults (Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian). While existing research proposes a number of explanations for political mobilization, I anticipate that under some circumstances, the hostile political context of the COVID-19 pandemic increased the political mobilization of some East and Southeast Asian American young adults. My research will focus on East and Southeast Asian Americans, despite this virus being associated with China, given that it was found in Wuhan, China. However, despite this, people who hold racist views about other racial groups, are likely to confuse Southeast as East Asian American, and are less likely to take the time to ask about an individual’s ethnicity to ensure they are correctly discriminating against a person. During the height of the pandemic, East Asian Americans were not the only group directly impacted by the anti-Asian sentiment. In the U.S., Southeast Asians also experienced anti-Asian sentiment, because they assumed they were Chinese.

Asian Americans are generally perceived as a homogenous racial group. However, this group is significantly diverse with unique national origins, migration histories, languages,

dialects, socioeconomic status, cultures, religion, and political ideologies (Le et al., 2020; Budiman & Ruiz, 2021; Tran, 2024). In the United States, a recorded 22 million Asian Americans reside in the country and trace their heritage to more than 20 countries in East and Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). For five decades, the U.S. has had continual immigration from Asia, which has transformed Asian America (Tran, 2024). Asian Americans have become a group that many researchers have now been paying attention to because this group has become the fastest growing racial group in the U.S. (Le et al., 2020). Additionally, Asian Americans have become an important voting bloc in American politics (Le et al., 2020). It is estimated that by 2060, the Asian population is projected to be in the 35.8 to 46.2 million range (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021; Tran, 2024).

According to the United States Census in 1870, there were roughly 63,000 individuals who were classified as Asian by the U.S. Census Bureau— meaning individuals from the U.S. Census Bureau were assuming and categorizing people’s racial identity and believed 63,000 individuals of the U.S. population were Asian (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). However, this changed in 1960, when it was the first time that respondents could select their own race. As a result of this change, 980,000 individuals identified themselves as Asian (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). For more than a century, the Asian share of the total U.S. population remained less than 1% growing from 0.11% in 1860 to 0.76% in 1970, and from 1980 to 2000, the Asian population tripled from 3.5 to 11.9 million (Tran, 2024). The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 contributed to the significant increase in immigrants from Asia. Unlike previous immigration laws, this act replaced national quotas and origins with overall hemispheric limits on visas issued and allowed for more skilled workers and family members to join the country (Daniels, 1993). From 2000 to 2020, the Asian population more than doubled to 24 million (Tran, 2024). In between 2000 and

2020, in 2009 specifically, Asians had surpassed the Hispanic population among the newly arrived immigrants, and had become the fastest growing racial group in the U.S. (Tran, 2024).

In 1960, much of the Asian population in the U.S. were of East Asian ancestry, specifically, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean (Tran, 2024). By 1980, East and Southeast Asians accounted for 37.7% and 36.2% of the total US Asian population. The increase of the Southeast Asian population is due to the influx of Southeast Asian refugees (Vietnamese, Hmong, and Cambodians), most of them who fled in the 1970s (Tran, 2024). Additionally, the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 shifted the Asian population in the U.S. and contributed to the national origin changes (Daniels, 1993). From 1980 to 2000, the population of South Asians tripled from 9.9% to 27.4%, with Indians and Pakistanis dominating the increase (Tran, 2024).

By 2000, the US Asian population increased 11.9 million. The amount nearly doubled by 2019 to 22.4 million Asians in the U.S., an 88% increase within two decades (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). Asians make up about 7% of the nation's overall population, however, the Asian population in the US is projected to surpass 46 million by 2060, nearly four times the current total (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021; Tran, 2024). Chinese Americans currently make up the largest Asian origin group in the U.S., making up 24% of the Asian population, 5.4 million people (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). Indian Americans follow second, where they account for 21% of the total (4.6 million), Filipinos accounting for 19% (4.2 million), Vietnamese (2.2 million), Korean (1.9 million), and Japanese (1.5 million). Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese each have a population of at least one million, and the other 13 groups in the analysis account for 12% of all Asians in the U.S. a total of 2.7 million people, with no group surpassing 600,000 (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). The history of when and how Asian immigrants arrived to the U.S. varies, it can be

explained why some Asian origin groups are more likely than others to be born in the U.S. (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021).

The median age of U.S. born Asians was 19 years old, compared to the median age among all U.S. born people in the U.S. which is 36 years old (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). Nearly six-in-ten U.S. born Asians (58%) are members of Generation Z in 2019, meaning they were 22 years or younger at the time (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). Another quarter of the U.S. born Asian population in 2019 belonged to the Millennial generation, and one-in-ten or fewer were a part of Generation X or older generations (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). U.S. born Asians are substantially younger than the rest of the Asian American population (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). As of 2019, in the U.S. the Asian population had a median age of 34 years old, which is slightly lower than the nation's overall median age of 38 (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021).

Asian Americans are an extremely diverse diaspora, representing more than 20 countries across East, Southeast, and the Indian subcontinent. As a result, Asian Americans bring a range of experiences with them into the U.S., including different experiences of politics which can impact their political mobilization (or lack thereof).

The Beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic: How Did We Get Here?

The U.S. has a long history of discrimination, scapegoating, and targeting Asian American communities around disease, dating back to the late 18th century, as I will discuss further in chapter four. The COVID-19 pandemic is but one of these examples, this context will set the stage for broader arguments in the project.

On December 31, 2019, government officials from the People's Republic of China (PRC) confirmed that health authorities were treating patients who were believed to become ill with

pneumonia. A few days later, researchers found out that the cases that seemed to be cases of pneumonia were something entirely different— this was the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic that affected the entire world. The virus was traced to a wet market in Wuhan, China. At the end of January 2020, U.S. officials confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in the nation. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global health emergency. By mid-March 2020, COVID-19 infections in the U.S. were anywhere between the range of tens of thousands to half a million cases (Reny & Barreto, 2022).

Since the COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020, anti-Asian discrimination has also increased. In response to the COVID-19 cases in the U.S., Asian Americans quickly became the target of racial hostility (Li & Nicholson Jr., 2021). Asian Americans were blamed for fear about the virus, economic insecurity, and stay at home orders (Tessler et al., 2020). In March 2020, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) warned of an increase in hate crimes against Asian Americans, “based on their assumptions that a portion of the U.S. public will associate COVID-19 with China and Asian American populations” (Li & Nicholson Jr., 2021, p. 638). The WHO was also aware about the possibility of people associating COVID-19 with people of Asian descent, and therefore warned against associating diseases with racialized groups.

Across the U.S., Asian Americans reported a surge in harassment and hate crimes on the basis of their racialized identity. Accounts from Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI), quickly emerged by recounting their experiences of verbal and physical attacks, in relation to being associated with COVID-19 (Reny & Barreto, 2022). From March 19, 2020, to March 31, 2021, STOP AAPI Hate recorded more than 6,603 discriminatory incidents recorded by AAPI (Tao et al., 2024). These reported racist incidents were not limited to Chinese Americans, but also to other Asian Americans (Chan et al., 2021). Despite the overwhelming number of reported

hate crimes or incidents, it is also possible that Asian Americans are likely to under-report because of the lack of understanding of the U.S. legal system, particularly for hate crimes (Tessler et al., 2020). Therefore, it is likely that the number of hate crimes and incidents could be much more than what has been recorded.

I anticipate that under some circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the hostile political context, particularly the surge in discrimination, increased the political mobilization of some East and Southeast Asian American young adults. This project is driven by my desire to better understand the ways in which this heightened sense of discrimination might influence the attitudes and behaviors of East and Southeast Asian Americans. The independent variables in this study include generation status, adoption status, and neighborhood composition. Some other factors such as linked fate and group consciousness may be intervening variables and/ or can be factors that underlie discrimination.

Attacks Against Asian Americans Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

As people in the U.S. became accustomed to this “new norm” that was brought upon a global pandemic. Americans began practicing social distancing requirements, stay-at-home orders, while anxieties about COVID-19 increased. Simultaneously, Asian Americans experienced an added layer of additional burdens of heightened racial tension and the way the COVID-19 pandemic became associated with China, and as an extension, anyone who “looked” Chinese, because people of Chinese descent were falsely accused of spreading the virus. As a result of this racial tension and association of a virus with a racialized group, Asian Americans experienced harassment, hate crimes, and physical violence. It is not surprising that some

Americans scapegoated and blamed people who “looked” Chinese, given the track record the U.S. has with Asian Americans, and how this country has treated this racialized group.

During the pandemic, social media played a significant role in publicizing the racialized attacks against Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Twitter, a social media platform, now called X, and Instagram, another social media platform, were the main platforms where users saw the increase in anti-Asian incidents and hate crimes (Gover et al., 2020). There were numerous experiences of anti-Asian attacks that included verbal and physical assault. The following section will illustrate the socio-political climate that East and Southeast Asian Americans were noticing across the United States.

On February 5, 2020 in a Chinatown subway station, a woman was wearing a face mask, and a man came up to her and verbally and physically assaulted her, calling her a “*diseased (expletive)*” (Gover et al., 2020, p. 659). Another hate incident occurred on March 10, 2020, in midtown Manhattan. A Korean American woman was grabbed by the hair, shoved, and punched in the face by the assailant. The perpetrator then yelled at the woman, “*You’ve got coronavirus, you Asian (expletive)*” and “*Where’s your (expletive) mask?*” As a result of this racial attack, the woman suffered a dislocated jaw (Gover et al., 2020). A few days later, on March 14, 2020, at a Sam’s Club in Midland, Texas, a man attacked a family from Myanmar. The perpetrator stabbed three victims, including a two-year-old and six-year-old. The assailant told the cops he feared the victims were Chinese and that they were infecting people with COVID (Gover et al., 2020, p. 659). In late March, in a Brooklyn subway, a 26-year-old Asian American man was spat on the face. When the Asian American man confronted the perpetrator, asking why the perpetrator spat on him, the perpetrator yelled at him, “*You (expletive) Chinese spreading the Coronavirus*”, and the perpetrator unzipped his jacket, pointing to a weapon, and followed up saying, “*You wanna*

do this?” (Gover et al., 2020, p. 659). The last incident that will be mentioned occurred on April 5, 2020, in Brooklyn, New York, a man snuck up behind an Asian American woman and doused her with acid, causing second-degree burns on her body, face, and hands (Gover et al., 2020). Across the United States, Asian Americans were watching people who looked like them being dehumanized and violently attacked because others blamed them for the spread of the contagious virus.

In 2020, the United States was going through a turbulent time. The U.S. was experiencing a global pandemic, the murder of three Black Americans. The Black Americans were Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. Breonna and George were killed at the hands of law enforcement and Ahmaud Arbery was killed by white men (Tong et al., 2022). In addition to the revival of the Black Lives Movement (BLM) through social media and protests, the increase of anti-Asian hate crimes resulted in the #StopAsianHate movement that led to social media activism, protests, and rallies across the U.S. (Xie et al., 2023).

Social media played a major role in the #StopAsianHate movement, as it was a way millions of online users could speak out against the marginalization Asian Americans in the U.S. were experiencing. With the development of social media, there has been an increasing number of movements that have been observed in the digital sphere (Xie et al., 2023). In addition, mobile phones have made it much easier for the public to engage with digital activism. In response to the increase in anti-Asian sentiment, speaking out against the rise in anti-Asian sentiment came in the form of digital activism (such as social and political campaigning practices) that utilized digital networking (Xie et al., 2023). During the pandemic, social media was used as a way to recognize the racial discrimination and anti-Asian sentiment in the U.S., and a way to spread

information about #StopAsianHate activities, including lectures, protests, and rallies, as a way to mitigate and combat discrimination (Xie et al., 2023).

Introduction of Concepts: Panethnic Linked Fate and Group Consciousness

Although panethnic linked fate and group consciousness will not be the main focus of this research. These terms may have influenced the political mobilization of young East and Southeast Asian Americans. Panethnic linked fate is a concept that describes a feeling amongst individuals of a certain group who may feel like their fate is connected to one another. Another political concept is group consciousness, which is the phenomenon in which members within a certain group become aware of how their group identification impacts their position in social and political society. As a result of their awareness, group members come together to pursue collective action to advocate for shared interests. Group consciousness is known to significantly influence racialized minorities' political participation and activism. Political scientists have used linked fate and group consciousness to understand Black Americans' feelings of connectedness, uniformity, awareness about one's racialized identity, and the impacts it has on their political participation.

As the U.S. has become more racially diverse, political scientists have begun asking if these concepts like panethnic linked fate and group consciousness can be applied on Latina/e/o/x and Asian Americans, to understand the impact of their racialized identities on their political participation. As noted, the Asian American community has grown tremendously and is extremely diverse. Therefore, it is important to understand how experiences with discrimination influence the behavior of this community. These concepts, panethnic linked fate and group

consciousness, may play an important role in understanding the political participation of Asian Americans, despite the heterogeneity of these groups.

In times of the perception of threat, particularly when a racial identity is attacked by politicians, Asian Americans' panethnic linked fate and group consciousness may become activated (Masuoka, 2006; Le et al., 2020). In the specific context when Asian Americans feel that politicians are hostile to the Asian diaspora, experience increased threats and discrimination, and a negative rhetoric towards this racialized group—scholars have found that this may lead this group members to believe their panethnic identity is attacked and fear that they could experience similar rhetoric, despite not identifying as a certain national origin group that is being specifically targeted (Masuoka, 2006; Le et al., 2020; Nicholson Jr. & Mei, 2023). As a result of the rhetoric politicians have utilized, Asian Americans become aware that when any ethnic group in their panethnic identity group is attacked, it could include themselves—the more likely they are attacked (Le et al., 2020). Some scholars are hesitant to apply this group-based model of behavior, given the idea that these individuals do not feel attached to others in their panethnic group (Masuoka, 2006). However, certain political circumstances may change this hesitancy. Therefore, feelings of panethnic linked fate and group consciousness may arise when politicians reinforce racist ideas of racialized groups, which has increased the possibility of experiencing discrimination.

The Asian American community has grown tremendously over the past several decades, and it is a very diverse group. The focus of my research looks at how experiences of discrimination, specifically related to COVID, influence the behavior of this community. This thesis will look at the experiences of East and Southeast Asian Americans because Southeast Asian Americans are likely to be confused as East Asian. In addition, many East Asians are

likely to be assumed Chinese, by non-Asians. Therefore, East and Southeast Asian Americans experienced heightened racial hostility during the pandemic. Due to the fact that COVID-19 was found in Wuhan, China, many associated the virus with China and people of Chinese ancestry. As a result of these associations of a virus with a country and people who “look” Chinese. The following chapter will include scholar’s ideas about the reasons people choose to become politically mobilized. By examining and critiquing traditional explanations for individual-level political mobilization, this chapter will also demonstrate how discrimination could play a significant role for ¹PGM in the United States and the impact it has on their political participation.

Thesis Overview

Under certain political circumstances, particularly during a sense of threat, the hostile context of COVID-19 resulted in the rapid increase in discrimination that is demonstrated through anti-Asian rhetoric and violence, which may have increased the political mobilization of some East and Southeast Asian American young adults. The central question of my research focuses on the political mobilization of East and Southeast Asian American young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. My research questions that will direct this research are: (i) how did the spike of anti-Asian racism in the context of COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. impact Asian

¹ I prefer using the acronym PGM instead of ‘POC’. The term ‘people of the global majority’ is a collective term that refers to Black, Asian, Latina/e/o, Indigenous, and individuals who have been racialized as “ethnic minorities”. Unlike “racial minorities”, this term highlights how these groups make up 80% of the world’s population. POC situates whiteness as the norm. By examining the world through experiences of whiteness, we fail to consider the worlds’ norm for most people in the world. Shifting this language allows us to disrupt the conversation about race and center PGM and challenges whiteness as the norm while challenging the subordination PGM experience (Campbell-Stephens, 2020).

Americans politically? (ii) Did the possibility of experiencing discrimination increase one's likelihood to politically mobilize? I argue that the increase in discrimination led to the political mobilization of young East and Southeast Asian Americans in the United States.

Chapter two will discuss the methods that were utilized for this thesis. This research utilized a mixed-methods approach, with an anonymous survey and confidential interviews. This chapter will seek to provide an account of how the study was conducted. It will also explain the reasonings for the measures and variables that were utilized in the research design.

Chapter three will examine reasons people choose to become politically mobilized. This chapter will begin by focusing on the standard factors for individual-level political mobilization, including criticism of standard factors. In addition to focusing on standard reasons for political mobilization, this chapter will also consider alternative factors. This chapter will include literature that focuses on social identity theory (SIT) and discrimination as a reason for individual-level political mobilization. Additionally, this chapter will demonstrate how panethnic linked fate and group consciousness may be intervening variables that underlie discrimination as the main factor that drives political mobilization for East and Southeast Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter four will provide historical context of the arrival and immigration of Asians into the United States. It will provide a foundation to understand how notions such as Orientalism and the Yellow Peril still persist and impact East and Southeast Asian Americans in the 21st century. This chapter will also examine why Asians became associated as disease carriers, the significance of COVID-19 virus, and how COVID-19 virus became racialized in the United States.

Chapter five will focus on my survey and interview findings. This chapter seeks to understand if survey respondents and interviewees noticed any changes in anti-Asian sentiment and the possible fear of discrimination, and the possible implications it had on an individual's political participation. The survey engages with political participation of respondents by asking questions about their engagement with politics before, during, and after the pandemic. In particular, understanding survey respondent's engagement with political activities that focused on combating anti-Asian sentiment and general political participation. The interviews demonstrate similarities and differences in experiences during the pandemic and how they responded. The purpose of this chapter is to include and highlight the experiences and voices of young East and Southeast Asian Americans who were in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews add to the survey findings by adding more complexity and nuance to East and Southeast Asian American young adult experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S.

Lastly, chapter six will bring all of the findings together with the survey and interview findings. This chapter will also discuss limitations of this research, and considerations for future research.

Chapter 2: Methods

My research poses the question if the hostile political context of the COVID-19 pandemic increased the political participation of East and Southeast Asian American young adults. This chapter will describe the mixed-methods approach I utilized to answer my research questions. As mentioned previously, I have sought to answer my questions through an anonymous Qualtrics

survey and confidential interviews. The advantage of surveys is that researchers are often able to garner many responses. Surveys provide researchers with an understanding of what participants did or did not do. However, surveys cannot answer why participants did or did not engage in certain activities. Therefore, I also employed interviews to understand personal experiences of the pandemic and their political mobilization before and after the pandemic. I chose to utilize a mixed-methods approach because I believe that utilizing both, I am able to get a general understanding of how East and Southeast Asian American young adults experienced the pandemic and how it impacted or did not impact their political mobilization. If I had only utilized a survey, I would not have been able to ask follow-up questions. Additionally, because of the structure of surveys with closed questions, being yes or no answers, I was able to get a better understanding of why participants chose to participate or not participate in certain activities. However, if I had only conducted interviews, I would not have been able to notice any noticeable patterns amongst my target audience. Therefore, through my survey, I was able to get a bigger picture of what the pandemic felt like for East and Southeast Asian American young adults and their political mobilization (or lack thereof). By conducting interviews, I was able to answer follow-up questions and understand why they did what they did before, during, and after the pandemic.

Survey recruitment was done by circulating the information to acquaintances, East Coast Asian American Student Caucus, and professors who shared the survey to their students. Interview recruitment was accomplished through the survey (see Appendix A and B). One of the last questions on the survey asked if the participant would like to expand more upon what they shared in the survey in a confidential interview. If the participant indicated they would want to be interviewed, they would click on a link from the anonymous Qualtrics survey to another

Qualtrics survey where they would include their contact information and availability to be interviewed. This ensured that survey respondents' answers and identities were anonymous (see Appendix A and B survey and interview questions).

The following section will discuss literature that has been used to explain individual-level mobilization. This chapter will also include alternative factors that may influence individual-level political mobilization, which may be pertinent to East and Southeast Asian American young adults during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Survey

To test my hypotheses, I conducted a survey which I fielded by recruiting students through Asian American organizations, acquaintances, and professors and faculty on Clark University's campus, who circulated the survey to students (see Appendix A for the survey). The survey was conducted from December 12, 2024 to February 21, 2025, the sample size was 29. On average, it took respondents six and a half minutes to complete the survey. All respondents included in the sample identify as Asian American, specifically East and Southeast Asian American.

It is important to note that this Qualtrics survey was an opt-in survey, rather than a national sample. As a result, this data is not purposely sampled to be representative of the entire population of interest. Additionally, with surveys that are conducted after an event like the COVID-19 pandemic, it is necessary to note that people may have different interpretations of the events, than if they were to take the survey during the pandemic, and it may not be accurate (Snelgrove & Havitz, 2010).

Description of the Survey Sample

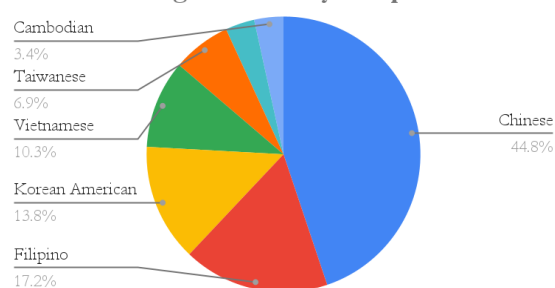
National Origin

Chinese Americans made up almost half of the respondents, this group represented 44.8% (n=13) of survey responses. This large number of Chinese American respondents can be explained in part because Chinese Americans make up the largest Asian origin group in the U.S., making up 24% of the population (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). Following Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans made up 17.24% (n=5) of survey responses. Korean Americans made up 13.8% (n=4) of survey responses. Vietnamese Americans followed closely after Korean Americans, representing 10.34% (n=3) of the responses. Taiwanese Americans represented 6.90% (n=2) of responses, while Japanese and Cambodian Americans both made 3.45% (n=1) of survey responses.

As compared to national demographics of Asian national origin groups, Filipinos account for 4.2 million, Vietnamese representing 2.2 million, and 1.9 million Koreans, of the U.S. population (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). Later on in the survey results, the small number (n) is because I have grouped some of the national origin groups. To understand if Chinese Americans experienced and reacted differently to the COVID-19 pandemic, this group will be looked at by itself, while Southeast and other East Asian American groups will be two separate groups, with the goal of seeing if there were significant differences between all three groups. Overall, East Asian Americans (Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese, and Japanese) were the majority 69% (n=20), while Southeast Asian Americans (Filipino, Vietnamese, and Cambodian) made up 31.03% (n=9) of the survey respondents.

Figure 1I National Origin of Survey Respondents

National Origin of Survey Respondents



East/Southeast Asian American of Survey

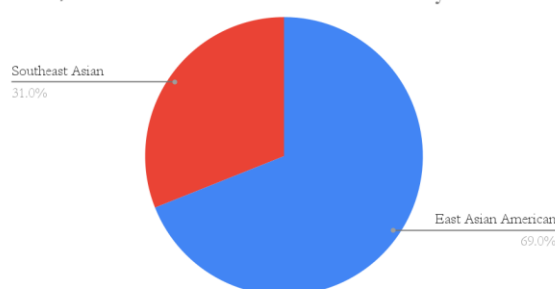


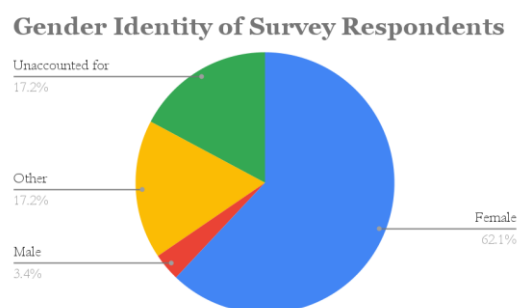
Figure 2 I East/Southeast Asian American of Survey Respondents

Gender Identity

More than half of the respondents who included their gender identity identified as female (62.10%) (n=18), while about a fifth of the respondents did not include their gender identity, meaning 17.24% of the respondents' gender is unaccounted for. For individuals who do not identify with the gender binary, "other" made up 17.24% (n=5) of the respondents' gender identity. "Other" often includes people who identify as transgender or nonbinary. Lastly, male respondents made up 3.45% (n=1) of the survey responses. Unfortunately, respondents who identify as men are significantly underrepresented in my survey. Although close to 50% of young Asian American college students in the broader population are men, only 3% of my respondents (n=1) placed themselves in this category. It is likely that some share of respondents who did not indicate a gender identity in fact identify as men. However, the low number of male

respondents means that we are unable to generalize about the experiences of Asian American men from the results.

Figure 3 I Gender Identity



Generation Status

Half of respondents identify as second-generation, making up 51.7% of the respondents (n=15). Second-generation means the individual was born in the U.S. and whose parent(s) are immigrants. The experiences of second-generation is contextually different and has political significance, which is the reason for the differentiation (Terriquez & Kwon, 2015). First-generation respondents represented 31.03% of my respondents (n=9). First-generation means that the individual themselves was born outside the U.S. and immigrated to the country.

It is worth noting that some of the individuals in the first-generation category were adopted. Therefore, their experiences in the U.S. may not be representative of most first-generation experiences. The political socialization of first-generation adoptees who are raised in non-immigrant households may look different than other first-generation immigrants. Political socialization is the process in which individuals gain their political orientations— their knowledge, opinions, and evaluations of politics (Wong & Tseng, 2008). Traditional literature has argued that political socialization occurs in an unidirectional intergenerational transmission,

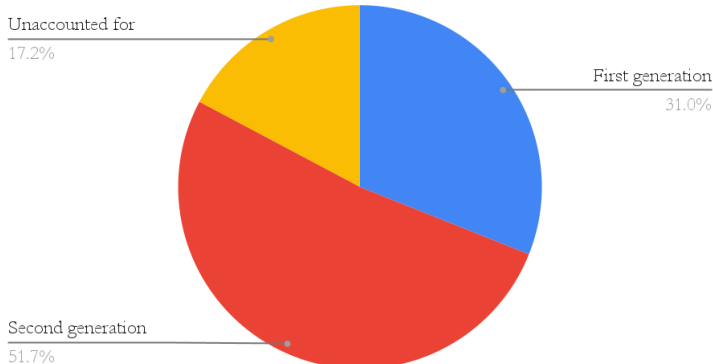
meaning political attitudes and orientations begin with parents' who pass on their thoughts regarding politics toward their children (Wong & Tseng, 2008).

However, first-generation immigrants have a distinct socialization process as compared to the rest of the general population. In comparison, Wong and Tseng argue that children serve a crucial role in acting as an important source of political socialization for their parents by translating political materials and explaining U.S. politics, arguing that parent-child socialization is a reciprocal process (2008). About one-fifth of the survey respondents did not include their generation status, making up 17.24% (n=5) of the population.

Over half of the Asian American population (57%) were born outside of the U.S (Budiman & Ruzi, 2021). However, this is not reflected in the survey data, which leans more heavily towards immigrants who are second generation or above. Compared to Asian Americans born outside of the U.S., Asian Americans born in the U.S. are significantly younger than people who have immigrated (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). Given the focus on Asian American young people, the entire sample was represented by this demographic. The ages of the respondents' ranged from 19-24 years old. It is also important to note that some respondents did not include their age, 31.04% (n=9) did not record their age.

Figure 4 I Generation Status

Generation Status of Survey Respondents



Adoptee

About a quarter of the survey respondents identified as adoptees (24.14%) (n=7), adoptee is a term that is used to describe someone who is adopted. The majority of the survey respondents do not identify with being adopted (58.62%) (n=17), and 17.24% (n=5) are unaccounted for, whether they were adopted or not. I decided to include a question regarding adoption because I thought it was pertinent to the research, given the history of Vietnamese, Korean, and Chinese transnational adoption. The transnational adoption of Vietnamese and Korean children were an outcome of the Vietnamese and Korean Wars where children were removed from their homes or adopted as a response to devastation of the wars. In the case of Chinese transnational adoptions, the One Child Policy that the People's Republic of China (PRC) implemented between 1979 and 2015, in response to the country's rapid population growth, was the reasoning behind the tremendous number of Chinese adoptees into the U.S. A consequence of this policy led to the disproportionate number of Chinese girls who were sent to orphanages, because in Chinese culture, boys and men are preferred because they are expected to take care of their parents in old age.

It is possible that transnational adoptees (adoptees born outside the U.S.) may have distinct political socialization, because their parents were born in the U.S. As a result of being born in the U.S., it is likely that adoptees have been politically socialized by their parents, similar to traditional literature that describes the unidirectional intergenerational transmission of political information (Wong & Tseng, 2008). Therefore, it may be that adoptees have more knowledge because of their parent's knowledge and experiences with U.S. politics, which may result in their political mobilization.

Neighborhood Composition

Neighborhood composition was another independent variable that was considered. Due to immigration patterns, there is a large number of Asians who reside on the West Coast. By 2019, 45% of Asians lived in the West, 24% lived in the South, 19% lived in the Northeast, and 12% lived in the Midwest (Tran, 2024). While researching, I was curious if neighborhood composition impacted the political mobilization of East and Southeast Asian American young adults. I wanted to understand the racial diversity and its impact (or lack thereof) it had on the political mobilization of survey respondents.

To test this, I tried to see if conversations, posting on social media, and participating in protests were impacted by survey respondents' geographic location during the pandemic. I chose these three activities because they seemed to be the most popular amongst survey respondents. The data demonstrated that there does not seem to be much of a strong relationship between the racial diversity of a neighborhood and one's political mobilization during the COVID-19 pandemic. Wong and other scholars have also found that geography does not impact political participation significantly (2011).

Interview

My research focuses on East and Southeast Asian American young adults experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact (or lack thereof) it had on their political mobilization. To test my hypotheses, which have been discussed in the previous chapter, in addition to conducting a survey, I also conducted interviews with some of the survey respondents who noted their interest in being interviewed. The interviewees were fielded through the survey I sent to Asian American organizations, acquaintances, and professors and faculty on Clark University's campus, who shared the survey with their students. In the survey, the last question asks the individual if they would like to be interviewed. To preserve the confidentiality of the survey, if respondents indicated yes, they were then sent to a separate Qualtrics form where they could share their contact information with me.

Although the survey responses are useful towards my research, I also wanted to understand the nuanced feelings and thoughts that could be conveyed better with interviews, by being able to follow up with clarifying questions. The interviews were conducted from February 4th to the 18th, where I interviewed five people. On average, the interviews took about 35 minutes. All respondents included in the sample identify as Asian American, specifically East and Southeast Asian American.

Description of the Interviewees

My sample includes three Chinese Americans (all of whom are adoptees), one biracial Filipino American, and one Korean American. For ease of reading, I have included pseudonyms for the interviewees to protect their privacy. Therefore, these names are completely made up and

other sensitive information has been removed to protect their information and identities. Due to the small sample of interviews, I cannot make generalizations about the East and Southeast Asian American diaspora, but the interviews do provide additional richness that sheds light on the results of the survey. I will use these interviews to create a better understanding of these interviewees' experiences and how they responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis utilized a mixed-methods (i.e. anonymous survey and confidential interview) approach to answer my research questions. This chapter provided a description of the survey sample which garnered 29 responses. Additionally, this chapter also includes the description of the five interviewees. This chapter also includes logistical information that discusses how I recruited survey and interview participants and the duration it took for participants to complete the survey and interview. The next chapter will focus on the research that grounds this thesis. In addition, this research will also provide a theoretical framework that seeks to understand the impacts of a hostile political context that could impact the political mobilization of East and Southeast Asian American young adults.

Chapter 3: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

As outlined in chapter one, I am interested in understanding if the hostile political context of the COVID-19 pandemic increased the political mobilization of East and Southeast Asian Americans. The following section will discuss literature that has been used to explain individual-level mobilization. This chapter will also include alternative factors that may influence

individual-level political mobilization, which may be pertinent to East and Southeast Asian American young adults during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Standard Factors for Individual-Level Political Mobilization

Before examining why COVID-19 may have driven political engagement, it is important to explore some factors that scholars think are associated with participation. Standard factors for understanding political engagement have historically included income, level of education, political interest, and age. Additionally, other factors that focus more on systematic-levels examine how political parties, candidates, and interest groups impact individuals' political mobilization (Nedelmann, 1987; Schildkraut, 2005; Bloemraad, 2006). According to Nedelmann, political actors become aware of and articulate their interests to develop affective loyalties that encourage others to politically mobilize (1987).

Political science literature on individual-level political mobilization has focused largely on an individual's socio-economic status (SES) (Verba et al., 1993). The notion of higher SES being attributed to higher levels of political participation among individuals is due to Verba and Nie's standard socioeconomic model of political participation. Verba and Nie's model includes measures of education, occupation, and income, and several civic attitudes (i.e. political efficacy, interest in politics, feelings of obligation to participation) were considered to explain the connection between SES and political participation (Murray & Vedlitz, 1977; Zipp et al., 1982). The higher an individual's SES, the more likely they will participate in politics (Barrett & Pachi, 2019). This connection of higher SES resulting in increased political participation is that SES, in most cases, is interrelated with individual resources that are necessary for participation in politics; meaning, it takes time, skills, and money to overcome the costs of participation. As a

result, political participation is easier for individuals who easily possess these sources (Vráblíková & Císař, 2014).

In contrast, scholars have claimed individuals with a ‘lower status’ and less political engagement have lower levels of education, restricted occupation-related learning experiences, greater social isolation, and higher alienation. As a result, some researchers have asserted this means people with low SES are less interested in politics, less aware of the need for and possible benefits of political participation, and feel less politically efficacious (Zipp et al., 1982). Scholars have argued individuals with a lower SES often do not have the same capacities as people with higher SES, and therefore cannot overcome the costs of participation because it is more of a challenge for people with lower SES to have the time and access to resources for political mobilization (Zipp et al., 1982).

Although there has been a significant amount of research focusing on the impacts of SES on individual-level political mobilization, some scholars are not convinced that SES is the best explanation for why individuals choose to become politically engaged (Murray & Vedlitz, 1977). Additionally, Leighly (2001) and Schildkraut (2005) have argued these claims have come from studies that have generalized on data that was predominantly white. Thus, the SES model has been applied to everyone, despite studies not including various racialized groups in their research. An example supporting this argument can be demonstrated through Black Americans’ high political participation. According to Verba and Nie’s “standard socioeconomic model of political participation”, Black Americans’ should have low political participation because of their relatively low SES in the U.S., however, this remains false (Murray & Vedlitz, 1977). Studies controlling for SES have found that Black Americans participated as much, and in some cases, even more than white Americans, and higher than their SES alone would predict.

Several factors that led to the increase of Black American political participation have been the decrease of *de jure* and *de facto* barriers to activity, mobilization from the Civil Rights Movement, and the dramatic increase of Black Americans who have attained higher levels of education and higher-status occupations during the 1960s and early 1970s (Verba et al., 1993). Verba and Nie argue that despite their surprise in Black Americans participating more than they had expected, given their lower SES, they note this racialized group has developed a sense of awareness of their status as a marginalized group, and this recognition has resulted in this group becoming more politically active than members of society who have similar socioeconomic levels but do not share the same racialized identity.

Another reason Verba and Nie believe this as an explanation for Black Americans' high political participation is that they are better organized than white Americans who have a low SES (Murray & Vedlitz, 1977). I would expand on Verba and Nie's argument that Black Americans' have felt the need to be better organized in response to the feelings of powerlessness and events that exacerbate fear and threat. I agree with Verba and Nie's argument that Black Americans have developed an awareness of their status as a marginalized group, and this has resulted in this racialized group to become politically engaged. I believe this demonstrates Black Americans' sense of group consciousness. Group consciousness is when an individual identifies with their in-group, like a racialized group, and the belief that collective action is the best way to improve the groups' status and interests (Nicholson Jr. & Mei, 2023). Group consciousness is significant because it can mobilize individuals' to become politically engaged, particularly in a context of marginalization.

More recently, scholars have noted that the focus on white Americans' reasons for political mobilization fails to provide an understanding of reasons PGM decide to politically

mobilize (Leighley, 2001; Schildkraut, 2005). By only considering the *standard* tools, we are overlooking an important factor that could be the reason for political mobilization of many individuals. Schildkraut and Leighly observe scholars of U.S. political participation often rely on factors that mainly focus on white Americans' political engagement. Leighly specifically notes how the national samples of U.S. political participation focus primarily on white Americans, and then apply theories of individual mobilization to everyone else (2001). Schildkraut adds that utilizing data from respondents who are disproportionately white provides an incomplete understanding of political participation amongst all Americans. Schildkraut also notes how the standard set of individual factors that have been used to understand political mobilization has only looked at one racial group, which overlooks other factors that impact people of color (POC) individual-level political mobilization (2005).

Existing scholarship makes the clear need for more research to better understand mobilization among PGM. As the U.S. becomes more racially diverse, it is even more crucial to understand the various reasons why individuals decide to become politically mobilized, and look beyond research that focuses primarily on white American experiences. Thus, although factors like age and SES are significant to individual-level political mobilization, the following section will take into account the unique experiences of PGM, and how that may impact their individual-level political mobilization. Over the last two decades, some scholars have started to delve more deeply into factors that may encourage PGM to become politically mobilized. In the following section, I will explore some of these reasons for political mobilization, and discuss how they contribute to my own arguments focusing on the East and Southeast Asian American communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alternative Factors for Individual-Level Political Mobilization

Traditional factors such as the socioeconomic model for political participation for understanding individual-level political mobilization have demonstrated that it cannot comprehensively explain the reasons for everyone's political mobilization, specifically for PGM. As a result, other factors have been suggested to explain the reasoning behind individual-level political engagement, that is more representative of individuals in the U.S. The rest of this chapter will examine how structured mobilization, Bloemraad's alternative model of structured mobilization (2006), discrimination, panethnic linked fate, and group consciousness can contribute to individual-level political engagement.

Structured Mobilization and Alternative Model of Structured Mobilization

According to Bloemraad (2006), one explanation for individual-level political mobilization within immigrant communities is structured mobilization. Structured mobilization considers the social nature of immigrant incorporation and pays attention to the process of mobilization and meaning-making, which alters people's perceptions of the costs and benefits to becoming politically engaged for immigrants. This framework is built upon existing research including immigrant citizenship and comparative scholarship of naturalization and political engagement. Structured mobilization framework is motivated by the belief that citizenship matters to immigrants because without citizenship, they have a weakened political voice (Bloemraad, 2006). While Bloemraad's arguments apply specifically to first-generation immigrants, it highlights how an individual's understanding of the culture and political institutions impacts their political mobilization. Thus, people of second-generation or beyond,

may be more aware of the political structures and institutions, which are helpful to become politically engaged.

The term second generation was coined with the observation of the long-term effects of immigration into American society experienced by the children of immigrants (Portes et al., 2009). As a result, second generation refers to someone whose parents are immigrants (Terriquez & Kwon, 2015). For individuals' whose grandparents are immigrants, the grandchildren would be considered third generation, and so on. This term is significant because it highlights how children and descendants of immigrants become culturally fluent because they have emerged in the new environment, and are also exposed to the public K-12 education system which exposes them to political knowledge that can increase engagement (Terriquez & Kwon, 2015). Literature that focuses on down-ward assimilation emphasizes the reinforcement of social inferiority among PGM still exists, and may strengthen second generation and beyond individuals to experience feelings of marginalization, which can severely impact their mental well-being.

Bloemraad (2006) also proposes an alternative model of structured mobilization. This alternative model emphasizes political incorporation, a social process where friends, family, community organizations, and local leaders are a part of an institutional context that is shaped by government policies of diversity and newcomer settlement. This model suggests material and symbolic resources provided by the government shape the ability and interest of "social helpers" to support and mobilize, specifically in regards to citizenship. Therefore, government institutions and policies affect mobilization activities, and directly influence immigrants by indirectly affecting their goals, understandings, and resources of community organizations, and leaders (Bloemraad, 2006).

The alternative model of structured mobilization highlights the importance of individuals who are part of an institutional context that is shaped by government institutions and policies, which impact individual-level political mobilization. Bloemraad's research highlights the significance of people who are mobilized by other people (e.g. friends and community organizations), which can help explain mobilization that goes beyond citizenship. Bloemraad's scholarship goes beyond factors like income, level of education, and age, by insinuating there is an inherent willingness to become politically engaged. She highlights how structured mobilization and the alternative model proposed can begin with individuals, and not outside factors like political parties, candidates, and interest groups. Thus, it makes us question, what external factors motivate individuals to have a willingness to politically mobilize (Bloemraad, 2006)?

Social Identity Theory (SIT)

The creation and act of imposing identities onto others may motivate an individual's willingness to become politically mobilized. Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, highlights how individuals obtain a sense of self from their membership in social groups—particularly for an individual's ethnic identity. This theory postulates that individuals categorize themselves and others into distinct groups. I would highlight that it is a particular group, the dominant group, in this case, white Americans, who create these groups, and impose these identities on who they consider as "others". As a result of this categorization, it leads to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination. Social identity theory literature has demonstrated that marginalized people will increase their political involvement with their

immediate group despite feeling disempowered, dissatisfied, and engaged because of negative interpersonal experiences (Oskooii, 2016). In particular, research has demonstrated that vilification of a certain group can foster an increased sense of group-based identity among people who are removed from the immigrant experience (Lajevardi et al., 2020).

For political mobilization, ethnic identity plays an important role in understanding why ethnic groups rally together to pursue collective goals, especially in the context of perceived marginalization and/or discrimination (Thelma et al., 2024). SIT can be used to understand ethnic identity, motivations behind political mobilization, and the implications it has for intergroup relations (Thelma et al., 2024). This is due to an individual's adaptive response which may increase one's investment in their group, which may result in increased identification with one's ingroup, allowing some group members to overcome psychological barriers to political participation (Oskooii, 2016). SIT provides a background by demonstrating how categorization of an in/out group can lead to experiences of disempowerment, which can motivate their political engagement. This framework provides a foundation to understand how discrimination can encourage an individual's political mobilization.

Discrimination

Discrimination is another factor that may encourage individual's political mobilization (Schildkraut 2005; Oskooii, 2016; Oskooii, 2020). Discrimination is the act of unfair treatment of a person or group based on certain identities. Oskooii argues existing research overlooks the negative consequences of discrimination in relation to politics, specifically the political mobilization of individuals (2016).

Oskooii's research focused on feelings of discrimination among Muslim Americans, and the outcomes it has on their political mobilization. Similar to Muslim Americans, Oskooii notes the strong association between interpersonal, societal discrimination, and negative psychological outcomes among Asian, Black, Indigenous, and Latino Americans. Oskooii found that increased or decreased levels of political activism was dependent on whether the individual experienced political, societal, or personal discrimination. His research finds discrimination likely increases in-group involvement because of people's desire to feel like they belong. This is due to an individuals' adaptive response to increased their investment and identification with one's group, which can allow for individuals to overcome psychological barriers to political participation (2016).

As a result, discrimination may activate feelings such that if something happens to someone of the same racialized group, it may affect themselves. This feeling demonstrates panethnic linked fate, because it includes one's awareness of what happens to others that may impact the individual. A sense of panethnic linked fate may lead individuals to wanting to do something about the treatment they face and work within their racial group to overcome the discrimination they are experiencing. As a result, discrimination can act as a motivator or can ignite a sense of feeling of a shared panethnic identity, which may motivate individuals to attain group consciousness, which is when individuals become aware of how their group identification impacts their positioning in society, and may encourage these individuals to work collaboratively to combat issues that are of shared interests. Examples of perceptions of discrimination among PGM can enhance behavioral engagement include voting. Research has demonstrated that self-identification has consequences for engagement with the political system.

As the U.S. becomes more diverse, it is becoming increasingly relevant and crucial to consider factors such as discrimination as a factor of political mobilization. By utilizing an approach that considers discrimination, it can help scholars understand how these experiences relate to sociopolitical behavior and political attitudes of PGM. Therefore, it is necessary to explicitly look at how people racially identify themselves, and how it may impact other factors, such as perceptions of discrimination. Meaning, self-identification and perceptions of discrimination could result in increased feelings of solidarity between racialized people and a motivation to do something about the discrimination they experience. Perceptions of discrimination can promote attitudinal and national origin identification. Research has also demonstrated that political discrimination is a powerful initiator to motivate groups like Black Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos (Oskooii, 2016). Research have also identified different types of discrimination that impacts individual-level political mobilization.

Three Types of Discrimination and Its Impacts on Political Mobilization

Oskooii examines how discrimination affects political mobilization. He finds three types of discrimination can impact individual-level political mobilization: political, societal, and personal discrimination. One type of discrimination is political discrimination (PD). PD can be demonstrated in the form of laws, policies, practices, symbols, or political campaigns and discourse that deprives people of resources and/or their rights. PD has the ability to make politics more salient for individuals, thus motivating people to act against institutions or actors.

Another type of discrimination Oskooii differentiates is societal discrimination (SD). According to Oskooii, SD has the ability to undermine political participation, it includes negative actions that can be in the form of verbal/nonverbal antagonism, intimidation, avoidance, and physical assault (2020). Persistent negative interpersonal experiences may make individuals feel

less inclined to engage in politics, due to the internalization of negative attitudes, lowered sense of self-worth, confidence, and belonging. As a result, spending the time and resources on the political process may become an afterthought for some marginalized people, who may even view the political system with pessimism because of institutional inequities in their group experiences (Lajevardi et al., 2020).

The last type of discrimination is personal discrimination (PD). Personal discrimination provides an individual a more powerful realization of political and societal discrimination, and is found to have a more meaningful impact on behavior. According to Oskooii, increased or decreased political activism is dependent upon if someone has experienced political, societal, or personal discrimination. Therefore, the type of discrimination can impact one's response to increased or decreased political participation (Oskooii, 2020). The following section will examine how people identify perceived discrimination.

Identifying Discrimination: Linguistic, Communication, and Cognitive Dissonance

In addition to pointing out the scholarly gap in understanding U.S. political participation among PGM, Lajevardi et al. examined two primary mechanisms that connect cultural integration among Muslim Americans to heightened perceived discrimination, meaning how Muslim Americans identify discrimination that is directed towards them. The first mechanism was the linguistic and communication elements of integration allowed individuals to recognize micro aggressive behaviors. This implies, in order for people to perceive discrimination, they must recognize micro or macro aggressive behavior, by noting the implicit and/or explicit message and tone from the perpetrator. Thus, this ability to perceive discrimination requires substantial cultural fluency to appropriately interpret the interaction (Lajevardi et al., 2020).

The second mechanism was the reliance on the effects of cognitive dissonance, which is the psychological discomfort caused by the inconsistency in thoughts and beliefs, and when actions do not align with their beliefs. An example of this is when someone believes the United States is a country that welcomes everyone. However, when a racialized person experiences discriminatory treatment, the individual experiences cognitive dissonance which is the confusion between the sentiment that the U.S. treats everyone similarly, and the reality of being a racialized person in the U.S. The authors argue that experiencing differential treatment the individual notices will evoke cognitive dissonance. They further argue that cognitive dissonance could contribute to the understanding of political consequences of being a racialized person, which encourages PGM to reflect on their denial of the right to equal treatment by fellow citizens.

Thus, the scholars argue that some level of cultural fluency is required to determine intent and when an individual experiences psychological discomfort by inconsistent experiences with others this may lead to heightened perceptions of discrimination amongst marginalized people (Lajevardi et al. 2020). Consequently, scholars have argued that people of second generation and beyond individuals are more likely to report experiencing discrimination. Collectively, these ideas suggest the idea for future research needs to consider which group members are most likely to perceive discrimination. The research demonstrates how people of second generation and beyond who have knowledge about U.S. culture and politics and are proficient in English are more likely to perceive discrimination (Lajevardi et al. 2020).

My research focuses on young East and Southeast Asian Americans because people of second-generation and beyond, who have more knowledge about U.S. culture and politics and proficiency in English— allows them to pick up on micro and macro aggressive behaviors, implicit and explicit messages, and the tone of an individual's voice when being discriminated

against. Therefore, I believe young East and Southeast Asian Americans are more likely to be aware that they have experienced discrimination, which could have political implications.

Panethnic Linked Fate

Panethnic is a term to describe a group of individuals who share cultural, linguistic, religious, or geographic similarities. Despite the diversity within the Asian American diaspora, this diaspora has been grouped together because of imposed identities and shared experiences of racialization and discrimination (Nicholson Jr. & Mei, 2023). As mentioned previously, before the term “Asian American”, many groups identified themselves with their national origin. However, in the 1960s, university students, Emma Gee and Yuji Ichioka, coined the term, “Asian American” to create a sense of solidarity among the diverse diaspora (Nicholson Jr. & Mei, 2023). In the context of the pandemic, panethnic is an important term because it highlights how this group is lumped together and shares similar experiences of racialization, discrimination, and exclusion. During the heightened time of COVID-19, in 2020 and 2021, when anti-Asian sentiment increased significantly, it did not matter if East and Southeast Asian Americans are not Chinese American, it only mattered that they “looked” Chinese. This term highlights how the experience of mistaken identity has fatal consequences that goes beyond discrimination—that has been felt amongst Chinese Americans, East and Southeast Asian Americans.

Linked fate is the belief that one’s fate is connected to what happens to members of their own group (Nicholson Jr. & Mei, 2023). Thus, panethnic linked fate is a feeling of connectedness to members of a panethnic group, such as Asian Americans. It is possible that discrimination may have activated panethnic linked fate among East and Southeast Asian

Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Linked fate has been used to understand Black Americans' feelings of connectedness and uniformity regarding their political behavior. Michael Dawson and Katherine Tate, assert because of Black Americans' socio-historical experiences of racism in the U.S., the continued experiences of discrimination have resulted in increased feelings of a common racial bond (Le et al., 2020). Dawson and Tate argue discrimination can act as a motivating factor of a sense of panethnic linked fate. As the United States has become more racially diverse, this concept has also been applied to understand Latina/e/o/x Americans feelings of connectedness amongst members. It is also important to note that there is still continued debate about the limits of applying this terminology to Latino and Asian American groups that are more diverse than more homogenous experiences like Black Americans. In this thesis, I will be using panethnic linked fate because the rise of anti-Asian sentiment was felt amongst East and Southeast Asian Americans, and did not only target Chinese Americans. The term, panethnic linked fate, demonstrates how Asians in the United States are lumped together as one and treated as a monolith.

As of now, there has been research that has investigated Asian Americans' sense of panethnic linked fate. Scholars have found linked fate is demonstrated amongst some, but not all, Asian Americans. For instance, Masuoka found 54% of Asian Americans felt a sense of linked fate with other Asians. A more recent study from the Social Status Survey found 67% of Asian Americans feel a sense of linked fate with other Asians. The data suggests there has been an increasing sense of linked fate amongst Asian Americans over the years, particularly among second-generation individuals (Nicholson Jr. & Mei, 2023; Ruiz et al., 2023).

Nicholson Jr. and Mei have found a growing sense of linked fate among Asian Americans is likely due to the rise in anti-Asian sentiment, growing awareness of the

racialization Asian Americans experience in the U.S., and increasing societal trends of racialized groups seeing their life chances being connected to other marginalized people (2023).

Additionally, other factors that contribute to a sense of linked fate include a higher level of educational attainment, comfortability with the English language, and perceived interpersonal discrimination. Educational attainment, comfortability speaking English, and perceived interpersonal discrimination is pertinent to one's likelihood of increased panethnic linked fate because these factors have been found to increase odds of adopting the panethnic "Asian American" label, which strengthens perceptions of linked fate with other Asian Americans (Nicholson Jr. & Mei, 2023).

Scholars argue the utilization of anti-Asian and anti-immigrant messaging during the 2016 U.S. Presidential election by Trump's campaign, as well as subsequent enactment of discriminatory policies, may have increased feelings of panethnic linked fate among Asian Americans, similarly to Latinos. When asked to provide two or three sentences of feelings of linked fate, a respondent observed how the climate of explicit racism has made individuals feel an increased connection with other Asian Americans, "The climate [of] open racism being expressed... has led me to...feel like, 'I could be next'" (Le et al., 2020, p.6) They continue to describe this sense of growing connection to other Asian Americans, and note the police shootings of Black Americans and racial animus towards brown and Muslim Americans, which makes them feel like they could be next to experience racism (Le et al., 2020).

Data has demonstrated an increase in panethnic linked fate could be partially attributed to Trump's discriminatory rhetoric. Researchers found fear in the U.S. the 2016 election had a strong mobilizing impact on Asian Americans (Le et al., 2020). Le et al's demographic data included age, native born, bachelor's degree, gender (specifically female), and ethnicity (2020).

After the 2016 election, researchers found Asian Americans, specifically, Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, and Japanese Americans had a higher linked fate after the election, and this level of linked fate remained one year after (Le et al., 2020). When asked about the levels of linked fate after the 2016 election, respondents noted they felt a significantly higher level of panethnic linked fate than asked one week before the election. Scholars found a significant relationship between linked fate, fear, and anger among Asian Americans, that could explain their heightened sense of linked fate. This research also demonstrates there are implications for Asian American political behavior, specifically for mobilization by invoking collective action through a sense of panethnic linked fate (Le et al., 2020).

In the case of East and Southeast Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic, I am interested in understanding whether increased anti-Asian rhetoric, the sense of threat activated a sense of panethnic linked fate amongst members of this diaspora living in the U.S. Thus, when Asian Americans noticed the rise in anti-Asian rhetoric, it could have led them to believe that because of their racialized identity, there was a higher chance of experiencing anti-Asian discrimination.

Group Consciousness

Group consciousness is defined as an “in-group identification politicized by a set of ideological beliefs about one’s social standing, as well as a view that collective action is the best means by which the group can improve its status and realize its interests” (Nicholson Jr. & Mei, 2023, p. 4). Group consciousness involves group identification, creating a sense of belonging, political awareness of one’s group's social positioning, and a commitment to the interests of the

group. It is known to significantly influence racialized minorities' political participation and activism in efforts for equity, justice, and representation of their group and other marginalized groups (Nicholson Jr. & Mei, 2023). It is a group-based model that has been found amongst Black Americans, a key component that encourages Black American participation is racial group consciousness (Wu, 2022).

As a result of high levels of linked fate, individuals may develop group consciousness and create political decisions that are based on their racial/ethnic group (Le et al., 2020). Linked fate aligns with measuring group consciousness by indicating how a political identity is related to one's racialized identity. It is an external categorization that gives an individual's perception of how they would be treated by others. It measures an individual's perceived likelihood of being discriminated against on the basis of one's ethnicity (Wu, 2022). Researchers have found that group consciousness is flexible and easily influenced. Under the right political context, particularly if a racial identity is attacked by politicians, it can activate a sense of panethnic linked fate (Le et al., 2020).

In the past, scholars of Asian American political participation have been hesitant to apply this group-based model of behavior due to the speculation that this racialized group does not feel attached to others in their panethnic group. However, writing nearly 20 years ago, Masuoka expresses optimism that this phenomenon can be applied to understand Asian Americans' political behavior (2006). Pan-Asian identity is connected to the notion of group consciousness, which stresses the connection between an individual's membership, awareness of group outcomes, and their positionality in the U.S. racial hierarchy (Wu, 2022). Additionally events like the COVID-19 pandemic might have increased a sense of a panethnic identity, in the context

of increased anti-Asian violence, which could encourage people to feel like they need to do something to combat the increase in anti-Asian sentiment.

Similarly to panethnic linked fate, factors that contribute to a sense of group consciousness include high level of education, SES, U.S. born, people who understand how racialization contributes to lived experiences, and experiences of discrimination. Research has found more educated Asian Americans have expressed a stronger sense of group consciousness, particularly when it comes to Asians sharing a common race and culture, and similar political and economic interests. Scholars have also found a higher socioeconomic status, which often indicates an individual's privileged status that allows them the time, money, resources, and power to not only develop psychological attachment to the group but be actively involved in addressing the interests of the group (Nicholson Jr. & Mei, 2023).

Another factor that contributed to a sense of group consciousness among Asian Americans was understanding the U.S.'s racial context. This includes how racialization contributes to people's lived experiences and life chances as Asians as a panethnic group, which is often limited among Asian immigrants compared to U.S. born Asians. For that reason, U.S. born Asians should be more likely to express a stronger group identity with other Asian Americans (Nicholson Jr. & Mei, 2023).

It is possible that if Asian Americans saw an increase of anti-Asian incidents, it might have made some East and Southeast Asian Americans feel that their fate is connected with other members of the East and Southeast Asian diaspora, that with the increase of anti-Asian rhetoric and violence, they could be next to experience this sentiment. As a result, this feeling of connectedness amongst members during a time of increased anti-Asian sentiment in the U.S. may have led to a feeling of group consciousness. The increase in anti-Asian sentiment and

violence may have led East and Southeast Asian Americans to become aware of how their Asian identity impacts their positioning in social and political society. Thus, this group may be more likely to come together to pursue action to advocate for their shared interests during a turbulent time of anti-Asians sentiment.

Conclusion

Building on all of this prior research, in my thesis, I am interested in testing the political mobilization of East and Southeast Asian American young adults' political mobilization. One independent variable includes generation status. I anticipate East and Southeast Asian American young adults, who are second generation and above are more likely to perceive discrimination because they were born in the U.S. and/or lived in the country for the majority of their life. As a result, they are proficient in English and have attained knowledge about U.S. culture, and have the ability to recognize micro and macro aggressive behavior, and can rely on the effects of cognitive dissonance (Terriquez & Kwon, 2015; Lajevardi et al., 2020).

Another independent variable that my research will include is adoption. The Asian American diaspora is vastly diverse. One subgroup of this larger diaspora are transracial adoptees who were born outside the U.S. and brought to the country. Chinese American transracial adoptees are the second largest subgroup of transracial adoptees in the United States, with many of them who were adopted from 1999 to 2019. Thus, because of this unique identity, it has led to a particular experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, adoption will be included to understand the impact it had on individuals within this subgroup (Wing & Park-Taylor, 2022).

From the literature that I have reviewed, I believe discrimination is a significant factor of the mobilization of East and Southeast Asian American young adults in response to the rise in anti-Asian sentiment and violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, when elected officials utilize language that associates the virus with a certain ethnicity, such as calling COVID-19, “China virus”, it activates panethnic linked fate amongst East and Southeast Asian American young adults, because of the fear of being blamed for the pandemic. I hypothesize that this encouraged many East and Southeast Asian American young adults who choose to do something about the vilification of this diaspora in response to the racist anti-Asian rhetoric that swept the United States. I think if discrimination occurs, it will most likely increase chances of experiencing panethnic linked fate and could result in a sense of group consciousness, by combating anti-Asian violence through political mobilization.

Although there is some research that has been conducted that focuses on discrimination as a factor for individual-level political mobilization, the literature does not seem to specify the age group of the research subjects. I wonder if the difference in age may impact political mobilization. My research focuses specifically on individuals who were either in high school or university during COVID-19. Existing research has not yet fully explored how events like COVID-19, that impact marginalized groups, impact their political mobilization (or lack thereof). Much of the research focused primarily on interpersonal experiences, which can be a result from a notable event similar to COVID-19, however, the research did not mention how events like COVID-19, may impact individual-level political mobilization.

Due to COVID-19 being discovered at the end of 2019, there is not much research yet that focuses on the impacts this pandemic has had on East and Southeast Asian American young adults. I seek to fill this gap with my thesis project by examining the political engagement of

East and Southeast Asian American young adults. I will accomplish this research by conducting a survey and interviews with this target audience to get a better picture and understanding of East and Southeast Asian American young adults' experiences regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and political mobilization (or lack thereof). In the following chapter, I will provide historical context on the arrival and immigration of some Asian Americans into the United States. In addition, this chapter will also demonstrate how Asian Americans were racialized and discriminated against, which led to their treatment as conditional citizens through the passage of legislation and U.S. Supreme Court cases.

Chapter 4: Racialization of Asian Americans and COVID-19

This thesis examines how a hostile political context can impact the political mobilization of East and Southeast Asian American young adults. Chapter four will provide historical background of the arrival and immigration of Asians into the United States. This chapter will also include history about the way Asians and Asian Americans have become racialized through legislation and U.S. Supreme Court cases. This chapter will also discuss how Orientalism and “Yellow Peril” have impacted the racialization of Asians and Asian Americans. Additionally, this chapter will highlight how the COVID-19 pandemic became racialized in the United States. Lastly, this chapter will focus on the contemporary racialization of Asian Americans in the United States. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the historical context of the racialization of Asians and Asian Americans in the United States, and the way this racialized group has become associated with disease, and its implications on the hostile context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the political mobilization of East and Southeast Asian Americans.

In the United States, during times of instability Asian/Asian Americans have become quickly blamed for the negative events and become the scapegoat (Espiritu, 1992). Examples of the scapegoating of Asian/Asian Americans include Detroit, Michigan during the 1980s and its struggling auto industry and the possibility of a pandemic—which can be demonstrated through examples like in the late 1800s and early 1900s of the bubonic plague, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) of 2003, and most recently, COVID-19 (Tessler et al., 2020). These examples will be discussed in further detail in this chapter. The scapegoating of Asian Americans in the U.S. has resulted in the racialization of this group as a group that is distinctly different from the dominant group, white Americans. While events such as a struggling economy or the spread of a contagious disease occurs, white Americans are often granted innocence, and are not blamed for the failing economy or the spread of a disease, unlike a racialized minority group like Asian Americans.

Among the Asian American diaspora there are many differences and similarities regarding national origin groups that has researchers considering if the group's diverse experiences is worthy to be considered as a cohesive political community. To understand if it is politically relevant to consider this entire group as a cohesive political group, it is important to understand Asian Americans' lives outside of the country and what factors lead them to come to the U.S. In this section, I will focus on Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, and Vietnamese Americans. In addition to providing the context of Asian immigration to the United States, this paper will highlight how the U.S. has responded to the increase in Asian immigrants.

Conditional Status of Asian Americans Through Policy and U.S. Supreme Court Cases

Filipino Arrival & Immigration

The earliest Asian settlement in the U.S. can be traced to the mid-1700s when settlers from the Philippines arrived on Spanish ships as part of the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade. Filipinos initially migrated to the U.S. as agricultural laborers. Unlike many Asian settlers, Filipinos arrived as a subject of territory that was administered by the U.S., not as immigrants from another sovereign country. As a consequence, Filipinos were able to organize strikes without fear of reprisal and deportation (Wong et al., 2021). More recently, thousands of Filipino professionals have migrated to the U.S. (Wong et al., 2021). Additionally, because many residents in the former U.S. territory speak English, it led to schools in the U.S. continuing to recruit teachers from the Philippines until the late 2000s (Wong et al., 2011). Following Filipinos, Chinese immigrants were the second group from the Asian American diaspora that is being included in this thesis to arrive in the United States.

Chinese Immigration

Chinese immigration to the United States can be traced to the late 1840s. Immigrants from China immigrated because of social, economic, and political turmoil that occurred in China. The earliest Chinese immigrants traveled to Hawai'i and worked on sugar plantations. Later in 1849, generations of Chinese immigrants immigrated to the U.S. after the discovery of Gold in California. Chinese immigrants make up half of the contemporary Chinese population, including people whose families settled in the U.S. many generations ago. The original immigrants from China came from poor rural backgrounds, where many relatives arrived as a part of the family reunification program since 1965, likely to come from similar economic circumstances. In the

past two decades of political turmoil and rapid urbanization in China, it led to the further diversification of the Chinese immigrant community in the U.S., including socio-economic status (SES), political ideology, and homeland regions (Wong et al., 2011). In response to the increase in immigrants who arrived from the Philippines and China, white Americans in the U.S., were not particularly welcoming of Asian immigrants and responded by othering the Chinese immigrants and associating them with foreignness, which eventually led to violence against the Chinese immigrants.

Chae Chan Ping v. United States (1889)

The association of foreignness with Asian Americans can be dated back to the end of the 19th century, when early Chinese arrivals in the U.S. sought economic opportunity (Loh, 2020). The influx of Chinese immigrants led to sentiments regarding economic competition, which stoked nativism (Loh, 2020). As a result, it led to the “driving out” period, where white Americans burned Chinatowns, terrorized, and lynched Chinese immigrants (Loh, 2020). The heightened sentiment of nativism encouraged the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act suspended immigration of Chinese laborers. It was the first federal immigration restriction based on membership of a certain ethnic group. In response, some Chinese immigrants attempted to challenge the law. In 1889, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Chinese Exclusion Act in *Chae Chan Ping v. United States*. The court suggested that exclusion was needed to keep the peace and prevent violence. Additionally, the majority on the Supreme Court equated the influx of Chinese immigrants as an “invasion” that would be a menace to our civilization (Loh, 2020, p. 1337). The court also reinforced foreign sentiments by describing

Chinese people as “inferior” strangers who were unwilling to change their traditions. The language characterized Chinese immigrants with an “impassable difference” with white people, and they were “incapable of... intellectual development beyond a certain point” (Loh, 2020, p. 1337). As a result of the white American’s anger with Chinese immigrants, the courts utilized language that clearly labeled Chinese people as different from whites and laid a foundation for the notion of foreignness to be associated with Chinese immigrants. As more immigrants arrived in the country, the United States government responded differently. The diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and Japan led the country to accept immigrants from Japan.

Japanese Immigration

For Japanese Americans, significant migration from Japan to Hawai’i and mainland U.S. began in 1890 when thousands began working in agriculture (Wong et al., 2011). In the late 1800s and 1920s, 400,000 Japanese immigrated to the West Coast and Hawai’i, mostly as contract laborers and were recruited to work on sugar plantations and other commercial agriculture ventures (Wong et al., 2011). Diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Japan have also contributed to the immigration of Japanese and their political incorporation patterns. The first generation, Issei, had been strike leaders on sugar plantations and founded ethnic associations. Later, second-generation, Nisei, and third-generation, Sansei, were mostly professional and highly educated immigrants who came to the U.S. Therefore, their occupations and educational attainment encouraged their participation in the Asian American movement in the late 1960s to mid-1970s. These factors also led to the fight for reparations after the internment of Japanese Americans, which deepened their sense of ethnic identity and increased their prominence in U.S. politics (Wong et al., 2011). By 2008, a majority of Asian American

elected officials were of Japanese descent. The Japanese American population includes a larger portion of second-, third-, and later generations than other Asian American subgroups.

Additionally, the Japanese-origin population in the U.S. has the second-highest average income of any racial/national origin group in the U.S. (Wong et al., 2011). Japanese Americans also have high rates of citizenship, largely due to the fact that more than half of this population (57%) was born in the U.S. The history of Japanese migration to the U.S. led to the early creation of organizations like the Japanese Citizens League, and long-standing movement seeking for redress for the internment camps (Wong et al., 2011). Another group that has immigrated to the United States recently is Korean Americans. Like Japanese Americans, this group also worked on sugar plantations when they arrived.

Korean Immigration

Unlike Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese immigration into the United States. Mass migration of Korean immigrants to the U.S is relatively recent, although Koreans have been in the U.S. for well over a century. The first mass migration of Koreans began when labor immigrants arrived in Hawai'i to work on the sugar plantations (Wong et al., 2011). The reason for the early immigrants leaving Korea was due to the 1901 famine and the harsh economic conditions in Korea. Some of the first Korean immigrant laborers often came from more urban and Christian backgrounds than Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese counterparts, 40% of early Korean immigrants identified as Christians (Wong et al., 2011). Between 1910-1924, the National Origins Act passed, and more than a thousand picture brides entered into the U.S. (mostly Hawai'i) to partner with Korean bachelor immigrants (Wong et al., 2011). Similar to this time, a smaller group of Korean students, intellectuals, and political exiles from the Japanese

occupation of Korea arrived in the U.S. (Wong et al., 2011). The influx of Koreans resumed after the Korean War as brides and orphans arrived in the U.S. in significant numbers. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act also resulted in the number of Koreans skyrocketing (Wong et al., 2011).

The U.S. Census in 1960 reported the original Korean population was 25,000, and by 2000, the figure exploded to more than a million. The post-1965 wave of Korean immigrants were often college-educated and middle class, many of whom were professional and technical workers in Korea who left the country beginning in the 1970s (Wong et al., 2011). As the urban jobs in Korea became more scarce, some decided to immigrate to the U.S (Wong et al., 2011). However, as more Korean professionals arrived in the U.S., they also encountered discrimination and experienced licensing restrictions, which resulted in many Koreans turning to self-employment in small businesses, which lead to the prominent role of Koreans in urban areas with shops which lead to the heightened targeting and visibility in U.S. urban and racial politics (Wong et al., 2011). In response to the consumer boycotts and violence, it led the group to become more attentive and involved in politics, despite the demographic disadvantages this group experienced (Wong et al., 2021). The Spring of 2006 when marches across the U.S. occurred, defending immigrant rights took place, Korean American organizations and individuals played an important role in building coalitions with Latino groups.

California Land Law (1913)

With the influx of immigrants, in the early 1900s, many began working on farms. Similar to the immigration of Chinese people in the late 1840s, white Americans reacted in a similar manner, worried they would be out of a job, fueling a sense of competition with the immigrants—

—resulting in the passage of the 1913 California Alien Land Law. This law prevented ‘aliens ineligible to citizenship’ from owning a fee, absolute interest in agricultural property, and entering into leases for land longer than three years (Loh, 2020). This law also made generalizations of Asian immigrants, which allowed anti-Chinese sentiment to be transferred to all Asian immigrants, “transferr[ed] and generaliz[ed] anti-Chinese sentiments to all Asian immigrants” and “provided a bridge that sustained the virulent anti-Asian animus that linked the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 with the internment of Japanese American citizens pursuant to Executive Order 9066” (Loh, 2020, p. 1342). Thus, the mapping of anti-Chinese sentiment onto anti-Japanese sentiment leveraged existing anti-Asian stereotypes to create a justification for the internment and deprivation of civil liberties of Japanese Americans, which resulted on the internment of over 1000,000 people of Japanese ancestry, nearly 70,000 of whom were U.S. citizens, by President Franklin Roosevelt (Loh, 2020). The passage of the California Land Law of 1913 demonstrates how generalizations about Chinese immigrants were applied to other Asian Americans, illustrating how a law encouraged “Asian lumping”. According to Espiritu, “Asian lumping” is when hostilities are directed towards Asian subgroups that affect all Asians. This occurs because non-Asians cannot distinguish between the different Asian subgroups. As a result, they target all Asians or punish one for another’s behavior (Espiritu, 1992). Lastly, this law is an example of how foreignness became associated with Asian American identity.

Ozawa v. United States (1922)

In addition to laws associating Asian Americans with foreignness, the United States Supreme Court set the precedence for who could and who could not gain citizenship because of their identity. In 1922, Takao Ozawa sought to naturalize as a U.S. citizen. Ozawa’s attempt to

naturalize made it all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In *Ozawa v. United States*, he drew on “biological, social, and performative conceptions of race” to argue that he was white. He tried to demonstrate that he had assimilated to white culture, arguing that his skin color was white, and sought to distinguish between the Japanese race from the Chinese race. However, the court rejected Ozawa’s arguments that his color of skin made him white and alluded to “numerous scientific authorities” (Loh, 2020). The court maintained that white persons were synonymous with “a person of the Caucasian race”—as a result, Ozawa was not eligible for naturalization. The decision of the *Ozawa v. United States* case upheld that people of Japanese descent could not naturalize as citizens because of their non-whiteness (Loh, 2020). This established a precedent that citizenship could be withheld on the basis of one’s racial identity, racializing this group, which was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. Therefore, East Asian Americans were racialized and labeled as “nonwhite”, as a justification for not giving these groups U.S. citizenship.

United States v. Thind (1923)

Months after the *Ozawa v. United States* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court saw another case: *United States v. Thind*. The *United States v. Thind* case decision expanded the definition of who was considered “nonwhite”. With this decision, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the scientific connection that equated Caucasian with “white” for purposes of the naturalization statute, that had been previously used in *Ozawa v. United States*. In this case, the Court abandoned the scientific test from Ozawa because of visual perception of the difference between “blond Scandinavian[s]” and “brown Hindu[s], and relied on a “common knowledge test”. As a result of the *United States v. Thind* decision, the U.S. began a campaign of denaturalizing

citizens of Asian Indian descent (Loh, 2020). This court decision highlights how Indian Americans were racialized based on their skin color and racialized as “nonwhite”, to reject their attempt of gaining citizenship and denaturalize some Indian Americans.

Korematsu v. United States

Another significant is the U.S. Supreme Court case that focused on the internment of Japanese Americans. The *Korematsu v. United States* decision justified the scapegoating of Japanese Americans for the sake of national security. In 1944, Fred T. Korematsu challenged the conviction for remaining in an exclusion zone and refused to go to the internment camp. However, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the government’s interest in national security justified the deprivation of his liberty (Loh, 2020). The internment of Japanese Americans tells a cautionary story, by characterizing Asian Americans as perpetually foreign, which was used to weaponize unfounded attacks on loyalty, it demonstrated how earlier anti-Chinese sentiment about an inability to adopt U.S. culture was easily transferred to another East Asian group (Loh, 2020). This case sheds a light on how scapegoating was enabled by the highest judicial court in the country— enabling the unconstitutional internment of Japanese Americans. This case also demonstrates how this ruling encouraged the notion that Asian Americans are foreign and questions the loyalty of this group, insinuating because of their racialized identity, that this group are not “fully American”.

The U.S. courts were responsible for deciding who was white, and why they were considered white. By bringing whiteness to the forefront, and defining it, the U.S. courts were able to exclude anyone they wanted. As a result, only white Americans were allowed to gain citizenship (Loh, 2020). The cases demonstrated ways the courts legally constructed an Asian

American “race” by relying on pseudoscience, common knowledge, and performative standard of assimilation (Loh, 2020). As a result, the role of the court established our understandings of racial identity, and the associations of foreignness with Asians. Lastly, the judicial branch was not only responsible for entrenching the notion of Asian Americans as foreign, it also legally constructed racial categories and boundaries that were based on performative notions of whiteness and assimilation (Loh, 2020).

Vietnamese Refugees & Immigration

In comparison to the experiences of other Asian Americans that have been discussed in this section, Vietnamese Americans have had a different arrival in the U.S. compared to their counterparts. In 1975, Saigon fell and the U.S. withdrew from Vietnam, as a result, more than 130,000 Vietnamese refugees were admitted into the U.S. (Wong et al., 2011). The first wave of Vietnamese immigrants were well educated, the majority spoke English because they were from Saigon and other urban areas of Vietnam (Wong et al., 2011). The second wave of Vietnamese immigrants arrived in the U.S. in 1978. This second wave included a large number of refugees who fled the country in small overcrowded boats after the brutal reform, which led to the mass relocations, closing of ethnic Chinese businesses, and torture of dissidents (Wong et al., 2011). By 1979 and 1980, around 90,000 Vietnamese immigrants had arrived in the U.S. (Wong et al., 2011).

By 2000, Vietnamese Americans made up the fourth-largest Asian American group in the U.S. (Wong et al., 2011). Unlike other Asian American subgroups, Vietnamese Americans received support from the federal government. From 1975 and 1986, the U.S. government provided five billion dollars for refugee assistance programs, many of the funds being given to Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian populations in the U.S., with help from church groups and

non-profit organizations, with the goal of resettling Vietnamese refugees in the country (Wong et al., 2011). Compared to their counterparts, Vietnamese immigrants are much more likely to be recently arrived immigrants who have fewer economic resources (Wong et al., 2011). In 1990, 25% of the Vietnamese origin population in the U.S., versus 14% of the Asian-origin population as a whole were living in poverty (Wong et al., 2011).

Most Vietnamese immigrants arrived in the U.S. as political refugees and had no intention of returning permanently. As a result of their status as political refugees, this group has higher rates of citizenship, and have a political orientation that is attributed to strong anti-communist strain within the community. Similar to Cuban Americans, who have received federal assistance by the U.S. government, in the 1980s, Vietnamese Americans have also gained a foothold in local political offices (Wong et al., 2011).

Although the Asian American diaspora is diverse, and the reasons for arrival and immigrating into the United States varies from national-origin group and individual circumstances, the way that the United States has reacted to the immigration of Asian Americans is for the most part similar: fear. Through the processes of othering and racializing this group, associating them with ideas of foreignness, and lumping this group together to ensure that this characterization continues, during times of instability, Asian Americans are blamed and scapegoated. In addition to the immigration of Asians in the United States, the racialization of Asians/Asians Americans also occurred before this diaspora arrived in the country.

History of Orientalism and Yellow Peril in the U.S.

Orientalism & Yellow Peril

Anti-Asian sentiment did not appear out of thin air, in response to COVID-19. The U.S. has a history of anti-Asian rhetoric that dates to the late 18th century, and continues to persist to this day. Asians and Asian Americans have experienced harassment and physical violence, a marginalizing stereotype, the “yellow peril” myth at the turn of the 20th century, verbal attacks and microaggressions by individuals, and on an institutional level, the government either implicitly or explicitly reinforcing, encouraging, and perpetuating violence through racist and xenophobic discriminatory sentiment and through exclusionary policies (Gover et al., 2020).

Orientalism began anti-Asian racism and the stereotyping of the East, in comparison to the West, as a justification for the colonization and domination of this region. Orientalism is the study of how the West viewed, stereotyped, and dominated the East. Through Orientalism, the West portrayed itself as a superior civilization compared to the “exotic” and “inferior” “Orient”. Orientalism framed the “Orient” as a constant threat to the well-being of Westerners (Li & Nicholson Jr., 2021). It was used to justify colonial aspirations by Europe and the U.S. Orientalism did not necessarily die out, instead, it took a new form: the “Yellow Peril”.

The Yellow Peril is a racist metaphor that refers to East and Southeast Asia and, as an extension, East and Southeast Asians, as an existential danger to the West. It portrays Asians as dishonest, disease carriers, and culturally and politically inferior to whites. In addition, it characterizes Asians as unassimilable foreigners who would overtake the U.S. and wreak social and economic havoc. Yellow Peril sentiments can be noticed during times of crisis or in times of competition, as in situations like COVID-19: a scapegoat to blame for COVID-19. This can be demonstrated when over a century ago, the press, politicians, and public health experts believed

Asian immigrants were a menace to the country's health morals, technological superiority, and well-being of white Americans. COVID-19 is an example of a crisis that revitalizes Yellow Peril sentiment that enables anti-Asian sentiment, "othering", and racializing practices that expose the marginalized and conditional status of Asian Americans in the U.S. (Li & Nicholson Jr., 2021).

Asians/Asian Americans As The Physical Embodiment of Contagious Disease(s)

During the late 1800s, the Yellow Peril rhetoric was reinforced through the idea that characterized Chinese immigrants as disease carriers, who "ignored...all laws of hygiene and sanitation, bred, and disseminated disease, thereby endangering the welfare of the state and nation" (Reny & Barreto, 2022, p. 214). Other theories that strengthened this notion was that Chinese immigrants were the cause of the epidemics in the late 1800s. These theories blamed Chinese immigrants for the epidemics, with the belief that the poor sanitary conditions that these immigrants were forced to live in "tainted" the local air (Reny & Barreto, 2022). As a result, public health officials blamed Chinese immigrants with their "foul and disgusting vapors" as a source of the pollution and disease in U.S. cities (Reny & Barreto, 2022, p. 214). Consequently, as a justification for the anti-Chinese sentiment, lawmakers often cited public health and safety to justify laws banning Chinese immigrants (Reny & Barreto, 2022). Due to health and safety laws, Chinese laborers were often subjected to harsher medical examinations that were invasive and traumatic medical exams than other immigrants who crossed the U.S. border (Reny & Barreto, 2022).

In 1899, Honolulu officials burned the Chinatown in Hawai'i (Tessler et al., 2020). In the following year, San Francisco quarantined residents of Chinatown, and regulated food and people because they believed the food was unclean, and that Asians were the cause of the epidemic (Tessler et al., 2020). In 2003, SARS broke out, and the U.S. responded by focusing on

Chinatowns as epicenters. As a result, 14% of Americans reported avoiding Asian businesses, and Asian Americans experienced increased threat and anxiety amidst this outbreak (Tessler et al., 2020). These examples of the bubonic plague and the SARS outbreak demonstrate how Asian immigrants, and people of Asian descent quickly became the embodiment of a disease.

The legacy of white supremacy has associated white bodies with innocence and purity, while associating PGM² bodies as unclean, uncivilized, and dangerous (Tessler et al., 2020). The spread of the bubonic plague, SARS, and COVID-19 also demonstrates how discrimination and attacks emerged against Asian Americans, as non-Asian Americans wanted someone to scapegoat their anger and fear about the virus. The following section will illustrate how these long-held racist ideas have persisted into the 21st century and how political figures, mainstream media, and social media have characterized the COVID-19 pandemic and associating East and Southeast Asian Americans with the virus.

Racializing COVID-19 and Associating the Virus with Asian Americans: Political Elites, Mainstream Media, and Social Media

Mainstream Media

As mentioned previously, during times of instability, it is not uncommon for the U.S. government and its citizens to scapegoat who they blame for economic instability or a contagious

² I prefer using the acronym PGM instead of 'POC'. The term 'people of the global majority' is a collective term that refers to Black, Asian, Latina/e/o, Indigenous, and individuals who have been racialized as "ethnic minorities". Unlike "racial minorities", this term highlights how these groups make up 80% of the world's population. POC situates whiteness as the norm. By examining the world through experiences of whiteness, we fail to consider the world's norm for most people in the world. Shifting this language allows us to disrupt the conversation about race and center PGM and challenges whiteness as the norm while challenging the subordination PGM experience

disease. COVID-19 is the most recent example of the scapegoating and racialization of Asian/Asian Americans in the U.S. Despite it being the 21st century, the U.S. still holds onto remnants of Orientalism and Yellow Peril.

During the early reporting of COVID-19 in the U.S., stock photographs of Asians in masks were utilized. Major outlets such as the *New York Times* and *Forbes* selected photographs of Chinatown and Asian people wearing masks when covering stories about COVID-19, even if the news was irrelevant to Chinatowns or China (Li & Nicholson Jr., 2021). Additionally, some of the first reports labeled COVID-19 as the “Wuhan virus” and “Chinese virus”. When news coverage focused on the seafood market in Wuhan, China, wild animal consumption was reported as the cause of the virus. As a result of this news coverage of the pandemic, memes and jokes about Chinese people eating bats circulated online. An example of this is when U.S. Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) justified referring to COVID-19 as “Chinese virus”, by saying, “China is to blame because the culture where people eat bats and snakes and dogs and things like that...” (Reny & Barreto, 2022). Scholars argue that it was relatively easy for people to associate and treat Asian Americans as a physical embodiment of COVID-19 due to the history of Yellow Peril.

Therefore, anyone who “looked” or could be confused with Chinese ancestry became associated with COVID-19. Reports by U.S. media provided a narrative that blamed China, and people of Chinese descent as the origin of COVID-19 (Tessler et al., 2020). Due to the association of Asian faces, food practices, and “jokes” about Asian people, it quickly created an illustration of Asian people as an embodiment of China and as potential carriers of COVID-19. In the U.S., the virus was identified as foreign, and it was expressed through xenophobia, prejudice, and racism against Asian Americans (Tessler et al., 2020).

Political Elites

When COVID-19 entered the U.S., it was quickly racialized by the media and prominent politicians. The WHO explicitly named SARS-CoV-2 virus, COVID-19, to avoid using any regional or ethnic stigma. Despite this, U.S. politicians, administrative officials, and media commentators referred to the disease as “Chinese virus” or “Wuhan virus”. An example of this is when Donald Trump deliberately and repeatedly referred to the virus as the “Chinese virus” or “Kung flu”. By utilizing “Chinese virus”, “Wuhan virus”, or “Kung flu”, it exacerbated public sentiment that fueled the flames for anti-Asian sentiment in the wake of COVID-19.

Li and Nicholson Jr. (2021) find this intentional naming of the virus exacerbated anti-Asian racism in public sentiment. Li and Nicholson Jr. found more than 50% of respondents said they somewhat/strongly agreed with Trump for using “Chinese virus” to address COVID-19. Additionally, other political figures who embraced this racist rhetoric include: U.S. Senator Tom Cotton, a Republican representing Arkansas, a former Director of the White House National Trade Council Peter Navarro, and former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who served early in the Trump administration. Senator Cotton embraced a fringe theory that provided a false narrative that the virus was created by Chinese scientists as a biowarfare weapon. The White House adviser, Peter Navarro, accused China of sending “hundreds of Chinese” to “seed” COVID-19 across the world (Li & Nicholson Jr., 2021). Pompeo, utilized the term “Wuhan virus” (Li & Nicholson Jr., 2021). Additionally, a Republican strategy memo advised Senate candidates to justify using language like “Chinese virus” and “Wuhan virus” to refer to COVID-19. When U.S. authorities explicitly associated the virus with China and the Chinese government, it implicitly and explicitly insinuated that COVID-19 was a Chinese problem, the

other's problem, *not* a U.S. problem. Therefore, it fueled anti-Asian hostility from top-down (Li & Nicholson Jr., 2021).

Trump's anti-Asian rhetoric created a climate where it was socially acceptable to express and act on anti-Asian sentiment. Scholars noticed an "emboldening effect" that occurs when political elites embrace racism. When elites utilize racialized language, it violates the norms of tolerance and permits the mass public to follow suit (Chan et al., 2021). In other words, when politicians are publicly expressing racist language, it signals to the public that this is socially acceptable and may make some people feel comfortable openly expressing racist ideas and thoughts. This can be observed through the impact social media has had on the spread of racist ideas about Asian cultures.

Social Media

Mass media and social media are significant because they facilitate the dissemination of derogatory content, conspiracy theories, and hateful speech towards people of Asian descent. Researchers found sinophobia and hostility against Asians increased in social media (Li & Nicholson Jr., 2021). Sinophobia is the intense fear and hatred of China and people of Chinese descent. Chan and colleagues (2021) use data from X to track the spread of anti-Asian sentiment in the U.S. Analysis from 1.4 million tweets found Trump racialized the public health crisis using terms like "Kung Flu," and how anti-Asian attitudes increased since the COVID-19 outbreak among the general population (Chan et al., 2021).

In addition to the hostility against Asians on social media, conspiracy theories regarding the origins of COVID-19 surged. On social media, conspiracy theories became viral and utilized sinophobic slurs. Researchers found a combination of Asian ethnic slurs: "chinkiepox", "kung flu", and "chinaids"— implying the virus was engineered. Additionally, the terms "bioweapon"

and “bio attack” were used on 4Chan’s, an anonymous image board website, to describe the virus (Chan et al., 2021). Although it is the 21st century, stereotypes of the Yellow Peril have prevailed and have been reinforced through social and political media. As a consequence, social media can make the spread of conspiracy theories and racist sentiment more pervasive and seem more acceptable.

COVID-19 is an example of how stereotypes evolve to remain prevalent among non-Asian Americans as a way to scapegoat and homogenize Asian Americans through the lens of Orientalism and Yellow Peril rhetoric. The way that Asian Americans and COVID-19 have been racialized has political implications. As the United States has evolved, so has the way Asian Americans have been racialized. While there has been change in the racialization of Asian Americans in the past years, it is crucial to note how old sentiments of Orientalism and the Yellow Peril still persist, and how other stereotypes of Asian Americans have been utilized to support the idea that the United States is a “post-racial” society.

Anti-Asian Violence in the U.S.

Anti-Asian violence in the U.S. did not begin during COVID, it has occurred since the mid-19th century (Espiritu, 1992). Often with incidents of violence against Asian/Asian Americans, it is often a reaction to the current social, political, and economic events that are shaping the lives of the perpetrator. In the past, Asians/Asian Americans have been scapegoated for the loss of jobs, economic competition, and contagious diseases. One notable example of the scapegoating of Asian/Asian Americans is the murder of Vincent Chin in 1982 (Espiritu, 1992). In the 1980s, Detroit City had one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation, about a third of auto-workers in the industry lost their job due to Japanese imports making up almost a quarter

of the market (Espiritu, 1992). As a result of Japan's auto industries success, some of the workers blamed the country for their loss of their job (Espiritu, 1992).

On June 19, 1982, Vincent Chin, a 27-year-old Chinese American draftsman stopped at a bar in Detroit with some of his friends to celebrate his wedding (Espiritu, 1992). Chin became involved in a fist fight with Ronald Ebens, who was a white Chrysler factory foreman (Espiritu, 1992). The fight escalated, and moved into the parking lot where Ebens pulled out a baseball bat from his car (Espiritu, 1992). Afterwards, Ebens and Nitz stalked Chin, finding him at a fast food restaurant and Nitz grabbed Chin from behind while Ebens struck Chin's head at least four times (Espiritu, 1992). Three witnesses stated that Ebens directed a racial slur at Chin, another witness heard, "because of you... we're out of work" (Espiritu, 1992, p. 142). This quote implies that Ebens and Nitz mistook him for Japanese descent, thus, blaming him for the layoffs in the auto industry. Although a manslaughter conviction in Michigan covered a maximum of 15 years in prison, the Wayne County Judge Charles Kaufman imposed no prison time for Ebens and Nitz, only sentenced the two to three year's probation, and fined about \$3,000 each (Espiritu, 1992). Judge Kaufman cited the defendant's stable work backgrounds and lack of criminal background as justification for the light punishment, and implied that these were not the type of people who should be in prison (Espiritu, 1992).

The murder of Vincent Chin is one of the most well-known cases of mistaken identity. Chin was a Chinese American, however, two white men mistook him for Japanese, blamed him for his assumed ethnicity, and killed him because of the assumed ethnic identity. Chin's case is important because it also highlights how the murder of this man activated pan-Asian levels of solidarity (Espiritu, 1992). This case embodies the deathly consequences of Asian lumping, and how this murder creates a sense of pan-Asian solidarity. The following section will examine the

contemporary racialization of Asian Americans, and where this group fits in the black and white binary.

Contemporary Racialization of Asian Americans

Racial Triangulation Theory

In response to the increasing diversity in the U.S., scholars such as Omi and Winant (1994) have focused on examining racialization. Their work has highlighted how different racialized groups have become racialized in the U.S.: Indigenous people in the U.S. experienced genocide, the racial enslavement of Black people, Mexican individuals were invaded and colonized, and Asians faced exclusion (Omi & Winant, 1994). Another approach that has been utilized to understand the racialization of groups in the U.S is the emphasis of the ordering of groups into a single scale of status and privilege, with whites at the top and Black people at the bottom, and any other racialized group in between white and Black, thus creating a racial hierarchy (Kim, 1999). However, these approaches have shortcomings. Claire Jean Kim highlights how these approaches ascribe mutual autonomy to respective racialization processes that are in a mutual relationship of one another (1999).

In 1999, Claire Jean Kim proposed racial triangulation theory to understand the unique racialization of Asian Americans in the U.S. At the time of writing *The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans*, many scholars were advocating for going beyond the Black and white binary in discussions of race, in response to unprecedented levels of Asian and Latin American immigration that has diversified the U.S. According to Kim, Asian Americans have been racialized relative to and through interactions with white and Black people. Therefore, respective

racialization trajectories of these groups are interrelated, meaning the racialization of racialized groups are connected to one another (Kim, 1999).

Kim argues Asian Americans have been “racially triangulated” in relation to white and Black Americans in the field of racial positions for the past century and a half. They further claim that public discourse about racial groups and their relative status generates a field of racial position in a given time and place (1999). Chief architects of the field are responsible for defining the field and have continuously contested and negotiated within and among racial groups at the elite level and level of popular culture and everyday life. Chief architects of the field are what many would consider major opinion makers including white elected officials, journalists, scholars, community leaders, business elites, etc. (Kim, 1999). As a result, groups have become racialized in comparison to one another and racialized differently. The field of racial positions acts as a normative blueprint for who should get what—it shapes opportunities, constraints, and possibilities with which marginalized groups must contend, ultimately, reinforcing white dominance and privilege (Kim, 1999). Kim argues Asian Americans are racially triangulated vis-à-vis Black and whites, and on the field of racial positions, located in reference to the two other points on the graph, representing the racial positioning of white and Black Americans (1999).

According to Kim, Racial triangulation occurs through either two processes. The first, linked processes include the “relative valorization” where the dominant racial group (whites) are assigned an elevated positioning and valorize subordinate groups (Asian Americans) relative to the subordinate group (Black Americans) on cultural/racial grounds to dominate both groups (Kim, 1999). Relative valorization highlights how the dominant racial group, whites, assign value to Asian Americans, in relation to Black Americans, while still dominating both groups.

This highlights that despite the valorization of Asian Americans, it is done so strategically as a way to maintain white dominance.

The second process is the processes of “civic ostracism” where the dominant racial group (whites) construct a subordinate group (Asian Americans) as a perpetual foreigner and unassimilable with whites on cultural and racial grounds to ostracize them from the body politic and civic membership (Kim, 1999). As a result of civic ostracism, Asian Americans become associated with the forever foreigner concept, and never accepted as an insider in the United States. Consequently, due to being associated with foreignness, it enables the U.S. to exclude Asian Americans from being considered citizens and participating in politics.

The racial triangulation of Asian Americans has persisted since the mid-1800s to the present. As the U.S. has evolved, so has the racial triangulation of Asian Americans, where slight changes were made in the post-1965 era to keep up with contemporary norms of colorblindness (Kim, 1999). Before the civil rights era, racial triangulation occurred openly in cultural and racial terms. However, since the civil rights era, it has become coded, subtle, in a way that is not overtly racialized (Kim, 1999). During both periods, racial triangulation has functioned as a normative blueprint to decide which groups get what, and ultimately reproducing patterns of white power and privilege (Kim, 1999). As a result, whites are treated as both superior and insider, while Black Americans are treated as inferior and insider, and Asian Americans are positioned as in between inferior and superior and a foreigner.

“Model Minority” Myth

Kim’s racial triangulation theory includes “relative valorization”, where whites assign Asian Americans an elevated positioning and valorize this group, relative to a subordinate group

on cultural/racial grounds to dominate all PGM. The way that is achieved is through the “model minority” myth. This myth claims that Asian Americans are successful and do not need social/economic assistance, unlike other PGM. The myth originated in 1966, an issue of the *U.S. News & World Report*, described Chinese Americans as an important racial minority pulling itself by their bootstraps despite experiencing discrimination and hardships, and have become a model of self-respect and achievement (Loh, 2020). Another article, also made sweeping generalizations about Japanese Americans, that in the face of adversity and racism, they have benefited from strong familial ties and have remained resilient (Loh, 2020). This sentiment was strengthened when some East Asians with professional degrees were recognized by mainstream media, giving rise to Asian Americans being considered the “model minority”.

Although this may seem like a “positive” characterization, it is both false and harmful towards this group. This notion is false because it claims that Asian Americans have a higher median family income compared to white families. In many Asian American households, it is a multigenerational household, meaning parents, children, and grandparents often live in the same home (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). As a result, that means there are multiple earners in the house that contribute to the income (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). In comparison, white families are often single earners (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). This highlights the inequities that Asian Americans experience. This myth also overlooks the important distinctions between East Asians whose families have been in the U.S. for generations, and Southeast Asian immigrants, who have most likely immigrated in times of crisis (Shih et al., 2019). As a result, the myth has become mythologized to a point of inaccuracy.

Lastly, this myth is harmful because as a result of this generalization of Asian Americans, it negates the perception that this group may need social services, and Asian Americans

personalities are flattened into two-dimensional caricatures of success and affluence, which denies this group of the racism and oppression Asian Americans experience, while legitimizing the oppression of other PGM communities (Loh, 2020). The myth also allows for dominant white culture to romanticize Asian Americans by not needing social welfare “handouts”, and simultaneously, critiques other PGM for not doing the same (Loh, 2020). The contemporary racialization of East and Southeast Asian Americans characterizes this group as a uniform-monolithic group that strips away personhood, a strategic tool to maintain white supremacy by putting this group on a pedestal in comparison to other PGM, while holding onto the idea that Asian Americans will remain perpetual foreigners. The next chapter will examine the survey and interview findings. More specifically, this chapter will seek to understand if participants noticed an increase in anti-Asian sentiment and how they reacted to it. Additionally, this chapter will compare participants’ political engagement before and after the pandemic, to see if there was increased political mobilization of these young adults. Lastly, this chapter will cover what this term, Asian American, means to the interviewees, and its potential for this term to create a sense of community and shared experiences.

Chapter 5: Accounts from East and Southeast Asian Americans’ Regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic and Political Mobilization

My thesis focuses on if the hostile political context of the COVID-19 pandemic increased the political mobilization of East and Southeast Asian Americans. This chapter will focus on the findings from the anonymous survey and confidential interviews I conducted. This will provide a better understanding of how East and Southeast Asian American young adults perceived the anti-

Asian sentiment and what they did to combat it. Additionally, this chapter will also focus on the political participation before and after the pandemic.

Measures and Variables

The key dependent variable of this research is political engagement. To better understand the impact of COVID-19 on engagement, I included questions to capture engagement before, during, and after the pandemic in the Spring of 2020. To measure the political engagement of survey respondents before the pandemic, the survey asked about the types of political participation the individual had participated in (or lack thereof). For example, posting on social media about socio-political issues, talking with friends and family about politics and social issues, participation in boycotts and/or protests, and closely following news about the U.S. elections. In addition, frequency was also included to understand the prevalence of these types of political engagement, from never, daily/weekly, monthly, and a few times a year.

Given the age of all of the respondents', some measures of understanding political participation differed from traditional measures of understanding political participation, because many of these respondents were unable to vote in U.S. elections. As a result, following news about U.S. elections was used to understand how often respondents' engaged with the U.S. elections, despite not being able to cast a ballot. Posting on social media was also included because online social media platforms have demonstrated the impact these online communities have in spreading information and mobilizing individuals (Keating & Melis, 2017). Another measure that is included to measure an individual's political engagement focuses on if the respondent talks about politics with friends or family. This demonstrates the individuals awareness about events that are happening around them. Lastly, participation in boycotts and

protests demonstrates an individual's interest in a political issue and demonstrates dissent or support for a particular issue.

One independent variable that is used in this research is the experience of discrimination. However, before I could ask about discrimination, I needed to understand if respondents had noticed a change in the political climate. To measure people's observations (or lack thereof) regarding anti-Asian sentiment, I asked the following question: did you notice any change in anti-Asian sentiment at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic? In response, survey respondents could choose the following to match their observations: 1) Yes, I noticed a significant increase, 2) Yes, I noticed a slight increase, 3) I did not notice any increase or decrease, 4) No I noticed a slight decrease, 5) No, I noticed a significant decrease. The purpose of this question is to see if respondents felt that the COVID-19 pandemic led to a rise in anti-Asian sentiment.

My theory suggests discrimination leads to political engagement (Schildkraut 2005; Oskooii, 2016; Oskooii, 2020). I am differentiating between national origin/ancestry and panethnic because some national origin groups of the Asian American diaspora may have experienced the pandemic differently. As a result, by perceiving the pandemic differently, it could have different outcomes, in regards to East and Southeast Asian American political mobilization (or lack thereof). This question highlights how individuals of certain ethnicities may feel a heightened sense of worry. For example, because of perceptions that COVID-19 originated in China, which were reiterated by certain political figures at the beginning of the pandemic naming the virus "China virus", COVID-19 became associated with people of Chinese descent. Therefore, people of Chinese descent may feel more worried than people who are Japanese American, Filipino American, or Vietnamese American. The question was the following: during the height of the pandemic, from 2020 to 2021, how worried, if at all, was the

individual that they would experience discrimination because of their ancestry. The options for answering included very worried, worried, neutral, not worried, and not worried at all.

Depending on respondents' responses, it may demonstrate different experiences among different national origin groups of Southeast and East Asian Americans (Schildkraut, 2005).

Schildkraut's research differentiated between national origin/ancestry and pan-ethnicity in the context of discrimination. Based on Schildkraut's findings, experiences of discrimination can lead to attitudinal and behavioral alienation (2005). Schildkraut found that when panethnic and national origin identification was included, behavioral alienation is reduced, and in some cases can be overcome (2005). As a result, Schildkraut's research finds that panethnic and national origin identification can reduce political activity amongst Latino Americans, highlighting the importance of these identities to this group's political involvement (2005).

Another question on the survey asked the respondent if they were concerned they would experience discrimination on the basis of their race. To measure this concern (or lack thereof) regarding the possibility of experiencing of discrimination, I asked the following question: During 2020-2021, at the height of the pandemic, how worried, if at all, were you that you would experience discrimination because of your racial identity (e.g. Asian American)? Although this question and the question above are similar, asking if their racial identity made the interviewee concerned about experiencing discrimination, is important because it is able to highlight how race and national origin are distinct, and is intended to capture different things.

I want to capture these things differently because I believe if respondents indicate they were more concerned with experiencing discrimination on the basis of their racial identity, it would indicate a sense of panethnic linked fate, because it highlights although they are not a specific identity, they notice how people who "look" like them will be impacted similarly. As a

result, this could increase group consciousness, which could mobilize people as a way to combat this possibility of experiencing discrimination. This question highlights how people of different ethnicities may feel different levels of worry regarding their ancestry, but feel that their pan-ethnic identity may expose them to discrimination; especially because non-Asian people often cannot tell different Asian ethnicities apart from one another, and/or, do not care to differentiate, due to “Asian lumping”, which will be defined later in chapter four (Espiritu, 1992).

Respondents’ political participation before the pandemic was another variable that was used to understand their general political participation (or lack thereof), and used as a way to compare before and after the pandemic. As noted above, activities ranged from posting on social media about socio-political issues, talking with friends and family about socio-political issues, participating in boycotts and protests, and closely following the U.S. elections. This measure functions to understand if respondents’ political engagement remained the same, decreased, or increased after the pandemic. It is also important to note the limitations of retrospective recollections, past engagement, because people may have forgotten how politically engaged they were a few years ago, as compared to their political engagement today (Snelgrove & Havitz, 2010).

My main dependent variable of interest is political participation. I am interested in understanding whether general participation, or if anti-Asian sentiment and violence led to an increased engagement. Therefore, there are two questions that focus on political participation, one focusing on general engagement, and the other examining if anti-Asian sentiment led to increased political behavior.

The measures for political participation included posting about socio-political issues on social media, talking with friends and family about anti-Asian sentiment, participating in

protests/rallies/vigils, and donating to non-profit organizations. Similar to previous measures for general political engagement, however, slightly different because the purpose of these measures is to understand how respondents' engaged in political participation with a focus on anti-Asian sentiment that could have been a mobilizing factor, regarding the #StopAsianHate and other similar movements related to anti-Asian sentiment and violence. The activities listed include posting about anti-Asian sentiment issues on social media, talking with friends and family about anti-Asian sentiment, participating in boycotts, protests, or vigils focused on #StopAsianHate or other similar movements, and donating money to a non-profit that is focused on anti-Asian sentiment and violence. An additional measure that was added was donations to non-profit organizations that focused on combating anti-Asian sentiment. This measure demonstrates an individual's awareness about events occurring and donating money to support the work of organizations that focus on certain issues. Frequency was also included to see how often respondents engaged with the different types of political engagement, from daily, weekly, monthly, a few times a year, and never.

As a way to understand respondents' current feelings about the political climate, two questions asked the respondents if they currently are worried that they may experience discrimination because of their primary ancestry and racial identity. The purpose of these questions is to understand if East and Southeast Asian Americans are still concerned about the anti-Asian sentiment that was prevalent during COVID-19.

At the end of the survey, one question asks respondents what issues drive their political engagement. The choices are as follows: #BlackLivesMatter, gun control / #MarchForOurLives, reproductive rights, anti-Asian sentiment and violence, immigration, economy, ongoing conflict in the Middle East, none of the above, and other, with a write-in option. These options were

decided based on events such as the murder of George Floyd which led to the revival of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, school shootings, the overturning of U.S. Supreme Court decision: Roe v. Wade, and nationwide protests on university campuses in support of Palestine, where many young Americans have been vocal and have participated in these movements. Additional examples of issues that drive political engagement include immigration and economy—by including these issues, I am able to understand if immigration and the economy impacted people’s political participation.

Anti-Asian Sentiment and Fear of Discrimination

Respondents’ observations regarding anti-Asian sentiment

Before I asked participants in the survey and interview if they combated anti-Asian sentiment and their political engagement in general, I was curious to understand if these individuals noticed a change in anti-Asian sentiment in general. According to my survey, 53.85% (n=7) of Chinese American respondents noticed a significant increase and 46.15% (n=6) of Chinese American individuals noticed a slight increase in anti-Asian sentiment. All of the Chinese American respondents noticed an increase in anti-Asian sentiment, 100% (n=13). Similarly, all Southeast Asian American respondents noticed either a slight or significant increase in anti-Asian sentiment, 100% (n=9). More than half of the other East Asian American respondents, 85.71% (n=6), noticed an increase in anti-Asian sentiment. I was surprised that not all other East Asian American respondents noticed an increase in anti-Asian sentiment, because I would assume other East Asian Americans would have a higher chance of experiencing “Asian lumping”, than Southeast Asian American respondents. Overall, all groups: Chinese, Southeast,

and other East Asian American young adults in the survey noticed an increase in anti-Asian sentiment.

Table 1 I Did you notice any change in anti-Asian sentiment at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?

	Chinese American	Filipino American	Vietnamese American	Korean American	Taiwanese American	Japanese American	Cambodian American
Yes, I noticed a significant increase	53.85%	40%	66.67%	50%	0%	0%	100%
Yes, I noticed a slight increase	46.15%	60%	33.33%	25%	100%	100%	0%
I did not notice any increase or decrease	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%
No, I noticed a slight decrease	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
No, I noticed a significant decrease	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	n=13	n=5	n=3	n=4	n=2	n=1	n=1

The Treatment of Asians and Asian American Cultures

Similarly to the survey respondents, all of the interviewees were aware of the rise in anti-Asian sentiment and rhetoric. The interviewees noticed anti-Asian sentiment in their schools, on the news, and social media (e.g. Instagram, Reddit, and other social media platforms). Some interviewees highlighted how the pandemic led to the rise of racist commentary about Asian/Asian American cultures. Lilly noted the commentary they noticed about Asian/Asian Americans' cultures, and the different perceptions that non-Asians had about Asian/Asian

Americans and the way they live their life. Emily, a Chinese American transracial adoptee, also discussed how Asian culture's practices have been deemed "gross" or "dirty", despite some of these "practices" being made up by non-Asians and spread throughout social media. Emily also noted that they saw "jokes" about Chinese people eating bats and other racist stuff they saw online, which contributed to this idea of Asian/Asian American cultures as "backwards".

Interviewees also noted that Chinese culture was particularly targeted at this moment, because it was first reported in Wuhan, China. As a result, the interviews I conducted highlighted a distinct Chinese American experience of the pandemic. Interviewees were made aware of the increase in anti-Asian sentiment from the media. The following section will focus on the role of media as a way to cover (or the lack thereof) and raise awareness about the increase in anti-Asian sentiment respondents noticed.

Perceptions of Anti-Asian Fueled Attacks

As mentioned previously, the media was how survey respondents and interviewees were made aware of the increase in anti-Asian sentiment and violence that occurred throughout the pandemic. Due to the fact that we live in a society where many people have access to information at the touch of a button, media plays a significant role in how people become aware of and react to news. It is also important to note the difference between types of media. In this context, I will be focusing on traditional news outlets (NYT, CNN, NPR, and etc.), and social media (specifically Instagram). The difference between the two is that traditional news outlets are often considered more reputable because journalists must adhere to strict practices to ensure their information is correct. In comparison, social media is oftentimes questioned for its accuracy

because it does not go through the same rigorous research process that traditional journalism goes through.

The majority of interviewees discussed the role of the news in regards to covering the rise of anti-Asian sentiment. Interviewees shared that they had seen coverage about the increase in anti-Asian rhetoric and hate on major news outlets that covered the attacks against Asians. Mia shared how they saw the coverage of an elderly grandmother being pushed onto the street. However, they found that bigger outlets did not talk as much or that this type of news did not receive the same attention as others, like the presidency. Lilly (a Filipino/white American), Emily, and Alice noted they saw New York Times (NYT) and Cable News Network (CNN) cover stories regarding anti-Asian attacks. Lilly also highlighted that it took a while for mainstream media to cover anti-Asian fueled attacks— and once it did get covered, it did not last long. Although this was understandable to Lilly, because NYT and CNN have a lot of news to cover, it led to the lack of depth in the coverage of the rise of anti-Asian attacks. They also mentioned how reasons like bias raised the issue of racial inequality and the targeting of Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) which arises from the coverage (and lack of coverage) that demonstrated how the AAPI diaspora has been overlooked. Lilly's point is important because it highlights whose stories are considered important to document and raise awareness. While others may not be treated with the same standard. This sentiment of shedding light onto certain experiences connects to the following section which will focus on the difference between ancestry and racial identity, pointing to a distinct Chinese American experience.

Respondents' fear of experiencing discrimination on the basis of ancestry

At the height of the pandemic, 2020 and 2021, a little more than three-quarters, 76.93%, (n=10) of Chinese American respondents felt worried or very worried about experiencing discrimination because of their ancestry. This could demonstrate an increased sense of panethnic linked fate, which is when individuals believe what happens to a group of individuals impacts the lives of individuals in that group (Nicholson Jr. & Mei, 2023). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the respondents who are of Chinese descent noticed an increase in anti-Asian sentiment, and slightly more than three-quarters of the respondents shared that they were worried that they would experience discrimination because of their ethnicity.

More than half, 66.67% (n=6) of Southeast Asian Americans were worried/very worried that they would experience discrimination based on their ancestry. Lastly, slightly more than half, 57.14% of other East Asian American respondents shared that they felt worried or very worried about experiencing discrimination because of their ancestry. This surprised me because I would assume people of other East Asian American national origin groups would feel more worried about the likelihood of experiencing discrimination, because East Asians are more likely to be confused than Chinese individuals than Southeast Asian Americans.

Table 2a I During the pandemic, how worried were participants they would experience discrimination on the basis of their ancestry.

	Chinese American	Filipino American	Vietnamese American	Korean American	Taiwanese American	Japanese American	Cambodian American
Did not respond	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not worried at all	0%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not worried	15.38%	0%	0%	25%	0%	100%	0%

Neutral	7.70%	0%	33.33%	0%	50%	0%	100%
Worried	69.23%	80%	66.67%	75%	0%	0%	0%
Very Worried	7.70%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%
Total	n= 13	n=5	n=3	n=4	n=2	n=1	n=1

The Distinct Chinese American Experience During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The interviews highlighted the distinct Chinese American experience during the pandemic, in regards to the treatment of this group during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many interviewees, Chinese, and non-Chinese, highlighted how Chinese Americans were specifically targeted during the pandemic, due to the fact that COVID-19 was found in Wuhan, China, and many people began associating the virus with China, and people of Chinese ancestry. Two out of the three Chinese Americans expressed they were worried they would experience racism or discrimination because they are Chinese. Alice, who is a Chinese American transracial adoptee, added that they were worried they might experience anti-Asian sentiment directed towards them because of their Chinese identity.

Mia, a Chinese American transracial adoptee, was aware of how their Chinese ethnicity made them a target for anti-Asian sentiment during the pandemic. This interviewee lived in a town that was known for being openly racist, and they were one of the few Asians. The following is an example of how they felt about being one of the only Asians, specifically being Chinese American in school during the pandemic: “I remember like I was in high school and I was really scared of breathing too loudly, or like sneezing or coughing, because I was scared people were going to be like: Oh you're sick. You probably have COVID.”

In addition to their heightened sense of awareness of how their ethnic identity would be perceived by others, and how that would in turn, impact them during the pandemic. While

interviewed, Mia shared their experience with anti-Asian sentiment they experienced in their school. Mia was aware that their Chinese identity was known amongst their peers. They shared that they experienced two instances of racism related to COVID-19: one from a student, and the other from a teacher.

One racist interaction Mia encountered was when they coughed in class, and in response, a classmate physically moved away from the interviewee. “I remember one time I was in one of my classes and I coughed and then a guy looked at me and he was like, “Oh Mia has COVID, like get away from me! Like everyone, get away from Mia because she has COVID...” Mia shared that the person was trying to play it off as a joke, but in actuality, Mia believes that the classmate truly meant it. She continued, noting that their classmate was popular, so he was able to get away with the “joke”. However, because Mia was one of only Asians in that classroom, they felt like they could not be “dramatic”, by expressing to her classmate that it did not come off as a joke, and that they believe that the classmate purposefully meant it.

Another instance of the racism they experienced during the pandemic in the classroom was when Mia coughed and the teacher “joked” to everyone in the room that Mia had COVID-19. “My math teacher said that to me ...because I then coughed in that class and then in front of that entire class, he literally said, “Oh everyone get away from Mia because she has COVID.”

Mia’s experiences highlights how they were aware that their identity as an Asian American, and specifically as a Chinese American impacted them— as they were worried that they would be associated with a contagious disease, that if they coughed and/or sneezed, they might be accused of having COVID-19. Mia’s experience also highlights how their Chinese American identity made them a target of receiving racist treatment they experienced at the hands of a peer and a teacher. In addition to fear of discrimination on the basis of ancestry,

discrimination on the basis of racial identity increased for some groups, which could impact their reaction to the increase in anti-Asian sentiment, although the findings demonstrate there is a distinct Chinese American experience of the pandemic.

Respondents' fear of experiencing discrimination on the basis of racial identity

Similar to the fear of experiencing discrimination because of one's ancestry, 76.93% (n=10) of Chinese Americans were either worried or very worried that they would experience discrimination because of their racial identity, at the height of the pandemic. However, when asked on the basis of their racial identity, other East Asian American respondents were more likely to worry about the possibility of experiencing discrimination, 71.43% (n=5). It is understandable that both Chinese American and other East Asian American respondents felt worried or very worried about the possibility of experiencing discrimination. I assume this is because other East Asian Americans are more likely to be mistaken for Chinese ancestry. As a result of mistaken national-origin identity, it might increase the likelihood non-Asian Americans would blame them for COVID-19 because of their Asian American racial identity. For Southeast Asian American respondents, when asked about if they were worried they would experience discrimination because of their racial identity, the number increased 1.16%, to 77.78% (n=7). The difference between national origin and panethnic discrimination could play an important role and impact the respondent's worry about experiencing discrimination, and thus impact their political mobilization (or lack thereof).

Table 2b I During the pandemic, how worried, if at all, were you that you would experience discrimination because of your racial identity?

	Chinese American	Filipino American	Vietnamese American	Korean American	Taiwanese American	Japanese American	Cambodian American
Did not respond	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Not worried at all	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not worried	15.38	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Neutral	7.70%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
Worried	69.23%	80%	100%	75%	50%	0%	100%
Very Worried	7.70%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%
Total	n=13	n=5	n=3	n=4	n=2	n=1	n=1

While being interviewed, Lilly highlighted how the phenomenon of “Asian lumping” impacted East and Southeast Asian Americans during the pandemic. For a refresher, “Asian lumping” is when non-Asians make generalizations about Asian/Asian Americans, because either they do not care, cannot realize the backgrounds of Asians, and then apply stereotypes of whatever perceptions they have of Asians as a whole onto all Asians (Espiritu, 1992). This phenomenon, as Espiritu calls it, “Asian lumping” could explain why Chinese Americans were not the only group that was deeply affected by the rise of anti-Asian sentiment (Espiritu, 1992). Lilly added that because some non-Asians will not take the time to ask an individual what their ethnicity is before they direct their anger towards someone who “looks” Chinese. For some, it is easier to assume and apply one’s anger to scapegoat an entire group of people for something that is out of a groups’ control. Alex, a Korean American, was also aware of the anti-Asian sentiment that occurred throughout the pandemic. In addition to being aware of the increase in anti-Asian sentiment, they expressed that they felt a looming feeling, but they did not feel any sense of immediate danger. These feelings of worry from the interviewees demonstrate that some of them did feel a sense of worry to some extent, enough to feel that this anti-Asian sentiment and

violence could be directed to them, demonstrating that a sense of panethnic linked fate could have been felt amongst East and Southeast Asian American diasporas, despite not being Chinese American. The next section will examine how respondents and interviewees responded to the increase in anti-Asian sentiment and violence.

Combating the Hate

Conversations with friends and family

One form of political participation as a way to combat the anti-Asian sentiment and violence interviewees engaged in was through having conversations about the increase in hate crimes and incidents against Asians and Asian Americans. For many of the interviewees, conversations were a way to raise awareness and educate others about what they were noticing. By initiating and engaging in these conversations, survey respondents and interviewees were able to raise awareness about what this racialized group was experiencing.

According to my survey, all groups: Southeast Asian, Chinese, and other East Asian Americans had conversations with family and friends about anti-Asian sentiment observations on a daily/weekly basis during the pandemic. The large number could be attributed to the fact that many people were quarantined with family members, which could have allowed for individuals for more time and space to talk to one another about issues. Another reason for this high number is that this was an unprecedented time of a global pandemic and the rapid increase of anti-Asian rhetoric, that could have led to many Asian Americans (and all Americans) wanting to talk about what was happening.

Chinese and Southeast Asian Americans were the groups to most frequently talk with close ones about the anti-Asian sentiment they noticed. More than half of the Southeast Asian American respondents, 88.89%, (n=8) engaged in conversations about the anti-Asian sentiment they noticed with family or friends, and more than half of Chinese American respondents, 53.85% (n=7) had these conversations with family or friends, compared to other East Asian American respondents. Although the percentage is lower among other East Asian American respondents, 42.86%, (n=3) it is not relatively low. Thus, this demonstrates that among all of the respondents, this was one activity Asian American respondents engaged with the most, and seemed most meaningful amongst respondents.

Table 3a I During COVID: participate in conversations about anti-Asian sentiment in the U.S. with friends and family

	Chinese Americans	Southeast Asian Americans	Other East Asian Americans
Did not respond	0%	0%	0%
Never	7.70%	0%	14.29%
A few times a year	23.08%	11.11%	28.57%
Monthly	15.38%	0%	14.29%
Daily/Weekly	53.85%	88.89%	42.86%
Total	n=13	n=9	n=7

The interviews I conducted also highlighted how residing in predominantly white spaces seemed to have encouraged the need to raise awareness about the increase in anti-Asian sentiment amongst the interviewees. This suggests that physically being in white spaces made these individuals feel the need to highlight what some people in their community might not have

even thought to consider. The following section will focus on the unique experiences of Chinese American transracial adoptees and how conversations (or the lack thereof) with their white family members, shapes their ideas about engaging with loved ones about the racism connected to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chinese American Adoptee's Experiences

While I was conducting my interviews, I noticed a difference between how the adoptees' and non-adoptees' social circles talked about the rise in anti-Asian sentiment, how it impacted their mobilization (or lack thereof), and general discussions about race and racism with family and friends. Mia, a Chinese American adoptee, whose family is white, shared that they did not have conversations with their family about what they were experiencing and observing because it felt awkward bringing it up in conversation and sharing their experiences of racism with them. The following quote demonstrates how they did not want to make it awkward for their family members.

I felt very awkward talking to my parents because they are white...Because I didn't really know how to, how are you even supposed to bring it up to like your white parents who were born in America, always grew up with like being in white communities, and stuff like that, and to be like: Oh, yeah, there was someone in my class, and they were racist to me today...because that's just been my life the entire time growing up.

Mia grew up in a predominantly white town, and was one of the few Asians at her school. Consequently, they did not talk to many people about what they were experiencing. The friends they did share her experiences with were unable to understand her experiences as a Chinese American, because two of them were white and one of them is Latina. When they did bring up the rise of violence against Asians, her friends were not able to relate to her which made it hard. They also shared that they did not want to become the person who would bring up these issues in

conversations. They noted they did not feel comfortable speaking up with people who did not know, and being one of the few Asians in their community made it hard for them.

Another Chinese American adoptee, Emily, shared that they had talked with their mom, who is white, about the rise of anti-Asian violence they observed. They also noted how they had conversations with friends who could relate, who were either Asian American or mixed race, and had conversations about identity—including their reactions to the rise of anti-Asian violence. This interviewee also noted how they felt the need to talk to others, as it was important for them to hear from others who share similar perspectives.

These interviews demonstrate the interesting differences experienced by adoptees and how the comfortability with talking about the rise in anti-Asian hate incidents, and the importance of talking with people who share similar experiences to themselves is important. Additionally, these interviews demonstrated how some of the adoptees, Mia and Emily, were unsure how to talk about the increase in anti-Asian sentiment among white friends and family members. Emily describes their surprise when their white friends did not reach out to them during this distressing time and the uncertainty of bringing up the rise in anti-Asian violence among white friends. In addition to this uncertainty, they also expressed their surprise with the lack of non-Asian friends who did not check up on the interviewee:

I was a little surprised...when, um, some of these attacks against Asians were like at an all time high, during the pandemic. I was kind of surprised that more people weren't checking in with me. And I was thinking, maybe I'm being a little selfish, thinking that people would say something. I was just like, I thought that more friends would be reaching out, being like: Hey are you okay? Like...[they would be] interested in maybe my perspective. But, um, I don't think many people did. So that's also why, [they were often the person to bring this up in conversations] at least if I start the conversation, it'll get people thinking about it because whether or not, it's really on their radar. Maybe [white] people are just shy about bringing it up, or because it's uncomfortable.

Mia and Emily's experiences with their white family and friends demonstrates an uncertainty of how to bring up the rise in anti-Asian violence and sentiment they noticed. Both

interviewees shared how they did not want to make others around them feel uncomfortable. It is unfortunate to know that in addition to grappling with the pandemic, the rise of anti-Asian violence, these interviewees also seemed to have a harder time talking with loved ones about how seeing the news of increased hate against Asians was impacting them. As a result of these complicated feelings, Emily felt that they were the one who needed to initiate the conversation and to encourage others to consider Asian Americans' experience of the pandemic. Another thing that contributed to Emily's shock that her loved ones around her were not checking on her was because of the influence and unprecedented behavior of the former and current U.S. President, Donald Trump. Emily shared that they were shocked by the unprecedented openly racist Donald Trump, who encouraged the usage of "China Virus" and "Kung Flu". In the interview, Emily emphasized the way anti-Asian rhetoric was reinforced by social media and political elites like the U.S. President Donald Trump:

...a lot of it coming from, like a lot of that rhetoric was, yes, it was reinforced by social media...but also because so much of it came from President Trump...and it was also just a shock. Because it was, at that time, that was so unprecedented. And, um, having a president who would say anything like that or would be so openly racist, was just— that was a shock, in uh, 2020.

Emily's emphasis on the impact of political figures like the U.S. President Donald Trump highlights the shock they felt when they saw one of the most powerful leaders in the world utilize explicitly racist language to associate the Chinese government and anyone who "looked" Chinese with the virus. Her commentary highlights the urgent need they felt to talk with others about violence against Asian Americans because of the way politicians were reinforcing racist rhetoric. The next section will focus on non-adoptee experiences of engaging in conversations with loved ones about the increase in anti-Asian sentiment they noticed.

Non-Adoptee Experiences

In Lilly's family, older members of their family became outraged by what they were noticing. As a result, they noticed a shift in mobilization amongst family members, and were engaging in conversations where anti-Asian sentiment was discussed. Therefore, it seems that talking about the rise in anti-Asian sentiment and violence their family noticed seemed to come easily to her family. However, because Lilly lived in a predominantly white city during this time, they felt the need to discuss the rise of anti-Asian sentiment they noticed with their friends, who are white. Lilly shared that they began these conversations with her friends in hopes of opening their eyes, as a way to encourage their friends to consider what Asian Americans were experiencing at this time and how their friends could support this group. They shared that they believe that having conversations about what was happening was an important way to make a difference and raise awareness of anti-Asian violence.

Although, similar to what Emily expressed, both of these interviewees felt the need to initiate these conversations regarding the rise of anti-Asian sentiment they noticed among friends who are white. Although Emily is an adoptee, and Lilly is not, it is worth noting how the town's they lived in at the time were predominantly white, and how they both felt the responsibility to begin these conversations to highlight what Asian American communities were experiencing. Both Emily and Lilly highlight how they felt the need to amplify their voice because they felt that without bringing this up in conversations among their white friends, then their friends may not have been as likely to consider and talk about this rise in anti-Asian sentiment during the pandemic. In addition to having conversations about the rise in anti-Asian sentiment, the respondents also combated the hate in several ways.

Despite the differences experienced by adoptees and non-adoptees, the main takeaways was the importance of having people who the interviewees felt comfortable talking to, specifically people who shared the same racialized identity. I think being able to talk to someone who understood what it was like to be Asian American at the time was important for many Asian Americans because they did not see their experiences of the violence against them highlighted on national television until later in the pandemic. Lastly, the fact that all of the interviewees lived in predominantly white areas during the pandemic, seems to have impacted the sense of urgency to raise awareness as a way to combat the anti-Asian sentiment they noticed with their peers, friends, and family.

Social Media As a Tool for Asian American Activism

Through social media, you can examine real time reactions and the coverage of events because individuals are able to post information at the touch of their fingertips if they have access to a smartphone. Additionally, this form of information is more personal, where you can hear directly from the people experiencing the event. As per the previous chapter, social media played a significant role during and after the pandemic as a way to highlight and raise awareness about socio-political issues, including the rise in anti-Asian sentiment (Xie et al., 2023).

At the height of the pandemic, 2020-2021, my survey found that Southeast Asian Americans were the most likely to post on social media, highlighting anti-Asian sentiment on a daily/weekly basis. Southeast Asian Americans were more than five times likely than Chinese Americans to post on social media on a daily/weekly basis. The percentage of Chinese and other East Asian Americans seems to slightly increase when including people who posted monthly and

a few times a year, but not significantly. It is also important to note that some survey respondents either skipped this question or ended the survey before answering this question, which explains the lack of data.

Table 3b I During COVID: posting on social media about anti-Asian sentiment observations

	Chinese Americans	Southeast Asian Americans	Other East Asian Americans
Did not respond	30.78%	22.22%	14.30%
Never	38.46%	22.22%	57.14%
A few times a year	15.38%	11.11%	0%
Monthly	7.69%	0%	14.28%
Daily/weekly	7.69%	44.44%	14.28%
Total	n=13	n=9	n=7

The majority of the interviewees discussed the role of social media as a vehicle for raising awareness about the rise in anti-Asian rhetoric. For many interviewees, they noticed how platforms like Instagram as a place to repost information on Instagram Stories and add their own commentary. Emily noted that they did not have an Instagram account until the very beginning of the pandemic. Before, Emily assumed Instagram was for posting pictures of yourself at the beach, but they quickly realized it was a significant platform for social activism, particularly for Black Lives Matter (BLM)— given that this was also during the time of the murder of George Floyd, the national response to his murder, and the revival of the BLM movement (Cheng et al., 2020). Emily shared that they noticed a huge uptick on political engagement among the people they followed during the pandemic, in response to anti-Asian sentiment (Xie et al., 2023).

Lilly and Alice discussed how they utilized their Instagram accounts as a way to educate others and raise awareness about the impact of COVID-19 on Asian Americans. Lilly grew up in a predominantly white area. As a result of being in predominantly white spaces for most of their life, Lilly felt the need to repost posts on their Instagram stories, where they would add their own commentary. They shared that they felt compelled to do so because most of the people they interacted with were white, and might not have considered Asian American experiences. Therefore, Lilly felt the need to share what they were seeing and put it there because it was not being discussed in mainstream media. Lilly noted this balance of being politically engaged, of wanting to participate in protests, but also remaining physically safe. Thus, social media was a physically safe way to combat the anti-Asian sentiment they noticed.

As a way to combat the rise of anti-Asian hate they had observed, Alice chose education as a way to combat the anti-Asian rhetoric they noticed. They believed these attitudes and behaviors of anti-Asian sentiment derived from personal biases from not fully understanding and scapegoating a group of people, particularly racialized groups. Therefore, they believed education was a way to address and combat the anti-Asian hate they noticed, and saw social media as an outlet to share information with others because it connects many people.

The year of 2020, was a time when many Americans were thinking about the U.S. critically, specifically with the revival of the #BlackLivesMatter movement (Cheng et al., 2020). Alex noted how the Summer of 2020 was a radicalizing time for themselves and their social circle because of the news of the murder of George Floyd. They noted that their activism and politics was fueled more by Black American activists because they did not see much information about anti-Asian sentiment on their social media, and interacted with social media posts regarding BLM. Similar to other interviewees, Alex noted their usage of Instagram, and how

they preferred using social media to stay informed because they trust people on the ground to talk about their experiences. As a result, many Americans went to attend rallies and protests in support of the BLM movement. The support of the BLM movement can also be demonstrated in my survey, where 55% (n=16) of respondents indicated that the BLM movement drives their political engagement.

Due to the fact that social media covered the rise of anti-Asian hate and violence, and the accessibility of reporting about these incidents, the use of social media as a tool to bring attention to and include one's own thoughts and experiences as an Asian American was significantly influential to how many of the interviewees decided to raise awareness. Another reason why this method for political participation was utilized is because it was during a global pandemic. At the height of the pandemic, many were worried about catching this disease, so a safer way to combat anti-Asian violence and hate was to spread awareness about this on social media. Another way some East and Southeast Asian American young adults engaged in combating anti-Asian sentiment was by donating to non-profit organizations.

Donating to non-profit organizations

For many of the respondents, the majority did not donate to a non-profit organization that was focused on combating anti-Asian sentiment. Despite this sample including individuals ranging from 19 to 24 years old, Chinese American respondents reported that they donated to non-profit organizations to combat anti-Asian sentiment. Chinese Americans were twice (2.42%) as likely than Southeast Asian Americans to donate to a non-profit organization that focused on combating anti-Asian sentiment, at a frequency of a few times a year. The increase in anti-Asian

sentiment that was specifically focused on China and people of Chinese descent, could have encouraged Chinese Americans to donate to nonprofit organizations that focused on combating anti-Asian sentiment during a time when Asian hate crimes had seen a rapid increase. The last type of political activism during the pandemic as a way to combat the increase in anti-Asian sentiment was by attending protests, boycotts, and vigils.

Table 3c I During-COVID donating to nonprofit organizations that combated anti-Asian sentiment

	Chinese Americans	Southeast Asian Americans	Other East Asian Americans
Did not respond	0%	0%	0%
Never	46.15%	55.56%	85.71%
A few times a year	53.85%	22.22%	0%
Monthly	0%	22.22%	14.29%
Daily/Weekly	0%	0%	0%
Total	n=13	n=9	n=7

Participation in protests, boycotts, and vigils

Although participation in protests, boycotts, and vigils was not a frequent activity among respondents. It is important to highlight that this was during the pandemic, which caused lots of fear about going outside and spreading it to loved ones, this could explain the overall low participation in this activity. However, it is also noteworthy to highlight that despite such an unprecedented time, Chinese Americans were the most likely group to participate in protests, boycotts, and vigils highlighting the increase in anti-Asian sentiment, on the basis of attending a

few times a year. More than half (53.85%) of Chinese American respondents attended protests, boycotts, and vigils in response to the increase of hate crimes. Compared to Southeast and other East Asian American respondents who participated in protests, boycotts, and vigils a few times a year, Chinese Americans participated almost four times (3.76%) more than other East Asian American respondents.

The large number of Chinese American respondents' participation in protests, boycotts, and vigils could be explained because lots of the anti-Asian sentiment was being directed towards the country of China, Chinese government, and people of Chinese descent. As a result, the Chinese American respondents may have felt the need to be in community with one another, especially when this national-origin group was experiencing lots of Sinophobia. Furthermore, the increased participation in protests, boycotts, and vigils may be understood through a possible sense of panethnic linked fate and group consciousness amongst Chinese Americans, which could have led Chinese Americans to fear of the possibility of experiencing discrimination and wanted to do something about it to combat the anti-Asian rhetoric.

Lastly, the #StopAsianHate and #The HateIsAVirus movement could have also contributed to the increased participation among Chinese Americans. #StopAsianHate was a hashtag that was used to bring awareness to the increase in anti-Asian sentiment and violence that Asian American communities were experiencing, particularly Chinese Americans, given the fact that some politicians were blaming the Chinese government and implying that people of Chinese descent were responsible for the contagious disease (Xie et al., 2023).

Table 3d I During COVID: participation in rallies, boycotts, and vigils

	Chinese Americans	Southeast Asian Americans	Other East Asian Americans

Did not respond	0%	0%	14.28%
Never	46.15%	55.56%	71.43%
A few times a year	53.85%	11.11%	14.29%
Monthly	0%	11.11%	0%
Daily/Weekly	0%	22.22%	0%
Total	n=13	n=9	n=7

Although the majority of interviewees did not participate in the protests, boycotts, or vigils for the rise in anti-Asian sentiment, two out of five interviewees, Mia and Emily, attended protests and rallies that focused on combating anti-Asian hate. Mia was also invited and spoke at a rally that was hosted by the school's Asian student club, which was associated with the #StopAsianHate movement. They recounted that nine people spoke at the rally, and around 200 people attended. Mia also noted that the school did not make an announcement about the rally, and the reason for the attendance of the rally was through word-of-mouth communications. When asked if they believed this rally would bring about any change, they noted that they did not believe the rally would do anything, because they shared that people who hold these racist opinions will not change their minds easily. However, Mia noted that it was nice seeing people come together, but they thought that not much would come out of the rally:

Oh, yeah. It's basically like that people showed up, people came to it, and it was like, yeah, like, we hear you. We're gonna stand with you, and the next day, nothing else really happened. Like we did the pep rally, and then there were no other pep rallies, protests, or anything like that. So it was kind of like, good job, we feel bad for you, we're gonna be with you. But, we're also never gonna bring up what's happening to you guys again.

Mia's experience of speaking at the pep rally demonstrates how they reacted to this rise of violence and anti-Asian rhetoric. This quote also shows that they were unsure how effective speaking and attending this pep rally would be to create change. Her evaluation of the aftermath of the protest was also noteworthy, because they noted that nothing was done afterwards to

combat anti-Asian hate. Therefore, this quote demonstrates the power of seeing people who support you and are upset with the increased violence, but also the inaction that occurs after the event. In the last sentence, Mia uses the term “we” which I thought was particularly interesting, in the context of this group who has the power to control what is discussed. My interpretation of this sentence is that Mia is shedding light that narratives and experiences of Asian and Asian Americans are controlled by others, and only used for other people’s convenience.

Emily also attended a rally during the pandemic. The reason Emily decided to attend is because they felt more comfortable attending because it was not at the height of the COVID-19 safety protocols, the rally was held at a city near them, and chose to wear a mask to protect themselves. Although they did not speak at this event, they shared that they admire people who spoke at these events and attended protests and rallies frequently during the pandemic. They shared with me that they believed— if it had not been for a global pandemic, the number of participants would have increased significantly. However, because of COVID-19 restrictions— they felt the protests and rallies more limited. Emily decided to attend because they felt that anything helps in combating anti-Asian sentiment, even showing up and being a member at the rally and being a part of the crowd meant something to them.

It seems that for Mia and Emily, participating in the protests was an important way for them to combat the anti-Asian rhetoric and violence they noticed. Mia highlighted that it was nice to see people coming together, while Emily noted the importance of the power in numbers. In the interview, Mia also emphasized the limitations of rallies and protests, and mentioned the importance of after events such as these. It is also noteworthy that both of these interviewees are Chinese American, and were the only ones to participate in this form of political action. It is likely that the distinct treatment towards China and people of Chinese ancestry also could have

encouraged Chinese Americans to attend a rally/protest, compared to Southeast and other East Asian American young adults.

General Political Participation: Before and After the Pandemic

My findings demonstrate that the pandemic changed mobilization of survey respondents and interviewees. The following will compare the political engagement before and after the pandemic amongst the survey respondents and interviewees. By looking at the before and after data of political participation, this will provide a better way to understand the specific ways mobilization changed for all of the East and Southeast Asian American respondents and interviewees. The four types of political participation that have been included in this research are the following: 1) engaging in conversations with friends and family about socio-political issues, 2) posting on social media about socio-political issues, 3) following news about U.S. elections, and 4) participating in protests and boycotts.

Conversations about socio-political issues: pre-pandemic

Regarding the respondents' frequency of having conversations with friends and family about social and political issues, both Chinese Americans and Southeast Asian American respondents were more likely than other East Asian American respondents to discuss these issues on a daily/weekly basis before the pandemic. It seems that Chinese Americans and Southeast Asian Americans were more likely to talk about social and political issues with friends and family on a frequent basis. When the frequency decreased to monthly and a few times a year, all Asian American groups were participating at a relatively similar rate.

Table 4a: Pre-COVID: discussion with friends/family about socio-political issues

	Chinese Americans	Southeast Asian Americans	Other East Asian Americans
Did not respond	0%	11.12%	29.00%
Never	7.70%	11.11%	0%
A few times a year	15.38%	11.11%	42.86%
Monthly	30.77%	22.22%	14.29%
Daily/Weekly	46.15%	44.44%	14.29%
Total	n=13	n=9	n=7

Overall, it seems that all groups, Chinese American, Southeast Asian American, and other East Asian Americans are much more likely to have conversations about politics with friends and family now, compared to before the pandemic. The majority of my sample had increased discussing politics to a daily/weekly recurrence. However, similarly to the previous table, some people did not answer all the questions, which prevents us from making generalizations about the sample. However, the data demonstrates a significant increase among respondents. The increase in having conversations about politics with family and friends could be attributed to growing up and respondents feeling more aware of current political events.

Table 4b I Post-COVID: discussions with friends and family about socio-political issues

	Chinese American	Southeast Asian American	Other East Asian Americans
Did not respond	0%	11%	14.28%
Never	0%	0%	14.29%
A few times a year	15.38%	11.11%	0%
Monthly	23.10%	0%	0%
Daily/Weekly	61.54%	77.78%	71.43%
Total	n=13	n=9	n=7

Posting on social media about socio-political issues

Posting on social media about social and political news was another measure that was used to understand East and Southeast Asian Americans' levels of political engagement. Before the pandemic, Southeast Asian Americans were more likely than Chinese American and other East Asian Americans to utilize social media to talk about social and political news. About a half of Asian American respondents, 48.27% (n=14) had never posted about socio-political issues on social media. For respondents who posted on social media about socio-political issues on a daily/weekly basis, they represented 13.80% (n=4) of the sample. However, when you allow for less frequency, posting on social media increases among all Asian American respondents. It seems that Southeast Asian American respondents were posting the most compared to other groups. Other East Asian American respondents reported an increase regarding posting on social media on a monthly basis. Therefore, it seems that posting on social media about socio-political issues was most popular among Southeast Asian American respondents, utilized amongst other East Asian Americans, and the least likely to be a form of participation by Chinese American respondents.

Table 5a: Pre-COVID: posted on social media about socio-political issues

	Chinese Americans	Southeast Asian Americans	Other East Asian Americans
Did not respond	0%	0%	0%
Never	69.23%	22.22%	42.86%
A few times a year	7.70%	11.11%	14.29%

Monthly	7.70%	44.44%	42.86%
Daily/Weekly	15.38%	22.22%	0%

Social media political engagement seems to have changed slightly amongst Asian American respondents from before to after the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, it seems that there was an increase among Chinese Americans' of posting about socio-political issues on social media regarding frequency a few times a year. It is also important to note that some respondents did not complete all of the survey, and may have left the survey before some of the questions that looked at political behaviors post-COVID. Therefore, it is hard to make observations about Southeast and other East Asian American respondents because some did not answer all of the survey questions.

Table 5b I Post COVID: Posting about socio-political issues on social media

	Chinese Americans	Southeast Asian Americans	Other East Asian Americans
Did not respond	38.44%	55.56%	71.42
Never	15.38%	11.11%	14.29%
A few times a year	23.10%	0%	0%
Monthly	7.70%	0%	0%
Daily/Weekly	15.38%	33.33%	14.29%
Total	n=13	n=9	n=7

Following U.S. Elections

Another form of participation that was popular among survey respondents was following news about U.S. elections. Similar to having conversations with friends and family about social

and political issues, Chinese Americans were the most likely to follow the news regarding U.S. elections. Southeast Asian American respondents also seemed to be following U.S. elections, but not to the extent of Chinese Americans. In comparison, other East Asian American respondents were the least likely to follow this news. However, by including less frequency, the number of East Asian Americans' increases in engagement with news about U.S. elections.

Table 6a: Pre-COVID: followed news regarding U.S. elections

	Chinese Americans	Southeast Asian Americans	Other East Asian Americans
Did not respond	0%	11.12%	0%
Never	7.70%	11.11%	28.57%
A few times a year	38.46%	22.22%	57.14%
Monthly	15.38%	22.22%	14.29%
Daily/Weekly	38.46%	33.33%	0%
Total	n=13	n=9	n=7

Southeast Asian American respondents' had the most increase, (2.50%) more likely to follow news regarding U.S. elections, than before the pandemic, on a daily/weekly basis. Chinese Americans demonstrated an increase as well, but not to the same extent as Southeast Asian American respondents. In comparison, other East Asian Americans seemed to remain the same. It is also to note that at this point in the interview, some participants did not answer some of the last questions, which may be a factor in the low percentage for other East Asian American respondents. The increase of following news about U.S. elections among Southeast Asian

Americans and Chinese Americans may also be explained by the 2020 U.S. Presidential election, and some of the participant's eligibility to cast a ballot.

Table 6b I Post-COVID: followed news regarding U.S. elections.

	Chinese Americans	Southeast Asian Americans	Other East Asian Americans
Did not respond	0%	11%	14.28%
Never	0%	0%	14.29%
A few times a year	23.10%	11.11%	28.57%
Monthly	15.38%	22.22%	14.29%
Daily/Weekly	61.54%	55.56%	28.57%
Total	n=13	n=9	n=7

Participation in boycotts/protests

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of respondents never participated in boycotts or protests 65.52% (n=19). However, the number increased when accounting for a few times a year, where Chinese Americans had participated in one of these activities, 35.71% (n=5), as compared to their peers. In comparison to Chinese Americans, about a third (33.33%) (n=3) of Southeast Asian Americans respondents attended these events a few times a year. The group least likely to participate are other East Asian Americans who participated in protests or boycotts 14.28% (n=1) a few times a year. Overall, Chinese Americans and Southeast Asian Americans were at least two times more likely to participate in boycotts or protests before the pandemic.

Table 7a: Pre-COVID: participated in boycotts or protests

	Chinese Americans	Southeast Asian Americans	Other East Asian Americans
Did not respond	0%	0%	0%
Never	53.85%	66.67%	85.71%
A few times a year	38.46%	33.33%	14.29%
Monthly	0%	0%	0%
Daily/Weekly	7.70%	0%	0%
Total	n=13	n=9	n=7

Regarding participation in protests and boycotts, other East Asian Americans reported an increase in participation than they had before the pandemic, specifically, they were almost two times more likely to engage in these activities. Other East Asian American respondents recorded that they had participated in this form of political engagement from at least a few times a year to as frequently as daily/weekly. Additionally, some Southeast Asian Americans did not answer this question which could explain the lack of change.

Table 7b I Post-COVID: participated in protests and boycotts

	Chinese Americans	Southeast Asian Americans	Other East Asian Americans
Did not respond	0%	11.12%	0%
Never	46.15%	44.44%	42.86%
A few times a year	38.46%	22.22%	28.57%
Monthly	0%	22.22%	0%
Daily/Weekly	15.38%	0%	28.57%
Total	n=13	n=9	n=7

Political Engagement Now Among Interviewees

All of the interviewees considered themselves politically engaged now. Many of the interviewees cited growing up as a reason for their increased political mobilization. Therefore, it is possible that more factors have led to the increased political mobilization of East and Southeast Asian American young adults. Additionally, the interviews highlighted how the increased anti-Asian sentiment may not have played as much of a role as I hypothesized. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether their increased participation emerged in response to their experiences of anti-Asian sentiment in response to the pandemic, or if participation would have naturally increased with age.

Lilly considers herself as politically engaged to a certain extent, noting their job as a federal worker restricted them from participating in some political activities. They believed that becoming older, understanding what is going on, the shift in the political landscape, and figuring out what is important to them were factors that contributed to their political mobilization. They also shared that they believe that protesting, posting and sharing information on social media, and engaging in conversations were various ways to change how people think, in regards to anti-Asian hate and violence. Therefore, these activities were utilized by Lilly because they believed these strategies had the ability to create change.

Mia also considers themselves more politically engaged compared to before the pandemic. They noted that they now read the news and engage in conversations with friends about the news. Additionally, they expressed her interest in remaining politically engaged and trying to improve her political participation. Mia also noted that growing up, attending university, having social media, and having friends who are politically engaged were factors that contributed to their political mobilization.

They also shared that they believe protests are meaningful because communities come together, noting large numbers are powerful, and that it makes a statement about the relevance of the issue. While sharing their thoughts on the power of numbers, they cited the large numbers of people who supported the BLM movement, adding that it was impactful seeing how many people in the U.S. and across the world supported the movement. They noted that by participating in these protests they were making people's voices heard, which demonstrated to powerful figures the importance of the BLM movement.

Mia noted that they wished that they spoke up and participated more during the pandemic. They noted that it was hard for them to speak up— citing fear as the reason they did not participate as much as they wanted to. Additionally, they expressed that it was hard to speak up and be politically engaged because they feel that politics does not care about them, and they questioned why they should care about politics, and shared that they believe it will remain the same. Mia did not necessarily specify whether they were talking about politics in general, or politicians. They also brought up in the interviewee that they do not believe that “politics” does not care about them. They did not specify if they meant PGM, or general apathy.

I feel like when things like that happen to kids, it's really hard for them to speak up for them in the future. Because then it's ingrained in their head, like this is what will happen to you, like that kind of fear. Which I think makes it harder for them to speak, because they may have this one view that politics won't help me at all, why should I pay attention? It'll always be the same. Which isn't always true, but I feel like people will have the mindset. Because they both have these negative ideas about minority groups.

Emily shared that they believed their political engagement increased, specifically noting how they experience waves of political involvement. They strongly believed participation in politics was necessary for a functioning democracy. Emily credits majoring in political science as one reason for their increased political engagement. While in university, they created an affinity group at her college for people of mixed-race background and adoptee identities. They noticed a lot of overlap in these two identities, and cited the feeling of not feeling one or the

other and feelings of belonging. The group turned out to be exclusively Asian American, specifically Chinese American adoptees. During these meetings, they hosted lunches where they had conversations about a topic that would be in the form of a presentation and then had conversations about said topic.

In addition, the interviewee became a door-to-door canvasser for Maine People's Alliance (MPA) for two summers. MPA is Maine's largest progressive community action organization. Most recently, they worked on an elected officials' reelection campaign as a city's organizer. They credit growing up, learning of more ways to become politically engaged, being able to vote, gaining more confidence, increased opportunities to put themselves out there, improved understanding of political issues, and academic background/foundation to discuss political issues as factors that contributed to their increased political participation.

When asked if they believe they have experienced increased political mobilization, Alice noted that we live in a world that is governed by politics. As a result, they care about the workings of politics. They remain politically engaged through the emails they receive from Senators or other representatives, and read them to be aware of the legislation that is being passed. Alice shared that they believe that growing up as the reason for their increased political engagement because they feel there is more at stake in the game of politics because they can vote.

Alex also believed that their political engagement had increased since the pandemic, and considers themselves more politically engaged. They shared that they care about issues and topics that are considered political. When asked about the effectiveness of protests, they shared that they believe protests are a good way to show that large numbers of people care about a certain issue—that sheer numbers tell a story and that it can have a powerful impact. However,

they noted that protests do not necessarily affect change. Protests have their time and place. Alex highlighted that conversations are also crucial, and that it has the ability to add nuance. They also noted standing up against hate if someone says something hurtful is also important to creating political change, because everything is connected.

They attributed their increased political participation to attending university, widespread information on social media, finding people who care about similar issues, and finding mentors who do similar work. They shared that they believe that the COVID-19 pandemic was an eye-opener for many Americans, stating that society is fragile and the world is not right, and that the pandemic propelled that thinking.

Asian American: Belonging and Being “Enough”

The term “Asian American” includes more than 20 national origin groups. The term originated to create unity amongst a diverse group of people to fight for the Asian American movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, it is also important to note that before “Asian American”, there was “Oriental” and “Mongoloid”, which were derogatory terms to refer to Asians. It is important to note that although this is an important identity and it has significant political consequences, it is also an identity that has been imposed on this diaspora to “other” and distance from whiteness. Given the diversity within this diaspora, it is likely that this term will vary from person to person. All of the people I interviewed grew up in predominantly white towns and cities. As a result of being one of the few Asian Americans in their communities, it seems that some of the interviewees have struggled with their racialized identity. However, as they have grown up, they have also learned how to find belonging and feel “enough”.

When asked what this identity means to them, Lilly noted their Asian identity is important to them. Growing up in a predominantly white area, they were acutely aware of their identity as they were often the only Asian American. In addition to their awareness about their racialized identity, they also mentioned how her Asian side of the family are recent immigrants. Therefore, it is important to them to stay connected to, preserve her culture and history.

Mia noted how the meaning of Asian American varies for each person. For their entire life they have lived in the U.S., despite being born in China. They noted how if people did not see their face, and only heard their voice, they sound like an American. Despite growing up in the U.S., they noted their ethnicity, race, and culture is important to them. As an adoptee, they have felt not fully American, and not fully Asian. As a result, they shared that the term Asian American is a good in-between, and provides them a sense of belonging:

I feel like... I just want to feel like I'm part of a community, and that I feel like my entire life, I've just been drawn to being Asian American. Because I feel like that's the only way to describe what I am to other people without having to go into the details of my background... But I also think that it's a community with other people who have similar experiences who like also like don't feel like fully American and fully Asian, and it's like a nice in between where a lot of people can feel safe in... I feel the most comfortable... I feel like if I said one [Asian or American] or the other, they wouldn't agree with me at all. And just saying I'm Asian American is that nice in between.

It is interesting that Mia brings up how if someone were to only hear their voice, that they believe that someone would know they are American— but if they see Mia's face, they might assume differently. Mia's observations shed light on how someone may perceive her as not American, just because they are Asian American. Another interesting comment that Mia brought to the interview was other's agreement (or lack thereof) regarding identifying as one or the other. Mia's comments about what this identity means to them demonstrates how identity is a social construct, and can be used as a mechanism to impose upon individuals, and it can also be utilized to highlight similarities in shared experiences, and building community. The quote from Mia illustrates how this identity allows them to feel comfortable and to have a space of belonging.

For Emily, being an Asian American adoptee has brought nuanced feelings to this interviewees' Asian American identity. At one point in their life, they noted they were frustrated that race was the only thing others saw— noting how when they were perceived, people would make snap judgements because of their race and appearance. They noted that their identity as a Chinese American was a dominant trait that others identified. As people got to know the interviewee, people eventually looked past their Asianness to see them as a nuanced person:

It wasn't top of mind when I was younger because I grew up in a predominantly white area. People know me eventually. Like I've been in this town long enough, I have enough friends and connections. And if I just do what everybody else does, they'll see, oh, it's almost like they can look past my Asianess and see that look, I'm like a nuanced person, which is not something a white kid in this town deals with. It's like oh, like, you're first gonna see that they're, you know, a star athlete on the baseball team...it's not like they have to go through another layer of screening in a way.

As a result of their experiences of growing up in this predominantly upper-middle class town, it took time for the interviewee to become comfortable with their identity. They shared that because of their racial identity, they were held to a different standard and did not have to go through a “screening”. The quote, “if I just do what everybody else does”, might imply that Emily felt the need to assimilate to avoid or prevent the “screening” they experienced. During the interview, Emily did not specify what “screening” meant to them, for that reason, I cannot provide a definition of what this meant to the interviewee. Hence, I can only propose possible explanations to what the “screening” process meant to Emily. From my interpretation of “screening” it may mean that it takes white people a longer time to find similarities with Emily. Thus, making it harder for Emily to feel included and part of the community.

In addition to this experience of being held to a different standard and not being seen as a nuanced individual at first glance— they felt that they did not feel Asian “enough”, and that they sometimes felt ideas were enforced upon them by white people in their life to go to China, know about certain topics to be considered Asian “enough”. Similar to Mia, since growing up, Emily

has learned that their identity is something they can choose, regarding how they embrace their identity, without feeling any shame or guilt for not being Asian/American “enough”.

Alice shared that they had struggled with their Asian American identity in the past. They noted that their identity is complex because of their experience as an adoptee. While growing up, they noted how they had a different experience than Asian Americans who were born in the U.S., and whose parents were either first or second-generation (or beyond) immigrants. They noted there are different ways to be Asian American, and it is not a one-size-fits-all. Additionally, they also highlighted how East Asian American experiences are often considered “the Asian American experience”, and pointed out how Southeast and South Asians are sometimes not considered Asian American. Although their racial identity does shape their life, they noted that it is not their whole story, and they do not let it define them.

Alex shared that growing up, they did not embrace their identity. They did not realize that being Asian American was an identity on its own. They noted being Asian American is an experience of existing in two different worlds. In university, they grappled with their Asian American identity, specifically their Korean American identity. To complete this project, they went to the Koreatown in Los Angeles, where they explored their identity and addressed questions of belonging in their photography project. They also highlighted how other identities have also shaped their understanding of their Asian American identity, noting that being Asian American can mean to exist at intersections of multiple groups.

For the interviewees, being Asian American means different things to each individual. However, some common themes that I noticed were the importance of belonging and feeling “enough”. But most importantly, having the agency to identify and embrace their racial and ethnic identities. To be Asian American means to be in two different worlds: Asia and the United

States, while creating your own definition of what it means to be a part of this diaspora. This identity is important because it is how people feel a sense of belonging. The COVID-19 pandemic was an example of when Asian Americans across the United States mobilized to demonstrate the racist treatment of this racialized group and demand to be treated with respect and humanity. In response to the significant increase in anti-Asian rhetoric, East and Southeast Asian Americans rose to the occasion and mobilized to demonstrate this group belongs in the United States, despite the treatment this group has experienced and continues to experience.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

My thesis focuses on if the hostile political context of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the political participation of East and Southeast Asian American young adults. This chapter will provide a summary of the previous chapters, summarize findings, and provide considerations for future research.

Summary of the Chapters

As the data has demonstrated, there was an increase in political mobilization among East and Southeast Asian American respondents in the surveys and interviews I conducted. This paper began with providing background context about who Asian Americans are. The first chapter set the context for COVID-19 in the United States and how Asian Americans faced an additional burden of the possibility of being discriminated against because of their racialized identity.

Chapter two discussed the methods that were used in this research: anonymous survey and confidential interviews. This chapter described the measures and variables involved in the research, and provided a description of the survey and interview samples.

Chapter three proposed different reasons people choose to become politically engaged. A popular explanation for individual-level political mobilization is socio-economic status, arguing that people with higher SES are more likely to be politically engaged, and people with lower SES are more likely to be less politically mobilized. However, research has noted how this research relies on data that relies predominantly on data from white Americans. As a result, the notion that SES impacts individual-level political mobilization is insufficient. Therefore, other scholars have addressed this gap by focusing on immigrants' experiences of political incorporation and participation. However, despite this research that expands its data to include more people, it does not answer why second-generation immigrants become mobilized. This has led to researchers finding that discrimination could contribute to the political mobilization of racialized minorities in the United States who are second-generation Americans. Consequently, this chapter focused on how discrimination affects political mobilization, and how different types of discrimination impacts one's likelihood of becoming politically engaged. This chapter also discusses how people become aware of perceived discrimination, and that this is particularly pertinent to second-generation Americans. Lastly, this chapter notes how panethnic linked fate and group consciousness could have been underlying factors that were activated once an individual perceived discrimination, and how that could impact their perception of possible solutions to combat the discrimination.

The fourth chapter focused on the racialization of East and Southeast Asian Americans, since they arrived and immigrated to the United States. This chapter highlighted how the rapid

increase of Asian immigrants led to the blaming of this diaspora during times of instability. As a result, Asians were racialized through legislation and the U.S. Supreme Court cases as a way to justify the discrimination this diaspora experienced. Through this racialization process, East and Southeast Asians were also lumped together. Thus, East and Southeast Asian Americans were treated as one homogenous group. Examples of instability included economic insecurity and the possible spread of contagious diseases, through legislation, Asian Americans were characterized as the cause of the problems, and became the embodiment of disease-carriers.

In addition to the racialization of East and Southeast Asian Americans, this chapter also examined how the COVID-19 virus became racialized. Since the virus was first reported in Wuhan, China, mainstream media began calling it the “Wuhan virus”. This sentiment of blaming the Chinese government, people of Chinese ancestry, and anyone who “looked” Chinese was further reinforced by Donald Trump— who referred to the virus as “China virus” and “Kung flu”. As a result, the intentional usage of implying the virus was from China, it had an emboldening effect that encouraged other Americans to spread hateful sentiment about people of Asian descent. Thus, the intentional naming of COVID-19 as “China virus” associated this virus with people of Chinese descent or anyone who could be mistaken as Chinese.

An example of mistaken identity in the context of political turmoil occurred in 1982. The murder of Vincent Chin highlights how the scapegoating of Asian Americans for economic recession/competition and disease causes some Americans to blame a certain group and enact on their frustration through hatred and violence, which in some cases, result in the brutalization and murder of Asian Americans.

In addition to the racialization of Asian Americans when this group first arrived in the United States, this chapter also discussed the ways this group is currently racialized. After the

Civil Rights Movement, it was no longer socially acceptable to be explicitly prejudiced.

Therefore, the racialization of Asian Americans evolved into casting this group as a perpetual foreigner and “model minority” that would serve as an example of a racially minority group that had made it in America.

Chapter five focused on the findings from the surveys and findings, demonstrating that there was an overall increase in general political engagement amongst all groups. Additionally, this chapter highlighted how Chinese American participants felt that their ethnic identity impacted them during the time of the pandemic, which seems to have encouraged their political mobilization during the pandemic.

Empirical Findings: Survey

Chapter five focused on data from the survey I conducted. Regarding respondents' observations and worries about the possibility of experiencing discrimination, Chinese American respondents were the most likely group, 40.83% (n=13) to notice a slight or significant increase. Southeast Asian Americans were also likely to notice a slight or significant increase, 31.04% (n=9). In response to the increase of anti-Asian sentiment and violence towards this group, more than three-quarters of Chinese American respondents noted that they were either worried or very worried that they would experience discrimination because of their ancestry. When asked about the concern of experiencing discrimination based on their racialized identity, the number increased significantly among other East Asian American respondents. This is likely because East Asian Americans are more likely than Southeast Asian Americans to be confused as Chinese. For Southeast Asian Americans, the number increased by slightly more than 10%. For

Chinese American respondents, the percentage remained the same. This data highlights how panethnic identity seems to be significant for all of the groups.

This demonstrates the consequences of lumping Asian Americans and homogenizing this group can have significant impacts on this groups' perceptions of themselves, in relation to the possibility they may be targeted because of the possibility of being confused with another Asian ethnic identity. This recognition highlights how East and Southeast Asian Americans are aware they may be perceived differently than how they actually identify, which could explain their increased political mobilization to combat anti-Asian hate and violence.

The political participation of the survey respondents demonstrated that Southeast and Chinese Americans were the most politically engaged groups. The following variables: conversations, following news about U.S. elections, posting on social media, and participating in boycotts/protests were the most popular political activities that respondents were engaged in.

For conversations, before the pandemic, both Chinese and Southeast Asian American respondents had conversations about political topics on a daily/weekly basis. After the pandemic, other East Asian American groups increased their participation in this activity, to the same frequency of Chinese and Southeast Asian American respondents. On social media, before the pandemic, Southeast Asian Americans were the most likely to participate in this activity on a daily/weekly basis. After the pandemic, there was a slight increase among Chinese American respondents who began posting on social media. Before the pandemic, Chinese Americans were the most likely group to follow news about U.S. elections on a daily/weekly basis. After the pandemic, Southeast Asian Americans increased their participation in following news about U.S. elections on a daily/weekly frequency. Lastly, before the pandemic, Chinese Americans were the most likely group to participate in boycotts/protests at least a few times a year. After the

pandemic, participation in boycotts/protests increased amongst East Asian American respondents who participated at least a few times a year to as frequent as on a daily/weekly basis.

In regards to ways respondents combatted anti-Asian sentiment, during the pandemic, Southeast Asian and Chinese Americans were the most likely to engage in conversations with friends and family about the increase in anti-Asian sentiment they noticed on a daily/weekly basis. After the pandemic, all groups engaged in these conversations. However, because the current climate is not what it was during the pandemic, the frequency decreased to a few times a year and as frequently as monthly. Another method of combating anti-Asian hatred was posting on social media to raise awareness. During the pandemic, Southeast Asian American respondents posted on social media on a daily/weekly basis. After the pandemic, Chinese American respondents engaged in this form of participation. However, the frequency decreased as compared to during the pandemic to a few times a year. This is most likely due to the fact that East and Southeast Asian Americans felt a stronger sense of need to spread awareness about the rapid increase in anti-Asian sentiment. Another activity that was included in the research was participation in protests, boycotts, and vigils. During the pandemic, Chinese American respondents were the most likely to attend at least a few times a year. Since the pandemic, Southeast Asian Americans have also engaged in this activity with Chinese Americans at least a few times a year and sometimes monthly. Finally, donations to nonprofits combating the rise in anti-Asian sentiment was another way respondents were politically active. During the pandemic, Chinese American respondents were the most likely to donate to a non-profit at least a few times a year. Since the pandemic, Southeast Asian Americans have also donated at least a few times as well.

Overall, it seems that Chinese and Southeast Asian Americans were the most politically mobilized groups. It surprised me that other East Asian American respondents were not as politically involved after the pandemic. Additionally, although Chinese Americans became politically involved throughout the pandemic, it seems that the frequency among this group has decreased. It is likely that the decrease in anti-Asian sentiment has resulted in a less frequent manner.

Empirical Findings: Interviews

Another way to get a better understanding of how Asian Americans became politically mobilized during the pandemic is through the interviews I conducted. Since the pandemic, all of the interviewees have become more politically involved. Before the pandemic, the majority were interested in politics but did not actively engage in it. However, since the pandemic, all of the interviewees have become more politically engaged, some more than others. A major theme was the way social media was a way individuals spread awareness about the rise in anti-Asian hate and how education was seen as a way to combat anti-Asian sentiment. Another response by interviewees included attending protests. This discussion about protests also highlighted how interviewees participate in different roles of these events, that goes beyond attending, Mia spoke at a rally and Alex created art for rallies. Now, it seems that the interviewees talk more about politics with close ones, follow the news about local politics, and participate in protests. Emily is an example of someone who took a different approach and worked with an organization as a door-to-door canvasser, and also worked on an elected official's reelection campaign. It seems that the Chinese American interviewees were for the most part, now, the most politically engaged group. This may be due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted them, and

encouraged their political participation. It is also possible that their identities as adoptees may have impacted them. As people who are adopted by white Americans, they may have felt more knowledgeable about the ways they could participate in politics.

Considerations for future research

According to the survey and interviews I conducted, the hostile context of the COVID-19 pandemic that was fueled by the increasing anti-Asian sentiment and discrimination, led to the political mobilization of East and Southeast Asian American young adults. One limitation in my research was trying to get a diversity among survey respondents and interviewees. I attempted to have as much diversity represented in my study such as neighborhood composition, ethnic identity, and gender identity. However, because of time constraints, I was unable to create a larger picture of the impact COVID-19 had on this diaspora. Therefore, future research could examine the pandemic's impact on the political mobilization of East and Southeast Asian Americans, that includes more diversity. Additionally, while I was conducting my research, I noticed some respondents identified as biracial, having Asian and white ancestry, this led me to wonder if there were differences in experiences of the pandemic and political mobilization amongst biracial and monoracial East and Southeast Asian American young adults.

The interviews demonstrate an under-researched field of study within political science, which is the political mobilization of transracial adoptees, and how their third-generation and beyond parents impact their political participation. Thus, it is possible that because of white Americans being socialized in the U.S., they may pass down their knowledge of political participation to their transracial adopted children, which could make it easier for this group of individuals to become politically mobilized. Despite this, it is also important for future research

to consider how racial identity may play a role in the political mobilization of this group. More specifically, how feelings of panethnic linked fate and group consciousness may be felt differently amongst transracial adoptees and non-adopted Asian Americans. As well as how discrimination may impact transracial adoptees and non-adoptees. Due to the fact that the Asian American diaspora includes a considerable number of individuals who are transracial adoptees, it is important to understand how their experiences may be similar or different to non-adoptee Asian Americans.

The interviews I conducted with the adoptees demonstrated that there seems to be a lack of conversation among Chinese American adoptees with their white parents about race and how it impacts their lives, and how white American parents respond. Specifically, the interviewees noted the awkwardness they feel because they are aware that their white parents cannot relate to them. Future research could examine how conversations about race, racism, and racial identity could impact the political participation of Asian American transracial adoptees. Furthermore, research could seek to understand about the socialization and racialization of transracial Asian American adoptees.

Due to the fact that Asian Americans are one of the youngest racialized groups in the United States, it is understandable that social media played a significant role in political participation. Future research should look to understand the impact and role social media has for political mobilization. Additionally, I would encourage scholars to focus specifically on how PGM utilizes social media as a means of political mobilization, including spreading awareness about issues and a way to inform people of upcoming events. More specifically, how Asian American young adults utilize social media as a strategy for political mobilization.

Lastly, I encourage scholars to understand how “softer” forms of political activity can impact one’s engagement in politics and activism. In the world we live in, particularly in the context of the United States, I think we often view activities such as participating in protests, that require charisma and louder personalities, as one of the ultimate forms of participation. Therefore, I think activities that are not as eye-catching can be just as, if not, more powerful, such as posting on social media to inform others, and engaging in conversations with the goal of listening to other perspectives, because you can change others’ perspectives.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates how ideas associating Asians with diseases does not occur in a vacuum— racist notions such as Orientalism and Yellow Peril have persisted, and impact the perceptions and (mis)treatment of East and Southeast Asian Americans today. My research has demonstrated some activities that are popular amongst the East and Southeast Asian American survey respondents and interviewees to combat anti-Asian rhetoric.

Asian Americans have become the fastest growing racial group in the United States. In addition to becoming the fastest-growing racial group, Asian Americans have also become an important voting bloc in American politics. It is crucial to understand what motivates Asian Americans to participate in politics, and what this will mean for U.S. politics in general.

Bibliography

- Barrett, M., & Pachi, D. (2019). Social and demographic factors linked to youth civic and political engagement. In *Youth civic and political engagement*. Taylor & Francis. 10.4324/9780429025570
- Bloemraad, I. (2006). Becoming a citizen in the United States and Canada: Structured mobilization and immigrant political incorporation. *Social Forces*, 85(2), 667-695. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2007.0002>
- Budiman, A. & Ruiz, N. (2021). Key facts about Asian Americans, a diverse and growing population. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/04/29/key-facts-about-asian-americans/>
- Campbell-Stephens, R. (2020). Global majority; decolonising the language and reframing the conversation about race. Leeds Beckett University.
- Chan, N. K. M., Kim, J. Y., & Leung, V. (2022). COVID-19 and Asian Americans: How elite messaging and social exclusion shape partisan attitudes. *Perspectives on Politics*, 20(2), 618-634. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592721003091>
- Daniels, Roger. (1993). United states policy towards asian immigrants: contemporary developments in historical perspective. *International Journal*, 48(2), 310-334.
- Gover, A. R., Harper, S. B., & Langton, L. (2020). Anti-Asian hate crime during the COVID-19 pandemic: Exploring the reproduction of inequality. *American journal of criminal justice*, 45(4), 647-667. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-020-09545-1>
- ina Vrábliková, K., & ej Císař, O. (2014). Individual political participation and macro contextual determinants. *Political and Civic Engagement*, 55-75. <https://doi-org.goddard40.clarku.edu/10.4324/9781315758145>
- Keating, A., & Melis, G. (2017). Social media and youth political engagement: Preaching to the converted or providing a new voice for youth?. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 19(4), 877-894. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148117718461>
- Kim, C. J. (1999). The racial triangulation of Asian Americans. *Politics & society*, 27(1), 105-138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329299027001005>
- Lajevardi, N., Oskooii, K. A., Walker, H. L., & Westfall, A. L. (2020). The paradox between integration and perceived discrimination among American Muslims. *Political Psychology*, 41(3), 587-606. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12640>
- Le Espiritu, Y. (1992). *Asian American panethnicity: Bridging institutions and identities*. Temple University Press.
- Le, D., Arora, M., & Stout, C. (2020). Are you threatening me? Asian-American panethnicity in the Trump era. *Social Science Quarterly*, 101(6), 2183-2192. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12870>
- Leighley, J. E. (2001). *Strength in numbers?: The political mobilization of racial and ethnic minorities*. Princeton University Press.

- Li, Y., & Nicholson Jr, H. L. (2021). When “model minorities” become “yellow peril”—Othering and the racialization of Asian Americans in the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sociology compass*, 15(2), e12849. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12849>
- Loh, N. (2020). Diasporic Dreams: Law, Whiteness, and the Asian American Identity. *Fordham Urb. LJ*, 48, 1331.
- Masuoka, N. (2006). Together they become one: Examining the predictors of panethnic group consciousness among Asian Americans and Latinos. *Social Science Quarterly*, 87(5), 993-1011. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2006.00412.x>
- Murray, R., & Vedlitz, A. (1977). Race, socioeconomic status, and voting participation in large southern cities. *The Journal of Politics*, 39(4), 1064-1072. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2129944>
- Nedelmann, B. (1987). Individuals and parties—changes in processes of political mobilization. *European Sociological Review*, 3(3), 181-202. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.esr.a036449>
- Nicholson Jr, H. L., & Mei, D. (2023). Predicting group consciousness among Asian Americans: Considering commonalities, shared interests, panethnic group identification, and linked fate. *Sociology Compass*, 17(2), e13051. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.13051>
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States*. Routledge.
- Oskooii, K. A. (2016). How discrimination impacts sociopolitical behavior: A multidimensional perspective. *Political Psychology*, 37(5), 613-640. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12279>
- Oskooii, K. A. (2020). Perceived discrimination and political behavior. *British Journal of Political Science*, 50(3), 867-892. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123418000133>
- Portes, A., Fernández-Kelly, P., & Haller, W. (2009). The adaptation of the immigrant second generation in America: A theoretical overview and recent evidence. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 35(7), 1077-1104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830903006127>
- Reny, T. T., & Barreto, M. A. (2022). Xenophobia in the time of pandemic: Othering, anti-Asian attitudes, and COVID-19. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 10(2), 209-232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2020.1769693>
- Schildkraut, D. J. (2005). The rise and fall of political engagement among Latinos: The role of identity and perceptions of discrimination. *Political Behavior*, 27, 285-312. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-005-4803-9>
- Shih, K. Y., Chang, T. F., & Chen, S. Y. (2019). Impacts of the model minority myth on Asian American individuals and families: Social justice and critical race feminist perspectives. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 11(3), 412-428. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12342>
- Snelgrove, R., & Havitz, M. E. (2010). Looking back in time: The pitfalls and potential of retrospective methods in leisure studies. *Leisure Sciences*, 32(4), 337-351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2010.488199>

- Tao, W., Li, J. Y., Lee, Y., & He, M. (2024). Individual and collective coping with racial discrimination: What drives social media activism among Asian Americans during the COVID-19 outbreak. *new media & society*, 26(6), 3168-3187.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221100835>
- Terriquez, V., & Kwon, H. (2015). Intergenerational family relations, civic organisations, and the political socialisation of second-generation immigrant youth. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41(3), 425-447. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2014.921567>
- Tessler, H., Choi, M., & Kao, G. (2020). The anxiety of being Asian American: Hate crimes and negative biases during the COVID-19 pandemic. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 45, 636-646. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-020-09541-5>
- Thelma, C. C., Sain, Z. H., Phiri, E. V., Sylvester, C., & Patrick, M. (2024). The Role of Ethnic Identity in Political Mobilization: An Analytical Review.
- Tran, V. C. (2024). Asian American Diversity and Growth. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 50. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-031021-012617>
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., Brady, H., & Nie, N. H. (1993). Race, ethnicity and political resources: Participation in the United States. *British Journal of Political Science*, 23(4), 453-497. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400006694>
- Wing, H. M., & Park-Taylor, J. (2022). From model minority to racial threat: Chinese transracial adoptees' experience navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 13(3), 234.
- Wong, J. S., Ramakrishnan, S. K., Lee, T., Junn, J., & Wong, J. (2011). Asian American political participation: Emerging constituents and their political identities. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Wong, J., & Tseng, V. (2008). Political socialisation in immigrant families: Challenging top-down parental socialisation models. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 34(1), 151-168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830701708742>
- Wu, J. D. (2024). Understanding pan-Asian identity: How and when threat affects Asian and national origin identity attachment. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 12(2), 376-394. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2022.2137050>
- Xie, C., Liu, P., & Cheng, Y. (2023). Praxis, hashtag activism, and social justice: A content analysis of #StopAsianHate narratives. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 33(2), 121-137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2023.2180529>
- Zipp, J. F., Landerman, R., & Luebke, P. (1982). Political parties and political participation: A reexamination of the standard socioeconomic model. *Social Forces*, 60(4), 1140-1153. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/60.4.1140>

Appendix A: Survey

Participants will be asked:

1. In which state and city did you reside in during the spring of 2020?
 - 1.1. In the spring of 2020, were you
 - a) a high school student
 - b) a college student
 - c) working full-time
 - d) other
2. Thinking back to the start of the pandemic, which of the following activities did you participate in? Please select all that apply (you may choose more than one option)
 - I posted about socio-political issues on social media
 - I talked with friends and/or family about social issues and politics
 - I participated in boycotts and protests
 - I voted in U.S. elections
 - I do not consider myself politically active
 - 2.1. [In response to question 2], please indicate how often you participated in these activities, if it is applicable to you
 - Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - A few times in a year
 - Never
3. How worried, if at all, were you during the pandemic that you would experience discrimination because of your Asian identity during COVID-19.
 - Very worried
 - Worried
 - Neutral
 - Not worried
 - Not worried at all
4. What do you consider to be your primary race/ethnicity?
 - Asian
 - Chinese
 - Japanese
 - Taiwanese
 - Vietnamese
 - Korean
 - Thai
 - Filipina/o
 - Other:

- Black/African American
 - Latina/e/o
 - White
 - Middle Eastern North African
 - Mixed:
 - Other:
5. How important is your racial/ethnic identity to your identity?
 - Extremely important
 - Very important
 - Moderately important
 - Slightly important
 - Not important at all
 6. Did you notice any change in anti-Asian sentiment at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - 1. Yes, I noticed a significant increase
 - 2. I noticed a slight increase
 - 3. I did not notice any increase or decrease
 - 4. No, I noticed a slight decrease
 - 5. No, I noticed a significant decrease
 7. Have you heard of the #StopAsianHate movement?
 - 7.1. [If yes] what do you think are the goals of this movement? (open-ended)
 - 7.2. The Stop Asian Hate slogan was used for a series of demonstrations, protests, and rallies highlighting the violence against Asians in the U.S. These events were held across the country in 2021 in response to racial discrimination against Asian Americans relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. Were you aware of any mobilization in your community along these lines?
 8. If responses to previous question [question #6]. Did you do anything to respond to rising anti-Asian sentiment? Please select all that apply.
 - I talked about the rise of anti-Asian sentiment with friends and/or family
 - I posted about anti-Asian sentiment on my social media [if so, which platform?]
 - I participated in a #StopAsianHate or other similar rallies and protests
 - I did not participate in any way
 - 8.1. [In response to question 8], please indicate how often you participated in these activities
 - Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - A few times in a year
 - Never
 9. Today, please indicate how often you participate in the following activities, if at all:
 - Worked or volunteered for a candidate
 - Participated in one or more social, cultural, civic, political groups, or unions
 - Attended a protest march, demonstration, or rally
 - Discussed politics with friends and/or family
 - Discussed a candidate or political issue on social media
 - Signed a petition regarding an issue of concern

- 9.1. [In response to question 9], please indicate how often you participated in these activities
 - Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - A few times in a year
 - Never
10. Which of the following issues, if any, drive your political engagement?
 - The Black Lives Matter movement
 - The March For Our Lives
 - The U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision overturning abortion access
 - Anti-Asian sentiment and violence
 - Other (please explain)
11. Please indicate the approximate racial/ethnic composition of the zipcode where you lived during the spring of 2021. (*Note: using a sliding scale that adds up to 100*)
 - Percent white... 1-100
 - Percent Black... 1-100
 - Percent Latino or Hispanic... 1-100
 - Percent Asian... 1-100
 - Percent American Indian/Native American... 1-100
 - Percent Other... 1-100
12. In what year were you born? – Drop down option
13. In what year did you become a naturalized U.S. citizen? – Drop down with years
- 13.1. Were your parents born in the United States, or in another country?
 - Both parents were born in the U.S.
 - Both parents born in another country
 - 1 parent born in the U.S./1 parent born elsewhere
 - Don't know
- 13.2. How about your grandparents? Where were they born?
 - All 4 grandparents born in the U.S.
 - 3 grandparents born in the U.S./1 elsewhere
 - 2 grandparents born in the U.S./2 elsewhere
 - 1 grandparent born in the U.S./3 elsewhere
 - All four grandparents were born outside the U.S.
 - Don't know
14. How do you identify your gender identity?
 - Cisgender Male
 - Transgender Male
 - Cisgender Female
 - Transgender Female
 - Non-binary or genderfluid
15. I am seeking to extend this project by conducting follow-up interviews to better understand the experiences of young Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews will be conducted on Zoom, and will last approximately 30-45 minutes. All interview data will be kept confidential, and the names of respondents will be maintained separately from the responses

themselves. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview to share your perspective in more depth?

[If yes] Please provide your name, email address, and/or cell phone number so that the researcher may follow-up to schedule an interview at your convenience.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Thank you for your willingness to complete the survey and interest in participating in the interview to expand upon your thoughts. A friendly reminder that participation in this interview is completely voluntary, you may choose to not answer any question, and you have the option to opt-out at any point during the interview.

I will ask you some questions about your experiences as an Asian American during COVID-19. Please answer to the best of your abilities. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. I am conducting this research to gather a better understanding of what people in this diaspora think about this event.

[If respondent agrees to be recorded on consent form] on the interview form, you consented to audio recording. Is there anything you want to ask before the recording begins? If for any reason, you would like me to stop recording, please let me know.

1. During the pandemic, did you live in a racially diverse area? Which state and city did you reside in during the spring of 2021?
2. In the spring of 2020, were you
 - a) a high school student
 - b) a college student
 - c) working full-time
 - d) other
3. Would you have described yourself as a political person before the COVID-19 pandemic? Why or why not?
4. In the beginning of the pandemic, did you think the anti-Asian sentiment linked to the COVID-19 pandemic would impact you? Why or why not?
5. Did you feel any anti-Asian sentiment during the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, can you share any examples?
6. [If yes to Q5] Did you feel motivated to do anything to combat anti-Asian sentiment?
 - a. If so, what did you do, and why?
 - b. If not, did you consider participating? Did you see any shifts in mobilization among friends or family members?
 - c. Are you familiar with the #StopAsianHate movement? If so, did you participate in any activities related to this movement? If you did participate, did you think it would bring about any change?
 - d. What about other aspects of political participation: have you been involved with any campaigns for candidates? [If yes” who].
 - e. What about any organizations that work to support the Asian American community in some way? [If yes: can you tell me a little bit about that involvement. What sparked it? What sort of efforts have you been involved in?]
7. Would you describe yourself politically engaged today? Why or why not?
8. If you feel more politically engaged now than you did before the start of the pandemic, is there anything in particular that you think caused this shift?

9. Do you believe engaging in protests is meaningful to create change? Why or why not?
10. Do you view the news or think about protests on issues that are important to Asian Americans?
Why or why not?
11. Do you describe yourself as an Asian American? What does that identity mean to you?