

Linked Fate in Asian America: Promise, Pitfalls, and
Practice

by

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Abstract

This thesis looks at the concept of linked fate, a term coined by Michael Dawson in 1994 to describe the relationship between personal political interests and racial group political interests. I argue that while the term is meant to demarcate a rational process by which people make a judgment about the efficiency of using race as a proxy for individual political decisions, it often leads to assumptions about in-group loyalty (i.e. blacks as a “captured constituency”). This leads to unique representational problems for Asian Americans. By demonstrating low levels of perceived linked fate, stereotypes that cast them as “apolitical” and politically docile are reinforced. Using interviews from Asian American civic leaders, secondary source literature on Asian American political mobilization, and coverage of recent news stories, this thesis argues that linked fate is never completely established in any community but historical legacies and contemporary realities make it dependably efficient for African Americans, while different, unique, historical and sociological conditions make the use of linked fate much more fraught in Asian American communities.

Chapter 1: What's So Black about the Black Utility Heuristic?

Michael Dawson's Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics is one of the most important works in the field of African American politics and racial and ethnic politics more broadly. Dawson argues that for black people in the United States, race serves a critical function in how they develop their political identities, seeing their fates as "linked" to other members of the race. As Dawson notes: "The relationship between a black person's sense of his or her own interests and the same person's sense of the interests of the racial group is the key to the apparent political homogeneity of African Americans (Dawson, 1994)."

In other words, Dawson argues that race over-determines the political decision-making of African Americans. He operationalizes this concept using the phrase "black utility heuristic," which refers to the idea that "as long as race remains dominant in determining the lives of individual blacks, it is 'rational' for African Americans to follow group cues in interpreting and acting in the political world (Dawson, 1994)." When I first learned about linked fate, I was blown away. By indicating that race is a political tool, Dawson is identifying something important on a representational level. Rather than a theory that tries to excuse black political behavior as an expression of deference or loyalty to race, Dawson is denoting the shrewdness and strategy employed by African Americans. On a personal level, learning about linked fate took me back years earlier to when I was a middle school student.

I still remember being told at an assembly about misbehavior in middle school that the word that we all needed to know, memorize and fight against was apathy. I

could be anything I wanted to be, but I could never be lazy. And I wasn't. I worked hard, participated in (too) many extracurricular activities, and got into a great school. However, as I was adjusting to my first time in a majority white environment, I was slowly beginning to realize that apathy was racialized.

The bar I had to reach to not be considered apathetic was much higher than it was for my white peers. Even as I entered a campus culture in which everyone was expected to be smart and great in their own unique ways, students who were "just" focused on their academics were seen as apathetic. This was especially acute for students of color. If they did not participate in the social life of students of color, peers would whisper about how much they cared about their race and their racial community on campus. In other words, being perceived as non-participatory was quite easy for students of color.

The racial climate on campus was complicated, however, depending on what particular race you students were. For black students, the idea that they would not participate in a racial community, particularly the black student group Ujamaa, broke with an assumed racial unity. Black students that were active members of Ujamaa felt betrayed when race did not seem salient to other students. A logic of respectability politics intimated that blacks should see their fates as linked and that there was something wrong if it did not seem that way.

This respectability politics for black students stood in contrast to Asian American students. When I first got to campus, the analogous group for Asian American students to Ujamaa was the Asian American Student Collective (AASC). When I was a first year, they had next to no one in their organization. Interestingly though, the

ways that non-participation was perceived was quite different. Many students would talk about the lack of participation by Asian American students as expected and unsurprising. Asian Americans being visible in student-of-color organizations was seen as a reflection of a broader apolitical nature that they had.

It is important to mention that membership for both Ujamaa and AASC would increase and decrease at different times, most often because there were different impetuses that made race more salient for one group or the other. Nevertheless, there was a significant difference between black and Asian students that structured how their non-participation was perceived. Why, then, was non-participation read as laziness in black communities and as apolitical in Asian American communities?

The concept of linked fate does in fact offer some answers. The first returns us to what Dawson termed the “apparent political homogeneity of African Americans.” The fact that there is such a connection between perception of personal interests and perception of racial group interests for black people is greatly indicative of their patterns of political participation.

In contrast, the literature on Asian Americans and their sense of pan-ethnic and ethnic linked fate does not show the same type of togetherness; Janelle Wong et al. published the most comprehensive large-scale Asian American survey in *Asian American Political Participation*. Wong and her colleagues dedicate a full chapter to notions of pan-ethnicity within the Asian American community. The data they present, however, paint a relatively bleak picture about the state of Asian American group consciousness. As seen in Figure 1, a majority of Asian Americans surveyed saw their fates as not very strongly linked or not linked at all for both pan-ethnic and

intra-ethnic linked fate (55% and 50%, respectively). These findings lead to the conclusion that Asian Americans might have a sense of linked fate but that the “sentiment is not deeply held and national-origin group variation is considerable.”(J. Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee, & Junn, 2011)

Table 5.2 Pan-Ethnic and Ethnic Linked Fate

	India	China	Philippines	Japan	Korea	Vietnam	Total
Pan-ethnic linked fate							
Fate very linked	7	9	8	7	13	7	9
Fate somewhat linked	32	32	16	26	40	27	28
Fate not very linked	4	7	13	7	4	6	7
Fate not linked	49	43	60	50	35	47	48
Don't know	8	10	3	10	7	13	8
Ethnic linked fate							
Fate very linked	10	11	10	12	19	17	12
Fate somewhat linked	33	31	19	27	43	30	30
Fate not very linked	7	8	16	9	4	3	8
Fate not linked	42	40	50	43	28	42	42
Don't know	8	10	5	9	7	10	8

Source: Authors' compilation of data from the 2008 National Asian American Survey (Ramakrishnan et al. 2011).

Note: Rates are in percentages.

Survey questions: “Do you think what happens generally to other groups of Asians in this country affects what happens in your life?” “Do you think what happens generally to other [R ETHNIC GROUP] Americans affects what happens in your life?”

Figure (J. Wong et al., 2011)

In other words, the literature demonstrates that Asian Americans have low levels of both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic linked fate. This empirical interpretation has normative implications. A perception of linked fate implies a linear connection to political engagement and participation. For Asian Americans to participate, there is an idea that they should develop a sense of racial solidarity (Espiritu, 1992). Looking at Asian American participation through this lens obscures the focus on how Dawson conceptualizes linked fate. Dawson structures linked fate within the terminology of the black utility heuristic. African Americans use the heuristic because it remains efficient to do so. Thus, developing a perception of linked fate is a representation not of affective solidarity but the result of a rational political decision.

That the data seems to perpetuate the idea that linked fate is affective rather than political thus indicates something about how linked fate is interpreted rather than how it actually operates. Linked fate is usually operationalized in the political science literature through a two-step model. The survey model asks people to identify their perceived racial identity in the first step, and in the second step asks people if they think what happens to other people within their racial group affects what happens in their life (Bowler & Segura, 2011; Dawson, 1994; J. Wong et al., 2011). I would suggest that these two questions imply a third: whether they feel compelled to participate politically if they do in fact perceive that racial group interests affect their personal interests.

Political scientists, it must be stressed, are aware of the disjuncture between linked fate's methodological approach and its normative implications. Claudine Gay and Jennifer Hochschild describe the division,

...the idea has taken on a strong normative or even emotional valence for many researchers because it is seen as an indicator or perhaps cause of group identity and commitment, which many cherish. So linked fate is analytically important as a correlate of various race-related views and activities, and normatively important as a way to show that group solidarity remains robust in the face of persistent racial discrimination or hierarchy.

However, in their own analysis of if race is unique as a demographic factor in determining a sense of linked fate, their analysis does not break with the conventional approach to determining if a respondent demonstrates a perception of linked fate.

Their survey instrument asks, similar to the one previously mentioned,

“Do you think what happens to [R's RACE/ETHNICITY or CLASS or GENDER or RELIGION] people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life? How much will it affect you?”

As it currently stands, the scholarship seems to imply that if someone feels a sense of linked fate, it is assumed that they are going to participate politically. There is an association between linked fate and political participation that is not operationalized, which muddles the ways that Asian American political participation does take place and overlooks the specificity that Dawson calls for with respect to black people and linked fate. This is not meant to castigate Gay and Hochschild. Rather, it is to suggest that while they, like many other scholars (Lien 2001, Sanchez 2006, Burnside and Rodriguez 2009) have a conceptual understanding of the normative underpinnings of linked fate, the methodological approach currently used reinforces a logical slippage between affective and pragmatic approaches to the term.

Moreover, the lack of explication of the specific ways that the concept of linked fate operates does unique representational damage to Asian Americans by reinforcing stereotypes of them as “apolitical.” Low levels of intra-racial community further the notion, as Asian American students experienced at Wesleyan, that non-participation is part of who they are. This is related to Claire Jean Kim’s “Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans,” in which she talks about Asian Americans using the concept of civic ostracism.(Kim, 1999) For Kim, Asian Americans are contrasted to African Americans in terms of being lifted up and valorized for their social and economic advantages and accomplishments, but ostracized for their lack of commitment to political participation, which shows that they will never be “fully” American; their civic duty is fraught, which reinscribes their foreignness.

The current methodological approach to linked fate, it should be noted, also hurts African Americans. In some ways, just asking about perceived racial group interests

misreads Dawson's ideas about the black utility heuristic. The argument that black people are a "captured constituency," for example, sidesteps the historical and contemporary factors that sustain the efficiency of using the black utility heuristic (Wright-Rigueur, 2015). Simply asking about group interests does not address the substantive reasons that those perceptions develop.

By showing that the decision to use race as an organizing principle in one's life is acutely intentional, Dawson is painting a more complicated picture about racial salience than the one often offered in the scholarship. Redirecting our focus towards the black utility heuristic as we have been focusing on Asian Americans does, however, force the question: What, exactly, is black about the black utility heuristic?

Dawson does propose some specific answers. He argues, quite successfully, for the historical specificity that leads to the use of the black utility heuristic, stating: "The experience of slavery, reinforced by the post-Civil War destruction of Reconstruction, ensured that both the general social component and economic component of African American group interests would be tied to black politics (Dawson, 1994)." Here Dawson is articulating a historical basis for the specific relevance of the black utility heuristic for African Americans. Further, in his modeling of African American political utility, he designs the equation:

$$U_{it} = f(\mathbf{pgi}, \mathbf{ises}, U_{t-1})$$

"Where U_{it} is the utility flowing to an individual from a given policy, candidate, or political party; \mathbf{pgi} is the respondent's perception of racial group interests, \mathbf{ises} is the respondent's socioeconomic status, and U_{t-1} is the past utility flowing to an individual from the same policy, candidate, or political party (Dawson, 1994)." In

other words utility is a function of perceived linked fate, income, and past experiences. Dawson notes that past information is “transmitted through the formal and informal networks of the black community (Dawson, 1994).” In other words, what people have gone through is critical to their understanding of rational political behavior.

Returning then to the question of what is black about the black utility heuristic we find that the answer to this question is not tautological (“Black people participate because they are black”) nor is it a direct result of deeper affective bonds (“Black people love each other more”). The real idiosyncrasy of black politics is not about how black people make political decisions but rather how black history structures those decisions. Knowing this, it becomes apparent that methodological assumptions have tangible consequences. What is the use value of using the framework of the black utility heuristic for Asian American communities?

This thesis argues that linked fate is never completely established in any community but historical legacies and contemporary realities make it dependably efficient for African Americans, while different, unique, historical and sociological conditions make the use of linked fate much more fraught in Asian American communities. Dawson shows that a unique and incomparable history within the African American community but in doing so also shows how the logic develops to a point at which the black utility heuristic becomes efficient. In this thesis, I will use different conceptual and substantive approaches to chart how Asian Americans can develop this logic as well. Rather than simply attempt to see whether or not Asian Americans perceive their fate as linked, I will establish how unique historical and

political factors make race both efficient and inefficient as a tool for making political decisions within the Asian American community.

In doing so, I am also providing a critical reappraisal of linked fate and the ways in which scholars have applied it to groups other than African Americans. I will show that while the term has been misapplied in many ways, it also still has tremendous relevance to the study of race and politics. Moreover, as the thesis unfolds, I will suggest how we might expand and re-evaluate the term to be more comprehensive in its attendance to historical specificity and racial difference.

As Pei-te Lien states in *The Making of Asian America Through Political Participation*,

Compared to other U.S. racial groups, Asians collectively bear certain paradoxical group positions that cannot be fully substantiated by census statistics for each of the subgroups. Depending on the racial group and sociopolitical domain in reference, Asians can be characterized simultaneously as super achievers, underachievers, and strange outsiders. This contingent and ambivalent racial group status of Asians in America can be a barrier to the structuring of political consensus across communities when each Asian may make a different political choice based on his or her assessment of the group status and importance of community. On the other hand, the process of racialization can also be instrumental to the forging of panethnic unity when it is able to influence an individual Asian's decision to marry or associate with other Asians through pan-Asian unions and organizations (Lien, 2001).

Lien here is developing an argument about the contingent racial status of Asian Americans and how that contingency structures Asian American political participation. This thesis intends to assess the question: contingent on what?

I focus on three particular topical points in order to make the case that while Asian Americans' perception of linked fate is fraught, it is still present and highly functional, depending on context.

In the second chapter, I will discuss two cases of state run campaigns by Asian Americans to show how linked fate often takes on a local flavor, indicating the need to see linked fate as something that can be and often is nurtured and developed by one's local community. Utilizing theoretical frameworks and two case studies from James Lai's *Asian American Political Action*, I show that state and local politics presents an opportunity for Asian American issues and perspectives to come to the fore, making the use of racial utility heuristic decision-making uniquely efficient.

In the third chapter, I will talk about the case of Vincent Chin to show how the organizational apparatus formed in the months and years after his death contributed more to Asian American political community than increased intra-ethnic compassion. I will then place this moment in conversation with the shooting of Michael Brown to show how Asian American bloggers used the incident to create a simultaneous vision of solidarity with African Americans while at the same time making space for a unique view of Asian American political consciousness.

In the fourth chapter, I turn the tables by talking about how racial conflict serves to break down Asian American community when placed in opposition to black people. By analyzing the recent murder of Akai Gurley by the Chinese American police officer Peter Liang, I show that Asian Americans do not close ranks in the same ways that African Americans do when there is inter-ethnic conflict, which leads to a more difficult time for Asian Americans in their quest for political incorporation. In both the third and fourth chapter, I develop an argument about how racial violence provides a toolbox to understand the infrastructures of solidarity.

Finally, in the fifth and concluding chapter, I discuss what the nascent political development of Asians in America means for understanding linked fate, both substantively for Asian Americans and for the concept more broadly. Asian Americans have lived and struggled in the United States for nearly two centuries. However, they were not able to develop as a political community and voting bloc until after the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act. In this chapter, I think through how civic leaders at the elite, national level take this understanding of Asian Americans as a “new” group and employ it as a strategy to develop higher levels of linked fate. I then conclude the thesis by talking about different examples of research on Asian American linked fate and political participation that had greater historical specificity by providing a brief sketch of some pressing implications from this research that have yet to be answered. I also briefly discuss potential policy implications of this research.

This thesis contributes to Asian American studies by bringing new insight into how American politics can reinforce negative stereotypes of Asian Americans. It also contributes to African American studies and the study of racial and ethnic politics more broadly by shedding new light on how and why the black utility heuristic has remained so s valuable tool for analysis since Dawson formulated the concept in 1994. Finally, it contributes to the new and burgeoning field of Afro-Asian studies by talking about the dual role that blackness plays in terms of both strengthening and weakening American political community both through coalition and conflict, which are never as clearly opposed as they seem.

In different parts of the thesis, I draw on interviews with a number of Asian American civic leaders. As a result of a personal connection with Daphne Kwok, a Wesleyan alumna and a valued mentor, I was able to meet a number of Asian Americans working at the national level, who all, whether formally or tangentially, work to increase political incorporation of Asian Americans. I had the opportunity to interview Daphne, who among other things was the first executive director of the National Coalition for Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA), and a founding member of the Organization for Chinese Americans (OCA). I also got a chance to interview Christine Chen, currently the executive director of Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote); Carl Hum, the Vice President for Policy and Programs at Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC), a civil rights organization specifically tailored to Asian American justice; Mini Timmaraju, the current executive director of NCAPA; and Mark Keam, a Korean-American state delegate from Virginia. Working in diverse fields, including voter registration, lobbying, elder care, and civil rights, these informants provided me with analytical frameworks, relevant examples, and practical challenges to my theoretical assumptions. Their words come through at different times in the thesis, but their ideas permeate the entire text. Delegate Keam's interview, for example, was what led me to write a chapter about state and local politics. Moreover, my interview with Mr. Hum made me re-think the importance of Vincent Chin to Asian American politics.

These chapters are also informed by secondary source material drawn from political science, Asian American studies, African American studies, history, sociology, and ethnic studies.

Returning to Lien:

The development of a panethnic consciousness and organizations is, to a large extent, not a voluntary process but determined by the specific political context and social relations within the state. . . . The daunting task of constructing and maintaining a politically coherent community within the American context is not unique to Asians. In fact, it is a challenge faced by all groups, both white and nonwhite, because of the contestable and malleable meanings of race (Lien, 2001).

This thesis intends to show that while the process of group consciousness-formation is not unique to Asian Americans, there are particularities that create both opportunities for cross-ethnic community building and fractured and deleterious conflict. By demonstrating the promise, pitfalls, and practice of linked fate in Asian America, I will show how racial communities develop over time, both among and beyond Asians in America.

Chapter 2: Asian Americans and the Sequential Logic of Participation

This chapter argues that while Asian American linked fate might be contingent in many ways, it manifests itself most tangibly at the state and local levels. Moreover, the development of linked fate at the community level can lead to increased political efficacy in more conventional and comprehensive ways.

In my interview with Delegate Mark Keam, he described what he saw as unique ways his role as an elected official on the state level helped develop Asian American political consciousness. In our conversation, we discussed what were the idiosyncrasies of state-level politics,

Mark Keam: I think at the federal level it's much more esoteric and not as relevant to our daily lives. At the other extreme of it is the local government, whether it's a town or city or little county or local area. The work that those government officials do and the policy that they deal with are very relevant to our lives, but they're issues that are more mundane like clearing the snow after a big snowstorm off my street or making sure that my kids' school has adequate janitors to show up and clean the school after school or whatever.

The state is actually the place that has the perfect mix of the two. You've got a little bit of the local stuff, which is the day-to-day mundane things like regulating the whatever industry that affects your lives, from gas stations to restaurants to what-have-you. All the regular things of life. These big policy discussions about what kind of society we want, those are determined at the state level. In some ways what I do at the state level is actually more interesting, more fun and more relevant to people's lives.

The question about Asian Americans: I think one of the reasons why I got into politics and one of the reasons why I spend a lot of time with Asian American communities is because I don't think that the vast majority of Asian immigrants, especially older generations, Asians generally don't think about the relevance of government in their lives. It's like a parallel universe where they live their lives. They have their family, friends, their church, their work, their business. They do their thing. Then you've got this other world that's got government and white people doing white people stuff. Black people doing black people stuff. It's just the parallel lives that they're living. (Keam, 2015)

Keam is pointing to two different but related ideas. There are the structural differences between federal, state, and local government that makes state government the most directly relevant to people's lives. At the federal level, a citizen might feel that a certain policy is important but does not necessarily have a direct impact on their job or their children, whereas at the local level the work can be too mundane for the purposes of organizing. While I disagree with the idea that local politics does not provide as fertile a ground for political engagement as state politics, the larger point of state politics being a site of implementation that affects people on a personal level stands.

The second point refers specifically to Asian Americans. Keam's description of government as a "parallel universe" articulates the stereotype of the perpetual foreigner that is often used as an explanation for low numbers of Asian American political participation. (Wu, 2002) According to Keam, Asian Americans distancing themselves from civic engagement is based on a broader distancing from mainstream American society. Their businesses, their children, and their communities do not always see the direct impacts of government so they do not feel the need to participate. I read this statement as saying that Asian Americans do not necessarily participate in American politics out of a sense of civic duty in the way that might be expected of other Americans (Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999). Their participation is practical and tied directly to their personal, familial, and economic interests.

However, to claim that Keam thinks that Asian Americans do not participate in politics would be to misunderstand what he is actually talking about. In our

interview, I asked him whether he thought civic engagement changed depending on the cultural context:

Mark Keam: Yes. That's right. It also takes different stimulus, if you will. Different things will get them engaged than others. For example, some people might love education issues. They care about their kids. They want to make sure that their kids have a great education. For parents with kids, talking about how the schools are treating Asian kids and what's good for them and what's not good for them, that might be a way to get the kids engaged.

That's something that we did just recently in Virginia. There was an issue that came up that was somewhat controversial about the name of the water between Japan and Korea and how it's listed in Virginia textbooks. We had a bunch of grassroots [organizing] of parents and others that said, "You know what? We've got to ... It's called the Sea of Japan in the textbooks now, but Koreans don't call it the Sea of Japan. They want to call it by their name, which is the East Sea." They mobilized, got themselves all educated. They came down to Richmond and lobbied. They got the bill passed. Now, all the textbooks should have the dual designation of East Sea and Sea of Japan.

That's an issue where most Americans would have no idea. Most people couldn't care less about this. Most Koreans wouldn't care less, but then when somebody said, "You know, this affects students, and it affects the way Korea's image is among kids." For the nationalists among the Koreans, they said this is a way for us to show that Koreans have power over to Japanese. They mobilized and got something done.

As we can see from the quotation, what Keam said earlier about Asian Americans not seeing government as relevant remains true until government actually becomes relevant. The state and local levels are more pertinent, but not just because of the difference in purpose and functionality. Rather, they are perceived as more germane than national-level politics because on the more local level cultural specificities of the Asian-American experience come to the fore within a political framework. Keam's use of this example stands out because it shows not the development of a pan-Asian coalition but rather nationalist imperatives driving

political participation as Koreans set out to make sure that Korean perspectives receive their due in the educational setting. The situation reveals that specific stimuli at the state and local levels can develop Asian-American political participation.

However, what is particularly “Asian American” about these stimuli? Do state and local politics inspire civic engagement among members of this racial group in a way that is not the same for other racial minority groups? If so, then what does this say about linked fate (or the lack thereof) within Asian America and the development of political community?

Localizing Linked Fate

The questions asked above indicate a certain ambivalence as to sites of politicization. At issue is not simply what types of participation develop; it is where they develop. It is important to note that the lobbying by Koreans in Virginia did not directly clash with the political needs and wants of other demographic groups. Organizing along racial lines did not conflict with organizing at different levels of government. In *The Paradoxes of Integration*, J. Eric Oliver describes the tension that can arise between community ties and racial ties:

For many groups, incorporation into American society often comes at the expense of an indigenous cultural identity and creates enormous conflicts in self-perception. Although one may argue whether this is desirable or not, processes that sustain social cohesion are usually in direct tension with processes that maintain cultural differences. These issues are the ultimate paradox presented by an integrated, multiracial America: will the real transformation in American racial attitudes require the elimination of the ethnic, cultural, and social markers that many groups hold as a fundamental part of their identity? And if so, will it do so at the expense of darker skinned peoples? (Oliver, 2010)

Oliver’s paradox trains our focus on the difference between assimilation and maintaining cultural specificity. I would suggest that it should also lead us to a more

fundamental question about the development of community. Along which lines does community building take on the strongest salience? Put another way, with specific focus on Asian Americans: is the neighborhood or the race more important?

In many ways, this question overlooks the severe housing segregation within the United States. People's neighborhoods often overlap with their racial community. Rethinking the implications of the question, however, helps to re-establish its importance. While neighborhood and race are often co-extensive, this does not mean that they are interchangeable in the eyes of individual community members. Just because a racial community and a local community are similar does not mean that they are the same or that they weigh equally in people's perception. In *Boundaries of Obligation in American Politics*, Cara Wong makes a complementary point:

Even the borders of groups defined by age, gender, race, income, and place of birth are fuzzy, and members of these groups may have an image of a community based only loosely on these characteristics... This does not make the nation or any other community any more or less "imagined"; if anything, it is more realistic and accurate to assume those claiming membership to what they believe is the same community. (C. Wong, 2010, pg. 5)

Wong's point is that the development of one type of community does not necessarily preclude the importance of another, because both are socially constructed and "imagined." The distinction remains still analytically important for Asian Americans, however. James Lai's *Asian American Political Action* describes the "suburbanization of Asian American politics":

As is true in real estate, the same can be said for Asian American politics: location matters. Where Asian American politics matters most is in the suburbs. This is where Asian Americans have demographically transformed and subsequently have attained the greatest political inroads to achieving local political incorporation beginning with electing Asian American candidates. What differs in this suburban context from that in the urban context is that Asian Americans have been able to sustain elected representation. And in

some cities, they have built on this to attain a majority presence on city councils so that decisionmaking on policies takes into account the interests of the entire communities they represent. (Lai, 2011, pg. 13)

Lai's point about majority presence on city councils should alert us to the importance of the distinction. While race and neighborhood might be aligned at times, for Asian Americans who are often new to their communities (immigrant or not), the need for descriptive representation to make sure that policy interests of Asian Americans are accounted for shows that the communities in which Asian Americans are living, especially the suburbs, are not primarily Asian.

To be sure, that Asian Americans constitute a small demographic minority, even at the local level, should not come as a surprise. The empirical data show that even in California, the state with the highest proportion of Asian Americans, the statewide population amounts to only 13 percent (Lai, 2011). Nonetheless, I want to show that racial communities have the capability to activate linked fate and that these racial communities (and the resulting political actions) have a distinctly local flavor.

Lai describes the suburbs as the "key site for understanding the contemporary and future trajectories of Asian Americans in American politics" (Lai, 2011). I will contextualize this argument within the framework of linked fate.

Dawson does not talk about the interplay between locality and linked fate. He does, however, pay attention to frameworks of African American political choice. As he describes it,

African Americans' ability to act on their political preferences is constrained by the dearth of candidates and other officials from the two major parties willing to advocate and implement those preferences. As African Americans often perceive little difference between the candidates placed on the ballot by the major parties, abstention becomes a rational alternative. African-American political choice includes the decision to vote for candidate in national

elections, the process of candidate evaluation, and the decision to participate in local politics. (Dawson, 1994, pg. 131)

Dawson models African-American political choice as beginning with a choice to abstain or participate. If one chooses to participate, one then chooses between voting and non-voting participation. Voting participation creates a partisan choice (e.g., conservative, third-party/radical, liberal). Non-voting participation creates a methodological choice (e.g., militant activity, economic protest, community politics). It is important to note that Dawson states that “These branches are not mutually exclusive; individuals over time, or at the same time, may well engage in more than one alternative”(Dawson, 1994, pg. 133). While I agree with this contention, I want to push it further by breaking apart the unidirectional nature of the model. I would suggest that if a certain type of participation seems viable, it could determine the initial decision as to whether to participate or abstain. Further, participation at the community level could very well create the type of group consciousness necessary to make other forms of participation rational.¹

Asian-American politics needs to be seen through a geographical lens because the population is so heavily concentrated within a few states. Because the majority of Asian Americans reside in only five states (J. Wong et al., 2011), when gains are made for Asian Americans, whether within the context of electoral politics or policy victories, other than in Hawaii and California those gains have been achieved in a context of severe underrepresentation. This shows us that Asian-American politics should be foregrounded with local politics.

¹ While I will argue this point using Asian-American politics, I believe that it could also be applied to other groups, including African Americans.

² The organization is now referred to Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC)

This is in line with the concept of a sequential logic of partisanship posited by Zoltan Hajnal and Taeku Lee in their work *Why Americans Don't Join the Party*. They argue that Latinos and Asians see the partisan choice between Democrats, Republicans, and Independents as significant (identifying as an independent is in fact the modal response among the two racial groups), while many other models of voting choice discard independent voting, seeing it as insignificant data. They argue:

Specifically, we posit that these “noncompliant” responses represent a choice in the first of a two-stage process of coming to terms with two-party competition in the United States. Before they can place themselves at a point somewhere along the traditional partisan spectrum [from Strong Democrat to Strong Republican], political actors must begin to see meaning, content, or value in the partisan options that are typically offered. Only after passing through this stage can individuals engage in the second stage, where they choose between the three unordered options of Independent, Democrat, and Republican. (Hajnal & Lee, 2011, pg. 182)

For my purposes, the connection between local politics in Asian American politics and the sequential logic of partisanship is not so much substantive as methodological. As I described in my analysis of Dawson’s framework of participation above, local politics can serve as a prelude to other forms of political participation. Thus, for Asian Americans, there is not just a sequential logic of partisanship; there is a sequential logic of participation.

Foregrounding the local means that we are genuinely thinking about not just the results of political activity and engagement but also about how those results develop. Mark Keam considers his being a state delegate important to Asian-American politics, even considering that much of his constituency is not Asian American:

Christian Hosam: Really, what I think it's getting at is what you think is your personal role in Asian American politics. You're a delegate. Your broad constituency is not, I think, exclusively Asian American. I'm interested in you talking a little bit more about really how you view your own responsibility, what kind of duty you might see that you have to Asian Americans, if at all.

Mark Keam: Well, I was born overseas. I was born in Korea. I lived in a couple other countries before I came to the U.S. I've been exposed in my life to a lot of different aspects of diversity, myself included. I'm very involved with community, the Asian-American community here and immigrants across the board. What I find is a lot of us have similar backgrounds and similar experiences, but we don't share it.

We don't like to talk about it because you come to the U.S., and you feel you've got to do things the American way. We can't be doing it our way. They tend to hide their Asian-ness, if you will. They tend to hide their minority status and their immigrant status in order to be accepted by the mainstream and not be seen as this ostracized ethnic group that's kind of on their own.

Well, I think that's a problem. That mindset and that psychology of, "I'm here, living in this other country, and my people aren't the majority. Therefore we shouldn't really stick out and try to express ourselves too much." That goes completely counter to the idea of civic engagement as participation in America. Our nation was founded on the fact that every single person steps up and participates. If you don't like something, we'll change it. So many Asians have the opposite mindset, which is, "I'm not supposed to get involved. I'm supposed to stay with my own people because the other side won't accept me, and such."

What I try to do with my life, and what I try to do in my professional career, is to really show, number one, show by example that it is possible. You can have a person like me from a different background without giving up a single thing of who I am as an Asian or an immigrant. I'm willing to contribute and be part of the mainstream and participate.

If you said, "Our community, Koreans, Asians, minorities, we're not being helped by these laws." There are some laws that are discriminatory on the books. There are laws that don't allow you to speak non-English languages at your workplace. There are laws that say every restaurant has to have English and their foreign language menu. There are laws that say that people of certain backgrounds shouldn't apply for jobs. There are laws that say, "We are not allowing certain businesses to open on certain days because of religious reasons." If you have laws like that that are specific to one culture and not to another, and people say, "Well, we just have to conform to those laws because that's where America's at. These are American laws, and we as

foreigners have to . . ." After that, well, if you settle with that then you'll never change.

But, if somebody says, "You know what? We can change that. Here's the way to do it step-by-step-by-step. You can do protests. You can walk to raise awareness. You can write op-eds. You can organize rallies. You can go and meet with elected officials. You can mobilize people by registering them to vote and getting them to come out and vote for the candidate who supports your views. You can come visit members, elected officials, at their office, lobby them and their staff on why they should support and vote whichever way. Have people that look like you run for office, and then have express your views in their chambers. Once you do these things once, twice, three times, you see role models doing it, then people say, "It's not as hard as it looks."(Keam, 2015)

For Asian Americans, local politics represents a moment of seeing politics as viable. While many Asian Americans might not feel compelled to vote for their senator, they are much more likely to care about standardized testing for their children and business development taking place in their neighborhoods.

That sense of political identity is analogous to an increased sense of linked fate. According to Dawson,

The black utility heuristic is a mechanism enabling one to specify the conditions under which African-American group interests become stronger or weaker relative to individual interests. It simply states that as long as African Americans' life chances are powerfully shaped by race, it is efficient for individual African Americans to use their perceptions of the interests of African Americans as a group as a proxy for their own interests. (Dawson, 1994, pg. 61)

For Asian Americans, local politics allows race to become efficient, leading to a style of decision-making consistent with the racial utility heuristic. By using two case studies of Asian-American campaigns, I will show how political participation at the local level develops perceptions of linked fate in specific and potent ways. In Montgomery County and Sugar Land, we find that a pan-ethnic ideology develops

out of necessity rather than affective connection. In fact, we see legitimate conflict between different ethnic groups. What, then, accounts for the development and, perhaps more importantly, the maintenance of this ideology?

In the David Wong for Mayor campaign in Sugar Land and in Susan Lee's re-election campaign in Montgomery County, the campaigns made intentional, ethnic-specific appeals. This technique worked in both instances, with varying results for the ultimate election tallies.

After an election, what Lai terms "tipping point politics" may also come into play (Lai, 2011). When racial discrimination against Asian Americans manifests itself as they begin to achieve electoral success, might this make them see the importance and value of their racial identity? While Lai does not deal with this topic, we can see that at the state and local levels Asian-American candidates had success in mobilizing Asian-American voters, often motivating them to participate in politics for the first time. Political identity development thus correlates to racial identity development for Asian Americans.

Montgomery County: Party Politics and Pitfalls for Political Community building

Montgomery County offers a revealing story about the connection between locality, linked fate, and political participation. Adjacent to Washington D.C. (and neighboring Prince George's County, where I grew up), Montgomery County, Maryland is a collection of municipalities rapidly developing, in terms of both economic activity and demographic diversity. Asian Americans have achieved a number of local and state victories. As Lai explains: "This major population boom of

Asian American immigrants in Montgomery County over the past twenty years is beginning to bear the fruits of Asian American elected representation at the state and county levels whose districts contain these suburbs”(Lai, 2011, pg. 120).

The fact that there is no one demographically dominant Asian American ethnic group within the county creates both opportunities and challenges for Asian American political mobilization. The increase in the number of elected Asian American officials in the county suggests that Asian American activism is occurring along racial rather than ethnic lines. The 2007 election of Saqib Ali to the Maryland House of Delegates is a prime example.

A software engineer by profession and a relative newcomer, Ali waged a campaign that “demonstrated how grassroots politics, through a two-tiered campaign strategy in the non-Asian and Asian American communities, can be effectively pursued despite [the candidate’s] lack of political experience and [his opponents’] networks...”(Lai, 2011, pg. 121). Michael Lin, the executive director of the panethnic Organization of Chinese Americans at the time, was quoted as saying, “Saqib Ali ran his campaign the right way, unlike previous Asian American candidates who assumed that the Asian American community would automatically rally behind him. Ali went directly to the Asian American and mainstream communities and mobilized them with his charisma and political vision”(Lai, 2011, pg. 121).

Lin is describing the intentional outreach necessary to win elections in Montgomery County. However, the question of which Asian Americans were taking the Asian American electorate for granted is very relevant, especially with respect to linked fate. Lai quotes Delegate Kumar Barve:

Pan-Asianism really has not come to fruition in my opinion. The Asian community is broken up into four, and maybe more, very distinctive groups in my area. They are in no particular order: one, South Asian Hindus primarily Indian-American; two, South Asian Muslims primarily from Pakistan; three, East Asians (Chinese, Korean, and Japanese); and four, South-East Asian primarily Vietnamese. These groups no longer dislike each other, they get along very well, but they are not an integrated whole. Nor are they ever likely to be because, frankly, they are very different people. Their needs, languages, objectives and self-perceptions are very different. Also, there is very little intermarriage. Each of these groups is more likely to marry into the white community than with each other. This is a distinct difference with a heterogeneous ethnic grouping, like say, the Hispanic community. (Lai, 2011, pg. 132)

Barve's comments paint a remarkably complex picture of the Montgomery County Asian American population. The differences extend beyond race to include religion, nationality, and regional migration patterns, which demonstrate just how far the idea of pan-ethnicity has to go within the region. In addition, the point about intermarriage indicates that there is not an affective sense of community between ethnic groupings in the Asian American community. However, Barve suggests the possibility of a political community that strengthens and solidifies over time.

Implied in Barve's description is also a normative value being placed on pan-Asianism and its necessity for the furthering of Asian American political mobilization. If it does not occur, Asian Americans will not be able to reap the benefits of their increased numbers and their economic and social influence on the county. However, if that is the case, then the experience of Delegate Susan Lee poses a direct challenge.

Lee is the first Asian-American woman to be elected to the Maryland House of Delegates. Her 2006 re-election campaign attracted contributions from a diverse set of Asian Americans. Her contributors "reflected the diverse Asian ethnic makeup

of Montgomery County (Lai, 2011).” Lee received 58.4% of her contributions from Asian American Montgomery County residents. While the vast majority of Lee’s support came from Chinese Americans, 10.29% of her contributions came from other Asian American communities within Montgomery County (Lai, 2011). What about Lee inspired the donations from these communities? Lai’s theory about Asian American suburbanization suggests that

...Three key political loci must emerge within the Asian American community in Montgomery County in order for successful group political incorporation. The three political loci are (1) an emerging critical mass of Asian Americans, (2) strong community political loci that mobilize this critical mass in different ways, and (3) the presence of a strong panethnic ideology. (pg. 126)

Lee’s re-election campaign shows that one can compensate for the lack of affective community by employing intentional strategies to gain pan-ethnic support.

For example, as Lai states,

While it is not surprising that Chinese Americans represented the largest percentage of Lee’s Asian American contributors, Korean Americans were the second largest Asian ethnic contributors...One of the primary reasons for this is that Chung Pak, a Korean American, was one of Lee’s primary campaign advisors, which served her well with the growing Korean American community in both the county and state. (Lai, 2011, pg. 124)

Furthermore, 17.8% of Lee’s contributions from outside the state came from Korean donors. This demonstrates that Lee built cross-ethnic appeals into her campaign. More importantly, it worked.

Describing her campaign in terms of infrastructure sheds light on another major component of Lee’s success. Lee has been the majority whip of the Maryland House of Delegates since 2003, an indication of her major role in the Maryland Democratic Party. The fact that she needed a foothold in Maryland party politics in

order to achieve electoral success highlights a potential confounding variable in the fractured Asian-American community that Barve describes. As Lai explains,

She was a Maryland Democratic party insider who was in the right place at the right time. Her appointment to fill one of the three seats from her district that had been vacated was a logical choice given the facts that she was an Asian American woman in a district with many Asian Americans who had no representation and she was a Democrat. Whether Lee would have received the appointment if she had not been a Democrat is an important question. Of the many foreign-born Asian Americans who form a large portion of the Asian American community in Montgomery County, few are key members of the Maryland Democratic Party. This poses a major challenge for future political action efforts for descriptive representation regardless of whether key Asian American political loci such as a guiding political ideology are present or not. (Lai, 2011, pg. 131)

While in the passage quoted earlier Barve lamented the development of a pan-Asian ideology within Montgomery County, if we take seriously Hajnal and Lee's point about the sequential logic of partisanship, we realize that for many Asian Americans, while there are significant obstacles to working together across ethnic lines, the most prominent may have more to do with the resources allocated to developing such an ideology. As discussed earlier, linked fate entails not only identification with a group but also the willingness to make political decisions based on that identification. In Montgomery County, partisan identification with the Democratic Party takes precedence over Asian-American political interests. At the national level, Asian Americans are much more likely to identify with no party. Susan Lee's victory thus takes on a different cast because the Democratic Party enhanced her importance to the Asian American community. In other words, within Montgomery County, the sequential logic of participation is not just a matter of identification leading to action but rather a necessity for increased representation. Asian Americans must begin to identify with the Democratic Party before they are

able to think about descriptive representation. To say that a pan-ethnic ideology does not exist in Montgomery County might be true, but it misses the fact that it is untenable for Asian Americans to come together to support Asian American elected officials until those officials have already developed mainstream appeal within the Democratic Party.

Susan Lee (and to a lesser extent Saqid Ali) shows that for Asian American candidates in Montgomery County, there is also a sequential logic of inclusion. First they must gain inclusion in the Democratic Party. Second, they must achieve Asian-American support. Third, they must achieve white support.

While the candidates able to navigate these representational waters prove quite successful (Susan Lee became the first Asian American to win a seat in the Maryland State Senate in 2014), (V. Wang, 2014), they also demonstrate the unique obstacles preventing the development of Asian American community building in counties that have partisan connections.

Sugar Land and the Precarious State of White Moderates

Half a country away, in Sugar Land, Texas, different representational issues created both coalition and conflict within the Asian American community and also between Asian Americans and the majority white community of Sugar Land.

Sugar Land, Texas has a city council and manager system. Members are elected to the council, which then appoints a city manager to execute the policies adopted by the council. In 2008, Asian Americans were on the verge of winning half the seats on the Sugar Land City Council. The 2008 mayoral campaign of Daniel Wong, offered an unprecedented opportunity to have both the office of the Mayor and

an additional voice on the City Council. Daniel Wong was running concurrently with S.B. Gaddi, an Indian American, and Adnard Saddiqui, a Pakistani American.

Wong's campaign manager, Mustafa Tameez, himself a Pakistani American with a record of getting minority candidates elected, saw the potential of this moment that would bring together South Asians and East Asians. As Lai puts it:

“In short, Tameez's primary political strategy, on one hand, was to construct a pan-Asian American coalition among Chinese Americans, Asian Indians, and Pakistani Americans that would be naturally mobilizing around the three Asian American candidates running in the May 2008 city elections. And on the other hand, the strategy was also to construct a cross-racial coalition among progressive to moderate white Democrats who were opposed to their conservative counterparts.” (Lai, 2011, pg. 152)

It is safe to say that the former aspect of Tameez's plan worked but the latter did not get off the ground.

Thinking through the development of a pan-Asian coalition in the Wong campaign is helpful because it shows that community, while not necessarily built on affective connection, can be strongly supportive of and receptive to the needs of other communities. As Lai points out, “Tameez attempted to achieve this coalition through a series of concentrated mailers during the last month before the election that were specifically and ethnically sensitive to the Chinese American, Asian Indian, and Pakistani communities, which featured all three Asian Americans on a political slate” (Lai, 2011, pg. 152). Tameez used very specific tactics to appeal to Asian American voters, appealing to both intra- and inter-ethnic sensibilities. And his tactics worked for the Asian American community; the largest number of Asian Americans ever to vote in a Sugar Land election participated in the 2008 election.

Wong did run an unsuccessful campaign, however. While his loss can be attributed to a number of factors, the high participation within the Asian American

community was decidedly a factor in preventing white residents from supporting him in sufficient numbers.

In the midst of the successful grassroots efforts to register Asian Americans to vote (with particular focus on new voters), *The Fort Bend Star* newspaper published a letter intimating that Asian American political engagement represented racism, alluding to a “conspiracy” within the Houston chapter of the 80/20 Asian American Political Action Committee because it was race-based. The letter states:

In Sugar Land, where a new mayor and new city council person are on the ballot, the public contest has been something Fort Bend County has seldom seen – overt racism...of the Asian kind. I received a letter from a writer with a supposed Chinese surname, Ahmed Zhiang. Since no telephone number was on the letter and I couldn't verify the writer, I didn't run it. However, Mr. Zhiang sounds like he is well-connected in the Asian community...According to Mr. Zhiang, a Chinese man named Fong, whose head is shaven to make him look like a Buddhist monk is a central figure in the conspiracy. In addition to serving on the 80/20 endorsement committee, he spends virtually full-time in teaching Asians to vote a race-based ticket. Fong and another conspirator, known only as Mustafa, regularly address the Asian community groups urging them to vote solely on the issue of race. (Lai, 2011)

This letter, deeply troubling in its xenophobia and race baiting, had a significant effect. Mustafa Tameez had to de-emphasize his role in the wake of the letter because many people now viewed him as a figure not to be trusted. Moreover, linked the development of an Asian American candidate pipeline to a specific, overt racism: “the Asian kind.”

Jonathan Wong, Daniel Wong's campaign advisor describes another instance of racial priming for white voters,

Our election was lost because the current mayor and Daniel's opponent used the phrase “we must elect the best person to be the face and voice of our city.” Despite Daniel being more qualified, more respected, and more hardworking than his opponent, people came out to vote against him in record numbers.

The single reason we can chalk this up to is lingering prejudice with regard to Asian Americans holding executive level positions in public office.(Lai, 2011)

The letter in the *Fort Bend Star* and the event recounted by Wong both show implicit racial cues reinforcing a white standard of elected representation, named “tipping point politics” (Lai, 2011). However, it is perhaps even more important to mention that these racial appeals made by both the paper and Wong’s opponents were not started simply because of an Asian American candidacy. Rather, it was the successful effort at creating an Asian American community across ethnic lines that led to specific warnings to white voters about the “racism” in Asian American political community building. Put another way, increasing perceptions of linked fate has political consequences. As Lai states: “Perception is reality in local politics, especially when the majority racial group begins to feel threatened that an emerging and competing racial group is seeking to gain political power (Lai, 2011).”

Conclusion

Placing Montgomery County and Sugar Land into conversation, we begin to see the structural difficulty of linked fate at the local level. While Susan Lee succeeded in her campaigns to become the first Asian American woman in the Maryland House of Delegates and first Asian American in the State Senate, it seems that her status as a Democratic insider with state-level connections presaged her ability to run a campaign focused (partly) on Asian American representation. Thus, what seems like a weaker community may in fact reflect the lack of opportunity for race to be a primary political decision-making tool.

The Sugar Land experience indicates that even when that type of decision-making is used, it has political consequences in terms of white resentment. In that

case, the use of xenophobic rhetoric and implicit racial appeals may very well have cost Daniel Wong the 2008 mayoral election. Lai notes,

“the data strongly suggest that James Thompson received a large percentage of his additional 1,100 votes in the general election from Tom Jones, the third candidate in the primary election. Whatever the reasons for this shift, in many ways the result was expected given the political undercurrent that many Asian American community activists in Sugar Land and Houston had felt was taking shape prior to the primary election (Lai, 2011).”

This is not to say that the work of this chapter is able to prove this definitively. For example, an interesting empirical question would be to test the success of political inclusion for Asian Americans through the use of these ethnic-specific appeals depending on who is using them. Do these appeals to individual ethnic groups (e.g. Chinese American, Indian American) work especially well for Asian American candidates or is it just that appeals to individual ethnicities are powerful by themselves in supercharging Asian American political participation across racial lines? Furthermore, does tipping-point politics hamper the maintenance of Asian American participation. Did the new voters that came out in 2008 also come out in subsequent elections and, if so, did they vote as a bloc in the same way?

In both cases, we can identify that Asian Americans developing a sense of political efficacy is stymied by factors that make it harder for them to get behind Asian American representatives, making the decision to form cross-ethnic coalitions less immediate than they are in African American communities. That does not mean that they do not occur. Rather, the local context shows a sequential logic of identification. Before they develop a linked fate group consciousness, Asian Americans have to see racial organizing as both viable and imperative. While this sequence might fly in face of accounts of Asian Americans being a potential voting

bloc but it also certainly refutes understandings of them as politically distant. Indeed, the local context provides a training ground for Asian Americans to determine if participating within a racial political framework is beneficial and, perhaps more importantly, if it will work.

Chapter 3: Vincent Chin, Michael Brown, and Infrastructures of Solidarity

On February 10, 2015, Deah Shaddy Bakarat, along with his wife, Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, and her sister, Razan Mohammad, were murdered in their Chapel Hill, North Carolina home, all three shot in the head. The circumstances led many to believe that the incident was a hate crime, in which the assailant, Craig Stephen Hicks, shot the three individuals because of their religious identity (“#MuslimLivesMatter: Shock and outrage as 3 Muslim students gunned down in N. Carolina,” 2015). The shooting sparked a significant social media campaign that included Islamophobic themes in coverage of the incident and the even broader phenomenon of the press not covering the story at all (Daileda, 2015). Many Muslims took to Twitter and Facebook to condemn how the loss of Muslim life had not generated outcry in the mainstream American community. Specifically, the hashtag #muslimlivesmatter was used to call attention to the lack of regard for Muslim lives (Daileda, 2015).

A friend of mine who identifies as Muslim was deeply affected by the tragedy, planning a vigil in support of the victims and engaging online about the issue using the hashtag. She was upset at encountering backlash from some black students who resented the hashtag, derived from the hashtag #blacklivesmatter, which had developed in the wake of the protests in Ferguson, Missouri sparked by the assassination of Michael Brown. To these students, borrowing from the hashtag was tantamount to diverting attention from a more pertinent issue of black people’s encounters with police terror. My friend was even told by another student that the use of the hashtag showed how “they never let black people shine.”

That #muslimlivesmatter was an explicit modification of and homage to #blacklivesmatter identifies a moment of both solidarity and conflict. In some ways, both the potential and pitfalls implicit in the hashtag can be detected in the *Huffington Post* article “UNC Shooting Leaves Muslims Wondering: Was This A Hate Crime?” In the article, Imam Khalid Latif, a chaplain at New York University, is quoted as saying “What the last few months have indicated to us is that there are many different minority groups in the U.S. that aren't treated the way their counterparts are treated. It's up to us not to treat these hashtags just as slogans and delve deeper into the lived realities of these groups that need to have their voices amplified” (Kuruvilla, 2015).

This point was challenged by Dawud Walid, the executive director of Michigan’s chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (and a Black Muslim) who stated that #blacklivesmatter responded to state-sanctioned police violence, while the shooting of Bakarat, Salha, and Mohammad had been carried out by a “lone wolf.” He pleaded for Muslims to not use the hashtag because, as he said, “We need to be sensitive & not alienate Christian BLACK ALLIES also” (Kuruvilla, 2015).

Thus the very use of the hashtag, in its resemblance to #blacklivesmatter, identifies that blackness has a catalytic power, both immediate and resonant. Imam Latif viewed the hashtag as a signifier of the ways in which moments of violence directed towards minority groups provide opportunities for reflection and greater cross-cultural understanding. However, for Mr. Walid, the use of what he saw as a specifically black signifier was insensitive because it took the focus away from the specific ways in which African Americans are subject to state terror.

It is important to note, however, that the use of #muslimlivesmatter proved successful in gaining mainstream coverage of the shootings. The *Huffington Post* article closes on a congratulatory note, with a quotation from a Facebook post professedly started by family members of the victims: “Many, many amazing people have condemned this crime from across the world including many random people who seem to want to apologize for the heinous acts of this man. Muslims know all too well that the actions of few may not define the masses. Love shall overcome” (Kuruvilla, 2015). As a matter of fact, over 40,000 tweets used the hashtag within a day of the shooting. This concentration of tweets takes on a different timbre considering that much of the outcry over the shooting pertained not simply to the loss of life but also to the paltry coverage given the tragedy. As many of the tweets articulated, the shooting revealed a double standard, in which Muslim issues were reported on only as crimes rather than as coverage of the victims.

Thus, the hashtag did valuable work in forcing the mainstream media to cover the effects and implications of the shooting. With respect to the statements by Imam Latif and Mr. Walid, however, the question becomes how much (if any) of this success can be attributed to the relationship that #muslimlivesmatter had to #blacklivesmatter and, perhaps, to blackness more generally.

While my research does not focus on the Muslim experience specifically or the association between race and religion in the development of perceptions of linked fate, thinking about #muslimlivesmatter does provide some good insight into the relationship between these perceptions and notions of solidarity among racial

minority groups. Dawud Walid's statement on the type of violence that the respective hashtags refer to offers a useful starting point for analyzing that association.

That Walid capitalizes "BLACK ALLIES" in order to emphasize his point about the need for black people to feel comfortable responding to the shootings is jarring because it indicates a seeming precariousness of black support for anything not related to black people. It also shows that Walid places a premium on that support, identifying black allies as a critical need. But why, when racial violence occurs, would it not elicit immediate support on the part of African Americans, often seen as the most likely victims of such violence?

Racial violence in Chapel Hill did in fact spark a desire for solidarity between communities of color in the face of the type of violence faced by African Americans within the United States and the discrimination experienced by other, non-black, racial minorities. Racial violence serves as a strikingly efficient theoretical tool for understanding this phenomenon. Its use value to the Asian American community is well documented (Lien 2004, Zia 2000). As Pei-Te Lien states in *The Making of Asian America through Political Participation*,

The cases of both [Vincent] Chin and [Jim Ming Hai] Loo illustrate a central organizing principle in combating anti-Asian violence: All Asian Americans are in the same line of fire. In the eyes of the attacker, the Asian victim is never an individual human, but rather a symbol of foreign threat. This makes the issue of anti-Asian violence a handy one for panethnic coalition building and empowerment (Lien, 2001).

Historical moments of racial violence like the ones to which Lien refers are interesting for the political unity that they stimulate but also for the subsequent call for coalition-building both within and beyond the Asian American community. Using two different cases, I will now examine two different ways in which Asian Americans

have attempted to develop a sense of linked fate in response to racial violence. Using the murder of Vincent Chin, a case that demonstrates significant anti-Asian violence and the shooting of Michael Brown, a case that demonstrates anti-black violence, I argue that racial violence illustrates how perceptions of linked fate have developed within Asian- American communities in seemingly very different circumstances. On one level, racial violence creates an impetus for the development of a political infrastructure that supports and reinforces notions of linked fate. On another, proximity to blackness offers a powerful occasion for clarifying the idiosyncrasies of anti-Asian racism.

Vincent Chin: Frameworks of Fellowship

There is little doubt that Vincent Chin represents a major moment in Asian- American political history. As Lien recounts,

The watershed event in the constructing of a panethnic consciousness regarding the status of Asian Americans as a community was the murder of Vincent Chin in 1982. Vincent Chin was a Chinese American draftsman mistaken as a Japanese by two unemployed Detroit auto workers [Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz]. They bludgeoned him to death because they believed Japan was responsible for ruining the American auto industry with cheap auto exports. In a controversial plea bargain, each killer was given a sentence of three years' probation and a fine of \$3000. The murder might not have engaged the attention of Asian Americans from all over the nation had it not been for the light sentencing given to the father-stepson team of assailants. In shock and disbelief, the small and fragmented local community formed an organization called American Citizens for Justice (ACJ) to seek prosecution of Chin's killers. At first, only Chinese Americans and their traditional ethnic associations were involved in the case, but the issue quickly drew participation from other ethnic groups and non-Asians across the country. (Lien, 2001, pg. 57)

This passage suggests two reasons why Vincent Chin's assassination galvanized the Asian American community. On the one hand, we can see how the murder, by its very nature, forced the community to see itself in a racial framework

rather than an ethnic one. The murderers conflated Chin's Asian racial background with a Japanese ethnic background. Their racist assumptions cost Chin his life, but they also identified a pernicious threat of anti-Asian violence.

The second reason is that Ebens and Nitz received such lenient punishment. The fact that the justice system so obviously protected the white murderers indicated that Asian American lives were not valued, reinforcing and reigniting fears that Asian Americans remained perpetual foreigners who could not expect justice within the U.S. judicial system.

While both of these reasons contributed importantly to the development of an increased pan-Asian perception of linked fate, I think that neither gets at how activism in response to Chin's murder persisted for so long. As Helen Zia describes it, "It was the first time that an Asian American-initiated issue was considered significant national news"(Zia, 2000, pg. 73). For over five years, Asian Americans in Detroit, inspired by a national support system made up of Asian Americans, fought valiantly to see Ebens and Nitz brought to justice. What accounts for not just expanded recognition of linked fate but also its preservation? A passage quoted by Zia from Yen Le Espiritu is illuminating:

Considered the archetype of anti-Asian violence, the Chin case killing has "taken on mythic proportions" in the Asian American community (W. Wong 1989a). As a result of the Chin case, Asian Americans today are much more willing to speak out on the issue of anti-Asianism; they are also much better organized than they were at the time of Chin's death. Across the country, Asian Americans have formed new organizations to monitor, report, and protest anti-Asian incidents. Some of the newly formed organizations include the Bay Area's Break the Silence Coalition and the Asian Network for Equality and Justice, Boston's Asians for Justice Coalition, Cincinnati's Americans for Asian Concerns, Davis, California's Asians for Racial Equality, New York's Coalition against Anti-Asian Violence, and Sacramento's Coalition of Asians for Equal Rights (Mar 1987). In 1988, the

Asian Foundation for Community Development in northern California established the Vincent Chin Memorial Grant to fund projects that aim to reduce anti-Asian violence and to improve inter-group relations (Rafu Shimpo 1989). (Espiritu, 1992, pg. 165)

The Vincent Chin murder case retains such historical resonance not only because of the severity of the crime but also because it sparked the creation of an infrastructure to address anti-Asian violence and oppression. Moreover, it also gave rise to a network of organizations through which pan-Asian activism could be conducted. This mobilization subsequently led (at least at the national level) to a distinct effort to organize Asian Americans as a racial category, rather than as Chinese Americans, Korean Americans, etc. This is not to say that ethnic organizing declined or that Asian Americans moved away from it. Rather, as the passage just quoted indicates, , we see an burst of organizations all working within a coalitional framework (many of them with “coalition” in their names) that intentionally brings together Asian Americans under a broader racial heading, both through formal coalitions and through recruitment of Asian Americans from different groups.

When it comes to understanding Asian American awareness of linked fate, it helps to think about the relationship between institutions and perceptions of linked fate. Describing the importance of group cues to individual behavior among African Americans, Dawson asserts,

This tendency of African Americans to follow racial cues has been reinforced historically by institutions developed during the forced separation of blacks from whites during the post-Reconstruction period. These institutions, particularly the black church, tended to transmit the lessons of how to respond to the shifts in race relations, economic climate, and political environment across generations. (Dawson, 1994, pg. 58)

Institutions support and strengthen the salience of race for political decision-making. Through their advocacy for and emphasis on the importance of racial community, they establish race as an important organizing principle. Within the Asian- American context, Chin's murder is important first because it created increased racial consciousness but perhaps even more so because it led to the development of institutions that fortified such a consciousness.

The formation of American Citizens for Justice, or ACJ, as it was known at first, provides another way to think about this.² The organization formed quite quickly in reaction to the plea bargain for Ebens and Nitz, and it accomplished heavy lifting in its earliest iterations. As Zia recounts,

The pan-Asian intent of the group became clear as the group discussed what to name the new organization...The vote overwhelmingly went to "American Citizens for Justice," which offered an inclusive base and a vision for justice beyond a single case. The founding of the American Citizens for Justice, or ACJ, marked the formation of the first explicitly Asian American grass-roots community advocacy effort with a national scope. Third-generation Japanese American James Shimoura was the first, and at the time only, non-Chinese to serve on the executive board. Japanese, Filipino, and Korean American groups joined in support, assured that they would be welcome. As word of our efforts spread, both white and black individuals also volunteered, making the campaign for justice multiracial in character.(Zia, 2000, pg. 66-67)

American Citizens for Justice was formed for the specific purpose of advocating on behalf of Asian Americans at the national level. As we have seen above, many other local organizations followed suit. When I interviewed Carl Hum, the Vice President for Policy and Programs at AAJC, we talked about the organization's finding its political roots in a singular moment and what that meant for its history and contemporary growth:

² The organization is now referred to Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC)

Christian Hosam: A lot of people that I've already interviewed have recounted to me different stories of really developing a pan-ethnic ideology. Does that affect your work, and if so, how?

Carl Hum: Pan-Asian asset, yeah, we are a pan-Asian organization, I think that for the most part we try to do our advocacy based on research that we've done and what does the research point to in terms of the needs of the community. Our research is pan-Asian in regards to this is Asian American. I think that many things, the aspect of pan-Asian approach, really comes from our research, which informs our advocacy. (Hum, 2015)

Hum and I then discussed how goals are determined within AAJC:

Christian Hosam: What are your goals for your organization? Is it civil rights, and what does that actually look like? How does the organization at large set its agenda?

Carl Hum: It's rooted in the theory that I'd mentioned about immigration because that's how most of our community comes to the country. 90% of the community are immigrants or children of immigrants. The second is census, making sure that we are counted, there is voting rights, making sure that we are engaging or that we have better access to the polls. Lastly it's . . . the other part that I'm responsible for is litigation as well and making sure that if any of these areas are not enforced as policy, that we have the option to litigate as well.

In terms of the history of the organization, it was really born out of the fact that there was no Asian American voice in DC when it came to the issues that I've talked about. I guess the Vincent Chin killing back in 1982 woke up a lot of people in terms of how, even though, post-1965, Asian Americans were welcomed to this country after the Exclusion Act, that we still weren't part really of this country. I think that the need to have a voice here in Washington DC was particularly important and that's how the beginnings of AAJC was created back in 1991. (Hum, 2015)

The development of AAJC thus represents a specific effort to ignite a sense of political will within the Asian American population.

Emphasizing this effort should be interpreted as a move to de-emphasize the impact of Vincent Chin on Asian American history. His murder did have a significant

effect on the creation of political unity within Asian American communities.

However, the infrastructure created in response to Chin's death reveals some of the reasons for which that particular historical moment maintains such presence. In recounting another instance of anti-Asian racial violence, Lien states,

Seven years after Vincent Chin's murder, an American-born Chinese, Jim Ming Hai Loo, was beaten to death by two brothers who claimed that their brothers "went over to Vietnam and never came back." By 1989, however, Asian Americans were much better equipped to react to the crime and to act on behalf of the victim's family. It not only took the local Chinese and other Asians less than a month to form the Jim Loo American Justice Coalition to ensure the prosecution of the assailants, but representatives from Asian American civil rights organizations elsewhere promptly offered their support. In addition, the legal system was more responsive at both the local and federal levels and resulted in, "the first successful federal prosecution of a civil rights violation case in which the victim was an Asian American." (Lien, 2001) [add page numbers]

That the first *successful* prosecution on behalf of the Asian American civil rights community has not received nearly as much attention as the Vincent Chin murder might be peculiar but is due mostly to the fact that the groundwork for a successful campaign was already in place as a result of the work that had happened after the Chin murder.

However, the conceptual difference between civic organizations and an institution like the black church must be stressed. While the development of civic organizations has meant that there are now particular sites for the development of pan-Asian policy advocacy and civil-rights litigation, their existence does not necessarily account for or lead to an increase in individual- feelings of linked fate among Asian Americans. Unlike the black church, these organizations do not "transmit lessons" for individuals.

In our interview, Mini Timmaraju, the Executive Director of the National Coalition for Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA), made a similar point:

Christian Hosam: How do you think about location with respect to your job, because you are a Federal policy-making kind of organization but you are working with different organizations that are based around the country. How does location and thinking about really where the need is greatest, how does that affect your job?

Mini Timmaraju: Yeah, that's a great question. I'll tell you, it's something we are working at right now. It's a challenge. Obviously the organizations that are Washington D.C.-based, and have inside staff, and are able to be on the Hill, and are able to meet with the administration, they are the ones ... I mean quite candidly, who shape our agenda more aggressively, but we ... one of our members of the group called Hmong National Development ... headquartered in Minnesota because that's where the largest Hmong population is.

They have one staff in Washington D.C. It's harder for them to influence the national AAPI agenda. I do see a lot of my job as picking up the phone, and interacting, and reaching out as much as possible because the members that are far flung across country and making sure we have their perspective on what we are working on. What we do every four years, and we are in the process of starting it again, and it coincides with the presidential elections, is we put out...a policy platform, and take the range of issues we work on.

We look at the five focus areas, and we do a deep dive of the list of AAPI, AAPI and Hawaiian. So Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders are a piece of each policy area. For example, you'll see a listing of these are bills we support. These are issues we support, everything from concerns about racial profiling to the robustness and strength of the Voting Rights Act to expanded immigration, obviously family based integration, et cetera. We do this every four years, and we use this as a way to weight, have all of our member organizations weigh in. Also to have all of our community partners, and leaders, and leaders, and stakeholders, staff like Members of Congress, appointees from the administration, individual civic leaders and cities across the country weigh in on these policies. Do these really reflect the Asian community? (Timmaraju, 2015)

The work of NCAPA is explicitly pan-Asian, drawing from thirty-four member organizations and attempting to incorporate their policy platforms and needs into coherent policy proposals. What this work does not and cannot address is

increasing pan-Asian consciousness across the nation. To expect it to do so would be irresponsible; but there is a larger question. While the Vincent Chin case was important to the development of a pan-Asian consciousness, it was more important in the development of a pan-Asian political infrastructure. What does this mean, however, if the organization does not reflect the broader sentiment of Asian Americans? This fact suggests that Asian Americans do not necessarily see race as consistently salient as African Americans do; they have to use other causes to appeal to a broader pan-Asian and multiracial sensibility when it comes to Asian American issues. These other causes are evidenced in the way Zia actually introduces Chin within her own narrative. She describes Chin in a striking way:

Vincent Chin was a regular Detroit guy who happened to be of Chinese descent. Cheerful and enjoyable, Vincent was a recent graduate of Control Data Institute, a computer trade school, and worked as a draftsman during the day and a waiter on weekends. He liked nothing more than spending a lazy afternoon fishing with his buddies. He hadn't been touched by the Asian American movement and knew little of the violence endured by past generations of Asian Americans. But he had felt the sting of racial prejudice and witnessed the hardships of his immigrant parents, who worked in the laundries and restaurants of Detroit. (Zia, 2000) [add page number]

Zia's narrative description of Chin is packed with appeals to make him seem more American than Asian, someone who was never politicized or radicalized by the Asian American movement, and had adopted without question the American ethos of hard work and personal responsibility. Zia continues:

On June 19, 1982, a week before his wedding, Vincent's pals took him out for the all-American ritual, the bachelor party. They went to Fancy Pants, a raunchy striptease bar in Highland Park, a tattered enclave of Detroit, near the crumbling mansions once home to auto magnates and Motown stars, and only blocks away from the abandoned buildings where Henry Ford manufactured

the Model T. Vincent, who grew up in that neighborhood, had been to Fancy Pants several times before. Zia, 2000) [add page number]

The depiction of Highland Park serves to create an understanding of Chin's life as pushing back against a tide of unemployment and working-class resentment in a city that had lost its former cultural and economic prestige.

Zia's imagery is intentional. It sets the stage for her audience to view Chin's life as anything but foreign, clearly within the bounds of an American experience, in order to make his death seem much more startling against the background of racial animus. Zia, to put it another way, is crafting a model victim.

This crafting is certainly not uniquely relevant to the Asian American community, but it reveals the author's strategy of representing Chin in a way that could appeal to people who were not Asian American—those who might have stereotyped Vincent Chin in the same way that Ebens and Nitz did. Indeed, anticipating such stereotyping was not far-fetched. In fact, Joe Davis, the African American fair-practices director for the United Auto Workers, a powerful union in Detroit that provided a great deal of support to the ACJ in the wake of the Chin murder, was quoted as saying, "If he had been Japanese, the attack would be understandable, and we wouldn't give you our support."

This quotation demonstrates the contingent status of Asian American racial victimhood. Davis was sympathizing with Nitz and Ebens by suggesting that the (false) sense of Japanese encroachment on the U.S. auto industry justified murder. Given the lack of solidarity in the Asian American community at the time that Chin was murdered, we know external support was still very important, even when it was

laced with the type of suspicion and resentment towards Asian Americans' real or perceived relative economic empowerment and social advantage. Davis's point might have been offensive, but his support was still necessary. This passage by Zia illuminates this point further:

An appearance that Liza Chan and I made on a popular African American talk radio program drew numerous calls from black listeners. Some were pleased that Asian Americans would reach out to their community to talk about this injustice. Others asked if Asians were just trying to "ride the coattails" of African Americans, and still others accused Asian people of prejudice against blacks. We tried to answer questions frankly, acknowledging that anti-black prejudice exists among some, but not all, Asian Americans, and that ACJ was trying to address racial bias and injustice against any group, including attitudes held by Asians. The talk shows gave us an opportunity to point out the contributions of Asian Americans to the civil rights struggles. The listeners' comments also underscored the need for us to bring such discussions to the more recent Asian immigrants who had arrived after the 1965 Immigration Act with little awareness of the U.S. civil rights movement. (Zia, 2000, pg. 68)

The responses of African Americans to the Chin case are important, but even more relevant here is the importance of soliciting those opinions. Note that Zia points out two distinct reasons for the appeal. One reason is to note the particular work done by Asian Americans within the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, ostensibly to show African Americans the work that has been done on their behalf (as Zia and Chan are appealing for African American support). In addition, these appeals highlight the need for Asian immigrants to be informed about the many forms of work that has been done to allow them to be in the United States. What both reasons show is the importance of blackness as a conceptual tool for Asian American political advancement. Zia takes time in her narrative to talk about appealing to black listeners because the historical legacy of discrimination and racism in the U.S. often stems from African Americans' experiences. These appeals therefore have a legitimating

function in the campaign for Asian American civil rights. The need to show the importance of Asian Americans' struggle to other Asian Americans while simultaneously highlighting the unique contributions of Asian Americans demonstrates the contingent status of linked fate in Asian America. The heterogeneity of Asian American generational status, socioeconomic background, and proximity to discrimination makes the idea of political unity precarious. However, as we saw with Vincent Chin, that does not mean that cross-ethnic and pan-Asian coalitions cannot be built. What the appeals to African Americans show is that blackness has a resonance that works both on a practical level and on a more ephemeral, representational level. Blackness thus both facilitates and challenges perceptions of linked fate in Asian Americans. The shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014 can provide a sounding board for the resonance of blackness in Asian American political engagement..

Ferguson and the Catalytic Power of Blackness

In the wake of the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, no fewer than eight Asian American writers spoke out on the tragedy, with many of them offering a specific perspective as to why the death of Michael Brown was particularly salient. Five articles published by Asian American authors that gained popularity in online news sources focused on the importance of the tragedy to the Asian American community are especially illuminating.

In his "Men Without a Country: Mike Brown, Trayvon Martin, My Father and Me," Arthur Chu reflects on the different ways in which full citizenship is withheld from all people of color. In "As an Asian American, I Care About Ferguson and Race

Relations,” Grace Hwang Lynch grapples with the problem that Asian Americans who do not actively fight for racial justice can perpetuate perceptions of Asian American complicity with white privilege. In “Why Ferguson Matters to Asian Americans,” Soya Jung looks at the question of rage from a cross-racial perspective to show how the “model minority” myth is intimately connected to the myth of black criminality. In “Ferguson’s Other Race Problem: Riots Damaged Asian-Owned Stores,” Tim Mak discusses how the events in Ferguson may have triggered other types of racial tensions, affecting Asian American business owners in the town. In “Why All Communities of Color Must Demand an End to Police Brutality,” Deepa Iyer describes the police brutality that different racial groups have endured, stressing the importance of understanding the protests in a context of racial justice broader than one that addresses only anti-black racism. A consistent thread running through all these articles but Mak’s is the care the authors take to recognize differences in the racialization of Asian Americans and African Americans while making sure not to exclude anti-black racism as a cause worthy of Asian American activism. Many of the articles also convey a subtle critique of the model-minority myth. As the articles exhort other Asian Americans to stand up for the rights of African Americans, they all implicitly (and Lynch explicitly) state that those who do not speak out are assenting to that myth. This emphasis creates an interesting thematic arc between the articles, suggesting that the model-minority myth is not limited to the educational and economic stereotypes prevalent in both the popular media and the scholarly literature about Asian Americans, but extends to questions of civic engagement and willingness to take part in activism on the part of the race.

Furthermore, this critique applies to my argument about linked fate among Asian Americans. As the authors show, the call for an end to anti-black racism from an Asian American perspective implies that Asian American political power emerges when different ethnic groups form a united front. Political influence results from increased levels of racial community building. The repudiation of the model-minority myth calls for Asian American activism on a mass scale. Ferguson is its own moment, yes, but for these authors it also provides an entry point for Asian Americans to understand their own commonalities and linked fate.

The articles indicate that Asian Americans reacting to Ferguson are simultaneously framing racial justice for Asian Americans within contexts particular to breaking down anti-Asian racism and pushing for a society rid of anti-blackness and white supremacy that will benefit all people of color.

In “The Afro-Asian Analogy,” Colleen Lye suggests that Asian American racialization is caught between competing currents of a relationship to white supremacy and anti-blackness (Lye, 2008). On one end is Claire Jean Kim’s “Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans,” which argues that Asian Americans are racialized within a context of “civic ostracism” that locates them as perpetual foreigners, in contrast to a black racialization of “relative devalorization” that depicts African Americans as perpetually inferior. In this way, Kim claims that Asian American racial formation is mediated by the anti-black racial formation through an understanding of blacks as insiders to the country even as they are inferior, with Asians not being seen as inferior in the same way but still outside of the black-white binary.

On the other end of the spectrum is Susan Koshy's "Morphing Race Into Ethnicity: Asian Americans and Critical Transformations of Whiteness," which posits that Asian Americans represent a racially excluded group that "morphed" into a assimilable ethnicity during the twentieth century, with a specific focus on economic stratification as a lens that magnifies the limits of what Lye calls "racial parallelism" in the development of a coalitional politics (Koshy, 2001). While this analysis challenges the narrative of the perpetual outsider that constitutes a central theme of Asian American studies, it also resists the impulse to make Asian racialization in the United States a simple derivative of anti-blackness, thereby uncovering the tension present even conceptually in comparing the racial development of Asian Americans and African Americans.

Focusing on specific articles helps illustrate differences in the experiences of African Americans and Asian Americans. Take, for example, Arthur Chu's "Men Without a Country: Mike Brown, Trayvon Martin, My Father and Me," in which he states,

I can pretend to belong here better than Trayvon was ever given the chance to. The white racist looks at me and sees a stolen job or the slow decline of national prominence, but he doesn't see a rapist, a thug, a barbarian at the gate. I fear being snubbed and sometimes spat on but rarely shot. And that is a very important difference. But it is still not my country. However hard I try, however well they treat me, however much we all smile at each other and however much people praise the "model minority" I am, I know it is not. (Chu, 2014)

Chu notes that while Asian Americans and African Americans experience prejudice in different ways, white supremacy affects both groups, preventing access to full citizenship and blocking their ability to claim membership in the American project.

While Chu is getting at questions of how racial identity structures the fortunes of African Americans and Asian Americans in different ways, he also raises questions of national belonging and inclusion. Chu describes an incident in which a gang of white people accosted his father during graduate school:

Because it was a lesson he learned the night that some random drunkards decided that terrorizing two pedestrians in a car, swerving toward them again and again, would be fun—would have no legal consequences because the cops wouldn't care, would have no moral consequences because the victims didn't matter. That lesson was: This Is Not Your Country... I resisted this lesson. I fought back. I worked for hours to give myself a generic Midwestern broadcaster's accent—I became a voiceover artist because the way I have trained myself to speak is a "radio voice."... I binged on America, I stuffed myself so full of America I was bursting at the seams with America.... Because none of that was real. That was all in another world. (Chu, 2014)

Chu is creating a compelling dichotomy between his experience and his father's relationship. While his father responded to racial animus by distancing himself from his larger residential community and as little interaction with whites as possible, Chu pushed himself to assimilate into a mainstream culture, until he realized that assimilation was unsustainable.

Questions of national belonging in the context of coalition building are important because they point to some of the fissures often taken for granted when the political agendas of different communities of color are juxtaposed. Indeed, much of the scholarship on Afro-Asian Studies tries to "recuperate a shared social history that challenges binaristic constructions of race, as well as the conventional wisdom that presumes a longstanding antagonism between African Americans and Asian Americans"(Watkins, 2012). This conventional wisdom bubbles up in Tim Mak's article "Ferguson's Other Race Problem: Riots Damaged Asian-Owned Stores." Mak

creates the sense that a specific type of antipathy led to looting of Asian- American-owned businesses:

The Ferguson Market, where the teenage Brown allegedly grabbed a handful of cigars before his deadly encounter with police, is owned by the Patels, an Asian American family. Looters have targeted the store twice. On the same block, Northland Chop Suey, a Chinese restaurant, has been looted at least two times. A second market, a beauty shop, and a cellphone store within walking distance also have been damaged; all are owned by Asian Americans. (Mak, 2014)

Mak invokes a historical narrative to advance his argument: “It happened during the L.A. riots, when anger over the police beating of Rodney King spilled into Koreatown. It happened fictionally in Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing*, when an Asian American business owner was forced to defend his store from rioters. And it’s happening again in Ferguson: Looted Asian American businesses have become collateral damage” (Mak, 2014). This narrative reproduces a kind of interracial conflict that in many ways obscures the role that white supremacy plays in the entire situation. Later on in the article, Mak concedes, “Jay Kanzler, the Patels’ lawyer, told *The Daily Beast* he believed that law enforcement authorities allowed the looting of Ferguson Market on Friday in part because it is a minority-owned small business” (Mak, 2014). Mak here rearticulates the spark of the entire incident, state-sanctioned violence against people of color, as a lack of protection for Asian-owned businesses. However, he does not make the connection between anti-black racism and anti-Asian racism other than in mentioning how lack of police protection for Asian businesses versus white businesses could have played a part in the looting. As Grace Hwang Lynch contends in her own article about Ferguson and Asian Americans, which also serves as a critique of Mak,

But look beyond the headline and you'll see that the real story lies not in a simplistic Asian v. black conflict, but in the struggles of small businesses trying to file insurance claims and in the questions of whether law enforcement was protecting small businesses owned by Chinese or Indian Americans in the same way they would guard a Walmart or Starbucks. (Grace Hwang Lynch, 2014)

Another point that gets little attention in the Mak article is that the Asian business owners rejected the idea that the situation offered a simple repetition of Asian-black tensions playing out in ways reminiscent of the Rodney King riots; many business owners stated that they loved Ferguson and even cited the assistance they had received from black protesters who attempted to protect their shops from the looting. The overshadowing in the article of the business owners' sentiment indicates how easily even moments of racial solidarity can be represented as interracial conflict.

Lynch, however, reframes this conflict in terms of an activist sentiment and analyzes what the Asian American response means in the context of larger racial histories within the United States. She contends that

... there are more subtle ways that Ferguson coverage could easily fall into old tropes. When Asian Americans don't speak up about police violence and profiling of African Americans, some people assume our silence is complicity with white privilege. We could be better allies with our black fellow citizens, not because we are more privileged, but [because of our] influence in our own circles. (Lynch, 2014)

The idea of influence within specific communities points to the ways in which different racialized groups conceptualize and perhaps, with particular respect to Asian Americans, "triangulate" (Kim, 1999) their impact on racial-justice struggles more broadly.

Redirecting Lynch's argument to questions of national belonging, Kim and Koshy's theories about Asian American racialization represent two different ideas about how prejudices faced by Asian Americans are related to those faced by African Americans. To be sure, there are practical reasons for viewing these prejudices as connected. The article "Why all Communities of Color Should Care about Ferguson" (Jung, 2014) lays out some effective practical reasons as to why all people should care about police brutality (i.e., that Asian Americans can and have experienced police brutality as well). The primary terrain of this question, however, is epistemological. On what conceptual grounds should Asian Americans see the racial fortunes and futures of African Americans as their own, or at least as tied to their own?

Jung's article wrestles with these questions of cross-racial affinity and in doing so returns us to the critique of the model-minority myth. By juxtaposing the ideal of black criminality with the model-minority myth, Jung articulates the critical importance for Asian Americans of unraveling the logics of white supremacy that presage police brutality in black communities:

... America normalizes and indulges in black death in service to a dehumanizing narrative of black criminality. The exalting of Asian Americans as a model minority reinforces this narrative. And Asian death is rendered invisible when it has no value to the power structure. If Asian life falls outside of model minority and Orientalist narratives, if it doesn't prop up ideas of American exceptionalism and meritocracy, it doesn't register much. (Jung, 2014)

Jung points out the ways in which Asian communities also experience state-sanctioned white supremacist violence (she cites two instances of South-Asian Americans becoming targets of racially motivated murders) but notes that when it

falls outside a stereotypical narrative about Asian Americans, the violence is not even reported on: “The invisibility of Asian death, and the denial of any form of Asian American identity that doesn’t play by the model minority rulebook, is another reason why black rage holds such importance to me. It serves as a beacon when faced with the racial quandary that Asian Americans must navigate.” (Jung, 2014)

Jung thus sees a dialectical relationship between black rage and the model-minority myth. On the one hand, black rage creates a space from which to clarify the unique position that Asian Americans face because the modality of race in the United States rests on an ideal of anti-blackness, and Asian Americans are raced in relation to this anti-blackness, either being elevated through the model-minority myth or erased through denial of their existence in the racial hierarchy. On the other, by unpacking the inconsistencies of the model-minority myth, Jung exposes as a farce the stereotype of a unique pathology within black communities that predisposes them to higher levels of state-endorsed death.

Jung’s commentary is connected to the work of Rychetta Watkins, who portrays the historical moment of Yellow Power in the United States as both a response to Black Power and a specific call to Asian Americans to rise up based on their unique social location within the United States:

Unlike previous immigrant success narratives that focused on successful assimilation, the model minority myth managed to laud “traditional” Japanese and Chinese values that *somehow* survived, while simultaneously reinforcing stereotypes of Asians as inscrutable and reinscribing the myth of American equality. The model minority stereotype functioned as a sop to a ‘bourgeois’ class of Asian Americans and helped deflect charges of unfairness leveled by civil rights proponents. The recognition of the damage done by this stereotype presented the first obstacle to group identity and agency for Asian Americans; repudiating it would be the next step in self-determination. (Watkins, 2012, pg. 39)

In Jung and Watkins we see a depiction of the model minority myth as one that functions among other things as a means of obfuscation, shrouding larger issues of Asian American racial subordination under claims of economic and social advancement. While Watkins is describing the historical period of the birth of the Yellow Power Movement and Jung is speaking of the contemporary moment, they both point to an even more specific point about the pernicious effects of the model minority myth, which is that it obscures the chances for a pan-Asian identity. Jung states it in her call to recognize the invisibility of Asian death; Watkins places it within the context of a clarion call to Asian American coalition building both within and beyond the race. Watkins states:

According to Uyematsu, Asian Americans face two identity problems. They are not white; they are not yellow enough. The resolution to this problem would be the formation of a new identity predicated on resisting an outwardly imposed racial narrative that reinforced America's myth of itself.... By banding together under a 'yellow' consciousness, a correct consciousness aware of the effects of racism on Asians in particular and people of color generally, Asian Americans could agitate for change and begin to heal the fractures within their community and claim more representation in America's racially charged political system.(Watkins, 2012, pg. 38)

Watkins claims that resistance to an imposed identity, a model minority status, holds the key to Asian American liberation and sees this liberation as tied to awareness of both the racism directed against Asian Americans and of the racial subjugation of people of color more broadly. This dual recognition will allow Asian Americans to make common cause with African Americans. Therefore, in both a way specific to Asian Americans and to people of color on a general level, visions of Asian American racial justice are never only about Asian Americans.

Iyer's "Why All Communities of Color Must Demand an End to Police Brutality" offers yet another example of a writer attempting to create a coalitional consciousness that extends an issue seemingly confined to Black people to all people of color. Iyer states that: "We can only end racial injustice through strategic multiracial alliances at the local and national levels that are informed by an understanding of our connected histories, and through working within our constituencies to address anti-black racism and stereotypes about one another. We can and must start with Ferguson." To Iyer, Ferguson might highlight the plight that African Americans face but it also shows that racial justice cannot end with them either.

By envisioning a world without white supremacy, Asian American activists and writers simultaneously reject being placed at the margins of the US racial hierarchy while still articulating an understanding of the ways that anti-blackness functions a dominant discourse within the U.S. racial climate. In this way, Asian American reactions to Ferguson provide a window into the possibility of a multiracial coalition committed to fighting for racial justice. Simultaneously, it reminds us about the malleability of linked fate. For these Asian American writers, political unity and participation is distinctly tied to anti-black racism. This indicates that linked fate can and does arise in Asian Americans but also, interestingly, that it can be spurred (in unique ways) by the discrimination faced by other minority groups.

Conclusion

The discussion of #muslimlivesmatter at the beginning of the chapter shows us that blackness is an agent, serving practical goals of sounding the alarm for the plight of other minority groups in a way that is accessible to a broader population while at the same time creating a deeper understanding of the ways that racism and discrimination play out in non-black minority communities.

Developing a notion of linked fate hinges for Asian Americans on a number of factors that create a calculus for political unity different than that for African Americans. As a political voting bloc, Asian Americans are exceedingly new to the United States polity. A desire for political solidarity and connectedness hardly existed outside of the academy until the 1980s, sparked by Vincent Chin's death. What Chin's assassination did was create an infrastructure through which elite level actors (like my interviewees) could organize along racial lines. When that infrastructure is absent, Asian Americans utilize other tools that resonate both within and outside of their racial community. Blackness in particular has often served as such a tool: resounding, immediate, and jarring; pointing out anti-black racism has served as an entryway to talking about anti-Asian racism. Subsequently, it has the ability to grow and reinforce Asian American linked fate.

However, the two cases presented in this chapter, one that represents significant anti-Asian violence and another that represents significant anti-black racism, Asian American activism after the death of Chin and Brown place a premium on the use of blackness towards the ends of coalition-building and seeing each victim's struggle in a broader, multiracial context. However, this assumes a level of

solidarity and coalition between African Americans and Asian Americans. What about in moments of inter-ethnic conflict between Blacks and Asians?

Chapter 4 takes on these questions, using the division within the Chinese American community after the indictment of NYPD Officer Peter Liang to explain what happens to perceptions of linked fate in Asian American communities when faced with charges of the very type of complicity with white privilege that Lynch so vehemently opposes. With specific respect to Asian Americans, if blackness has the potential to be used as reinforcement for linked fate, what does it mean for community building when blackness is seemingly pitted against Asianness?

Chapter 4: Peter Liang and Life Cycles of Linked Fate

Chapter 3 showed how racial violence could provide a powerful tool for analyzing how a sense of linked fate does and does not arise for Asian Americans. In the Asian American bloggers' characterizations of Ferguson, blackness served as an agent in developing a clearer group consciousness among Asian Americans.

However, Michael Brown was not shot by an Asian American. Trying to catalyze Asian American activism through blackness worked in the last chapter because the agent of blackness points towards a reagent of whiteness. What type of reaction occurs when black interests are at odds with Asian American interests? In this chapter, I will look at the recent indictment of Peter Liang, a Chinese-American cop who shot an African American, Akai Gurley, in a moment of seeming Afro-Asian conflict, to assess how perceptions of Asian Americans' linked fate can be activated by inter-ethnic conflict involving black people. As much as blackness can serve as a galvanizing force for Asian Americans, in this chapter I will suggest that it also creates severe disjuncture in the Asian American community. More specifically, black-Asian conflict can bring ethnic differences within the Asian American community to the fore, breaching a veneer of linked fate.

The Perils of Chinese-American Organizing

The shooting of Akai Gurley, a twenty-six-year-old New York resident and aspiring actor, shows how anti-black racial violence can drive a wedge between Asian American communities. This case reveals how perceptions of linked fate can break down when confronted with accountability for the ending of a black life.

The Talking Points Memo article “Why The Chinese Community Shouldn't Rally Around Indicted Cop Peter Liang” provides a succinct description of the event in question:

On the evening of November 20, 2014, Officer Liang and his partner were doing their regular rounds at the Pink Houses, a public housing development in East New York. They were performing what's known as a vertical patrol (a practice that has come under criticism for its harassment of residents of public housing and their guests). As they entered the darkened stairwell on the 8th floor, unlit due to malfunctioning lights, Liang took out his gun, finger on the trigger. Startled by the sound of Akai Gurley and his girlfriend entering the landing below, Liang fired one shot, which ricocheted off the wall and into Gurley, killing him. It hardly bears mentioning that Gurley was unarmed. He was simply there to visit his girlfriend. (E. Wang, 2015)

Gurley's death takes on a particular resonance because of its timing. A grand jury had just declined to indict Officer Daniel Pantaleo for (recorded) choking death of Eric Garner, an unarmed black man, and in a matter of days a grand jury in Ferguson would decide not to indict Officer Darren Wilson. Peter Liang, however, was indicted, which sparked a strong reaction in the Chinese community. For a significant number of its members, the question became, “If these white officers are not indicted for the intentional murder of black men, why would Peter Liang, a Chinese cop who accidentally kills a black man, have to face indictment?”

A petition was circulated, calling for the state to withdraw the indictment of Officer Liang. As of late March 2015, the petition had gathered nearly 124,000 signatures.³ The petition called attention to the lack of equity in the circumstances of Liang's case and the cases of Garner and Wilson:

³ The signatures are not made public, so the demographic makeup of the petitioners is unknown.

Prosecutors Indict Officer Liang for Political Gain! Asian American Police Officer Becomes Scapegoat!

NYPD Officer, Peter Liang told his superiors that his gun had gone off unintentionally, the bullet rattling off a wall and into an unsuspecting man's chest, killing Akai Gurley.

Nonetheless, the circumstances surrounding Mr. Gurley's death led to a manslaughter indictment this week, whereas police officers in the Michael Brown and Eric Garner case were never charged. Criminal charges appeared more likely in the later two cases, but these two non-Asian Police Officers were never charged. ("Demand Brooklyn District Attorney Kenneth P. Thompson to withdraw indictment against Asian minority Officer Peter Liang!" 2015)

By framing the indictment in explicitly racial terms, the drafters of the petition are interpreting the incident in terms of anti-Asian racism

This is not the full story, however. Other Chinese Americans, and other Asian Americans, praised the indictment. From their perspective, the indictment of Liang constituted a victory against police brutality, something that affects Asian Americans, even though it is more immediate for blacks and Latinos. As Vivien Lee reports in her *New York Times* article "Indictment of New York Officer Divides Chinese-Americans,"

The indictment has galvanized other Chinese-American leaders, but in a different way. To say that Officer Liang has been singled out misses the bigger picture, those leaders argue. Asians have also suffered at the hands of police officers, they say, and it is time for them to join the chorus of black and Latino voices calling for reform. "Peter Liang being Asian only means that all cops need to be held accountable, regardless of skin color," said Cathy Dang, the executive director of CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities, an advocacy group in New York that works with Asian immigrants from several countries. "We should use this indictment as fuel for us to organize even harder to hold the white officers who've killed accountable." Councilwoman Margaret Chin, a Democrat who represents the Chinatown neighborhood, also called for Officer Liang to be indicted, saying the filing of charges would be a step toward reforming a police force that she said has unfairly targeted Asians as well as blacks and Latinos. (Yee, 2015)

For Asian Americans who agree with Lee, Liang's indictment indicates a willingness on the part of the authorities to hold police accountable. In addition, the indictment supports blacks and Latinos calling for police reform, a sign of solidarity across racial lines. Put another way, the systemic issue of police brutality trumps the individual indictment of a Chinese-American officer. Indeed, for these activists, the indictment furthers the goal of stopping police misconduct in all communities of color.

This significant divide within the Asian American community takes on a different cast when juxtaposed to the unity of the black community. The *New York Times* article "Community Leaders Criticize Police over Fatal Shooting of Unarmed Brooklyn Man" reports on the local community's response to Gurley's death. In commenting on the murder, community members did not characterize the incident in racial terms, in contrast to the Brown and Garner shootings, but rather voiced a broader criticism of police conduct. Brooklyn Councilman Jumaane Williams was quoted as asking, "Why didn't an electrician make a vertical patrol (Mueller & Flegenheimer, 2014)?" This comment echoes the sentiment of many in the community who were concerned about the shooting because it could have happened to any of them. The stairways in the Pink Houses were often in disrepair and usually very dark because many of the lights had been burned out for a long time. Furthermore, the police presence in the buildings had led to frequent charges of resident harassment. The Gurley shooting did, therefore, strike a nerve with many of the members of the community, illustrating the danger of vertical patrols to the residents not just of the Pink Houses but also in the NYPD's jurisdiction at large.

This incident tells us something about the strength of linked fate. Do perceptions of linked fate retain their salience when faced with an issue such as this that arouses different senses of racial and civic responsibility? This question leads to another: how does a perception of linked fate within the Asian American community ebb and flow in relation to external factors such as the Liang indictment?

African Americans can more easily achieve political unity in this instance than Asian Americans because the effect of race is exceedingly clear in the context of the case. The facts of the event were not open to dispute as they were in the Brown and Garner cases. For the residents of East New York, Gurley's very existence in this neighborhood, with its high proportion of black people, was subject to a specific type of police scrutiny and surveillance that ultimately cost him his life. Using race as a way to analyze and organize how this case should play out thus makes sense.

The calculus is very different for Asian Americans and, perhaps, more complex. The organizing to challenge Liang's indictment and the support for that indictment do not necessarily represent different levels of affective connection to Liang (although they might). More probable is that both responses demonstrate how Asian Americans perceive racial justice within their community. The Asian Americans advocating for the quashing of Liang's indictment see Asian American justice in the context of judicial parity with whites. If Liang gets off, it would indicate that Asians are treated in the same way as whites. Those focused on police brutality as something affecting Asians as well as blacks and Latinos, view Asian American justice through the lens of equity for all people of color. Both sides represent the use of a racial utility heuristic. Their perceptions of group interests, however, diverge, 1

with different outcomes for the utility of race in the context of the decision not whether to participate politically, but *how* to participate.

Investigating the ways in which Asian Americans participate helps to illuminate how contextual frames shape perceptions of racial utility. Viewed from this vantage point, the question posed by the petition registers on a different level. The petition stresses that Peter Liang was indicted for a killing when two other white police officers were not. As Wang puts it, “The argument basically boils down to this: If these white officers got off, so should Peter Liang” (Wang, 2015).

The problem with framing the issue this way, I would propose, lies not in its moral failing. The question itself implies a racial hierarchy that does in fact exist.⁴ However, the more critical problem is the question’s lack of substance. Asking why Peter Liang got indicted may raise the issue of racial inequity, but it does not point toward any meaningful answers. The converse of the question, however, creates different opportunities.

Asking something along the lines of “If Peter Liang got indicted, why did Darren Wilson and Daniel Pantaleo get off scot free?” might have moral implications but it can be answered by looking at the law pertaining to use of deadly force by police officers. Understanding how and why these three officers were and were not indicted brings a new kind of story into view.

The Supreme Court cases *Tennessee v. Garner* and *Graham v. Connor* are the principal precedents defining how much discretion police officers in situations that may involve deadly force. In *Tennessee v. Garner*, the Court found that if an officer

⁴ Kim (1999) and Zia (2000) both offer compelling accounts of racial hierarchy.

has probable cause to believe a suspect represents an immediate threat to the officer or others, it is reasonable to use deadly force to prevent the suspect from fleeing. In *Graham v. Connor*, the Court named three criteria by which to assess the use of force by police officers: (1) the severity of the crime at issue, (2) whether the suspect posed an immediate threat to the safety of the officers or others, and (3) whether the suspect was actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight. As Mark Clark reports in the online article “Understanding *Graham v. Connor*”:

The 'reasonableness' of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight. The calculus of reasonableness must embody allowance for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second judgments—in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving—about the amount of force that is necessary in a particular situation. (Clark, 2014)

The use of an objective reasonableness standard provides a high degree of flexibility for police officers if they can prove that they *believed* that they were in imminent danger. In other words, Wilson and Pantaleo were likely never to be indicted because they were engaged in altercations with Brown and Garner. At an operational level, this has meant that in cases where the witness and the officer offer contradictory accounts, the officer and the witness can both be seen as telling the truth but the officer will have legal recourse and protection for his/her decision.

In inadvertent shootings, however, criminal culpability for death cannot be covered by the criterion of threat perception. As James McKinley Jr. and J. David Goodman discuss in their article “Basis for Case in Brooklyn Police Shooting: No Threat Led Officer to Fire”,

as a legal matter, the case against Officer Liang was stronger, and hinged on two factors: Unlike the officers in the Brown and Garner cases, Officer Liang

declined to testify before a grand jury, and he did not claim he was acting against a perceived threat—making it difficult for him to argue he was using legitimate force. “I can’t think of a case in any recent time where an officer took someone’s life and there was no explanation of why,” a senior prosecutor in Brooklyn said. “He had no justification defense.” The officer’s claim that he fired his weapon by accident did not spare him from criminal culpability, prosecutors and legal experts said. Prosecutors can bring charges based not on the person’s intention to do harm but on his failure to perceive the danger of his acts, or worse, his willful decision to ignore that danger. Prosecutors also contend that Officer Liang, 27, who had been on the force for less than 18 months, disregarded his safety training by putting his finger on the trigger and pointing the gun ahead of him into the dark, even though there was no obvious threat. (McKinley Jr. & Goodman, 2015)

Liang’s choice not to testify before a grand jury and his admission that there was no basis for threat in the case actually results in a higher level of criminal culpability for Peter Liang. In moments of accidental death versus those instances in which police officers claim imminent danger, there are fewer legal protections.

As a racial question, the question of why Liang is indicted and Wilson and Pantaleo are not is a substantive one. Its substance is found within the legal realm, however, rather than in the theoretical and moral realm.⁵ Furthermore, the legal answer to the question has racial implications. Liang’s account of the incident was nearly congruent with that of Gurley’s girlfriend, Melissa Butler, in stark contrast to the ways other cases bore witness to divergent accounts from the perspectives of the witnesses and the officers. Ironically, this by itself increased the probability that Liang would be indicted than his white colleagues Wilson and Pantaleo. In other words, framing Liang’s indictment against the others is powerful not because it calls for parity in the criminal justice for Asian Americans (although it might). Rather, it lays bare just how pernicious the laws around policing are, in fact devaluing the

⁵ This is not to suggest that there is not a moral question here. Rather, the critical punch of Liang from a racial perspective is found within law rather than ethics

testimony of all people of color. The police brutality often faced by immigrant communities is of particular importance here. Liang's indictment shows that the police, at a legal level, are always more trusted than community members. For communities of color, this is deeply important to recognize because it shows that the only time a police officer can face trial for instances of violence against a community member is when they. Questioning Darren Wilson and Daniel Pantaleo's non-indictment thus implies another question: who is accountable to communities of color? Given the merits of the Gurley case, Liang's indictment actually brings this question into clearer focus.

That organizing breaks down within the Asian American community thus indicates a deeper (and similar) distrust of the legal system playing out in different ways for different people. Putting it in Dawson's framework, the heuristic calculation has different outcomes. Even within the Chinese American community, the U_{it} outcome shifts greatly because, unlike African Americans, the pgi score has significantly greater variation. In addition, given how significantly large of an immigrant population we see in the community, the U_{t-1} variable is also unpredictable because it is entirely likely that they have not had an experience in which there was high utility in using race to make political decisions. For example, the ways that members of Liang's neighborhood perceived his indictment indicates a deep ambivalence about his culpability in Gurley's death and what those neighbors felt that their role was in helping or not helping him. As the Yee article describes:

“If Officer Liang's indictment has prompted a political awakening of sorts for some, it has failed to stir passions in the working-class Chinese enclave within Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, where the Liangs live.

As garment factory workers, appliance salesmen and waitresses along 18th Avenue in the neighborhood reached the end of the workday one evening last week, many said they had not followed the case. Most who were familiar with it declined to attach any political significance to the officer's indictment, insisting it was not their place to do so. "This is something for the courts to decide," Amy Chen, a bakery worker, said. "They'll be fair."

Among the few who disagreed was Vivian Tan, 47, a former garment worker who was buying buns for Lunar New Year from Ms. Chen and, like her, spoke in Mandarin. "The light was off. It was just too dark. You couldn't see anything," she said of the dim stairwell in the Louis H. Pink Houses where the shooting occurred. "There's no possibility that he killed him on purpose."

Yet Ms. Tan would not go further. "It's not discrimination," she said. "It's just unfair in general, because it was a mistake." Several said that the indictment would stem the growth in the number of Chinese-Americans who have joined the Police Department in recent years.

Bona Sun, one of those who is backing Officer Liang, said the news of his indictment had almost immediately prompted "heated debates" in her social circle about whether Chinese parents should continue to support their children in becoming officers. Of the more than 2,100 Asian Americans within the department's uniformed ranks — about 6 percent of the total — roughly half are Chinese-American, police statistics show.

That figure has grown tenfold in the last 25 years. That it is not bigger, she said, is both a cause and a symptom of how little mainstream political power her community can claim.

"We are very vulnerable," she said. "We don't speak up." (Yee, 2015)

I have quoted this article at length because it shows a mosaic of Asian American responses to Liang's indictment. When framed in the context of linked fate, these varied responses paint a diverse yet tense picture of Asian American solidarity, for Chinese-Americans in particular, showing that the process of developing a group consciousness has major differences at the individual level. In addition, the statistic at the end of the quote about the demographics of the police force ties in again to the earlier point made about reframing the question. The low numbers of Asians on the

NYPD indicates further how people of color have institutional resources that work against their individual legal rights.

Moreover, consider the opinion of Indian Americans within the context of this incident. They are subject to higher rates of police surveillance and brutality than other Asian ethnic groups. So much so, in fact, that Indian Americans, Sikh, Arab, and Hindus lobbied for the creation of specific categories for the FBI to label the hate crime statistics that they face each year.(Kai-Hwa Wang, 2015) The fact that the issue of Liang's indictment does not seem to affect them underscores that this issue was read more of a Chinese American issue than an Asian American issue. However, the fact that South Asians face unique issues of police surveillance along racial and religious lines indicates that while Peter Liang might not be visible in the same way as a relevant issue, the broader topic of police brutality is in some ways even more relevant to the South Asian community than the East Asian community.

Understanding the variety in calculation of rational choice is important then to understand the motivation for how Dawson set up his schema for political participation. In many ways, the very decision to participate, and how, is in many ways driven by their perception of the utility of using race as a decision making tool. As demonstrated in this chapter, the utility that an Asian American perceives they will gain from using race in such a way is contingent based on ethnic, class, and for Asian Americans especially, where they locate themselves within the broader U.S. racial hierarchy.

The next considers the ways Asian American civic leaders negotiate the fraught and complicated process of developing and capitalizing on linked fate. For

many Asian Americans, a complicated sense of racial utility means a highly contingent sense of if and how they participate politically. In addition, when many Asian Americans participate, they are doing so for the first time. Thus, for those professionals who are specifically tasked both with inciting higher levels of political participation for Asian Americans as well as lobbying for them at the national level, they are negotiating between the formal issues of policy-making while also trying to lobby for a coherent community. I thus think through what their experiences indicate about the aggregate outcomes of Asian American racial utility heuristic decision-making. Also, I think about the inverse question, specifically what does linked fate indicate about policy-making for Asian Americans?

Chapter 5: Capitalizing on Community: Elite Responses to Linked Fate

On March 25, 2015, the Department of Justice and the FBI announced new regulations for the collection and tracking of hate crimes. There would henceforth be specific tracking for hate crimes committed against South-Asian and Arab Americans. As reported by NBC News, “The FBI Hate Crime Data Collection Guidelines and Training Manual is considered a critical hate crime training resource for law enforcement, and with the help of community advocates, now includes a special section to help local police identify, respond to, and report hate crimes against Sikh, Hindu, and Arab Americans.” (Kai-Hwa Wang, 2015)

This expansion of hate-crime-tracking signals recognition of a particular type of racialized and xenophobic violence. It should also remind us of the specific work done as a result of the Vincent Chin case. Chin’s assassination and the highly influential campaign in subsequent years led to the passage in 1990 of the Hate Crimes Statistics Act, which developed a uniform system for collecting more accurate data at the federal level on crimes motivated by racial, gendered, ethnic, sexual, national, and religious prejudice. (Lien, 2001) The recent victory for Hindus, Sikhs, and Arabs can thus be seen as a direct descendant of the political victories fought for by supporters of Vincent Chin.

The need for Hindus, Sikhs, and Arabs to have a particular category indicates that their experiences of racism may take unique forms not accounted for in the framework previously used by the Department of Justice and the FBI. But what does the fact that the experiences of certain ethnic groups are muddled when seen through a standard racial lens tell us about linked fate for Asian Americans? What do the

unique policy needs of ethnic groups within the Asian American community tell us about linked fate?

The new regulations received enthusiastic support from the Asian-American civic community. Representatives Grace Meng (D-NY), Mike Honda (D-CA), and Amit Bera (D-CA) all attended the press conference, commending the two agencies for their work. Their presence emphasizes the critical need for the more inclusive regulations but also shows a level of linked fate across ethnic lines—*at the elite level*.

In the previous three chapters I analyzed the effects of different contextual factors on individual perceptions of linked fate within Asian-American communities have been analyzed. Here, I will examine how these perceptions can (and do) affect policy preferences and lobbying strategies, asking what it means to lobby on behalf of Asian Americans and what an Asian-American issue looks like.

During my discussion with Daphne Kwok and Christine Chen, Chen spent time discussing the process of gaining APIAVote influence in Washington:

Then for APIAVote the whole idea was like, okay, here we have organizations that are doing policy work and pushing a specific agenda. What was lacking was that, if we're going to do that effectively, we actually need to engage our voters and make sure they actually turn out. We could utilize them in terms of our advocacy efforts and then throughout the years as we were going along and seeing how other communities were also being developed...If we're going to be part of the leadership conference on civil rights and be part of these immigration coalitions we need to pull our weight. The only way we could pull out weight, if we can actually move X, Y, Z elected officials, but how can we do that if our voters are not engaged. (Chen & Kwok, 2015)

From this discussion, we can tell that for APIAVote, the work of policy advocacy is intimately linked to the development and cultivation of potential Asian American voters. Further, in noting that there are costs to entry in terms of being at a high level of leadership with respect to civil rights, Kwok is indicating the significant

implications of cultivating voters at a national level. Chen goes on to describe how APIAVote fosters different levels of engagement:

Making those kinds of connections, convincing the leadership of why they should invest in terms of doing this but then also learning about best practices. I think a lot of people are good about just publicizing and providing information about it, but that doesn't necessarily move people. People don't actually realize that voting work is a lot harder. It takes multiple touches, there's actually a science behind it so it's really I would say in the last 4 years that I think we were able to bring the science around campaigns to actually ... to the non-profits so that way they're actually utilizing the same type of strategy but modifying it obviously because of language and cultural issues, right? Trying to get the resources and the strategies to actually do this work.

Chen is showing that APIAVote often takes on the task of providing greater depth to the process of civic engagement for organizations at the local level.

APIAVote's work does not simply entail allocating resources to local non-profit organizations; it also engages in explaining the types of difficulties that arise in the creation of voter-outreach campaigns. In addition, the work involves providing frameworks that can be used successfully. By talking about bringing a "science around campaigns" to affiliated non-profit organizations, Chen suggests that APIAVote provides information on best practices that can be replicated in different contexts.

The national advocacy of an organization like APIAVote and its partner organizations suggests that organizing at the elite level serves as a moderating force for manifestations of Asian-American political identity by providing a broader base for local grassroots organizations. This organizing provides striking insight into Asian American linked fate. In Chapter 2, I described how community-level engagement could produce a higher level of linked fate that would result in to greater sense of the

value of racial utility heuristic decision-making. In Chapter 3, I talked about how the civil-rights campaign that took place after Vincent Chin's murder allowed political infrastructure to develop, which in turn enhanced a sense of Asian Americans' linked fate. The role of APIAVote that Chen describes implies a connection between the two arguments.

National organizations can support the development of sustainable political infrastructure on the state and local level, provided increased resources and strategies for fostering Asian-American civic engagement.

This support has particular value in view of the nascent status of Asian Americans as a political community. The work of national civic organizations often creates new opportunities for political advancement that had not existed before. The mobilization performed by many of these organizations has the clear intention of expanding the pool of Asian Americans who see politics as a viable and vital area of activity and are willing to participate. In our interview, Daphne Kwok talked about this phenomenon in light of her current position with the AARP and her thoughts about targeting specific Asian Americans.

I think for the work that I've been doing since all my work has been really focused on empowering the APIA community sort of depends where I am. Right now the reason I wanted to go work for the AARP is I realized that at the national level or even at the local level there really isn't any focus on the Asian American community, on Asian Americans, let's say, 50+ years old, right, the elders or the seniors. There are some organizations that are doing some work but there is no national agenda and so for me right now it's like, okay, with the baby boomers ... we really need to start mobilizing this segment of our community.

That's why for me, right now it is the 50+ age group, the seniors, empowering that community. Prior to that I was working with the APIAs with disabilities. There is no national agent working with disabilities organizations. When I went to California I was working with this one and only

and so in our community no one is talking about people with disabilities. I think it was very important to try to help empower those with disabilities.

Kwok is describing a high level of intentionality not only with respect to the populations she feels merit the most attention but also to the areas where she feels she can have the greatest impact. Her engagement with the Asian American community in several arenas suggests her intuitive understanding of the analysis I have been presenting to show Asian American's relationship to the concept of linked fate. Kwok's assuming responsibility for supporting and engaging underserved segments of the Asian American community connects with the broader point made in Chapter 3 about the development of political infrastructure. As an individual political actor, Kwok helps create higher levels of perceived linked fate. While the perception of linked fate begins at the individual-level, in instances such as the Vincent Chin murder those individual- perceptions become solidified and persist at the structural and policy level. Kwok's focus on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the context of an organization designed to advocate for older Americans shows a desire to use race as an organizing principle. Kwok sees her work as demographically and politically important, given the specific moment of Asian American civic engagement:

Maybe for civic engagement, I think what is it in the Asian American community? I think we're on the verge of really a huge boom. There's interest now. People understand we have political leaders now and they're being looked up to. I've always said that every time an Asian-American runs for elected office, whether they win or lose, it doesn't matter, hopefully they're a good candidate but if they win or lose it doesn't matter because they have totally been a catalyst and galvanized Asian-Americans to become volunteers, to become campaign managers, to help fund-raise, all that's part of the process as well, to ... and so that's very, very important.

The notion of being a catalyst indicates recognition of the powerful presence of Asian Americans and a sense that Asian Americans are in fact more connected politically than appearances would suggest. Put another way, Kwok anticipates the Asian American community's exerting a greater influence, with more and more Asian Americans gaining elected and appointed positions. With more Asian American inclusion comes more Asian American influence; with more Asian American influence, comes more Asian American participation. Kwok sees the candidates and the Asian American organizations and civic leaders that support them working in tandem to develop an Asian American electorate as they develop an Asian American political community.

The distinction between an electorate and a political community bears on the broader critique of the extant literature on linked fate that I have presented in this thesis. In many ways, getting Asian Americans to do something, whether that be voting, community organizing, or donating money to campaigns, in some ways precedes their developing a sense of increased racial group consciousness. This dynamic indicates a reversal of the causal arrow implied in Dawson's schema of political participation, in which the decision to participate leads to the decision as to how to participate. Asian Americans like Kwok and Chen understand that for their group the substance of participation plays a major role in the development of consciousness.

Analyzing the often-implied relationship between participation and perceptions of linked fate helps clarify the contingent and ad-hoc status of developing a sense of community with any group, even those in which there might be

expectations of solidarity. Kwok crystallized this point when talking about the founding and early years of the Organization for Chinese Americans:

OCA was the first national Asian American civil rights organization to have its headquarters here in DC. There were a lot of other organizations that are based in San Francisco or New York and other cities, but OCA it really was to make sure that the hopes and aspirations of ... At the time it was for Chinese Americans, then we brought it out to Asian Americans as well too. Because we realized the work that we were doing for OCA, while the membership was about, yes, 95/99% Chinese Americans, the issues we were addressing here in Washington DC were hate crimes, bilingual education, English only, affirmative action.

All those issues that we were addressing, immigration reform, it wasn't just for Chinese. Actually all those years that OCA has been around, very few are Chinese-specific issues; it was really Asian American issues. The interns we took were very pan Asian and so for OCA we like to say that we are the equivalent of the National Council of La Raza for the other communities.

Analyzing the development of OCA helps not only to illuminate how linked fate functions but also makes it possible to define solidarity. As the organization's development shows, the necessity and context made pan-Asian work convenient and logical. It was both counter-productive and counter-intuitive to work on a national level within the bounds of narrowly circumscribed ethnic issues, particularly because many of the topics that would need advocacy on the federal level for Chinese Americans also deeply affected other Asian American communities. Working in a pan-Asian context allowed solidarity to become part of the scaffolding of the organization. Further, when OCA pioneered Asian American civil rights advocacy, it set a tone for pan-Asian work that contributed in a major way to the subsequent development of other organizations that for the coalition-building that Mini Timmaraju discussed in conjunction with NCAPA (see Chapter 2). As Carl Hum notes about AAJC:

I think it's important to have that [pan-Asian] aspect because one of the public things that we probably get at home is that ... okay, some of the things that we fight against is the model minority myth, and preconceptions on the community. I think by having a pan-Asian approach it goes a long way towards fighting these myths about the Asian community and being well educated, being wealthy, and it's not true. A lot of members of our community are not in that position.

It's interesting because you'll see that there's a fit, even among the other Asian groups that, I don't know if you had an opportunity to interview or not but they are moving towards a pan-Asian representation because ... and I don't know if it's necessarily a commission shift or if it's an unfilled need or because ... in regards to the appeal but an organization like OCA was ... the OCA was into Chinese American but they're much more broader than that now. (Chen & Kwok, 2015)

In other words, the affective connections came after the work was done and the structure was in place to sustain such work.

Looping this back to linked fate, note the normative implications of the concept presented in Chapter 1. Linked fate represented the idea that communities that stayed together participated in politics together. As I have tried to show, neither the community nor participation can be taken for granted. As Kwok's story reveals, solidarity does not need love to survive. It needs structure. Moreover, the gnarly, difficult, and powerful labor born of that structure yields the community and compassion so understandably desired.

Chapter 6 – Finding Linked Fate in Asian America

The concept of linked fate reveals many things. It reveals the political potential of community building, especially for racial minorities. It also explains a great deal about “rational” decision-making and the need for past experiences to guide current decisions. The concept can also take on new and unexpected meanings. By exploring more fully the normative implications and affective impulses of linked fate, we can acquire a deeper understanding of its methodological elasticity. To conclude this thesis, I would like to sketch out some future directions in which this research can be taken in order to fill the gaps in linked-fate scholarship while still attending to the lineage of the term and its deep and abiding import for the study of racial and ethnic politics. Then, drawing the analysis outlined in Chapter 5, I will suggest additional ways to ignite and sustain a sense of linked fate in Asian-American communities, in the hope of strengthening the already powerful work of Asian American civic organizations.

Research Goals

- As stated in Chapter 1, this thesis set out to make up for the general lack of attention to Asian American politics as well as the methodological confusion in the existing scholarship about the concept of linked fate. While many directions can be discerned, some ideas include: Distinction between Linked Fate and Political Participation. As discussed in Chapter 1, the singular question to test for linked fate is inadequate because it does not account for heterogeneity of rationale for identification. For respondents who

affirmatively report feelings of linked fate, a subsequent question could be a why measure that asks what factors led to a sense of commonality with other in-group members, listing factors such as socioeconomic status, experience with discrimination, perceptions of discriminatory behavior, media representations, none of the above, all of the above, etc. I would then ask a different question about participation and what people were now willing to do after they have identified both their sense of linked fate and the factors driving it. This three-step model would capture self-report of linked fate, substance of that perception, and the potential political outcome. While some scholars (Sanchez and Matsuoka 2006) get close to a framework like the one presented here by measuring notions of linked fate against various factors to get a sense of the reasons that Latinos express linked fate, no scholarship thinks about all three together. I would hypothesize that if someone responded with all of the above to the substance question, it would mean that they see discrimination and racial primes on a number of different levels, which would predict a higher chance of their participation based on linked fate. As stated previously, participation is often conflated with linked fate. Disentangling the two and adding a measure for rationale of linked fate create the opportunity to understand the relationship between perceptions of linked fate and political participation on an empirical level. Much of this thesis has been dedicated to breaking down the assumed relationship between linked fate and participatory outcomes. What was not done here was an examination of if these two things do in fact have a linear relationship. For Asian Americans, do higher levels of

linked fate in fact lead to higher levels of participation? There are a number of subsidiary questions that come out of that one, including: is it actually that higher levels of participation lead to higher levels of linked fate and to take it to a question of cross-racial solidarity, do infrastructures of solidarity (as described throughout the thesis) lead to interethnic closeness? There are any number of ways to consider the relationship between linked fate and political participation but what is of paramount importance is that the relationship, which has been taken for granted in an expanse of the scholarship, is made explicit

- Local linked fate
 - As discussed in Chapter 2 with particular respect to the 2008 Wong Mayoral campaign, there are moments in which race can become increasingly congruent with a neighborhood demographic. However, they still are distinct and linked fate has an especially local flavor when describing the devolution of barriers to entry for Asian Americans at the local level. Is there such a thing as neighborhood linked fate, and if so, what type of relationship does it have with racial linked fate?
 - In addition, a major crux of Chapter 2 that deserves empirical attention is the idea of sequential logic of participation. While it is forcefully argued that with particular respect to Asian Americans, participation at the local level leads to higher sense of linked fate, contributing to higher levels of racial linked fate. Determining if there is a stepwise

relationship between local and racial linked fate would thus be a valuable empirical contribution to understanding more fully the ways that local politics can lead to a higher level of racial consciousness

- Gender, Sexuality, and Activism
 - One major hole within this thesis is the lack of attendance to gender and sexuality as axes of differences and potential confounds to the development of a sense of linked fate. Within the African American example, Evelyn Simien notes:

It is my view that what is defined, as linked fate must be determined, in part, by an appreciation for the lived experience of both African American men and women. That is to say that survey researchers and public opinion scholars must develop measures of race identification that consider in-group variation. The use of a single survey item that asks about Blacks in general is insufficient because this approach fails to consider differences between and among individual members of the Black population.(Simien, 2005)
 - Assessing in-group differences within Asian American communities is critical because it further highlights the contingent status of racial solidarity. Especially considering the divergent gender roles within various ethnic groups, gender can serve as a significant barrier to entry for political participation in general. If, as I have noted, participation can actually be a precursor to feelings of intra-group linked fate, assessing gendered in-group differences is crucial.
 - Furthermore, sexuality is emerging as a major force within the political socialization of many Asian Americans. As recounted in an anonymous interview in the research report “Left or Right of the Color Line? Asian Americans and the Racial Justice Movement,” “finding

solidarity with other folks of color who were queer is really the start of my own understanding of what it means to be a person of color living in the U.S.” Furthermore, as the article reports “Of the 17 interviewees who identified as LGBTQ, nearly one-third said that coming out or being involved in LBGT organizing was an important step in their political development.” This report thus points to queerness as a political agent, much as blackness was in Chapters 3 and 4. For many LGBTQ Asian Americans like the one quoted above, once queerness becomes a political identity to organize around, it might also serves as a priming mechanism for Asian American organizing. Understanding a potential sequential relationship between queer identity and racial identity also warrants an empirical investigation.

- Partisanship – Another concept absent from the text is work on partisanship. Bowler and Segura argue that Asian Americans provide a conceptual puzzle because they are nearly equally likely to identify as Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. While their argument is complicated by more recent data showing Asian Americans moving more and more towards the Democratic Party, there has been little scholarship on the substance of this shift. One particularly relevant query is to see if delineated perceptions of linked fate lead to a higher strength of identification with a particular party

Policy Focus

In digging into the lack of research on Asian Americans, it also became apparent that there were many directions that were not applicable only to scholars but also to practitioners of Asian American activism and civic engagement. While much of what I diagnose is already being enacted, some of these issues go unspoken, making them unavailable in the broader scheme of replication and emulation. Throughout my research, what was most striking to me is the lack of opportunity for the development of an Asian American political consciousness. Different outlets that address issues to the community such as ethnic media, churches, and ethnic enclaves have an important role to play but do not address three crucial points about Asian American political group consciousness raising:

1. Physical space to location to come together as a community
2. Site that makes explicit and implicit appeals to both race and politics
3. Site that decreases the salience of in-group difference

While organizations like NCAAPA cannot necessarily take on this responsibility, their unique position within the community as advocates and an entrenched network make civic organizations a moderating force for Asian American identity. In describing the use value of these organizations, I described the ways in which they developed a pan-Asian focus among themselves within the context of Washington DC. However, as they exercise their camaraderie and influence with organizations at the state and local level, it makes sense to use national resources to develop networks of Asian American civic organizations at the local level. Often, state and local level organizations do not have the monetary or staffing resources to develop strong relationships within state lines. By allocating resources to develop

relationships that reflect the relationships of national groups and NCAPA at the state and local level, this also helps to create channels for the development of cross-ethnic identity, which in turn, as Daphne Kwok mentioned in the last chapter, leads to more Asian Americans to turn to and look up to.

The use of blackness as an organizing tool for Asian Americans is complicated to say the least. What cannot be denied is that the oppression of African Americans takes on a relevance that is often unpredictable in scope and magnitude. Thus, it behooves national organizations to work with community-level organizations to create spaces for cross-cultural dialogue and shared resources. Specifically, there should be spaces to not just talk but to physically come together consistently. In some ways, as in any neighborhood, ethnic conflict can and probably will occur. However, ethnic conflict need not lead to ethnic violence (Varshney, 2001). Through the use of elite-level influence, national organizations could invest in physical spaces that serve communities of color, allowing them to develop institutional ties to solidarity. Put another way, national level organizations can replicate at the local level what happened within organizations such as OCA at the national level.

On the civic engagement level, many civic leaders would stand to lean into differences within the Asian American community. Counter-intuitive as it seems, we see from the Wong campaign that the intentionality of reaching out to voters through an ethnic appeal for a racial result works and creates opportunities for new voters and participants in American politics. Ironically, yet promisingly, the recognition of difference can serve as a strong precursor to higher feelings of intra-group linked fate

depending on context. The context of working decisively to gain trust and political participation is in fact one of those contexts.

In all instances, Asian American civic leaders must work strategically to compensate for the lack of chances for Asian Americans to see their fates as linked. Asian Americans participate in politics but they must have a reason why and civic organizations, even when not in a position to do grassroots organization, can still grease the wheel so to speak on more Asian Americans seeing themselves through a racial lens, which leads to the next step as reliable and consistent voters and donors.

Conclusion

When beginning this project, I found the dearth of political science literature on Asian Americans startling. On a descriptive level, the Asian American experience enriches our understandings of race, citizenship, and difference within the U.S. context. However, Asian American politics also means something quite important on an epistemological level. Asian Americans destabilize what is often taken for granted as a straightforward relationship between race, community, and political participation. With a diversity of experiences, immigration patterns, sexualities, and histories, Asian Americans do not hew to conventional wisdom about the processes by which Americans enter politics. Linked fate may thus seem an odd choice for describing their sense of community. Yet although their relationship to politics and American government lacks the clarity found among other immigrant groups, Asian Americans have a long history of organizing when they feel compelled to take action. In doing so, Asian Americans widen our sense of the scope of racial minorities' political participation. By highlighting the myriad factors that lead to racial utility heuristic

decision-making, Asian Americans show that this type of decision-making is always occurring in other groups as well. At certain times, Asian Americans become more and more involved politics throughout the course of their lives. At other times, Asian Americans participate for specific reasons to push back against ideas of them being “apolitical.” Still other times, Asian Americans are quite strategic in their decision not to participate politically. At all times, their decision making should not be read as being apolitical or an unwillingness to engage with American politics. By demonstrating the promise, pitfalls, and practice of linked fate, Asian Americans are lighting a path for the study of racial and ethnic politics to follow.

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