

## Research Statement - Neil Visalvanich

My research specifically looks at how race affects the political decision making of whites, both in terms of the evaluation of minority candidates and how racial cues can influence political action. I bring new methodological rigor to the study of race and ethnic politics by utilizing a mixed methods approach, which leverages untapped information available in observational datasets as well as novel experimental designs.

While most studies on minority candidates rely exclusively on either experimental or observational data, I use both types of data in my research, with the goal of creating a unified methodological look at minority candidates. My paper, “When Does Race Matter? Exploring White Responses to Minority Congressional Candidates,” offers the most comprehensive observational look at minority candidates in America to date. By utilizing the Cooperative Congressional Elections Study, I am able to look at individual responses to minority candidates in every congressional race in America. I theorize that the influence race on political behavior and opinion varies over time and across different political contexts. I argue that the salience of race is conditioned on which racial group the candidate belongs to and the candidate’s partisan affiliation. I find that black and Latino Democratic candidates suffer from bias in the evaluation of ideology and competence, while Asian Democrats and all minority Republicans are not afflicted by the same biases. After I control for ideological and competence evaluations, the handicap in the vote for black and Latinos disappear, indicating that these biases are the result of negative racial stereotypes centered around these evaluations. This paper is forthcoming at *Politics, Groups, and Identities*.

In several experiments, I examine minority candidates in bi-racial contests by varying the race of the candidates (black, Asian, or Latino), and also the information given about the candidate, giving subjects either low-information biography, a liberal biography, a conservative biography, or a biography that cues foreignness. My paper, “Asian Candidates in America: An Experimental and Observational look”, uses data gathered from this experiment. I find that Asian candidates are significantly advantaged when compared to white candidates with the same biography, and that this advantage holds across all of the treatments, even when the biography that emphasizes foreignness. I corroborate these experimental findings with CCES data, in which I also find Asian candidates to be seen as more moderate and more competent compared to their minority counterparts. Consequently, white voters favor Asian candidates in the vote. This study represents the first comprehensive look at the candidacies of Asians in an American electoral context and has received a revise and resubmit at *Political Research Quarterly*.

Another paper, co-authored with my colleague Hans Hassell, titled “Call to (In)Action: The Effects of Racial Priming on Grassroots Mobilization,” is the first to explore the link between racial framing and political mobilization. We designed an experiment around a grassroots appeal aimed at motivating respondents to contact their member of Congress over a real world piece of legislation. We treat this appeal with three cues, implying the law would help the following groups: one racial cue (a minority group), a non-racial cue (Construction workers), and one treatment with no cues (control). We found that white respondents were significantly less likely to write to their member of Congress with the racial cue, and that this was further amplified among the racially resentful. Our finding that racial priming has a large effect on the propensity for whites to civically engage means that race has the potential to dramatically influence what is considered a central pillar of a healthy democracy. This paper has been published at *Political Behavior*.

My ultimate goal is to continue to explore new avenues of research in race and ethnic politics in theoretically and methodologically rigorous manner.