# Beyond Pan-Ethnicity: Responsiveness of Elected Officials to Asian American Subgroups

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To what extent do American political officials discriminate against Asians? Asian American is one of the major racial/ethnic groups in the United States and it is currently the fastest-growing racial group. However, studies on the representation of Asian Americans are extremely limited. Studies also commonly view Asian Americans as a single, homogenous group and omit the heterogeneity within this unique population. I argue that, to better understand any racial/ethnic group, we have to look into the ethnic subgroups and examine them as separate populations. In this study, I conduct an audit experiment and send emails to more than 2000 state legislators, manipulating names of senders to represent different Asian subgroups. I find that none of the subgroups received a lower response rate than white constituents, regardless of the officials' racial group and partisan affiliation. However, Korean constituents are less likely to receive a friendly response, compared to white and Vietnamese constituents. The results also show that Latino and Black legislators are less friendly in their emails than their Asian and white counterparts. This study sheds light on the heterogeneity of racial/ethnic groups which scholars have routinely overlooked.

# Introduction

To what extent do American political officials discriminate against Asians? Are all Asian ethnic subgroups being treated the same? Despite that Asian American makes up a substantial portion of the population in the United States, its representation has gotten much less attention. In spite of the growth of using audit experiments to examine political representation and discrimination (i.e., Butler 2014; Butler and Broockman 2011; Hughes et al. 2019; White, Nathan, and Faller 2015), to my knowledge, Asian American is not included in all but one of the audit experiments that examines responsiveness of the elected officials. Gell-Redman and colleagues (2018) use Chinese to represent Asians in their study and find that they are about 9 percent less likely to receive a response from the state legislators compared to white constituents. This bias comes from representatives of both parties. However, the study did not look at or compare across several Asian subgroups.

The current environment provides a critical opportunity to study the representation of Asian Americans because of two competing expectations. On the one hand, recent development of COVID-19 has spurred the growth of racism towards Asians, with over 1700 reports of coronavirus discrimination across 45 states since March 2020. Nine out of ten respondents

believed that they were targeted because of their race.[1] President Trump has repeatedly tweeted messages that promote xenophobia, such as the "Chinese virus" and "kung-flu." Both presidential candidates have received criticism from Asian American activists due to the xenophobic messages in their campaign advertisements.[2] The trade tensions between the US and China have further fostered the public's negative attitudes towards China, particularly among Republicans (Pew 2019). Therefore, one may expect that Asians, particularly the Chinese might be discriminated both by the public and the elected officials. The personal bias of the officials against minorities that have been observed (Costa 2017) should be primed in this political environment.

On the other hand, Asian Americans make up a significant portion of the electorate in certain geographic areas, particularly in California, Hawaii, and New York (Wong et al. 2011). For instance, 13 percent of California voters are Asian Americans (Baldassare et al. 2019). The size of their population may increasingly become decisive in any elections; hence, electoral importance may have outweighed the personal biases of the elected officials. The positive image

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[1] http://www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Press_Release_5_13_20.pdf

[2] https://theintercept.com/2020/05/11/china-trump-biden-asian-american-hate-crimes/

of being the "model minority" (Danico and Ng 2004), should help reducing the biases against them.

Yet, whether we should expect all Asian American subgroups to be treated the same by the elected officials is unclear because the heterogeneity among Asian Americans subgroups is high (e.g., Lien, Conway, and Wong 2003, 2004; Ramakrishnan et al. 2018; Sadhwani 2020; Tam 1995; Wong et al. 2011). In particular, although Asian Americans are typically viewed as less politically active, it is inaccurate to generalize this notion to all subgroups because some subgroups are actually more politically active than African Americans and just slightly behind the whites (Ramakrishnan 2017). In addition, not all Asian American subgroups fit into the description of "model minority" and they do face significant discrimination in daily lives (Chi 2005; Chou and Feagin 2008; Ramakrishnan 2005; Ramakrishnan et al. 2018; Wong et al. 2011).

Given the current environment and the competing expectations, this project serves as a timely examination of the discrimination that Asian Americans are facing. My audit experiment is similar to Gell-Redman et al. (2018). The key difference is that I used names that represent white, Chinese, Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese American constituents. Drawing on previous research, I expect the elected officials to be less responsive to Asian than white constituents. I also expect that the officials will respond to Asian subgroups differently. Furthermore, the Republican elected officials should be less responsive than their Democratic counterparts

because Asian Americans are more likely to identify as a Democrat than a Republican (Ramakrishnan et al. 2018; Wong et al. 2011) and Republicans have more unfavorable views of China (Pew 2019).

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it contributes to the study of Asian American, which lacks studies on representation, despite its rapidly growing population (Pew 2015). Second, it sheds light on the heterogeneity within a racial/ethnic group by examining the subgroups rather than Asian as a whole. Third, it contributes to the study of discrimination of Asian Americans due to the recent development of COVID-19 and the trade war with China.

## Research Design

Using audit experiment is common for studying discrimination of the elected officials (i.e., Butler and Broockman 2011; Butler 2014; Gell-Redman et al. 2018; Hughes et al. 2019) because it brings high ecological validity by mimicking the daily interactions between the constituents and their representatives. Emailing is the most common form of communication between legislators and their constituents (Butler 2014; Goldschmidt and Ochreiter 2008). Sending emails directly examines how responsive is the legislator to her constituents and we can infer the difference in responsiveness to different groups as the priorities and allocation of resources of the legislator.

Information of the state legislators can be retrieved from the website of the state legislatures. Other background information is collected using the membership in ethnic caucuses or organizations, news coverage, candidate websites, and Ballotpedia. To limit the scope of the study and to ensure validity, I have limited my study to the top 15 states with the largest Asian American populations[3], resulting in a population of 2528 state legislators. Districts with less than 0.5 percent of Asians are eliminated because legislators from there are unlikely to receive a request from an Asian constituent in reality, hence would lead to validity issues. Legislators are assigned to treatment groups by state, district, political party, the percentage of Asian American in the district, and whether the legislator is up for re-election by using block randomization. The emails were sent out in mid-September over four waves. Each legislator only received one email with no follow-up. The ethical considerations of the study are discussed in Appendix 3.

## Treatment Conditions

To examine the biases of legislators, I vary the ethnicity of the constituent. This factor takes five values: white, Chinese, Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese. These four Asian American subgroups are picked due to their significant size of population and geographic areas, covering East, South,

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[3] The fifteen states are California, New York, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, Washington, Florida, Virginia, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Georgia, Michigan, and North Carolina.

and Southeast Asia. I assume that the names can indicate the race/ethnicity of the hypothetical constituent (Butler and Homola 2017).[4] Each value will consist of three names to minimize the chances of being discovered (Butler and Crabtree, n.d.). I pick names with high prevalence in order to ensure that the legislators would be able to identify the constituent's ethnicity. The last names are derived from the 2010 Census. The Census Bureau does not provide frequently observing first names; therefore, I have to rely on a few other local sources.[5] The names are available in Appendix 1.

The emails consist of common questions that constituents ask and inquiries to access the services that representatives frequently provide; they are outlined in Table 1. Questions are designed to be short and do not require a lot of time from the officials to respond to (Butler 2014). The variation of messages ensures that the questions appear to be from the constituents and minimizes the chance that staff working on multiple legislative offices would discover this experiment, which would undermine the validity of the study (Crabtree 2018; Gell-Redman et

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[4] Butler and Homola (2017)'s study only covered white, Latino, and African American names. Therefore, whether or not the officials or average citizens can distinguish Asian names is a concern. I will further discuss them in the later section.

[5] https://www.census.gov/topics/population/genealogy/data/2010_surnames.html; https://statewidedatabase.org/info/metadata/asian_american_ethnic_id_by_surname.pdf; https://news.joins.com/article/22067159; https://www.babycenter.in/a25036522/top-100-girl-names-in-india-in-2019

al. 2018). The template of the email is shown in Appendix 2. The name of the constituent is

indicated both in the email address and the signature at the bottom of the email.

Table 1: List of Messages

| Subject Line | Messages |
|---|---|
| Flag Request | I would like to honor my parents for their retirements. How long does the flag request process take? |
| Request for Military Academy Nomination | I would like to serve in the military. May you please provide me with a nomination? How competitive is that? |
| Registering to Vote | When is the registration deadline for the upcoming election? Where can I register to vote? |
| Unemployment Benefits | I am not sure if I am qualified for the unemployment benefits. May you please provide me with the corresponding resources? |
| Coronavirus | I would like to get a coronavirus test, but I am still unsure about my eligibility. Who can help me out with this? |

## Methods

The sample size was reduced to 2413 because of the inability to collect all email addresses[6]. I

have also discounted email addresses that were undeliverable due to incorrect email addresses

and technical difficulties[7]. After the second wave, I noticed that placing a flag request is not

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[6] California and Illinois have created an online system for the constituents to put in contact
with their representatives. Therefore, not all email addresses were collected from the officials'
website or the directories of the state legislatures.

[7] One email account encountered errors of reaching maximum delivery quotas.

always a common request that the officials have received, and they might forward the emails to more experienced legislative aides or officials for advice.[8] Therefore, I stopped sending out Flag Request after the second wave, resulting in a final sample size of 2189. Flag Requests from the first two waves were still being analyzed. The overall response rate was 55.1 percent, which lies in the middle of the range observed in previous studies of this kind (Costa 2017). This suggests that the requests were not seen as significantly different from the requests that have been used in other studies (Gell-Redman et al. 2018).

Response rate is a dichotomous dependent variable (Butler 2014; Butler and Broockman 2011; Gell-Redman et al. 2018). The timeliness of the message reflects the priority of the officials and it affects the perception of response quality by the constituent (Costa 2020). If there is a response from the official within two weeks from the date that the email has been sent, it is coded 1. It is coded zero if the official never responded or responded after two weeks.[9] Figure 1 displays the response rate for each group. It shows that Vietnamese is the most likely to receive

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[8] Clearly, legislators in certain states are more experienced in answering this question. This might have to do with the differences in the flag request process in different states. Legislators who are new are more likely to seek help from their staff.

[9] I did not analyze the average number of days it took a legislator to respond because the overwhelming majority of the responses were received just one day after the emails were being delivered.

a response (58.5 percent), followed by Indian (57.3 percent), white (56.1 percent), Chinese (52.7 percent), and Korean (50.3 percent). The average of all Asian subgroups is 54.8 percent.

Figure 1: Response rate by group
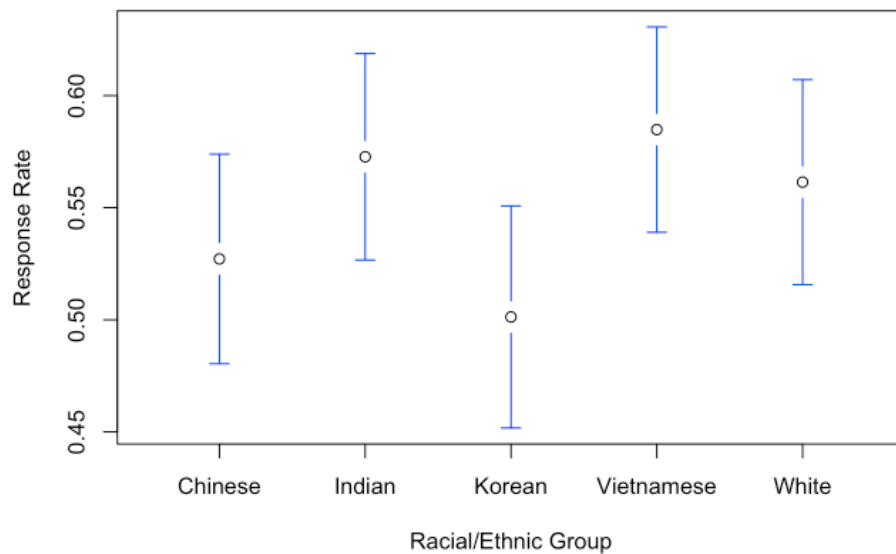


*Note:* 95 percent intervals.

To examine the quality of the responses, I look at the friendliness of the response. An email is coded as "friendly" when the official offer to be of future assistance ("Please let me know if you have other questions") or sending good wishes ("Have a great day"). This is similar to the coding rules of White, Nathan, and Faller (2014). In addition, I code "friendly" if the official expressed excitement, such as using exclamation mark. Coding examples are available in

Appendix 4. It is coded zero otherwise. Non-responses are also coded zero to avoid post-treatment bias (Coppock 2019).

To account for covariates and better the accuracy of the estimates, in the following, all treatment effects are estimated by using linear probability models. I also include Democrats, re-election, legislative chambers, Asian population, and the race of the legislators in the specifications. The baseline for all specifications is white constituents.[10] I include fixed effects to account for state covariates, and robust standard errors clustered on state in all specifications.

## Empirical Results

The results of the model demonstrate similar pattern that I have observed in the raw data. Under the first column of Table 2, I compare the response rate of the Asian subgroups to white constituents. None of the coefficients is statistically significant, meaning that all Asian constituents are as likely as the white constituents to receive a response. Next, I examine whether there is partisan differential because the Republican officials should be more likely to discriminate against Asian Americans, and Asians are more likely to be Democrats

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[10] I also aggregated all Asian subgroups into Asian and compared them with white constituents. Results are reported in Appendix 7.

(Ramakrishnan et al. 2018; Wong et al. 2011), so Democratic legislators should have more incentive to response. Therefore, I interact Democrats with each of the subgroup. The estimates of the interaction terms are small and insignificant, meaning that Democrats and Republicans respond to all groups at roughly the same rate. This is contrary to my expectation. To examine the quality of the responses, the second column of Table 2 compares the friendliness of the responses. The coefficient for Korean is negative ($p<.01$) and indicates that Korean constituents are about 12.6 percent less likely to receive a friendly response, compared to white constituents. The unfriendliness towards Korean constituents is driven by Republicans as the interaction term between Korean and Democrats is positive and significant ($p<.01$). There is no partisan differential for any other Asian constituents in terms of friendliness.

Since Korean constituents has received the lowest response rate, I run the exact same model with Korean as the baseline. The results are reported in Appendix 6. Column 1 reports the model that uses response as the dependent variable. Since no coefficient associated with the Asian subgroups or white is significant, Korean constituents receive a response rate that is indistinguishable from other constituents, consistent with the results in Table 2. Under column 2, however, the coefficient of Vietnamese is .107 ($p<.05$), meaning that Vietnamese constituents are 10.7 percent more likely to receive a friendly response than Korean constituents. Meanwhile, all other coefficients of the Asian subgroups are statistically insignificant, indicating that no other constituents receive more friendly responses. Thus, the results demonstrate that not all Asian

subgroups receive responses with the same quality, even though the likelihood of receiving a response is similar.

Table 2: Regressions with Partisan Interactions

|  | Reply | Friendliness |
|---|---|---|
| Constant | 0.305 * (0.107) | 0.268 * (0.082) |
| Democrat | 0.026 (0.058) | -0.001 (0.039) |
| Chinese | -0.021 (0.042) | -0.058 (0.051) |
| Korean | -0.062 (0.047) | -0.126 ** (0.036) |
| Vietnamese | 0.032 (0.033) | -0.019 (0.040) |
| Indian | 0.026 (0.049) | -0.084 (0.059) |
| Democrat x Chinese | -0.021 (0.051) | 0.011 (0.051) |
| Democrat x Korean | -0.011 (0.047) | 0.124 ** (0.035) |
| Democrat x Vietnamese | -0.010 (0.052) | 0.015 (0.045) |
| Democrat x Indian | -0.020 (0.065) | 0.077 (0.067) |
| N | 2189 | 2189 |
| R2 | 0.078 | 0.053 |

Robust standard error. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

The existing literature shows that legislators are responsive to those who share the same characteristics with them and discriminate against those who do not (Broockman 2013; Butler and Broockman 2011). Therefore, I examine if Asian legislators would be more responsive to Asian constituents and if other legislators are less responsive. I interact the race of the officials with each Asian subgroup. I also examine the quality of the responses. The results are reported in Table 3. None of the coefficients under column 1 is significant, indicating that legislators from different racial/ethnic groups respond to the constituents at roughly the same rate and no legislators is particularly likely to respond to a particular Asian subgroup. Column 2 presents interesting results: Latino legislators and Black legislators are 23.1 percent and 31.6 percent less likely to be friendly ($p<.05$ and $p<.01$, respectively). However, are they unfriendly towards a particular Asian subgroup? The answer appears to be a no, because all the interaction terms are positive but insignificant. Hence, there is no evidence that Latino legislators and Black legislators are discriminative against Asian Americans, even though they appear to be less friendly. A plausible reason might be that Latino and Black legislators prioritize serving constituents who share the same characteristics with theirs (Broockman 2013).

Table 3: Regressions by Race/Ethnicity of the Legislators

| | Reply | Friendliness |
|---|---|---|
| Constant | 0.307 * (0.108) | 0.257 * (0.082) |
| Democrat | 0.014 (0.039) | 0.043 (0.031) |
| Latino Leg. | -0.095 (0.124) | -0.231 * (0.095) |
| Black Leg. | -0.188 (0.097) | -0.316 ** (0.071) |
| Asian Leg. | 0.021 (0.148) | -0.152 (0.078) |
| White Leg. | -0.004 (0.105) | -0.063 (0.062) |
| Asian Leg. x Chinese | 0.094 (0.139) | 0.182 (0.119) |
| Asian Leg. x Korean | -0.061 (0.107) | 0.255 (0.167) |
| Asian Leg. x Vietnamese | 0.137 (0.130) | 0.111 (0.134) |
| Asian Leg. x Indian | 0.023 (0.090) | 0.004 (0.084) |
| Latino Leg. x Chinese | 0.070 (0.128) | 0.187 (0.086) |
| Latino Leg. x Korean | 0.029 (0.163) | 0.149 (0.074) |
| Latino Leg. x Vietnamese | 0.011 (0.179) | 0.159 (0.105) |
| Latino Leg. x Indian | -0.050 (0.109) | 0.104 (0.088) |
| Black Leg. x Chinese | 0.044 (0.058) | 0.126 (0.060) |
| Black Leg. x Korean | 0.090 (0.081) | 0.131 (0.082) |
| Black Leg. x Vietnamese | 0.033 (0.102) | 0.129 (0.093) |
| Black Leg. x Indian | 0.018 (0.145) | 0.143 (0.099) |
| N | 2189 | 2189 |
| R2 | 0.079 | 0.056 |

Robust standard error. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

In short, the results show that Democratic and Republican legislators are equally responsive to all Asian constituents and white constituents, contrary to the previous study (Gell-Redman et al. 2018). However, I find that Korean constituents are less likely to receive a friendly response, compared to white and Vietnamese constituents. Democratic legislators are significantly friendlier to Korean constituents than their Republican counterparts. Latino and Black legislators are less friendly but not towards a particular subgroup. I find no evidence that Asian legislators are friendlier than the other legislators either, indicating that Asian legislators are not particularly responsive to the Asian constituents.

This study relies on the assumption that the officials or their staff are able to distinguish the ethnicity associated with each name. To validate the results, I conduct a survey via M-Turk (n=157) and ask the respondents to evaluate each name; details are reported in Appendix 9. Respondents generally associate Asians with having higher education and leaning Democratic which correspond to the model minority stereotype. I find that 26 to 45 percent of the respondents can accurately identify the ethnicity of the aliases. Respondents are more likely to identify Chinese and Indian correctly and misidentify Korean and Vietnamese as Chinese. Hence, it hinders the ability for me to draw confident conclusion that the Republican legislators convey unfriendliness towards Korean on the premise that they can correctly identify the constituent as Korean. The fact that the majority of the respondents could not identify the names may also explain why the response rates for all four Asian subgroups are statistically

indistinguishable; but it cannot explain why Korean constituents are less likely to receive friendly responses. The mixed findings demonstrate unique challenges to using audit experiment to study responsiveness to Asian Americans because legislators and the general public are not as familiar to their names as they are to Latinos and African Americans (Butler and Homola 2017).

## Conclusion

As discussed by other scholars, Asian ethnic subgroups participate in politics differently and have varying turnout rates (Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004; Wong et al. 2011). The extent of racial discrimination that they face may not be the same either (Ramakrishnan et al. 2016). Recognizing the lack of research on the political representation of Asian Americans and the commonly overlooked heterogeneity within this group, I sent emails to the elected officials using last names of different Asian ethnic subgroups to examine whether elected officials respond to their constituents differently depending on which ethnic subgroup the constituent belongs to. I find that Asian Americans receive a response rate that is statistically indistinguishable from the white constituents. Contrary to my expectation, Democrats and Republicans respond to Asian Americans at similar rates, meaning that partisanship has no effect on the legislators' responsiveness. In addition, I find that Korean constituents are less likely to receive a friendly response from Republican legislators. Latino and Black legislators are less friendly but not

towards a particular subgroup. I find no evidence that Asian legislators are friendlier than the other legislators either; it potentially has to do with the small sample size of Asian American legislators. Yet, it is unclear if the officials can accurately identify the ethnicity of the constituents. The study also cannot answer *why* exactly are we observing the particularistic unfriendliness. Nonetheless, legislators' differential responsiveness to different groups of Asian Americans is demonstrated and scholars should devote more attention to the heterogeneity among Asians. Future research of this kind can explicitly inform the officials of the ethnicity of the individual and more work certainly needs to be done on discrimination against Asian Americans.

Another caveat needs to be noted – this study only covers 15 states with high number of Asian Americans. The sample also eliminated districts where Asians only account for less than 0.5 percent of the population for validity reasons. Gell-Redman et al. (2018)'s study, which cover 42 states, finds discrimination against Asian Americans. The discrepancy between Gell-Redman et al. (2018) and this study might imply that Asians are being discriminated in places that do not have a large population of Asian Americans. Reasonably, legislators are strategic in prioritizing their likely supporters, particularly among those who serve in majority-black or majority-Latino districts. Legislators from places with rare presence of Asians might also have more personal biases. So, the districts in the 27 states that I did not cover likely have legislators who are more discriminative against Asian constituents. From another perspective, however, it is plausible that the legislators simply found it odd to receive requests from Asian constituents and checked that

the constituent is not on the constituent-list that they keep. Thus, they were suspicious of the requests. This is an inherent limitation of any kind of audit experiment. Though this study is admittedly limited in scope, the 15 states account for 80 percent of the Asian American population in the US (US Census 2012). There are rooms to increase the sample size by covering places such as Minneapolis, Portland, and Phoenix, because Asians tend to live in big cities. The key for future research is to strike a balance between validity and generalizability.

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# Appendix

Appendix 1: Name of Aliases by Nation of Origin

| Racial/Ethnic Group | First Name | Last Name | Last Name Prevalence (rank) | Percentage of Asian |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | Mary, | Smith | 1 | .5 |
| | Patricia | Miller | 7 | .54 |
| | Jennifer | Anderson | 15 | .61 |
| Chinese | Fang, | Chen | 150 | 96.12 |
| | Xiu Ying | Li | 273 | 96.78 |
| | Na | Yang | 290 | 96.81 |
| Indian | Arya | Patel | 95 | 94.78 |
| | Sannyi | Singh | 260 | 82.77 |
| | Maira | Khan | 427 | 81.25 |
| Korean | Ha-yoon | Kim | 77 | 94.47 |
| | Seo-yun | Park | 289 | 72.98 |
| | Seo-yeon | Choi | 676 | 96.09 |
| Vietnamese | Mai | Nguyen | 38 | 96.45 |
| | Tai | Le | 277 | 95.59 |
| | Linh | Pham | 370 | 96.33 |

Notes: The 2010 census defines Asian as non-Hispanic Asian and native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander.

Appendix 2: Template of an Email Sent to State Legislators

From: **[Treatment Name]**
To: **[Legislator's Email Address]**
Subject: **[Subject Line]**

Dear **[Representative/Senator] [Legislator's Last Name],**
My name is **[Treatment Name]** and I live in your district. I have a couple of questions for you.
**[Message]**

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks,
**[Treatment Name]**

*Note: Bolded items were manipulated across emails. Items in italics were assigned randomly based on the treatment group.*

**Appendix 3: Ethical Consideration**

This study received Institutional Review Board approval but given the salience of the ethnic issues related to audit experiment, I shall devote more efforts to explain some of the concerns and how did I address them. The first concern would be the time cost imposed on the staff and the elected officials (Whitefield 2019). Having this concern in mind, my five email requests were intended to be easily answerable by the elected officials because these are common questions that they have gotten. They often can refer to the template or previous emails. From all the responses I have obtained, the median word count of replies is 52. This is much shorter than the other two studies of this kind (Butler 2014; Landgrave forthcoming). Using the same calculation that Landgrave (forthcoming) has done, I estimate the estimated time cost per subject and the estimated total time cost for this study. They are reported in table A3.

Table A3: Comparisons of Estimated Time Consumption

| Study | Present Paper | Landgrave (forthcoming) | Butler (2014) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Median Word Count | 52 | 199 | 284 |
| Estimated Time Cost per Subject (minutes) | 1.3 | 4.98 | 7.1 |
| Number of Impacted Subjects | 1206 | 230 | 3513 |
| Estimated Total Time Cost (hours) | 26.1 | 19.07 | 415.71 |

*Note:* Assuming the average typing speed is 40 WPM (Langrave forthcoming).

The second concern would be that the intervention might affect the election. To address this, I fielded the experiment in mid-September so that the study will be done before the deadline for registration. Hence, real constituents who would need help with voter registration would not be significantly affected as the elected officials would have ample of time to respond to their requests. The study was designed to not take place in October or any dates close to the election for similar reasons: the interventions would not affect the daily legislator-constituent interaction that might influence the voting calculus of the voters and would avoid consuming the elected officials' time to prepare for reelection.

**Appendix 4: Coding Rules**

To examine the quality of the responses, I look at whether or not the responses were friendly. An email was coded as "friendly" when the official offer to be of future assistance ("Please let me know if you have other questions") or sending good wishes ("Have a great day"), this is similar to the coding rules of White, Nathan, and Faller (2014). In addition, I coded "friendly" if the official expressed excitement, such as the use of exclamation mark. Non-responses are coded as zero to avoid post-treatment bias (Coppock 2019). Below, I present two examples to illustrate my coding rules. The first email is considered as friendly because of the last two sentences ("I hope this information is of use to you." and "Thank you for participating in our Democracy."). This demonstrated the official's gratitude to the constituent for voting in the upcoming election. The second email is not considered as friendly because the official simply reply to the email with basic information without any salutations or any acts to convey friendliness.

Dear Mr. Fang,

I would also reach out to the Director of Administration for the Board of Elections in ~~NYC Georgea at 212 487 8849~~ she will be able to give you up to the minute places both to register and to vote at. Below I have included some other information regarding the voting dates as well.

MAIL REGISTRATION (N.Y. Election Law Section 5-210(3))
Applications must be postmarked no later than **October 9, 2020** and received by a board of elections no later than **October 14, 2020** to be eligible to vote in the General Election.

IN PERSON REGISTRATION (N.Y. Election Law Sections 5-210, 5-211, 5-212)
You may register at your local board of elections or any state agency participating in the National Voter Registration Act, on any business day throughout the year but, to be eligible to vote in the General Election, your application must be received no later than **October 9, 2020**. If honorably discharged from the US Military or have become a naturalized US Citizen after October 9, 2020, you may register in person at the Board of Elections up until October 24, 2020.

I hope this information is of use to you. Thank you for participating in our Democracy.

information on filing an unemployment claim, details on how employers can file partial claims, and resources for other reemployment assistance can be found on the agency's webpage at dol.georgia.gov.

Appendix 5: Regressions with Partisanship Interactions (Full)

| | Reply | Friendliness |
|---|---|---|
| Constant | 0.305 * (0.107) | 0.268 * (0.082) |
| Democrat | 0.026 (0.058) | -0.001 (0.039) |
| Upper Chamber | -0.007 (0.034) | -0.050 (0.026) |
| Latino Leg. | -0.096 (0.080) | -0.130 (0.062) |
| Black Leg. | -0.167 (0.076) | -0.230 ** (0.051) |
| Asian Leg. | 0.052 (0.103) | -0.077 (0.050) |
| White Leg. | -0.018 (0.099) | -0.082 (0.051) |
| Asian Population | 0.121 (0.089) | 0.092 (0.220) |
| Re-election | 0.101 ** (0.026) | 0.051 * (0.017) |
| Chinese | -0.021 (0.042) | -0.058 (0.051) |
| Korean | -0.062 (0.047) | -0.126 ** (0.036) |
| Vietnamese | 0.032 (0.033) | -0.019 (0.040) |
| Indian | 0.026 (0.049) | -0.084 (0.059) |
| Democrat x Chinese | -0.021 (0.051) | 0.011 (0.051) |
| Democrat x Korean | -0.011 (0.047) | 0.124 ** (0.035) |
| Democrat x Vietnamese | -0.010 (0.052) | 0.015 (0.045) |
| Democrat x Indian | -0.020 (0.065) | 0.077 (0.067) |
| N | 2189 | 2189 |
| R2 | 0.078 | 0.053 |

Robust standard error. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Appendix 6: Regressions with Partisanship Interactions
(Korean)

| | Reply | Friendliness |
|---|---|---|
| Constant | 0.243 (0.109) | 0.142 (0.069) |
| Democrat | 0.013 (0.063) | 0.120 ** (0.035) |
| Upper Chamber | -0.007 (0.034) | -0.050 (0.026) |
| Latino Leg. | -0.096 (0.080) | -0.130 (0.062) |
| Black Leg. | -0.167 (0.076) | -0.230 ** (0.051) |
| Asian Leg. | 0.052 (0.103) | -0.077 (0.050) |
| White Leg. | -0.018 (0.098) | -0.082 (0.051) |
| Asian Population | 0.122 (0.089) | 0.093 (0.219) |
| Re-election | 0.101 ** (0.026) | 0.051 * (0.017) |
| Chinese | 0.040 (0.045) | 0.068 (0.039) |
| White | 0.062 (0.047) | 0.126 ** (0.036) |
| Vietnamese | 0.094 (0.057) | 0.107 * (0.043) |
| Indian | 0.088 (0.053) | 0.043 (0.045) |
| Democrat x Chinese | -0.008 (0.057) | -0.111 * (0.051) |
| Democrat x White | 0.015 (0.047) | -0.119 ** (0.034) |
| Democrat x Vietnamese | 0.003 (0.069) | -0.107 (0.050) |
| Democrat x Indian | -0.007 (0.072) | -0.045 (0.056) |
| N | 2189 | 2189 |
| R2 | 0.078 | 0.053 |

Robust standard error. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Appendix 7: Regressions with Partisanship Interactions
(Aggregated)

| | Reply | Friendliness |
|---|---|---|
| Constant | 0.321 * (0.110) | 0.271 * (0.081) |
| Democrat | 0.028 (0.058) | 0.001 (0.039) |
| Upper Chamber | -0.007 (0.033) | -0.051 (0.025) |
| Latino Leg. | -0.111 (0.082) | -0.130 (0.061) |
| Black Leg. | -0.178 (0.078) | -0.230 ** (0.051) |
| Asian Leg. | 0.048 (0.103) | -0.075 (0.051) |
| White Leg. | -0.030 (0.102) | -0.081 (0.051) |
| Asian Population | 0.108 (0.085) | 0.095 (0.219) |
| Re-election | 0.100 ** (0.027) | 0.050 * (0.018) |
| Asian | -0.004 (0.031) | -0.070 (0.037) |
| Democrat x Asian | -0.018 (0.037) | 0.052 (0.034) |
| N | 2189 | 2189 |
| R2 | 0.073 | 0.050 |

Robust standard error. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Appendix 8: Regressions by Race/Ethnicity of the Legislators
(Full)

| | Reply | Friendliness |
|---|---|---|
| Constant | 0.307 * (0.108) | 0.257 * (0.082) |
| Democrat | 0.014 (0.039) | 0.043 (0.031) |
| Upper Chamber | -0.006 (0.034) | -0.052 (0.025) |
| Latino Leg. | -0.095 (0.124) | -0.231 * (0.095) |
| Black Leg. | -0.188 (0.097) | -0.316 ** (0.071) |
| Asian Leg. | 0.021 (0.148) | -0.152 (0.078) |
| White Leg. | -0.004 (0.105) | -0.063 (0.062) |
| Asian Population | 0.131 (0.092) | 0.079 (0.234) |
| Re-election | 0.103 ** (0.027) | 0.051 * (0.018) |
| Asian Leg. x Chinese | 0.094 (0.139) | 0.182 (0.119) |
| Asian Leg. x Korean | -0.061 (0.107) | 0.255 (0.167) |
| Asian Leg. x Vietnamese | 0.137 (0.130) | 0.111 (0.134) |
| Asian Leg. x Indian | 0.023 (0.090) | 0.004 (0.084) |
| Latino Leg. x Chinese | 0.070 (0.128) | 0.187 (0.086) |
| Latino Leg. x Korean | 0.029 (0.163) | 0.149 (0.074) |
| Latino Leg. x Vietnamese | 0.011 (0.179) | 0.159 (0.105) |
| Latino Leg. x Indian | -0.050 (0.109) | 0.104 (0.088) |
| Black Leg. x Chinese | 0.044 (0.058) | 0.126 (0.060) |
| Black Leg. x Korean | 0.090 (0.081) | 0.131 (0.082) |
| Black Leg. x Vietnamese | 0.033 (0.102) | 0.129 (0.093) |
| Black Leg. x Indian | 0.018 (0.145) | 0.143 (0.099) |
| N | 2189 | 2189 |
| R2 | 0.079 | 0.056 |

Robust standard error. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

**Appendix 9: Validation Study**

Questions may arise as to whether the elected officials can correctly identify the aliases and how do they perceive them. Therefore, after conducting the audit experiment, via M-Turk, I tested whether average citizens could identify the ethnicity associated with the aliases I used in the study. I asked about their perceived occupation, education, partisanship, and the ethnicity of the alias. Each respondent was presented with an example of the email that was sent out to the elected officials that asked for help with voter registration. I ran the test with this topic because this is the most commonly used topic in experiments of this kind. Each respondent was asked to evaluate five aliases that were randomly assigned from fifteen aliases. The final sample size of the survey was 157. The respondents are overwhelmingly white (78 percent), age between 25-49 (88 percent), female (68.3 percent), and college educated (76.8 percent). Although this is not representative of the population of the United States, it largely assembles the demographics of state legislators who are generally white, and college educated.

The table below summarizes the results which show that the respondents cannot clearly distinguish the ethnicity of the aliases. Whilst about 40 percent of the respondents can identify Chinese and Indian, only about 25 percent of the respondents can identify Korean and Vietnamese. It is apparent that Korean and Vietnamese aliases are often mis-identified as Chinese which makes sense because the names are relatively similar. Therefore, the results

suggest that state legislators are unlikely to distinguish the Asian aliases I used in the study. This may explain why the ethnic subgroups are treated in a statistically indistinguishable way.

In terms of the perceived socioeconomic status, respondents generally think that Asians are more educated and more likely to be a Democrat. This aligns with the fact that Asians are much more likely to be a Democrat than a Republican (Ramakrishnan et al. 2016) and the model minority stereotype. Indian seems to be perceived as less likely to be a professional and less educated, this may suggest that the model minority stereotype only applies to East Asians but not South Asians, echoing to Lee and Ramakrishnan (2019)'s findings that South Asians are less likely to be seen as Asians, compared to East Asians. Future studies can examine such proposition.

Table A9: Results of Validation Study

|  | White | Chinese | Indian | Korean | Vietnamese |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Occupation (%)** | | | | | |
| Accountant | 49.0 | 59.9 | 48.7 | 60.5 | 53.2 |
| Customer Service Representative | 51.0 | 40.1 | 51.3 | 39.5 | 46.8 |
| | | | | | |
| **Party (%)** | | | | | |
| Republican | 55.6 | 47.8 | 42.9 | 40.8 | 40.3 |
| Democrat | 44.4 | 52.2 | 57.1 | 59.2 | 59.7 |
| | | | | | |
| **Education (%)** | | | | | |
| Four-year college degree | 70.9 | 75.8 | 69.2 | 75.8 | 72.1 |
| High school diploma only | 29.1 | 24.2 | 30.8 | 24.2 | 27.9 |
| | | | | | |
| **Race (%)** | | | | | |
| Caucasian | **84.1** | 33.1 | 39.7 | 35.0 | 32.5 |
| Chinese | 8.61 | **44.6** | 10.9 | 26.1 | 22.7 |
| Indian (Asian) | 1.32 | 0 | **37.2** | 1.27 | 1.30 |
| Korean | 3.97 | 15.9 | 3.85 | **26.8** | 16.9 |
| Vietnamese | 1.99 | 6.37 | 8.33 | 10.8 | **26.6** |

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