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# **Asian American Congressional Representation**

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**April 2015**

## **In Fulfillment of the Requirements for Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with Honors**

**Abstract:** While studies have researched substantive representation of other minority groups, this paper is the first to examine Asian American congressional representation. I ask two questions. First do Asian American legislators vote differently on roll call votes than other members of their party? Second, do Asian American constituents get less of what they want from government compared to White American? I use a quantitative analysis to answer both of these questions. First, I examine the interest group scores of Asian American legislators compared to other legislators from the same political party to determine whether Asian American legislators tend to vote differently. Second, I use the 2004 National Annenberg Survey results to understand how well Asian Americans are represented by their elected officials compared to other ethnic groups. When observing general measures of ideology, the results show that Asian American representatives tend to vote more liberally than other party members; however, when observing specific issues, their votes are not distinctive. Additionally, I find that Asian American constituents are just as disadvantaged as African American and Latino American constituents.

**Acknowledgement:** I wish to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Brian Newman for his role as my faculty advisor. His willingness to help plan, develop this research work, and give his generous time is very much appreciated. I would also like to thank both Dr. Candice Ortals, my honors thesis professor, and Dr. Joel Fetzer, my faculty thesis reviewer, whom provided valuable support and useful critiques on this research work.

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## **Introduction**

After winning two presidential elections, Barack Obama argued that “race is still a powerful force in this country. Any African American candidate, or any Latino American, or Asian candidate or woman candidate confronts a higher threshold in establishing himself to the voters...” (2013, 71). Connections between constituents and elected representatives are foundational in democratic systems. Yet Obama argues that the relationship between the people and representatives from minority groups is distinctive. In fact, studies of African American and Latino members of Congress find unique patterns of legislative behavior. Other studies have found that the interests of African Americans and Latinos in the public are reflected in the policies their representatives support and enact less often than is true for whites. However, we do not know much about Asian American legislators or the representation of Asian Americans.

Past studies have focused on minority representation of African Americans, Latino Americans, and women legislators in Congress (Black 2013; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Griffin and Newman 2007; Griffin, Newman, and Wolbrecht 2012; Grose 2011; Hero and Tolbert 1995; Merolla, Sellers, and Fowler 2013; Minta 2009; Preuhs 2005; Swers 2013; Tate 2003; Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer 2013; Wilson 2010; Weissberg 1978). However, literature on Asian American congressional representation is virtually non-existent partially because only thirty Asian Americans have been members of Congress since its formation in 1789. John Griffin, Zoltan Hajnal, Brian Newman, and David Searle (2014) acknowledge that Asian Americans have been understudied in the field of political representation, which has led to a lack of findings from which to draw any firm conclusions. Because Asian Americans are a diverse group and the pan-ethnic identity is relatively new and still developing, particular policy interests have yet to emerge from the group; however, scholars still must learn whether Asian American

representatives behave differently, as do other minority representatives, who make efforts to show some panethnic unity. Additionally, asking how well Congress represents Asian American constituents, a growing group, is crucial in order to determine whether they are a disadvantaged group. After all, the Asian American community is growing rapidly and “gains in the proportion of long term U.S. residents are expected to increase the number of active Asian American participation in American politics in the years and decades to come” (Lee, Junn, Ramakrishnan, and Wong 2011, 241). Hence, the purpose of this research study is to answer two questions: 1) Do Asian American legislators vote differently on roll call votes than other members of their party? and 2) Do Asian American constituents get less of what they want from government compared to White Americans?

Often, past literature has focused on underrepresentation of minority groups in Congress and types of representation performed by minority legislators. For example, Hero and Tolbert (2005) find that minority groups are facing serious underrepresentation within Congress, while Grose (2011) observes that African American legislators tend to represent their African American constituents’ interests through the delivery of goods and services to this group. Griffin and Newman (2007) found that Latino members of Congress tend to represent Latino Americans, while increasing Latino American voter turnout. Likewise, women members of Congress tend to improve the representation of all women by focusing on women policy preferences (Griffin, Newman, and Wolbrecht 2012; Weissberg 1978). Unfortunately, studies on representation show almost no attention towards Asian Americans, usually due to the lack of information on this group. Therefore, my research study fills the gap in the literature on Asian American legislative representation.

Although other minority legislators act in distinctive ways and minority groups in the public tend to get less of what they want from government than whites, Asian American legislators and the representation of Asian American interest may not be systematically different from whites. A major question in studying Asian Americans arises from grouping all ethnic Asians under the umbrella of an Asian American pan-ethnic identity (more below). Asian Americans are a community of groups that differ in history, religion, culture, language, origin, and socio-demographic background. However due to broader society's view and treatment of Asian Americans, Pan-Asian American organizations, ethnic media networks, and symbolic leaders have been crucial in creating a pan-ethnic consciousness and identity (Lien 2001; Lee and Ramakrishnan 2012). Still, even though Asian Americans are growing as a pan-ethnic group, they have yet to emerge with distinctive policy interests compared to other minority groups. Asian Americans may focus on the same issues as White citizens, namely economy, unemployment, healthcare, and education; at this point, no clear distinctive policy agenda has emerged (Aoki 2012; Lee, Junn, Ramakrishnan, and Wong 2011; Lee and Ramakrishnan 2012; Lien 2011). Consequently, findings from other minority groups may not apply to Asian Americans. Therefore, only a systematic study will tell.

In order to address my research questions, I use two quantitative analyses. First, I conduct an analysis of Asian American legislators through interest group scores (e.g. Nominate Scores, League of Conservation Voters) to see whether Asian American legislators tend to vote differently than other members of their party. Second, using the "winning/losing" model created by Griffin and Newman (2008, 2013), I use the 2004 National Annenberg Election Study to find how well Asian American constituents are represented by their member of Congress compared to White constituents. By using these two approaches, I draw conclusions regarding whether Asian

American constituents are well represented and whether Asian American legislators exhibit unique patterns of roll call votes.

I present two important findings. First using interest group scores, I find that Asian Americans legislators' general patterns of roll call votes lean more liberal. However, looking at four specific interest group scores, Asian American representatives' liberal lean disappears. Second, as expected, Asian Americans are not represented as well as whites in their members of Congress' roll call votes. Racial inequality in policy representation includes Asian American constituents. In fact, the Asian-White gap in representation is bigger than the gender gap and the income gap. Overall, I find that Asian American constituents are just as disadvantaged as African Americans and Latino Americans.

Below I offer an overview of representation, the underrepresentation of minority groups, minority legislative behavior, and current literature on Asian American Congressional representation. Next, I review the methods I utilize and present hypotheses. I state the results and explain how they either support or oppose my hypotheses. Lastly, I explain the implications of my study for future research.

### **Literature Review**

Studies of minority representation in Congress tend to focus on three groups: African Americans, Latino Americans, and women. Although, women are not a numerical minority like African Americans and Latinos, they still face unequal representation important enough to elaborate on. The literature review defines descriptive and substantive representation, then turns to current research on minority legislative behavior, the underrepresentation of minority groups, and the

available Asian American political literature. I close the review by pointing out the deficiencies in knowledge about Asian American Congressional representation.

### ***Descriptive vs. Substantive Representation***

Studies of congressional representation focus on multiple theories, but I focus on two models: descriptive and substantive representation. Descriptive representation is when the outward, physical appearance such as gender or race of a government official resembles that of his or her constituents (Griffin and Newman 2007; Griffin, Newman, and Wolbrecht 2012; Grose 2011; Pitkin 1967, Preuhs 2005; Swers 2013; Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer 2013; Wilson 2010). Moreover, the representatives ‘stand for’ them, by “virtue of correspondence or connection between them, a resemblance or reflection” of how they think, feel, reason, and act like their constituents (Pitkin 1967, 61). However, substantive representation measures the extent to which a governing actor advocates for the interest of a certain social group without regard to shared characteristics (Black 2013; Griffin, Newman, and Wolbrecht 2012; Grose 2011; Hero and Tolbert 1995; Minta 2009; Pitkin 1967; Swers 2013; Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer 2013). This model of representation focuses on how members of Congress represent constituent preferences through legislative decisions, such as roll-call votes, bill sponsorship, and/or committee work.

Some argue that descriptive representation can yield substantive representation in Congress. Grose (2011) found that to increase the substantive representation of black interests, as measured by the delivery of good and services to black constituents, the best strategy for black people was to elect black legislators. Similarly, scholars report that women politicians tend to see policy problems faced by women as more important than their male counterparts. Women in

Congress tend to push for women's interests and issues because they are able to use their experience to bring unique insights and innovative solutions (Black 2013; Swers 2002; Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer 2013). On the other hand, some studies find that once members' party affiliation is accounted for, there are minimal gains in substantive representation to be had by increased descriptive representation. That is, African American Democrats in Congress vote similarly to non-African American Democrats (Swain 1993).

### *Underrepresentation of Minority Groups*

Multiple studies (e.g. Gilens 2005; Griffin, Hajnal, Newman, and Searle 2014; Griffin and Newman 2013; Hero and Tolbert 1995; Preuhs 2005; Preuhs and Juenke 2011) have concluded that minority groups are dealing with serious underrepresentation in Congress. In order to study underrepresentation, researchers orient their studies towards a particular type of representation. Most studies of substantive representation examine what is known as "dyadic representation" asking whether a "direct link exists between the voting patterns of elected representatives and their constituents' interests" (Hero and Tolbert 2005, 646; see Griffin and Newman 2007; Griffin, Newman, and Wolbrecht 2012; Merolla, Sellers, and Fowler 2013). For example, Griffin, Newman, and Wolbrecht (2012) examined the dyadic relationship between female citizens and female members of Congress to show whether "female members of Congress improve the representation experienced by their own female constituents" (Griffin, Newman, and Wolbrecht 2012, 3).

Using this approach, Hero and Tolbert (2005) find that little or no direct or indirect substantive representation of Latinos in the U.S. House occurs. They conclude, "the absence of descriptive and/or substantive (dyadic) representation of Latinos as Latinos in Congress mirrors



their descriptive underrepresentation at virtually all levels and in all institutions of American government” (Hero and Tolbert 2005, 649). Other studies (e.g. Griffin and Newman 2007, 2008; Preuhs 2005) reflect how members of the House of Representatives tend to vote in ways that better reflect the policy preferences of their white constituents than those of their Latino constituents, which shows the political inequality in government action and the power of the majority to set policy. In addition, African Americans’ policy preferences are also less represented than whites’ preferences in the legislative behavior of their representatives (Ellis 2012; Griffin and Newman 2008).

Even though these minority legislators propose more often than their white colleagues, they have greater difficulty in seeing that legislation enacted, which exemplifies the continuous underrepresentation of minority constituents (Merolla, Sellers, and Fowler 2013). With real imbalances occurring in the policy world, the government has been shown to respond much more to the advantaged interests than it does to the disadvantage preferences with both class and race shaping policy responsiveness (Griffin, Hajnal, Newman, and Searle 2014). Hence I base my first hypothesis on the findings that ethnic and racial minorities are underrepresented. I expect Asian American constituents to have lower win ratios compared to White constituents, meaning they get less from the government compared to their White peers. Studying Asian Americans, I will extend current findings on underrepresentation of minority groups by Congress.

### ***Minority Legislative Behavior***

From a substantive representation standpoint, minority legislative behavior can be measured most easily from roll-call votes. However, other Washington based activities like bill-sponsorship, co-sponsorship, committee positions, and accumulative leadership are important

dimensions of legislative behavior as well (Casellas 2007; Grose 2011). Studies of various forms of minority legislative behavior find evidence that minority members of Congress behave differently compared to White constituents.

Minority legislators propose legislation supporting their group interest more often than their white colleagues, though they have greater difficulty in seeing that legislation enacted (Merolla, Sellers, and Fowler 2013). Similarly, female members of Congress provide representation because they are “like-minded” with their female constituents. Hence, they show substantive representation by pushing for women’s policy preferences including: health; law, crime, and family; and labor, employment, and immigration (Black 2013; Carroll 2005; Griffin, Newman, and Wolbrecht 2012; Swers 2002, 2013; Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer 2013). Christian Grose (2011) found that black legislators are more likely than other legislators to make substantive decisions affecting African American constituents. Black representatives allocate more federal projects to heavily African American populated areas, give substantially larger amounts of federal money to African Americans, and enhance African Americans’ interests via bill sponsorship, committee choice, and legislative activities than do their white colleagues (Grose 2011; see also Haynie 2001; Preuhs 2006; Rocca and Sanchez 2008). Even though only some evidence relating to Latino representation shows distinctive patterns, the evidence can generally support similar conclusions to African American representation studies. Mindiola and Gutierrez (1984) found that in the Texas state legislature, Latino legislators tend to propose more bills of Latino interest than others do. Wilson (2010, 1059) shows Latino representatives not only responding to substantive and symbolic concerns of Latino constituents, but also “an added element of closeness to this constituency, and willingness to advocate on behalf of Latinos”.

Overall, ethnic candidates are found to direct more resources to mobilize voters in their related ethnic communities (Leighley 2001).

Past studies show that African American legislators behave differently compared to their White members of Congress through roll call voting and other legislative activities. Even though weaker, evidence also shows that Latino American legislators behave differently than White members of Congress, typically in ways that represent the interests of their minority constituents. Since this is occurring in these minority groups, the purpose of this study is to learn whether Asian American legislators behave differently than other members within their party as well.

### ***Representation of Asian Americans in Congress Literature***

Literature on Asian American Congressional representation is available; however it is extremely limited. Hence, I review the literature on Asian American history, the group label itself, Asian American policy interests, and Asian American political participation to establish background information on this emerging pan-ethnic group.

### ***Asian American History in the United States***

The relationship between the United States and Asian Americans has been strained due to various immigration restrictions and an anti-Oriental sentiment. From the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which prohibited all immigration of Chinese laborers, to the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1908, which was a diplomatic agreement between Japan and the United States to stop sending Japanese immigrant workers, the United States has been fairly unwelcoming to Asian immigrants. The Immigration Act of 1924, which was reluctantly signed and approved by President Coolidge, was the first step towards increasing the number of Asian

immigrants in the United States (Nakahashi and Lai 2003). However, the hallmark of immigration legislation was the Immigration Act of 1965, which still governs immigration law today. This act benefited Asian Americans the most by allowing a significant number to immigrate through chain migration, by which immigrants from a particular area follow one another to a different region (Nakahashi and Lai 2003, Lien 2001).

### *Asian American Policy Interests*

With its population growing at a rate of forty-six percent between 2000 and 2010, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders became one of the fastest growing populations in the United States (Lee and Ramakrishnan 2012; U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Because of this growing presence of Asian Americans, scholars have paid greater attention to the group. For example, the National Asian American Survey (NAAS) surveyed Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, asking questions about their policy preferences. The survey found four major policy categories that concern this group as a whole: the state of the economy, unemployment/jobs, healthcare, and education (Lee and Ramakrishnan 2012; Lien 2001). These are not distinctive issues. They are of concern to Americans of various ethnicities. In fact, it is not clear whether Asian Americans have distinctive group-based interests. Given that the pan-ethnic identity may be considerably weaker than the African American identity and that Asian Americans do not have clearly identifiable group-based political interests, it may be that there is nothing at all distinctive about Asian American representation or the legislative behavior of Asian American members of Congress.

*Asian Americans as a Group*

In fact, some argue that the group of Asian Americans is so diverse that it makes little sense to group them together. Asian Americans can be traced to their various and unique home countries of China, Mongolia, Japan, Vietnam, South Korea, Indonesia, Cambodia, and many more. However, even though Asian Americans may not share a common language, religion, immigration status, or broader cultural factors, they can relate to one another because of their treatment by broader American society. Seen as “strangers, yellow people, outsiders, and foreigners”, Asian Americans have never been fully accepted as Americans because other citizens in the United States see them as a threat due to economic competition and anti-Asian sentiments (Takaki 1989, 14). Categorized as a whole, all Asians are at risk because outsiders perceive them as a single group (Espiritu 1992).

For Asian Pacific Americans, the 1960s and the 1970s symbolized a period of increased political activity, which was evident with the emergence of Asian American elected federal officials and panethnic Asian American community-based political organizations (Nakahashi and Lai 2003). Asian Americans increased electoral participation has been significant. Many have become candidates, financial contributors, voters, campaign workers, and legislative liaisons and continue to become more and more active as each election season passes (Nakahashi and Lai 2003). In addition, civic and religious organizations are some of the most important institutional engines of pan-ethnic group formation. According to Lee, Junn, Ramakrishnan, and Wong (2011), this civic involvement will be strongly associated with voting turnout.

Two key events played a large role in the creation of an Asian American panethnic attitude. First in 1982, Vincent Chen, a young Chinese man in Detroit, was beaten to death

by two white autoworkers. However, they were sentenced to only three years' probation and fined \$3780 each. Not a single day was spent in prison for Chin's murder. Across the nation, Pan-Asian organization like the American Citizens for Justice generated pan-Asian consciousness by gathering together to demand the prosecution of Chin's killers (Takaki 1989). Second, only 10 years later, the 1992 Los Angeles Riots shook the largest Korean-American community in the United States. Due to the rage inspired by the Rodney King trials, riots, civil disobedience, and looting broke out. This was most felt by and directed towards Koreatown entrepreneurs, which forced them to fight and protect their own property. After three days, there was an estimated 58 dead, 2,400 injured, 11,700 arrested, and \$717 million in damages (Abelmann and Lie 1995). According to Masuoka (2006), Asian Americans lacked the types of resources to participate in politics, so they acted as a collective bloc to allow this marginalized group to gain political leverage. Because of these horrific events which occurred in a span of 10 years, speedy developments in Pan-Asian American ethnic media outlets, organizations, and Asian American leaders who emerged to promote Asian Americans' well-being and camaraderie allowed for a pan-ethnic identity to start to take root.

Furthermore, Schildkrout (2012) found that Asian Americans would prefer a candidate who shares their national origin or Asian background and felt a linked fate with other Asian Americans. Through this idea of linked fate, ethnic identification stimulates participation and assimilation into the pan-ethnic identity, especially through generational progression (e.g. first to second, second to third) (Oh 2013; Lee, Junn, Ramakrishnan, and Wong 2011). Making up only about five percent of the entire population, Asian Americans have sought to gain political power to create change for themselves. In 2012, three times as many Asian Americans ran for a political

position than in the past two elections, which shows the recent awakening of a political minority group confined to the margins of American society (Stein 2012). In order for these candidates who are elected to make a difference, they may feel the need to band together to differentiate themselves as a minority group within Congress and their own party. This leads me to my second hypothesis that Asian Americans will have different roll call votes compared to other members in their party.

### *Limits to Literature*

While studies focused on women and people of color have been quite extensive, the dearth of literature on Asian American representation in Congress must be remedied. With a growing number of Asian Americans running for elections and winning political positions, studying representation of Asian Americans is essential to supplementing current findings about representation within Congress.

## Research Design

I test the two hypotheses using statistical analyses, in order to answer my two research questions (see to Table 1).

**Table 1: Statistical Methods**

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Variables</b>		<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Data/Method</b>
<b>1</b>	By observing interest group scores, do Asian American legislators vote differently on roll call votes than other members of their party?	<u>Dependent:</u> Interest Group Scores	<u>Independent:</u> Party ID, Location, Gender, District Political Trait, Asian	By reviewing interest group scores, I expect Asian American legislators will have different roll call votes compared to other members in their party.	Ordinary Least Squares Regression (OLS)

2	By using the 2004 Annenberg Survey results, do Asian American constituents have lower win ratios than White constituents?	<u>Dependent:</u> Win Ratios	<u>Independent:</u> Ethnicity, Gender, District Heterogeneity, 2000 Voter Turnout, Income, Consistent Preferences, Co-Partisan, Preference Popularity	Using the 2004 Annenberg Survey's data, I predict that Asian Americans will have lower win ratios compared to White constituents.	Ordinary Least Squares Regression (OLS)
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### *Statistical Test 1: Ordinary Least Squares Regression (OLS)*

First, I ask whether Asian American legislators vote differently on roll call votes than other members of their party. By observing interest group scores, I analyze how each Asian American legislator voted on particular policy issues, in comparison to other party members in their party. I start with general ideological scores, as measured by DW-Nominate Scores, which range from -1 (liberal) to 1 (most conservative) and are based on all non-unanimous roll call votes. Then, I examine scores of four popular interest groups: League of Conservation Voters, Family Research Council Action, Club for Growth, and Chamber of Commerce. Because the 113<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress DW-Nominate scores have not been released, I use the 112<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress scores (2011-2012), while using the 113<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress scores (2013-2014) for the particular interest groups. I match all Congressional members' interest group scores to their party, Asian origins, and gender. I estimated an OLS regression model using these data to see whether Asian Americans legislators may vote differently on roll call votes than other party members.

The independent variables are fairly straightforward. Party affiliation identifies whether legislators associate with the Democratic or Republican Party. Location is based on whether the legislators represent districts from the South or not. District political trait identifies the percentage of the members of Congress' district that voted for President Barack Obama in the



2008 election. This is a common measure of district preferences (e.g. Jacobsen 2012). To qualify as an Asian American, the legislator must identify with a particular Asian-American ethnic background. The last demographic factor to be measured is gender. The dependent variable is the interest group scores, which shows how an individual legislator votes on particular policy issues (all are coded 0 – 100).

**Table 2: Interest Groups**

<i>Interest Group</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
League of Conservation Voters	LCV advocates for sound environmental laws and policies, in order to turn environmental values in priorities.
Chamber of Commerce	As the world’s largest business organization, it advocated pro-business policies that create jobs and grow our economy.
Club for Growth	An organization that promotes limited government, free market, economic freedom.
Family Research Council Action	This Christian organization stresses religious liberty, the value of human life, and family life.

***Statistical Test 2: Ordinary Least Squares Regression (OLS) and Difference of Means***

To test the second hypothesis, I ask whether Asian American constituents have lower win ratios compared to White constituents following the approach of Griffin and Newman (2013). By using the data from the National Annenberg Election Study, I determine how often each Asian American individual in the survey is a “policy winner” in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress (2005-2006). If, for example, a particular individual favored a decline in federal government welfare spending and their district legislator’s actions sought to decrease welfare spending, that individual is a policy

winner. If the legislator voted as the constituent preferred on a particular vote, I coded the constituent a “winner” (1) and if the MC voted against the constituent’s preferences, we coded the constituent a “loser” (0) on that vote (Griffin and Newman 2013). A constituent’s “win ratio” is calculated as the proportion of roll calls on which each constituent was a winner. I multiple this ratio by 100 to get a 0 – 100 scale used as the measure of policy representation. By analyzing this data, I compare Asian Americans’ win ratios to the win ratios of other ethnic groups.

Using the same model employed by Griffin and Newman (2013), my independent variables consist of demographic measures including gender, income, and racial group (Black, Hispanic, and Asian). Moreover, I included voting power, estimating an “individual’s probability of voting, along with a probability of voting for a particular party, given the citizen votes” (Griffin and Newman 2013, 54; Bartels 1998). I also control for voter turnout in the 2000 election, district heterogeneity, consistent preferences, co-partisanship, and preference popularity, which measures the degree to which an individual’s preferences diverge from the nation trends. See Griffin and Newman (2013) for discussion of how these variables are related to policy representation. The dependent variable is each respondent’s win ratios.

## **Results**

### ***Asian American Legislative Behavior***

I begin by analyzing the DW-Nominate scores for the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress (see Table 3). Controlling for just partisanship, Asian American legislators DW-nominate scores were 0.14 more liberal than non-Asian American legislators within their party ( $p < 0.01$ ). Hence there is a 99% probability that Asian American legislators do vote differently compared to other members of their party. Furthermore controlling for party identification, gender, location, and district

political heterogeneity, Asian American legislators vote 0.10 more liberally than other members of their party ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus even with the multiple controls, Asian Americans legislators' DW-NOMINATE scores were significantly more liberal<sup>1</sup>.

However when observing individual interest group scores, I do not see clear evidence that Asian American legislators are voting differently compared to other members of their party. In Table 4, I analyze legislators' roll call voting behavior as measured by four interest groups. Controlling for party identification, gender, southern residence, and district political traits, Asian American legislators are not significantly more liberal or conservative compared to other member of Congress.

The results both undermine and support my first hypothesis. This pattern of results may have occurred due to the fact Asian Americans vote slightly more liberally on all policy issues, which explains the DW-Nominate scores statistical significance. However when focusing on individual interest group scores, Asian Americans legislators may not appear to be voting more liberally at statistically significant levels simply because there are not enough votes in each domain to reach statistical significance. Another possible reason could be that Asian American legislators do not vote distinctively in these domains but do so in other domains<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 3: DW-Nominate Scores (112<sup>th</sup> Congress)**

Asian	-0.14 (0.04)***	-0.10 (0.04)**
Republican	1.06 (0.01)***	0.93 (0.02)***

<sup>1</sup> To provide some scale, .10 is about 20 percent of a standard deviation and is the size of the difference between Maxine Waters (D-CA) and Janice Hahn (D-CA).

<sup>2</sup> For all tables, standard error is in the parentheses.

South		0.01 (0.02)
Women		-0.01 (0.02)
District Political Traits		-0.56 (0.07)***
Constant	-0.39 (0.01)***	-0.01 (0.05)
$R^2$	0.92	0.93
$N$	446	446

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 4: Interest Group Scores (113<sup>th</sup> Congress)**

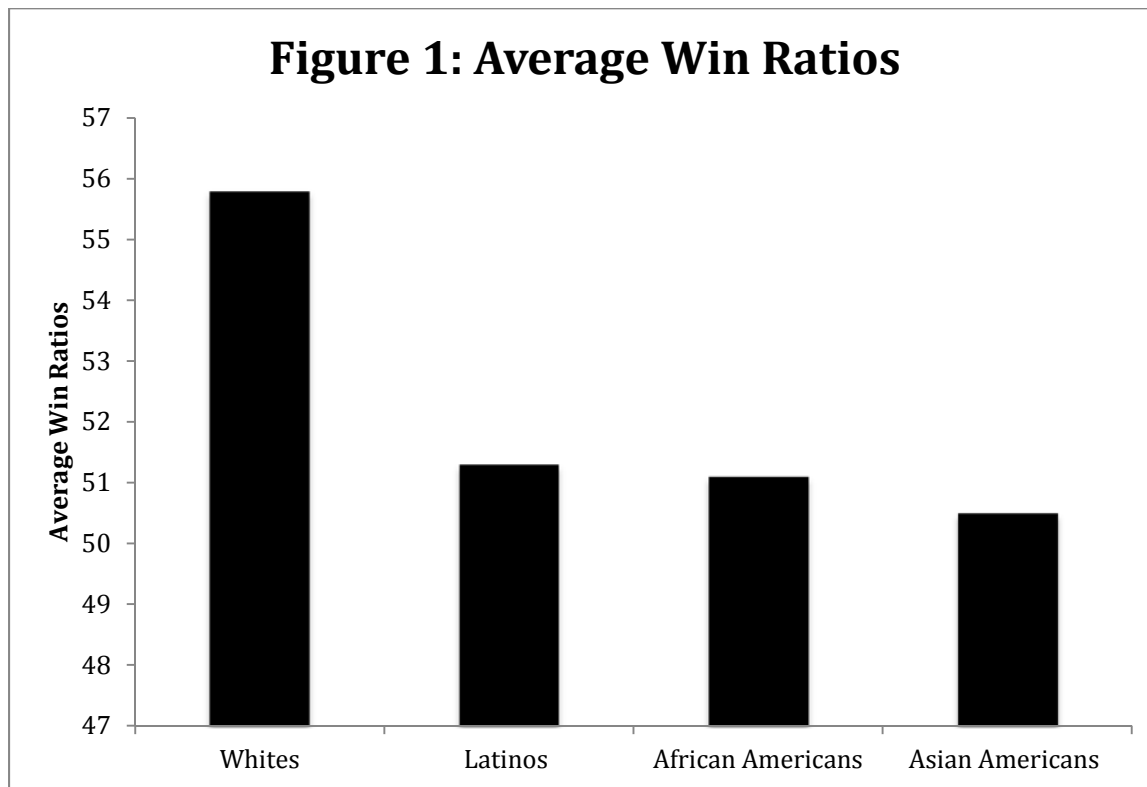
	League of Conservation Voters	Club for Growth	Chamber of Commerce	Family Research Council
Asian	4.91 (3.27)	-0.01 (0.04)	-1.77 (2.44)	-3.18 (4.13)
Party ID	-69.23 (1.59)***	0.53 (0.02)***	37.71 (1.50)***	70.30 (2.01)***
Location	-3.77 (1.06)***	0.05 (0.01)***	-0.38 (1.03)	8.40 (1.34)***
Gender	0.83 (1.29)	-0.00 (0.01)	-1.43 (1.24)	-1.00 (1.64)
District Political Traits	0.31 (0.05)***	-0.00 (0.00)***	-0.35 (0.05)***	-0.48 (0.06)***
Constant	67.79 (3.36)***	0.31 (0.04)***	63.62 (3.17)***	34.81 (4.24)***
$R^2$	0.94	0.90	0.86	0.92
$N$	434	429	441	433

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

### ***Representation of Asian American Constituents***

To this point, the results suggest that Asian American legislators' roll call voting behavior leans liberally overall, however when analyzing individual interest group, that liberal lean is no longer seen. Now, I orient my analysis to the win ratios of Asian American constituents compared to White constituents. The average win ratios for Whites are 55.8

compared to Latinos at 51.3, African Americans at 51.1, and Asian Americans at 50.5. Whites win ratios are significantly greater than each of the other three groups. Importantly, Asian American win ratios are just as low as African Americans and Latino win ratios. (There are no statistically significant differences across these three groups.)



I also estimated a multiple variant OLS model to control for other factors known to affect win ratios as describe above. The results show that constituents' sex and income is significantly related to win ratios, as is the consistency of constituent preferences, the popularity of their preferences, their voting power, whether they are co-partisanship, and the heterogeneity of the district they live in. Additionally, they show win ratios significantly lower for Black and Hispanic constituents compared to White constituents (see Table 5).

More importantly for my hypothesis, Asian Americans constituents also have significantly lower win ratios compared to White constituents ( $p < 0.01$ ). Substantively speaking,

Asian American constituents' win ratios are about 4.5 points lower than White constituents' win ratios on the 0 – 100 scale. In terms of substantive significance, the 4.5 point difference found between Asian and White constituents is significantly greater than the difference in win ratios between men and women (about 0.75 points) and the difference between highest and lowest income earners (1.2 points,  $p < 0.05$ ). Past studies (e.g. Gilens 2012; Gilens and Page 2014; Griffin, Newman, and Wolbrech 2012) have shown the unequal representation of gender and income groups, so this finding further supports the struggles of Asian American constituents and the need for more studies to examine this growing ethnic group. Asian American constituents' win ratios are just as disadvantaged as Hispanics and African Americans constituents.

**Table 5: National Annenberg Survey (2004)**

	Overall winner
African-American	-3.40 (0.60)***
Latino	-3.62 (0.62)***
Asian	-4.57 (1.27)***
Gender	-0.74 (0.31)**
Household Income	-1.17 (0.62)*
Voter in 2000	-0.04 (0.42)
Consistent Preferences	12.65 (0.92)***
Co-partisan	13.55 (0.36)***
Voting power	2.49 (0.18)***
District Heterogeneity	-3.37 (1.96)*
Preference Popularity	-15.60 (0.55)***

Constant	55.32 (1.01)***
$R^2$	0.07
$N$	37,977

p<0.1; \*\* p<0.05; \*\*\* p<0.01

### **Conclusion**

Due to the lack of research on Asian Americans, I have aimed this study to be the first step in understanding Asian American representation. My results have shown two important aspects of Asian American representation. First, Asian American constituents face unequal representation by Congress, being underrepresented to the same degree as African Americans and Latino Americans. Second, Asian American legislators vote more liberally overall, but this liberal tendency is not clear in specific domains. My findings show how Asian Americans are dealing with serious underrepresentation by Congress, while Asian American legislative behavior is still in need of further research. Overall, studying Asian Americans could supplement representation research affecting minority groups, whether positively or negatively.

The limited data available on Asian American policy interests creates limitations within my research. Griffin, Newman, and Wolbrecht (2012) were able to analyze the effect of legislator's sex on women's policy representation by comparing the level of representation for women represented by men in Congress to the level of representation for women represented by women. Using similar methods to those of Grose's (2014) longitudinal study on African American legislative behavior from 1994 – 2002 allow a study of whether Asian American legislators directly represent Asian American constituents' policy interests better than non Asian Americans. However with no specific policy agenda for Asian Americans established in the literature, I was unable to do so. Moreover, even with over 2,000 Asian American respondents the NAES only included fewer than 40 Asian Americans represented by Asian American

members of Congress. In addition, due to my time constraints, I find myself unable to test for reliability. If possible, I would have expanded my analysis of interest group scores to see whether there are specific domains with distinctive Asian American roll call behavior.

Additionally, replicating the analysis at different time points would have been beneficial for the issue of reliability. The lack of availability of the 2008 or 2012 National Annenberg Election Study made my data a bit dated<sup>3</sup>. Having that data would have produced more recent and applicable results. However, even with these limitations, my quantitative approaches allow me to answer my research. Overall, my findings help fill the gap in the literature caused by limited research on Asian Americans and representation. This paper produces findings previously unknown about the political representation of this growing population within the United States.

For future research, even though literature argues there are not distinctive Asian American policy priorities or positions currently, it would be enlightening to conduct a study or survey solely for the purpose of discovering whether this is true or not. If cohesive group preferences are found, researchers could use a similar winning/losing model; therefore they would be able to compare the states preferences to respondents' particular legislators' actions, focusing especially on Asian American legislators to see whether they are representing Asian Americans better. Beyond roll call votes, Christian Grose (2011) studies other legislative behavior (e.g. committee activity, bill sponsorship) to see how African Americans were representing African American constituents and voters. To perform a similar analysis for Asian American legislators' political behavior may bring light to the unknown minority group. In fact, it is often in these types of legislative activities where ethnic minorities most stand out from their white peers.

This study provides novel evidence that Asian American members of Congress vote consistently more liberally than Whites and that Asian Americans are underrepresented as much



as African Americans and Latinos. As one of the fastest growing populations in the United States, Asian Americans must be focused on and more research must be performed on this minority group to understand how Asian Americans legislate and how Asian American in the mass public are represented in Congress. Seeing whether Asian American legislators typically to vote as a unified group to show solidarity with their ethnic background or representing the interests of Asian American across the United States is crucial in deepening our understanding of representation.

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