Research Question: How do younger Vietnamese Americans vote compared to their older counterparts? What social influences contribute to this voting behavior?

Purpose/Objective/Approach

The United States has a complex, rich history with the Vietnamese, stemming from its controversial involvement in the Vietnam War. This conflict and its fallout kickstarted a large migration crisis lasting several decades wherein Vietnamese civilians fled Vietnam by boat or by legislation such as the Orderly Departure Program and the Amerasian Homecoming Act. Starting with roughly 125,000 Vietnamese arrivals in 1975, the United States is now home to the largest Vietnamese population outside of Vietnam, totaling around 2.2 million people as of 2019 (Harjanto and Batalova 2021; Budiman 2021).

It is incredibly important to study how Vietnamese Americans behave politically. Vietnamese Americans are becoming an important part of the Asian American electorate, as it still grows and is the fourth largest group of Asian Americans (Budiman and Ruiz 2021). Furthermore, many Vietnamese Americans are concentrated in specific areas of the United States, such as Little Saigon in Orange County, California or Harris County, Texas, meaning that they will have significant impacts in local and district elections (Harjanto and Batalova 2021). While there are studies that focus on Asian Americans as a whole, there are fewer that study Vietnamese Americans specifically. What makes this group especially important to study is their unique context in American history, providing multiple variables that could alter Vietnamese American partisanship.

Vietnamese migration lasted multiple decades, with numerous policies passed to assist with this process. Over time as the programs continued, the public largely disapproved of accepting Vietnamese migrants, despite the programs constantly being renewed (Stern 1981). Tensions boiled to the point where there was an altercation between the Ku Klux Klan and the Vietnamese in Galveston, Texas in 1981, where locals felt threatened by Vietnamese competition in the fishing market and sought the KKK’s assistance in intimidating the Vietnamese (Stevens 1981). Each wave of migrants faced a different reception and set of circumstances when they arrived to the United States. Studies indicate that older generations of Vietnamese migrants tend to vote conservatively compared to other Asian Americans, voting Republican due to multiple factors but the most important being the party’s anti-communist messaging (Le and Su 2017). This is a result of the war and conflict with the communist Viet Cong. Younger generations or more recent migrants tend to have more liberal views than their older counterparts, which studies on Asian
Americans as a whole and Vietnamese migrants have attributed to perceived social exclusion, warm embrace from the Democratic Party, and interactions with peers in school (Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlaner 1991; Raychaudhuri 2018; Le and Su 2017).

The importance and impact of studying Vietnamese American partisanship is threefold. The first is practical, as it provides campaigners and lawmakers an insight into how Vietnamese Americans vote and respond to different social stimuli. This could change messaging and outreach to this specific community, especially since they have significant say in their local and district elections. The second is to expand the knowledge on Vietnamese American partisanship. There is a lack of study on Vietnamese American partisanship compared to the scholarship on Asian Americans as a whole. This is an opportune time to remedy the disparity and study multi-generational differences as there is an aging immigrant population from the Vietnam War era and progeny that is either of age to vote or about to be. This study would provide important insight as to how different generations of Vietnamese Americans develop their views either independent of each other or together. The third is to expand on previous theories as to how Vietnamese Americans, and possibly Asian Americans tend to vote. Current studies suggest that Asian Americans, or Vietnamese Americans, vote due to certain social stimuli, such as cross-generational interaction, school, or lived experiences like the war. This project hopes to refine these theories by studying Vietnamese Americans specifically to see if these theories work only in the aggregate or not. If not, it would provide new insight that future scholarship could build off of.

To prepare for this project, I have reviewed numerous studies on Asian American voting behavior and available voting data, mostly from the most recent national elections. I also created a survey to be sent out to Vietnamese respondents in Orange County in hopes of gathering fresh data and make follow-up questions. In the past year, I have completed historical research on the United States’ reception to the Vietnamese migrants as part of a research seminar to better understand this community’s history and serve as a foundation for this project. By gaining a holistic view of their history, I can better craft my project and reach out to the community. The data I have compiled thus far will provide patterns that I can look for and test from respondent data.

**Research Method**

To fulfill the aspirations of this thesis, I will be surveying Vietnamese Americans via the qualtrics platform and incentivizing responses with Amazon gift cards. To gain in-depth data that could supplement survey data, I will be interviewing volunteers, remotely or in-person depending on respondent preference, from the survey and ask them about their responses in detail. This will be done in conjunction with analyzing existing literature on Asian American or Vietnamese American partisanship.
Responsibility

I will have the responsibility of completing the Political Science 182 Honors Thesis Workshop to hone my research skills. I will also be responsible for maintaining contact with my advisor throughout the academic year to ensure a successful thesis. It will be my responsibility to conduct the research and gather survey data from the targeted audiences. I will be reviewing and interpreting the data, with assistance from my advisor when I need it.

Timeline

- Fall Quarter 2022
  - Send in UROP Proposal
  - Finalize research design and create a plan on where to send the surveys.
- Winter Quarter 2023
  - January: Send out survey and analyze data as it comes in. Begin work on literature review section of thesis.
  - February: Begin interviewing volunteer respondents and interpret data for thesis. Work on other available sections and meet with advisor to ensure quality/progress.
  - March: Finalize respondent data and draft out the results section for my thesis.
- Spring Quarter 2023
  - Complete the results section and meet with advisor.
  - Finalize draft of thesis and touch up sections.
  - Present at UCI Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Itemized Budget

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Budgeted Amount</th>
<th>Explanation and Justification</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gas</td>
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<td>Transportation cost for student researcher to travel to interviews</td>
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References


