# Asian American Political Participation: An Analysis of the Influences On Immigrant Political Efficacy In the United States

A THESIS

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# Abstract

In the United States, Asian immigrants are classified as having the highest socioeconomic status of any racial/ethnic group, yet they are also known to have the lowest rates of political participation. This research examines the influence of native democratization on Asian immigrant political participation in the United States. Here, native democratization is defined as the level of democracy seen in one's country of origin. Using data from the *National Asian American Survey* and the *Freedom House Freedom in the World Index*, I conclude that individuals from countries with higher levels of democracy are more likely to participate in politics in the United States because of the political socialization received in their home country. The findings of this research point to a non-inclusive American political system that is unaccommodating of certain immigrant experiences.

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# Introduction

The 2012 Presidential election cycle marked a new age of political campaigns. The Obama campaign's focus on branding, data mining, and most importantly – grassroots organizing revealed an innovative approach to targeting voters in an effort to increase turnout (Lewandoski 2013, p.2). As a Field Organizer on this campaign I gained first hand experience with community organizing as a form of political participation. From door-to-door canvassing to voter registration drives, these locally based activities are what ultimately led to President Obama's victory. During my time on this campaign I found myself drawn to the incredible power of organizing as a tool for recruitment to help strengthen and mobilize communities. Throughout my eight months as a Field Organizer, I watched as communities strengthened, expanded, and mobilized around the communal goal of re-electing President Barack Obama.

But as my days as an organizer began to intensify and our campaign activity shifted from capacity building to actually mobilizing communities to get-out-the-vote, I became increasingly aware of my identity as a South Asian womyn in this political space. I realized, more often than not, Whites, Blacks, and Latin@'s[1] surrounded me – rarely were individuals of Asian descent present. I considered that perhaps Asians were not present in the specific communities I was organizing in, but 2011 census data shows that Asians make up 14.3% of Ann Arbor's population totaling the largest minority group in

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[1] A native or inhabitant of Latin America or a person of Latin-American origin living in the United States. The @ symbol is used in place of the commonly used "o," which is a masculine ending in the Spanish language that is used to represent two genders. The @ symbol attempts to disrupt the idea that masculine is an all-encompassing norm. *Adapted from the Young People For Social Justice Guide*

the area (Keeping 2011). And though President Obama's success in that election is something I will cherish throughout my life; I am still left with unresolved feelings about the inclusion and participation of Asians in the political process. Passionate about policymaking yet still marred by this lack of racial and ethnic diversity in politics, I spent my last summer in Washington D.C. working at the National Organization for Women.[2] And for the three months that I spent working in the policy department, each day I found myself facing similar questions I had in 2012. It is no secret that today's Congress has the highest recorded number of womyn[3] ever – 102, totaling a measly 18.8% of the total Congress, and of those 102 womyn, only 7 are Asian Pacific American, and not one is South Asian (Manning 2014). So it should come as no surprise that as I have continued through my senior year of college, I am haunted by these statistics and questions about my potential as a South Asian womyn. All of this curiosity, frustration, and continued interest in the political system have been the driving factor in writing this thesis. What you will find here is not an answer to my life's questions, nor a solution to a lack of

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[2] Founded in 1966, The National Organization for Women (NOW) is the largest and oldest women's organization in the United States.

[3] Throughout this project, the terms "woman" and "women" will be spelled with a "Y" to challenge the notion that one individual's identity is dependent on that of another. As articulated by Michigan State University's *Womyn Creating Consciousness Collectively,* "[b]y taking the "men" and "man" out the words 'woman' and 'women' we are symbolically saying that we do not need men to be 'complete.' We, as womyn, are not a sub-category of men. We are not included in many of the history books, studies and statistics that are done in male dominated societies, thus they do not apply to us, for in these items we do not exist. In these societies men are the 'norm' and women the 'particular,' a mere sub-category of the 'norm,' of men. The re-spelling of the word 'woman' is a statement that we refused to be defined by men. We are womyn and only we have the right to define our relationships with ourselves, society, with other womyn and men. These re-spellings work as a symbolic act of looking at and defining ourselves as we really are, not how men and society view us, but through our own female views of ourselves, as self-defined womyn."

minority representation in the United States Congress – but rather an explanation for my observations and a proposed idea for moving this country in a direction where people like myself are included.

*Overview*

When looking at community organizing as a form of political participation, there is a noticeable lack of involvement amongst Asian immigrants[4] – consistently, the majority of people interested in local activism are Caucasian and African American (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999, p.1096). Thus, my exploration will focus on non-voting forms of political participation as I investigate what causes some immigrant groups to participate less than others. Rather than focusing on popularly cited immigrant specific barriers, I will investigate levels of native democratization and corruption as they impact immigrant political efficacy in the United States. Through this thesis I will explore existing literature on political participation, offer my own theory and methods, present secondary data, analyze the results, and discuss the future implications of my research.

Generally, the existing research on political participation focuses on voting behavior and partisanship, which though informative, does not fit the definition of political participation necessary for this study. Political participation is defined here as non-voting forms of political activity that ultimately increase political engagement in one's own community. By "local," I refer to activities restricted to an area similar to a city. Spanning an area larger than one's own home, this activism engages with other

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[4] For the purposes of this research project, "immigrant" will be defined as an individual who migrated to the United States permanently. This classification does not include the children or grandchildren of immigrants. Considering this definition, the common response to my research question would be to simply assert that low levels of participation amongst immigrants is because they are not naturalized citizens. But for the purposes of my research, specifically the qualitative analysis, the focus is on individuals who migrated from another country and have become naturalized United States citizens.

community members in an effort to increase political knowledge. This conceptualization of political participation can be measured by looking at individual involvement with community organizing events. By engaging in such events, one demonstrates a clear understanding of, and appreciation for the political system – and hence, measuring political participation using activities such as donating to a political campaign and talking about politics with friends and family, we can gain a deeper understanding of the true level of engagement individuals feel.

My research will investigate variables such as length of residence, level of native democratization, and immigrant-specific barriers as they affect rates of involvement. By accounting for one's length of residence we can evaluate the impact a longer assimilation period has on political interest. Length of residence shall be defined as the period of time one has lived in the United States. Similarly, native corruption is expressed as the level of corruption present in one's native government. This concept allows researchers to understand the influence of ineffective governments on one's political efficacy. Corruption is thus conceptualized as impediments to effective government performance resulting in citizen's lack of political efficacy (Chang 2006, p. 261). In order to make this into a more quantifiable measure, I will look at levels of democratization as an indicator of corruption within one's home country, and assess whether or not this has an impact on political efficacy in the United States.

Based on previous research, I hypothesize that lower levels of democratization in the previous home country lead to lower levels of political participation in the US. Thus, the cynicism immigrant's feel toward the political system is not merely the result of an exclusionary American system, but rather stems at least in part from skepticism of, and

unfamiliarity with political systems as a whole as a result of their experiences in their country of origin.

Understanding varying levels of political participation is important for a variety of reasons. Political participation is a key aspect of our democratic society, and therefore it is important that all persons feel welcomed and empowered to contribute. This project investigates what specific barriers exist to Asian immigrant communities that ultimately limit their participation in American politics. According to a study done by A.G. Jacob on minority participation, amongst Indian immigrants, there is an overwhelming sense of political apathy that discourages one from participating in community organizing (Jacob 2006, p.104). In order for American elections to be truly inclusive and democratic, they must be representative of the entire population and appealing to the masses. Learning what causes immigrants to be less likely to participate will not only add to the study of political participation and immigrant behavior, but can also contribute to improving our electoral system to be more inclusive.

# Chapter 1: Literature Review

To effectively evaluate political participation it is important to understand the many ways in which scholars define this concept, as well as how varying measurement tools raise new questions about accuracy and effectiveness within this field of study. Again, the focus of my study is political participation as it pertains to non-voting activity centered on an election period of any type. Particularly, I will be evaluating how country of origin impacts one's understanding of politics and their political efficacy. For the purposes of this study, I will focus primarily on Indian and Chinese immigrants to see how political attitudes in one's native country influences propensity to engage in electoral activity beyond voting in the United States. Chinese immigrants are selected here as a comparison group because the Chinese government is ranked highest in terms of corruption.[5] This allows for a sound contrast between the differing socializations Indian and Chinese immigrants receive in their home countries. In order to do this, I will first look at political participation holistically. Broadly looking at political participation requires us to turn first to the "Civic Voluntarism Model" as created by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995). In their groundbreaking work on this subject, they focus on three major factors which determine participation – "resources, psychological engagement with politics, and access to networks through which individuals can be recruited into political life" (267). Drawing on this model, we turn to immigrant community organizing and analyze how it coincides with this overarching framework. Engagement in community organizing events such as donating to a campaign and

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[5] This specific ranking will be further explained in the research design and collection section.

discussing politics with friends and family will be used to measure this concept, and allows scholars to gain a deeper understanding of the true level of engagement individuals feel. The intent of this study is to look closer at psychological engagement with politics as it is influenced by the political system in one's country of origin. Thus, I will also evaluate political socialization in both India and China in order to understand the knowledge with which immigrants from these countries approach the American political system. Many scholars have looked at political socialization, but few have made the connection to political participation in another country. Understanding political socialization as a primer to political participation therefore becomes the basis for this research.

Before proceeding it is important to note how the immigrant community is being defined for the purposes of this study. As articulated in footnote 3, immigrants hereafter only include individuals who themselves migrated to the United States. Employing this definition, one may point to a lack of naturalization as the main reason for limited participation amongst immigrants, thus leaving this project without much direction. Instead of focusing on Asian immigrants as a largely un-naturalized population, both my quantitative and qualitative analysis will target individuals who have become naturalized United States citizens and thus are able to fully participate in the American political system. Specifically, 88.5% of respondents in the *National Asian American Survey* indicated they were born outside of the United States, and 75.6% indicated they were naturalized United States citizens.

*Causes of Political Participation*
When studying immigrant political participation as a whole, determining factors such as socioeconomic status, education level, family influence, and political ideology

are all known to greatly impact one's propensity to participate in the political process. Here, we see that education level and socioeconomic status specifically contribute to one's willingness to participate (Diaz 2012, p.142). Those members of society with high-income levels, who have felt the effects of strong educational systems, inherently feel more engaged with the American political process (Williams 1983, p. 2). This applies to all individuals regardless of immigrant status, and is due to the fact that institutional processes work to instill a sense of political efficacy. Thus, those individuals with higher exposure to education and other sources of information tend to be more interested in political processes. But interestingly enough, amongst Asian immigrants we see that "group levels of educational attainment do not demonstrate a strong correspondence with higher levels of formal aspects of participation such as registration and voting" (Junn et al. 1999, p. 5). My research will explore this paradox.

Similarly, by looking to studies that examine political participation defined broadly, we see that the strongest predictor is socio-economic status (Hyman 1999, p. 404). But the research question proposed in this study requires a different approach to understanding political participation. Undeniably, when we begin to narrow our scope of interest to Asian-origin populations, we see an additional set of reasons accounting for varying levels of political participation. Here, factors spanning from level of democratization in one's native country to the age at which one migrated to the United States are taken into consideration.

The existing literature can be categorized into two distinct theories that will be hereafter referred to as the "group membership theory" (Muste 2001, p.16) and the "individualistic theory" (Lien et al. 2004, p. 627). Those scholars who support the group

membership theory focus on the benefits derived from belonging to a specific ethnic group or community. They argue these associations and cultural ties increase one's likelihood to engage politically, and therefore, those individuals who are not members of active formal ethnic groups do not feel the same motivation to participate (Jang 2009, p. 1). On the contrary, the "individualistic theory" states engagement in the political system is an individual impetus, as it requires private behaviors such as naturalization and registration (Lien et al. 2004, p.625). These two opposing views encapsulate the existing research on political participation of members of immigrant groups. Based on the research done for this literature review, I hypothesize that an immigrant's willingness to participate in the political process results from a combination of the group membership and individualistic theories. For instance, if formal group membership provided enough incentive for significant political participation amongst Asian immigrants, we should ultimately see comparable rates of participation amongst all racial groups as Asian immigrants tend to have high levels of group consciousness (Leighly and Vedlitz 1999, p.1103). But instead, this high group consciousness does not directly correlate to increased participation. Thus, for Asian immigrants membership in an ethnic group alone does not provide the necessary motivation for political engagement; rather individuals who feel part of a group and have also surpassed immigrant specific hurdles will be most compelled to engage in local activism. Because group membership will not be individually evaluated in this project, here I focus specifically on the individualistic-attentiveness theory.

Individualistic-Attentiveness Theory

The individualistic theory posits individual behaviors such as naturalization and voter registration are ultimately the most important factors in determining differences in

rates of political participation amongst ethnic minorities. By accounting for personally driven political actions we are able to understand why some immigrant groups participate less than others. Although it is still unclear how these individual behaviors work in connection with group membership dynamics, many scholars affirm that processes necessitating individual action such as naturalization, voter registration, and voting seem to ultimately dissuade minorities from participating (Lien et al. 2001, p.626). This is not to say that such barriers do not exist for other minority groups, but rather suggests that because naturalization is a process that only immigrants must partake in, this action functions as basic way of excluding immigrant participation in certain political actions. Here I note that though the individualistic-attentiveness theory includes all forms of political participation, it largely focuses on voting behavior.

Uhlaner, Cain, and Kieweit focus on naturalization and the effects of this process on one's political interest. They demonstrate that the complex process of gaining citizenship an individual must undergo has the direct result of deterring one from participating. This disengagement with the political process occurs for several reasons. First, Asian Americans tend not to live in "Asian" neighborhoods and thus the "lack of geographic concentration makes ethnic politics more expensive and less valuable for Asian-Americans" (Uhlaner et al. 1989, p. 218). Similarly, the United States has a history of discrimination against Asian immigrants and thus many Asian individuals do not feel the need to engage with the political process.

By narrowing in on the idea that naturalization is a burdensome task for Asian immigrants both emotionally and time-wise, we are able to gain a broader understanding of what Lien et al. refer to as a three-step process of participation, which provides a

contextual approach to analyzing political participation. Often, studies do not take into consideration the immigrant-specific actions one must partake in before true assimilation can begin, and thus some political participation studies tend to overlook cultural boundaries. These "immigrant-specific actions" include naturalization and registration. There are some issues with the Lien et al. study as it acknowledges the broader context affecting political participation, but subsequently struggles to incorporate this perspective into an appropriate discussion of minority political participation (Lien et al. 2001, p. 626). Actions beyond voting such as campaign donations and participation in political protests are only briefly mentioned, but not fully accounted for in this study making the overall conclusion of individualistic barriers fall short of convincing.

Ramakrishnan and Espenshade again look at individualistic behaviors but focus primarily on the impacts of anti-immigrant legislation as it affects immigrant political participation.[6] By looking specifically at previous and current legislation, they are able to discuss institutional barriers similar to the features Lein et al. discuss (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001, p. 874). The importance of these barriers will become abundantly clear during the qualitative portion of my analysis – but for the purposes of this literature review I suggest that such institutional barriers to participation and access to public goods have a negative impact on Asian immigrant political efficacy. Examples of such legislation include, Proposition 187 and the Chinese Exclusion Act. Proposition 187 essentially denied "any public benefits to undocumented immigrants" (892), while the Chinese Exclusion Act served to prohibit the immigration of Chinese laborers into the United States. The burdens imposed by these barriers effectively disenfranchise

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[6] "Anti-immigrant legislation" refers to "laws that threaten to cut off public benefits to immigrants" (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 879).

immigrant groups both in actual access to services and processes, as well as psychologically. But as Ramakrishnan and Espenshade point out, for first and second generation immigrants, this legislation acts as a positive mobilizing tool as these individuals "are more likely to have relatives that stand to [lose] benefits" (879). By considering the effects of anti-immigrant legislation on minority groups, the authors say these laws become persuasive in motivating immigrant groups to participate in an effort to reverse discriminatory legislation (878). Specifically, my qualitative research will examine anti-immigrant legislation as it psychologically impacts immigrants, both now and in the past. Though this study draws attention to the individual burdens one faces, it does not successfully differentiate between group motivations derived from anti-immigrant legislation and individualistic motivations.

Contrary to much of the findings of the group membership theory, many scholars point out that individual factors such as socioeconomic status *do* impact the tendency to participate in politics. Junn looks at the effects of "level[s] of formal education, economic resources, generation of immigration…on the propensity to be politically active" (Junn 1999, p.1418). She says that these factors directly influence one's ability to assimilate into American culture and the political system, and thus, participation is largely the result of individual determinants. Similarly, other scholars affirm, "the relationship between higher education and civic involvement is strong" (Blanks 2000, p.118).

Looking holistically at political participation, the individualistic theory emphasizes factors such as immigrant specific barriers and socioeconomic status as contributing to one's interest in political engagement. Based on this theory, I hypothesize that individual, immigrant specific obstacles such as naturalization and registration result

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in low levels of participation amongst immigrant groups. Registration is noted as an immigrant specific barrier although it is something all individuals, immigrant or not must do on their own. The reason for this classification is because for many individuals who grow up in the United States, voter registration is provided in school and/or when one applies for a driver's license (Register to Vote). And because many immigrants do not apply for a drivers license immediately after migrating to the United States, these built in systems for registering to vote often do not reach immigrant communities, or if they do this activity only happens several years after they have already been in the United States.

Here, I am left with many questions based on this theory that focus on the relationship between individual factors and group-membership association. Many of the studies in support of the individualistic theory isolate individual influences, and thus fail to take a complete approach. Similarly, looking at the individualistic theory begs the question of why such institutional barriers exist that effectively disenfranchise minorities? Are minorities to be blamed for their lack of participation – or are they stuck in a cycle that unfairly burdens them? Each of these questions will be examined through my theoretical argument and qualitative analysis.

Though factors impacting immigrant participation have been previously discussed, here I find it important to point to research by Sergio Wals, which evaluates political participation as it changes with migration. By focusing on Los Mochis, Mexico, Wals is able to analyze the experience of border crossing on political participation and ultimately concludes, "politicization in one's home country predicts post migration political engagement" (Wals 2001, p. 605). By measuring the strength and directionality of political affiliation, this study allows us to see the influence of democratic regimes on

one's desire to engage in the political process. Additionally, Wals' research allows us to see that although many immigrants have yet to gain citizenship status, many still do partake in political action (600).

*Political Socialization*

When looking at immigrant political participation as a whole, it is important to account for previously held norms that influence the way one views political systems and participatory politics. Thus, here I evaluate political socialization as a way of understanding what knowledge Asian immigrants hold as they enter the American political system. As defined by Roberta Sigel, "political socialization refers to the learning process by which the political norms and behaviors acceptable to an ongoing political system are transmitted from generation to generation" (Sigel 1965, p.1). Specifically looking at Indian and Chinese immigrants we see that the socialization in one's home country has significant impact on participation in the United States.

Broadly looking at political socialization we see that according to White et al., once one has been inculcated with certain political behaviors and values, it becomes difficult to assimilate into a new political environment (White et al. 2008, p. 268). Through their research they focus on three major theories that encompass the means of immigrant political socialization and assimilation.

First, the Exposure Theory which "focuses on how much exposure immigrants have had to their new host country's political system: the more exposure they have, the more they adapt" (269). What becomes important to note here is that length of residence is viewed largely as the primary factor impacting political assimilation. This variable will be evaluated in the quantitative analysis portion of this project.

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Second, the Theory of Transferability claims "immigrants are able to draw on past experience and transfer the lessons learned from their old environment, applying them to the new host environment" (269). It is this theory that becomes the foundation of my research question suggesting that political values acquired in one's home country impact political participation in the United States. Crucial to this theory is the fact that the type of political participation is less important than the existence of political participation in general. By this I mean that whether or not one participates in rallies or protests in their native country does not automatically mean they will engage in such activity in the United States, but rather the defining factor in participation is whether or not participatory politics are present at all (269). Further research on this theory conducted by Jerome H. Black suggests the more similar political ideals of one's home country are to that of the country to which they migrate, the easier the assimilation process will be (Black 1987, p. 736). This is not to imply that socialization is impossible if regime makeups are entirely different between the two countries, but rather indicates that the process of political integration will be more burdensome to the individual. Based on this theory, I hypothesize that individuals from less participatory countries such as China and Vietnam are less likely to participate in the United States. This is because notions of a non-participatory system sustain even when one moves to a participatory regime.

Lastly, the Theory of Resistance contends, "people acquire relatively enduring orientations toward politics in general and toward their own particular political systems" (269). Because here political socialization is viewed as a cumulative and lasting process, the authors suggest that "re-socialization" is a difficult and often unachievable task. As

White et al. point out, without regard for past experiences, we cannot fully understand the immigrant political experience.

Looking specifically at what impacts socialization both in one's native country and in the United States, I turn to the work of Wendy K. Tam Cho as she discusses education as a crucial factor in the socialization process. Here she argues that it is a proper education that inculcates certain political values, but it is one's socialization that decides if and how these behaviors are manifest (Cho 1999, p. 1140). Specifically, Cho suggests that education in and of itself is a socializing process and that non-democratic countries actively instill very different values than democratic countries do (1152).

Political Socialization in India

Understanding political socialization in India is a difficult task, as not much scholarship exists on the topic. Here I will summarize this body of literature as it pertains to my research question.

Firstly, important to note is that the immigrant population used in this study for both the quantitative and qualitative analysis lived in Indian after the British colonial rule. This becomes relevant as we see that it was only after this that a democratic rule was established and political participation became part of Indian culture. According to one study, this new democratic society encouraged "empathy, greater involvement and commitment, and higher participation of the people" (Mishra 1990, p.115). Because of how incredibly populous India is, here we see that political parties are the foremost tool of political engagement and thus socialization for the Indian citizenry (116). Especially during election periods, it is political parties that work to educate and engage individuals as a way of engaging the massive population.

Additionally, we see that through the Indian education system values of institutional trust and efficacy are instilled (Malik 1979, p. 441). Schools tend to employ democratic means of engagement and also work to promote a sense of national integration amongst their students. Though scholars largely point to political parties and education as means of political socialization, here I note that education is not ubiquitous in Indian culture and thus is it merely those in the middle and upper classes of India that receive such education. Therefore, though schools work diligently to inculcate values of political participation, we must be wary of who exactly is receiving this socialization. Education as a tool for socialization will be evaluated in my study as I look at how individuals were educated and whether or not this affects political participation in the United States.

Political Socialization in China

Political socialization in China looks very different than that of India in terms of values and participation. In order to understand how these differences manifest themselves in participation in the United States post migration, we must first understand the underpinnings of certain values.

Under the rule of Chairman Mao Zedong, China saw an unprecedented shift in political culture. According to one scholar, "the leitmotiv of Mao's China was orthodoxy, conformity and isolation, a whole people walking in lock-step, seemingly with only one voice, repeating one mindless slogan after another" (Pye 1993, p. 412). But more importantly than the idea of political isolation is the notion that individuals do not question and/or interact with authority. Pye describes that the inner workings of the government operate behind closed doors and thus the Chinese people are not privy to general political knowledge or integration. Here I suggest that this sense of distance

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created between the people and the government becomes largely applicable to the Theory of Transferability, as Chinese immigrants in the United States do not attempt to interact with the American political system. The Theory of Transferability suggests that moving from one political environment to another does not have a large impact on participation as long as there are similar norms between the two host countries. For instance, moving from one participatory regime to another will allow values of political interaction to endure, while moving from a participatory system to a non participatory system will have reverse effects. Thus, in the case of immigrants who move from China to the United States, the values of a non-participatory system remain as individuals begin to assimilate to the American lifestyle.

Similarly, we see that within Chinese culture, there is an emphasis on social order and thus individual rights and liberties are not prioritized (Chen and Lu 2011, p. 708). Thus, this desire for social order seems to trump a need for political freedom leading to a culture in which government dependency is high. According to this same study by Chen and Lu "there is a negative correlation between the middle class's dependence on the state and its support for democracy" (705). Confucian ideals that promote the "mandate of heaven" to rule the country tend to omit forms of participation amongst the Chinese citizenry, and therefore values of a participatory system are nowhere to be found (709). These notions of participatory politics as undesirable will be expanded upon in the qualitative portion of this project.

*Community Organizing as Political Participation*
For the purposes of this study, when analyzing political participation we will focus on community organizing rather than strictly participation in voting. In trying to understand what motivates certain individuals to engage in community organizing as a

form of participation beyond voting, we turn to the Alinksy Model as articulated by Stall

and Stoecker. This theory revolves around mobilizing communities and building systems

of people who can collectively take action (Stall and Stoecker 1998, p. 730). Compared

to the previous portion of this literature review, this section focuses solely on community

organizing as form of participation.

The Alinsky Model

By focusing on "communities organizing for power" (Stall and Stoecker 1998, p.

733), this framework relies on the "self-interest [and] centrality of the public sphere"

(737). The ultimate goal for this model is to gain control of whatever particular system

individuals view as requiring change at a particular time. Because of the goal of obtaining

power, organizers are able to attract members by appealing to their desire for long-term

benefits (738). What is more important to note is that such organizing does not occur

within a short period of time, but rather seeks to foster the development of a greater

community which can be mobilized over time. This mode of operation allows for

constant capacity building as a form of political participation, rather than participation

simply being defined as a single act or event such as voting.

Parallel to the concept of gaining control and access to institutional systems, this

model is often associated with traditionally masculine traits of direct, confrontational,

resolute actions (745). This demand for power, and self-interest as motivation further

explains why community organizing, though highly effective, is a less popular mode of

political participation. According to scholar Andrew Sabl, the ethos of organizing is

increasingly relevant in modern politics. As he states "given the subtle and complex

actions that organizing requires, and the probable rarity of the character dispositions

needed to do it well, the kinds of politics associated with organizing, and their associated

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normative virtues, will tend to be episodic and rare" (Sabl 2002, p. 2). This speaks to the uncommon and unsustainable methods often employed in community organizing. Rather than a pattern of behavior with consistent motivation and clearly defined, tangible goals, community organizing often takes its form in policy debates and issue organizing that arises with popular support, and dies out with changing political trends. As Stoecker and Stall explain – community organizing often refers to "localized, often "prepolitical" action that provides the foundation for multilocal and explicitly political social movements" (730). Here, "multilocal" refers to the expansion of political activity beyond one's own neighborhood community. Thus, it is this cumulative nature of organizing that we tend to see in unsustainable movements.

What we are challenged to understand now is how this models is employed by immigrant communities. Does the same adherence to obtaining power or building relationships apply when other cultural barriers are introduced? Here I hypothesize that the Alinksky model will be prevalent amongst immigrant communities as a focus on gaining power to address specific legislation is central immigrant participation.

*Corruption, Democratization, and Political Participation*

In understanding how and why corruption influences one's political efficacy and thus participation, we must first define these terms. According to Mark E. Warren, corruption can be defined as "departures by public officials from public rules, norms, and laws for the sake of private gain" (Warren 2004, p. 328). According to his, and many others' evaluations of the effects of corruption, it often serves as the broken link between people and the state. Specifically, Warren states that it "undermines democratic capacities of association within civil society by generalizing suspicion and eroding trust and

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reciprocity" (329). What is important to note here is that though corruption has detrimental effects of political trust, political theory often points to corruption as an element that allows democracies to be more efficient. By evading rules and "lowering transaction costs," such acts allow the government to achieve its goals faster and "generally make things happen" (328). For the purposes of this project, I acknowledge corruption's ability to expedite government action, but press on this assertion to ask – at what cost? In knowing the negative effects of corruption on one's interest and faith in the political system, is an expedited process worth deteriorating trust in government?

Also worth addressing in this section is the difficulty in measuring and understanding corruption. By this I refer to the fact that in order for scholars to evaluate corruption, they must gain quantifiable information from citizens of the particular country of interest. In seeking out these numbers, we realize that corruption is all about perception, and that there is no universal method of understanding and/or measuring corruption. Therefore, these discrepancies in identifying corruption make it a difficult and somewhat impossible variable to fully understand. According to Anderson and Tverdova, "if a country's cultural context predisposes people to view corruption as acceptable practice and therefore relatively benign, measures of corruption may not coincide with how people in different cultural settings respond to corrupt political practices" (Anderson and Tverdova 2003, p. 93). Here we see that although measuring corruption is entirely necessary to understanding comparative politics, its continually changing definition makes this process difficult.

One thing that can be seen is increasing mistrust amongst individuals who live in countries with high levels of corruption. Specifically, these individuals often "express

more negative evaluations of the performance of the political system and exhibit lower levels of trust in civil servants" (91). Again, Anderson and Tverdova point out the lack of research that can be attributed to this topic and particularly the minimal credence given to how corruption impacts one's view of their own country (93).

In looking specifically at political trust, Timothy Wong et al. describe two broad theories that help to explain the root causes of trust. First, the "institutional approach" describes "political trust [as] endogenous; that is, that it arises from rational responses by individuals to the performance of political institutions" (Wong et al. 2011, p.264). This approach shows that political trust is a result of how well individuals perceive the state to be performing. In line with my discussion of corruption and political skepticism, this approach would lead to the conclusion that a less democratized, more corrupt government will result in a less responsive society.

The second theory they describe is the "cultural approach" which asserts "political trust [is] exogenous; that is, as originating not in the political sphere, but outside of it, in the cultural values and beliefs of the people, which have been learned through socialization in early life" (265). According to this theory, individual responses to state actions are not merely a result of the success/failure of the action, but rather are influenced by norms and values that are specific to individual societies.

For the purposes of this project, I wish to combine these theories to argue that political trust derives from both the effectiveness of government action and the cultural norms one has internalized. Hence, these theories are not mutually exclusive and rather are mutually reinforcing – one's ability to deem state action as unsavory comes from the particular socialization they have received. In looking at how corruption can affect one's

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political trust, consistent with Anderson and Tverdova's argument, if an individual has been socialized to think corruption and bribery is normalized, then skepticism of such an institution will be lower than that of an individual who grew up knowing democracy in it's full form. Here, I extrapolate these theories to suggest that socialization derives from the level of democratization in one's native country. Thus, those individuals hailing from less democratized regions are more likely to be skeptical of political systems as a whole. Conversely, individuals from less corrupt countries are less likely to trust non-democratic systems. Understanding how notions of corruption and democratization influence an individual's view of governmental systems becomes crucial to this study as it allows us to see the effects of political socialization and knowledge on rates of participation. As previously mentioned, the Theory of Transferability is used here as a framework for investigating how socialization in one country impacts political behavior in another.

# Chapter 2: Theoretical Argument

*Introduction*

Leading theories support the claim that political participation is a result of a wide range of factors and thus must be analyzed broadly. Although these arguments adequately look at the immigrant experience and elements affecting one's interest in politics, they fail to account for intrinsic values regarding political participation – such as the level of democratization and corruption in one's native country. Many immigrants who migrate in their early adulthood spend a significant portion of their lives in countries with vast corruption and ineffective democracies and therefore, it is undeniable that these cultural factors greatly influence views of political systems as a whole (Chang 2006, p. 259). Here, I am interested in understanding the impact of native corruption – the fraudulence seen in one's home government – on an individual's interest in the American political system (Chang 2006, p. 261). Already we know immigrants feel less inclined to participate in electoral politics due to institutional barriers i.e. language restrictions, naturalization (Lien et al. 2001, p. 626), and difficulties assimilating (Saxena 2009, p. 2). But according to Uhlaner et al., cultural and demographic determinants have a profound impact on one's tendency to participate, and thus they conclude native corruption creates a sense of apathy amongst immigrant groups (Uhlaner et al. 1989, p. 218). Hence, I hypothesize that higher levels of native corruption lead to lower levels of political participation.

There are many factors that lead to a sense of political apathy, including socioeconomic status, group membership and immigrant-specific barriers, but here I suggest native corruption should be considered among many causal mechanisms affecting

rates of participation. I hypothesize that native corruption and/or low levels of democracy act as primers to interest in political participation, as they seem to color one's perception of political systems. From the literature review, it is clear that native corruption has not been considered as a determining factor and here I propose that it should be evaluated as the initial cause of political apathy.

*Factors Contributing to a Sense of Corruption*

As will be expanded upon in the Research Design and Collection section of this project, measuring corruption raises many difficulties for scholars as indicators are primarily based on individual perceptions. Corruption, as defined by Warren describes "departures by public officials from public rules, norms, and laws for the sake of private gain" (Warren 2004, p.328). But this corruption manifests itself in various ways and is often hard for citizens to pinpoint. Even within democratized nations, corruption can persist but may look different than that of non-democratized regions. For example, according to one study, "democratic institutions and politics make it more likely that corruption will be discovered and publicized, allow citizens and political oppositions to make an issue of corruption, and facilitate recourse of democracy ranging from public hearings to voting the scoundrels out" (Sun et al. 2009, p. 1). This assertion presents an interesting concept – that corruption exists in all regimes, yet the ability to mitigate and reduce corruption becomes the indicator of a functioning democracy.

This argument suggests not only that corruption is ubiquitous, but also that varying methods of ameliorating corruption can impact one's perception of regime stability. For example, though certain nations and individuals may view bribery as the worst form of government corruption, others may view the influence of big money in

elections as unhealthy politics.[7] Between these two cases we see that although both concern how money impacts politics, one is more focused on post-election monetary incentives to accomplish a goal, while the other deals with using money to elect win elected office. These diverse interpretations of corruption support the claim that corruption is difficult to measure, but also underscore the notion that no state is entirely free of government dishonesty.

Considering this categorization of corruption, here I acknowledge that my focus is less on what the definition of corruption is, and rather hinges on how various manifestations of corruption within a regime impacts its citizens. Hence, though the United States is considered one of the highest functioning democracies, this does not suggest that it is free of corruption. Understanding how and why corruption exists requires understanding regime makeup and history – factors that are outside the scope of this study. In further looking at the existence of corruption in all regimes, scholars must then inquire as to whether citizens are inculcated with an initial sense of political skepticism, a mental state that for the purposes of this discussion I will rank as 0. This abstract scale can be seen in Table 1 as a way of thinking about forms of political participation and the burden it places on an individual. Thus any political engagement is considered above this threshold of 0, such as basic activities like watching the news or reading the paper would indicate a 1, while voting and other more intensive activities would lead to higher numbers on the scale. The question now becomes how and where

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[7] According to reports from *Transparency International,* corruption challenges in the United States include financial regulation, anti-fraud legislation, and political financing. This same report listed bribery as the largest corruption challenge in India, contributing to parliament and the legislature, political parties, and the police force.

does a sense of political efficacy come from, and do all individuals start at the same place?

Table 1: Forms of Political Participation

| Activity | Ranking |
|---|---|
| Universal Starting point | 0 |
| Basic engagement (watching news, reading the paper) | 1 |
| Voting | 2 |
| Donating[8] | 3 |
| Campaign activity (canvassing, phonebanking) | 4 |

For the purposes of this study, the underlying premise is that all individuals have the same capacity for participation and engagement with the political process, yet it is the effectiveness of their native regime that impacts their willingness to participate. By this, I suggest that individuals all start with a high capacity to participate (though this is obviously impacted by demographic factors including socioeconomic status and regime type), and therefore regime stability can either affirm this or reduce one's propensity to participate. But in considering the definition of corruption and my previous assertion that corruption exists in all regimes, if it is simply the ability to manage and reduce corruption that indicates a functioning democracy, the opposite may be accurate. Instead of all individuals initially having a high sense of political efficacy, individuals all begin by being skeptical of governments due to the presence of corruption, but in maturing and

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[8] For the purposes of this scale, "donating" is depicted as more intensive than voting because it requires an individual to have a disposable income. Though voting may be more time intensive than donating, here, making a monetary investment is considered more of a commitment than time.

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understanding their regime's ability to manage said corruption, individual willingness to participate increases. Here I am still pointing to native corruption as an indicator of individual propensity to participate, but rather than being a negative factor, ability to manage corruption is actually seen as a positive trait for the government.

### *Hypothesis*

As has already been articulated, I hypothesize that lower levels of democratization and higher levels of native corruption lead to lower levels of political participation by immigrant-based communities in the United States. Though there is potential to problematize the working definitions presented for this hypothesis, the purpose of this study is to shed light on intrinsic values held by individuals and uncover the roots of these perceptions.

Based on the evidence presented in the literature review, it becomes clear that the immigrant experience with American politics is much different than that of native-born Americans, but the complicating factor is realized through the different environments in which individuals were raised. Focusing specifically on Asian immigrants, I suggest that native corruption has an impact on willingness to participate regardless of education levels of and income. Here, my hypothesis serves not as a way of claiming that those from highly corrupt regimes are completely removed from the American political system, but rather to say that intrinsic values of politics and early political experiences have significant impact on an individual's long-term political views. Specifically, the Theory of Transferability shows certain intrinsic values such as politics being a largely non-participatory process impact the ways in which one is able to approach the American political space. Here I am suggesting a connection between high levels of corruption and low levels of participatory politics.

I also present this hypothesis to illuminate the nuanced barriers that exist for immigrants in regards to engagement with the political system. Already we know that studies successfully address tangible barriers such as naturalization and language discrepancies, but here I wish to extend these "immigrant specific barriers" to include an immigrant's previously held political views which are undeniably influenced by experiences in their native country. By broadening the definition of "immigrant specific barriers" to include the effects of particular political socializations we are able to gain a deeper understanding of the immigrant experience within the United States political system. This expanded definition becomes the focus of this research project as a comprehensive look at immigrant political behavior must take into account the institutions and ideals that have impacted an immigrant's beliefs.

What also becomes telling through this research is the limited data available regarding specific types of participation amongst immigrants. According to the Group Membership Theory one would expect large immigrant groups, such as Indians and Chinese, to mobilize around issues relevant to their individual experiences such as immigration processes and access to higher education and jobs. But overwhelmingly, there is a lack of data around immigrant political community organizing. By immigrant political organizing I here refer specifically to campaign related activities such as canvassing, making phone calls, and voter registration efforts. Questions about these activities are rarely asked in large surveys, and when they are – the response rate is dismal. This type of research requires an understanding of all forms of political participation including the ones that may be more relevant to immigrant communities. Both the *National Asian American Survey* and the *Collaborative Multi-Racial Post-*

*Election Survey*, which are described in more detail in the following chapter, briefly include similar questions about political community organizing activities, but neither sufficiently depicts rates of these activities amongst immigrant populations. This knowledge raises the question of why? Why are immigrant communities less likely to participate in campaign-related community organizing? Is it because they do not know how or are unable to? Or is it because they are excluded from the political system in a way that makes community organizing unimportant and/or irrelevant to them?

These are questions that become important to the conversation about immigrant political participation. Understanding what motivates an immigrant to participate is just as relevant as what immigrants find un-motivating. The purpose of this study is to expand the definition of "immigrant specific barriers" to include one's mental state and the political socialization one has experienced that will impact their interest or lack thereof in the political system.

# Chapter 3: Research Design and Data Collection

_Introduction_

The study of political participation lacks a unified approach to investigating rates of participation as it relates to immigrant specific barriers and mentalities. By this I refer to the fact that because such barriers impact immigrant groups differently, scholars have yet to establish a centralized method measuring these effects. Thus, much of my research will involve defining such obstacles to participation as well as illuminating new variables that specifically affect Asian immigrants. In order to test my hypothesis I propose a research design that incorporates interviews and surveys. Modeled after research conducted by Junn et al. and Verba, Scholzman, and Brady, this two-stage approach allows for a focused look at types of political participation beyond voting while simultaneously incorporating qualitative interview information to provide more subjective, emotionally driven responses to my research question. The methodology used in Verba et al.'s groundbreaking book _Voice and Equality_ includes a 2-Stage survey of voluntary activity of the American public (Verba et al. 1995, p. 535). In their study, Stage 1 consisted of 15,053 telephone interviews, while Stage 2 included 2,517 in-person interviews from the original respondents. Similarly, Junn et al. administered the _National Asian American Survey_ via telephone to 5,519 respondents. At the start of these interviews, individuals were asked what language they prefer to speak in as well as their age, gender, and ethnicity. Additional details of this survey will be explored later in this chapter.

A study done by Sergio Wals, as discussed in the literature review, looks specifically at post-migration political behavior. This study hypothesizes "higher levels

of trust in the political institutions of their countries of origin increase the likelihood that immigrants to the United States will exhibit political trust in the American government" (Wals 2011, p. 603). Though similar to my research question, Wals' methods solely include *The Mexican Values Survey,* an original additive index to measure trust in the United States government[9], and case studies. I include this reference to Wals' work to show the various ways in which similar research questions have been investigated and how my project will differ. But here, my research design will be limited to survey and interview data methods and does not include case studies intentionally. Though information derived from case studies is often pertinent to such projects, in the case of my research, which is asking broad questions, focusing on one locality and immigrant population will not provide the latitude needed for this study.

*Conceptualizations*

Throughout the vast literature regarding immigrant political participation, it is seen that participation is measured in a variety of ways, but overwhelmingly there is a lack of consistent conceptualization. Though "electing officials" is generally treated as an implicit conceptualization, the study of political science struggles to agree on one definition of political participation. I will define this topic as non-voting forms of

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[9] This index ranks trust from 0 to 9, 0 indicating the lowest level of trust and 9 indicating the highest level of trust. Had I had more time, I would have used this index and administered a survey to my target populations – specifically Indian and Chinese immigrants. A second hypothesis articulated in this study states "affiliation in one's country of origin increases the likelihood of political engagement following migration to the United States" (603). Though this assertion also falls closely in line with my intended research question, the variables used – expected political participation in the United States, and political party attachment in Mexico – were too vague for the purposes of my study. As has been previously discussed, measuring corruption is a difficult task as it is based solely off individual perceptions, and therefore the aforementioned variables in Wal's study left too much room for error to be included in this study. Again, had I had more time for this research project I would have included variables measuring expected political participation as well as actual political participation amongst Asian immigrants.

political activity that ultimately increase political engagement in one's own community.

Rather than concentrating on propensity to vote and voting patterns, I will look at

activism as actions beyond voting that can still be considered participation in and around

the electoral process. This conceptualization, which was previously outlined, will be

measured by looking at involvement in a variety of community organizing events such as

discussing politics with others, working for a campaign, and donating money to political

campaigns and organizations.[10] In understanding that Asian immigrants have the highest

collective socioeconomic status of any individual racial or ethnic group in the United

States, I seek to resolve the tension between this and the low rates of participation seen

by Asian immigrants. This is a known anomaly in the field of political participation

research and is specifically looked at by Junn et al. in their book *Asian American*

*Political Participation.* According to their work, there is a "mismatch between the high

average economic and education achievement of the Asian American community and its

correspondingly modest levels of political activity" (5). By focusing specifically on the

aforementioned aspects, my research aims to suggest reasons why Asian immigrants are

less likely to participate in politically motivated activities. Table 2.1 includes in

percentages, information taken from the *Pilot National Asian American Political Survey.*

This survey was conducted between 2000-2001 and incorporates a national sample of

Asians in the United States. It was administered via telephone in five metropolitan areas

selected for multiple reasons including the size of their Asian population as well as

geographic location. A total of 1,218 individuals were surveyed in 5 different languages.

These languages include English, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, Korean, and

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[10] These forms of participation are derived from the survey questions used in the *National Asian American Survey, 2008*.

Vietnamese. Again, more information regarding this survey as well as the full data set

can be found at the University of Michigan's Inter-University Consortium for Political

and Social Research. The specific question asked here states "How interested are you in

politics and what'd going on in government in general?" Though this survey is not

incorporated as one of the major data sources for this project, here I thought it important

to include information regarding baseline political interest amongst Asian Americans.

From this table alone we see that as indicated earlier, South Asian immigrants are the

most likely to be "very interested" in politics while Chinese immigrants are least likely to

indicate this same response.

Table 2.1: Interest in Politics Among Asian Immigrants

| | Number of Individuals Surveyed | Very interested | Somewhat interested | Slightly interested | Not at all interested | Not sure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Chinese** | 308 | 18% | 46% | 24% | 10% | 2% |
| **Korean** | 168 | 28% | 43% | 24% | 4% | 1% |
| **Vietnamese** | 137 | 21% | 31% | 27% | 18% | 1% |
| **Japanese** | 198 | 21% | 38% | 25% | 16% | 1% |
| **Filipino** | 266 | 24% | 29% | 26% | 20% | 1% |
| **South Asian** | 141 | 38% | 34% | 16% | 11% | N/A |

Additionally, Figure 2.2 incorporates data taken from Verba, Scholzman, and

Brady's book *Voice and Equality* showing rates of participation in various types of

political activity. Again, data from this research is included as preliminary information

about participation and popular activities. From this figure we see that voting is

undeniably the most popular form of participation, which asks the question – why are

other forms of engagement not as popular among immigrant communities? Though this figure largely represents non-Asian populations, I include it as a way of showing broadly the various types of political activities that scholars evaluate and identify as important in the study of political participation.

Figure 2.2: Types of Political Activities Participated In
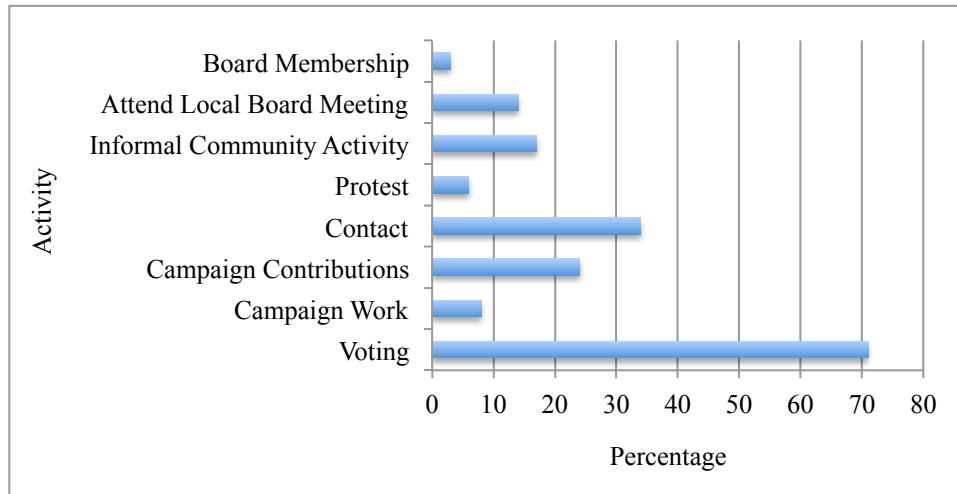


In bringing meaning to this observation, the level of democratization in one's native country will be evaluated as an independent variable, which is hypothesized to have a direct impact on an individual's willingness to participate beyond in the electoral process beyond voting. Conceptualized as the relevance of individual voices in electoral processes and the freedom in elections – I will evaluate how levels of democratization impact one's interest in politics. Here I hypothesize that individuals hailing from countries with higher levels of democratization are more likely to participate in politics once settled in the United States.

## *Data Sources*
Using data from the *Freedom House Freedom in the World Survey,* the *National Asian American Survey*, and the *Collaborative Multi-Racial Post-Election Survey*, I will be able to extrapolate existing data to answer the questions of my research.

The annual *Freedom House Freedom in the World Survey* derives its data from a series of external sources and evaluates countries based on regime type. The survey analyzes democratization and corruption in 195 countries and 14 territories total. In order to acquire the necessary data to determine individual country rankings, analysts include a wide range of sources from foreign and domestic news reports to "individual professional contacts and visits to the region" (Freedom in the World Overview). Using a three-tiered system assessing scores, ratings, and status this index allows me to differentiate the varying levels of democracy seen across the Asian continent. Within the "scores" category, this survey gives each country a certain number of points for a series of political rights and civil liberties indicators. Using a scale of 0-4, 0 indicating the lowest degree of freedom and 4 representing the highest, this survey traces growth over time as well as regime stability. After combining these scores, an overall freedom ranking is awarded to each country on a scale of 1-7, 7 indicating least free and 1 indicating most free. For the purposes of my study, I have inverted this scale to allow for consistency throughout the visual representations. Hence, 7 will now indicate most free and 1 will indicate least free. Important to note are the specific cultural nuances that influence one's perception of their own government, and thus here I underscore the fact that simply because two countries have the same numerical ranking or categorical indicator, does not mean the human rights situations in the territories are identical (Freedom in the World Overview). In fact, more often than not there are wide variations within each category, but looking at the index holistically, the three distinctions of "free," "partly free," and "not free" do show clear differences. In knowing that India received a "free" ranking from the *Freedom in the World Survey*, my hypothesis suggests immigrants from India

will be more likely to participate compared to those from China, which is classified as a "not free" regime. The information provided in this survey will allow me to focus my study by comparing individual levels of corruption and democratization, to political skepticism and ultimately participation (Asia Pacific).

My hypothesis states lower levels of democratization lead to lower levels of political participation and thus, the cynicism immigrant populations feel toward the political system is not a result of an exclusionary political system, but rather stems from skepticism of political systems as a whole. To investigate this I will draw on data from three indices that focus on democratization in Asian countries. Specifically, *Freedom in the World, The Index of Economic Freedom,* and the *Corruption Perception Index* measure democratization and corruption as reported by natives and compare these findings to other countries in the region (Quah 1999, p. 484).

Ramakrishnan and Espenshade suggest the lack of participation seen amongst immigrant groups is a result of institutional barriers, which make participation a daunting task (Lien et al. 2001, p. 626), but here I affirm that immigrant-specific barriers are not the sole contributor to political interest. Hence, my hypothesis looks holistically at political participation and suggests a significant contributor to political interest is confidence in political systems altogether.

National Asian American Survey (NAAS)

The *National Asian American Survey* focuses on responses from the six major national-origin groups, Chinese, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Filipino, and Japanese by posing questions regarding political behavior and attitudes. Administered in 2008, this survey included a total 5,159 respondents with an oversample from each of the six major populations. Specifically, 968 respondents were Chinese, 677 were Indian, 508

were Filipino, 587 were Vietnamese, 405 were Korean, and 409 were Japanese.

Respondents were asked what language they preferred to speak in and thus the survey

was conducted in English, Japanese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Vietnamese, Hindi,

and Hmong. Though other national origin groups are included in this survey, these six are

the largest groups, and have the largest populations of individuals living in the United

States. Table 2.3 shows the breakdown of the major Asian populations in the United

States in 2008 (Junn et al. 1999).

Table 2.3: Major Asian Populations in the United States, 2008

|  | Population in 2008 | Percentage of Total U.S. Asian Population In 2008 |
|---|---|---|
| Chinese | 2,998,849 | 22% |
| Asian Indian | 2,495,998 | 19% |
| Filipino | 2,425,697 | 18% |
| Vietnamese | 1,431,980 | 11% |
| Korean | 1,344,267 | 10% |
| Japanese | 710,063 | 5.3% |

In terms of data collection, this survey was used for a majority of my research.

This survey is useful as it analyzes the most basic forms of political engagement

(discussing politics with others) to a more intense participation such as working for some

political entity. Here we see that the two largest populations surveyed were Asian Indians

and Chinese Asians. Basing my research primarily off these two populations as countries

with differing rankings according to the Freedom House Ranking, I was able to see the

correlation between high levels of democracy and rates of political participation in the

United States.

Using *NAAS,* I analyzed specific questions pertaining to interest in, and rates of participation. These variables include talking about politics with friends and family, working for a campaign organization, donating to a campaign, thinking politics is too complicated to understand, trusting Washington D.C. politicians, and thinking that elected officials care about individual well-being. The specific questions can be found in the codebook located in the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). By looking at these variables broadly I was able to uncover which Asian populations had the highest and lowest rates of engagement. Here, overwhelmingly we see that the countries with the higher rates of democratization consistently had the highest rates of participation. Figure 2.4 shows the rankings given by the Freedom House Index.[11]

Figure 2.4: Level of Democratization in Asian Nations
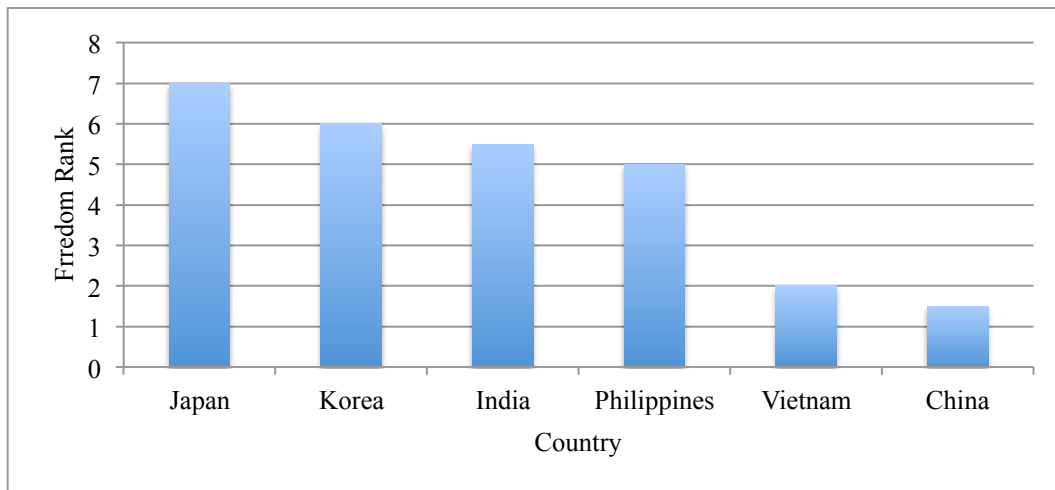


After collecting these initial results, the next step in the analysis required controlling for education level, length of residence, and income level separately. Using a

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[11] The scale has been inverted to allow for easier visual interpretation. 7 indicates a high level of democracy while 1 is a low level of democracy.

statistical analysis program called *STATA,* I was able to run simple calculations analyzing the relationships between variables. By generating my own variables and isolating native country and other dependent factors I ran basic frequency and mean calculations to produce my results.

As was explained in the theoretical section, these factors are evaluated as independent variables affecting interest in politics and rates of participation. The original survey asked respondents "what is the highest level of formal education you completed" and responses varied from Primary/Grammar School through earning a doctorate degree. For the purposes of my research, the answers were categorized as either "attended college" or "did not attend college." Comparing rates of participation and interest in politics amongst those who attended college and those who did not allowed me to evaluate the impact of educational systems both in the United States and in one's native country on political interest and participation. I include this variable to see whether rates of participation can be attributed to high levels of education amongst immigrant populations as has often been cited (Diaz 2012, p.142). Though this variable has already widely been evaluated, I seek to examine it in relation to levels of native democratization – asking whether or not education serves as a mitigating factor in countries with low levels of democratization.

Similarly, length of residence was broken down into three categories for the purposes of the *NAAS* survey. The categories span from less than one year, one to five years, and five years or more. In looking at the impact of residence I am able to evaluate how the assimilation process affects one's propensity to participate, if at all. Important to note here is that increased length of residence does not necessarily imply an increase in

rates of citizenship, though this is typically cited as a related factor. The variables

evaluated here are donating to a political campaign, discussing politics with family and

friends, trusting Washington D.C. politicians, thinking politics is too complicated to

understand, and thinking Washington D.C. politicians care about individual well being.

As Lien, Conway, and Wong articulate in their book *The Politics of Asian Americans*,

"political awareness is a necessary condition for the formation of political attitudes and

beliefs" and "information can be distributed through channels of political socialization"

(Lien et al. 2004, p.73). From this we know that political awareness takes time and often

a conscious effort toward engagement – a task that is undoubtedly influenced by one's

length of residence in the United States. Again, here I investigate whether similar lengths

of residence lead to similar rates of participation.

The final factor being evaluated from this survey is income and its effect on

participation. As has been previously discussed, high levels of income typically

correspond with high levels of participation – but here we know that Asian immigrants

are an anomaly. By controlling for income level I am able to understand what impact

income has on rates of participation and whether or not individuals from more

democratized countries participate at higher rates regardless of income status. The

question in the original survey asks respondents to provide the total pre-tax income

earned in their household during the previous financial year. Answers ranged from

$20,000 to $150,000+. Here it is important to note the shortcomings of this question as

individuals often misrepresent their annual household income (Moore et al. 1997).

Additionally, though not uncommon with questions of this nature, approximately 37.3%

of the total number of survey participants did not know or refused to answer this question.

For the purposes of incorporating *NAAS* as well as many other comprehensive data sets of this kind in scholarly research, it is important to acknowledge the frequently used generalization, "Asian Indian." The Indian subcontinent is indisputably extremely diverse and thus lumping all Indians into one category may lead to the omission of state specific experiences that contribute to one's political socialization. Considering this potential shortcoming, through the interview process I hope to gain a deeper understanding of what growing up in different parts of India and China specifically was like, and how state specific politics impacts individually held values.

The Collaborative Multi-Racial Post-Election Survey (CMPS)

Lastly, the *Collaborative Multi-Racial Post-Election Survey* is useful in both its breadth in looking at racial groups but also its specificity in differentiating types of participation. Also conducted in 2008, *CMPS* had a total of 4,563 respondents with 35.3% identifying as Latin@, 21.5% as Black, 19.2% as Asian, and 24% as White. Because of this wide range, the survey was conducted in six languages including English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, and Vietnamese. This survey narrows participation to specific forms such as donating money, signing a petition, and attending a politically centered event. I also rely on this survey heavily for information about individual mobilization. From this data I can see how individuals were mobilized for a political cause, if at all, and who did the mobilizing. The questions in the survey regarding mobilization focus specifically on voter registration and canvassing events. Questions include "Over the past 12 months, were you asked to register or to vote by a candidate for office or a person working for a candidate, a representative of a political

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party, or someone from an organization working in your community?" "Who was it that contacted you?" "How were you contacted? Was it by mail or door flier, telephone, in-person, e-mail, text message, or some other way?" By looking at these question, I can evaluate how often immigrant communities are included in political mobilization efforts and whether this has an impact on rates of participation. Additionally, this data set allows me to compare racial groups broadly. Instead of looking specifically at Asian Indians, I will use this survey to compare all self-identified Asians, Whites, Blacks, and Latin@s.

Admittedly, lumping all Asians into one category fails to recognize cultural nuances within individual groups, but for this portion of the study such a generalization is sufficient. I turn to this survey as a way of illuminating my initial observations from the Obama campaign and to demonstrate that beyond immigrant status (which is shared with Latin@s), there are other mitigating factors impacting Asian immigrant's willingness to engage in the political process. The relevant survey questions include being asked to register to vote, attending a politics speech and/or protest, volunteering in a political capacity, donating to a political entity, and convincing others to vote. These factors will not be evaluated in terms of level of education and income as I am simply trying to provide an overview of participation amongst various racial groups.

Within the *CMPS* survey, about 34.4% of respondents identified as Latin@, while the next largest group of respondents (24.8%), identified as non-Hispanic White. Black and Asian respondents were each approximately 20% of those surveyed. I raise these numbers to highlight the size of the Latin@ population as it is the largest single immigrant group in the United States (Gibson). Here I also point out that approximately 15.1% of respondents had the survey administered in Spanish which speaks to existing

language barriers within the American political system as voting and other political services are largely only offered in English.

*Interview Methodology*

In conducting interviews for this project, the criteria for subjects included self-identifying as either an Indian or Chinese immigrant above the age of 18. By keeping the requirements broad, I spoke with respondents from around the country, of varying genders, and who had been in the United States for different periods of time. The interview questionnaire and recruitment form can be found in Appendix I. From these conversations I was able to determine differences amongst men and womyn in their relationships to the political process as well as how individual attitudes have changed over time – information which cannot be obtained from survey data.

Here, I acknowledge the possibility of acquiring false information. Knowing the context of my study, interview subjects may have felt compelled to misreport political involvement and/or engagement, which is why this information will only be used as complementary to my quantitative research. I will also organize my interviews to account for partner dynamics amongst married couples and the influence of cultural gender roles on participation. I am interested to see if couples respond differently to questions when asked alone as opposed to in the presence of their spouse. Particularly amongst immigrant populations, traditional gender roles are often reinforced (Chuang 2009, p. 451), and I am curious as to how these dynamics affect propensity to participate.

When analyzing this data, my primary task became identifying patterns and understanding the differences between what those individuals from India said, as compared to what the Chinese immigrants felt. I looked for patterns in major events that had an influence on political views, patterns in voting behavior and types of political

activities participated in, and patterns amongst men versus womyn. I also looked for patterns in the timeline of individual political involvement. By this, I refer to the ways in which an individual's willingness to participate changed overtime once moving to the United States. Did being in the United States longer make individuals more or less likely to participate? And are these results consistent with leading political theory about assimilation?

To clarify and summarize the specific variables that will be used in this study, Table 2.5 identifies the most important variables, as well as how they will be conceptualized, measured, and obtained through this research.

Table 2.5: Variables of Interest

| Variable | Conceptualization | Measurement | Source |
|---|---|---|---|
| Political Participation (DV)[12] | Individual involvement via local activism | Participation in door-to-door canvassing, phone banking, voter registration drives | NAAS |
| Socioeconomic Status (IV) | Social standing of an individual due to economic and class indicators | Education and income levels | NAAS |
| Length of Residence (IV) | Amount of exposure to the U.S. mainstream | Number of years spent in the U.S. | NAAS |
| Level of Democratization (IV) | Relevance of individual voices in electoral processes and the freedom in elections | Rate of transitions of power and stability of governmental agencies | Freedom House Freedom in the World Index |

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[12] Here, DV refers to a "dependent variable" while IV refers to an "independent variable."

# Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

In this section I will present the findings of my research. I begin with the qualitative data that will subsequently be used to explain many of the findings from the quantitative portion. Additional graphs and qualitative materials can be found in the Appendices. For the purposes of this analysis it is important to note that the study of political participation is far-reaching and well established. Thus the trends seen and conclusions drawn merely suggest causal mechanisms leading to immigrant political participation. Here I acknowledge that no single factor[13] can be credited with influencing an immigrant's willingness to participate.

*Qualitative Results*

The interview process for this project allowed me to uncover the narratives behind individuals' political interests. Moving away from survey data I was able to speak with respondents about their personal experiences and the specific moments that contributed to their political socialization. In expanding the definition of "immigrant specific barriers" to include political socialization, using interview data becomes vital. In this section I will include the results from the 21 interviews conducted. Here, I will be identifying trends among individual responses.

Indian Interviewees

Of the 13 Indian immigrants interviewed, 7 identified as womyn, while 6 identified as men. Important to note is the fact that each of the interviewees was

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[13] The individual factors referred to here include socioeconomic status, length of residence, and native corruption. As has been established through existing scholarship on political participation and for the purposes of this study, each of the factors work in conjunction to determine rates of political participation amongst immigrants.

employed and had been living in the United States for a minimum of 7 years. The longest time lived in the United States was around 30 years.

Looking firstly at experiences growing up in India (albeit in different parts of the country), a majority of respondents cited that there was a large emphasis on American government in history/civics classes. These lessons instilled in many respondents a sense of an idealized American political system. According to one interviewee, "we saw that there was some degree of sophistication in the American political system, which we didn't always feel was manifest in the Indian system…the American system was a mature political system that functioned well." Though there was an understanding that the American system was different and more inclusive than the Indian system, all 13 respondents enthusiastically agreed that they lived in a democratic society growing up. To them, it was clear growing up that they had the freedom to worship and to express themselves. Many also cited the importance of print news and the influence newspapers had on their upbringing. "The press in India has always been powerful…most middle class people would start their day by reading the newspaper. Even at the height of Indira Gandhi's Emergency rule there were [outspoken] critiques in the press."

To contextualize this information, I turn to the Freedom House Freedom in the World Overview of the Indian government. According to their 2008 report,

"India is an electoral democracy. The 1950 constitution provides for a lower house of Parliament, the 545-seat Lok Sabha (House of the People) Executive power is vested in a prime minister and a cabinet. The president, who serves as head of state, is chosen for a five-year term by state and national lawmakers. India is a mature democracy that has held regular and reasonably free elections since independence, and sitting governments are thrown out of office with increasing frequency. Under the supervision of the vigilant Election Commission of India (ECI), recent elections have generally been free and fair."

But what was unique and consistent about the Indian democratic system was the notion that although one could vote, there were not a lot of choices. And similarly, because India is so populous, there was never a sense that individual votes mattered. The youngest individual interviewed, a man who has now been in the United States for 7 years stated, "I didn't think we could directly influence or take action of any sorts, but in a broad way it was a democracy." Several respondents addressed the fact that in order for a large enough number of people to organize in an effective way, there needed to be a gross violation of human rights. By this I refer to that fact that unless it was an issue of food security or public safety, often times mass support was difficult to garner. As articulated by one interviewee, the Indian electorate is too uneducated for democracy to actually work. In the current system, though everyone has the right to vote, since such a large part of the population lives in poverty and therefore is often disenfranchised from elections – the existing democratic system becomes ineffective. In keeping with the same discussion of the actuality of the Indian democratic system, many interviewees cited Indira Gandhi's Emergency Period as a clear violation of what they had come to know as democracy. According to one womyn's response, the Emergency Period "deprived people of a lot of power and left many educated people shocked and horrified." What's important to note here is that people cited the Emergency Period not to attack Gandhi or to call the Indian system broken, but rather to show the instability and often elitist attitudes that govern the system.

Other respondents expressed the difference in youth organizing between the United States and India. One interviewee, a mother of two and practicing doctor said, "the problem is, in the Indian education system you are tunnel vision. So after high

school, there is little exposure to things outside your field." According to her, it is because of this education and career oriented mentality that young people are not as empowered or encouraged to become active in politics as they are in the United States. I include this anecdote to say that although the Indian system is open and free, general attitudes and school curriculum may not be conducive to an engaging and representative political system.

Moving into one's immigrant experience in the United States, overwhelmingly interviewees said they felt they could trust the American government more on major issues than they could the Indian government. In the United States there is a sense of openness and access. "The process is easy to understand if you make an effort to understand. It is open and is not controlled by the insiders. On a daily basis you can feel the benefits of the government." Additionally, respondents expressed that the American political system provides many more ways for individuals to get involved. Rather than needing to be an insider or have deep pockets, in the United States anyone can be involved in politics and access to the system is easier. I include this sentiment not to dismiss the large voter disenfranchisement[14] that occurs in the United States, but rather to show the impact of perception and how having India as a baseline may influence the way one sees the American political system.

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[14] Voter disenfranchisement is a large issue in the United States. This is a type of injustice manifesting from race and class politics. Issues of voter ID, early voting, and multi-language ballots are only a few ways this problem is seen in America. Closely examining the similarities and differences between voter disenfranchisement between India and the United States is well beyond the scope of this project, but is important to know that the inclusion of the preceding narratives from interviewees is not intended to discount this widespread discrimination.

In approaching these interviews with the baseline knowledge that immigrant specific barriers exist in terms of interacting with the political system, I was interested to learn about how the barriers manifest themselves and the ways in which immigrants navigate them. Many respondents articulated the simple fact the political engagement is simply not a priority for much of the immigrant community, and that they must first focus their attention on other things before they can participate in the process. As one womyn, mother of three, and counselor at a nursing home expressed "we have stuff to do, so leave those things to people who can handle them. My priority is managing my own life." But what did become apparent from this interview and all of the interviews with womyn was the fact that being a mother largely influenced their desire to participate. When asked how she would engage with a new immigrant mother around the issue of political engagement, another womyn stated "your children are growing up in this country, what kind of country do you want them to grow up in? If you care about that, then you will be involved with politics." The fact that womyn are more involved in local politics is known as a result of previous political science research, but what was largely visible throughout these interviews was that not one man who indicated having children listed them as a reason for wanting to engage with the political system, as compared to their female counterparts who consistently referenced their children's future as a motivation to participate.

The final trend I wish to explore here is the mentality shift that occurs for many individuals the longer they have been in the United States. Many respondents expressed that over time they have become less faithful in the system as they see how underrepresented Indians are within the political sphere. As one man articulated, "I don't

think the political system is willing to embrace the ideas of people like me. Minorities are pretty much only considered blacks." This speaks to the larger issue of race and identity politics in the United States, which often includes and perpetuates the erasure of Asian bodies from politics. Broadly speaking, Asian Pacific Islanders are largely grouped within the term "people of color" but are often unrecognized in their unique differences from other racial and ethnic minorities.

Chinese Interviewees

Eight Chinese immigrants were interviewed for this project with a total of five men and three womyn. Two of the individuals interviewed were international students who had been in the country for less than 3 months, while the rest of the interview subjects were working and/or retired individuals who had been in the United States for a majority of their adult lives.

What was abundantly clear from these interviews, much like those of the Indian immigrants used for this project was the enjoyment of high socioeconomic status and the social and cultural benefits that accompany such a lifestyle. Though employment and education status were considered when selecting individuals for my research, the impact of status was felt in apathy towards governmental systems. Many interviewees pointed to the upper middle class standing of many Asian immigrants as a reason why participation is less of a priority. According to one individual, a middle aged husband and father of two children, "the current system benefits the Asian American who has higher education … [we] benefit from a system mostly established by Caucasians, but also benefit from the civil rights mostly established by African Americans. So there is not a whole lot of incentive for [Asians] to stand up and fight." Throughout these interviews, many individuals expressed sentiments of being unaffected by large political and social issues

of the time because of their upper socioeconomic status. Here, it become interesting to note how high education and income status can have opposite effects on immigrant communities – fostering disengagement rather than political interest.

Additionally, many of the interviewees spoke about the unique relationship between individuals and the government in China. Subjects were asked about what their political interests looked like before moving to the United States, they were asked if they feel like their voice has an impact in the political process, and they were asked if during their time in China they felt as though they could trust the government. Overwhelmingly, the responses to these questions all converged on a similar understanding – that government and politics in China was largely not participatory and therefore individuals worked to make a living and focused more on the well being of their household rather than larger social and political issues. As one individual stated, "there was a tendency to stay away from political issues, which is [only] starting to change now." Another womyn who moved to the United States for an advanced degree said, "I don't think [Asian American] voices are loud enough. [This] could be cultural, [in] the Chinese culture, engagement or involvement in politics is not that strong, [Chinese immigrants] are not actively participating." These sentiments point to the Theory of Transferability and the idea that growing up in a system that is largely non-participatory breeds a general sense of disengagement with and distance from the government. For many individuals, the restrictiveness of the Chinese government in terms of the ability to make one's political opinions public was simply a societal norm. Surely, people felt restricted, but it was a way of life to which people largely adapted.

Important to this discussion is an intersectional lens that incorporates one's political socialization in China along with historical realities of the American political system. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was signed into law by President Arthur and served as a way of preventing Chinese immigrants from entering the United States. The Act was only officially repealed in 1943 and thus these institutional means of discrimination have had significant impact on the Chinese community and its relationship with and trust in the United States government. As a one interviewee, a resident of Chicago and leader of a local non-profit articulated, "most of the immigrant community is very insular…you try to take care of everything within the community and therefore resources of the country never reach the community [itself]." He continued on to say, "there has been a series of exclusion and discrimination that meant in the early days people did not want to leave Chinatown…it has been a psychological burden."

This interview reflected a trend many subjects spoke about – the large language barrier faced by many Chinese immigrants. In knowing the details of my research and the comparison between the Indian and Chinese immigrant experience, several Chinese immigrants expressed how vastly different the language issue was between the populations. One of the international students interviewed for this project discussed the fact that just because English is taught in Chinese schools, it is often not taught in a way that prepares individuals for a shift to American culture. Thus, many immigrants find themselves automatically excluded from political conversations and debates as a result of their inability to access English media ads or ballots only provided in English.[15]

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[15] The United States Election Assistance Commission provides glossaries of election terminology in Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese. Here it important to

note that though I was able to locate this resource after a search on the internet, this information is not always provided at polling locations or made accessible to all voters.

I begin here with data collected from the *National Asian American Survey.*

Figures 4.1a and 4.1b show levels of participation and interest in the political system by

Asian country. Additional graphs from this initial stage of analysis can be found in

Appendix II. Important to note from Figure 4.1b is that those individuals most likely to

think politics is too complicated to understand are the ones hailing from less

democratized countries.

Figure 4.1a: Rates at Which Asian Immigrants Discuss Politics
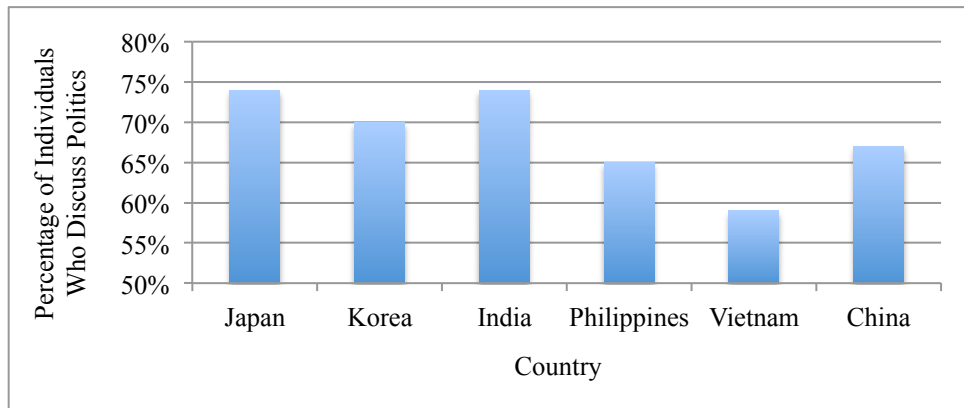


Figure 4.1b[16]: Do You Think Politics is Too Complicated to Understand?



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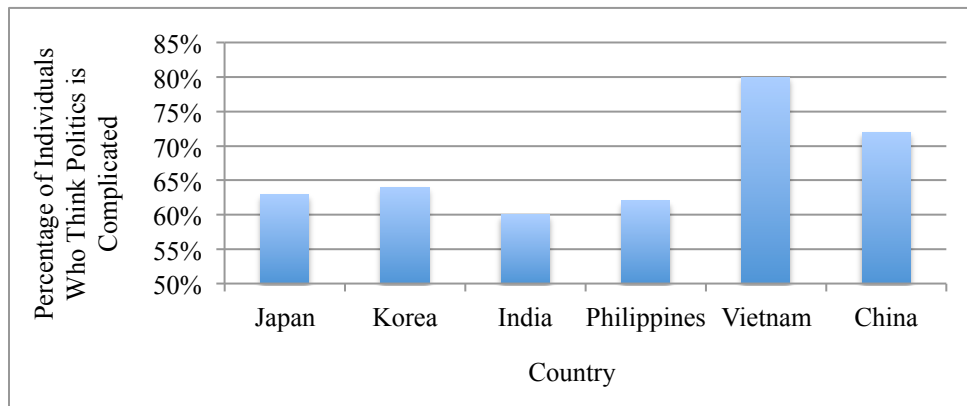
[16] The specific question posed here asked respondents to identify how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on." The purpose of including this question is to see if coming from a more democratized region makes you more likely to understand the American political system and therefore be willing and able to participate in it.

Looking first at rates of participation holistically, we see that consistently, individuals from more democratized countries had higher rates of discussing politics in the United States. Again, these countries include India, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. Additional graphs can be found in Appendix II, which provides more detail about the *National Asian American Survey.* Specifically, Figure 4.1a shows rates immigrant groups discuss politics; the most frequent respondents were from Japan, Korea, and India respectively. What I wish to point out here is that though this finding is consistent with my initial hypothesis – individuals from more democratized nations will have higher rates of political participation compared to individuals from less democratized regions – this first graph displays a low investment mode of participation. Discussing politics requires a relatively low amount of effort on an individual's part, and therefore should not be evaluated in isolation.

This is similar to the findings in Figure 4.1b, which show those individuals from more democratized regions are less likely to think politics in the United States is too complicated to understand. Again, consistent with my hypothesis, this figure suggests that individuals who have been exposed to democratic governments and thus have experienced much of their political socialization in such a setting are more likely to feel they can understand a similar system in a different country. This finding suggests that a lack of participation amongst immigrants from less democratized regions could be a result both of political skepticism but also because of a lack of familiarity with democracy that ultimately supports the Theory of Transferability. It is this unfamiliarity with democracy that manifests itself in a lack of engagement with the U.S. political system. From the qualitative analysis we learned that Indians largely felt comfortable

with, and knowledgeable about the American political system because of the emphasis placed on it during their grade school years. I include this here as a way of saying that perhaps Indians are more understanding of democracy because not only were they exposed to it, but they also learned about the American system specifically. This finding largely speaks to issues of education and exposure as they impact political awareness. Here we see that daily exposure to a democratic system makes one more likely to participate. Until moving to the United States, many of the Indians sampled in my interviews affirmed that they had an idealistic view of the American political system and thus were invested in participating once they migrated.[17] As was suggested by the Chinese interview data, Chinese disengagement here is fueled by both a comfort with one's current economic situation and non-participatory political upbringing. Growing up in a system in which political participation was not only rare, but also frowned upon – this mentality of separation and non-interaction with the government does not change once one moves to the United States, again confirming the Theory of Transferability.

Following this initial phase of analysis, which looked holistically at rates of participation amongst the six target countries, stage two involved controlling for education, length of residence in the United States, and income. As has been previously explained, these factors are often viewed indicators of high socioeconomic status and therefore lead to an increase in political participation. Here, I evaluate the impact of

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[17] Much of the qualitative information gained from the Indian immigrant sample had to do with what was taught of the American system both in and outside of school. Acknowledging this, I note that one's view of the American system can largely be influenced by their native country's relationship to the United States. Immigrants hailing from countries with poor diplomatic relations to America are therefore perhaps more likely to have a negative image of American politics. Unfortunately, analyzing perceptions of American politics is beyond the scope of this study.

attending college in the United States on one's willingness to participate in the American political system. Additionally, I look at how income impacts participation. According to leading political theory, higher income leads to greater participation (Williams 1983, p. 2), so for the purposes of this study I investigated whether this was true when also considering the level of democratization of the country. Additionally, by looking at length of residence, I was able to see if a longer assimilation period leads to increased participation or not. By using these three factors as controls, I was able to evaluate whether native corruption has an impact and if that impact is consistent across these mitigating factors.

Figure 4.2 shows the influence of attending college on political interest amongst Indian and Chinese immigrants. Figures 4.3a and 4.3b compare trust in, and understanding of government amongst Indian and Chinese immigrants. For this question, respondents were asked to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the statement "We can trust our government in Washington to do what is right." Here we see not only the influence of college, but a consistency with regime type and institutional trust. In the following series of graphs, the x-axis includes the country and education category while the y-axis references the percentage of individuals who responded affirmatively. In creating the categories "college" and "no college," for simplicity sake, the grouping "college" refers to anyone with a college education. This includes all forms of undergraduate and graduate school.

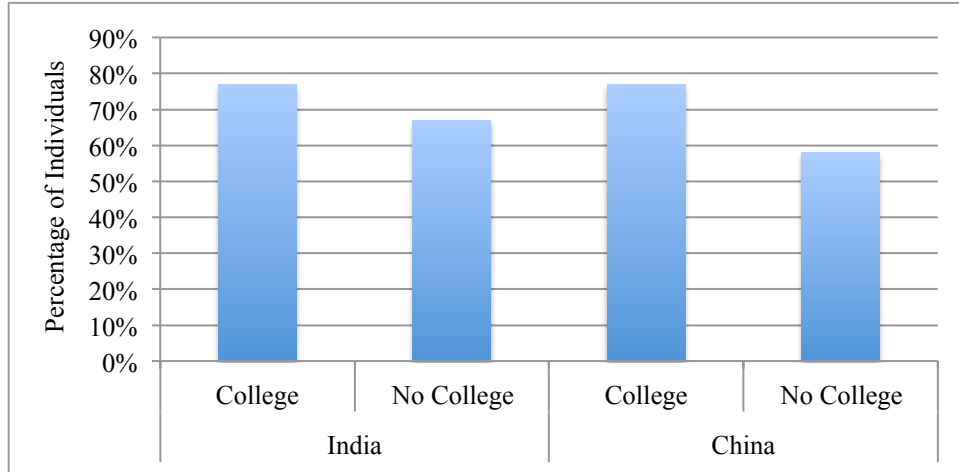Figure 4.2[18]: Influence of Attending College On Rates of Discussing Politics



Figures 4.2 shows consistent findings in regards to the impact of college on

individual political sentiments. For both countries we see that attending college makes

one more likely to discuss politics.

What becomes noteworthy is that compared to the initial graphs that did not

account for education as a confounding factor, in Figures 4.2 both Indian and Chinese

immigrants have similar rates of participation if they have attended college. This

confirms the leading theory that higher levels of education lead to higher levels of

political participation (Diaz 142). Here I seek to resolve the tension between increased

participation and decreased levels of institutional trust. Though reasons for this cannot

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[18] The X-axis of this graph introduces the wide range of survey questions evaluated for this project. Additional graphs incorporating these survey questions can be found in Appendix II. *talkpol* is used to summarize the question "In the last 12 months, have you discussed politics with family and friends?" *workcandidateorg* analyzes whether or not respondents have ever worked for a campaign or particular candidate organization. *beencontacted* refers to the question "In the past 12 months, has a political party or candidate contacted you about a campaign?" *useinternet* looks at whether or not respondents use the internet to talk about politics. This is an important question to ask as it can show both level and method of engagement. *trustDC* is included to summarize responses to the statement "We can trust our government in Washington to do what is right." And lastly, *DCcares* refers to the survey question "Public officials and politicians care what people like me think." The entire codebook for *NAAS* can be found in *ICPSR*.

fully be explored in this project, I suggest that receiving a college education makes clear to immigrants the specific barriers they face and their profound lack of representation. Thus, Asian immigrants specifically are less likely to feel compelled to participate. As one interviewee stated, "America has lived up to some of the hype opportunity wise, but otherwise it's kind of a let down. The people who did move here and wanted to embrace politics are now apathetic because they don't feel represented." Other conversations held with Chinese immigrants point not to frustration with the government, but more so to a sense of comfort in one's current situation that tends to breed political disengagement. Based on my research, this sentiment is felt largely throughout the Asian immigrant community. Thus, I affirm that high education levels and exposure to the American political system does not trump the lack of representation and political impetus Asian immigrant's feel. The preceding figures are consistent with the theory that education for immigrants largely contributes to frustration and therefore apathy.

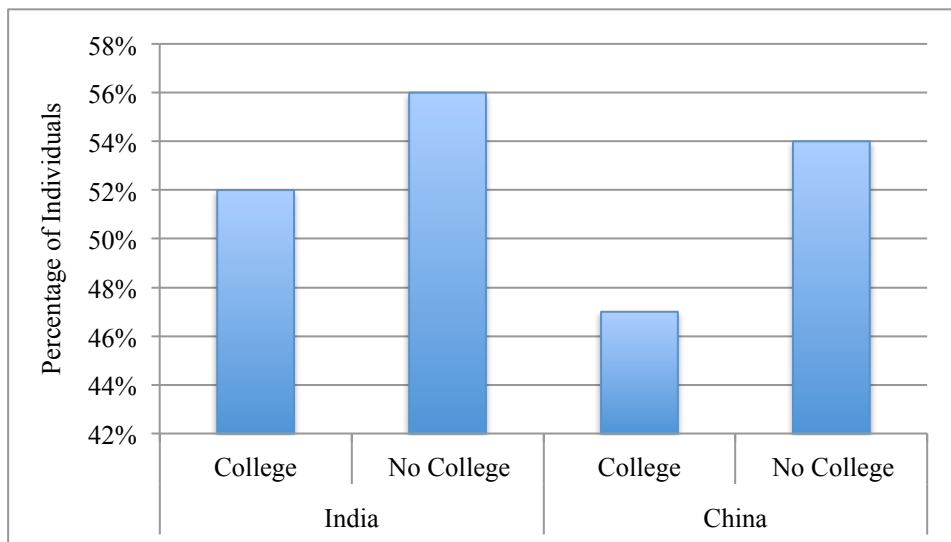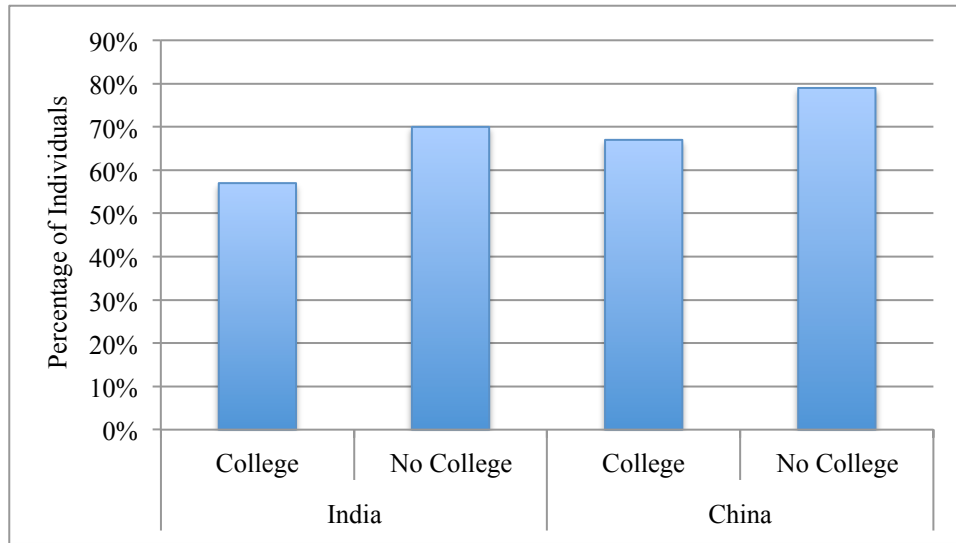Figure 4.3a: Influence of College on Institutional Trust

Figure 4.3b: Influence of College on Institutional Understanding



Figures 4.3a and 4.3b show that among the countries that fell on either extreme of the democratization ranking, attending college makes one less likely to trust the government to do what is right, and also less likely to think politics is too complicated to understand. This is an interesting finding as one may assume that attending college would make individuals more attuned to politics and therefore more likely to understand its intricacies and trust its capabilities. But here we see the exact opposite to be true.

Through this we gain a clearer understanding of the differences between Indian and Chinese immigrants. Though receiving a college education does make one less likely to trust the government, we still see consistency that those from a more democratized nation (India) are less likely to find the American system complicated.

Figures 4.4a and 4.4b depict length of residence and its impact on discussing politics and donating to a political organization. Using these graphs we are able to see if a longer assimilation process affects one's willingness to participate in politics in both easy

and more demanding ways. In both figures, the x-axis shows both country and response
to the survey question.

Figure 4.4a: How Does Length of Residence Influence Rates of Political Discussion?
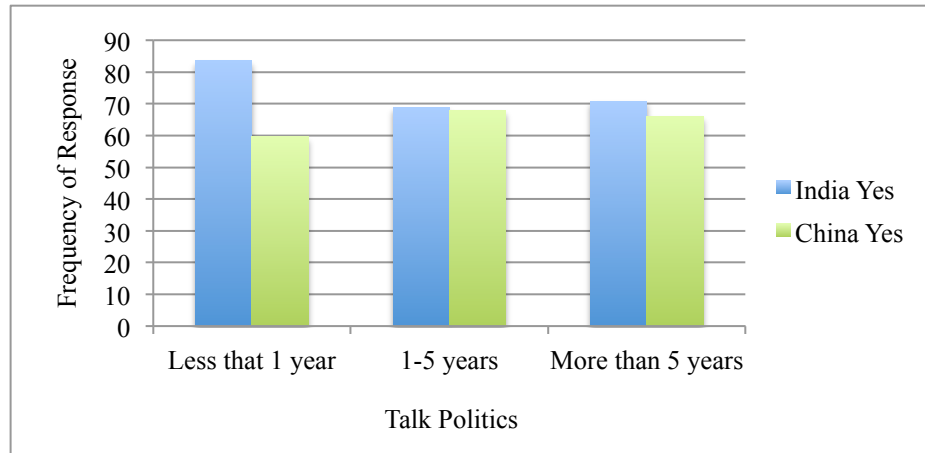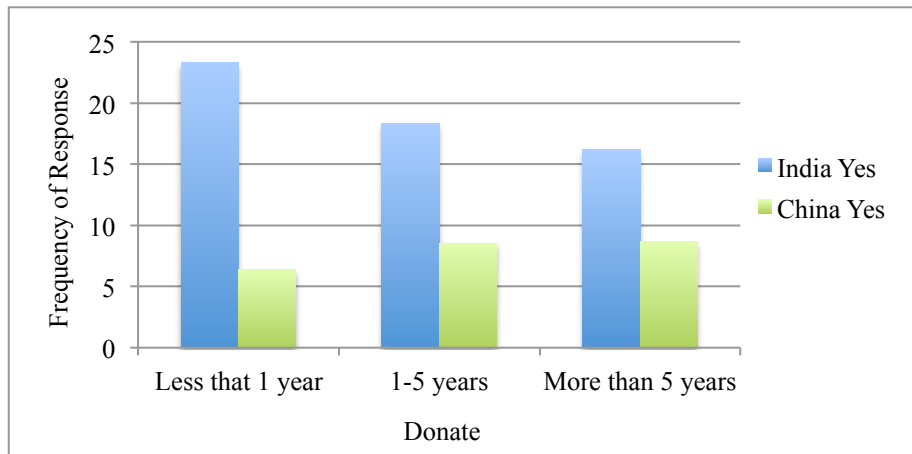


Figure 4.4b: How Does Length of Residence Influence Rates of Political Donations?



According to the aforementioned findings that suggest Asian immigrants largely
feel shut out of the American political process; I would assume that length of residence
might lead to lower rates of participation. Looking at Figure 4.4a we see that for Indian
immigrants, increased length of residence leads to a lower likelihood individuals will talk
about politics. Specifically, amongst Indian respondents, 83.56% of those who had been
in the United States for less than one year indicated that they talk about politics,

compared to the 70.87% of those who had been here for more that five years that indicated they talk about politics. Contrarily, in China, which is here identified as not democratized, we see that living in the United States for a longer period of time has a positive impact on political interest and engagement. Looking at China, 59.57% of respondents who had been in the United States for less than a year answered affirmatively that they discuss politics while 67.91% of those who have been in the country for 1-5 years answered affirmatively. Though not depicted here, similar trends can be seen in Vietnam as well. Based on these findings we see that though generally immigrants from more democratized regions are more likely to discuss politics, these rates are influenced by length of residence. Consistent with the previous assertion that Asian immigrants largely feel unrepresented in the American political system, those immigrants who came to the United States familiar with and excited about the democratic process are more likely to be deterred from participation with increased residence. We can extrapolate the trends in China and Vietnam to say that for those unfamiliar with democracy, increase exposure via longer presence in the United States makes them more likely to participate over time.

So far we have looked at rates of participation when compared to education levels and length of residence. The final factor evaluated here was income to see if higher levels of income lead to increased participation. Again, leading theory on political participation would suggest the higher one's income, the more likely they are to participate for a variety of reasons. These reasons include having more resources to spare, being in higher paying, more flexible jobs, being more invested in political outcomes due to the nature of said high paying job, etc. (Williams 1983, p. 2). The subsequent figures

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have been broken down to look separately at income brackets as they affect participation in India and China. Though the trend is slight, in Figure 4.5 we see an increase in rates of political discussion as income increases.

Figure 4.5: Does Income Impact Whether Asian Immigrants Talk About Politics?
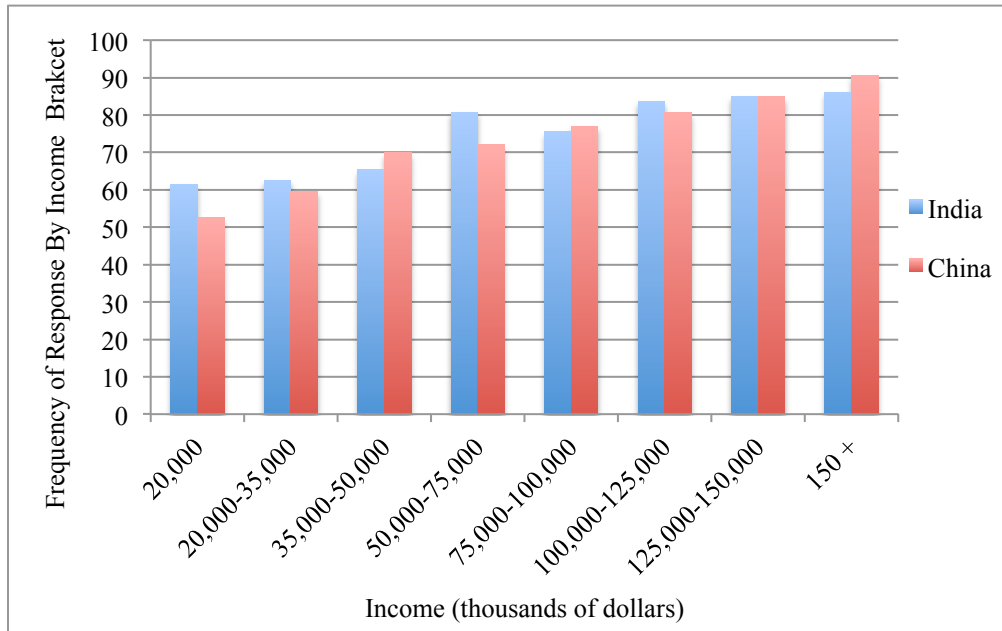


With few exceptions, the trend shown in Figure 4.5 is that the higher one's income, the more likely they are to discuss politics. This trend speaks to the understanding that for many lower income individuals and families, participating in the political process may not be a priority.

Figures 4.6a-4.6c show income versus various measures of institutional trust and understanding. The question asked in Figure 4.6a was the same as that of Figure 4.3a. Figure 4.6b refers to the survey question asking respondents to indicate whether they agree or disagree with the statement "Public officials and politicians care what people like me think." These graphs are limited to India and China as target countries for this study. In figure these figures, the x-axis shows income while the y-axis specifies the

relevant survey question. From Figure 4.6a we see that as income increases, trust in Washington DC politicians converges. Similarly, in Figure 4.6b we see a similar trend. This suggests that income impacts the way one feels about the government and how faithful an individual is in Washington's ability to look out for their best interest. As depicted from graphs not shown here, we see that in every nation, those in the highest income bracket ($150,000+) were most likely to indicate that they talk about politics while those in the lowest income bracket ($20,000 and below) were most likely to indicate that they do not talk about politics.

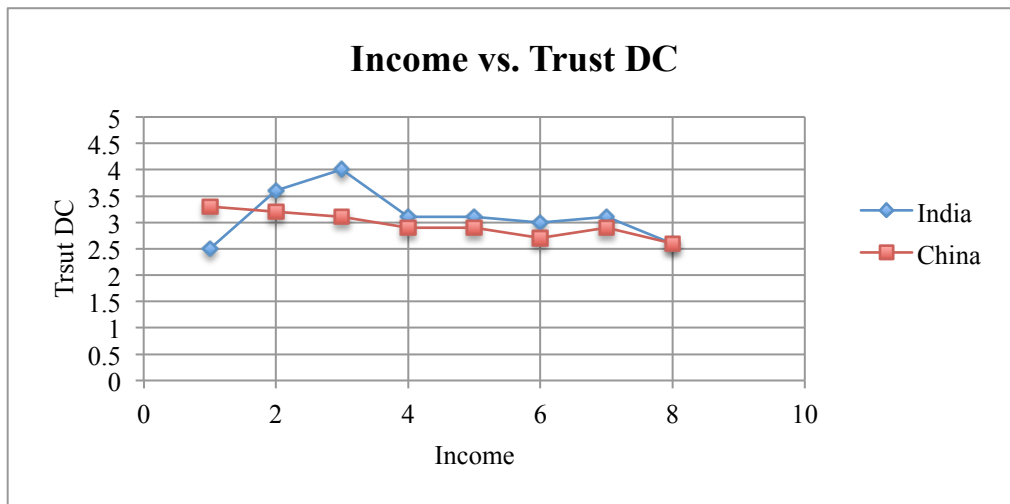Figure 4.6a: Does Income Impact Trust in Washington D.C.?



Figure 4.6b: Does Income Impact Whether or Not D.C. Politicians Care?
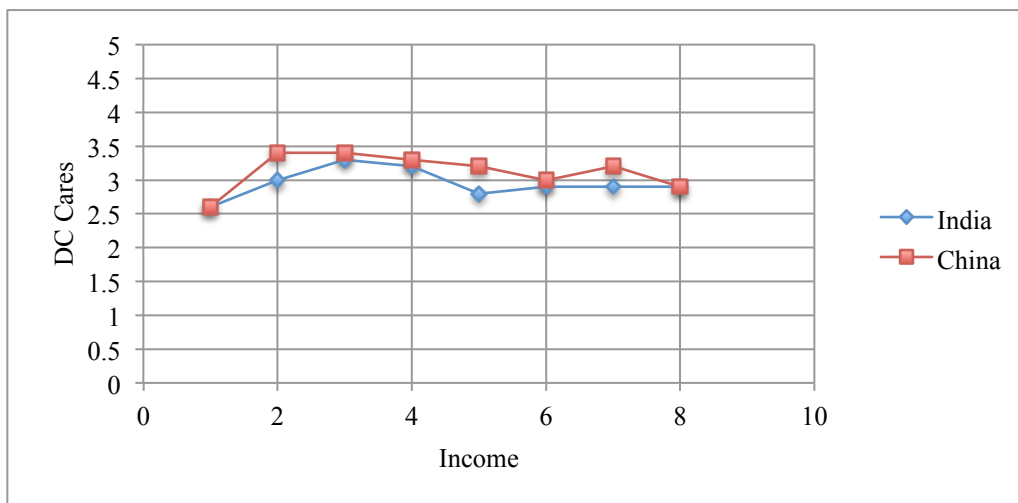
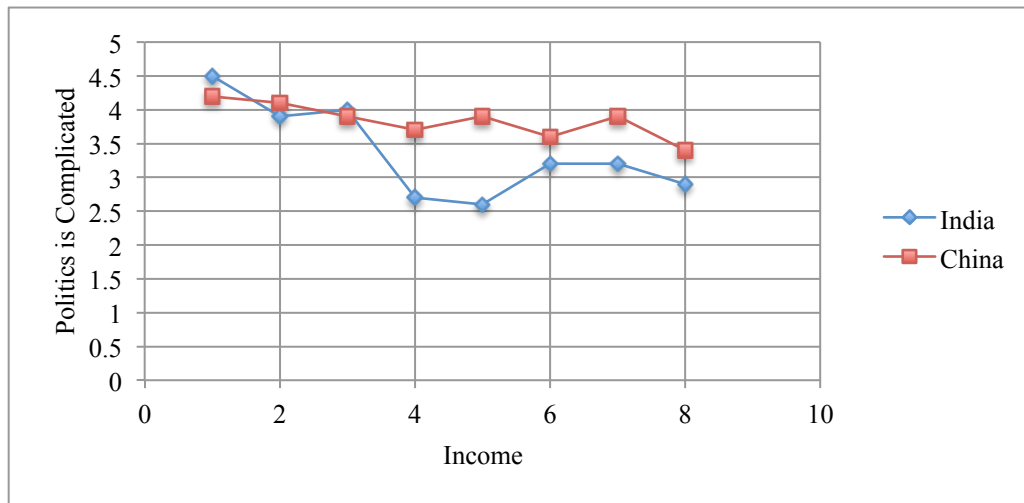Figure 4.6c: Does Income Impact Whether or Note Politics is Viewed as Complicated?



Figure 4.6c shows that even within the highest income bracket ($150,000+), those individuals from China are more likely to think politics is too complicated to understand. Another interesting finding from this graph is that at the lowest income bracket ($20,000 and below), Indians were more likely to think politics is too complicated to understand. This is odd considering India is listed as a democratized country within the six target states in this project. One potential explanation for this is that high levels of poverty and illiteracy in India contribute to a lack of education about government. According to the World Bank Development Indicator, India has the highest poverty rate amongst the six relevant nations.

Using these findings to look at levels of institutional trust, expanded versions of Figures 4.6a and 4.6b, which include all six countries, show that there does not seem to be a trend. Therefore, regardless of income, individuals will still hold similar views of Washington D.C. politics no matter what country the came from. Thus, here one could not make the argument that the reason individuals from more democratic nations

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participate more is because they are the wealthiest, or most educated when in fact –

similar views hold across all income levels. So in trying to disassociate regime type from

levels of political participation, one could not cite income as a factor. Also important to

note here is that across the various income levels, there is not much variation in levels of

institutional trust and understanding – thus we see that income has little to no effect on

these variables. In returning to my original hypothesis that individuals coming from less

democratized nations are less likely to participate, we see that the aforementioned

variables education, length of residence, and income may have individual effects but

overall do not affect the general trend.

Before turning to the final set of data analysis, I would first like to expand upon

the information presented thus far. The original thesis presented in this project intended

to look at how political socialization impacts one's political efficacy. Admittedly this is a

broad topic and the nuances of this project present many limitations, but for the purposes

of my research the goal was to see if relationships existed between level of democracy

and political participation post migration. Through this research I have demonstrated that

even when controlling for factors most scholars point to as reasons for participation, there

is still a consistent trend showing that individuals from more democratized nations are

more likely to participate.

The qualitative results portion of my study presented many findings, some more

predictable than others. Notions of participation being difficult for immigrants and/or not

a priority were articulated. There were clear divides between issues that concerned

womyn versus what motivated men to participate. And of course, there were many

discussions about growing up in their respective countries and the impact that had on

one's interest in and understanding of the political process. But, the most significant part of the interviews with Indian immigrants came when respondents were asked about how their views of the American political system have changed since moving to the United States. It was through these responses that interviewees were able to express personal sentiments about the exclusion many have felt from the political system. As one respondent articulated, "We are citizens of this country, and we should be able to engage without discrimination based on our country of origin." She continued on to say, "For my children, who are children of immigrants, it is a given fact that they will be recognized by their features." She cites this as a way of saying that regardless of citizenship or not, the stereotypes projected onto people affect individual willingness to participate. From issues of representation, to language and naturalization barriers, what become strikingly clear is that our political system is not representative of all populations.

The story of one individual becomes important here as it perfectly summarizes the sentiments felt by many of the people in my sample. In asking about his upbringing and the ways in which that influenced his interest in politics today, the interviewee explained that he had grown up in a family that was very politically engaged. His family owned one of India's leading national newspapers and thus his childhood revolved around the stories and events the paper reported. And it was through this media driven lens that he developed an understanding of and appreciation for the American political system. To him it was an idealized democracy in which individual voices mattered and could create lasting change. But after living in the United States for over twenty years, this view has largely shifted. When asked about his experience in America he said, "politics has put me on the defensive, today I vote for whichever party is going to harm me the least." He

continued on to discuss the false hope he has felt in terms of immigration reform and greater minority representation in Congress. Our one-hour conversation ended with him saying, "If you are Asian American, no one gives a damn."

In analyzing the results of the Chinese immigrant interviews it becomes clear that the sentiments expressed by these individuals were not a result of dissatisfaction with the American system, but rather centered around their own political socialization and the impacts of institutional discrimination in the United States. I asked each interview to speak to the stereotype that exists in the United States framing the Chinese people as repressed and what came of these answers becomes significant for this project. Firstly, the "oppression" inflicted by the Chinese government onto its people was largely unfounded, as most respondents articulated that their relationship to the central government was minimal. Thus, their day-to-day lives are and were not colored by sentiments of a repressive regime. But what is important to note is that this same "non-repressive" government also fosters a sense of individualism and disengagement. Rather than having large social and political issues at the forefront of one's mind, the societal understanding was much more insular and did not require large-scale participation. I expand on these findings to assert that the lack of participation seen by Chinese immigrants is largely because of a political upbringing that did not breed an impetus for participation.

Additionally, it is important to note the large, institutional differences between the experiences of the Chinese immigrant versus the Indian immigrant. Because of the longstanding Chinese Exclusion Act, many individuals have grown deeper into their own cultural communities and thus have not found success or necessity in engaging with the

American political system. As one individual put it, "[our] political system itself is not fair, it was not meant to be. The influences of interest groups can be seen everywhere, but [sadly], once rules are in place, society follows them." This speaks largely to the sentiment felt by many immigrant groups within the America's political system – that institutional oversights and exclusionary practices have become the norm, whether morally acceptable or not.

I incorporate these stories not as a way of painting all Asian immigrants with a broad brush, but rather to say that the immigrant experience is wrought with baggage acquired in one's native country and the American system is largely failing to mitigate these difficulties.

Lastly we turn to Figure 4.7, which uses data taken from the *Collaborative Multi-Racial Post-Election Survey* to show the rates of participation amongst the two largest immigrant groups in the United States. Here we see that Asians consistently participate less than Latin@s with the exception of making political donations. The information gathered from this survey was used to broadly compare rate of participation amongst large racial groups in the United States. Again, here I acknowledge the oversimplification of these racial groups for the purpose of this survey.

Figure 4.7: Rates of Participation Amongst Racial Groups in the United States
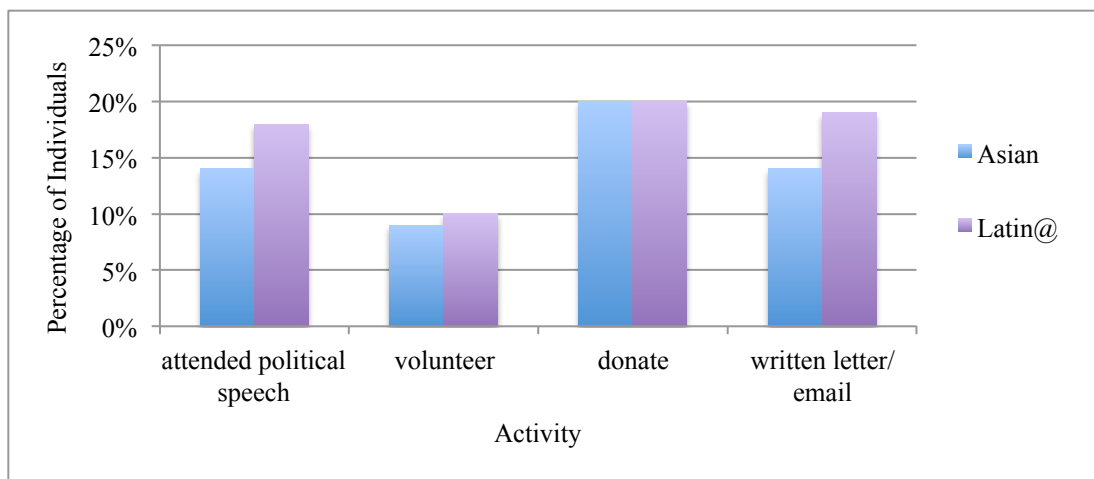
# Chapter 5: Limitations

Throughout this project I have referred to ways in which my research has been limited due to resource constraints and academic ambiguity. In this section I will expand upon these limitations as well as discuss possibilities for future research.

## *Possible Errors*

The entirety of the quantitative analysis was completed using a statistical analysis program called *STATA*. It was using this software that I was able to run simple calculations showing the relationships between specific variables of interest. One potential shortcoming of this mathematical analysis was the varying sample sizes and therefore statistical significance of certain results. The *National Asian American Survey* included 26 options for respondents to select in regards to race and ethnicity, and because of this wide variety the sample size in each category differs greatly. The six groups used in this study had the largest number of respondents with the highest being 968 Chinese respondents and the lowest being 409 Japanese respondents. This survey includes oversamples of the six target populations, but when these individual groups are broken down by education, length of residence, or income, each category becomes much smaller. Thus, in some cases certain variables were comparing small sub-portions of each population.

In regards to the qualitative work that was done, admittedly there is always room for error when asking human subjects to discuss personal experiences. According to a discussion from the University of California at Davis, "Although no research method is absolutely free of interpretation, the interview is more open to bias than most other

research methods. There is the problem of social desirability - giving the most socially-

acceptable response to a question, or saying what the researcher wants to hear"

(Interviews: Strengths & Limitations). Considering the type of questions included in the

interview process and the societal pressures around political participation and voting,

undoubtedly some of the information obtained was partially untrue. Additionally,

knowing the purpose of the research project, individuals may have felt compelled to

portray their native country in either a specifically positive or specifically negative light.

This desire to push against immigrant stereotypes may have impacted the verity of

responses.

*Measuring Corruption*

As has been mentioned in both the literature review and research design sections,

measuring corruption is a difficult task for scholars. Because indicators of corruption are

largely based on individual perceptions, there is not only large room for bias, but also

these measures often fail to acknowledge context and various academic definitions of

corruption. Depending on the country one is socialized in, their views of and knowledge

about corruption may lead to largely different conclusions. I include this as a potential

error to demonstrate that although the *Freedom House Freedom in the World Index* is

widely used by academics, the potential for contextual omissions in these indices is large.

Particularly looking at my target countries of India and China, we see that because of the

large structural differences between their regimes, the ways in which individuals from

each country discuss and understand corruption and democracy can be starkly different.

These differences are evidenced through the personal experiences relayed during the

interview process.

*Further Research*

The research conducted for this project was comprehensive and mirrored the work of many other political science scholars. Here, my goal was to determine the existence of a relationship between rates of political participation and the level of democracy in an individual's native country. In completing this research I am left with many areas for further consideration and additional study. In this section I will present ideas for future research to be completed with additional time and funding.

Firstly, the quantitative analysis done here was primarily done using the *National Asian American Survey*, which asked questions about political participation and institutional trust. To refine this research project even more, I would suggest the creation of an original survey targeting more specific aspects of the immigrant experience. Here, survey questions would include topics relating to pre-migration experiences, family structure and interest in politics, political party affiliations, and community organizing which I define as "non-voting campaign related activity." These questions are similar to the ones asked during my interview process and are important as they indicate methods and rates of political socialization before moving to the United States. Additionally, the focus on community organizing becomes vital, as it will allow scholars to understand how and why the immigrant community participates in politics beyond voting. The inspiration for this project came from personal experience working on a grassroots campaign, and thus learning more about how and why immigrants are involved in such work is highly relevant. This survey would also include more specific questions than *NAAS* about institutional trust and understanding. A general theme throughout the qualitative research was that the immigrant community feels largely shut out of the

American political system, thus I would recommend a series of questions in the survey speaking to this concern.

Secondly, I would suggest a more in depth study of perceptions of democracy in one's native country. For the purposes of this project, corruption and democratization were analyzed using the *Freedom House Freedom in the World Index* as well as individual interview responses. In strengthening this measure, I would create an original index much like the research done by Sergio Wals, focusing specifically on perceptions of democratization both within one's native country and in the United States.

Thirdly, as has been demonstrated by previous scholars, qualitative data is vital to such projects. Thus, future research should include in-person interviews, but should be conducted with a larger sample both in the United States and abroad. Speaking with immigrants in the United States will provide insights about current experiences and immigrant specific barriers, but engaging with individuals living in specific Asian countries will allow researchers to better understand outsider views of American politics.

Finally, though case studies were not included in this methodology, it may be beneficial to include research around an upcoming national election. While surveys can ask questions about campaign involvement, on the ground research in this case may be more valuable. Here I suggest allowing a researcher to follow a campaign through the creation and execution of its grassroots movement. By immersing oneself in this aspect of a political campaign, insights can be gained as to what such organizations look like, how if at all, outreach to Asian immigrant communities is conducted, and whether or not Asian immigrants are present during campaign activities.

Understanding in more depth these aspects of immigrant participation can largely inform the study of political science to be more inclusive and representative of the American electorate.

# Chapter 6: Conclusion

Immigrant political participation is a subject that has long been studied by scholars of political science as a way of understanding political engagement and creating a political system that is easily accessible to and inclusive of the entire population. Throughout this body of research, little attention has been paid to the type of regime from which immigrant communities come and the impact this has on political skepticism and trust. In this section I will present policy recommendations, conclusions, as well as final discussions about my research.

*Policy Recommendation*

As has been established throughout this research project, the American political system leaves much to be desired for its Asian immigrant community. We know that the longer such immigrants live in the United States, the less likely they are to have faith in the political system. Additionally, we know that individuals hailing from less democratized regimes, who thus have less familiarity and comfort with democracy, are less likely to participate once they move to the United States. We also know that the lack of participation seen by Asian immigrants is not due to low levels of education or income, but rather stems apathy and systematic exclusion from the political system.

Based on these findings, firstly I suggest more direct measures to include Asian immigrants in the political process such as additional language options in political paraphernalia i.e. voter registration forms, voting ballots, candidate guides, and television ads. By expanding the available language options, this sends a message to the American public and Asian immigrants specifically that these identities are recognized and are

important to the fabric of American society. Excluding individuals from the political process based on language barriers is in direct opposition to a truly democratic and inclusive system.

Secondly, I suggest a more theoretical and large-scale change, which requires shifting the dialogue around immigration in the United States. As it currently stands, rhetoric in America around immigration and immigration reform largely focuses on individuals from the countries of Latin America, thus Asian immigrants become irrelevant to leading discussions. But the reality is, according to the Migration Policy Institute as of 2012, 25% of immigrants in the United States are of Asian descent (Gibson). Therefore, for current policy discussions on immigration to exclude this population is unacceptable. As was a theme throughout the interviews, Asians are largely omitted from conversations about immigration and rather are only discussed in terms of their professional work in niche fields. This erasure from important and relevant conversations about the immigrant experience ultimately has a negative impact on political efficacy amongst Asian immigrant groups. To this effect, the feelings many Asian immigrants feel toward the political system is not unfounded, but rather is grounded in the psychological impacts of current debates and historical institutional discrimination. Thus, to point solely to tangible barriers such as language and naturalization when discussing participation would be inadequate. The findings in this project work to emphasize the importance of political socialization in the study of participation.

Lastly, in order for the American political system to be truly inclusive, it must also be representative of its population. As was mentioned in the introductory chapter of

this project, 13 of the 541 members of Congress are of Asian Pacific Islander descent, approximately 2.4%. These numbers are obviously not representative of the percentage of Asian Pacific Islanders present in the United States, which according to the 2010 census was 17.3 million – approximately 5.6% of the total population. And thus, for these individuals living in America is not an empowering and inclusive experience. Rather, as many interview subjects mentioned – they feel excluded from and unrepresented in the political process. Here, my recommendations for increased language options, shifting the immigration dialogue, and creating systems and spaces for a more inclusive elected body serve not as a panacea for the difficulties Asian immigrants in the United States face, but rather as a way of addressing the specific nuances of the Asian immigrant experience.

## *Conclusions*

The research done for this project sought to shed light on the impact of one's political socialization on rates of participation post migration. My findings are largely in line with my initial hypothesis that decreased levels of democratization and higher levels of native corruption lead to lower levels of political participation. As was evidenced by both the qualitative and quantitative analysis, individuals from less democratized countries with higher perceptions of corruption were consistently less likely to partake in a range of political activities. Additionally, we learned that though Asian Americans tend to have high socioeconomic status and education levels, mitigating factors such as language barriers, naturalization, historical discrimination, and political socialization influence the way this population interacts with the American political system. Unique to this particular study was the control of income and education levels to isolate political socialization as a contributing factor. Similarly, analysis of the interview data supplements this finding by pointing to cultural norms and expectations that color one's

perception of and interest in American politics. For the Chinese immigrants, the understanding that politics growing up was largely non-participatory helped to cultivate a sense of disengagement in the U.S. For Indian immigrants on the other hand, the participatory system in which they were raised undoubtedly translates to increased participation in the United States, but ultimately is negatively influenced by the profound lack of representation South Asian immigrants feel.

These findings are unique in their focus on one's "pre-migration" experience. A majority of political science scholarship on participation points to post-migration factors as they influence rates of participation. By giving more credence to one's political upbringing in their native country, I was able to point to native corruption and level of democratization as initial influences on an immigrant's political understanding.

### *Final Discussions*

In concluding this project I am left with many thoughts about the study of political science and the usage of scholarship in shaping policy. The purpose of my research was to investigate rates of political participation amongst Asian immigrants and point to influencing factors on the immigrant political experience. By highlighting the importance of one's political socialization, we are able to see that creating a truly inclusive political system requires much more than policy changes, but rather will be the result of both institutional and social shifts.

My initial skepticism and uneasiness with the current state of politics in America is not unchanged, but rather is now colored by the nuances of the immigrant experience. The fact remains that the relationship between Asian immigrants and American politics has much room for improvement, but it is my hope that in the future, this work and other

research of its kind are used in understanding and working towards a more representative

and inclusive system.

# Appendix I

1. How interested are you in what is going in politics in government in the United States at the national level?
2. Where do you think your interest in politics came from? How did you first become engaged with politics?
3. Did you vote in the most recent presidential election?
    a. If yes, why?
    b. If no, why not?
    c. Not citizen
4. Did you vote in the most recent midterm election?
    a. If yes, why?
    b. If no, why not?
    c. Not citizen
5. Did you participate in any form of campaign organizing related to the 2012 presidential elections?
    a. If yes, why?
    b. If no, why not?
6. How much of an impact do you feel your voice has in the political process?
7. At what age did you come to the United States?
8. Before you came to the US, did you feel like you were part of a democratic regime where your voice mattered?
9. Before you came to the United States, did you identify with any political party or political organization, or participate in any other type of political activities?
    a. If yes, what kind and why?
    b. If no, why not?
10. Since moving to the United States, do you feel more or less connected to the US government than you did to the Indian government when you lived in India?
11. Do you feel you can generally trust US government officials more, about the same, or less than government officials in India?
12. Do you believe that engagement in the political process in the United States is a worthwhile effort?
13. Does your spouse participate in any way in the political process in the US?
    a. Do you engage in similar ways?
    b. Do you feel like your participation has in any way had an influence on your spouse's participation?
14. Do your adult children participation in any way in the political process in the US?
15. Do you believe that non-voting forms of campaign activity are important part of American elections? (i.e. donating, canvassing, phonebanking, rallies etc.)

**Political Participation Amongst Asian Indian Immigrants**
**Recruitment Form**

Political participation is one of the most unique and envied aspects of the American political system, yet compared to many other democratic countries – the United States has exceptionally low rates of participation. The purpose of this research project is to evaluate differing rates of political participation amongst Asian immigrants in an effort to understand what factors impact this group's willingness to participate in the political process.

Unique to this research design is its focus on non-voting aspects of political engagement such as door-to-door canvassing, donating to a political campaign, and attending a protest and/or rally. By focusing specifically on these aspects, this research aims to suggest reasons why Asian immigrants, specifically Asian Indians are more or less likely to participate in politically motivated activities. Rate of participation will be evaluated using existing survey data and democratization indices, but in order to further expand on these findings, interviews become vital. Survey data only provides quantitative measures, while interviews will enhance this project to include narrative accounts of an interest or lack thereof in the political process.

Participation in this study will consist of a one time, in-person interview with the principal investigator. During this time, interviewees will be asked questions regarding their own interest in the political system as well as factors that had led to one's political socialization.

Understanding the varying levels of political participation is important for a variety of reasons. Political participation is a key aspect of our democratic society, and therefore it is important all persons feel compelled to contribute. In order for American elections to be truly inclusive and democratic, they must be representative of the entire population and appealing to the masses. Learning what causes specific factors impact Asian Indian immigrants willingness to participate will not only add to the study of political participation and immigrant behavior, but can also contribute to improving our electoral system to be more inclusive.

If you are reading this letter, you have been hand selected for participation in the study. Those individuals who are interested in participation or in learning more should contact the principal investigator, Pavitra Abraham, at [pavitras@umich.edu](mailto:pavitras@umich.edu) or 248-904-5544.

# Appendix II

*Figure 5.1: Percentage of Individuals Holding American Citizenship*
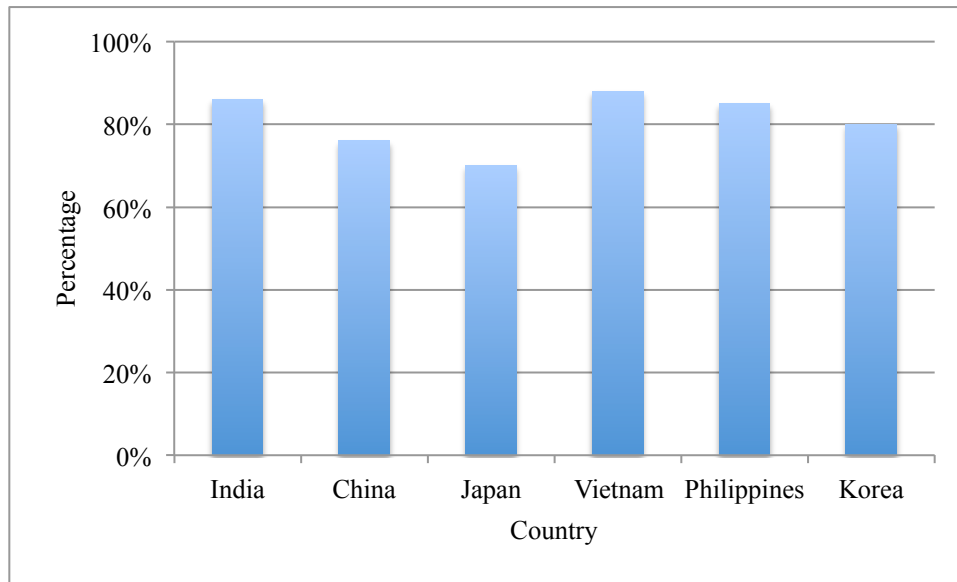


*Figure 5.2: Percentage of Individuals Indicating Trust in Washington D.C. Politicians*
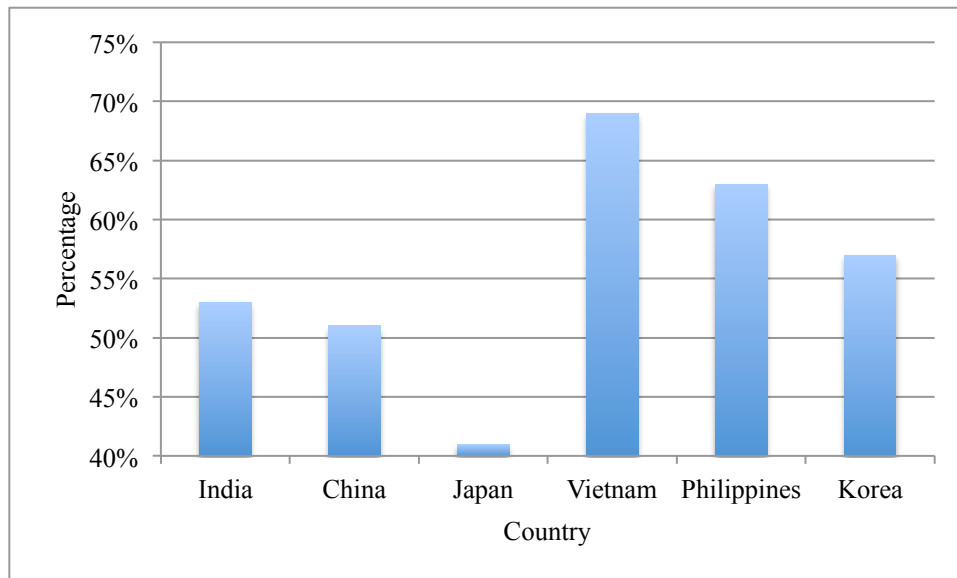
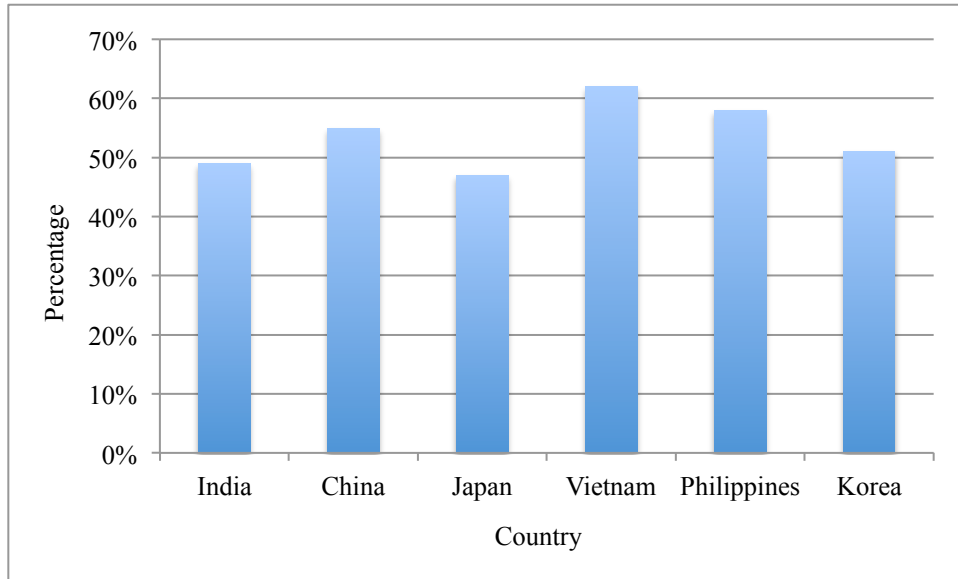*Figure 5.3: Percentage of Individuals Indicating Washington D.C. Politicians Care About Them*



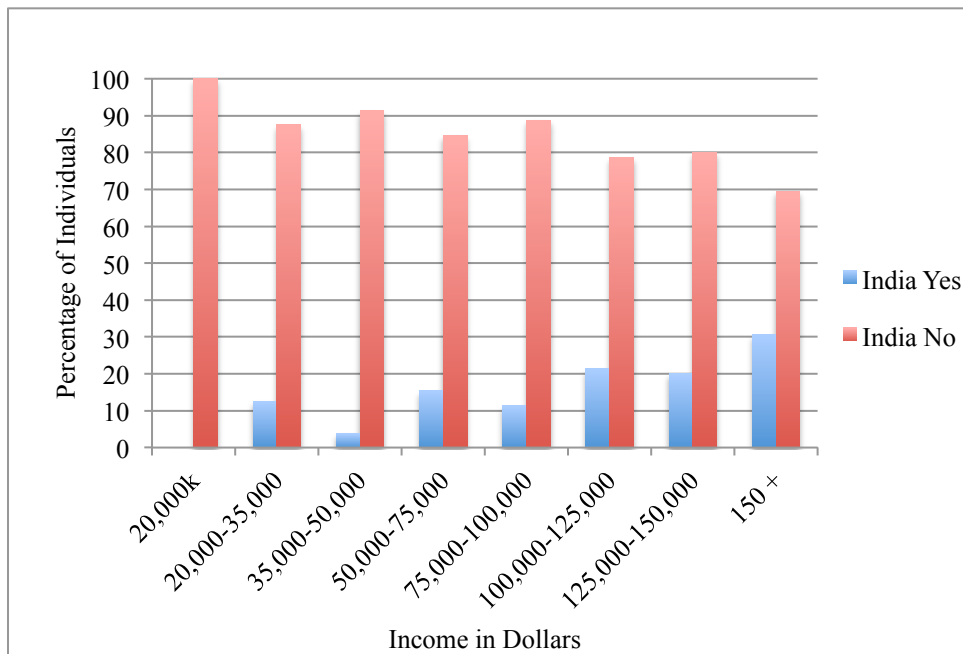*Figure 5.4: Does Income Impact Rates of Political Donations Amongst Indian Immigrants?*
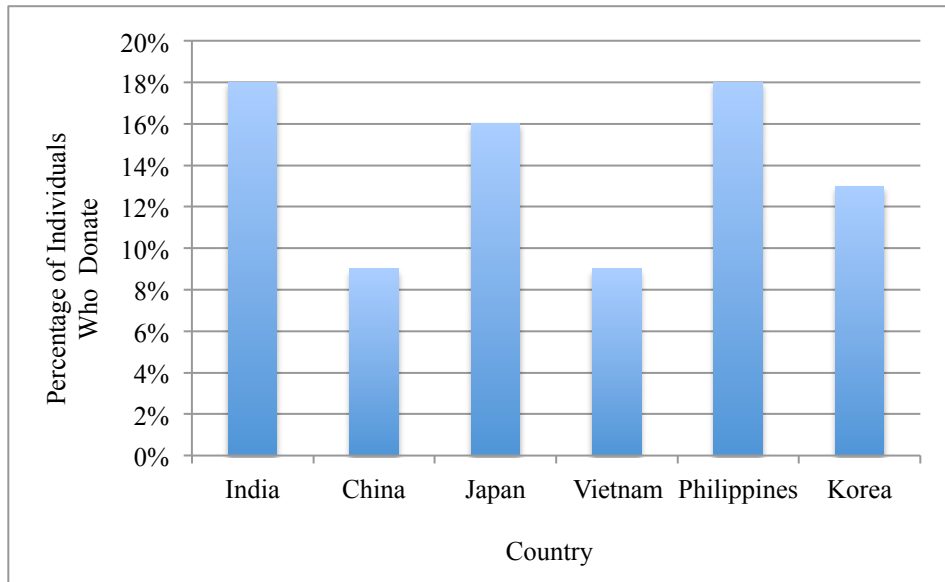
*Figure 5.5: Donations to a Campaign*



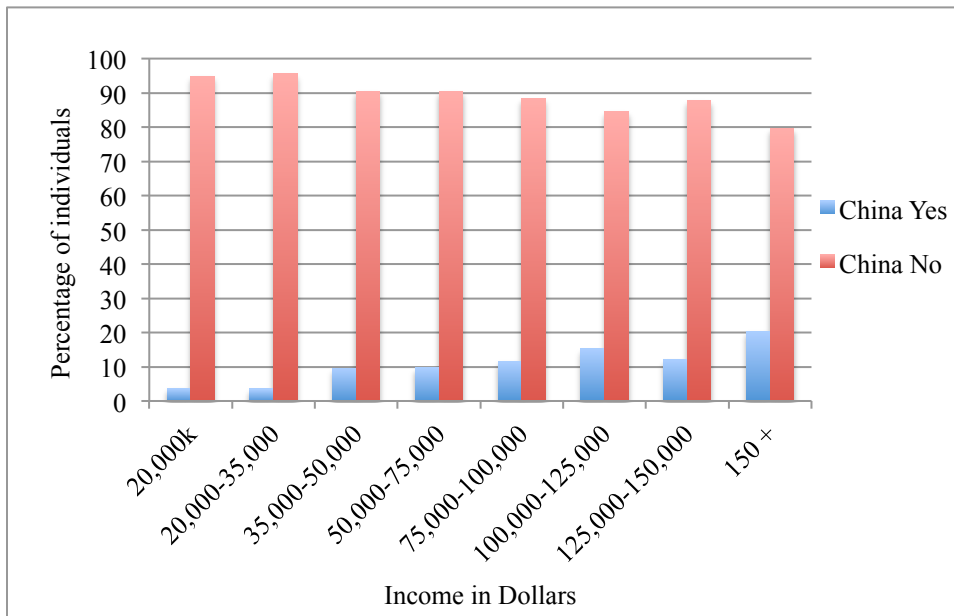*Figure 5.6: Does Income Impact Rates of Political Donations Amongst Chinese Immigrants?*

*Figure 5.7: Influence of College On Political Interest and Participation Amongst Indian Immigrants*
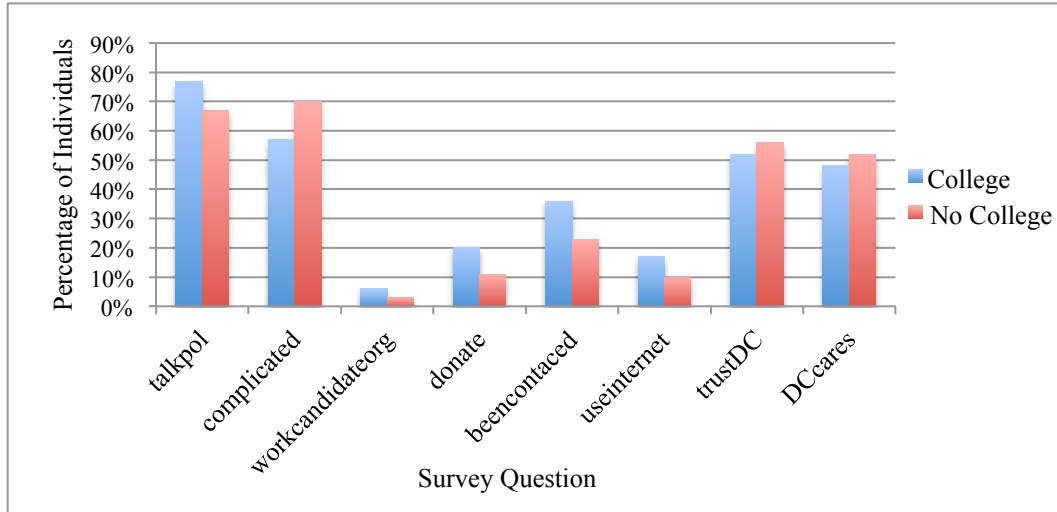


*Figure 5.8: Influence of College On Political Interest and Participation Amongst Chinese Immigrants*
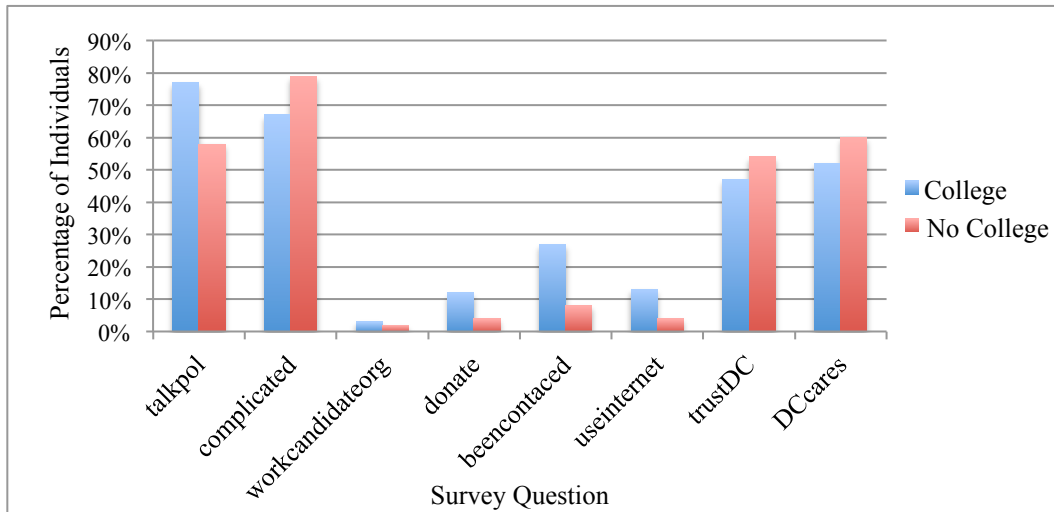
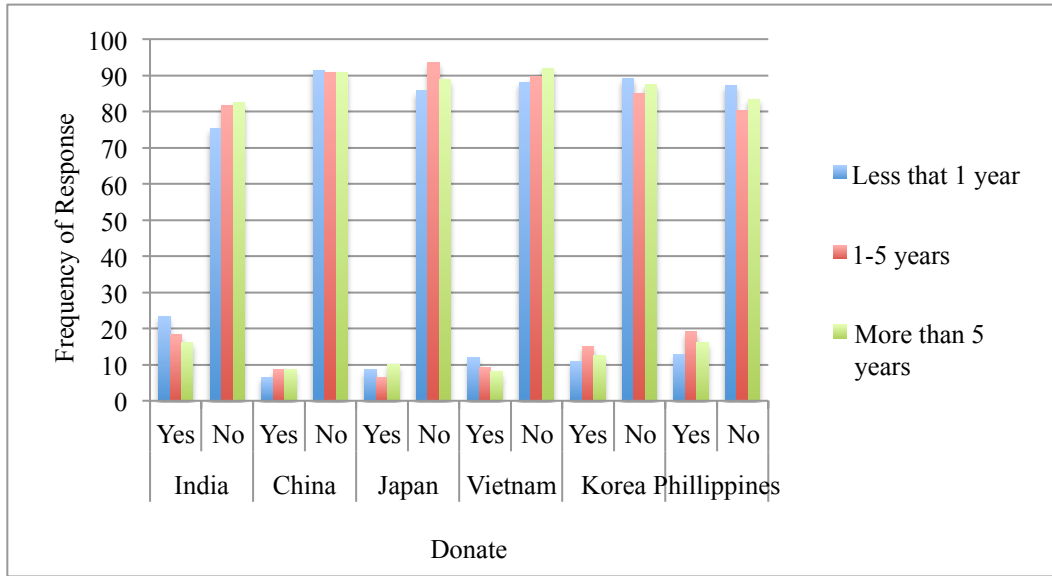*Figure 5.9: Does Length of Residence Impact Rates of Political Donations?*



*Figure 5.10: Does Length of Residence Impact Rates of Political Discussion?*
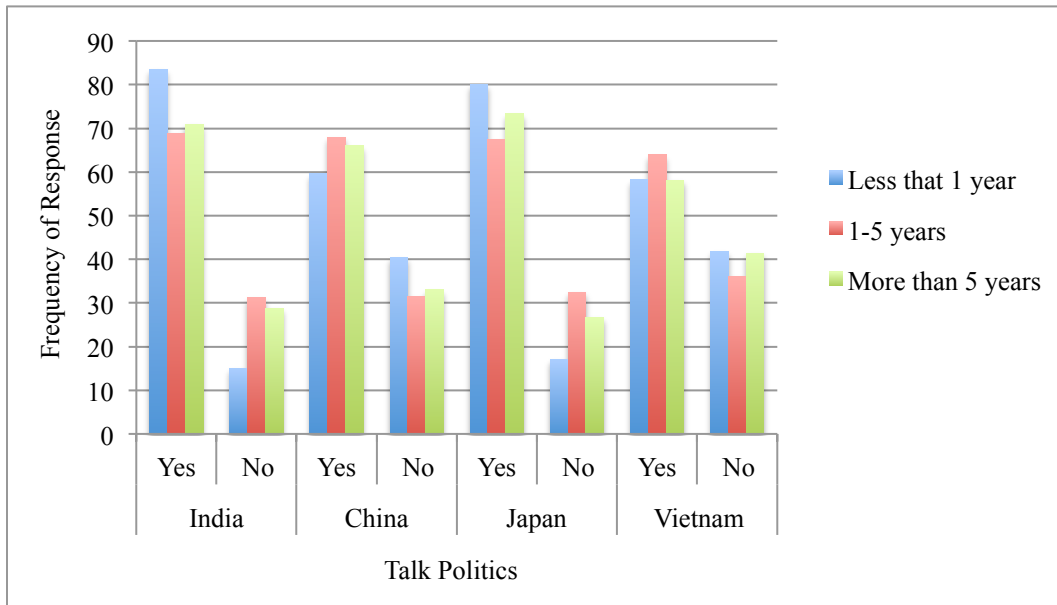
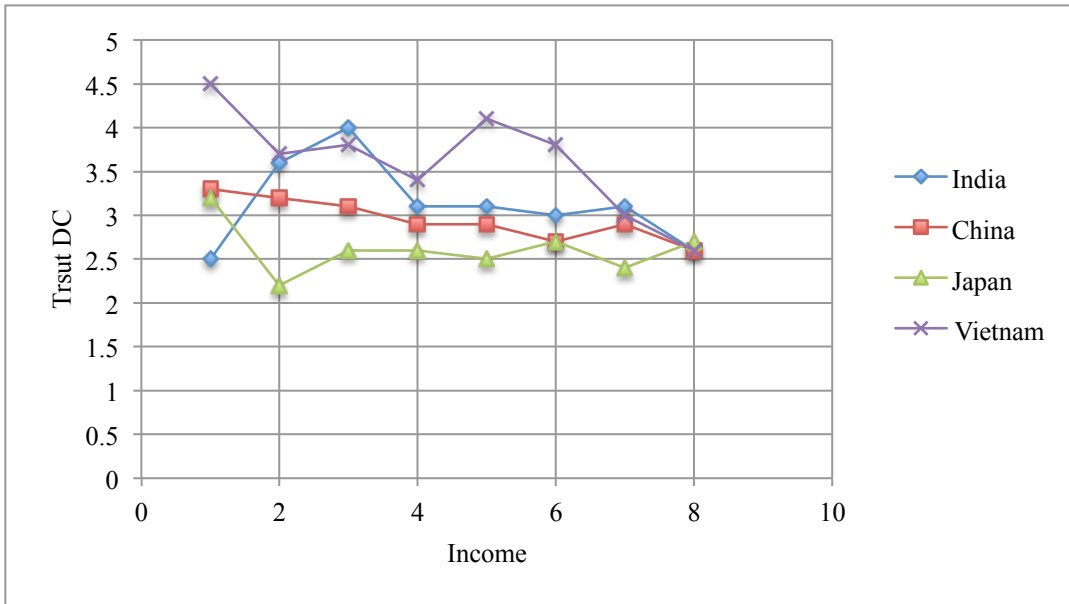*Figure 5.11: Does Income Impact Trust in Washington D.C.?*



*Figure 5.12: Does Income Impact Whether or Not Asian Immigrants Feel D.C. Politicians Care About Them?*
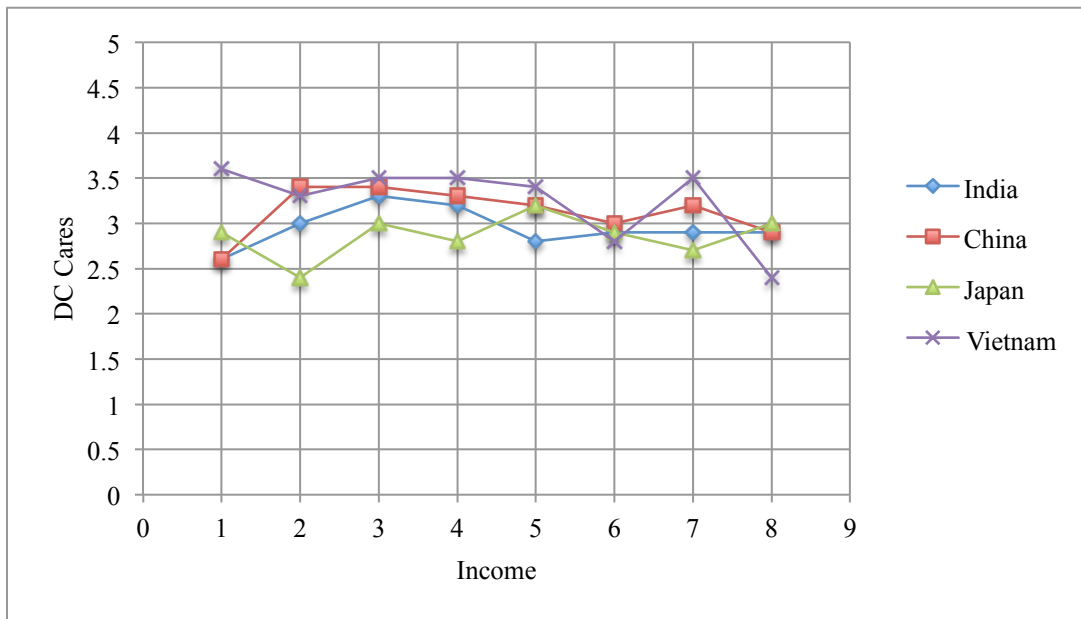
*Figure 5.13: Does Income Impact Political Understanding?*



*Table 5.14: Freedom in the World Rankings*
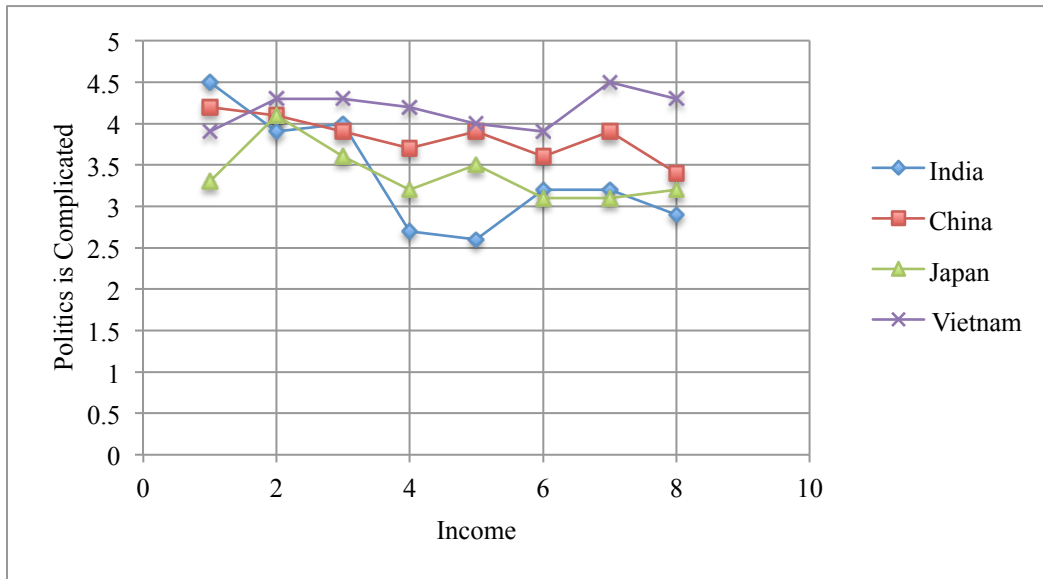
| Country | Ranking |
|---|---|
| **China** | 3.6 |
| **India** | 3.4 |
| **Japan** | 7.3 |
| **Vietnam** | 2.7 |
| **South Korea** | 5.6 |
| **Taiwan** | 5.7 |
| **Pakistan** | 2.5 |
| **Thailand** | 3.5 |
| **Bangladesh** | 2.1 |

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