

Educational Place, Simultaneity, and Civic Participation in Asian America



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Educational attainment is widely assumed to be positively correlated with civic participation in the United States. Yet Asian immigrants represent a civic paradox because they often report low rates of civic participation despite having relatively high educational attainment. This study investigates how educational place mediates civic participation among six Asian immigrant groups in the United States. We use the concept of simultaneity to examine the extent to which foreign and domestic educational environments mediate Asian immigrant proclivities for civic participation. Using survey data from the 2016 National Asian American Survey pre-election survey, we find exposure to foreign educational place decreases civic participation for all Asian immigrants; and educational place mediates subgroup group-level proclivities for civic participation. We conclude by discussing the significance of educational contexts relative to collective transnational simultaneity.

Keywords: Asian American, civic participation, education place, simultaneity, transnational

Existing scholarship on the political and civic participation of immigrants largely finds that educational attainment remains positively associated with voting and nonvoting types of civic participation such as volunteering or joining a charitable association (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001; Handy and Greenspan 2009). Yet nearly two decades of scholarship suggests that high levels of education may not

be positively correlated with civic participation for Asian immigrants in the United States (Wong 2000; Wong et al. 2011; Lien 2004; Masuoka, Ramanathan, and Junn 2019). Accordingly, research finds that foreign educational attainment is negatively associated with civic participation among Asian immigrants in the United States (Lien 2004; Wong et al. 2011). We explore the apparent paradoxical relationship

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between educational attainment and civic participation by investigating how variation in exposure to foreign and domestic educational environments mediates civic participation among six contemporary Asian immigrant ethnonational communities in the United States.

Educational attainment is widely deployed as an additive measure of human capital in most research on political and civic participation (Schlozman, Brady, and Verba 2018). However, research on immigrants as well as other segments of the U.S. population suggests that standard theories of civic participation should focus on the relative rather than the absolute value of educational attainment (Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996; Campbell, Levinson, and Hess 2012). Concomitantly, research on the political incorporation of immigrants calls for a reconceptualization of conventional theories and models of citizenship and civic engagement (Bauböck 1994; Jones-Correa 2001; Wong et al. 2011; Ramakrishnan 2013; Bloemraad and Sheares 2017). We heed this call by deploying a “transnational optic” (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007) to investigate how exposure to foreign and domestic educational environments mediates civic participation across our six Asian ethnonational subgroups.

Deployment of a transnational optic requires analysts to consider how cross-border activities, transnational processes, binational linkages, and perceptions of simultaneity affect acculturation, socioeconomic integration, civic participation, collective action, and organizational capacities of immigrant communities (Faist 2016; Vertovec 2003; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Chaudhary 2020; Erdal 2020). We accomplish this by examining the extent to which exposure to different national educational environment (foreign or domestic) mediates intragroup variation in civic participation among Asian immigrants in the United States.

Because educational settings (schools) are considered primary sites for the political socialization of children and youth into patterns of partisanship, political attitudes, and civic participation (Campbell, Levinson, and Hess 2012; Torney-Purta 2002; Wong et al. 2011), variation in national educational environments may correspond to differences in the substance of political exposure (Wong 2000). We draw on Levitt

and Schiller’s (2004) notion of simultaneity to guide our inquiry and interpret our results. Simultaneity was originally conceptualized regarding the increasing embeddedness of immigrants in transnational social fields, cross-border networks, and the circulation of knowledge and ideas between those who emigrate and those who stay behind (Levitt and Schiller 2004). Indeed, research on immigrant cross-border politics suggests a small but significant minority of immigrants simultaneously engage in both domestic and homeland-oriented politics (Waldinger 2015; Chaudhary 2018; Guarnizo, Chaudhary, and Sørensen 2019). In other words, some immigrants experience and participate in a form of individual level “simultaneity” whereby their political actions are embedded and informed by their respective places of origin and settlement.

However, simultaneity may also reflect collective or group-based ways of being and belonging within transnationally embedded immigrant communities (Levitt and Schiller 2004). We posit that individual and collective perceptions of transnational simultaneity are cultivated through both the volume and frequency of cross-border activities (such as remittances, external voting, and the like), transnational institutional linkages, and individual as well as collective perceptions of belonging (Levitt and Schiller 2004). Accordingly, we focus here on the extent to which exposure to different national educational environments (foreign or domestic) accounts for the paradoxical relationship observed relative to Asian immigrants’ high education and low civic participation in the United States.

Two questions guide our inquiry. First, to what extent does educational place operate as a mechanism to account for low rates of Asian immigrant civic participation? Second, does educational place mediate civic participation rates in the same way for each of our six Asian ethnonational subgroups? Using survey data from the 2016 National Asian American Survey pre-election survey (Ramakrishnan et al. 2017), we disaggregate the Asian American ethnoracial category into six immigrant ethnonational subgroups (Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Korean, Cambodian, and Vietnamese), and investigate the mediating effect of educational place on

Asian immigrant nonvoting civic participation. Findings reveal that foreign education is an important mechanism that accounts for variation in civic participation for all six subgroups, but the extent to which it matters varies across these subgroups. In explaining civic participation, foreign education mediates collective proclivities for civic participation more for Korean and Indian immigrants, and less for Chinese and Vietnamese respondents. We interpret foreign education as a critical mechanism and posit that exposure to variation in national educational environments may result in political exposure or socialization processes, which may depress Asian immigrants' civic participation. At the same time, findings also suggest that foreign "educational place" matters in different ways to different Asian ethnonational subgroups in explaining their civic participation rates.

This study along with the other contributions in this issue highlight the tremendous heterogeneity among Asian immigrants and the urgent need for data disaggregation with respect to existing empirical insights and discourses pertaining to Asian America (Lee and Ramakrishnan 2021). We advance this agenda by interrogating the apparent mismatch between Asian immigrants' high educational attainment and their low civic participation. In so doing, this article emphasizes the importance of the relative context of educational attainment and the need to deploy transnational optics when seeking to understand group-level disparities in civic participation.

EDUCATION AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN ASIAN AMERICA

Education attainment has long been theorized as a primary predictor for many forms of civic engagement including voting, voluntary behavior, and associational membership (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Putnam 2001; Campbell 2009). Indeed, research examining educational contexts and curricula in the United States suggests that schools and educational environments foster civic knowledge, skills, and political tolerance (Campbell 2008; Campbell, Levinson, and Hess 2012). Studies looking at the civic participation of immigrant and ethnoracial minorities find similar positive

correlations between educational attainment and electoral and non-electoral civic engagement (Jones-Correa 2001; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001; Ramakrishnan 2005; Wong 2000). However, research on the political participation of Asian Americans suggests that high levels of education are not positively associated with civic participation in the United States.

In their nationally representative analyses of Asian American political participation during the 2008 U.S. presidential election, Janelle Wong and colleagues (2011) find that high levels of education among foreign-born Asians were paradoxically associated with lower rates of civic and political participation. This paradox is observed again in preliminary analyses of the 2016 election. Asian immigrants maintained higher than average levels of educational attainment and lower rates of civic participation relative to respondents with commensurate educational qualifications (Masuoka, Ramathan, and Junn 2019; Ramakrishnan et al. 2016). These contrarian findings observed with regards to Asian immigrant civic participation lend support to past studies, which further challenge the assumptions surrounding the additive and linear association between education and civic participation (Campbell 2009; Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996).

EDUCATION PLACE AND SIMULTANEITY

Despite its ubiquity in social science research as a common statistical control, the mechanism and precise linkages between education and civic participation remain relegated to a proverbial "black box" (Campbell 2009). Efforts to interrogate how education informs civic and political participation suggest scholars should pay closer attention to the relative rather than the absolute effect of educational attainment (Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996; Campbell, Levinson, and Hess 2012). This can be accomplished by factoring in how the effects of educational attainment on civic participation vary by age, place, and types of participation (Campbell 2009). Given that relative value of educational attainment appears to affect the civic participation behaviors of the general U.S. population (Campbell 2009), it is quite likely that exposure to different national educational en-

vironments may correspond to different sets of civic knowledge and by extension, proclivities for civic participation.

Using a transnational optic (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Chaudhary 2018, 2020; Erdal 2020), we analyze how educational place (foreign or domestic) informs disparate civic participation rates among six Asian immigrant ethnonational subgroups in the United States. We build on prior scholarship emphasizing the significance of national origins for understanding the political and civic behaviors of Asian Americans (Lien 2010; Wong et al. 2011). We also draw conceptually on Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller's (2004) notion of simultaneity as a collective way of being and belonging within and across immigrant communities. Throughout the world, such communities are increasingly defined by a collective understanding of simultaneity (Levitt and Schiller 2004; Levitt 2015; Boccagni, Lafleur, and Levitt 2016), whereby increased frequency and salience of transnational linkages, networks, and processes foster community-level perceptions and understanding of transnational collective simultaneity and binational embeddedness.

In contrast to research on the simultaneous cross-border political activities of individual migrants (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; Waldinger 2015; Chaudhary 2018; Guarnizo, Chaudhary, and Sørensen 2019), we theorize simultaneity as a collective feature of immigrant communities that are directly or indirectly affected by historic and contemporary binational and cross-border linkages between places of origin and settlement. A collective or group-level interpretation of simultaneity accounts for how and why intersocietal processes can produce similar consequences for community members in both places of origin and places of settlement (Levitt and Schiller 2004). Such interstate and transnational linkages have been found to foster new iterations of citizenship (Arrighi and Bauböck 2017; Lafleur 2013), grassroots development and social change (Portes and Zhou 2012; Boccagni, Lafleur, and Levitt 2016), and access to legal protections. Conversely, the same binational and cross-border linkages can potentially constrain or impede immigrant civic and political actions (Chaudhary and Moss 2019; Chaudhary 2020). In rec-

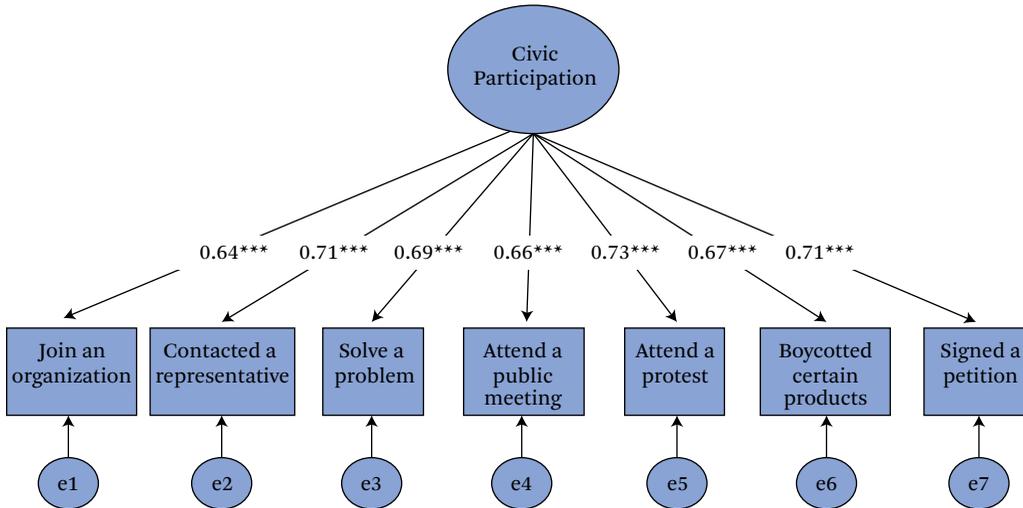
ognizing that cross-border linkages and transnational contexts may not always correspond to opportunities, we consider the extent to which foreign and domestic educational place mediate collective propensities for civic participation among Asian immigrants in the United States.

DATA AND METHODS

Using data from the 2016 pre-election National Asian American Survey (NAAS), we explore the linkages between different racial-ethnonational groups, educational place, and civic participation (Ramakrishnan et al. 2017). The NAAS is a nationally representative survey that includes adults in the United States who identified any family background from Asian countries. Survey interviews were conducted by telephone from August to September 2016. Rather than relying on the commonly used voter supplement of the Current Population Survey or small internet-based surveys (such as the Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey), we use the 2016 pre-election NAAS for three reasons. First, the NAAS data contain sufficient samples of several Asian ethnonational subgroups, including the six largest—Indian, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Cambodian. The data also include information on respondents associated with certain non-Asian racial categories (such as White, Black, and Latino/a), enabling us to examine interracial as well as intra-Asian differences in civic participation.

Second, the NAAS pre-election survey contains data on nonvoting civic participation. This information is essential for research on immigrant civic participation because, unlike voting, many other forms of participation do not require formal citizenship. Moreover, scholarship suggests nonvoting civic engagement may often be a better indicator of civic engagement because both citizens and noncitizens can participate (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008; Masuoka, Ramanathan, and Junn 2019).

Third, the NAAS pre-election survey contains information on whether respondents were educated in the United States or abroad. This enables us to use foreign education as a mediating factor for our analyses of civic participation. In sum, the 2016 NAAS is the most

Figure 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Depicting Construction of Dependent Variable

Model Fit Indices $\chi^2 = 79.88^{***} (14)$, RMSEA = .048, SRMR = .056, AGFI = .979, TLI = .976, CFI = .984

Source: Authors' tabulation.

comprehensive survey to date of the civic and political engagement of Asians in the United States and has many advantages over comparable data such as the Current Population Survey voter supplements (Ramakrishnan et al. 2016). We further restrict our sample by generation status and exclude all U.S.-born second- or third-generation Asian Americans from the analysis. Because our study is primarily focused on ethnonational group differences and foreign educational place, it is imperative to focus on Asian immigrants.

Dependent Variable: Civic Participation

Our dependent variable captures respondents' self-reported civic participation. To derive this measure, we used seven items: in the last twelve months, have you contacted your representative or a government official; worked with others in your community to solve a problem; joined an organization; attended a public meeting such as for school board or city council; attended a protest march, demonstration, or rally; signed a petition; bought or boycotted a certain product or service because of the social or political values of the company that provides it. We used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test how the seven items load on to one sin-

gle latent construct of civic participation. Figure 1 displays the CFA output. All loadings are positive, statistically significant at the .001 level, and moderate in size. The goodness of fit indices are all within recommended thresholds (McDonald and Ho 2002). These results suggest the model represents a good fit.

In addition to the CFA, we conducted several other statistical procedures to assess the items' internal consistency and verified that they load on to one underlying construct. The Cronbach α value is 0.86, suggesting good reliability. Dropping any item reduces the alpha, providing further evidence for acceptable overall reliability. We also tested for other estimates of reliability. Guttman's fourth lower-bound λ_4 is 0.89, indicating a good level of reliability. Additionally, the ω_t value is 0.90, once again suggesting that the items are internally consistent (Revelle and Zinbarg 2009). Altogether, the CFA and other indices such as Cronbach α , λ_4 , and ω_t suggest that the seven items load on to civic participation as a single underlying latent variable (Mai, Jacobs, and Schieman 2019). After list-wise deletion of all missing data from the seven items, the sample includes 2,013 observations. We extract the factor score from the CFA and use it as the dependent variable.

Key Predictors: Asian Ethnonational Subgroups

To interrogate the ethnonational heterogeneity among Asian Americans, our key predictors of interest are the Asian ethnonational categories with which respondents self-identify. Since our theorization centers on educational place in foreign and domestic environments, we do not expect our predictions to extend to U.S.-born Asian Americans. Although the NAAS includes data on several subnational Asian groups, our focus on educational attainment and place required us to remove some ethnonational subgroups because they comprised primarily non-immigrants or could not be linked to a single country of origin. Accordingly, we removed the Japanese and Hmong subgroups from our analysis.

Our decision to remove Japanese respondents stems from the fact that the immigration and integration histories of Japanese Americans are significantly different from most post-1965 Asian immigrants. In contrast to our six selected subgroups, Japanese respondents are largely native born, rendering them outside our analytic emphasis on immigrants and variation in educational place. Similarly, our theoretical emphasis on the effects of domestic and foreign national educational environments is problematic in the case of our Hmong respondents because, unlike respondents in the six selected Asian subgroups, Hmong immigrants are not linked to a single country of origin. Therefore, we restrict our sample and focus on the six largest Asian immigrant ethnonational subgroups with discernable binational linkages.

Mediator: Foreign Education

We examine the effects of foreign or domestic educational place by constructing a measure that can account for whether a respondent was educated entirely in the United States or partly elsewhere. We construct a dichotomous variable that separates respondents who completed all education in the United States versus respondents who completed any schooling abroad. This enables us to measure how experience with a foreign educational environment mediates the group-level differences in participation rates across Asian subgroups.

Control Variables

Besides our key predictors and mediator, all model specifications have standard control variables including gender, level of education (less than high school, high school graduate, and college or higher), employment status (employed versus not employed), income (less than \$50,000, \$50,000 to \$100,000, and more than \$100,000), marital status, years since arrival, citizenship status, whether respondent lives in California, whether respondent has children, English proficiency (no English versus some English), Party ID (Democrat, Republican, Independent), frequency of political discussion (often versus not often), and religious attendance (more than “once or twice a month” versus otherwise). Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for all variables used in this analysis.

Modeling Techniques

In addition to standard multivariate regression, our analysis makes use of a mediation model with a latent variable. This causes us to rely on a structural equation model. We construct and test a mediation model with educational place (M) mediating the association between race-ethnonational group (X) and civic participation (Y). Given our interest in disaggregating Asian-Americans, our primary independent variables or predictors are racial-ethnonationality group categories. Our focus on analyzing variation across multiple group-level categories makes estimating such a model challenging because most statistical literature on mediation has been based on the condition that the main predictor is continuous or dichotomous.

To fully appreciate the heterogeneity within Asian American groups, and to understand how different Asian American groups might relate differently to the mediator and the outcome variable, we rely on the “mediation analysis with a multi-categorical independent variable” (Hayes and Preacher 2014). We specify a structural equation model based on formulas (1) and (2), where “educational place” represents M in these models. In these models, Non-Hispanic native-born Whites are treated as the reference category. The nine a coefficients quantify the differences between racial-

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (N = 2,013)

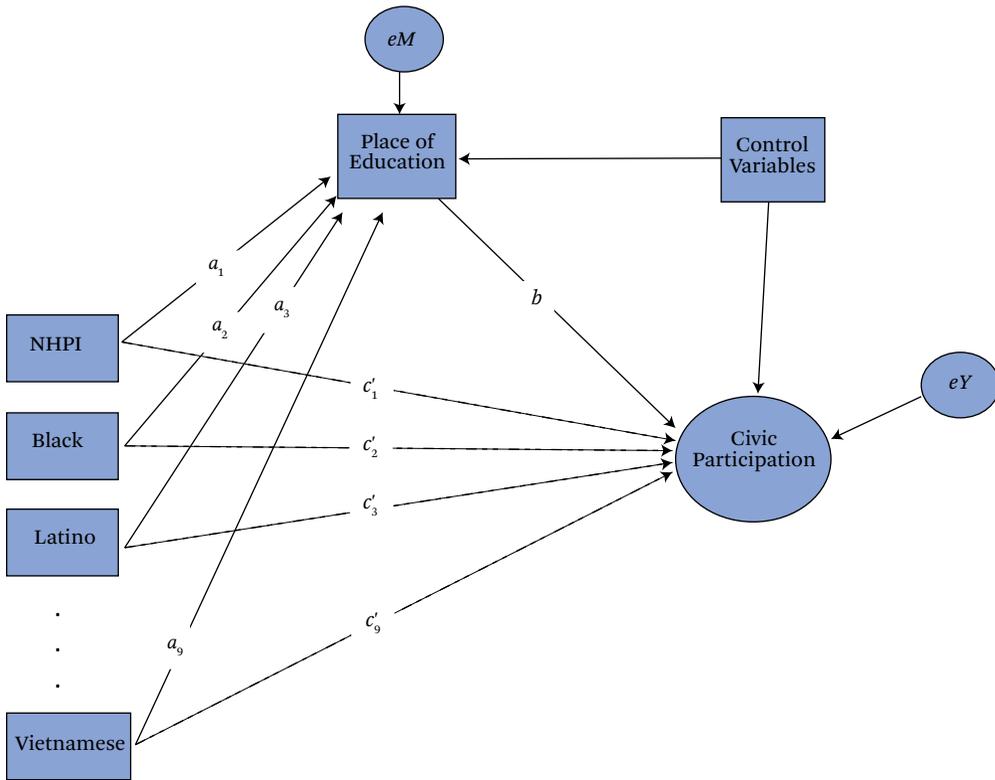
Variables	Range	Mean or Proportion	Standard Deviation
Dependent variable			
Civic participation (factor score)	-57-1.49	.03	.56
Independent variable			
Main predictor – racial-ethnonational subgroups			
White	0-1	18.52	-
Native Hawaiian–Pacific Islander	0-1	13.26	-
Black	0-1	18.73	-
Latino	0-1	18.82	-
Indian	0-1	5.21	-
Cambodian	0-1	4.97	-
Chinese	0-1	5.61	-
Filipino	0-1	5.26	-
Korean	0-1	3.52	-
Vietnamese	0-1	6.06	-
Mediator			
Place of education (ref = some education elsewhere)	0-1	65.87	-
Other predictors			
Discuss politics (ref = not too often or less)	0-1	43.41	-
Party affiliation (ref = Democrat)			
Independent		23.05	-
Republican		14.70	-
Religious attendance (ref = few times a year or less)	0-1	48.73	-
Employed (ref = not employed)	0-1	58.82	-
Control variables			
Female	0-1	51.31	-
Income (ref = less than \$50k)			
\$50k–\$100k		28.66	-
More than \$100k		22.70	-
Years since arrival	0-97	38.62	18.52
Noncitizen	0-1	5.81	-
Living in California	0-1	61.64	-
Educational attainment (ref = less than high school)			
High school	0-1	18.82	-
College	0-1	68.31	-
Speaking English	0-1	96.37	-
Not having children	0-1	29.75	-
Not married	0-1	40.44	-

Source: Authors' tabulation.

ethnonational groups on the mediator (place of education). The nine c' coefficients (or direct effects) capture the difference between racial-ethnonational groups on civic participation controlling for the mediator. U refers to a vector of control variables. The nine indirect ef-

fects of racial-ethnonational group (X) on civic engagement (Y) through educational place (M) are quantified by the nine products of the a coefficients in the model and the b coefficient in model 1. Figure 2 displays this structural equation model.

Figure 2. A Structural Equation Model of Place of Education Mediating the Association Between Racial-Ethnonational Groups and Civic Participation



Source: Authors' tabulation.

$$M = i_1 + a_1 \text{ NHPI} + a_2 \text{ Black} + a_3 \text{ Latino} + a_4 \text{ AsianIndian} + a_5 \text{ Cambodian} + a_6 \text{ Chinese} + a_7 \text{ Filipino} + a_8 \text{ Korean} + a_9 \text{ Vietnamese} + U_M + e_{-M} \tag{1}$$

$$Y = i_2 + b * M + c'_1 \text{ NHPI} + c'_2 \text{ Black} + c'_3 \text{ Latino} + c'_4 \text{ AsianIndian} + c'_5 \text{ Cambodian} + c'_6 \text{ Chinese} + c'_7 \text{ Filipino} + c'_8 \text{ Korean} + c'_9 \text{ Vietnamese} + U_Y + e_Y \tag{2}$$

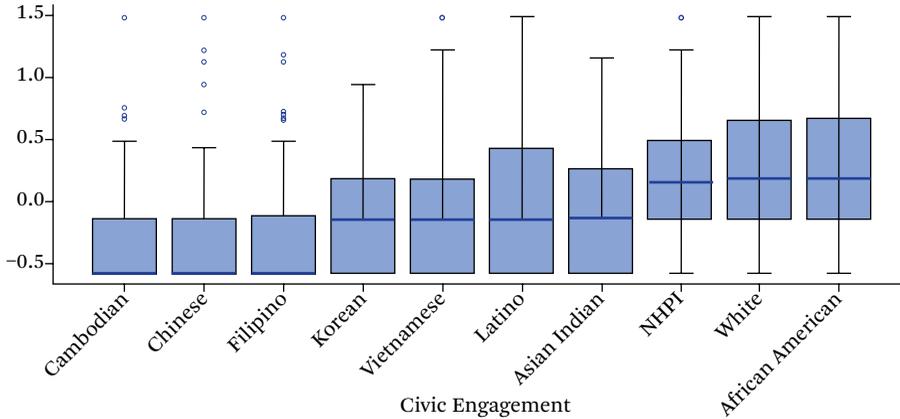
FINDINGS

Figure 3 displays a series of boxplots with the civic participation factor scores on the vertical axes and various racial groups on the horizontal ones. The boxes are sorted by group median. In this set of boxplots, the outcome variables are broken down by race and Asian ethnonational subgroup. The figure demonstrates that with respect to the measures of civic engagement: Cambodian, Chinese, and Filipino

registered the lowest scores; White, Black or African American, and Native Hawaiian–Pacific Islander (NHPI) registered the highest; and Vietnamese, Korean, Latino, and Indian being between the others. Among Cambodian, Chinese, and Filipino, the median civic engagement score equals the minimum score. This suggests that the median Cambodian, Chinese, and Filipino in our sample did not engage in any kind of civic engagement or replied no to all seven survey items that loaded on to the latent construct that makes up the dependent variable. These initial results indicate that though in the aggregate Asian Americans score low in civic participation relative to other racial categories, there is substantial variability across ethnonational groups. We now turn to an overview of group-level variation in educational environments.

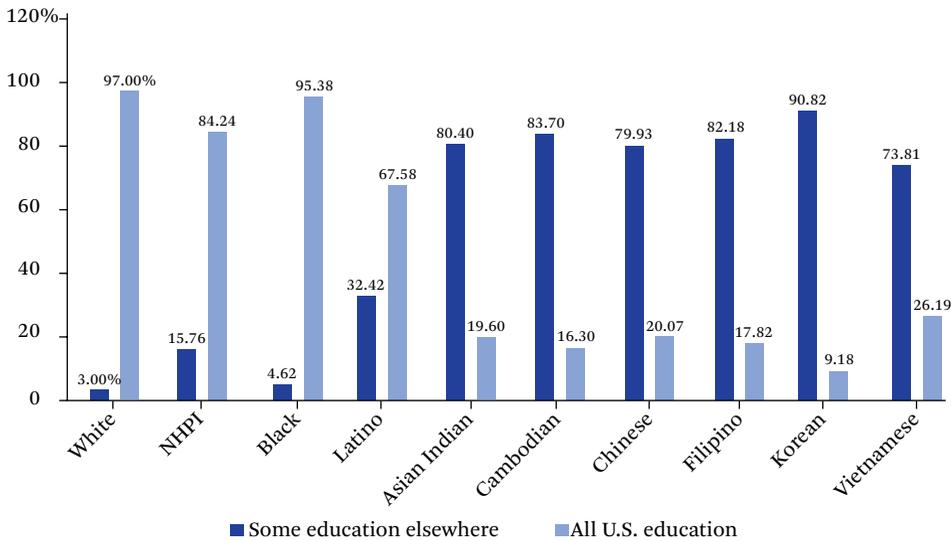
Figure 4 presents a bar graph that juxtaposes the proportion of respondents with exclusively

Figure 3. Civic Participation Rates by Race and Asian Ethnonational Subgroup



Source: Authors' tabulation.

Figure 4. Place of Education by Ethnonational Subgroup



Source: Authors' tabulation based on National Asian American Survey data (Ramakrishnan et al. 2017).

domestic educational attainment with conditionals who have had some education outside the United States. The proportion of respondents with domestic and foreign educational experience is disaggregated by race and Asian ethnonational subgroup. The lighter bars represent the proportion of the respondents who completed all their education in the United States, the darker bars the proportion who completed some of their education elsewhere. The figure displays a stark contrast between Asian

subgroups and other Americans in the sample. The overwhelming majority of non-Asian Americans completed their education exclusively in the United States across all racial categories (Whites 97 percent, Blacks 95 percent, Pacific Islanders 84 percent, Latino/a 67 percent). The pattern is reversed among Asian immigrants (see figure 4), the overwhelming majority of whom appear to have completed some of their education outside the United States. Asian respondents with an exclusively domestic

education constitute a minority. These proportions range from just under 10 percent (among Koreans) to just over 25 percent (among Vietnamese). The dramatic differences between Asian immigrants and other Americans with respect to educational place suggest the environmental contexts, in which educational attainment takes place for most Asians, diverge from most of the general American population. We now turn to our multivariate results to examine how differences in educational place mediate group-level differences in civic participation.

Multivariate Results

Table 2 displays a series of models predicting our civic participation outcome. Model 1 only includes various racial-ethnonational groups. Model 2 adds control variables; model 3 adds our core predictor of interest—measure of educational place. Models 4, 5, and 6 include all variables in the previous models, but add measures of political interest, religious involvement, and employment status. The coefficients associated with all Asian subgroups are negative and statistically significant in all model specifications. These results confirm findings on Asian Americans in that we find all Asian ethnonational subgroups have lower participation rates than Whites. The low rates of participation observed for Asians remain even after holding constant various measures of immigrant adaptation, political interest, religiosity, demographics, and, of course, educational attainment.

Turning to education, our initial results suggest educational attainment and educational place are important factors associated with civic participation. Consistent with decades of research, results indicate educational attainment is positively associated with civic participation for all groups in our sample. When educational attainment is treated as distinct categories (less than high school, high school, college, or higher), results show that only college-level educational attainment is statistically significant and positively associated with participation. Thus, at the individual level, our results lend support to the assumption that higher levels of education correspond with in-

creased civic participation. However, when we look at the effect of educational environment, results suggest that education completed exclusively in the receiving society (the United States) is associated with increased civic participation. In other words, people educated only in the United States reported significantly higher participation rates relative to those with some education abroad, *ceteris paribus*. These coefficients remain robust as specifications get more stringent. This suggests educational place is an important contextual factor that may shed light on how the relationship between educational attainment and civic participation varies for different groups. We explore this in the mediation analysis. However, first we briefly discuss some of the observed associations between our controls and the dependent variable in table 2.

As for measures of political interest, frequent discussion of politics is predicted to be associated with civic engagement. Relative to Democrats, Republicans are predicted to show lower levels of civic participation. Religion also plays an important role, confirming prior studies by suggesting religious attendance is predicted to increase civic participation. The coefficient associated with religious attendance in model 5 is marginally significant ($p = .0507$). Unsurprisingly, we also found that being employed increases civic participation, as does income. Although not the core focus of this article, the findings related to various control variables are also noteworthy. Civic engagement is predicted to increase with income and to decrease with time spent in the United States. Gender, citizenship status, residence in California, English-speaking skills, parental status, and marital status seem generally unrelated to the outcome variable. Altogether, the predictors account for about 20 percent of the variation in the dependent variable. However, these results cannot show the extent to which the association between various racial-ethnonational groups and civic participation can be explained through educational place. Table 3 presents a formal test of how educational place serves as a mechanism that partially accounts for the group-level proclivities for civic participation.

Table 2. OLS Regression Models of Factors Predicting Civic Participation

	Dependent Variable: Civic Participation					
	Baseline (1)	Baseline and Controls (2)	+ Place of Education (3)	+ Politics (4)	+ Religion (5)	+ Employment (6)
Racial-ethnonational subgroups						
(ref = White)						
NHPI	-.07 (.04)	-.03 (.04)	-.02 (.04)	.02 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)
Black	-.03 (.04)	.02 (.04)	.02 (.04)	.01 (.04)	.001 (.04)	.001 (.04)
Latino	-.26** (.04)	-.14** (.04)	-.13** (.04)	-.11* (.04)	-.12** (.04)	-.12** (.04)
Asian Indian	-.25** (.06)	-.38** (.06)	-.31** (.07)	-.28** (.07)	-.29** (.07)	-.29** (.07)
Cambodian	-.58** (.06)	-.29** (.07)	-.24** (.07)	-.21** (.08)	-.20* (.08)	-.20* (.08)
Chinese	-.58** (.06)	-.40** (.07)	-.34** (.07)	-.33** (.08)	-.32** (.08)	-.31** (.08)
Filipino	-.48** (.06)	-.47** (.06)	-.40** (.07)	-.34** (.07)	-.36** (.08)	-.35** (.08)
Korean	-.41** (.07)	-.40** (.07)	-.33** (.08)	-.26** (.08)	-.27** (.08)	-.26** (.08)
Vietnamese	-.38** (.05)	-.28** (.06)	-.24** (.06)	-.25** (.07)	-.25** (.07)	-.24** (.07)
Educational place (ref = some education elsewhere)						
All education in United States			.11** (.04)	.15** (.04)	.15** (.04)	.14** (.04)
Politics						
Discuss politics (ref = not too often or less)				.15** (.03)	.15** (.03)	.15** (.03)
Party (ref = Democrat)						
Independent				-.002 (.03)	-.001 (.03)	-.0004 (.03)
Republican				-.11** (.04)	-.12** (.04)	-.11** (.04)
Religion						
Religious attendance (ref = few times a year or less)					.05 (.03)	.05* (.03)
Employment						
Employed (ref = not employed)						.07* (.03)

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

	Dependent Variable: Civic Participation					
	Baseline Baseline (1)	Baseline and Controls (2)	+ Place of Education (3)	+ Politics (4)	+ Religion (5)	+ Employment (6)
Control variables						
Women		-.003 (.02)	-.005 (.02)	-.002 (.03)	-.01 (.03)	-.004 (.03)
Income (ref = less than \$50k)						
\$50k–\$100k		.11** (.03)	.10** (.03)	.09** (.03)	.09** (.03)	.08* (.03)
More than \$100k		.19** (.03)	.18** (.03)	.15** (.04)	.15** (.04)	.14** (.04)
Years since arrival		-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)
Noncitizen		-.07 (.06)	-.04 (.06)	-.05 (.06)	-.05 (.06)	-.05 (.06)
Living in California		-.03 (.03)	-.02 (.03)	-.02 (.03)	-.02 (.03)	-.02 (.03)
Not having children		.02 (.03)	.003 (.04)	.01 (.04)	.02 (.04)	.02 (.04)
Not married		-.02 (.03)	-.02 (.03)	-.06 (.03)	-.06 (.03)	-.06 (.03)
Education (ref = less than high school)						
High school		.13* (.05)	.10 (.05)	.08 (.06)	.08 (.06)	.07 (.06)
College or higher		.31** (.05)	.28** (.05)	.26** (.05)	.26** (.05)	.25** (.05)
Speaks no English (ref = speaks some English)		-.10 (.08)	-.09 (.08)	-.04 (.09)	-.04 (.09)	-.03 (.09)
Constant	.24** (.03)	-.01 (.08)	-.03 (.08)	-.07 (.09)	-.09 (.09)	-.13 (.09)
N	2,013	1,752	1,749	1,549	1,547	1,547
Adjusted R ²	.12	.19	.19	.20	.20	.20

Source: Authors' tabulation.

Note: Standardized coefficients, two-tailed tests.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Mediation Results

Results presented from the ordinary least squares regression models in table 2 show that the coefficients associated with Asian subgroups predicting civic engagement decrease as more predictors and controls are added to the

specifications. The reference group for the mediator are people who did not complete all of their education in the United States. All a coefficients associated with Asian subgroups (a_4 – a_9) are negative and statistically significant in predicting the mediator, suggesting that all

Table 3. Standardized Parameters from Mediation Model Predicting Civic Participation with Educational Place as Mediator

	All U.S. Education (Mediator)		Civic Engagement (Outcome)		Indirect Effect Effect of X→Y through M		Proportion Mediated Mediated Effect/Total Effect				
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE			
All U.S. education (M)			b →	0.053**	(0.020)						
Racial-ethnonational subgroups (X)											
NHPI	a1 →	-0.611**	(0.209)	c'1 →	0.016*	(0.044)	a1*b →	-0.032*	(0.016)	1.940	(4.959)
Black	a2 →	-0.018	(0.222)	c'2 →	0.017*	(0.040)	a2*b →	-0.001	(0.012)	-0.059	(0.741)
Latino	a3 →	-0.516**	(0.202)	c'3 →	-0.097*	(0.041)	a3*b →	-0.027	(0.015)	0.219	(0.134)
Indian	a4 →	-2.280***	(0.248)	c'4 →	-0.247	(0.079)	a4*b →	-0.120*	(0.047)	0.327*	(0.140)
Cambodian	a5 →	-1.542***	(0.271)	c'5 →	-0.169	(0.082)	a5*b →	-0.081*	(0.034)	0.324*	(0.163)
Chinese	a6 →	-1.780***	(0.250)	c'6 →	-0.375	(0.082)	a6*b →	-0.094*	(0.038)	0.200*	(0.086)
Filipino	a7 →	-2.621***	(0.262)	c'7 →	-0.287	(0.085)	a7*b →	-0.138*	(0.053)	0.324*	(0.135)
Korean	a8 →	-2.368***	(0.298)	c'8 →	-0.218	(0.086)	a8*b →	-0.124*	(0.049)	0.363*	(0.161)
Vietnamese	a9 →	-1.325***	(0.240)	c'9 →	-0.233	(0.065)	a9*b →	-0.070*	(0.029)	0.230*	(0.104)

Source: Authors' tabulation.

Note: Standardized coefficients, two-tailed tests. Control variables included: party identification, discussing politics, religious attendance, employment status, gender, income, years since arrival, citizen, living in California, have child, marital status, level of education, and English proficiency.

*p < .05; **p < .01

Asian subgroups are less likely to complete all their education in the United States relative to Whites (the reference group). Consistent with the results shown in table 2, the *b* coefficient is positive and significant, suggesting that respondents who completed their education in the United States are predicted to show higher levels of civic participation. Notably, all of the indirect effects associated with Asian subgroups are negative and significant. This suggests that for all Asian subgroups, foreign educational place operates as a key mechanism that explains low rates of civic participation. The proportions of mediated effects are statistically significant at the 0.05 level for all Asian subgroups. Additionally, we observed between-group variation in the proportion mediated. More than 36 percent of the total effect of race-ethnonationality on civic engagement is mediated by foreign education for Korean respondents. This is the highest mediated proportion among all groups. Indians, Cambodians, and Filipinos also report high mediated proportions, 32.7 percent for the first group and 32.4 percent for the latter two. The smallest proportion mediated observed are reported among Vietnamese (23 percent) and Chinese (20 percent).

In sum, these results robustly demonstrate that foreign educational place is a key mechanism explaining the civic participation rates among all Asian groups. Despite variation in proportion mediated, educational place plays an important role, as it accounts for about 20 to 36 percent of the association between groups and their rates of civic participation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. population, Asian immigrants and U.S.-born children reflect a diverse array of emerging political constituencies, collective identities, and civic organizational infrastructures (Lien 2010; Wong et al. 2011; Hung and Ong 2012; Okamoto 2014; Lee and Zhou 2015). Recent efforts to study the political and civic participation of Asian Americans suggest standard theories and perspectives on civic participation may need to be reconceptualized so they can better account for the distinct immigration experiences of Asian ethnonational subgroups in the United States (Masuoka, Ramanathan, and

Junn 2019; Wong et al. 2011). Accordingly, we sought to investigate how transnational (foreign or domestic) contexts of educational attainment (educational place) may mediate the group-level differences in the relationship between educational and civic participation across six significant Asian immigrant ethnonational subgroups.

Scholarship suggests Asian immigrants have relatively low rates of civic participation when compared to other Americans with commensurate educational attainment (Lien 2004; Wong et al. 2011; Ramakrishnan et al. 2016; Masuoka, Ramanathan, and Junn 2019). The high levels of education and low civic participation observed in past studies of Asian Americans indicate a paradox. The negative association observed between educational attainment and civic participation for Asian immigrants in the United States challenges the assumed linearity and positive directionality in extant literature on civic participation (Campbell 2009). This study sought to interrogate this paradox by examining the extent to which foreign and domestic educational environments—educational place—mediate proclivities for civic participation across six Asian immigrant ethnonational subgroups.

Our analysis confirms insights from previous work: we find that after controlling for a host of characteristics, Asian immigrants do have relatively low rates of civic participation. However, we uncover a critical mechanism that corresponds with the observed low participation rates. Our mediation analysis reveals that educational place partially explains why Asian immigrants have lower civic participation rates than other respondents with commensurate education. Our findings suggest decreased civic participation among Asian immigrants in the United States may in part stem from exposure to foreign educational environments. Additionally, results suggest the mediating effects of educational place vary to some extent by Asian ethnonationality.

Educational place accounts for the largest proportion of variation among Koreans and Indians, and the least among Vietnamese and Chinese. In sum, experience with a foreign educational context appears to account for a low of 20 percent and a high of 36 percent of the

observed subgroup-level variation in Asian immigrant civic participation rates. The observed significance of educational place confirms studies advocating for analysts to rethink the standard assumptions that educational attainment is an absolute and additive measure of human capital (Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996; Campbell 2008, 2009). Educational environments are key sites for civic knowledge and exposure to civic norms, skills, and tolerance across most societies (Campbell, Levinson, and Hess 2012; Schlozman, Brady, and Verba 2018).

Our findings also help make sense of the Asian immigrant civic paradox by highlighting how the relationship varies across scales of analysis. We find that the paradoxical relationship between education and participation among Asian Americans is limited to group-level comparisons with other ethnoracial categorical groups (Blacks, Whites, and others). Indeed, consistent with past research on Asian and Latino/a immigrants (DeSipio 1996; Ramakrishnan 2005), as well as general scholarship on civic participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Campbell, Levinson, and Hess 2012; Schlozman, Brady, and Verba 2018), we find that educational attainment increases individual-level civic participation rates across all subgroups. Specifically, university-level education appears to increase civic participation for all groups in our sample. Exposure to foreign educational environments appears to reduce group-level proclivities for civic participation. This suggests domestic educational attainment may foster more civic participation among Asian immigrants residing in the United States.

Despite yielding important findings, this research is not without limitations. As with all cross-sectional analyses on relatively small numbers of observations, our study and results have limitations with respect to what the findings can and cannot tell us. Although they show that educational place matters, the data are limited because we cannot explain why it matters. As a result, we cannot isolate educational place from other potentially confounding factors such as transnational networks or other types of cross-border linkages. Our study reveals how much foreign-domestic educational place matters differently for different groups,

especially the six Asian immigrant ethnonational subgroups.

Further inquiry into why education matters requires data that unfortunately cannot be collected in cross-sectional surveys conducted exclusively in immigrants' places of settlement. Ethnographic methods and research designs may better reveal how and why educational contexts vary cross-nationally and how these differences translate into divergent motivations and propensities for civic participation for Asian immigrants in the United States. Such efforts can be accomplished by collecting and analyzing data from immigrants and non-immigrants in both their places of origin and settlement (see Carling 2002; De Haas 2007; Mazzucato 2008). These alternative approaches may shed light on how educational place varies across Asian-origin societies and how these contextual differences generate divergent experiences for Asian immigrants in the United States.

Another limitation centers on our inability to account for the temporal or long-term effects of foreign education on civic participation over the life course. Does the role of foreign education "wear off" in the long run or remain relatively durable? Is it possible that this effect tapers off for some groups but persists for others? We sought to isolate the effect of educational place by controlling for time since arrival and other conventional measures of immigrant adaptation and found that place still matters. However, the extent to which educational place matters over time is beyond the scope of this study. Efforts to better understand how variation in educational place affects the civic participation of Asian or Latino/a immigrants over the life course may want to use longitudinal or panel data to better identify how educational place shapes Asian immigrant civic participation at different stages of the life course. Such data would allow scholars to parse out how enduring the effect of a foreign education is on civic engagement.

Despite these limitations, this study advances and updates research on Asian American civic participation in two ways. First, we refine our understanding of the civic paradox observed in research on Asian immigrants in the United States by showing that the relation-

ship between education and civic participation varies according to scale of analysis. Although Asian Americans' aggregated high educational attainment and low civic participation appear paradoxical, this group-level pattern is not observed at the individual level. Indeed, educational attainment remains positively associated at the individual-level for all respondents in the sample, including Asian immigrants. This suggests that although the assumed linearity between education and civic participation persists at the level of individuals, the relationship is nonlinear and uneven when scales and units of analysis shift from individuals to groups.

Second, we find that educational place is a significant, albeit often overlooked, factor that can affect Asian immigrant proclivities for civic participation. If large numbers of immigrants have foreign educational experiences, the community may be reflective of a collective transnational simultaneity where immigrants' civic knowledge and political exposure are informed by their direct and indirect experiences with foreign and domestic educational environments. By focusing on the environmental contexts of educational attainment, this study supports calls for a reinterpretation of educational attainment as a relative rather than absolute measure of human capital (Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996).

We build on research suggesting foreign education decreases Asian immigrant civic participation (Lien 2004; Wong et al. 2011) by expanding our analysis to investigate the mediating effects of educational place on Asian immigrant civic participation. We also reveal that foreign educational place does not affect Asian subgroups the same way. This suggests educational attainment should be reconsidered with a "transnational optic" (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Faist 2016; Chaudhary 2018) to further account for how cross-national variation in education environments may correspond with disparate forms of political exposure and participation (Wong 2000). In the case of Asian immigrants in the United States, any education obtained abroad appears to decrease civic participation relative to respondents who have been educated only in the United States. This suggests that educational place is an important factor that may inform immigrant knowledge,

skills, and motivations necessary for civic life in American society.

Although this study focuses on education and civic participation, the collective interpretation of simultaneity may be useful for better understanding group-level variation in a variety of social, economic, and political behaviors and integration-related processes. In doing so, this study further disaggregates the Asian category and advances recent calls among sociologists and political scientists to interrogate intragroup tensions and solidarities within Asian America (Wong et al. 2011; Okamoto 2014; Lee and Zhou 2015) We examined how variation in national educational context can affect individual and group-level proclivities for civic participation among Asian immigrants in the United States. In showing that contextual variation in educational place is an important factor shaping civic participation, we conclude that exposure to education outside of the receiving country may correspond with different sets of civic knowledge, tolerance, and skills relative to individuals who are educated only domestically.

In addition to contributing new empirical insights into the civic participation of Asian immigrants, our findings are consistent with recent theoretical scholarship that urges scholars to explore and theorize how transnational linkages and processes operate at multiple scales (Faist 2016; Chaudhary and Moss 2019; Erdal 2020). Future efforts to interrogate the links between education and civic participation should systematically compare how the substance and access to civic education varies between immigrants' origin and receiving societies. In doing so, researchers may be able to better determine how and why exposure to foreign education corresponds with consistently low rates of civic participation among some Asian immigrants' communities in the United States.

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