Identity and Partisanship in Flux: How Shifts in Type and Salience of Cultural Identity of Vietnamese Americans Affects the Generational Partisan Shift within the Vietnamese American Community

Joon Park

Department of Political Science, University of California, Irvine

Dr. Davin L. Phoenix

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Introduction

Asian Americans are currently the fastest-growing racial group in the United States, and as a result, the Asian American vote has become increasingly influential. Although formerly considered a more conservative or moderate voting bloc, Asian Americans have voted in higher numbers for Democratic over Republican political candidates in recent years.

According to the 2020 Asian American Voter Survey, 54% of respondents anticipated voting for Democrat Joe Biden, while 30% anticipated voting for Republican Donald Trump. However, the survey also found that younger Asian Americans were significantly more likely to vote for Biden, with 18 to 34-year-olds preferring Biden (66 percent) over Trump (20 percent). In contrast, Asian Americans over 50 preferred Biden (45 percent) over Trump (36 percent) by a smaller margin. Additionally, the survey found that Vietnamese Americans were the only Asian American subgroup to prefer Trump (48 percent) over Biden (36 percent). In every other Asian American subgroup, a majority preferred Biden over Trump.

To explain such a phenomenon, it must be addressed that the political views of many Vietnamese Americans are shaped by the loss of their country. After the capture of Saigon by the North Vietnamese in 1975, many South Vietnamese and some North Vietnamese fled their home country in fear of reprisal by the North Vietnamese government. The first wave of Vietnamese refugees fled their home country soon after the Fall of Saigon. Many of these migrants were highly-skilled professionals in Vietnam, with some having direct connections to the South Vietnamese government. Many of the first-wave refugees ended up in the United States, settling in major metropolitan areas after short stays at refugee camps. With a strong allegiance to South Vietnam, many of these refugees held staunch anti-communist views (Hoang, 2016).

Shortly, Republican Party organizations picked up on these sentiments and pitched themselves as the anti-communist party to the Vietnamese American electorate. Soon, more waves of Vietnamese immigrants arrived in the United States, and many had similar political beliefs to the earlier immigrants. This established the Republican Party as the party of Vietnamese American support and led to the growth of a conservative Vietnamese American political identity. Some Vietnamese immigrants supported the Republican Party to adhere to the political expectations of the established Vietnamese immigrant community. Today, many Vietnamese Americans, especially from older generations, strongly support the Republican Party and identify as South Vietnamese.

Many of these Vietnamese Americans also hold staunch anti-China views due to China's role in supporting the North Vietnamese during the Vietnam War. The modern relationship between Vietnam and China is complex and commonly described as a "love-hate" relationship (Forbes, 2007). Although Vietnam's history, culture, and current political system are heavily influenced by China, many Vietnamese are still wary of China due to its involvement of the latter in the Vietnam War. Vietnamese Americans, many of whom are refugees or children of refugees of the Vietnam War, feel such a sentiment much more strongly, despite being away from Vietnam for some time. As a result, many Vietnamese Americans are commonly motivated to support political parties and candidates that hold a staunch stance against the Chinese government.

During the 2016 presidential election, Republican candidate Donald Trump expressed strong opinions against China, which may have contributed to him winning the Vietnamese American vote. In particular, older cohorts and earlier generations of Vietnamese Americans were more likely than their younger counterparts to be mobilized by Trump's anti-China rhetoric, enough for many to overlook his hardline stances on immigration.

Other Asian American subgroups, such as Cambodian Americans, have a similar history to that of Vietnamese Americans with refugeeism and fleeing a communist country; however, they do not express the same support for the Republican Party[1]. Both Vietnamese and Cambodian Americans also have high rates of poverty relative to the Asian American population. These facts likely speak to the importance of the efforts of local and state Republican Party officials to court Vietnamese American voters to gain their trust and support.

However, despite historical circumstances, Vietnamese Americans have experienced a generational shift of partisan affiliation similar to that of other Asian Americans. For a few reasons, younger generations of Vietnamese Americans have become more likely to support the Democratic Party. This political development has caused tension between different generations of Vietnamese Americans, especially within the family unit.

As noted by Vox, many younger Vietnamese Americans have taken to social media to express their frustrations, especially through online communities such as the Facebook group "Asian Americans with Republican Parents Support Group" (Nguyen, 2020). In such communities, some progressive Vietnamese Americans commiserate over being labeled "communists" by older family members for expressing left-leaning political views. Others discuss frustrations with family members or older generations of Vietnamese Americans making discriminatory comments and spreading political misinformation. Many have tried, to no avail, to convert their parents or merely attempt for them to take another political perspective into account.

Others are using these online communities to discuss the information that their parents receive about American politics, much of which is misinformation or "fake news." Older cohorts

[1] Based on results of the 2016 Post-Election National Asian American survey by the National Asian American Survey

of Vietnamese Americans tend to rely on Vietnamese-language media sources, many of which are conservative or Republican-leaning in America, to receive their news about American politics. According to Vox, many of these sources disseminate biased or untrue information about American politics, especially regarding the U.S. relationship with China (Nguyen, 2020). Much of this information is spread among older cohorts of Vietnamese Americans through social media, particularly through Facebook.

The language barrier makes it difficult for these Vietnamese Americans to receive more credible information. Additionally, the language barrier makes it difficult for non-Vietnamese-speakers to determine the factualness of the information that older cohorts of Vietnamese Americans consume. Many who post on these online communities speculate that the media plays a significant role in how older cohorts of Vietnamese Americans vote.

Ultimately, the strength of a Vietnamese American's connection to the Vietnamese or South Vietnamese identity likely correlates positively with their likelihood of voting for Republican candidates. However, it is unclear how much influence the Asian American identity has on the likelihood that Vietnamese Americans vote for one party over another. Therefore, it is plausible that younger generations of Vietnamese Americans express stronger support for the Democratic Party due, in large part, to their Asian American identity.

Since the 2008 presidential election, the Asian American electorate has shifted significantly towards support for the Democratic Party. The election of President Barack Obama likely determined that the Democratic Party was the party of racial minorities in the minds of many Asian Americans (Tesler, 2012). Additionally, with the rise of the Stop Asian Hate movement, the liberal Asian American identity has grown significantly in recent years.

There is also some scholarly evidence of the influence of racial identity on Asian American partisan attitudes. In particular, the term “Asian American” was coined by historian Yuji Ichioka in 1968 during the founding of the Asian American Political Alliance to frame a new "inter-ethnic-pan-Asian American self-defining political group.” During this time, there was a sociopolitical movement called the “Asian American Movement” in which Asian American activists protested the Vietnam War alongside other minority groups (Espiritu, 1992, p.34). However, Asian American identity politics has since waned.

Today, the term “Asian American” is used in official documents, denoting all those with heritage from East, South, and Southeast Asia. However, according to political scientists Jane Junn and Natalie Masuoka in the 2008 study “Asian Americans Identity: Shared Racial Status and Political Context,” Asian Americans have only recently gained a sense of racial group consciousness. Furthermore, they assert that Asian racial group consciousness is heavily affected by the social environment, especially in comparison to Black racial group consciousness. This aligns with the findings of Raychaudhuri (2018) in which younger cohorts of Asian Americans tend to find their political consciousness in their social environment, as opposed to their cultural identities. Since the findings of Nunn and Masuoka, Asian American identity politics has grown through the rise of the Stop Asian Hate movement against the rise of hate crimes against Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like the Asian American Movement during the Vietnam War, many activists affiliated with Stop Asian Hate have collaborated and aligned themselves with similar movements such as Black Lives Matter.

In recent years, other researchers have discussed the recent rise of the Asian American racial group consciousness, linking it to the increased support of transitional or second-generation Asian Americans of the Democratic Party. For example, according to one

study in 2014, researchers found that Asian Americans aligned more with the Democratic Party, due to a sense of intergroup solidarity with other minorities (Kuo et al.). Furthermore, Asian Americans tended to factor in their racial identity and their status as racial minorities when making political decisions. As a result, younger Vietnamese Americans may be eschewing attachment to their Vietnamese American identity for a more general Asian American identity. This development leads to more pro-Democratic attitudes, as Asian Americans have shifted towards support for the Democratic Party for some of the reasons listed. In 2017, the same researchers found that a significant factor behind increased Asian American support for the Democratic Party was that Asian Americans felt that the Republican Party excluded them from the American social fabric. Therefore, the researchers argue that social identity, particularly racial identity, plays a strong role in Asian American partisanship.

Nonetheless, it is also plausible that younger generations of Vietnamese Americans are merely absorbing the political attitudes of their immediate social environments. According to a 2018 study, political scientist Tanika Raychaudhuri of the University of Houston used qualitative interviews and survey data to determine how Asian Americans in Houston, a mixed-partisan area, came to support the Democratic Party. She determined that first-generation Asian Americans "primarily interact with fellow Asian immigrants," assessing their partisanship through such interactions. However, transitional-generation and second-generation Asian Americans have more racially diverse peer groups, assessing their partisanship through interactions with people of different racial backgrounds. These Asian Americans seldom spoke about politics in their homes. Rather, many transitional-generation and second-generation Asian Americans develop pro-Democratic attitudes through "interactions with liberal friends in educational settings."

In another study, Raychaudhuri determines that younger generations of Asian Americans "develop partisan preferences partly through the diffusion of political views in local contexts" (2020). Moreover, young generations of Asian Americans received limited partisan socialization from their family. According to these findings, as most Vietnamese Americans live in diverse metropolitan areas, with many also obtaining college degrees, younger generations of Vietnamese Americans become inclined to pro-Democratic views.

However, Raychaudhuri's findings may not wholly apply to Vietnamese Americans, as many Vietnamese Americans are inherently political. Many older generations of Vietnamese Americans abide strongly by their South Vietnamese identity and continue to carry on the legacy of South Vietnam through their partisan affiliation. Many Vietnamese Americans of younger generations are exposed heavily to the political rhetoric of the older generations and are forced to reckon with politics at a young age. As a result, it is unclear whether cultural identity or immediate social environment plays a larger role in the partisan attitudes of transitional-generation and second-generation Vietnamese Americans.

Ultimately, unlike some other Asian American subgroups, the political identity of Vietnamese Americans is particularly rooted in the group's history. Today, a subset of the Filipino American community aligns strongly with the Democratic Party due to their historical connection to agricultural labor unions. Many of these Filipino Americans are descendants of farmworkers who allied with Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers, particularly in the Central Valley of California (Mosso Ruiz, 2021). However, these Filipino Americans comprise a small subset of the Filipino American community, while the historical conservative or anti-communist political identity of Vietnamese Americans permeates their entire community. Therefore, generational shifts of cultural or political identity within the Vietnamese American

community that trend towards support for the Democratic Party may be developing within the Asian American community as a whole.

As a foundation for the research, concepts such as identity have a basis in social psychology and the social identity approach. More specifically, according to the theory of self-categorization, people emphasize a shift from a personal to a collective identity. Soon, there is a drive for in-group conformity and perceiving distinctiveness from out-groups. In this case, Vietnamese Americans identify ethnically as Vietnamese, racially as Asian, and nationally as American, particularly if they have American citizenship.

However, according to social identity theory, Vietnamese Americans may feel a strong connection or identity to being any one of the three identities depending on certain factors. Some Vietnamese Americans may be quicker to identify with their ethnic identity if they see it as having a positive value connotation compared to their racial identity, and vice-versa. Moreover, when social identity is unsatisfactory, members will either leave their existing group or work to make their existing group more positively distinct. Being comparatively less culturally Vietnamese than their parents, younger cohorts of Vietnamese Americans may find their social identity as Vietnamese American less satisfactory than their parents.

This research assumes that older cohorts or earlier generations of Vietnamese Americans may feel most strongly connected to their Vietnamese identity, but younger cohorts or later generations of Vietnamese Americans may feel relatively more connected to their Asian or American identities. This research will further explore the connections that younger cohorts of transitional or second-generation Vietnamese Americans feel to the “Vietnamese American” and “Asian American” identities in comparison to their parents. Then, the research will explore how these identities within younger cohorts of transitional or second-generation Vietnamese

Americans affect their partisanship. Therefore, the research question is as follows: Does, and, if so, how, does a shift in cultural identity across generations affect the shift in partisan identity across generations within the Vietnamese American community?

Methodology

This research will consist of a series of interviews with 13 transitional-generation and second-generation Vietnamese Americans between the ages of 19 and 28. Out of the 13 interlocutors, I was connected to three through a work connection, four through a personal connection, and six through the aforementioned Facebook group "Asian Americans with Republican Parents Support Group." Geographically, at the time of the interview, eight interlocutors lived in California, three lived in Texas, one lived in Oregon, and one lived in Washington, D.C. Additionally, 10 were women, and three were men. Interviews lasted anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes, depending on how long the responses of interlocutors were.

11 interviews were conducted over video chat while two were presented in a written format. Each interview consisted of 13 pre-written questions with follow-up questions used to clarify or further investigate certain points interviewees made. Respectively, the questions aimed to gauge the level of political interest, on a five-point scale, and the political views of interviewees and their parents. Then, interlocutors discussed the influence of their parents and social environment on their partisan attitudes. Later, interviewees discussed whether they and their parents felt more connected to their ethnic Vietnamese identity or a pan-ethnic Asian American identity. Then, they were asked how their cultural identities affected the partisanship or political views of themselves and their parents.

Finally, interviewees were asked to speak more broadly about partisan attitudes and cultural identity within the Vietnamese American community, comparing those of their generation to those of their parent's generation. More specifically, they responded to the following questions:

- Do you think there is a big difference in how your generation and your parents' generation identify racially or ethnically within the Vietnamese American community?
- Do you think there is a big difference in political views between your generation and your parents' generation within the Vietnamese American community?
    - Does a generational shift in cultural identity help cause a shift in political views within the Vietnamese American community?

They were also asked to directly address the main research question by discussing the effect of cultural self-identification and social environment on partisan attitudes within the Vietnamese American community. More specifically, at the end of the interview, interviewees were asked:

- Do you think environment or cultural self-identification is a bigger factor in shaping the political views of Vietnamese Americans who are your age?

This part of the interview allows interviewees to express their thoughts on two different theories in recent scholarship on how transitional-generation and second-generation Vietnamese Americans develop partisan attitudes. In all, the research will be used to visualize interpretive trends from the interviews to determine whether and how the generational partisan shift has been

affected by the generational shift in cultural identity within the Vietnamese American community.

Results

Political Identity

According to the responses, 11 out of 13 interlocutors were either registered with the Democratic Party or were independents who leaned towards the Democratic Party. Two participants were independent with no party preference. There were no interlocutors who identified with the Republican Party. Additionally, interlocutors were asked to discuss the party preferences of their parents. The breakdown is as follows:

- Six said all of their parents identified as Republicans
- Two said all of their parents identified as Democrats
- Two said they had one Democrat-identifying parent and one independent with no party preference
- Two said they had one Republican-identifying parent and one independent with no party preference
- One said all of their parents identified as independent with no party preference
- Seven Democrat-identifying interlocutors had at least one parent who identified more strongly with the Republican Party

During the interviews, interlocutors were asked to rate their interest in American politics on a five-point scale from “not interested at all” to “very interested.” All of those who chose the third option or higher were considered to have a reasonable interest in American politics. Out of

the 13 interlocutors, nine expressed reasonable interest in American politics. However, none of the interlocutors expressed extreme interest or disinterest in American politics, with none having chosen the first or last options on the voting scale. Using the same scale, they were also asked to rate the interest of their parents in American politics. 11 interlocutors said that they had at least one parent in their household who had a reasonable interest in American politics. Interestingly, the father had more interest than the mother in the households of all five interlocutors who said that their parents had differing interests in American politics.

However, despite politics being important in many of their households, all but one interlocutor felt that their parents did not influence their partisanship or political views. Instead, some credited their educational environment to be one of the more significant factors that have shaped their partisanship. For example, a 24-year-old woman from Covina, CA felt that her time at a four-year university greatly influenced her political views. More specifically, she stated, “in our family, we didn’t really talk about politics directly… my peers are a lot of my influence.” Moreover, one 27-year-old woman from Santa Ana, CA concluded that her generation might “have influences from their families growing up” but “are also in a system of education where we get all these ideas [political views] from.”

Others viewed other family members, such as siblings, as people that have influenced their partisanship and political views. A few interlocutors discussed the internet or social media as being a significant factor in shaping their partisanship and political views. For example, one 20-year-old woman from Katy, TX attested to reading blogs that provided political or social commentary mainly because they discussed taboo issues she was not able to discuss with her parents, such as those involving the queer community.

Instead, some interlocutors have reported influencing the partisanship and political views of their parents. For example, with the help of her sister, one 20-year-old woman from Houston, TX debunked false claims made by conservative Vietnamese-language media outlets for their parents to better understand the 2020 presidential election. She recalled that "it was a long six-month process," but it was enough to help her parents look at the election from a more objective lens. Although her parents may have initially supported Trump due to misinformation and his staunch anti-China rhetoric, they decided to vote for Biden based on the information they received from their more politically engaged children.

Cultural Identity

According to the responses, six out of 13 interlocutors felt more strongly connected to the Vietnamese American identity than the Asian American identity. The other seven felt equally connected to both the Vietnamese American and the Asian American identity. However, none felt outright more connected to the Asian American identity. To one interlocutor, a 22-year-old woman from Fountain Valley, CA, "Asian American" referred to 2nd-generation Asian Americans as opposed to recent immigrants like herself. As the only transitional-generation Vietnamese American interlocutor, she uniquely pointed out that "I can't forget that I'm Vietnamese, but I also can't forget that I live in America and live in a diaspora and how I'm different from my friends that live in Vietnam."

A 26-year-old woman from Garden Grove, CA went further and described herself as "South Vietnamese American." Like her parents, she emphasized being "South Vietnamese" as opposed to "Vietnamese" due to her family's history. She also connotated "Asian American" as relating more to East Asians as opposed to Southeast Asians like herself, further explaining why

he related more to the "Vietnamese American" identity. However, one 24-year-old woman from Clackamas, OR discussed her experience relating to the term "Asian American," describing herself as such in different contexts:

> "I've always struggled with identifying as an Asian American or Vietnamese American since I was a kid. Was I an ethnically Vietnamese person who's American nationally? Am I just an Asian born in America? I identify as an American first and foremost because I was born here and grew up in a Vietnamese household in the US. English is my primary language and the American culture is what I know well. In front of non-Asians, I'm proud to say I'm an Asian American. But around other Asians, I feel more confident identifying as a Vietnamese American since they know that Asia is more than just China and Japan."

However, despite the interlocutors generally identifying more strongly as Vietnamese American, many touted their Asian American identity as a stronger influence than their Vietnamese American identity on their political views. When assessing the intersection between racial identity and their political preferences, many discussed the importance of laws being made to help Asian Americans. For example, a 20-year-old woman from Garden Grove, CA said "Asians are considered a minority group in America, so, if laws are being made, I would want the laws to benefit the minority group in some way or form." A 20-year-old woman from Houston, TX expressed a similar viewpoint, stating "when I think of policies, race comes into play because these rules and regulations are made for White people, so I take into consideration how policies affect people of color." Some, like one 28-year-old man from Washington, DC,

discussed the influence of the Stop Asian Hate movement that arose out of rising hate crimes towards Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic. The movement has caused him, in particular, to look more closely at Asian American issues and political figures who speak about them.

When assessing how their Vietnamese American identity affected their political views, many interlocutors said it did so in indirect ways. More specifically, many were first exposed to politics through their parents due to the historically conservative or Republican political identity of Vietnamese Americans. At first, some interlocutors expressed that they believed in their parents' conservative teachings but soon realized that they did not align with their personal beliefs. A 23-year-old woman from Garden Grove, CA admitted “I didn’t think about it at all until now. When going to college, I was more conservative like on topics like abortion or border control… I definitely believe that I was raised that way, and I wasn’t able to form my own understanding and opinion [about politics].”

In all, the interlocutors did not abide very strongly by the historical political identity of their ethnic community. For some, the only point to which they said the historical political identity of Vietnamese Americans affected their politics was their rejection of socialism or communism. For example, a 26-year-old woman from Garden Grove, CA said this:

> “I consider myself relatively more moderate than my progressive friends. I feel I can see the hypocrisy from both the left and right because I draw on history. I feel the Vietnam War was very multi-faceted. All 3 sides did good and bad things but won’t admit to the bad. The left and right in America do the same. Sometimes I am wary of policies that are

too far left, but I don't worry too much because overall I think America is currently too far right for "communism" to ever be a threat."

Similarly, 12 interlocutors felt their parents connected more strongly to the Vietnamese or South Vietnamese American identity than the Asian American identity. Only one interlocutor had a parent who was more likely to describe themselves as Asian American than as Vietnamese American. However, some were quick to clarify that their parents did not identify as "American" at all, whether or not they had American citizenship. For example, a 20-year-old woman from Houston, TX strongly emphasized that her parents connotated "Asian American" as referring to second or more-generation Asian Americans such as herself. To her, her parents considered themselves solely "Vietnamese."

For the interlocutors with firmly Republican-identifying parents, their parents strongly abided by the historical political identity of Vietnamese Americans. These parents strongly expressed anti-communist and anti-China views that they believed aligned more with the Republican Party. Despite hailing from San Francisco, CA, a city known for its large Chinese American community, one 21-year-old man said that his parents weren't "too fond of Chinese people because of what happened in Vietnam." During the rise of hate crimes against Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic, a 23-year-old woman from San Jose, CA reported that her parents did not sympathize with the struggles of the Chinese American community. According to her, "when the hate crimes were going up, they kind of felt distanced from those crimes. They were blaming the Chinese community." For these parents, it was too difficult to identify with Chinese Americans and even antagonized them due to the history of the Vietnam War.

For the interlocutors with firmly Democratic-identifying or independent parents, the results were more mixed. For example, a 20-year-old woman from Garden Grove, CA said that during the 2020 presidential election season, “my dad thought that some of the word choices that Biden was using sounded like promises that he wouldn’t be able to fulfill and too communist.” Despite being Democrats, she expresses that her parents may have voted for Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election. Therefore, regardless of party preference, the historical political identity of Vietnamese Americans against anti-communism seemed to permeate the political beliefs of the interlocutors’ parents. Other parents may have switched to the Democratic Party during recent years but initially expressed more support for the Republican Party.

According to many interlocutors, such as one 22-year-old woman from Fountain Valley, CA, social media played a strong role in shaping the partisanship of their parents and their vote during the 2020 presidential election. In particular, many older Vietnamese Americans received news updates from conservative Vietnamese or Vietnamese American outlets before the election through Vietnamese American friends. More specifically, she asserted that there was “a lot of [Republican-leaning] misinformation on YouTube and Facebook” aimed at the Vietnamese American community and later stated that this was one of the most significant factors behind the partisan gap across generations of the Vietnamese American community. Therefore, even if some older Vietnamese Americans were not quite in-tune with American politics, their friends on social media would be their only source of information about the election. Since Vietnamese Americans are historically conservative, many would only receive news from one ideological or partisan perspective.

For some of the interlocutors with Republican-identifying parents, however, they believed that their Vietnamese American identity or the historical Vietnamese American political

identity had little to do with their conservative beliefs or support for the Republican Party. A 21-year-old man from San Francisco, CA said that “with Asian immigrant parents, you could see why they have conservative ideals especially because they didn’t have much.” To him, his parents' support for the Republican Party stems more from the struggles they faced during the Vietnam War and the fact they were able to overcome the odds to lead a successful life in America. Furthermore, his parents want others to take personal responsibility for their economic situation, which they believe aligns more with the beliefs of the Republican Party. A 22-year-old woman from Fountain Valley, CA believed that Asian culture as a whole was the most significant factor attributable to the political beliefs of her parents. More specifically, she stated, “the older generation tends to align with that [conservative views] due to their cultural upbringing.” Later, she asserted that there must be a similar generational partisan gap within other Asian American subgroups.

Broader Views

After discussing the political identity and cultural identity of themselves and their parents, interlocutors were asked to speak about the relationship between cultural identity and political identity within the Vietnamese American community. When asked whether there was a significant difference in racial or ethnic identity between older and younger generations of Vietnamese Americans, nine said “yes,” two said “no,” while the other two gave mixed responses. As a rationale for answering affirmatively, many felt that it was obvious that first-generation Vietnamese Americans were going to have a stronger Vietnamese or Vietnamese American identity because they were born and raised in Vietnam. However, some respondents remarked that their parents still considered them to be Vietnamese even though they were born in

the US. For example, when pleading with her parents to participate in more extracurricular activities in high school, a 23-year-old woman from Covina, CA said that her parents would say that "you're talking like an American, but you're really Vietnamese." To them, focusing on education was an aspect of Vietnamese culture and their daughter's desire to focus on activities outside of school was her rebelling against her Vietnamese roots. However, a 24-year-old woman from Clackamas, OR felt that the generations of her and her parents were strongly connected to the Vietnamese or Vietnamese American identity. According to her, second-generation Vietnamese Americans like her have not been far enough removed from their culture to identify more strongly with the Asian American identity.

When asked about the existence of a difference in partisanship or political views between their generation and their parents' generation, all interlocutors believed there was. To all of them, it was no question that younger Vietnamese Americans had different political views from their parents. In particular, they felt younger Vietnamese Americans were more likely to support the Democratic Party than their parents, while older Vietnamese Americans were more likely to support the Republican Party than their children. To add to their response, some interlocutors described why they felt there was such a significant difference in political views between their and their parents' generation of Vietnamese Americans. For instance, a 20-year-old woman from Garden Grove, CA exclaimed, "I get most of my influence from education while parents get most of their influence from their own histories."

Later, interlocutors were asked if a generational shift in cultural identity has helped cause a generational shift in political identity within the Vietnamese American community. In all, seven said it has, three it hasn't, while the remaining three gave mixed responses. Those that gave mixed responses or did not see the relationship felt other factors were attributable to the

generational shift in political identity within the Vietnamese American community. For example, a 24-year-old woman in Covina, CA asserted that "I don't see a pattern, years that we were born makes a bigger difference, along with education [level of educational attainment]." Others, like one 20-year-old man from Garden Grove, CA, were adamant that people ultimately made their own decisions about politics and did not let their racial or ethnic identity affect their partisanship or political views.

Although interlocutors were not initially asked, later in the series of interviews, they were asked whether they thought social environment or cultural identity was a stronger factor in shaping the partisanship or political views of their generation of Vietnamese Americans. This particular question aimed partly to test the idea that the connection to the term "Asian American" depended on the context of an Asian American's social environment. If interlocutors felt that their cultural identity played a more significant role in shaping the partisanship or political views of Vietnamese Americans their age, then it may speak to the strength of either the Vietnamese or Asian American political identity.

In all, seven believed the social environment, while two believed cultural identity, was a stronger factor behind the partisan shift of Vietnamese Americans across generations. One interlocutor gave a mixed response. For a 20-year-old from Houston, TX, social environment proves to be a stronger factor as she believes that "based on the environment that you're in, you might have a weak or strong cultural identity." Such responses align with the conclusions of Nunn and Masuoka in which an individual's connection to their Asian American identity depends significantly on their social environment. Others, like one 19-year-old woman from Cypress, TX, said that "because of our social identities, we tend to have more left-leaning ideas." A 20-year-old from Katy, TX gave a mixed response but believed that cultural identity played a

role in the relationship, stating "Younger generations don't see the social mobility they've been promised. There's a dissonance between what we were promised and what are actually seeing in our communities, as Asian Americans."

Conclusion

Limitations

One limitation of my research study is that 12 out of 13 interlocutors had a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, the few connections I reached out to attain interviewees were college-educated and likely had peers or were in social groups consisting of college graduates. Additionally, those interested in politics were more likely to respond to interview requests, and there is generally a correlation between level of educational attainment and interest in politics. Therefore, if many interlocutors felt that education was a significant factor in how their political views were shaped, then much of that likely comes from direct experience.

There is mixed scholarly evidence that an undergraduate education makes one more likely to have liberal views or support the Democratic Party. Still, exposure to higher education generally makes students more knowledgeable when it comes to social and political news, issues, and events. It also makes them more aware of partisan politics and political ideologies. For those who have already come into college with strong political views, their education may make them better at rationalizing their political views. According to a 2015 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center, 52% of Vietnamese in the U.S. and 79% of U.S.-born Vietnamese had at least some form of higher education. Although levels of educational attainment may be higher amongst younger Vietnamese Americans, those with some sort of higher education are still

overrepresented within the sample. My research would be more representative had I specifically reached out to more potential interviewees without a college education.

Another limitation of my study is that interlocutors came from a narrow geographical scope. Out of the 13 interlocutors, eight came from California with six specifically from Orange County, CA. As mentioned, the Republican Party, from the local to the state level, has a strong relationship with the Vietnamese American community in California and Orange County. Therefore, interlocutors and their parents may have a stronger basis in politics than Vietnamese Americans in other parts of the U.S. Additionally, some evidence shows that Vietnamese Americans in more liberal or Democratic-leaning parts of the country show greater support for the Democratic Party. According to Macalester College professor Karin Aguilar-San Juan in the 2005 paper "Staying Vietnamese: Community and Place in Orange County and Boston," the Democratic Party has been the most dominant political party in the Vietnamese American community in Boston since the 1970s. Although Vietnamese Americans in Boston generally remain anti-communist, they have made in-roads with the Democratic establishment in Boston with more moderately liberal views. In sharp contrast, according to Aguilar-San Juan, Vietnamese Americans in Orange County, CA, have been historically Republican since the 1970s. Additionally, three interlocutors came from Texas, specifically the Houston metropolitan area, which is known to have mixed-partisan status as evidenced by the aforementioned studies of Tanika Raychaudhuri. Perhaps, I could have specifically reached out to Vietnamese Americans living in prominent ethnic communities in more historically Democratic-leaning areas to make my conclusions about Vietnamese Americans more representative.

A final limitation of my study is the fact that six of the 13 interlocutors were found through a Facebook group called "Asian Americans with Republican Parents Support Group."

To clarify, not all of my interlocutors had Republican parents. In fact, from the group, two had all parents as independent or Democratic-leaning. However, it was almost guaranteed that the interlocutors I received from this group were not going to be Republican-leaning, contributing to the study not having a single Republican-leaning interlocutor.

However, I do not regret looking into this particular Facebook group as it highlights the role of social media and the internet in Vietnamese American politics and American politics in general. As cited in many journalistic sources, many young Vietnamese Americans use social media such as Facebook to congregate over their political views and commiserate over the fact that their family members do not understand or even acknowledge their political perspectives. These platforms are a key insight into the political thoughts and behaviors of young Vietnamese Americans. Still, my study would have likely benefited from having a few Republican-leaning interlocutors. More specifically, young Vietnamese American Republicans could be more likely to identify as Asian American than their parents, and it would have been helpful to consider how that may affect their political views.

Discussion

Based on my study, there certainly seems to be a generational shift in cultural identity within the Vietnamese American community. In general, it seems that many transitional and second-generation Vietnamese Americans feel less Vietnamese but more generally Asian American than their parents. However, Vietnamese Americans continue to identify strongly as Vietnamese American and do not eschew it for an Asian American identity. More specifically, they still identify quite strongly and primarily as Vietnamese American but find it compatible with a weaker Asian American identity.

However, when it comes to shaping their political views, many transitional and second-generation Vietnamese Americans seem to eschew the conservative Vietnamese American political identity. Rather, based on responses about influences on their political views and their views on political developments within the Vietnamese American community, they use their education to make judgments about American politics. In many cases, many transitional and second-generation Vietnamese Americans may engage in political discussion with their peer groups from school and make their judgments from there. A 20-year-old woman from Garden Grove, CA discussed the most significant factor behind the generational partisan shift within the Vietnamese American community, asserting that "I get most of my influence from education while my parents get most of their influence from their own histories" when discussing the differences in political views between her and her parents. In general, the theories of Tanika Raychaudhuri about the generational partisan shift within the Asian American community seem to hold the most water when it comes to explaining the generational partisan shift within the Vietnamese American community.

In hindsight, many politically active Asian Americans were already aware of the general phenomenon of Asian Americans adopting the political views of their surrounding environment. For example, the pejorative term "boba liberal" was coined by Asian American socialists online to describe liberal-identifying Asian Americans who seemed to use their political views to integrate into White liberal society. These so-called boba liberals were furthermore described as those who used their racial identity to proselytize or "virtue signal" to other Asian Americans what they considered to be "correct" beliefs, which derived from elite predominantly white liberal social circles such as Ivy League universities. To these Asian American socialists, "boba

liberals" are a negative example of Asian Americans, many with little prior knowledge of American politics, adopting the political views of their surrounding environment.

Today, the term "boba liberal" has taken different meanings depending on which Asian American online community is using it. However, the term shows that the development described by scholars like Tanika Raychaudhuri has been well-documented before the empirical research of her and others. If social environment is a strong factor in shaping the partisanship and political views of transitional and second-generation Vietnamese Americans, many of whom grew up with parents who espoused a historically conservative political identity, then it is likely that it plays an even stronger role in Asian Americans who come from immigrants groups without a historical political identity. Another study may explore how Asian Americans have engaged with the political views of their surrounding environments, particularly in large liberal and multicultural metropolitan areas in which many Asian Americans grew up.

Why second-generation, and to a lesser extent, transitional-generation Vietnamese Americans have lost touch with their Vietnamese heritage and cultural identity is another question. According to bits and pieces of some conversations, many may have fallen out of touch with their Vietnamese roots primarily because their parents fail to instill Vietnamese cultural traditions within their children. More specifically, many Vietnamese American families struggle with poverty or trying to stay out of poverty due to a lack of skills and resources after transitioning to their host country. Therefore, in many Vietnamese American households, parents work multiple working-class jobs to take care of the household financial situation. As a result, children learn few Vietnamese cultural traditions and are left to adopt the culture of their surrounding environment, or even what is portrayed to them in media. In future research, this may be a development to further explore.

One smaller factor in the generational partisan shift within the Vietnamese American community may have to do with the fact that conservative group political identities are more susceptible to decline than liberal group political identities. Age itself is likely not a factor in the partisan shift within the Vietnamese American community across generations. Otherwise, other racial and ethnic groups would likely show a stronger preference for liberal views and the Democratic Party over recent years. However, polls such as those conducted by the Pew Research Center show that some ethnic groups such as Mexican Americans, who are historically Democratic-leaning, have become slightly more supportive of the Republican Party in recent years. Additionally, such a development has been happening within the Mexican American community even though the group has become increasingly younger, on average, in the last few decades.

Instead, age would likely become a stronger factor in a generational partisan shift towards the Democratic Party in groups with historically conservative political identities, as exposure to new ideas tend to be associated with more liberal political parties. Put differently, younger people tend to be more liberal than older people as they have grown up with different and likely more progressive ideas and viewpoints than generations before them. With a group that trends so significantly towards the Republican Party, it is only inevitable that it will face some sort of partisan shift towards the Democratic Party. However, the liberal or progressive ideas and viewpoints of today may become the conservative ideas and viewpoints of tomorrow, meaning that some part of the generational partisan shift within the Vietnamese American community may be temporary.

In terms of a generational shift in cultural identity causing a generational shift in the partisanship of Vietnamese Americans, solidarity with other Asian American groups and the rise

of a pan-Asian political identity may also be a smaller factor. If the rise of a pan-Asian political identity was not happening before, it is certainly happening now, as evidenced by some of the discussions by interlocutors of the Stop Asian Hate movement. For some, such as a 28-year-old man from Washington, DC, hate crimes against Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of the Stop Asian Hate movement have caused him to focus more on Asian American issues. He used this increased interest in Asian American issues to assess candidates during the 2020 presidential election.

Additionally, for other interlocutors, this increased interest in Asian American issues and the rise of the Stop Asian Hate movement has taken a partisan turn. During the interviews, some interlocutors expressed disappointment that their parents did not seem to identify with Chinese Americans who faced increased discrimination in their communities. These same interlocutors were Democratic-leaning and seemed to associate the Stop Asian Hate movement with more liberal ideals. At the same time, the parents of these interlocutors were either Republican-leaning or could not identify with Chinese Americans because of their feelings about China and their role in the Vietnam War. This may have caused these interlocutors to further question the culturally-driven political identity of their parents and further associate being “Asian American” with Democratic-leaning views.

Although almost all of the interlocutors attested to having a stronger Vietnamese American identity than Asian American identity, when thinking consciously about the intersection between race and politics, some felt that policies were biased toward the preferences of White people. Therefore, when assessing partisanship, some felt the need to align with a political party that spoke more to the needs of Asian Americans or racial minorities in general. In all, cultural identity or status as a racial minority may not be the most significant factor in

shaping the partisanship of young Vietnamese Americans, but it certainly plays a role. With the recent rise of the Stop Asian Hate movement and increasing discussion of issues facing Asian Americans, the Asian American political identity will continue to rise in prominence.

In the case of older generations of Vietnamese Americans, particularly those who immigrated to the U.S., some have shifted their support towards the Democratic Party in recent years. However, others continue to abide by the historically conservative Vietnamese American political identity. As mentioned by the interlocutors, many Vietnamese immigrants to the U.S. are still greatly affected by the traumas of the Vietnam War and its aftermath, and their cultural identity as Vietnamese remains the strongest factor behind their partisanship. Even those who generally support the Democratic Party may be wary of left-wing or progressive politics and policies and continue to express anti-China views. In recent years, many first-generation Vietnamese Americans have flocked to social media platforms such as Facebook to engage in political discussion and share political news. Through such platforms, the historically conservative Vietnamese American political identity has continued to thrive. Unfortunately, because they relied on social media for political information, many first-generation Vietnamese Americans have become victims of misinformation or "fake news" from heavily-biased conservative Vietnamese-language media outlets. This affects the voting patterns of many first-generation Vietnamese Americans, especially those who are independent with no party preference or do not know or care much about American politics in the first place.

To combat the spread of political misinformation within the Vietnamese American community, many transitional or second-generational Vietnamese Americans have taken active roles in supplying their parents with more credible information. In many cases, the partisanship of parents is the strongest influence on the average voter's partisanship. However, in many

Vietnamese American families, children are playing a considerable role in shaping the partisanship of their parents, particularly by providing them with more credible political information and sources. Some transitional or second-generation Vietnamese Americans have turned these efforts into a broader project. For example, as discussed in Vox, Ca Dao "Cookie" Duong, a 24-year-old consultant from Los Angeles, CA, founded a news aggregator site called "The Interpreter," which translates news from credible sources into Vietnamese for first-generation Vietnamese immigrants to consume (Nguyen, 2020). The project represents the efforts that many transitional or second-generation Vietnamese Americans make to dispel political misinformation their parents receive, particularly on social media.

On a final note, much of this research could be replicated for Cuban Americans, a group with a history and historical political identity similar to those of Vietnamese Americans. Additionally, Cuban Americans are going through a similar generational political shift, with younger cohorts of Cuban Americans being more likely to align with the Democratic Party than their parents. Research can explore whether and how a generational shift in cultural identity has helped cause a generational shift in partisanship within the Cuban American community. In particular, it can explore the role of the rise of the general Hispanic or Latinx identity in younger cohorts of Cuban Americans, who are shifting increasingly towards support for the Democratic Party.

Unfortunately, there has been a relative dearth of academic research on Vietnamese American politics. For example, in JSTOR, the term "Cuban American politics" yields over 65,000 results as of April 2022. In comparison, "Vietnamese American politics" only yields over 42,000 results, despite both Cuban and Vietnamese Americans having a similar population of over two million people. Studies like this one help close the gap in political science scholarship

that Vietnamese and Asian Americans face. In particular, due to the generational political shift within the Vietnamese American community, the Vietnamese American vote has become more decisive in more localized races such as those for Congress. Therefore, studies like these help political scientists and those working in politics make sense of the increased role of the Vietnamese Americans in deciding elections.

Studies like this also help political scientists and those working in politics make sense of the increased role of Asian Americans in deciding elections. In recent years, the Asian American electorate has played a significant role in the outcomes of federal-level elections. For example, before the 2020 presidential election, the New York Times reported that the Asian American Pacific Islander could play a decisive role in turning Georgia into a “blue” state (Tavernise, 2020). Much of this is due to younger cohorts of Asian Americans being more likely to support the Democratic Party. If Vietnamese Americans, who are historically conservative, mirror such a development, then it has strong implications for the voting patterns of the rest of the Asian American electorate. Political strategists can use the information found in this research in future elections to determine how and where to reach out to young Asian American voters. For example, if the social environment is the strongest factor behind the partisan identity of Asian Americans, political parties may want to reach out to young Asian American voters in mixed-partisan areas or even slightly more Republican-leaning areas since these are places where outreach may make the most significant difference. Moreover, if young Asian American voters are getting most of their information about American politics online, then political strategists may need to look into online or social media campaigns to spread their message to young Asian American voters. Finally, in response to the rise of Asian American identity politics, politicians

and political campaigns need to speak to the specific needs and concerns of Asian Americans if they aim to court Asian American voters.

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APPENDIX: Interview Questions

1. How interested are you in politics on a one-to-five scale?

2. Do you generally align with or feel closer to a political party?

3. How interested are your parents in politics on a one-to-five scale?

4. Do your parents generally align with or feel closer to a political party?

5. How influential are your parents in your partisanship or political views?

6. Who or what do you think has had the most influence on your political views?

7. Do you identify more strongly as Asian American or (South) Vietnamese American?

8. How do you think your identity as Asian/Vietnamese/South Vietnamese American shapes your political views?

9. Do you think your parents identify more strongly as Asian American or (South) Vietnamese American?

10. How do you think their identity as Asian/Vietnamese/South Vietnamese American shapes your parents' political views?

11. Do you think there is a big difference in how your generation and your parents' generation identify racially or ethnically within the Vietnamese American community?

12. Do you think there is a big difference in political views between your generation and your parents' generation within the Vietnamese American community?
    a. Does a generational shift in cultural identity help cause a shift in political views within the Vietnamese American community?

13. Do you think environment or cultural self-identification is a bigger factor in shaping the political views of Vietnamese Americans who are your age?