

ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY REVIEW

Volume XVII • 2008

**Looking Forward through the Past: Defining Future
Challenges in Asian American Policy**



HARVARD Kennedy School

JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

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Seventeenth Issue



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FROM THE EDITORS

With the presidential primaries at its heated peak, the entire nation is talking about change and reform. It is at such a time, however, that we at *AAPR* found it fitting and perhaps necessary to take heed of the old wisdom that lessons for the future are frequently learned from the past. We want to invite you into the collaborative effort of taking a step back to see what our policy community has already done, for better and for worse, before deciding where we should go next.

Thus, our theme this year is "Looking Forward through the Past: Defining Future Challenges in Asian American Policy."

In this issue, you will find a range of articles, interviews, and commentaries that illuminate our theme in different ways. In the academic research section, you will find authors present rigorous, original analyses of past policies or decisions in the education, political, business, and management sectors and provide recommendations for improvement.

In our interview section, we spoke with a diverse range of leaders and pioneers in fields of U.S. politics, mass media, and film production, and a living survivor of the tragedy of North Korean separated families. Each of these individuals open up about the barriers they had to overcome in the past and how being an Asian American influences, changes, and defines the current and future meaning of their experiences in each of their sectors.

Our commentary section includes pieces on the evolution and future place of the Asian American voting bloc as well as a film review of *Journey from the Fall*, which captures parts of the Vietnamese American experience not covered by history books.

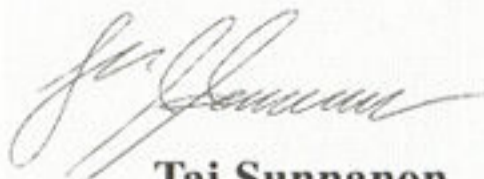
Every year, we are honored to publish and deliver the research, opinions, and achievements of the Asian American policy community. This year, to further expand our audience and make these works more accessible to you, we launched a newly updated Web site. Please visit us and check back for updates at <http://www.aaprjournal.org>.

As always, we give thanks to an excellent team behind the making of Volume XVII. To our faculty advisor, **Richard Parker**, and our journal publisher, **Jen Swartout**, we thank you for your endless feedback and assistance. To our managing editors, **Aram Hur** and **Artyom Matusov**, and the rest of our staff team, we pass the torch to you and look forward to many more accomplishments next year. Finally, we extend special gratitude to **Fred Wang** and the **Wang Foundation** for the continued support.

It is promising time of progress for U.S. politics. Amid the excitement and expectations, we hope that *AAPR* has provided a breathing space for reflection and deliberation as we make a constructive effort toward policy progress in our community. We appreciate your interest and passion.



Sareena Dalla
Co-Editors-in-Chief



Tai Sunnanon

SEVENTEENTH ISSUE

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ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY REVIEW
ANNOUNCES THE RELEASE OF

VOLUME XVII

The 2008 issue of the *Asian American Policy Review* is devoted to the theme **Looking Forward through the Past: Defining Future Challenges in Asian American Policy.**

- Reviews, commentaries, and interviews covering the many faces of Asian America, including Ambassador Sichan Siv and his journey through American electoral politics, and filmmaker Ham Tran's discussion about his film on Vietnamese boat people
- Korean Americans Suffer over Fifty Years of Family Separation: An Interview with Tong Chu Han, a U.S. Citizen with North Korean Roots: about one man's experience immigrating to the United States from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and trying to maintain family ties
- Asian Americans as the New Electorate: Exploring Turnout and Registration of a Growing Community

Throughout the issue, we uncover important and fascinating insights into the multifaceted, vibrant identity that is Asian America today.

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Korean Americans Suffer over Fifty Years of Family Separation: An Interview with Tong Chu Han, a U.S. Citizen with North Korean Roots

By Gloria Jin Kim, *M.P.P. '09*

Approximately one in four Koreans in the United States have family members in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), more familiarly known as North Korea. The majority of these families were separated during the Korean War, which was instigated by the communist north and lasted from 1950 to 1953. Those who remember the pain of separation most starkly are the elderly, who last saw their families together in the prime of their youth and have now suffered that loss for over 50 years. These Korean Americans desire the facilitation of family reunifications between the United States and North Korea, in addition to the peaceful reunification of the two Koreas on a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. Many Korean Americans view these foreign policy concerns as major factors that inform the framework with which they approach the 2008 U.S. presidential elections. Mr. Tong Chu Han, a seventy-eight-year-old Korean American from Chino Hills, CA, shares his tragic story of family separation in the language of his homeland and provides his policy perspective on U.S. foreign relations with the two Koreas. He hopes his story illuminates the personal importance of addressing North Korean issues for U.S. citizens and voters of Korean descent. His story was told in translation by his daughter, Susan Han. Susan was 11 years old when she came to the United States with her parents. She is currently a community placement specialist at the Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center in Los Angeles, where she serves individuals with developmental disabilities.

The following interview was conducted through two rounds of e-mail correspondence on 19 June 2007 and 6 March 2008.

AAPR

What were the circumstances under which you left the DPRK?

Han

When the Korean War began in 1950, the U.S. Army established one of their headquarters in my hometown. I am from WonSan City in the province of Hamgyung

Namdo in North Korea. The U.S. army advised all young men in the area to temporarily relocate to the south because we were about to be attacked by the communist North Korean Army. My family had a meeting regarding this grave announcement. I still remember it clearly. I miss them. They were worried for me. We decided together that I would be the only one to relocate in response to the warning for the time being because I faced the danger of being drafted into the North Korean Army by force. I was nineteen years old and the eldest son. U.S. headquarters promised that I would be able to return home in a week. Before I left, my father handed me a picture of him and my mother. The picture was so small in size that I enlarged it when I came to South Korea, and it has hung on the walls of my homes ever since. My father was very forward-looking. He gave me American money—a grand total of two dollars—and an English dictionary. He advised me to study the English language. He told me that I would probably need to communicate in English in the future. He was right. Looking back, that moment was quite ironic and fortunate because I would eventually immigrate to the United States. That was the last time I saw my family, all together, in my hometown. It has been over 50 years.

AAPR

What were your experiences in the Republic of Korea (South Korea) during and after the Korean War?

Han

After I relocated to South Korea, I volunteered to join the South Korean Army so I could return to my hometown. However, we were unable to pass the 38th parallel that still divides Korea in half to this day due to the involvement of the Chinese government. Mao [Zedong] sent a human wave of Chinese troops across the Chinese–North Korea border to fight the United States, the U.N. troops, and the South Korean Army. There was a military stalemate. After the war ended in the summer of 1953, I was facing a dead end. What should have been a week away from home had turned into three years. No matter how hard I looked, I had no opportunity or way to reach my family. I was completely cut off due to the political circumstances. The atmosphere in South Korean society at that time forbade even talking about North Korea. It had been a hostile civil war. I waited and waited for reunification. Everyone still wanted reunification. Perhaps it was only a matter of time, I thought. I began to make a life for myself in the south. I married my wife, Kye Won, in South Korea. All my four children were born there: Seunghoon, Seungmok, Seunghee, and Seungyoung. My parents and my siblings were not there to share in and celebrate these events in my life. In 1973, I decided that I could not wait in South Korea for reunification to see my family. I began to view the United States as my sole opportunity to reach my family. So I decided to immigrate to the United States with my wife and young children.

AAPR

How were you able to immigrate to the United States?

Han

I had several opportunities prior to 1973 to immigrate to the United States, but I had been waiting for reunification. My dream was to return home to North Korea. I wanted to be in Korea when the 38th parallel opened up, so I could immediately return to my parents and siblings. Finally after 20 years of waiting since the end of the Korean War, the United States was my only hope. It was not difficult to make the arrangements to be able to go to America. In South Korea, I had worked for the U.S. Army stationed in Seoul, the capital city of the Republic of Korea. They were called the 502D Military Intelligence Battalion. I was a group maintenance prescribed load list (PLL) clerk. My duties consisted of managing property and supplies for the unit. Because I worked for the U.S. Army, I was given an opportunity to come to the United States under special immigrant status. I was formally invited by the U.S. embassy. This was organized and coordinated by the U.S. Department of Defense.

I would like to share a little bit more about my appreciation for my time with the U.S. Army. Although I was not serving as a militant, I was able to experience the life of the U.S. Army by daily interaction with them. The U.S. Army stationed in Seoul at that time meant stability and the easing of political tensions between the south and north to most Korean citizens. We were too exhausted and hungry after the war. We were grateful for America's continuing efforts to help our country. I was well respected by friends and neighbors working for the U.S. Army. And I had the most precious experience acquiring the English language and positive work ethic of Americans. This, I believe, led me to experience successful cultural assimilation when I first came to the United States.

AAPR

What were your experiences as an immigrant in the United States and as a Korean American?

Han

My family reestablished our life in Los Angeles, CA, in December of 1973. I never lived outside of California. Being immigrants in America without family or roots in this country was rather an unpredictable adventure. My wife and I were soon convinced that by working harder our family would see more opportunities in our lifetime. We both worked long hours. My first job was as a clerk at the Toyota dealer's parts department. My wife worked at the sewing factory in downtown L.A. in the daytime and worked as an assembly worker in the nighttime. Somehow I knew that I would not have the same opportunities and access to the same resources as some Americans. I was a Korean American, first generation with English limitations. I was able to make a decent living for my wife and children. Our family obtained U.S. citizenship in 1981. I gave my children English names: Eddie, Mark, Susan, and Jay. I now have six grandsons, Peter, David, John, Jonathan, Issac, and Noah. I believe that my grandsons have learned one unforgettable lesson from me: Do not complain about food items during mealtime. They probably heard this hundreds of times from me, about the difficult way of life for

North Korean children—how they would greatly appreciate one fried egg on their dinner plate. My grandsons laugh, but, to me, I remember my family in North Korea the most, even to this day, whenever I am having a good meal.

In 1978, with the money I saved, I was able to own and operate several different grocery markets until 2006, when I retired. I was forcefully retired due to bankruptcy in 2006. I lost all I had earned. My American dream was shredded into a formless bubble without any warning. Though we did not have any direct impact due to the L.A. riots in the early 1990s, we were indirectly affected by it and had downfalls since that time. With or without financial blessings, my life was and is good in America. Despite my fulfilling life in the United States, however, I have suffered continuously from the excruciating pain and guilt that I have because I escaped from North Korea alone, leaving my family behind. Not one day goes by without my thoughts of them.

AAPR

What steps did you take to reach your family in North Korea when you came to the United States?

Han

When I was still in South Korea, I heard rumors about people visiting North Korea from the United States. However, when I arrived in the United States, I had no way of knowing who those people were and how to contact them. I naively thought there was an agency facilitating the visit. Instead, my friends carefully convinced me not to seek a way to North Korea because I would be persecuted since I am known to North Koreans as a national traitor. I had to think about my children.

I waited.

AAPR

Have you been able to hear news about your family in North Korea since the separation?

Han

If I could have known about the whereabouts of my family and their well-being, I probably would have suffered less. I was able to visit North Korea twice, in 1989 and in 1991, after 39 years of separation. In 1988, I came across a person who was actively coordinating family reunification. I was advised by this person to write a letter to the Committee for Aiding Overseas Nationals of the DPRK. I followed his advice and subsequently received an invitation from them. This invitation also informed the existence of my family.

How can I verbally express my thoughts and emotions the moment I landed on my hometown? I knelt down in front of my parents' grave and cried. And I asked for forgiveness. If I had only said one sentence during our family meeting 39 years ago, our family could have had a very different life. "Let's all go to the south together." I had regretted this countless times, and I was regretting again in front

of my parents' grave. I felt unspeakable pain. I was hospitalized two days in North Korea. I learned that my family had suffered much since I left them behind to go to South Korea. They were classified as having a national traitor in the family because I had gone to South Korea and were thus excluded from joining or gaining any governmental benefits.

Out of five siblings, Byungjin, Sangchul, Byungsam, Sooil, and Byungwok, only one survived the Korean War. Four of my siblings reportedly died during a bomb attack while hiding in a tunnel during the war. My younger brother, Byungjin, 75 years old now, who is still alive today, was not in the tunnel at that time because he was begging for food for the rest of my siblings. He still lives in our hometown, WonSan, with his family. He has a wife and four children like me. He was working as a supplier-buyer at the time of my visit.

My parents passed away much later, after the war. My mother's last will was to have my name engraved on her tombstone. She had hoped and believed that I would come back one day. She died in 1958, believing, hoping, and waiting to see me, her eldest son, until her last breath.

AAPR

What are your hopes for your family?

Han

I would like to invite my younger brother to live with me in the United States. I dream and pray for that day to come—when all Korean families suffering from separation can be reunited. I had the opportunity to at least visit my brother, but there are many families in South Korea and Korean American families in the United States who do not know the whereabouts of their loved ones in North Korea. I feel for each and every one of them.

I am currently a board member in the Council of Korean Unification Culture. Our organization strives to conduct research in depth about current issues in North Korea and deliver accurate messages to the world about North Korea. Our organization supports and networks through religious leaders and organizations in the Korean American community such as the Korean Church Coalition for North Korean Freedom. I personally favor the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004, which unanimously passed in the U.S. Congress in both the Senate and the House. The act can feasibly provide humanitarian assistance to North Koreans. I hope to see a concrete foundation built under this act in order to promote real changes in the lives of North Koreans. And I highly support the 2008 Beijing Olympics as a forum for talking about North Korean human rights. It will be a great opportunity to bring to the surface the issues surrounding North Koreans for other nations to recognize.

AAPR

Do you have a message for the new U.S. president elect regarding U.S. foreign policy towards the two Koreas?

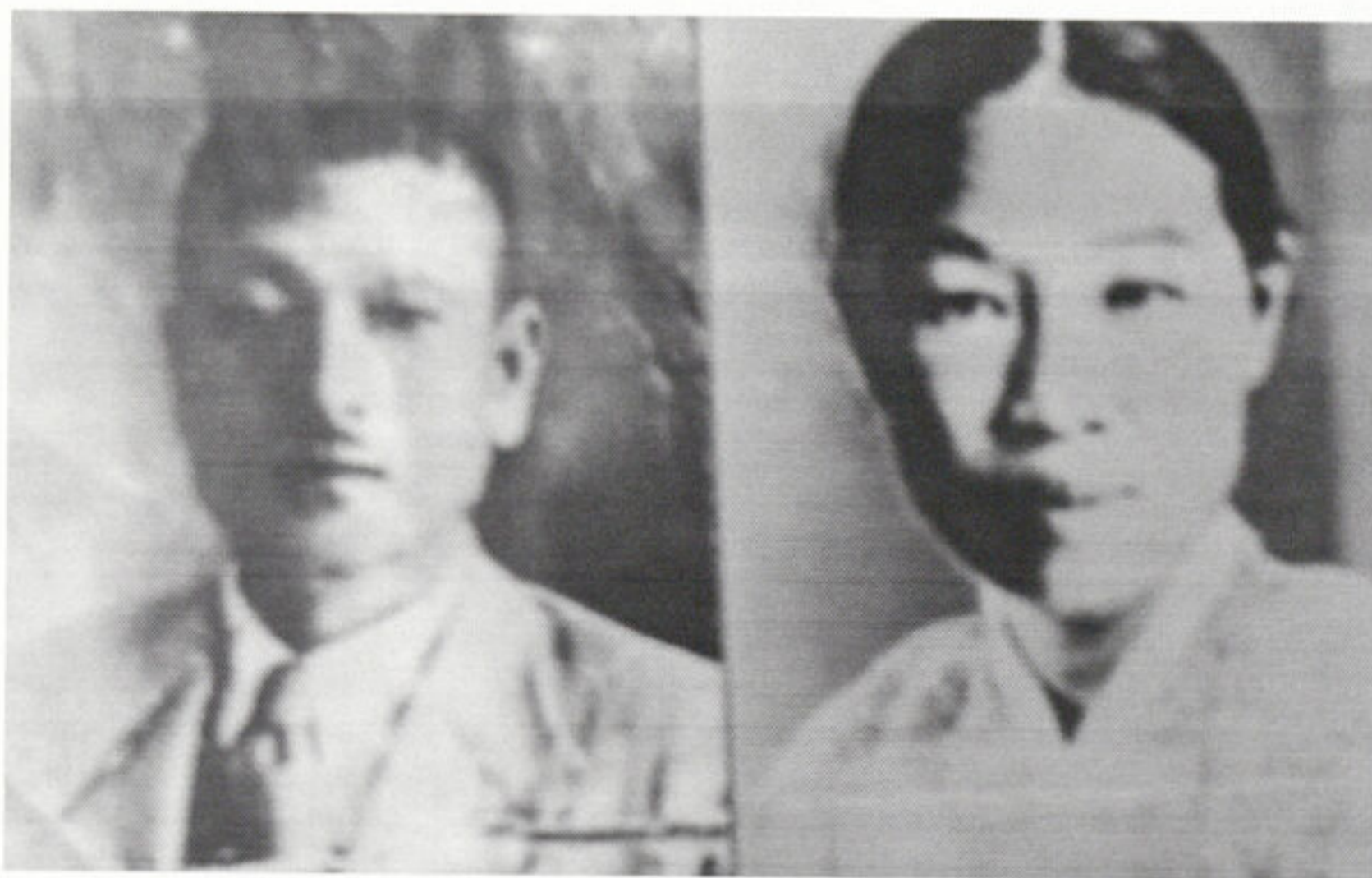
Han

U.S. foreign policy should primarily focus on the peaceful reunification of North and South Korea. The North Korean government needs to be reformed in order for democratic thoughts and practices to be instituted for the citizens of North Korea. In addition, a non-nuclear Korean peninsula is necessary for peace in that region of Asia and in the world. The fulfillment of these goals is intertwined with the peaceful integration of political, economic, military, and social-cultural components of the two Koreas under democratic terms. North Korea is a land of abundant natural resources. U.S. foreign policy should further focus on bringing and developing these resources to help North Koreans to meet their basic needs, solve common problems, and organize for safety and security.

Further Reading

Korean Church Coalition for North Korean Freedom, <http://kccnk.org/>

Let My People Go 2008 Campaign, <http://kccnk.org/letmypeoplego2008/>



Tong Chu Han's father and mother.



Tong Chu Han, right, receiving an award for his service with the 502D U.S. Military Intelligence Battalion after an annual audit.



Tong Chu Han and his wife, Kye Won Han, paying their respects to his parents in North Korea. Tong Chu Han is in tears and kneeling down. Kye Won Han is in traditional Korean dress next to him. Tong Chu Han's brother's wife and brother, Byung Jin Han, are to their right.



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Ham Tran Discusses His Film *Journey from the Fall* and Provides Perspective on the Vietnamese American Experience

By Jimmy Tran, *M.B.A./M.P.A. '09*

This interview was conducted on 5 November 2007.

AAPR

Thanks for coming, Ham. We appreciate your time.

Tran

Thank you.

AAPR

Why don't we just start off by hearing a little bit about yourself and your background?

Tran

It took me a while—it took me until college to figure this out. I'm ethnic Chinese-Vietnamese, but American. My grandparents came over from China to Vietnam a long time ago to avoid the revolution. And so, you know, my parents were born in Vietnam and then I was born in Vietnam. And we came over in 1982 through the Orderly Departure Program (ODP). And my aunt was the spokesperson who sponsored it. I have a lot of family that left during the late 1970s and the early '80s.

After the end of the Vietnam War there was an economic crisis, and all these boat people were leaving and they were taking a lot of gold and everything with them. And at the same time Vietnam wanted to implement an ethnic cleansing kind of program. Anybody that was not really Vietnamese they wanted to get out of the country. So when they discovered that there were boat people leaving, they said, "Okay, this is a good way to make some money out of this." So they had announced that if you were of Chinese descent, you could pay something like three bars of gold, but you paid, basically, to get out of the country.

I came to America, went to school. I went to UCLA, majored in English. And then I had an interest in film. When I graduated, I joined an acting group called

Club O’Noodle. That really changed my life because I was doing a lot of writing and everything then, but joining Club O’Noodle gave me an opportunity to work as an actor. So I was doing stage performance. And eventually I was writing for them and directing performances . . . Being part of Club O’Noodle gave me a chance to work with nonactors and taught me how to sort of uncover stories, you know, from people. And how to lead that into a play or a work of fiction. So that was invaluable.

AAPR

On the movie’s Web site you state, “Our story begins where the history book ends.” Can you elaborate on that theme?

Tran

From what I remember . . . you’re not really taught about this stuff. You were taught, you know, Independence Day. But just like our Fourth of July, they have their April 30. But in the history books, from what I remember in high school, it’s just a little chapter about the war and about how the Americans pulled out. Boom, that was the end. And I think that the education beyond that about the Vietnam War from films like *Platoon*, and *Full Metal Jacket*— it’s all American films about the war from an American perspective.

And the first time we had seen anything that was different from that was *Heaven and Earth*, but still it was about an American GI and this Vietnamese woman and their struggle . . . I feel it’s a very different story than what most Vietnamese [went] through in the war. Because most were left on their own, and I feel like in the history books not much was talked about . . . the Vietnamese boat people. And between 1975 and 1992 there were about 1.2 million that escaped, you know. And by now there are over two million people who left. And nothing at all—I mean, some books now, like when I was in college researching, they do mention boat people. And how they would read up on boat people. There was literally a book called *Boat People*. But little was really known about the reeducation camps.

So for me, the first glimpse I had into that was part of a Time-Life series book and I purchased this book randomly at a used bookstore. It was one of ten books that Time-Life put out about the Vietnam War, and it was the aftermath. In it there were a photo—a couple of photos of the reeducation camp. There was a photo of boat people that were rescued, and there was a woman who had a towel wrapped around her chest. And she had first-degree burn marks all over her. On the caption it said that her mom had thrown boiling hot water over her to keep her from being abducted by a Thai pirate, by pirates basically. And so for me, it’s just one of those things where it made me realize, wow, there’s so much more history that’s not been told. A lot of it—especially in American history books. The shame of it is all that stuff is not taught in Vietnam at all.

A couple of months ago I had received a letter from a group of students from the University of Ho Chi Minh City. And they said, “We saw this film. We saw this on DVD.” And there was a group of students who wrote this letter saying, “Thank you so much for making this film . . . We never knew about this. Boat people, we

were taught that they were just greedy. And they wanted homes. And they were traitors to the country. We didn't know anything about the reeducation camp."

Part of it was thanking me, part of it was apologizing to me. They were like, "We feel really badly about how we perceived those that left. And we never knew that this was their struggle and how much they [the boat people] had to struggle once they resettled." And so that was really moving. And I had totally not expected it. I was like kind of crying when I read that. I was like, "Wow, incredible."

That's what I mean by our story begins where the history books end. Because a lot of the stuff that's untold history is oral history that's been kept in the family because fathers don't want to tell kids about how they were put in prisons—because reeducation was really a prison and not a reeducation camp. And they were starving. I interviewed over 400 people.

And there's no occasion now, after thirty years, to talk about [the Vietnam War]. And soon, you know—our parents aren't getting any younger; they're going to die. If they don't talk about it, they're taking history with them. And a lot of the kids now, they don't—I think we [foreign-born Vietnamese] do take a lot of things for granted. And I think one of the things we take for granted is that we're here. And how we got here. And what it took for us to get here.

AAPR

Did you find that people were willing to engage with you in their stories and their struggles? Or did you have to pull it out of them?

Tran

It was very interesting . . . We put an ad in Northern California and Southern California and we said if you want to be a part of this film, we're not looking for actors . . . we're just looking for people who have experienced the war, basically. Come and audition. Come and talk to us. So each person sat down for half an hour. And it was really interesting because there was no script. I didn't give them lines that they had to read. I basically said, "Hi, what's your name? Where were you on April 30? How did you come over to America? What's your story?" And if they had something that was interesting, if they had something that I could relate to the characters in the film, I would ask them to go to a memory and then talk them through the memory and see if they could actually go back there and give me details and talk about it. There were some people who couldn't, who just kind of refused to.

AAPR

Was it difficult for you in uncovering these stories? Did you feel a lot of pain?

Tran

I think more internally. I don't really cry right away. My producer, he's a crier. He's like this tough guy who does martial arts and everything. But he cried literally 400 times. During the audition process he cried with every single story. I think it wasn't that difficult for me because of Club O'Noodle, because I had already

been trained how to talk to people, how to get them to access experiences, and how to get them to talk about it and get them to be okay to get out of it, out of the moment of remembering.

And so for me the audition was sort of like therapeutic . . . because they had a chance to just purge. Like, going up to someone that's a total stranger and then, "Here's my story." And then finally having the chance to talk about it, you know. And I felt really fortunate because everybody was very giving. Like, when they went in they were all giving. So there weren't a lot of difficulties in that part.

The only difficulty that I experienced was sort of people at that point knowing that the film was getting made. People were always saying, "Make sure you show how evil the Communists are. Make sure you tell what they did to the country. And how bad the Communists are." I think they're justified in saying that. But I feel like I can't make that kind of film because if I do that then it would limit the audience. The audience right away would be turned off because they would think it's a propaganda film. It's an anti-Communist propaganda film and they'll shut down.

AAPR

Some people may find the story dark and a little depressing. So how do we take these stories and draw hope in them?

Tran

I think you draw hope in the sense that they're survivors.

In the older generation the hope is connotation, it's communication, it's dialogue. And the grandmother in the film represents that. She keeps the history for the kids. She talks to Lai [the grandson]. She is connecting with him. So it reminds him of his father, reminds him not to forget basically.

But I think that hope can be taken in the fact that this story is finally being told. Hope can be taken in terms of for the younger generation, what we have to do, what our responsibilities are: Number one, not to forget. Number two is to bring something to Vietnam.

AAPR

From a policy perspective how do you think the movie shapes or changes the way that the Vietnamese community abroad interacts and deals with the Vietnam of today?

Tran

Well, I don't know that it actually helps them deal with the Vietnam of today. I think that what it does do is give them [the Vietnamese community abroad] a certain sense of validation. Because I think that this film acknowledges the pain that they have been going through in the last 30 years. And that's the first step. We are victims of a traumatic event. The first step is acknowledgment, to recognize that we went through something. I think for a lot of Vietnamese overseas, when they get to the [new] country, they had to leave it [Vietnam] behind. They had to forget everything. Because if they don't, they can't start a new life. I think that for them,

they need to acknowledge this and start opening up. And I think in that respect this film has helped. It's opened up a lot of dialogue.

A lot of times when parents do talk to the kids, it's very limited. They talk about how evil the Communists are, and in a way they pass on this hatred and this fear and this paranoia. "Don't go to Vietnam. Don't trust the Communist government. They're really bad." All this stuff. And their kids are out, they're protesting, but I don't think they realize what it is that they're protesting. And I think that having seen this film, having that kind of discussion, I think that it at least equips them to say, "Okay, this is why my parents feel the way they do. From here, how do I change Vietnam?"

For me that's the hope. I think that we should move toward that. Of course you're not going to expect change overnight. You're not going to have freedom of press or freedom of speech right now. But I think that as the country grows and as the people in Vietnam are opened up to the rest of the world, they're going to want change. You don't get change by coming down on the government, . . . creating this fear of the government so that now they're very self-conscious of how the world views them, so they close off their country even more.

And I think that if the doors were opening, our way of life is going to change how the people in Vietnam live. And those people, then the next generation, will be able to create change.

I think there's a very famous saying in Vietnamese: All changes take three generations. We're coming up on the first 30 years, so it's like the first generation's gone by. We're in the second generation. We're moving toward another change. And if we keep a positive perspective I think that there will be freedom of speech in Vietnam. There will be all these things. It doesn't happen right away. You have to change people from within. You can't shut them out.

AAPR

To many of the young people living in Vietnam today the war is almost a thing in the past. They didn't grow up with it, they didn't know about it. How do you characterize the way the young Vietnamese generation views the war?

Tran

They're taught it as the war of independence and they gained their freedom. And that's the extent that they know about the war because it doesn't get talked about at home. I had a student last year . . . and she was a foreign exchange student from Vietnam. She told me, "Of course, people don't talk about that." Because in the home if you start talking about, "Oh, well, reeducation camps and boat people." If your kids go to school and start telling other people about it, your kid's going to get in trouble and they're going to say, "Where do you learn this stuff?" And they're going to say their parents. So the parents don't talk about it at home because they're afraid their kid's going to go out and talk about it.

It's a system of censorship so deeply ingrained that people police themselves out of this fear of the government. And this history has been kept. They don't know much about it.

AAPR

When you've gone on touring and done screenings throughout the United States, what has been the reaction from a mainstream audience?

Tran

Good. I mean, actually I have teachers who come up to me and they go, "I teach in a high school. I would love to be able to have this film shown at my high school." And that's sort of been one of my dreams. And I want to connect with you guys. I want to connect with all the college campuses and anybody who is interested in policy and asking how do I get this film screened in high school, on college campuses, being taught in Vietnamese American studies classes, Asian American studies classes. Because I think that it begins with education. It begins with telling our story. And it has to be institutionalized I feel.

It doesn't have to be this film. But it needs to be part of the education. You know, to talk about reeducation camp, talk about it openly. Just to help people understand. Because I think that's our story—the fact that the East Asian story is so different because we are really like political refugees, victims of war. The same time that we came over, there were Laotians and Cambodians and they were victims of the killing field. And there was a movie about the killing fields. But there's never been a movie about our [Vietnamese] killing field as a way for people to understand that. So, yeah, my hope is that this film does get taught in high school and in college courses.

AAPR

We heard that you have been working on a couple of new and exciting projects. Can you tell us a little bit about those?

Tran

Yeah. One started out as an adaptation of a book but it's now . . . a book of short stories. So it's going to be three short stories adapted to make one feature film, and the book is about the Vietnamese community in New Orleans living in . . . Versailles Anh Apartment Community. And pretty much it became known as Versailles. Like, "Oh, you're Vietnamese, so you live in Versailles." Like, Little Saigon, right? If you're from California—"Oh you're Vietnamese? You live in Little Saigon."

But the book is like 12 years old, and it was written about the community that started emerging from the Versailles complex. And it was set in the 1980s. So for me, I'm like, wow, that's a total lost world now. And I think since Katrina things have changed as well. And the other two short films are going to be original. And it's based on the people that I interviewed when I went there.

The next film that I'm also working on is called *Distant Country*. And it's a true story about these two guys who live in Thailand. They're illegal immigrants. They snuck on a boat that took them to Australia, to Panama, to Mexico, where they were caught and were transported and sent back to Vietnam. So it's a really interesting story . . . and I thought *Distant Country* is a much better title for me because

the irony is [that] their dream is to come to America, to go to this one distant country, but they don't realize that they've been to many more countries than most Vietnamese would ever have the chance to go to. But they're still living illegally in Thailand right now after 20 years. They've been doing this for 20 years. So I thought the issue was very timely. You know, because of immigration, borders, and everything in it.

And then the third project I'm working on is the sequel to *The Rebel*. And *The Rebel* is this Vietnamese action film. It hasn't been released yet, but it's pretty much like the *Ong-bac*, the Vietnamese *Ong-Bac*, the martial arts kung fu film. Awesome, hip, cool, you know. It's going to put Vietnamese filmmaking on the global map.

AAPR

Is there anything else that you want to share with the readers of the *Asian American Policy Review*?

Tran

Journey from the Fall is out on DVD. And it just came out on 30 October 2007. It's available at Blockbuster.com, Amazon.com, Netflix, a whole bunch of other stores too.

AAPR

Well, thank you so much for your time, Ham. We appreciate it and we can't wait to see your next project.



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On Political Empowerment: From the Refugee Camp to the White House, an Interview with Former UN Ambassador Sichan Siv

By Christina Hu, *M.P.P. '08*

From 2001 to 2006, Ambassador Sichan Siv represented the United States of America at the United Nations Economic and Social Council. A Khmer Rouge survivor from Cambodia, Ambassador Siv immigrated to the United States in 1976 and became a U.S. citizen in 1982, a year after earning a master degree from Columbia University's international affairs program. Siv's latest accomplishments include an autobiography, *Golden Bones*, set to publish in July 2008.

This interview was conducted by Christina Hu on 1 March 2008, following Siv's keynote speech at the 14th Annual Asian Pacific American Conference on Law and Public Policy at Harvard University.

AAPR

What specifically about elections and electoral politics appealed to you as a new immigrant and refugee in the United States?

Siv

It's a very good question. I came out of a Communist dictatorship, where they killed people for having made a mistake. There was nothing in correction of law except the death penalty. I mean, you made a mistake, you die. And then I escaped from that tyranny. I came to a refugee camp in Thailand. I needed a few months to sort of readjust to normal life. Then suddenly I was in United States, 4 June 1976. A few months later, there was this big convention in New York, and then another one in Kansas City. The Democrats had their convention in New York, and the Republicans had it in Kansas City. In '88 George H.W. Bush was nominated in New Orleans; that's when I was involved.

Then I said election, election, election. People had the right to choose those who governed them. You see? I was totally disoriented under the Khmer Rouge because you open your mouth, you made a mistake, you're dead. They killed anybody who

disagreed with them. They killed the educated class. They murdered them. They killed them all. They killed everything that was a symbol of the previous society.

So here I was, in an electoral process, and I said, "People have the right to say what they have in mind. People are choosing those who are going to govern them. This is fantastic! This is great!" There was quite a process of absorption for me.

AAPR

Would you say that your involvement in electoral politics is also a process for self-empowerment?

Siv

Exactly. I was looking for that. Yes. And then that month went by, years went by. I began, "Look, I can say something! I can say something. I can be involved." And when I look back to some of the mistakes—my God, this is a great country. This is a great country. But I was busy adapting myself to life. I wanted to be on my own feet; I wanted to be able to support myself. But I never lost track of electoral politics.

AAPR

What would you consider as the most important lessons from your political experience?

Siv

Learn, learn, learn. I mean, do everything that they want you to do. No seriously. Everything. First you have to understand your candidate's position. I mean, why do you want to support George Bush? Why do you want to support Michael Dukakis? You really have to understand the opposition. You will never find a candidate that you will agree 100 percent. You'll never. If you agree with a candidate 100 percent, maybe you don't think. There will be 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 percent that you don't agree with. If you are 80 percent-plus in agreement with a candidate, you're perfect. You're perfect. So learn the position of your candidate. And then try to identify the common position. Disregard the candidate's positions that you don't agree with, and just look on the common position.

And then when you see something wrong in the present, you take note and say, "This is wrong" when you have a chance to speak. You said, "No, Mr. Bush didn't say that," "Mr. Dukakis didn't say that," when you have coffee with friends. You are supposed to support your candidate publicly. Not only while working in a room without walls or making phone calls, et cetera. But when you have a chance, when you have opportunity, you do it. Give your public support.

AAPR

As a Republican Asian American how well do you think Asian Americans are represented in the Republican Party?

Siv

I would say very well. First, let me start at the top. At the top, George W. Bush was the first administration that had two cabinet members. Norm Mineta, secretary of transportation, and Elaine Chao, secretary of labor. In addition to that, he has the largest number of Asian Americans in his administration—the largest number, larger than other administrations combined. Nobody knows that. I do not have the number, but you could get the number from the White House. It's like 850 Asian Americans serving in his administration, from top cabinet levels all the way down.

George H. W. Bush was the president that extended the celebration of Asian American Heritage from one week to one month. For many years, it was only one week in May. In 1990, George Bush decided to extend the heritage celebration to one month because he believed that Asian Americans had made a lot of contributions to America.

AAPR

Why do you think that there's not so much press around that?

Siv

Because they didn't do it to get press coverage. They did it because they felt that Asian Americans, just like any other Americans, can contribute. And that's why you had to ask whether the press is really doing a good job in covering ethnic issues. Yeah, I asked the question myself. How about this? I was the first American of Asian ancestry to be appointed ambassador to the UN! Nobody wrote about that.

Well, here's another point. In 2005, I was sent to speak at the sixtieth anniversary of the UN in San Francisco. I was speaking on behalf of the United States! On behalf of the United States, at the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. The United Nations was founded in 1945. Every ten years, they have a celebration in San Francisco: 1945, Truman was president, so he went; 1955, Eisenhower was president, he went; 1965, Johnson was president, he went; 1975; 1985, Reagan didn't care about the United Nations, so he sent George Schulz; 1995, it was Bill Clinton; 2005, it was me, Sichan.

And you know why he sent me? Because my life was intertwined with the United Nations. When I was a child, I was inoculated by UNICEF. When I became a refugee, United Nation High Commission for Refugees took care of me.

And you know what? AP wrote a story saying that I wasn't there. When they learned that I was going to San Francisco, they wrote, "Who is Sichan Siv?" And when you think of that, is that because I'm Asian, or because he may be an ambassador to your nation, but why is he coming to speak on behalf of the United States?

And the reason AP said I wasn't there was because the AP correspondent wasn't there when I spoke. I spoke at the opening of the conference. The AP correspondent went the following day! And I wasn't there because I had to come back to New York. Condi Rice was coming to the UN. I had to fly back to New York. It

took our press spokesman three days to ask AP to correct the story. And when they corrected the story, you know what? Page 125. Yeah.

AAPR

What would you recommend then for the future generation of Asian Americans interested in becoming more involved in electoral politics?

Siv

Volunteer, volunteer, volunteer. I mean if you do not get involved, you cannot get noticed. And if you don't decide what I did some thirty years ago. I mean, you had to have a thirst of learning and adaptation. My favorite letter in the English alphabet is A. The first letter. A stands for adaptation and adoption. A stands for altruism. You can adapt yourself to a new circumstance, you will be adopted, and you will be successful.

Electoral politics? What is an election? But I was fast enough to adapt, and I was lucky to be adopted. So that's my message.

AAPR

Having been involved in electoral politics and leadership, what would you say to future generations of Asian Americans in defining themselves as leaders? How would you define leadership?

Siv

Leaders have courage, integrity, and vision. Leaders can assemble teams to work effectively together. Leaders can make decisions based on the greater good, but not on popularity. Leaders see a 360 degree landscape, not just the trees. Not just the forest, the rivers, or the mountains, but everything around us. Leaders see into the future. So what is leadership? In my case, leadership is the ability to instill hope and optimism. That's what I call leadership.

Always be ready to take a risk. Always be ready to help. Always be ready to step in. But maintain your courage, maintain your integrity, maintain your vision. Somebody who can make political decisions is not always a leader if he or she doesn't have integrity, you see? You don't want to have a monk—a perfect person—to lead. But you look at the person. I see George Bush the father as a good leader because he is the ultimate altruist. He always thinks of other people, and that's what I like about him. He's not just a great leader, but he's also a great caring human.

You look at in the past. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Teddy Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln. I mean, Abraham Lincoln will always stand out. And Ronald Reagan. And these are the people who really made difficult decisions. Winston Churchill. These are the people that really decided on challenges. They saw challenges, they saw problems, as opportunities. They turned these things around. They didn't decide on popularity. They decided on the greater good. If Churchill and FDR didn't meet on that destroyer called the *Prince of Wales* off the coast of Nova Scotia in 1941, the United Nations would not be born.

AAPR

Finally, could you tell more about what great things we can expect from you, Ambassador, in the near future?

Siv

What will make me happy would be if everybody read my book because my book is a human story. It's an American dream story. I hope that my book will inspire people and motivate people more. And I just look forward to traveling around the country to share my thoughts about freedom, about independence, about democracy, and about this great land.

AAPR

Thank you very much.

On the Record: Conversations with White House Correspondent Ed Chen

By Sareena Dalla, *M.P.P. '08*

AAPR

Why do you think there are so few Asian Americans in journalism?

Chen

I think, one, there's a sort of a cultural issue that goes way back, where a lot of Asian kids are sort of raised to always obey authority. The whole filial-piety thing. And so a lot of kids end up going to professions that—like medicine, for one, or certain parts of law—that are not confrontational. Not very in your face.

And journalism is just the opposite. It can be very confrontational. It's adversarial. And I think traditionally the old Asian culture is one that avoided a lot of that. But I think that's really starting to change now, with the passage of time. And I am starting to see more Asian American journalists on the trail, but at the higher ends of the food chain, like at the White House press corps, very few.

AAPR

Why is that?

Chen

It's a sort of a pipeline issue. People have to come along. And so it'll take a while. But it's starting to happen. What I fear so much is because the jobs, the market is shrinking, that it's going to really constrict the pipeline. And that's going to be a real tough issue for any young people coming in, but I think especially for Asian Americans trying to make their way into this business.

AAPR

Source development is critical to your profession. Have you come across any difficulty in terms of getting access, information, because of your background?

Chen

It's hard to know for sure. It's really hard to know. It was pretty easy as a reporter at the White House for the *Los Angeles Times* to get access. So I guess what I'm

saying is it kind of depends less on a person and his or her background or ethnicity, and more on who that person works for. That is a far more important calculus. But I can't tell you how many times people don't want to talk, and they could have lots of reasons; I could only begin to guess. So it's hard to say that access was denied because of race or gender. But on a larger point, you're still Washington journalists, and they're still pretty much an old boys' network—an all White network. I mean you look at the upper echelons of the Sunday talk shows, the bureau chiefs. I mean you go down the line. It's mostly White guys. And it's not just at the very top, but probably the next several echelons below that. So there is that factor. It's such a structural problem that it's going to take a long time to address.

AAPR

What is your observation thus far of Asian American involvement/engagement in politics?

Chen

I think there hasn't been enough. I just don't see that much. I think there's just been a sort of a historical reluctance to get involved in a way that some other—to be as vocal, as out there, as some of the other groups are. Asians have been pretty good at giving money, writing checks, but in terms of getting really out there—working, lobbying, campaigning—it's still way, way behind. I don't see that much change. Maybe these two historic candidacies on the Democratic side now will kind of change things.

I have great hopes, partly because we all complain about how long this campaign has been. I think the one good side for Hillary [Clinton] and for Obama, whoever gets the nomination, [is] that they will have been out there so long that a good part of the public, will be really used to the idea of maybe voting for a Black man or a White woman. So I think in that way, it's good for everybody that a lot of these barriers are starting to come down.

AAPR

Why did you want to become president of the White House press corps?

Chen

Washington, especially Washington journalism but Washington government for the most part, is still largely an old boys' network. I mean, yes, we can look at Nancy Pelosi. It's great. She's a woman Speaker of the House. But look at most of the people around her. You go to the power centers; it's mostly still White guys. And by tendency, I think these organizations and structures, they don't lend themselves to be inclusive. . . . To better do my job, I need to be in certain circles [in terms of] the power brokers. And to better get a toehold in the room, or a seat at the table, I found it advantageous for anybody, for that matter, to be on the White House correspondence board because you get involved in decision-making meetings and meetings with the White House, with the press secretary, with the president's council, in a way that I wouldn't have been otherwise. It sort of elevates your

prominence too in a way that's helpful for reporting purposes. The more prominent you are, the more likely people will return your phone calls and maybe give you information. So there are ulterior motives.

AAPR

Do you feel any pressures in being the first person of color in this position?

Chen

Well, I do, but the president of the association every year gets criticized, and hopefully praised, for the program they put out, what entertainer they select. You're under the public scrutiny, and in the limelight, and you're never going to please everybody, so you just do the best you can. Am I nervous about it? Yes. Do I feel the pressure? Yes. Am I going to do my job any differently? No. I'll just do the best I can, and do what I think is right.

AAPR

Tell us about what it's like to cover the president.

Chen

I've heard it said that the best thing about being a White House correspondent is telling people what you do because there's a lot of drudgery and sheer physical labor—I mean exhaustion from doing it. It's not real different from some campaign trips. It's so different depending on who is the president. With Bill Clinton, covering the White House was very different from covering the Bush White House. Bill Clinton kept really long hours on the road sometimes, especially in foreign countries. There were nights where most of us reporters didn't get any sleep, just because of time differences, with home offices, and just scheduling and the logistics of catching busses and airplanes. It was just very, very exhausting with Clinton. Clinton liked to sightsee, and that was cool because in India, on a trip there, I rode an elephant. I saw the Taj Mahal.

But Bush? One good thing about Bush, he likes to go to bed early. At 9:30, he likes to be just about in bed. And so the nights aren't so late for us. And going overseas, that's the same case. He doesn't like to sightsee, he doesn't like to go out to restaurants and nightclubs, so it makes our days a lot easier. But the Bush people really clamp down on accessing information in a way that is unprecedented. And I live in great fear that whoever is the next president is going to take some lessons from this Bush White House in terms of restricting public and press access to government. That's going to be bad for democracy.

AAPR

What advice do you have for younger Asian Americans interested in pursuing a career in this field?

Chen

Work extra hard. But that's probably true for any field. I found personally, I think to be considered an equal, you have to have outperformed your equals to be considered on the same level as they are. That's how I've always worked. In addition to writing for newspapers and being on the payroll for newspapers, for many years in the business I wrote a lot of freelance articles for magazines. I wrote three books. Because I wanted to do more than just what I was being paid to do. Because I think you do have to do more to be seen as an equal and to be treated as equal with everybody else.

And that's sort of how I see it. And the benefit for journalism is much of what we do, it's out there for the world to see. So you can let your word speak for itself, for a greater extent than a law firm, for example, where sort of the internal politics become more of an issue.

Examining Longer-Term Teacher Effects on Asian American Student Achievement: A National Study

By Meechai Orsuwan and Mun Sim Lai

Abstract

Using the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) data, we examine the impact of teacher characteristics on the long-term outcomes of Asian American students. Three long-term outcomes examined in this study include college entry, college completion, and earnings. The logistic regression results indicate that teachers influence students' lives when they are still in school settings. Thus, we see teacher characteristics significantly influence school-related outcomes such as college entry and college completion. However, we do not find any teacher effect on students' earnings.

Mun Sim Lai is an assistant professor of economics at California State University at Bakersfield. Her research interests include demography economics, labor economics, and public economics. In 2006, she received Ph.D. in economics from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. In addition, she holds a master degree in business administration with a concentration in finance and a bachelor degree in accounting.

Meechai Orsuwan is currently an assistant professor in the Educational Leadership Department of Central Michigan University. His research interests lie in the areas of economics/finance of higher education, quantitative research methodology, and educational policy. He is currently examining how state merit-based scholarships, state-sponsored pre-paid tuition plans, and federal tax credits for higher education expenses influence college-going behavior. Previously, he served in the private sector as a management consultant for Actuaries of America in Honolulu, HI. He received his Ph.D. in education with specialization in higher education from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He also holds three master degrees in economics, business administration, and educational administration.

Introduction

The need for increasing accountability and results requires educational resources to have a consequent and sequential impact throughout educational systems to create cost efficiency and to justify the long-term investments of taxpayers in education. This trend has stirred a growing body of research on teacher education policies. Studies have shown that teacher salaries alone can consume over 50 percent of school district expenditures (Guthrie and Rothstein 1999). In terms of dollars during 1999–2000, academic institutions spent approximately \$360 billion on 2.9 million elementary and secondary public high school teachers (NCES 2000).

The goal of this study is to examine the long-term influence of high school teachers on the outcomes of Asian American students 12 years after they were first interviewed. Using the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) data, we examine how and to what extent K–12 educational resources (high school teachers in this study) link to the postsecondary outcomes (i.e., college entry, college completion, and earnings) of this student group. Our findings may shed light on their educational transitions and provide useful information that can be used to improve their transition from high school to college systems. This study poses three research questions. First, how did teachers influence students' decisions to enter higher education? Second, how did teachers influence their students' postsecondary educational degree attainment? And finally, how did teachers influence their students' income levels?

Literature Review

Research on Long-Term Effects of Teachers

K–12 and higher education researchers define the “long-term” impact of teachers on student outcomes differently. For example, for some researchers, long-term effects are usually referred to students' basic skills such as new mathematical or verbal gains that have improved from one semester to another or from one grade to another (Bressoux and Bianco 2004; Heck 2007). Research on this type of long-term outcomes is prevalent in the fields of early childhood or elementary education (e.g., Entwisle and Hayduk 1988; Pedersen, Faucher, and Eaton 1978). For some researchers, long-term outcomes are measurements over longer time periods such as high school graduation, college entrance tests, college entry, postsecondary degree attainment, and career aspiration (e.g., Baum and Payea 2004; Card and Krueger 1992; Cohn and Geske 1990). Overall, research on long-term effects of teachers is limited in number, and existing findings are contradictory. Depending on the educational outcomes, some have found such teacher effects throughout students' lives (e.g., Behrman, Khan, and Sabot 1997; Entwisle and Hayduk 1988; Stevenson and Newman 1986), but others have found such effect diminishes over time (e.g., Bressoux and Bianco 2004). Those finding long-term teacher effects have reasoned that good teachers helped students establish a higher learning standard, and lessons learned from teachers remain with their students throughout life (Entwisle and Hayduk 1988). In this study, we examine multiple long-term

outputs, including student's decision to enter higher education, the level of postsecondary education obtainment, and annual earnings. The next section provides necessary understanding of how previous literature has examined the effects of teachers on these long-term outcomes.

Long-Term Effects of Teachers on Students' Lives prior to and during College Years

The college-going decision is an intermediate outcome that links K–12 to higher education systems. College selection requires time and energy, and often begins in the eighth grade and continues throughout high school (Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith 1989). During the process, the role of teachers is continuously crucial in aiding students make the college decision. In fact, they are probably the first to whom students turn when seeking college-going advice. Although during grades seven to nine parents initially influence college choice of their children, in the beginning of college search, teachers become more important to the decision to enter higher education by the senior year (Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith 1989). Hossler and associates emphasized that the role of teachers on the college-going decision is so influential that it replaces that of parents when students have to make that important decision. The role of high school teachers also expands to college success. Research found that college success is highly correlated to students' preparedness for college. Research has found that taking rigorous and intense courses in high school is the best predictor of college success. For example, Sadler and Tai (2001) examined how a high school physics course prepared students for college physics success. They found that teacher decision, characteristics, education, and teaching methods influence student success in physics class in college. However, shortages of qualified teachers and those who can teach honors and advanced placement classes may lead to difficulties in college adaptation and retention (Myers and Schrim 1999).

Long-Term Effects of Teachers after College Years

Research specific on the long-term effects of the quality of high school teachers on postsecondary outcomes is sparse (e.g., Bedard 2003; Card and Krueger 1992). The existing studies have found that over a career, a private return to higher education (i.e., wage and salary) of a person relates significantly to the quality and quantity of high school inputs (Card and Krueger 1992; Johnson and Stafford 1973; Rizzuto and Wachtel 1980). Card and Krueger found teacher-related variables such as pupil-teacher ratio and relative teacher wages affected the earnings of students born between 1920 and 1949. The authors also found that teacher education as a measure of teacher quality significantly affected students' earnings.

Bedard (2003) examined the effects of pupil-teacher ratio and teacher-school ratio, and teacher pay on students' wages at the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th percentiles of the conditional wage distribution. His overall finding is that the effects of these teacher-related variables vary by wage distribution groups. For example, compared to other income groups, pupil-teacher ratios and teacher pay are more strongly associated with the income for the high-earning group. Research

has also shown that college degree attainment has a positive long-term effect on one's health, civic participation, and society (Becker 1993; Baum and Payea 2004).

Teacher Effects on Minority Students

Previous literature on the role of teachers on Asian American students is limited. Teacher effects studies with a focus on minority students are based on the educational outcomes of other racial groups (e.g., African American and Hispanic). One general finding is that teacher characteristics have greater impact on student outcomes than their backgrounds and characteristics (i.e., race/ethnicity) (Darling-Hammond 2000).

Another common finding on the relationship between teacher characteristics and the achievement of minority students is that minority students are more likely to be assigned to less qualified teachers and inexperienced teachers. Peske and Haycock (2006) supported these findings and found that these students performed poorly in state assessment tests because they tended to attend schools with lower proportions of highly qualified teachers. Using a multilevel analysis and data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of Kindergartners, Robinson (2006) found that teacher qualifications had moderating effects on students' cognitive growth from kindergarten to first grade. His results, specific to minority students, show that African American students from a high socioeconomic status tended to have higher levels of cognitive growth when educated by well-qualified teachers, but minority students from a lower socioeconomic status did not benefit from having such teachers.

In summary, the literature on teacher effects appears limited for two reasons. First, few research has examined how teachers have influenced their students' long-run outcomes in a very long time span, despite the belief that high school teachers stay profoundly involved throughout their students' lives. There is also not much research on the linkage of K-12 educational resources and the postsecondary student achievement with emphasis on teacher characteristic variables. Second, teacher effects research about Asian American students is scant. Education research is typically conducted at predominantly White institutions; as a result, the educational pathways of Asian American students are often ignored and largely unknown (Orsuwan and Cole 2007). Using longitudinal data, we attempt to fill some of the gaps identified in the literature.

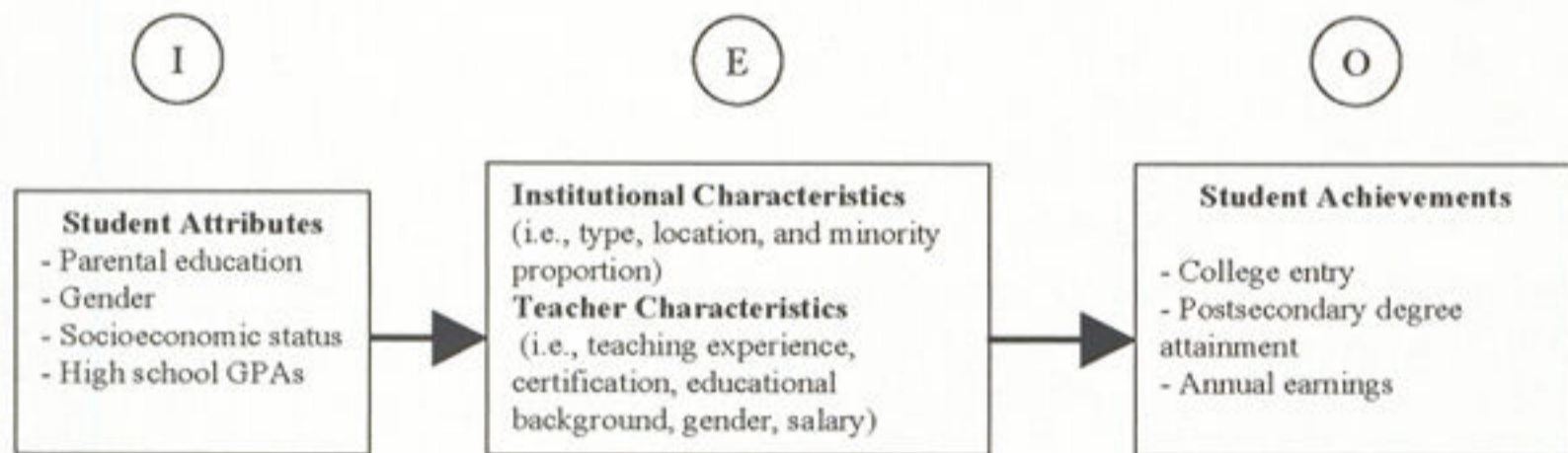
Conceptual Framework

Alexander Astin was one of the earliest education researchers to use educational production functions in higher education research. Astin's (1977) version of production function reflects in his IEO (input-environment-output) model. It is a commonly used analytical framework for educational evaluation and assessment activities in the classroom setting, and the IEO framework organizes the variables used in this study. In his IEO framework, students' individual backgrounds and characteristics are included in the input (I) component of his college impact framework. Astin stated that students' individual attributes have both direct and indirect impacts on student outcomes. By interacting with social and structural support,

these attributes subsequently interact with the multifaceted college environment and this interaction then influences student outcomes.

In our study, we use individual attributes (e.g., gender, parental education, high school achievement) to represent Astin's I component. Astin's environment (E) component includes within school circumstances that create student involvement opportunities such as curricula, instructor, campus climate, friends, extracurricular activities, and faculty-student ratio (Astin 1977, 1993). Consistent with Astin's framework, we use institutional and teacher characteristic variables to proxy the environmental context. Astin's output (O) component includes student achievement indicators such as GPAs, school retention, and personal development. In this study, the outcomes are college entry, postsecondary degree attainment, and earnings. Figure 1 illustrates the educational production function, which includes student backgrounds (I), teacher and institutional characteristics (E), and students' long-term outcomes (O).

Figure 1. Proposed Model of Long-term Effects of Teachers



With Astin's IEO framework, the study aims to systematically explore postsecondary outcomes of Asian American students. Specifically, this study proposes that student outcomes are a function of student attributes and environmental factors (i.e., institutional and teacher characteristics). With respect to the impact of teachers on student outcomes, our main prediction specific to teacher effects is students taught by teachers with certain characteristics are more likely to attend college, to obtain a postsecondary educational degree, and to earn more than the U.S. national median income level, compared to those educated by teachers with none or fewer of these characteristics.

Method

Sample and Instrument

Data used in the analyses are drawn from the NELS:88, a nationally representative survey of 24,000 eighth-grade students conducted in the spring of 1988. A subset of these students was resurveyed in their tenth grade (1990), their 12th grade (1992), and the year 2000. More specifically, we use the fourth follow-up data, which were collected in the year 2000. The fourth follow-up contains

information about what participants achieved twelve years after they were first interviewed. In 2000, most participants in NELS:88 data turned 26 years old, already graduated from college if they ever entered, began their careers, and had a family. In this study, Asian American students include those who identified themselves as "East Asian," "West Asian," "South Asians," and "other Asians" in the NELS dataset. This grouping method, therefore, yields 724 Asian American students.

Variables and Data Analysis

The dependent variables measure the long-term outcomes, which include postsecondary education entry, postsecondary attainments, and individual annual earning. They are all dichotomous variables. The first outcome is students' decision to enter higher education (1 = enter, 0 = not enter). The second outcome is postsecondary education attainment. This dependent variable is coded 1 if a student obtained a certificate/license, associate degree, or bachelor degree; and coded 0 if he or she did not have any of these degrees by 2000. Finally, the third outcome relates to the participants' earnings. This variable is coded as 1 if the earnings of participant are greater or equal to the 1999 U.S. median earnings of \$27,293 for male and \$15,304 for female; it is coded as 0 if their earnings are below that earning level.

We use two sets of independent variables, student characteristics and institutional characteristics, to explain the likelihood of these outcomes (see Table 1). Students' characteristics include gender (1 = female, 0 = male), socioeconomic status (SES) (1 = below the 25th percentile rank for SES; 2 = at least 25th percentile but below 75th rank for SES; 3 = at 75th rank for SES), parental education (high school and college), and high school achievements (i.e., eighth test score is the prior ability measurement and tenth test score). To measure the teacher effects, we use teacher qualifications of tenth-graders, such as years of high school teaching experience, standard certification,¹ degree in education, salary level, and master degree as exploratory variables.² Other schooling variables include enrollment size, diversity within school, public high school, urban, and school regions. Because of data limitations, the analysis of the relationship between teacher characteristics and student outcomes does not control for the effects of school quality, campus climate, and classroom-related matters.

Table 1. Description of Variables

Variable	Description
Dependent Variables	
<i>Student Outcomes/Achievements</i>	
Enter postsecondary education	Entered higher education = 1, otherwise = 0
Completed postsecondary education	Completed a postsecondary educational degree (certificate, associate's degree, bachelor degree) = 1, otherwise = 0
Earned above national median income	Earned above 1999 national median income = 1, otherwise = 0
Independent Variables	
<i>Teacher Characteristics</i>	
Teaching certification	Held a standard teaching certification = 1, otherwise = 0
Master degree	Had a master's degree = 1, otherwise = 0
Degree in education	Had a degree in education = 1, otherwise = 0
Years of teaching	Teaching experience (measured on a scale from 1 to 9). For example, 0 years = 0, 1 to 3 years = 1, 4 to 6 years = 2, . . . , and over 25 years = 9
Years of teaching ²	Square of years of teaching
Female teachers	Female = 1, otherwise = 0
Teacher salary	Annual salary of full-time teachers (measured on a scale from 1 to 7). For example, \$0-\$24,999 = 1, \$25,000-\$29,999 = 2, . . . , \$50,000 and above = 7
<i>Institutional Characteristics</i>	
Public	Public school = 1, otherwise = 0
Urban	Urban = 1, otherwise = 0
Northeast	School is located in Northeast region = 1, otherwise = 0
North Central	School is located in North Central region = 1, otherwise = 0
West	School is located in West region = 1, otherwise = 0
Minority proportion	Percentage of minority students in 8th grade high school (measured from a scale 1 to 7). For example, 0% = 0, 1%-3% = 1, 4%-6% = 2, . . . 91%-100% = 7
<i>Student Attributes</i>	
Parent(s) with only high school education	Highest education attainment of parent(s) is high school = 1, otherwise = 0
Parent(s) with college education	Parent(s) has a college degree = 1, otherwise = 0
SES	Socioeconomic status below 25th percentile = 1, between 25th and 75th percentile = 2, above 75th percentile = 3
Female	Female = 1, otherwise = 0
8th-grade test scores	8th grade average scores on four subjects (English, mathematics, science, and social studies). First quartile (low) = 1, second quartile = 2, third quartile = 3, fourth quartile (high) = 4
10th-grade test scores	10th standardized test scores. First quartile (low) = 1, second quartile = 2, third quartile = 3, fourth quartile (high) = 4
Work full time	Full-time = 1, otherwise = 0

The general form of the model is $Y_{i\varphi} = \beta X_{i\varphi} + \alpha S_j + \varepsilon_{i\varphi}$, where subscript i denotes individuals and j denotes institutional factor such as school. Y_i denotes the long-term outcomes of individual i , X represents individual and family background variables of students, S represents institutional and teacher characteristics of students, and ε is the random error term. We conduct a separate logistic regression analysis for each of the three long-term outcomes. The logistic regression method

is used to model the relationship between the dichotomous outcome variables in the study. For the purpose of this study, logistic regression provides the probability with values between 0 and 1 of entering higher education, obtaining a postsecondary education degree, and having an income equal or greater than the median national level.

Research Findings

Descriptive Analysis

Using descriptive statistics, we first examine a possible linkage between student outcomes and their teacher characteristics by ethnicity (see Table 2). Asian American students (80 percent) tend to attend similar types of high schools (public and urban) as other racial groups did. However, the family and individual profiles of Asian students are notably different from their counterparts. With regard to family backgrounds, almost half of Asian American students have parents with at least a bachelor degree (M = 0.470, S.D. = 0.499) and high socioeconomic status (M = 0.2.936, S.D. = 1.113). On average, Asian American students had the highest test scores of eighth grade (M = 3.247, S.D. = 0.688) and tenth grade (M = 3.022, S.D. = 1.035).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

	Students									
	Asian		Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander		White		African American		Hispanic	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
<i>Student Long-term Outcomes</i>										
Entered higher education	0.904	0.295	0.795	0.405	0.790	0.407	0.740	0.439	0.727	0.446
Completed a postsecondary educational degree	0.604	0.489	0.295	0.458	0.491	0.500	0.367	0.482	0.323	0.468
Had a high-end job	0.178	0.383	0.054	0.226	0.099	0.298	0.068	0.252	0.050	0.218
Had a full-time job	0.740	0.439	0.718	0.452	0.782	0.413	0.731	0.444	0.742	0.438
Earned \geq 1999 national median earnings	0.588	0.493	0.507	0.502	0.599	0.490	0.517	0.500	0.552	0.497
<i>Teacher Characteristics</i>										
Had a standard teaching certification	0.654	0.476	0.637	0.482	0.717	0.451	0.664	0.472	0.551	0.498
Had a master degree	0.387	0.488	0.331	0.472	0.400	0.490	0.329	0.470	0.303	0.460
Had a degree in education	0.076	0.265	0.180	0.385	0.041	0.197	0.085	0.280	0.042	0.200
Teaching experience ¹	5.353	2.742	5.154	2.662	5.368	2.753	5.051	2.672	4.714	2.829
Female teacher	0.358	0.480	0.392	0.490	0.361	0.480	0.390	0.488	0.297	0.457
<i>Institutional Characteristics</i>										
Public	0.836	0.370	0.832	0.375	0.882	0.322	0.929	0.257	0.898	0.303
Urban	0.446	0.497	0.493	0.502	0.201	0.401	0.568	0.496	0.483	0.500
Percentage of minority students ²	2.940	1.625	2.058	1.647	3.593	1.780	1.763	1.362	1.691	1.450
<i>Individual and Family Characteristics</i>										
8th-grade test scores quartile ³	3.247	0.688	2.803	0.767	2.962	0.760	2.717	0.733	2.745	0.722
10th-grade test scores quartile ³	3.022	1.035	2.323	1.084	2.762	1.088	2.018	0.988	2.074	1.011
Parent(s) with only a high school diploma	0.437	0.496	0.502	0.502	0.609	0.488	0.695	0.461	0.515	0.500
Parent(s) with a bachelor degree	0.470	0.499	0.295	0.458	0.326	0.469	0.154	0.361	0.119	0.323
Female	0.459	0.499	0.453	0.499	0.498	0.500	0.510	0.500	0.532	0.499
SES quartile	2.936	1.113	2.452	1.110	2.722	1.083	2.041	1.050	1.844	1.047
Sample size	724		180		8271		1151		1593	

Note: M = mean, S.D. = standard deviation, SES = social economic status

(1) Teaching experience has 9 scales with 1 being least experienced and 9 being most experienced.

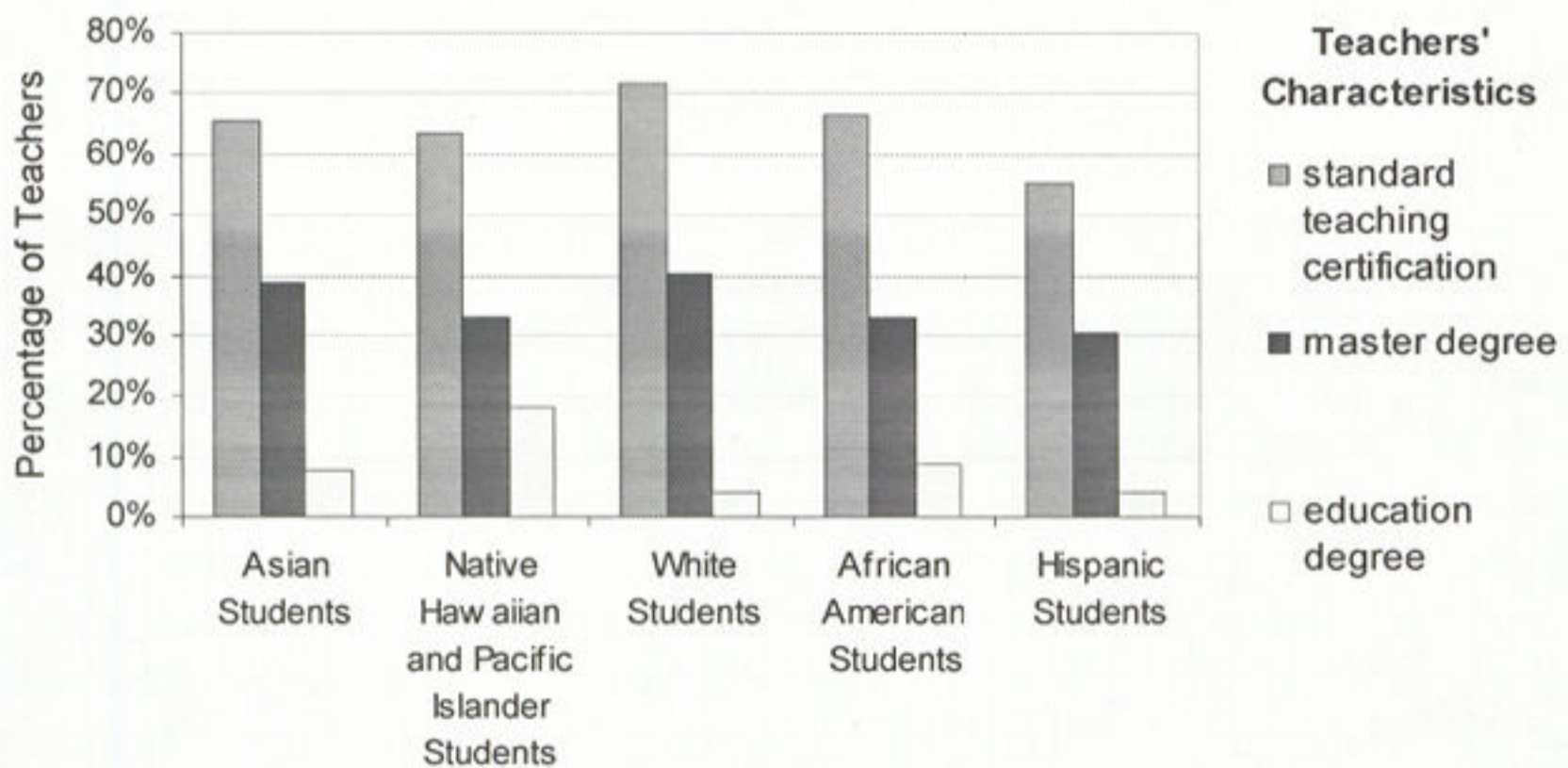
(2) Percentage of minority students has 7 scales with 1 being the least diverse and 7 being the most diverse.

(3) Grade test scores are scaled at quartile with 1 being low and 4 being high.

We then look at the teacher profiles of students from different racial groups (see Figure 2). At a first glance, White students and Asian Americans were more likely than their peers to have teachers with higher qualification criteria. For example, most teachers of White (70 percent) and Asian American students (65 percent) held a standard teaching certification, while about 40 percent of teachers of both groups held a master degree. However, students from all the racial groups were likely to be educated by teachers who did not hold a degree in education.

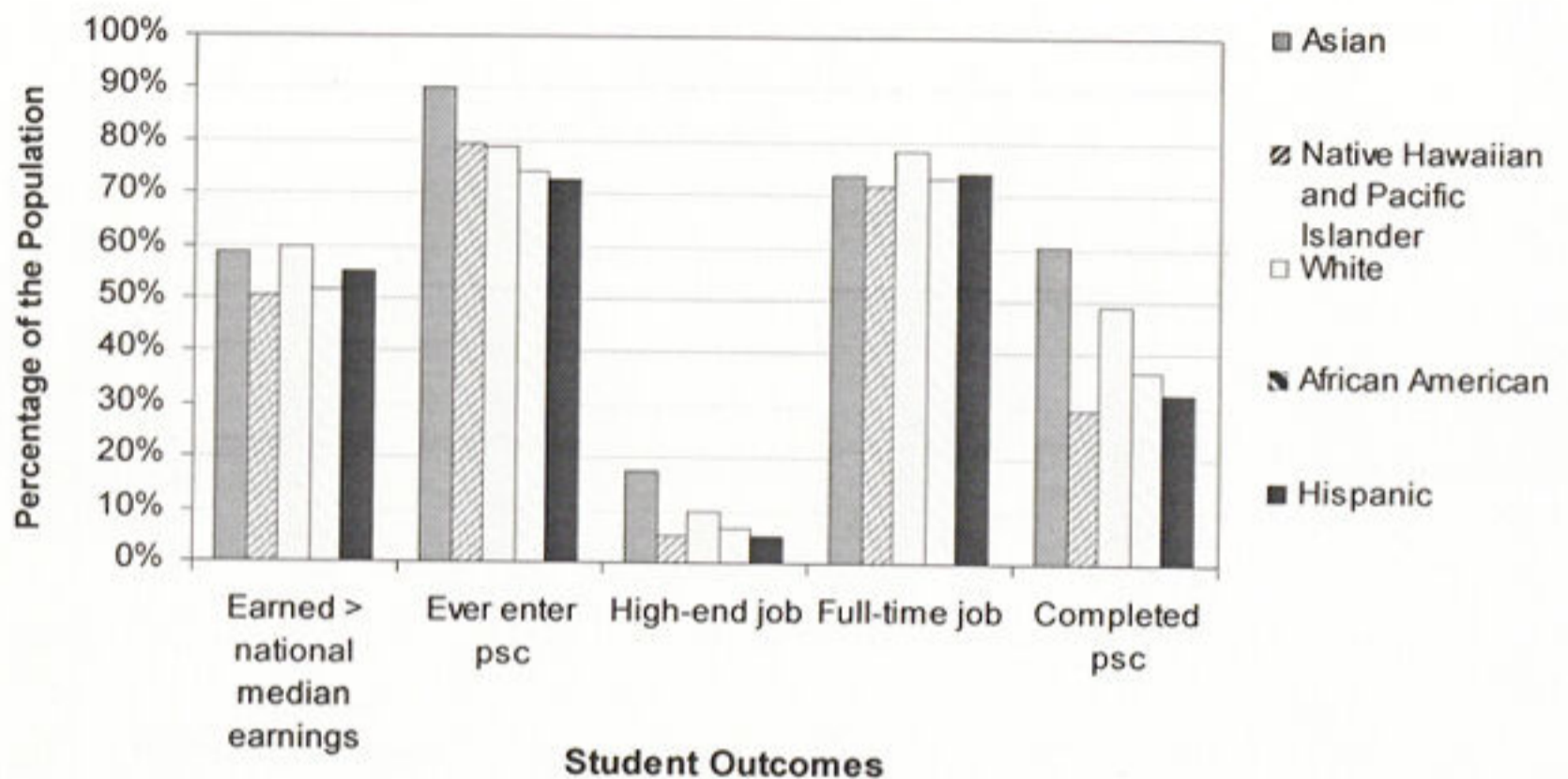
With respect to long-term achievement, Asian American students illustrated the highest level of achievement in every category (see Figure 3). Among the five racial groups, Asians had the highest percentage of college-goers ($M = 0.904$, $S.D. = 0.295$). Sixty percent of Asian American students ($M = 0.604$, $S.D. = 0.489$) obtained a postsecondary educational degree, while less than 50 percent of students from other racial groups held a college degree. In 2000, about 18 percent of Asian American students held a high-end job ($M = 0.178$, $S.D. = 0.383$),³ while less than 10 percent of other racial groups held one. The outcomes of White and Asian American students were compatible. Being taught by better-qualified teachers, they are the two groups that have the most desirable long-term outcomes in terms of college entry, college completion, employment status, and income level. Hence, we see a possible linkage between student outcomes and their teacher characteristics.

Figure 2. Teachers of Students from Different Racial Groups



source: NELS:88

Figure 3. Students' Long-term Outcomes by Ethnicity



Source: NELS:88

Logistic Regression Results

Teachers Effect and Asian American Students' Decisions to Attend College

Teacher characteristics appear to have different impacts on students' decision to enter higher education (see Column A in Table 3). Their college-going decisions were associated with several teacher characteristics. Specifically, holding everything else constant, the odd ratios of teaching certification (6.845) indicates that the odds of going to college for those taught by certified teachers were almost seven times larger than the odds of their peers taught by noncertified teachers. Surprisingly, being taught by teachers with a bachelor degree in education (log odds = -1.850) and by teachers with a master degree (log odds = -1.510) decreased the likelihood of entering higher education.

We also find that various student attribute inputs are significantly associated with students' decisions to attend higher education (see Column A in Table 3). For Asian students, having a parent(s) with college education (log odds = 2.326) increased the likelihood of their college entrance. Students with higher tenth grade test scores (log odds = 0.862) were likely to enter college.

Table 3. Factors Influencing Asian American Student Outcomes

	Column A			Column B			Column C		
	Entered postsecondary education			Completed postsecondary education			Earned above median national income		
	Log Odds	SE	Odds Ratio	Log Odds	SE	Odds Ratio	Log Odds	SE	Odds Ratio
Teacher Characteristics									
Teaching certification	1.924**	1.026	6.845	-0.469	0.547	0.625	0.13	0.576	1.138
Master degree	-1.510***	0.649	0.221	-0.397	0.319	0.794	-0.307	0.293	0.736
Degree in education	-1.850***	0.96	0.157	-0.365	0.447	0.694	-0.41	0.479	0.663
Years of teaching	-0.012	0.467	0.988	.360*	0.245	1.433	-0.242	0.228	0.785
Years of teaching ²	0.038	0.042	1.039	-.025*	0.023	0.975	0.03	0.022	1.03
Female teachers	0.007	0.59	1.007	0.197	0.314	1.217	-0.302	0.297	0.756
Teacher salary	-0.016	0.078	0.984	.050*	0.055	1.052	0.011	0.053	1.011
Institutional Characteristics									
Public				0.406	0.482	1.501	-0.19	0.561	0.827
Urban	0.151	0.544	1.163	0.351	0.312	1.422	-0.071	0.303	0.931
Northeast	0.228	0.934	1.256	0.622	0.497	1.863	0.076	0.54	1.08
North Central	-0.901	0.697	0.406	0.198	0.442	1.214	-0.645	0.42	0.526
West	2.002***	0.758	7.407	0.029	0.359	1.03	-0.434	0.38	0.648
Minority proportion	0.187	0.148	1.206	.204***	0.075	1.202	0.011	0.084	1.011
Student Characteristics									
Parent(s) with only high school education	0.654	0.694	1.923	-0.46	0.436	0.631	0.12	0.504	1.128
Parent(s) with college education	2.326***	1.167	10.233	-0.708	0.608	0.493	0.971	0.733	2.642
SES	0.301	0.369	1.351	.682***	0.258	1.977	-0.405	0.31	0.667
Female	0.691	0.576	1.995	0.362	0.263	1.437	.682***	0.293	1.978
8th-grade test scores	0.228	0.248	1.254	.481***	0.235	1.617	.359***	0.175	1.431
10th-grade test scores	.862***	0.191	2.37	.551***	0.121	1.734	0.034	0.128	1.035
Work full time							2.407***	0.286	11.097

NOTE. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01. SES = social economic status. Regressions are run using sampling weights and robust standard errors.

Teachers Effect and the Likelihood of Students' Obtaining a Postsecondary Education Degree

Holding everything else constant, the odd ratios of years of teaching (1.433) and teacher salary (1.052) indicate that students educated by experienced teachers and/or highly paid teachers had a higher probability to finish college than their counterparts (see Column B in Table 3). The findings show that teacher salary has a positive impact on college completion although its odd ratio of 1.052 is relatively small. Compared to their counterparts, students from a high SES family background (log odds = 0.682) were more likely to finish college, while those with good previous academic records (log odds of eighth-grade test score = 0.481 and log odd of tenth-grade test score = 0.551) more were likely to obtain a postsecondary educational degree. With regard to school characteristics, students attending high school with great diversity (log odds = 0.204) were more likely to obtain a postsecondary educational degree by 2000.

Teachers Effect and Students' Earnings

While students' individual characteristics are strongly associated with students' earnings, teacher characteristics have no significant impact on their earnings (see Column C in Table 3). For example, holding everything else constant, female students were twice more likely than their male counterparts to make more than the national median income level (log odds = 0.682). Similar to the college completion outcome, the findings show that previous achievements in school were associated with later success. More specifically, compared to their peers, students with higher eighth-grade test scores (log odds = 0.359) were more likely to have an earning higher than the national median income level.

Conclusion

The study draws two major conclusions. First, to some extent teaching certifications and educational backgrounds have a pronounced impact on college entry and college completion. Teacher salary also influences the likelihood of college completion. But we do not find any teacher effect on students' earnings. One possible explanation for our findings is that teachers influence students' lives when they are still in school settings (i.e., high school and college). Thus, we see teacher-related variables significantly influence school outcomes such as college attendance and college graduation. On the other hand, teachers have no impact on postschool outcomes such as earnings, perhaps because students' career choice and opportunities depend largely on out-of-school context. Second, student attributes and school characteristics are predictive variables of long-term educational outcomes. Generally, students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and with college-educated parents were more likely to have higher degrees of achievement.

This study is a response to what we need to be addressing in higher education in response to educational policies such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and other accountability measures. Under NCLB, states are required to upgrade the professional criteria of high school teachers, especially in schools serving a large number of economically disadvantaged students and students of color. In particular, NCLB has raised the stakes for schools to monitor student achievement progress, to use data for decision making and to justify public investment in teacher education. Our research findings provide support for the view that higher school-level professional standards (i.e., certification, content knowledge, and performance criteria) are an important component leading to stronger student achievement, similar to previous research (Card and Krueger 1992; Cohn and Geske 1990; Darling-Hammond 2000; Heck 2007; Peske and Haycock 2006). Schools, school districts, and states must ensure that their students, regardless of their background or economic circumstances, receive the best teachers possible. This goal can be accomplished by assisting new and existing teachers improve their skills through teacher professional development initiatives as well as supporting prospective teachers to go into teaching through alternate routes to traditional teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond 2000).

Several limitations should be noted in considering the results presented in this study. In truth, the long-term outcomes are intricate for measurement because there are numerous variables (e.g., school quality, campus climate, and classroom-relat-

ed matters) that may affect such outcomes. Omitting any important inputs would likely lead to bias and inaccurate estimates. If data allow, future research should control for this limitation. In addition, some educational inputs may not appear to provide statistical influence on the educational outputs, not because they are not effective, but because they are simply not an appropriate proxy of teacher quality and perhaps they may not reflect characteristics of “good” teachers. Nevertheless, the findings suggest early educational resources during high school years affect subsequent student lives.

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¹ We use Standard Certification only and exclude probationary and emergency certification because Goldhaber and Brewer (2000) suggest that using nonstandard certification will underestimate the true effect of teachers.

² Omission of unobserved teacher, school, or class effects does not cause biased estimate in standard educational production functions (Goldhaber and Brewer 2000).

³ High-end jobs include jobs that require specific skills and qualifications such as legal professionals, medical practice professionals, engineers, scientists, lab technicians, computer systems analysts, computer programmers, editors, and executives.

Discrimination Against Asian American Business Enterprises: The Continuing Need for Affirmative Action in Public Contracting

By Myron Dean Quon

Introduction

The Asian American Institute (AAI) is the Midwest region's pan-Asian nonprofit advocacy organization. Its mission is to empower the Asian American community, by utilizing research, education, and coalition building. Asian American Institute partners with affiliate organizations located in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and

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Quon has consulted for the Chicago Community Trust. His work included grantmaking for the Chicago Area Foundation for Legal Services, as well as developing initiatives benefiting Chicago's communities. Quon's background includes working as deputy regional director at Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund: education and outreach to underserved communities, the development of a Latino outreach project, and major donor stewardship. Previously, as a staff attorney, he performed community education and litigation: education and youth antidiscrimination, immigration reform, gay profiling by law enforcement, and HIV/AIDS discrimination. Quon has also been a managing attorney of the Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara County, directing legal services to low-income and senior citizen communities.

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Washington, DC; thus, AAI has local, regional, and national expertise with regard to Asian American civil rights issues.

Although affirmative action is being attacked through state-ballot initiatives throughout the country, local municipalities continue to seek to remedy past and present discriminatory practices related to public-sector contracting that have led to the underutilization of minority-owned business enterprises (MBEs) and women-owned business enterprises (WBEs). Although literature exists concerning White women-owned, African American-owned, and Latino-owned business enterprises, there has been little research, analysis, or discussion of Asian American-owned business enterprises.

In the past year, there have been several developments in “the heartland” concerning M/WBE programs that assist with evaluating public-contracting affirmative action programs, with a focus on Asian American contractors. First, at the beginning of 2007, a Seventh Circuit federal appellate court upheld the Illinois Department of Transportation’s Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program (that decision specifically included Asian American contractors). Second, although Illinois’s Cook County has not had an M/WBE program since 2001, the county in November 2006 passed an interim ordinance that went into effect the following year on President Lincoln’s birthday. Like its federal counterpart, the Cook County M/WBE construction program includes Asian Americans. (Cook County analyzed the impact of terminating its M/WBE program and found evidence that construction work by M/WBEs, including Asian American contractors, dropped off dramatically.) Lastly, recent analyses of Asian American businesses by two experts for the city of Chicago provided conclusive quantitative evidence of discrimination against Asian American contractors in Chicago; thus, the city of Chicago in April 2007 repaired its public contracting ordinance to reinclude Asian American contractors as a presumptive minority group.

Local municipalities have a compelling interest in eradicating racial discrimination and its negative impact on public contracting. M/WBE programs exist within the context of racial discrimination against minority-owned businesses, including those owned by Asian Americans. Nationally and locally, individual members of certain minority groups, including Asian Americans, suffer social and economic disadvantages that justify limited remedial measures that allow them to compete fairly for government contracts. This paper analyzes the ongoing racial discrimination against Asian Americans that justifies such ordinances.

As this paper demonstrates, the reality that Asian Americans suffer discrimination in government contracting must be placed in a broader historical context of discrimination. Asian Americans have experienced racial discrimination in virtually all areas of public and private life. Since this nation’s earliest days, racially discriminatory federal, state, and private actions have denied Asian Americans basic rights in areas spanning immigration to citizenship, land ownership to education, marriage law to business, and, ultimately, government contracting.

National findings, which are well supported by local research, demonstrate the existence of direct discrimination against Asian American-owned businesses in the awarding of government contracts. In addition to direct discrimination, subtler means of racial discrimination also prevent Asian Americans from competing for

government contracts. By limiting available opportunities for funding, training, and experience, racial discrimination blocks Asian Americans from establishing contracting businesses in the first place. Then, by excluding Asian Americans from the “old boys” networks critical to contracting decisions, racial discrimination prevents even those Asian Americans who are able to start businesses from competing on a fair basis for government contracts. Racial discrimination also blocks fair competition because it often results in higher price quotations from suppliers, bid rigging, and blocked access to bonding and financing from commercial lenders (and worse terms when financing is secured).

Recent Developments Involving Asian American Contractors in the Midwest

Public sector programs may constitutionally apply race-conscious remedies so long as it is narrowly tailored to serve a compelling governmental interest.¹ The scrutiny given to such a program, although strict, is not fatal.² M/WBE programs are an appropriate means of “remedying the effect of racial discrimination and opening up [public] contracting opportunities to members of previously excluded minority groups.”³ Recent state actions supporting the ongoing efficacy and need for affirmative action ordinances include the 2007 decision from the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals upholding the Illinois Department of Transportation’s Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program, the Illinois Cook County passage of its Interim Ordinance for Minority-Owned Business Enterprises and Women-Owned Business Enterprises, and the city of Chicago’s legislative reparation of its M/WBE public contracting affirmative action ordinance to reinclude Asian American contractors as a presumptive minority group (Asian American contractors had been excluded from the program for nearly three years).

Furthermore, the federal Congress repeatedly has found an extensive history of discrimination that disadvantages minority-owned businesses—Asian-American-owned businesses in particular—in the context of government contracting. Thus, affirmative action programs are an appropriate remedy to this history and pattern of discrimination by creating race-conscious goals with regard to individual members of certain minority groups, including Asian Americans, who have suffered social and economic barriers that justify limited remedial measures (Ray 2005; Holt 2006). The most recent study commissioned by the city of Chicago demonstrates that Asian American-owned firms continue to face discrimination: decreased wages linked to the housing market decline and greater likelihood of loan denials and of paying higher rates of interest, when controlling for other factors (Blanchflower 2007; Wainwright 2007). These types of discrimination against Asian Americans’ businesses support the continued usage of a local affirmative action ordinance with aspirational goal-setting.

This paper next explores the history of pervasive discrimination against Asian Americans and then discusses the extensive evidence of discrimination against Asian Americans in public contracting. The paper thus shows that not only are Asian Americans underutilized in public contracting, but also discrimination in

numerous areas related to contracting prevents Asian Americans from competing on an even playing field for public-sector contracts.

A Continuing History of Discrimination against Asian Americans

The discrimination in government contracting addressed by an M/WBE program must be understood in the context of a widespread history of racial discrimination that has affected Asian Americans in virtually every aspect of life—from citizenship to immigration, from fundamental personal rights to business and professional life, and, ultimately, in government contracting. Unfortunately, discrimination against Asian Americans is not a past problem and continues to this day. Thus, affirmative action programs are only one remedy to discrimination in the government-contracting context and represent just one effort to begin to break the cycle of discrimination.

Asian Americans Historically Have Suffered Extensive Racial Discrimination

From the very beginnings of American history, Asian Americans have faced governmental discrimination that has prejudiced their ability to exercise the most basic rights. In 1790, one of the first acts of the new federal Congress was to bar Asian Americans and other minorities from becoming naturalized citizens. Starting in the mid-1800s, immigration laws severely restricted the ability of Asians to enter the United States. Indeed, between 1917 and 1965, the United States enacted no fewer than five statutes intended to eliminate or limit Asian and Pacific Islander immigration. It was not until 1965 that discriminatory quotas against Asian Pacific immigration were finally ended. Discrimination against Asian immigration continued through the 1980s and 1990s in the often turbulent reactions to the waves of Vietnamese and Chinese political refugees. The few Asians and Pacific Islanders who overcame the discriminatory immigration laws then faced high barriers to the exercise of the rights that this country holds as fundamental, including (among others) the rights to own land, to marry (Ancheta 2006, 30; Chin and Karthikeyan 2002), and to obtain an education (Takaki 1998, 201). Perhaps the most egregious example of the effects of discrimination against Asian Americans, though, was the brutal internment of approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II. Many Japanese Americans resettled from such internment camps (or left the West Coast in advance of clear signs of state-sponsored discrimination) to Chicago and Cook County. Post September 11, the level of racial profiling against South Asian Americans nationally, and even instances of discrimination by government actors against South Asians in the Midwest, has increased tremendously (Chandrasekhar 2003). Indeed, this past decade in Chicago has seen a number of hate crimes or hate incidents involving Asian Americans (Shanshan 2007; Fitzsimmons 2007).

Asian Americans have suffered discrimination in the business context. For example, between 1873 and 1884, San Francisco enacted 14 ordinances with a discriminatory intent to restrict the economic growth and advancement of Chinese laundries. Similar local ordinances unfairly hampered Chinese laundries even in Chicago until 1886.

Further, until as recently as the late 1940s, several states prohibited Asian Americans, including American-born citizens of Asian descent, from owning land (McGovney 1947). Under so-called Alien Land Laws, people of Asian descent could not buy agricultural land or lease it for long periods, preventing them from establishing agricultural businesses. In fact, Illinois led the way in 1887, when it denied aliens the right to acquire land. Nine other states rapidly followed suit either by constitutional amendment or by legislation, and Congress then banned further acquisition of land by aliens in the territories.

Asian Americans Continue to Face Discrimination

Discrimination against Asian Americans continues to this day. As recently as 1994, the United States Commission on Civil Rights found that being of “Asian descent” had a “negative effect” on an employee’s chance to move upward into management (Woo 2000, 42). Indeed, one study stated that Asian Americans “face the worst chance [among all racial groups] of being advanced into management positions” (Ong 2000, 215–6). Further, a study of corporate directors of Fortune 500 companies conducted in 2003 revealed that only 1 percent were of Asian descent (Committee of 100 2004, 9). Asian Americans also experience a lower return on their education than other groups—Asian-Pacific Americans have an “inability to find job opportunities commensurate with [their] education and training” (Woo 2000, 44).

Moreover, as business owners today, Asian Americans experience great disparities in their revenues compared to White-owned businesses. In 1987, Asian Americans owned 2.6 percent of all U.S. businesses, but revenues from Asian American-owned businesses accounted for only 1.7 percent of total revenues from all businesses. Indeed, 1987 annual receipts for Asian American-owned businesses averaged \$107,000, well below the \$189,000 average for businesses owned by White men (NAPALC 1997, 4–5, 13). In fact, over one-third of Asian American-owned businesses had receipts of less than \$10,000 (NAPALC 1997, 6; Ray 2005). More recently, the 2007 study by National Economic Research Associates confirms these disparities for Asian American businesses in the Chicago region (Wainwright 2007).

Unfortunately, another study shows that many Americans continue to harbor racist views of Asian Americans. This study found that approximately one out of four Americans hold decisively negative views of Chinese Americans, and that 32 percent believe that Chinese Americans are more loyal to China than to the United States. Indeed, the survey showed that 46 percent of those surveyed believe that “Chinese Americans passing on information to the Chinese government is a problem,” and 23 percent said that they would be “uncomfortable” if an Asian American were elected president, in contrast to 15 percent who would be uncomfortable with an African American president. Almost 25 percent of those polled believe Chinese Americans are “taking away too many jobs from Americans,” are “overly aggressive in the workplace,” and “have too much power in the business world” (Committee of 100 2001, 12–15). Moreover, approximately 15 percent of those polled believed that Chinese Americans were “more willing than others to use shady practices,” and also that Chinese Americans are “twofaced” and

“conceited” (13; this information also appeared in the 26 April 2001 *Washington Post*). Disturbingly, the underlying racism that gave rise to *Korematsu* still appears to be with us today (and likely worse with the increased concerns of China as a rising global power) and forms the backdrop that confirms the need for affirmative action programs.

Racial Discrimination Also Indirectly Disadvantages Asian Americans in Public Contracting

The federal Congress’s findings and other evidence of direct discrimination against Asian Americans in the public contracting context illustrate the compelling need to remedy such discrimination.⁴ Congress also recognized additional evidence that shows that Asian Americans struggle with indirect forms of discrimination that insidiously prevent them from starting and developing contracting businesses. As Congress noted in its 1996 “Preliminary Survey Concerning the Compelling Interest for Affirmative Action in Federal Procurement,” “minority-owned firms face troubles in obtaining financing to begin a business; once formed, minority-owned business face similar difficulties in gaining access to capital for investments necessary for business development.”

Discrimination in Financing and Lending

Financial institutions historically have used discriminatory practices against Asian Americans and other minorities, including requiring minorities to meet criteria different from those required of White borrowers and requiring greater collateral from minorities than from White business owners. Congress has recognized, also from its 1996 preliminary survey, that “over and over again, studies show that minority applicants for business loans are more likely to be rejected and, when accepted, receive smaller loan amounts than nonminority applicants with identical collateral and borrowing credentials.”

As an illustration, according to the 1987 Economic Census, 16.9 percent of businesses owned by White males were started by means of a commercial bank loan, versus only 13 percent of Asian American-owned businesses (Enchautegui et al. 1996, 37). Thus Asian Americans are only about 75 percent as likely as their White counterparts to begin their businesses through commercial bank financing. For many Asian Americans who are unable to borrow money from commercial lenders to start businesses, the only recourse is either to borrow from families or friends or to forego starting a business (Enchautegui et al. 1996, 38; Ong 1994, 49). As the city of Chicago’s 2007 report demonstrates, Asian American firms are denied loans at a rate 50 percent higher than companies owned by White males and pay interest rates one-half of one percentage point higher under similar circumstances (Blanchflower 2007). Over the course of several years, this can severely hamper the ability of Asian American business enterprises to compete fairly.

Discrimination in the Development of Human Capital

Asian Americans also experience racial discrimination in the development of the human capital necessary to compete in public contracting. Important factors for

success in public contracting include a business owner's experience and contacts. As Congress found in its 1996 preliminary survey, however, deep-rooted discrimination in the contracting field hampers Asian Americans' ability to gain such experience. Prior to the 1960s, minorities, including Asian Americans, "were segregated into menial, low wage positions," which "left minorities unable to gain the experience needed to operate all but the smallest businesses . . . located in segregated neighborhoods, and serving an exclusively minority clientele" and precluded them from developing contacts, outside ethnic enclaves, in mainstream business communities. Without experience and contacts, Asian Americans have greater difficulty than their White competitors in developing business, securing contracts, and obtaining bonding.

Because Asian Americans were denied the equal opportunity even to enter the United States until a mere 42 years ago, many are recent immigrants. As a result of this discriminatory exclusion by the federal government, Asian Americans, as a group, have been deprived of opportunities to obtain some of the same business experience, including the opportunity to inherit family businesses, as their White counterparts. Indeed, Asian American business owners have the disadvantage of having had little work experience prior to starting their own businesses. Nearly a quarter of Asian American business owners began their businesses with less than two years of work experience, and another third with two to nine years of work experience. These figures contrast sharply with the figures reflecting the work experience of White male business owners, 54 percent of whom have had at least 10 years of work experience (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1997, 17).

Discrimination by Labor Unions

Asian Americans also suffer discrimination from unions—such membership often was a prerequisite to obtaining contracting jobs. As Congress's 1996 preliminary survey noted, "Discrimination by unions has been recognized as a major factor in preventing minorities from obtaining employment opportunities in the skilled trades." Asian Americans historically have faced great obstacles in the form of discriminatory legislation blocking their membership in unions at both the federal and local levels. In addition to the legal barriers that kept Asian Americans out of unions, they also were subjected to frequent employer efforts to forestall union solidarity by pitting minority employees against union efforts and to "explicit bans on Asian Pacific American membership in most AFL unions. . . . As a result, at least until the 1940s, Asian Pacific American unionization was often limited to ethnically-segregated 'blood unions' or to guild-like associations confined to joint-credit pools and social events" (Defreitas 1993, 290).

As recently as the late 1980s, when 19.2 percent of all American workers belonged to a union, only 12.5 percent of Asian American workers were union members, the lowest percentage of any ethnic group, including nonminorities. Moreover, "even after Title VII went on the books, . . . unions precluded minorities from membership through a host of discriminatory policies, including the use of tests and admissions criteria which have no relation to on-the-job skills and which have a differential impact on minorities" (Defreitas 1993, 292; see also NAPALC 1997, 36).

Discrimination in Bonding

Asian Americans also face discrimination in bonding, another prerequisite for many government contracts. For example, the cost of bonding can vary significantly, which has a disproportionate effect on minorities when bonding agents discriminate. For instance, “the cost of a \$1 million bond for a well-established firm would be approximately \$13,000; that same bond could cost three or four times more for a new, small, and, inexperienced firm.” Because most Asian American-owned firms are small and less-experienced, this cost differential consequently has a racially discriminatory effect. Also, “‘character, credit, and capability’ are the most frequently expressed measures weighed by a surety in making bonding decisions,” but “these factors are inherently discretionary and some believe discriminatory” (La Noue and Sullivan 1995, 352).

Discrimination by Prime Contractors and Suppliers

Prime contractors are an additional source of discriminatory conduct against Asian Americans. As Congress found in its 1996 preliminary survey, “another factor restricting the ability of minority-owned businesses to compete in both private and public contracting is discrimination allowing non-minority subcontractors and contractors to get special prices and discounts from suppliers which are not available to minority purchasers.” Additionally, Asian American- and other minority-owned firms had disproportionately fewer opportunities in the construction industry due to “‘bidshopping’ by White-owned prime contractors who, after the bidding process closes, secretly disclose the lowest bid to majority-owned subcontractors to solicit a lower bid” (NAPALC 1997, 33). Suppliers also discriminate against minority-owned businesses. As the 1996 preliminary survey illustrated, special prices and discounts given by suppliers to White-owned firms restrict the ability of minority-owned businesses to compete. Indeed, 11 percent of Asian business owners “had experienced known instances of discrimination in the form of higher quotes from suppliers.” Numerous other state and local studies have reported similar findings. As a result, Asian Americans face higher business costs, cannot compete for certain contracts, and, on the contracts that they do win, earn lower profits (NERA 1993, 6–14; Rice 1996). Furthermore, at the beginning of 2007, a number of Asian American contractors provided testimony to the city of Chicago concerning ongoing discrimination by suppliers, prime contractors, and other individuals working in the public contracting field (slow pay or no pay; pass-through solicitations; anti-Asian graffiti and bumper stickers; and other examples).⁵

Conclusion

Mindful of the widespread discrimination against Asian Americans throughout American history, Illinois history, and even Chicago history, it is clear that discrimination hinders Asian Americans from competing on a fair basis. Local municipalities thus continue to have a compelling interest in remedying this discrimination and its effects in public contracting. By collecting local qualitative and quantitative evidence of discrimination against Asian American business

enterprises, municipalities can remedy such discrimination through race-conscious goals, including public-contracting affirmative action ordinances.

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Endnotes

¹ See, e.g., *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña*, 515 U.S. 200, 235–36 (1995) (Adarand I); *City of Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co.*, 488 U.S. 469, 507–08 (1989).

² Adarand I, 515 U.S. at 237; *Northern Contracting, Inc. v. Illinois Department of Transportation*, 473 F.3d 715 (7th Cir. 2007).

³ *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Slater*, 228 F.3d 1147, 1164 (10th Cir. 2000) (Adarand II). In that case, the DBE program was narrowly tailored to further the compelling interest in "eradicating the economic roots of racial discrimination in highway transportation programs funded by federal monies" (1176).

⁴ Academic and statistical studies have found pernicious discrimination against Asian Americans in government contracting. Numerous studies conducted by local governments in California since 1989 have concluded that Asian American businesses continue to face significant discriminatory barriers in competing for government contracts. For instance, from 1990 to 1992, Asian-owned businesses composed 25.5 percent of the professional service engineering market in Richmond, CA, but received only 3.2 percent of the city's contracts. In addition, a study of Contra Costa County's procurement practices found that Asian prime contractors failed to receive a single non-federally funded construction contract during a two-year period in which the county did not have an affirmative action policy. Once the county enacted an affirmative action policy in 1987, about 7 percent of the county's prime construction dollars were awarded to Asian-owned businesses (Wang 1995, 469). In 2007, 11 years after California's voters approved a ballot initiative that banned affirmative action, an appellate court ruled that evidence of ongoing discrimination against M/WBEs, including Asian American-owned business enterprises, supported a reexamination of the need for public-contracting affirmative action, despite a state constitutional bar. *Coral Construction, Inc. v. City and County of San Francisco*, 65 Cal. Rptr. 3d 761 (2007) (California's Supreme Court has accepted for review the petition of the White male contractors).

⁵ Testimony by members and supporters of the Association of Asian Construction Enterprises at the hearing on 31 January 2007 by the Chicago City Council Committee on Economic, Capital, and Technology Development.

Asian American Immigrants as the New Electorate: Exploring Turnout and Registration of a Growing Community

By Louis DeSipio, Natalie Masuoka, and Christopher Stout¹

Abstract

Asian Americans are currently one of the fastest-growing racial minority groups in the United States. However, much of this growth is due to immigration: nearly

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70 percent of adults are immigrants. Thus, Asian American political incorporation is directly related to the challenges associated with immigration and in ensuring the transition from immigrant to citizen adult and, then, to voter. This paper explores the potential consequences of immigration and naturalization on the Asian American political behavior. Applying DeSipio's (1996) model of new electorates, we disaggregate Asian American immigrants into three nonvoting categories: non-naturalized immigrant adults, U.S. citizen adults not registered to vote, and registered voter adults who did not vote in the 2000 or 2004 election. Using Current Population Survey (CPS) data, we identify factors that differentiate these nonvoters from Asian Americans who voted, with particular attention to what distinguishes nonnaturalized adults from voters. We then supplement this analysis with survey data from the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS) to estimate how Asian American partisanship patterns may evolve as a result of increased naturalization and voter turnout.

Introduction

The competitive race between Hillary Clinton and Barak Obama in the 2008 Democratic Presidential Primary has led to new interest about the Asian American vote. Tight races in the key Democratic battleground states such as California, New York, and Washington have demonstrated how critical the Asian American vote can be for national elections. In the past, pundits have long hailed Asian Americans as model minorities in terms of education and finance, yet ironically, paid little attention to Asian American voting behavior. While they are critical voting groups in some states, Asian Americans make up a small share of the national electorate. But as national elections have become increasingly competitive, Americans recognize the importance of even small voting populations such as Asian Americans. Beyond election results, Asian American participation offers us a chance to understand how race and immigration influence political incorporation. As a community that is predominantly immigrant, culturally and linguistically diverse, and racialized as non-White minorities, the Asian American experience offers a complex lens through which we can understand electoral behavior.

Thus, a case study on Asian American politics helps us establish a new framework for examining immigrant political behavior more generally. Although Asian Americans have been in the United States since the late 18th century, the Asian American population today is overwhelmingly immigrant. According to the 2000 Census, nearly 70 percent of Asian American adults were born outside the United States. Although Latinos are more often the focus of immigration debates, it is Asian Americans who have seen the most dramatic changes resulting from the influx of new immigrants. Furthermore, contrary to the model minority stereotype, Asian Americans have, on average, attained high levels of socioeconomic status but participate at relatively lower rates than both Whites and Blacks. This poses a clear challenge to preexisting theories about political participation that have identified a positive relationship between socioeconomic status and electoral behavior. By pointing to the Asian American case, we can see that the interaction among immigration, race, and class have distinct effects on political behavior.

In this article, we use the Asian American case to further develop our understanding about immigrant political incorporation. Most studies that explore the political incorporation of new immigrant groups use a generational model that compares foreign-born voters with native-born voters (DeSipio 1996; Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004; Ramakrishnan 2005). However, largely due to data limitations, few scholars disaggregate the immigrant population by characteristics other than region of origin or generational status (Ramakrishnan 2005). We argue that in order to better understand the differences among immigrants in the realm of politics, we must also differentiate immigrants by the number of institutional barriers they have overcome such as naturalization and registration requirements. These institutional barriers place particularly heavy costs on voting for new immigrants.

Disaggregating immigrants by these characteristics offers a richer understanding of immigrant participation than does the socioeconomic status model more commonly used to predict individual political behaviors.

In this article, we analyze the individual-level factors that convert Asian Americans from nonvoters to eligible voters to voters. We apply DeSipio's (1996) typology of new electorate formation by dividing Asian American adults into four categories based on citizenship and voting eligibility status: nonnaturalized immigrants, nonregistered U.S. citizen adults, registered U.S. citizen adults who did not vote, and voters. As DeSipio notes, by disaggregating a population into these four categories, we can identify a four-step process of immigrant political incorporation and the electoral promise if that population can effectively convert its noncitizens into voters. Within each of the new electorate categories, we also disaggregate Asian Americans by national origin to determine how uniform electoral behavior patterns are across the community.

In the final section, we estimate the direction of Asian American voting behavior, focusing mainly on partisanship. Our goal in this final section is to assess the partisan accent of the Asian American voice as a higher share of the community move into U.S. citizenship and voting. Although exit polls depict Asian American voters as leaning slightly Democratic, including those reported online in the 7 November 2004 *New York Times*, research in political science shows that most Asian Americans are political independents with no clear party attachments (Hajnal and Lee 2006; Lien 2001; Uhlaner 2000). This paper offers conclusive evidence to dispute the sometimes naïve view of Asian American politics presented in the media and by some scholars of political incorporation that Asian Americans are not as interested in politics as are other racial and ethnic groups in the United States.

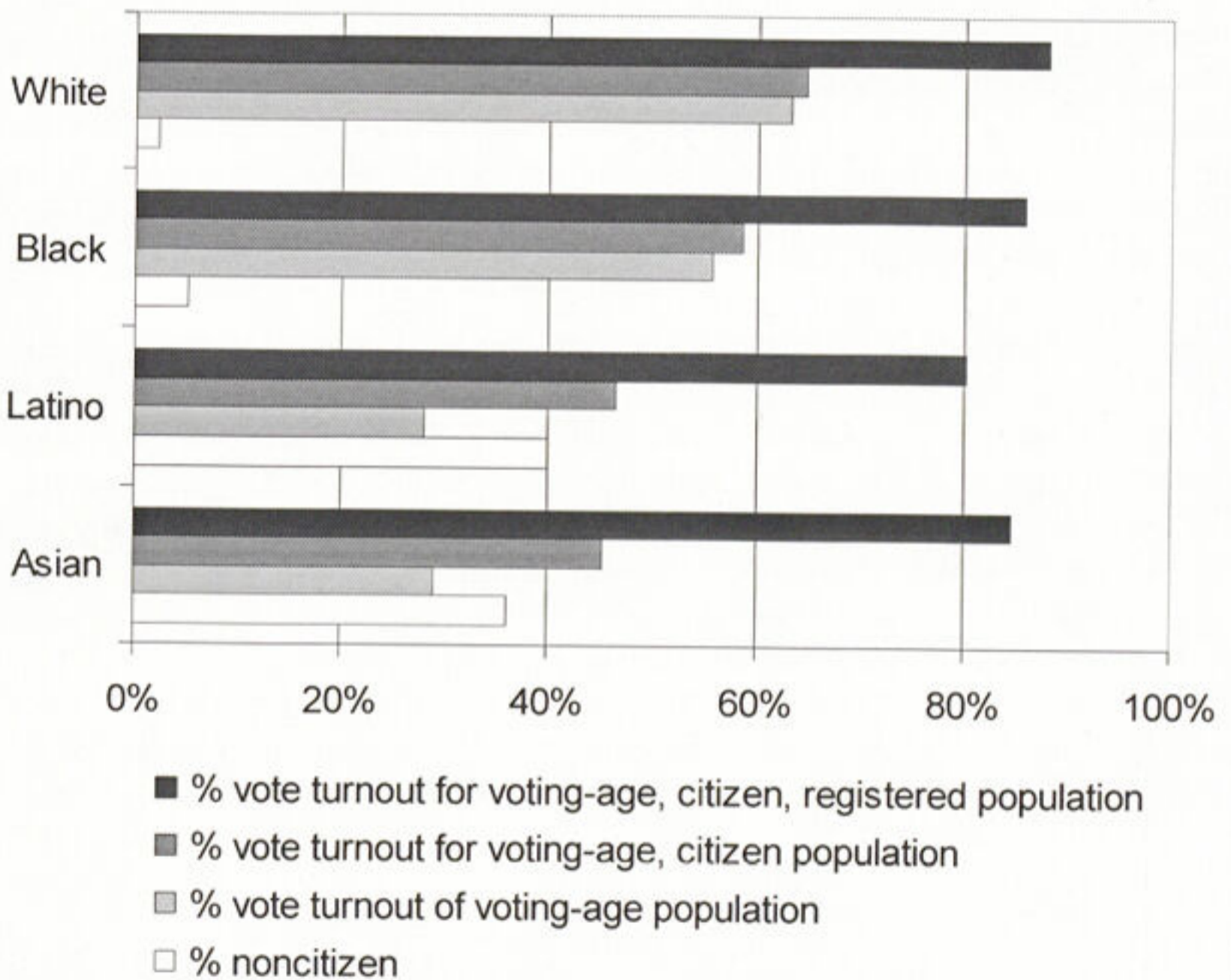
New Electorate Categories: From Nonvoter to Voter

In 2000, 331,136 Asian immigrants naturalized as U.S. citizens and in 2004, that number was 218,974 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2006). Each election year, then, sees hundreds of thousands of newly naturalized Asian Americans newly eligible to vote. Indeed, this steady influx of Asian immigrants results in the potential for continual shifts in the nature and patterns of Asian American electoral behavior. But how might this influx of new voters influence American electoral politics more generally?

In this section, we discuss Asian American political potential by providing estimates of prospective new voters that result from new immigration from Asia. As these estimates will show, the Asian American community has not yet reached full political maturity given its large share of noncitizens.

Figure 1 offers a visual portrait of the share of noncitizens and vote turnout levels of each major racial and ethnic group. The most striking difference is that between Asian Americans and Latinos, on the one hand, and Whites and Blacks, on the other. Asian Americans and Latinos have large shares of non-U.S. citizens, which explain a significant component of the turnout gap between these racial and ethnic groups. Contrary to the belief that Asian Americans are not interested in politics, however, Figure 1 demonstrates that once Asian Americans become U.S. citizens and register to vote, they are highly likely to turnout and mirror the pattern comparative to non-Hispanic Whites. Thus, Asian Americans may represent a significant voting bloc if the community can convert its noncitizens into registered U.S. citizens.

Figure 1. Voting Rates by Race and New Electorate Categories



Source: Merged CPS November Supplement files, 2000 and 2004

* White, Black, and Asian populations presented above exclude those of Latino ethnicity

In order for us to estimate this potential of the Asian American vote, we use DeSipio's (1996) new electorates typology by dividing Asian Americans into four electorate groups: non-U.S. citizens, nonregistered U.S. citizens, registered U.S. citizens who did not vote, and voters. According to our analysis, we estimate that the number of Asian American voters (approximately 2,979,572) is dwarfed by the number of adult non-U.S. citizens (approximately 4,200,437).²

Moreover there are nearly equal shares of voters as there are nonregistered citizens (approximately 2,134,323). Therefore, if nonregistered adult citizens were to register and vote at the rates seen among current registrants, the number of Asian American voters would exceed the number of Asian American nonnaturalized immigrant adults—making the Asian American bloc a critical force in any competitive election.

Given these estimates, the critical question for Asian American politics is how political elites can convert Asian American noncitizens into voters? The political behavior literature in political science offers insight about the key factors that increase voter turnout. Well established in the literature is the idea that participating in politics requires a degree of individual skill and resources (Campbell et al. 1980; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Therefore, those who have not acquired these necessary prerequisites are less likely to participate and, in turn, cannot have their interests addressed by the government. It is due to this reason why certain groups—such as racial minorities and immigrants—remain electorally disadvantaged in U.S. society. Recent studies have shown that, just as with native-born Whites, racial minorities with high socioeconomic status are more likely to participate in politics than are their less-advantaged coethnics (DeSipio 1996; Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004; Ramakrishnan 2005).

Once we consider the various resources individuals need to participate in politics, we can also understand why naturalized immigrants and their U.S.-born children are also less likely to participate. One resource that immigrants and their children lack is awareness about the American political system, or level of political socialization. As Wendy Tam Cho (1999) posits, immigrants are socialized in different political contexts and bring with them distinctive perspectives on politics. Thus, socialization factors such as time in the United States (for immigrants) and generational status are important factors that predict immigrant political incorporation (Cho 1999; Ramakrishnan 2005; DeSipio and Uhlaner 2007).

Political behavior, however, cannot be explained simply by individual-level factors. Structural forces such as the mobilizing role of various political institutions and the surrounding social environment also explain why one chooses to participate in politics. Institutional barriers such as electoral laws, naturalization requirements, and differential opportunities for and meanings of dual nationality place additional costs on political incorporation for new immigrants and their children; they create what Jones-Correa (1998, 2001) calls the “rules of the game,” which dictate those who can and cannot be included in the polity. Elites also play a key role in mobilizing people to become involved in politics. Political parties, labor unions, and other civic institutions can help ease the burden of participating by providing information about politics for their members (Dahl 1961; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Wong 2006). Scholars have also long suspected that the social

context of where an immigrant or minority group resides plays an important role in their political behavior; areas with newer histories of migration are less likely to have institutions to help immigrants incorporate into U.S. politics (Marrow 2005). Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001) posit that the political culture of a state as measured by average vote turnout may also impact the rates of immigrant political incorporation. Past research has also shown that the racial and ethnic makeup of a geographic area plays a crucial role in shaping the area's political culture (Key 1949; Hero 1998).

Although the scholarship on political participation is extensive, it has not successfully determined how these factors interact nor how these interacting forces may influence racial and ethnic minority groups differently. Asian Americans represent a unique case given their relatively high average income and education levels, which means they have the necessary individual-level resources but are disadvantaged because such a large proportion of their community is foreign born. This is in direct contrast to the model African American experience; Blacks are most likely born in the United States but lack the necessary individual-level resources to effectively voice their interests in national politics. We cannot expect that the rules that apply to political behavior of White Americans (largely the case that is presented in the established literature) will necessarily be true for minorities who face different structural and individual-level obstacles to participation. We argue that because each minority community faces a different set of challenges, the determinants of voting behavior will interact differently depending on the minority group in question. Although we cannot undertake this comparative analysis here, we recognize that it is important to analyze each racial and ethnic community separately, so that we can identify the unique set of factors that encourage their participation.

Data and Methods

For our analysis, we tap data from two sources: the November Supplement for the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS). Both datasets provide large samples of Asian American respondents and are considered the most accurate sources of information currently available on Asian American political participation and attitudes. We created our own dataset using merged files from the 2000 and 2004 November Supplement of the CPS in order to obtain the most comprehensive information on Asian American voters and nonvoters available today.³

The size of the CPS dataset will also allow us to present a portrait of not only Asian American voting and nonvoting populations but also by national origin group. However, since the CPS does not contain data on political attitudes, such as one's partisanship preferences, we utilize the PNAAPS to provide the link between voting behavior and political attitudes. The PNAAPS is a multicity, multiethnic telephone survey on Asian American political attitudes and participation. The survey consists of 1,218 adult respondents coming from the major six Asian national origin groups—Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, and South Asian

(Indian and Pakistani)—and provides a number of questions on political behavior, public policies, and racial identity.⁴

Our goal in this paper is to identify the key factors that predict an Asian American's propensity to first naturalize, then to register to vote, and finally to vote in a presidential election. To do this, we examine the influence of four sets of factors that scholars have found to influence immigrant incorporation: an individual's sociodemographic characteristics, factors related to immigrant political socialization, the influence of political institutions, and the influence of one's surrounding social context. To account for a person's sociodemographic characteristics we account for the respondent's age, gender, income,⁵ education, homeownership, employment status, and Asian national origin group.⁶

As discussed above, past research tells us that socioeconomic status is particularly important for predicting political behavior and we believe it also plays an important role in determining the naturalization process for immigrants. To account for the influence of immigration, we take into consideration the number of years an immigrant has resided in the United States and one's generational status. This allows us to take into consideration the role of American socialization on immigrant political behavior. We also wanted to take into account the role of political institutions that play a role in mobilizing or constraining individual behavior. We hypothesize that voting in a competitive presidential, gubernatorial, or U.S. senate election may influence one's desire to engage in politics. We also suspect that members of labor unions may also be more likely to participate in politics given that unions have historically been active in politics. We also account for the potentially mobilizing impact of Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act by including a control for living in a state in which some or all counties use Spanish- or Asian-language bilingual ballots. Immigrant voters with easier access to the ballot box—such as being able to read the ballot—may be more likely to participate.

Finally, to account for social context, we include a variable that controls for the proportion of the Asian population in the state.⁷ We expect that those who live in states with large Asian American populations are more likely to participate since it is more likely that there are ethnic organizations or other community-based resources that encourage Asian American political participation.

We use logistic regression models to identify the unique effect of each independent variable described in the paragraph above on naturalization, registration, and voting among Asian Americans.⁸ The first model takes into account the first step of immigrant political incorporation by identifying the different factors that predict an immigrant's propensity to naturalize. The second model identifies the factors that predict the second step; moving from a nonregistered citizen to a registered citizen. The third model identifies the factors that predict the final step; moving from a registered nonvoter to a voter. With logistic regression, we can identify which specific factors, holding everything else constant, influence the likelihood of accomplishing each of these three steps. We focus on the variables that obtain statistical significance (noted by stars in the tables) that rules out any chance that the effects we found were due to random error. We also compare those variables that obtain statistical significance across the three models in order to assess which factors are only relevant to one step of political incorporation and those that are

influential throughout the entire process. Although the data was collected in 2000 and 2004, our statistical analysis offers the opportunity to identify generalizable patterns that we should find occurring in future elections.

After identifying the factors that increase the likelihood of voting, we then briefly consider how the politics of the Asian American community may shift as it becomes more integrated into electoral politics. To do this, we focus on partisanship. Partisanship is one of the key political characteristics of which we can distinguish racial minorities from the White majority (Alvarez and Garcia Bedolla 2003; Tate 1994). Due to the racialized nature of party politics in the United States today, partisanship has been understood to also be an effective proxy for racial group interests. For example, Blacks, who understand that their individual life fate is linked to their racial group, are more likely to be affiliated with the Democratic Party (Dawson 1994). Given the racial differences established in the literature, partisanship may be the best indicator to determine the direction of Asian American political attitudes. Partisanship offers a glimpse into both the issues that mobilize Asian Americans into politics and the degree of political uniformity within the community.

From Nonvoter to Voter

To begin, we offer a picture of what the Asian American population looks like today. Table 1 presents the Asian American voting and nonvoting populations by national origin. Overall, 29 percent of the adult population voted in a presidential election.⁹ When we disaggregate Asian Americans by national origin group, we find significant variation. For example, Japanese Americans are the outlier group: they have the largest share of voters (36 percent) and a native-born majority (41 percent).¹⁰ Other Southeast Asians (which include those from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma, and Bangladesh) have the lowest voting rate (17 percent) and double the share of nonnaturalized foreign-born as the Japanese (81 percent). Most importantly, this table demonstrates that regardless of national origin, Asian American voting propensity is strongly influenced by the immigrant experience. Only 4 percent (380,944) of the Asian American voters are third generation or above. This finding is consequential given that for other racial groups (including Latinos), the voters are largely native born.

**Table 1. New Electorate Categories by Asian National Origin Group—
Weighted CPS Estimates 2000 and 2004**

	Adult Population	Voting Categories					
		All Voters	% of Population	Native Born	% of Voters	Foreign Born	% of Voters
Asian ¹	10,333,637	2,979,572	29%	1,016,918	34%	1,962,654	66%
Chinese ²	2,067,352	598,503	29%	142,043	24%	456,459	76%
Japanese	671,796	241,972	36%	126,136	52%	115,835	48%
Korean	940,398	228,935	24%	40,495	18%	188,439	82%
Filipino	1,743,223	533,547	31%	109,439	21%	424,107	79%
South Asian ³	1,580,215	328,977	21%	51,074	16%	277,902	84%
Vietnamese	906,386	289,065	32%	18,083	6%	270,982	94%
Other Southeast Asian ⁴	671,323	115,525	17%	22,245	19%	93,279	81%

	Nonvoting Categories					
	Registered Not Voted	% of Population	Citizen Not Registered	% of Population	Noncitizen	% of Population
Asian	551,991	5%	1,881,885	18%	3,709,139	36%
Chinese	91,868	4%	363,324	18%	790,385	34%
Japanese	42,710	6%	115,098	17%	195,874	28%
Korean	43,008	5%	158,335	17%	410,175	37%
Filipino	117,186	7%	328,045	19%	527,677	26%
South Asian	63,887	4%	199,221	13%	865,781	48%
Vietnamese	46,122	5%	182,942	20%	239,529	23%
Other SE Asian	n/a ⁵	n/a	145,937	22%	314,409	36%

Source: Merged CPS November Supplement files, 2000 and 2004

¹ Includes respondents who either answered "Asian" on the race question or one of the seven listed Asian national origin groups.

² National origin group estimates only accounts for first and second generation. Chinese includes those from Taiwan.

³ Includes those from India or Pakistan.

⁴ Includes those from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma, or Bangladesh.

⁵ Unweighted sample size is too small to estimate the population.

Overall, approximately 36 percent of Asian American adults are non-U.S. citizens. As we have indicated, the proportion of noncitizen adults varies by national origin group. South Asians have the highest proportion of noncitizens (48 percent) while Filipinos have the lowest (26 percent). We find, however, that of Asian Americans who register to vote, most also turnout; only 5 percent of the overall adult population are registered but did not vote and only 18 percent are unregistered U.S. citizens.¹¹ Interestingly, unlike the voting and noncitizen categories, there does not appear as much variation in the U.S. citizen adult groups when we disaggregate by national origin.

Since the Asian American population will assuredly change over time, we want to identify the specific factors that we can expect to predict an Asian American's propensity to participate in politics in the future. We begin by examining the first major institutional step, naturalization (see Table 2), and focus on the variables that obtained statistical significance. Perhaps not surprisingly, the longer an immigrant has lived in the United States, the more likely we can expect them to naturalize. We also find that higher levels of education, which offer immigrants the skills and knowledge they need to meet application requirements (and to complete the sometimes onerous administrative requirements to apply for U.S. citizenship), has a positive influence on naturalization rates. Social context is found to play a small role; Asian immigrants who live in states with large Asian populations are more likely to naturalize than those who live in states with small Asian populations. This may suggest that there is a richer infrastructure in the states of high immigration to assist applicants in completing the administrative requirement of naturalization. Most interestingly, registration rates appear to vary by national origin. Japanese, Koreans, South Asians, and Southeast Asians are all less likely to naturalize than are the Chinese. The Japanese in particular have low naturalization rates. They are 33 percent less likely to naturalize than the Chinese. Alternatively, Filipinos and Vietnamese are more likely to naturalize than the Chinese. Surprisingly, the Vietnamese, who are largely political refugees, are almost 20 percent more likely to naturalize than the Chinese; their naturalization rates may be influenced by the politicized reason for their immigration (see Portes and Bach 1985 for a comparable case in the Latino community).

Table 2. Logistic Model Predicting Naturalization—Asian American

	Naturalization		
	b	s.e.	min→max
<u>Panethnicity</u> ¹			
Japanese	-1.511***	0.198	-0.333
Korean	-0.348***	0.118	-0.087
Filipino	0.313***	0.099	0.077
South Asian	-0.332***	0.106	-0.083
Vietnamese	0.829***	0.127	0.196
Southeast Asian	-0.830***	0.137	-0.201
<u>Sociodemographics</u> ²			
Age	0.003	0.002	0.052
Gender (Female)	0.056	0.070	0.014
\$15K–24,999	-0.037	0.163	-0.009
\$25K–34,999	0.082	0.157	0.020
\$35K–49,999	-0.120	0.151	-0.030
\$50K–74,999	0.014	0.144	0.003
\$75K–99,999	-0.140	0.148	-0.035
\$100K+	0.039	0.179	0.010
Income Missing	-0.080	0.140	-0.020
Education	0.063***	0.010	0.305
Homeowner	0.603***	0.077	0.150
In Labor Force	0.163**	0.078	0.041
<u>Immigration</u>			
Years in United States	0.355***	0.011	0.897
<u>Political Institutions</u>			
Labor Union Member	0.273	0.280	0.067
State with Competitive Election, 2000	0.044	0.116	0.011
State with Competitive Election, 2004	0.009	0.114	0.002
<u>Social Context</u>			
Proportion of Asian Population in State	0.755**	0.383	0.077
2004 Election	0.852***	0.084	0.210
Constant	-4.785***	0.233	
N	5,918		
Log Likelihood	2782.42		
Percent Predicted Correctly	0.793		
Proportional Reduction of Error	0.578		

¹ National origin group estimates only account for first and second generation; the excluded category is Chinese.

² The excluded income category is \$0–\$14,999.

* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

Table 3 presents the registration and voting models. We find that many of the same determinants are significant in both models. Overall, we find that Asian Americans who are older, are better educated, own homes, and are in the workforce are more likely to register to vote. These same factors, with the exception of homeownership, also predict an Asian American's propensity to vote. Generation also makes a difference for registration and voting; U.S.-born Asian Americans are more likely to register and vote than immigrants. However, the differences between the native-born and the foreign-born decrease once we account for registration. While native-born citizens are 13 percent more likely than immigrant citizens to register, among registered adults, the native-born are only 5 percent more likely to vote than the foreign-born. Thus, there appears to be some advantage for those who are born in the United States, but that advantage decreases as immigrants become more incorporated into politics. Interestingly, most of the institutional variables do not appear to influence either voting or registration.

Table 3. Logistic Models Predicting Voting and Registration—Asian American

	Voting			Registration		
	b	s.e.	min→max	b	s.e.	min→max
<u>Panethnicity¹</u>						
Japanese	0.071	0.187	0.008	0.258**	0.105	0.063
Korean	-0.014	0.212	-0.002	-0.011	0.115	-0.003
Filipino	-0.089	0.149	-0.011	0.116	0.083	0.029
South Asian	-0.143	0.195	-0.017	-0.022	0.109	-0.005
Vietnamese	0.150	0.225	0.017	0.097	0.117	0.024
Southeast Asian	0.277	0.104	0.029	-0.299**	0.140	-0.075
<u>Sociodemographics²</u>						
Age	0.022***	0.004	0.165	0.022***	0.002	0.361
Gender (Female)	0.227**	0.104	0.027	0.096*	0.057	0.024
\$15K–24,999	-0.182	0.251	-0.022	-0.247	0.152	-0.062
\$25K–34,999	0.410	0.259	0.042	0.302**	0.143	-0.075
\$35K–49,999	0.097	0.234	0.011	0.003	0.138	0.001
\$50K–74,999	0.274	0.228	0.030	0.011	0.132	0.003
\$75K–99,999	0.622**	0.242	0.063	0.090	0.136	0.022
\$100K+	0.751***	0.275	0.072	0.075	0.151	0.019
Income Missing	0.632***	0.239	0.063	-0.754***	0.128	-0.186
Education	0.081***	0.019	0.247	0.131***	0.010	0.564
Homeowner	0.020	0.129	0.002	0.258***	0.068	0.064
In labor force	0.347***	0.121	0.043	0.205***	0.067	0.051
<u>Immigration</u>						
Generation	0.255*	0.142	0.055	0.274***	0.076	0.133
Years in United States	0.019	0.016	0.038	0.004	0.009	0.018
<u>Political Institutions</u>						
Labor Union Member	0.963**	0.469	0.080	0.410**	0.195	0.099
State with Competitive Election, 2000	-0.119	0.193	-0.014	0.224*	0.115	0.055
State with Competitive Election, 2004	0.220	0.194	0.024	0.150	0.101	0.037
State with Bilingual Ballot	-0.088	0.139	-0.010	-0.086	0.076	-0.021
<u>Social Context</u>						
Proportion of Asian Population in State	-0.287	0.524	-0.014	-0.685**	0.279	-0.070
2004 Election	0.156	0.123	0.018	0.069	0.067	0.017
Constant	-1.693***	0.496		-3.278***	0.273	
N	3,132			5,750		
Log Likelihood	137.38			586.80		
Percent Predicted Correctly	0.851			0.642		
Proportional Reduction of Error	-0.002			0.213		

¹ National origin group estimates only account for first and second generation; the excluded category is Chinese.

² The excluded income category is \$0–\$14,999.

* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

Our analysis also reveals some differences in terms of gender and national origin. We find unexpected differences among Asian American women and men. Past studies on Asian American voting have found either no gender effect on participation or that women are less politically engaged in politics (Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004; Wong 2003). The CPS data demonstrate that women are more likely to register and vote than men (a pattern that also appears in the non-Hispanic White population). This finding encourages further examination of gendered differences in Asian American participation rates. Finally, national origin does appear to not distinguish voters from registered nonvoters in the Asian American community, but it does appear to influence registration propensity. Japanese Americans demonstrate significantly higher rates of registration than Chinese respondents while Southeast Asians show a lower likelihood. Indeed, there appear to be different socialization processes between men and women, and among the national origin groups.

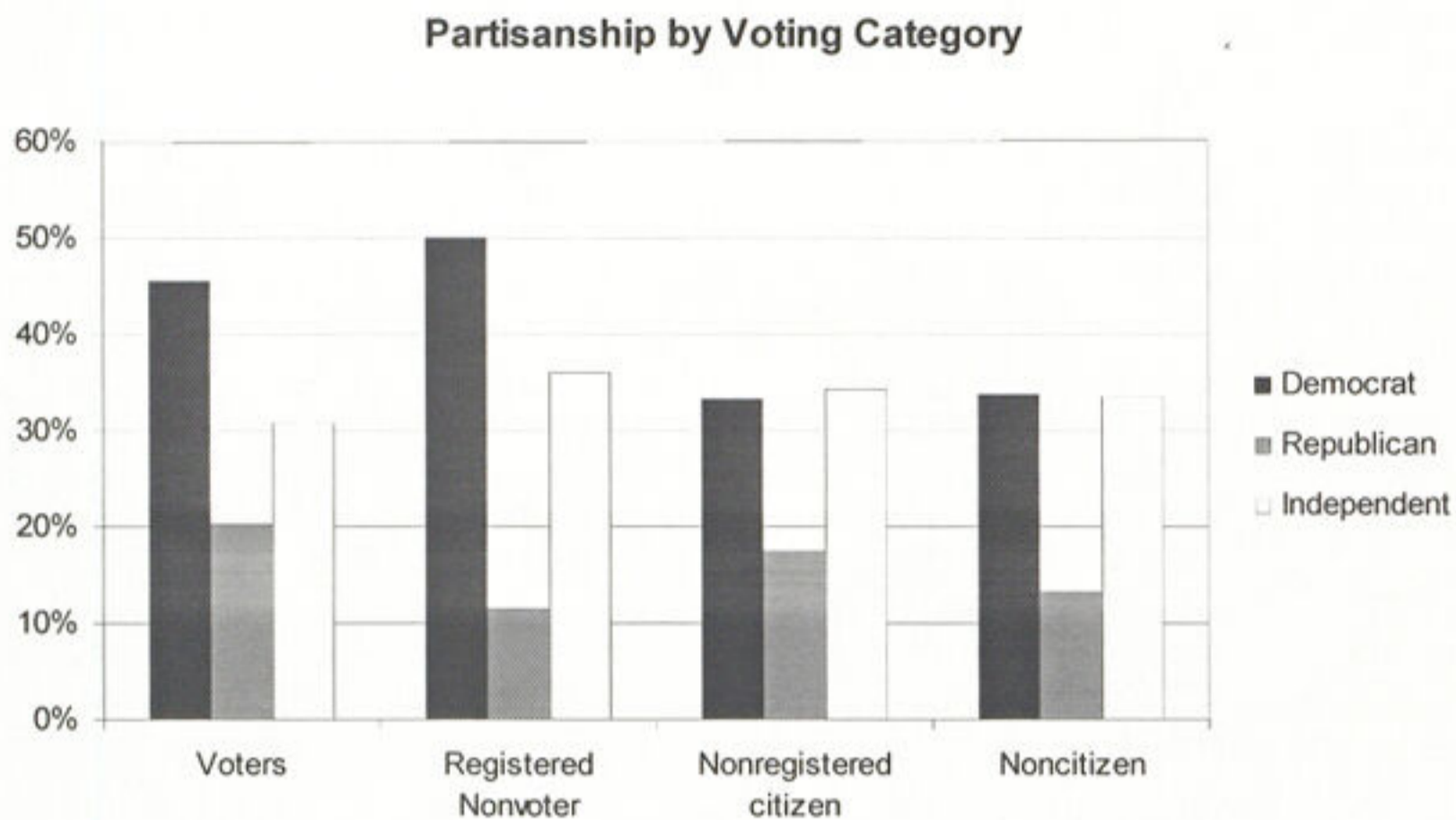
Looking to the Future: Asian American Partisan Recruitment

Public opinion polls tend to suggest that Asian Americans are nearly evenly split between Democrats and Republicans, with Asian Americans leaning slightly towards the Democratic Party (Lien 2001). Exit polls reported in the 7 November 2004 online edition of *The New York Times* show that Asian Americans have been steadily voting more Democratic, at least in presidential races. PNAAPS finds that for the Asian American community as a whole, 35.6 percent identify as Democrats, 13.8 percent identify as Republicans, and 12.9 percent identify as independent. Yet a significant 37.5 percent refused any affiliation by marking the option "Do not think in these terms." Although the lack of partisan attachment among Asian Americans may lead some to speculate that Asian Americans are not interested in American politics, we believe it is more appropriate to see this as evidence that the Asian American community has yet to reach full political maturity. Party identification should be understood as a proxy for the degree of political incorporation; strong attachment to a political party reflects an individual's political knowledge and exposure to American politics (Hajnal and Lee 2006). Relative to native-born populations, the political partisanship of new immigrant communities tends to reflect more moderate views and is least stable across time.

This is evident when we see the share of Asian American voters who report to be independent or do not identify with a particular political party. Figure 2 presents the partisan leanings of each of the four categories of Asian American adults. As we would expect, unregistered voters and noncitizens are generally the least likely to report partisanship. Voters and registered nonvoters are much more likely to report partisan attachments. These two electorate groups report Democratic attachment at much higher rates than Republican attachment indicating a Democratic advantage of at least two to one in any broad-based mobilization strategy that brings current Asian American nonvoters into the electorate.¹² We capture important insights into the real reasons why Asian Americans may appear to be disengaged from politics: primarily because Asian Americans are immigrants who

are new to the American political system. Once incorporated, Asian Americans engage in partisan politics.

Figure 2. Partisanship of Voters and Non-voters



Source: PNAAPS

* Those counted as independent in the figure above are those respondents who identified as “independent” or “do not think in terms partisanship.”

Even more importantly, this initial analysis also reveals that there may be distinctive political mobilization possibilities for each of the two major political parties. To identify these possibilities, we present two multivariate models that predict Democratic or Republican attachment among Asian American voters (see Table 4). We focus our analysis on Asian American *voters* in order to estimate which factors best predict party attachment once nonvoters have been incorporated into the electorate. To identify the factors that encourage attachment to either party, the models in Table 4 include the basic sociodemographic controls: age, gender, income, and education. To control for the immigrant experience and socialization, we take into account if the voter is foreign born and if that voter received the majority of his/her education in another country. To take into account social context, we include a variable that takes into account if the voter lives in an Asian ethnic enclave.¹³ Finally, since racial group attachment has been found to predict partisanship among other minority groups, we also include a variable for perceptions of linked fate or shared group consciousness with other Asian Americans. Our analysis models a scenario that predicts party attachment once the Asian American population converts from a largely nonvoting to a voting population. We recognize that our models provide only one possible estimate, but one that is more likely to present an accurate portrait if today’s nonvoters are rapidly incorporated into the electorate in the near future.

Table 4. Logistic Regression Models—Predicting Partisanship among Voters

	Democrat			Republican		
	b	s.e.	min→max	b	s.e.	min→max
Foreign Born	-0.668***	0.255	-0.166	0.431	0.303	0.068
Gender (Female)	0.150	0.101	0.075	-0.068	0.121	-0.022
Income (\$20K–\$29,999) ¹	0.610	0.436	0.151	0.465	0.615	0.084
Income (\$30K–\$39,999)	0.024	0.406	0.006	0.759	0.548	0.143
Income (\$40K–\$59,999)	0.109	0.383	0.027	0.922*	0.518	0.175
Income (\$60K–\$79,999)	0.770*	0.434	0.189	0.563	0.581	0.104
Income (Over \$80K)	0.529	0.398	0.132	0.798	0.532	0.149
Income (no report)	-0.081	0.397	0.020	0.449	0.562	0.080
Education	-0.072	0.064	0.126	0.158**	0.080	0.167
Foreign Education	0.224	0.258	0.056	0.176	0.301	0.029
Age	0.007	0.007	0.134	-0.005	0.008	-0.058
Ethnic Enclave	-0.173	0.269	-0.043	-0.350	0.350	-0.053
Linked Fate	0.157*	0.089	0.117	-0.047	0.106	-0.023
Constant	-0.336	0.667		-2.772	0.876	
N		439			439	
Log Likelihood		31.330			18.306	
Percent Predicted Correctly		0.613			0.781	
Proportional Reduction of Error		0.175			0.000	

Source: PNAAPS

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

¹ Income less than \$20K is the excluded category.

According to our results, immigrants, who represent the majority of the new electorate within the Asian American community, are less likely than their native-born counterparts to feel attached to the Democratic Party. Thus, Democratic Party leaders will most likely face significant barriers in their attempts to mobilize Asian American immigrant voters. Democrats may be more effective by targeting native-born nonvoters as opposed to naturalized U.S. citizen nonvoters. Our results, however, indicate that if Democrats use racial group cues or other messages that highlight the importance of the Asian American group identity, they will be able to mobilize nonvoters with a strong sense of racial group consciousness.

Alternatively, Asian Americans with higher educational levels, regardless if that education was obtained in the United States or in another country, are more likely to identify as Republican. Thus, Republican leaders may be most effective at mobilizing Asian American new electorates by focusing on subpopulations with higher than average levels of education or perhaps in social environments that contain large numbers of Asian Americans with higher degrees.

The rich history of immigrant adaptation in American political history indicates that few immigrants come to the United States as partisans. Instead, they learn not just about politics, but also about the parties as part of their political socialization (Dahl 1961; Wong 2006). In the contemporary era, parties have reduced their own roles in political recruitment and socialization. The Asian American community shows that this partisan neglect has consequences for the incorporation of new

electorates into American electoral politics and, that there is, potentially, an opportunity for the party that reestablishes a more traditional mobilizing role by reaching out to new immigrants. On the one hand, each party might run some risk in bringing Asian American nonvoters and non-U.S. citizens into the electorate since nonvoters profess higher rates of nonpartisanship and so may not be loyal to that party once incorporated into the electorate. On the other, this apparent independence among Asian American nonvoters should also offer a sense of opportunity for each of the major parties. As we have seen in recent elections, each party already has a core of adherents among Asian American voters. Thus, they can build their party base by both mobilizing this existing core and engaging in targeted outreach to certain sectors of the nonvoting population that may be sympathetic to their agenda.

Conclusions: Asian Americans and the 2008 Presidential Election

These findings offer new insights about both immigrant and Asian American political incorporation and the potential turnout rates in the 2008 presidential election. Overall, we highlight an important yet overlooked method of analyzing immigrant political incorporation by focusing on the institutional barriers related to naturalization and voting. In the traditional political participation literature, the focus has been largely on the determinants of voting. This literature assumes Americans are native born and that voting eligibility is easily established with the transition to adulthood. But for largely immigrant populations, such as Asian Americans, naturalization and registration are necessary prerequisites to voting. Our analysis shows that by disaggregating immigrant populations by citizenship and electoral eligibility, we can not only provide more fruitful information about differences within immigrant populations, but also consider the trajectory of immigrant politics as these populations move from noncitizen to voter.

Our analysis forces us to also consider the political potential of Asian Americans as a collective electorate especially given the context of the 2008 presidential election. Many Asian American advocates prefer to frame Asian Americans as a unified and collective bloc vote. Our analysis points to the significant variation across national origin, which challenges the assumption that Asian Americans can be considered one unified panethnic group. Some scholars may choose to highlight the differences we found among national origin groups as evidence that Asian Americans will not mobilize as a collective group and so will have no definitive impact on electoral outcomes. But our interpretation is less definitive. Given that each national origin group experiences its own unique set of challenges and opportunities in the United States, we should expect some differences between Asian ancestry national origin groups. To over- or underemphasize national origin differences neglects the fact that many predictors of electoral behavior appear both across groups and across models of electoral nonparticipation. We demonstrate that there is both potential in the formation of a panethnic group but also that there are clear challenges to this potential.

We realize that our findings do not offer solid evidence to those who propose that Asian Americans should normatively become a collective bloc vote, nor to those

who insist that we know the partisan direction of the Asian American vote. As we demonstrate in this paper, the Asian American vote is significant because it represents a latent voting population, not because it is a voting bloc with a clearly defined set of political interests. Speculations about Asian American partisanship and bloc voting are too far-reaching and overlook the primary institutional challenges that deter Asian American political participation in the first place. It is important to remember that there are more Asian American nonvoters than there are voters. Thus, before we can even consider an Asian American voting bloc, we must first understand how to transform Asian Americans from reticent members of the polity into voters. Thus, the Asian American vote is critical because it represents a community ripe for mobilization.

Our analysis demonstrates that political elites can assist in this process by helping to ease the path toward citizenship and voter registration. But even given the attention afforded to Asian American voters in the 2008 presidential election, it is difficult to determine if mainstream political parties have chosen to take on this challenge. Consistent with the research by Janelle Wong, mainstream political parties fail to take advantage of the immigrant vote as what has historically occurred in the past. In the 2008 primaries, candidates have made efforts to obtain endorsements from Asian American elected officials and community leaders, but the effect of endorsements most likely has the greatest impact on those who are already registered to vote. Thus, the largest segment of the Asian American population, noncitizens and nonregistered voters, may have been overlooked. Very little has been advertised regarding targeted immigrant naturalization or registration campaigns. Thus, potential of the Asian American vote may remain latent until political elites recognize the apparent barriers to immigrant voting.

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Endnotes

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² These estimates are derived from the 2000 and 2004 merged files of the CPS November Supplement. These numbers represent a weighted average for the two years.

³ However, the CPS has one major disadvantage: we can only identify national origin through either nativity or the nativity of the parents. Therefore, our analysis only presents accurate information about the first and second generations. But, given that most Asian families immigrated to the United States after 1965, most Asian Americans fall within the first or second generation.

⁴ For a more complete methodological discussion of PNAAPS, see Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004.

⁵ Because a higher share of respondents do not report their income, we use dummy variables that allow us to control for respondents who refuse to answer the question on household income. Although we do not believe that the “refused” income category has substantive meaning, by including it we ensure that these respondents—and their other characteristics—remain in the analysis.

⁶ When interpreting the models, we compare the behaviors of each national origin group to the Chinese, who are used as the baseline category.

⁷ We also account for the fact that we are using a merged data set by including a control for the 2004 election. We do this to ensure that our findings are not driven disproportionately by the data from one election cycle or the other.

⁸ In addition to the logit models, we also provide predicted probabilities for each independent variable to identify the magnitude of the impact on each of the three political incorporation steps. For the predicted probabilities, we use the minimum to maximum change, which identifies the predicted probability when you move an independent variable from its minimum value to its maximum value while holding all of the other variables at the mean.

⁹ This number includes those who checked either “Asian” on the racial category or one of the Asian ancestries. Our estimate presents the maximum estimate of Asians in the United States and is a larger number than that which is normally reported by census estimates. Census estimates only account those who mark Asian under the racial question while our measure better accounts for Asians who may be biracial.

¹⁰ We suspect, however, that the native born estimate for Japanese Americans is an undercount. If the CPS were to include ancestry data for the third generation and beyond, the proportion of native-born voters would be much higher.

¹¹ We are cautious of this estimate, given the concern that respondents tend to misreport voting activity. This number is most likely lower than the estimates provided here.

¹² Unfortunately, given data limitations, we are able to disaggregate these electorate groups by national origin for this analysis.

¹³ Ethnic enclave is a self-reported variable controlling for those who report living in a neighborhood that is primarily Asian.

Do College-Educated, Native-Born Asian Americans Face a Glass Ceiling in Obtaining Managerial Authority

By Isao Takei and Arthur Sakamoto

Abstract

Using data from the 2003 National Survey of College Graduates, this study investigates the managerial authority of native-born, college-educated racial/ethnic minorities. Managerial authority is measured in terms of the total number of employees supervised directly or indirectly through subordinates in the workplace. The data are limited to the college-educated portion of the labor force but provide important information on socioeconomic origins, college type, and major field of study. Controlling for these and other variables relating to labor market credentials, the results indicate that Asian American men supervise about 14 percent fewer employees than comparable non-Hispanic White men. Relative to the latter group, the effects for Hispanic White men and Hispanic non-White men are not statistically significant. The effects for Asian American women, Hispanic White women, and Hispanic non-White women are also not statistically significant relative to non-Hispanic White women. Conversely, African American men and women are slightly advantaged in that they are likely to supervise more employees than do comparable non-Hispanic White men and women. Thus, in the native-born, college-educated portion of the labor force, Asian American men are distinctive as the only major minority group that is characterized by a racial/ethnic disadvantage in

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obtaining managerial authority. The implications of these findings for policy and research on racial/ethnic inequality are briefly discussed.

Introduction

We investigate the managerial authority of college-educated, native-born racial/ethnic minorities including African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Whites, and Hispanic non-Whites. Previous research has analyzed the earnings and occupations of racial/ethnic minorities. Less frequently studied, however, is the attainment of jobs in terms of managerial authority. This dimension is somewhat separate from the monetary remuneration that jobs provide. The focus of research on the glass ceiling is not on the socioeconomic returns to human capital characteristics in the labor market as a whole, but on the chances for employment in administrative positions with managerial authority.

The term *glass ceiling* is derived from prior studies that argue that racial/ethnic minorities are distinctly disadvantaged in being promoted to positions with notable managerial authority due to advantages for Whites in the corporate hierarchy (Woo 2000). In regard to Asian Americans, one of the earliest references is Hirschman and Wong (1981, 496), who commented that Asian Americans “are permitted to occupy certain ‘occupational niches’ which allow for somewhat higher socioeconomic status than other minority groups, but there remains a ceiling on advancement into positions of authority or institutional power.” Thus, racial/ethnic minorities may sometimes be disadvantaged not only in terms of obtaining pecuniary rewards from the labor market but also in terms of being promoted into managerial positions with significant managerial authority.

Using data from the 2003 National Survey of College Graduates, this study seeks to improve our understanding of the glass ceiling hypothesis in several ways. First, we use recent data that includes a measure of the total number of people supervised directly or supervised indirectly through subordinates in the workplace. This is an important indicator of managerial authority that has not been investigated in prior research. For example, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1988), Yamane (2002), and Sakamoto, Woo, and Yap (2006) investigated managerial attainment as a general occupational category but this approach includes jobs that vary widely in terms of actual supervisory authority (e.g., corporate executives, lower-level managers, and many owners of small family-run businesses). Due to this imprecision of using employment in a managerial occupation as the measure of supervisory authority, the disadvantages of racial/ethnic minorities may be underestimated to the extent that they are more likely to be in the lower ranks of the managerial hierarchy (due to a glass ceiling in their promotions).

Second, our data include information on socioeconomic origins, college type, and major field of study of the highest degree. People who are successful in joining the upper levels of management may be more likely to have business related fields of study, higher socioeconomic origins, and more prestigious college degrees. Racial/ethnic differentials in terms of supervisory authority may at least partly derive from these class-related characteristics rather than from racial/ethnic

discrimination per se. For example, Asian Americans are well known to be highly overrepresented in scientific and engineering fields (Xie and Goyette 2003), which are not business oriented or considered to be critical management credentials. Our data provide a stronger set of relevant control variables and therefore enable a thorough analysis of net racial/ethnic effects that may be more confidently interpreted as being related to discriminatory practices.

Prior research has shown that the major field of study does affect labor market outcomes (Berger 1988; Goyette and Xie 1999; Xie and Goyette 2003). Moreover, parental educational attainments are known to be predictive of college selectivity (Bennett and Xie 2003; Davies and Guppy 1997; Hearn 1984; Goyette and Xie 1999), which in turn tends to have a higher labor market return (Loury and Garman 2001; Solmon and Wachtel 1975; Wales 1973; Weisbrod and Karpoff 1968). Our analysis acknowledges these factors by controlling for socioeconomic origins, major field of study, and college type which have not been systematically considered in prior research on the glass ceiling due to a lack of adequate data.

Third, our study uses carefully specified regression models that seek to avoid “over-controlling” (Sakamoto and Furuichi 1997). The market for upper-level managerial positions is typically national in scope. Top executives are not normally hired only from the local labor market. Although studies of earnings often control for regional and metropolitan location in order to take into account cost of living differentials, these geographic control variables are questionable when the dependent variable refers to managerial authority rather than income. Persons who wish to become managers need to be willing to move to where the managerial jobs are located rather than vice versa. In order to remain competitive, companies are obliged to locate their businesses in order to minimize their costs and cannot simply conform to the residential preferences of Asian Americans and other minorities.

In addition, statistical controls for industrial affiliation may confuse the distinction between cause and effect. People who aspire to positions of high managerial authority do not usually first decide upon a particular industry to work in and then take whatever occupation or job is available in that industry. Indeed, industrial affiliation may be largely irrelevant to many managers as they may switch from one industry to another in the course of their careers so as to increase their chances for upward mobility into the higher levels of the managerial hierarchy. In short, controls for industry are of dubious substantive justification in statistical models that predict supervisory power because people are not usually limited to employment in a single industry, managerial activities and job duties are often similar across industries, and industries are not generally the typical focus of career aspirations.

Previous Literature on the Glass Ceiling

Prior studies have discussed the glass ceiling hypothesis for Asian Americans. Min (1995, 42) states that Asian Americans “are severely underrepresented in high-ranking executive and administrative positions.” Ong and Hee (1993, 147) argue that this result arises because Asian Americans “are often stereotyped as not

aggressive, inarticulate in the English language, and too technical to become managers.” Fong (1998, 116) concludes that the underrepresentation of Asian Americans demonstrates that “the ‘old-boys’ network is still firmly in place.” Takaki’s (1998, 477) discussion similarly concludes that “excluded from the ‘old-boy’ network, Asian Americans are also told they are inarticulate and have an accent.” Although these claims are strongly stated, these studies on Asian Americans do not actually provide detailed analyses of much actual data.

In her study of a governmental research organization, Woo argued that discrimination against Asian Americans is entrenched due to a corporate culture which stereotypes them, imposes a “dual ladder,” and systematically denies them mentoring opportunities or management training. There is furthermore a lack of recruitment programs, limited access to informal social networks, and biased evaluation systems. Woo (2000, 156) contends that “the culture of corporate America has been identified as ‘the most serious type of impediment by far to upward mobility and advancement.’”

A more detailed statistical analysis was conducted by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1988). Using the 1980 U.S. Census data (which is nationally representative), their results for native-born men indicate that the odds of being employed in a managerial occupation is 28 percent lower for Chinese Americans, 43 percent lower for Filipino Americans, and 30 percent lower for Japanese Americans (relative to native-born, non-Hispanic White men). These effects are net of education, years of labor force experience, region of residence, marital and disability statuses, self-reported English-language proficiency, and industry of employment. The limitation of this study, however, is that it overcontrols by including industry, region, and metropolitan residence as independent variables in the statistical model.

Another multivariate statistical analysis by Yamane used the 1990 U.S. Census data to investigate the socioeconomic attainments of native-born Filipino Americans including their occupational employment as managers relative to Whites. Yamane (2002, 139) interprets his results as indicating that, net of a variety of control variables, “being a Filipino man decreases the probability of being a manager by 2.6 percent [in terms of absolute percentage points], decreasing the overall probability of being a manager by about 23 percent [in terms of the relative percentage differential] relative to White men.” Yamane’s findings thus indicate that the glass ceiling against native-born Filipino American men was still significant in 1990. As was the case with U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1988), however, the limitation of Yamane is that his analysis overcontrols by including industry, region, and metropolitan residence as independent variables in the statistical model.

Using the 2000 U.S. Census data as well as the recent years of the Current Population Survey, Sakamoto, Woo, and Yap (2006) studied the occupational employment of Asian Americans as managers broken down into those in the private sector, those in the public (i.e., government) sector, and those who are self-employed. The results indicated that after controlling for measured labor market credentials, native-born Asian American men are more likely to be managers in the public sector and less likely to be managers in the self-employed sector as

compared to White men. The difference between Asian American and White men in terms of managerial employment in the private sector was not statistically significant. However, this latter difference becomes statistically significant and slightly negative (i.e., Asian American men are somewhat disadvantaged) after controlling for region and metropolitan residence. Thus, the results of Sakamoto, Woo, and Yap do not find any significant evidence of a glass ceiling in more recent data except when the statistical model overcontrols by including region and metropolitan residence as independent variables (as do several prior studies as noted above). Nonetheless, as was mentioned earlier, the study by Sakamoto, Woo, and Yap is limited in that it investigates employment as a manager measured as an occupational category that includes jobs that vary widely in terms of actual supervisory power.

The glass ceiling hypothesis has been also considered for some other minority groups as well as for women. Palepu et al. (1995) found some significant disadvantages in the promotion rates to the rank of full professor for African American, Hispanic, and Asian American faculty relative to White faculty in a sample of 24 medical schools. Using data for three large metropolitan areas during the early 1990s, Elliott and Smith (2004, 365) found that relative to White men, African Americans and Latinos face lower odds of achieving higher levels of workplace power (measured in terms of simple indicators of supervisory and hiring authority). These disadvantages were largely explained, however, by the lower credentials (e.g., education) of the minority groups with the exception of African American women, who “seem to experience this form of inequality as a result of direct discrimination.”

Landau (1995) investigated employees in a large corporation to estimate the effects of race and gender on promotion ratings. After taking into account age, education, firm tenure, salary grade, occupational category, and satisfaction with career support, Landau (1995, 397) found that women and minorities (i.e., African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanics) had lower ratings on “promotional potential” (397). Landau concluded that the ratings process in this corporation was biased due to stereotypes against women and minorities.

In sum, several previous studies find that women and minorities sometimes face disadvantages in achieving managerial positions or supervisory authority. The results differ to some extent, however, depending upon the particular demographic group that is being considered, the measures that are used, the different organizational contexts that are sampled, and the set of control variables that are included in the statistical model. Although the precise patterns cannot be fully discerned by these few studies, their results do clearly indicate that the glass ceiling hypothesis merits further detailed investigation.

Methods

Data and Target Population

We use the 2003 National Survey of College Graduates. The sampling frame for this survey is nationally representative of all persons who responded in the 2000

U.S. Census that they had a college degree. In terms of the official racial/ethnic classification system used by the 2000 U.S. Census, our target population includes non-Hispanic African Americans (“African Americans”), non-Hispanic Asian Americans (“Asian Americans”), Hispanic Whites (“Hispanics”), non-White Hispanics (“Hispanic non-Whites”), and non-Hispanic Whites (“Whites”) who are native-born, between the ages of 25 to 64, and working full time during the week of the survey. We limit the analysis to the native-born so that the estimated racial/ethnic differentials cannot be attributed to immigrant characteristics such as limited English language skills, a lack of American educational credentials, and a reduced familiarity with American culture or with the social norms that are critically important for competence as a manager (Zeng and Xie 2004).

Variables

Our outcome variable of interest is the logarithm of the total number of workers supervised directly or indirectly through subordinates. A larger score is indicative of greater managerial authority or a higher place in the managerial hierarchy. Because the distribution of the total number of workers supervised has a high positive skew, the logarithmic transformation yields a more bell-shaped distribution that is better suited for multiple regression analysis (Sakamoto and Furuichi 1997).

The multiple regression functions that we estimate include four dichotomous variables to indicate the racial/ethnic minority groups (i.e., African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics, and Hispanic non-Whites) with Whites serving as the reference category. Hispanic non-Whites are included because in recent years there has been a trend towards some Hispanics identifying as “some other race” (Choi, Sakamoto, and Powers, forthcoming). The control variables refer to years of age, the square of years of age, a dichotomous variable to indicate disability status, three dichotomous variables to indicate the highest level of education completed (i.e., master degree, doctorate degree, and professional degree versus bachelor degree as the reference category), a dichotomous variable to indicate whether married, and four dichotomous variables to indicate parental status (i.e., living with at least one child under age 2; between age 2 and 5; between age 6 and 11; and between age 12 and 18) which have a reference category represented by those residing with no children. Because our focus is on racial/ethnic differentials rather than gender differentials, and because gender interactions in labor market processes are well established (Marini 1989), we estimate our statistical models separately by gender.

The regression functions further control for the major field of study of the highest degree obtained (i.e., mathematics, life sciences, physical sciences, engineering, social sciences, business, business finance, education, humanities, medical sciences, medicine and pharmacy, communications, and legal studies or law) with the reference category being visual or performing arts and majors reported as “other.” The Carnegie classification (see <http://sestat.nsf.gov/docs/carnegie.html>) for the college awarding the highest degree is indicated by dichotomous variables for Research University I, Research University II, Doctorate Granting I, Doctorate Granting II, Comprehensive I, Comprehensive II, Liberal Arts I, Liberal Arts II, Theological Seminars and Bible

Colleges, Medical Schools and Medical Centers, Schools of Engineering and Technology, Schools of Art, Music, and Design, Schools of Law, and classifications reported as "missing." The reference category is two-year institutions and a few other highly specialized institutions.

Finally, a series of dichotomous variables is used to measure the highest level of education completed by the respondent's father and mother. This series includes separate variables to indicate whether the highest level of education completed by the respondent's mother (or father) is unknown. Rather than deleting these cases of missing data, they are retained because they may be correlated with having been raised in a single-parent family, which is known to reduce academic achievement (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994).

Empirical Results

Descriptive Statistics

The sample sizes and the means of the variables are shown separately by gender in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 for men indicates that there are 1,992 African Americans, 808 Asian Americans, 1,697 Hispanics, 187 Hispanic non-Whites, and 28,643 Whites. For women, Table 2 shows that the sample sizes are 2,741 African Americans, 567 Asian Americans, 1,428 Hispanics, 180 Hispanic non-Whites, and 16,732 Whites.

Regarding managerial authority, Table 1 for men shows that African Americans have the highest mean number of employees supervised (27.08), which is even greater than for Whites (21.32), while the corresponding figure is the smallest for Asian Americans (9.58). The mean for Hispanic non-Whites (19.77) is close to that for Whites, but Hispanics have a clearly lower mean number of employees supervised (15.18). Among women as shown in Table 2, the mean number of employees supervised for African Americans (15.29) is almost same as that for Whites (15.81). Asian American and Hispanic non-White women have the smallest mean number of people supervised (8.88 and 8.72, respectively). These descriptive results suggest that the glass ceiling hypothesis may be quite relevant for Asian Americans due to their low levels of managerial authority for both genders.

As for the other variables in Tables 1 and 2, Whites and African Americans for both genders tend to be slightly older than Asian Americans and the two Hispanic groups. Because managers tend to be older and have more workforce experience, age differences across these demographic groups may partly account for their differences in managerial authority. Another important variable is having a major field of study in business or business finance. Among men the differences in this variable are not large. Among women, however, African Americans and Asian Americans are significantly more likely than Whites to have a business degree. In terms of socioeconomic origins, Asian Americans of both genders are much likely to have parents with a college or graduate degree than is the case for Whites or any of the other racial/ethnic groups. On the other hand, African Americans and Hispanic non-Whites have relatively high rates of not knowing their fathers' level of completed schooling.

In Table 1, the means for the Carnegie classification variables (pertaining to the highest degree obtained) indicate that the majority of Asian American men (55 percent) are graduates of a Research University I school. This rate is far higher than for any of the other male groups. Among women, Table 2 shows that Asian American women are similarly advantaged over the other racial/ethnic groups in terms of graduating from a Research University I school. For both genders, Asian Americans have the lowest levels of graduation from second-tier comprehensive and liberal arts colleges while Blacks have the highest levels.

In sum, Asian Americans have the lowest mean level of managerial authority among men while it is nearly the lowest for Asian Americans among women. When compared to the other racial/ethnic minorities, Asian Americans tend to be younger but are advantaged in having more highly educated parents and in having lower attendance at smaller, second-tier colleges.

Results for Multiple Regression Models

Table 3 shows the estimates of the regression models for which the dependent variable is the log of the total number of employees supervised. Due to the log transformation, the estimated coefficient for an independent variable refers to the percentage change in the total number of people supervised resulting from a unit change in that independent variable net of the other variables in the model (Sakamoto and Furuichi 1997). For example, in the regression model for men in Table 3, the coefficient of -0.135 for Asian Americans indicates that that this group of men supervises about 14 percent fewer employees than do White men after controlling for the other independent variables in the regression. In other words, this finding from our multiple regression model implies that when comparing Asian American men with White men who are the same in terms of age, educational level, marital status, parental status, major field of study, Carnegie classification type, and the education of their parents, Asian American men supervise about 14 percent fewer employees than do White men. This result shows that the lower mean number of employees supervised by Asian American men as compared to White men as shown in Table 1 cannot be explained by these other aforementioned characteristics. Furthermore, the three asterisks by the coefficient for Asian American men in Table 3 designate that this finding cannot be explained by random sampling error (or that, in other words, this coefficient is very highly statistically significant). In sum, Asian American men have a lower level of managerial authority as compared to White men even after taking into account the relevant control variables.

By contrast, African American men have a statistically significant coefficient of 0.108 in Table 3 indicating that that this group is surprisingly *advantaged* in terms of managerial authority. That is, relative to White men who are the same in terms of age, educational level, marital status, parental status, major field of study, Carnegie classification type, and the education of their parents, African American men actually supervise about 11 percent *more* employees than do the White men. Although the estimated coefficients for the two groups of Hispanic men are also positive in Table 3, in these cases the lack of asterisks indicates that these results

are not statistically significant. They may therefore be ignored as they are not statistically robust.

Other results for men as shown in Table 3 reveal that having a business degree does increase one's managerial authority. Degrees that reduce it, however, include mathematics, life sciences, physical sciences, engineering, social sciences, humanities, and communications. Perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, medical related majors tend to increase managerial authority. Graduating from a Research University I-level institution does not have a statistically significant net effect on managerial authority. It appears to be reduced, however, for graduates from second-tier doctoral granting and liberal arts institutions. Having a father who has a college degree (as his highest level of education) has a net positive effect on managerial authority.

The results for women are also shown in Table 3. In this regression model, the coefficients for Asian Americans, Hispanic non-Whites, and Hispanics are each not statistically significant. These findings show that Asian American women, Hispanic non-White women, and Hispanic women do not clearly differ from White women in terms of managerial authority when they are the same in terms of age, educational level, marital status, parental status, major field of study, Carnegie classification type, and the education of their parents. In other words, Asian American women, Hispanic non-White women, and Hispanic women do not appear to be disadvantaged relative to White women after taking into account the control variables.

As was the case for men, the results for women in Table 3 indicate that African Americans are advantaged in terms of managerial authority. More specifically, the coefficient of 0.081 in Table 3 for African American women implies that this group supervises about 8 percent more employees than do White women who have the same values on the control variables. This finding has a high level of statistical significance.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study has investigated the glass ceiling hypothesis among college-educated racial/ethnic minorities using carefully specified statistical models and recent, nationally representative data. Focusing on the total number of employees supervised, we estimated net racial/ethnic differentials in managerial authority after taking into account age, educational level, marital status, parental status, major field of study, Carnegie classification type, and socioeconomic origins in terms of the education of the respondent's parents. The findings indicate that Asian American men are disadvantaged in that their level of managerial authority is about 14 percent less than White men who are similar in terms of the aforementioned control variables. Other results show that Hispanic non-White men, and Hispanic men are not significantly disadvantaged relative to White men in regard to obtaining managerial authority. Surprisingly, however, African American men stand out as being advantaged because they supervise about 11 percent more employees than do comparable White men.

Among women as well, African Americans are advantaged in that they supervise about 8 percent more employees than do White women who are the same in terms

of the control variables. The findings for Asian American women, Hispanic non-White women, and Hispanic women do not indicate any clear differences relative to White women in terms of obtaining managerial authority after taking the control variables into account. That is, for these latter groups of women, their lower mean levels of managerial authority as shown in Table 2 can be statistically explained by their other characteristics (e.g., being younger, being more likely to have a degree in life sciences, etc., compared to White women).

As discussed earlier, we believe that these results are highly informative relative to prior studies that have mostly considered the glass ceiling hypothesis in terms of simply being a manager without taking into account the great heterogeneity of this occupational category. Our measure of the total number of employees supervised (either directly or indirectly) is, by comparison, a far more accurate indicator of managerial authority. Hence, our analysis provides more plausible conclusions about this important outcome.

At the same time, however, we caution that though better, our measure is still not perfect or multidimensional. Managerial authority may include different aspects such as decision-making power in regard to personnel policies, capital investment, organizational structuring, market strategy, or financial planning. These different dimensions of managerial authority may not be all equally indicated by the total number of employees supervised. While our results are certainly important, further research is needed should policy makers wish to make more refined assessments about particular types of managerial power. Our findings must be viewed in the context of this caveat that managerial authority in terms of total employees supervised is still only one very basic measure.

Even so, our findings of positive advantages for African American men and women are generally inconsistent with prior studies that typically find that this racial group is disadvantaged in the labor market. We speculate that our results may differ for a variety of reasons none of which are mutually exclusive. First, the few studies discussed above on the managerial outcomes for African Americans consider very selective organizations that may not be typical of the market as a whole. For example, senior faculty in medical schools may not be very representative of physicians in general who may be more inclined to practice medicine in society at large rather than be confined to an academic career in a university context. Furthermore, the persistence of racial/ethnic insensitivities in a single corporation does not demonstrate that other corporations have similar problems, and perhaps only minorities who lack competitive credentials to pursue other opportunities would resign themselves to such a corporation. In short, generalizing the population of African Americans in the labor force on the basis of highly specific organizational contexts may be compromised by sample selection bias. Our findings are unlikely to face this problem because our data are representative of the entire labor force.

A second possible source of our distinctive results for African Americans may derive from our better list of control variables. The labor force disadvantages for African Americans may increasingly stem from class characteristics rather than from racial/ethnic discrimination per se (Wilson 1980). Most prior studies of labor force outcomes for African Americans have not controlled for major field of study,

Carnegie classification type, and parental education because the U.S. Census Bureau does not often collect information on these variables. When these sorts of data are available to be applied to the analysis of African American labor market outcomes, the estimated net racial disadvantage is greatly reduced (Farkas and Vicknair 1996; O'Neill 1990).

A third possibility is simply temporal change. Our results are based on data for 2003 which are more recent than the data used in prior studies discussed above that mainly refer to the 1980s and early 1990s. Our findings may thus be indicative of a wider social acceptance of African Americans in positions of authority in the 21st century. In conjunction with the possibility of this trend toward greater opportunities for college-educated African Americans, decades of affirmative action programs may have also helped to increase aspirations among recent cohorts of African Americans to compete for lucrative opportunities in the labor market such as positions in executive management.

Fourth, however, we note that our findings for African Americans should not be overemphasized because this racial group lags behind considerably in terms of college graduation. Our results do not pertain to African Americans without a college degree, who constitute by far the largest component of this racial group. Because our data pertain to only the college-educated portion of the labor market, policy makers should bear in mind that our results do not warrant generalizations of African Americans as a whole.

Regarding Asian American men, they are the only group in our analysis for which the statistical evidence clearly indicates a racial/ethnic disadvantage in obtaining managerial authority. Due to the methodological complexities that are necessarily involved in this sort of statistical analysis, future research is needed to replicate this conclusion in order to confirm its robustness. Assuming that it is accurate and that it is not simply the result of lower preferences among Asian American men for management positions, we suggest that policy makers need to somehow promote a greater awareness of Asian American men as potential management leaders. Because Asian American men are a small demographic group that is generally ineligible for affirmative action programs or considerations, Asian American men may be easily overlooked in promotion decisions that are often made in the context of organizational concerns about appearing to be open to women and "disadvantaged minorities." If the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission would require the collection of more information on the promotion of Asian American men, then the awareness of the management potential of this demographic group might be further enhanced. As is evident in Table 1, the proportion of college-educated, Asian American men with a business degree is not substantially lower than that for the college-educated African American and White male populations.

In conclusion, we caution that although a 14 percent differential is significant and substantial, it is not huge. If the disadvantage were 50 percent, 100 percent or 200 percent, then perhaps more drastic policy measures might be warranted. Although Asian American men appear to lag behind somewhat in terms of our measure of managerial authority, demographic trends point towards a continued high proportion of college graduation among native-born Asian Americans as well as an

increasingly higher proportion of native-born Asian Americans in the U.S. population as a whole (the latter trend reflecting the aging of the offspring of the post-1965 immigrant stream from Asia). These demographic trends, when combined with the increasing significance of educational attainment in the labor market (Kim and Sakamoto 2008), suggest that Asian American men will become increasingly visible as successful participants in the American economy of the 21st century. We predict that this increasing visibility will help to promote a greater acceptance of Asian American men in the upper levels of management in the near future.

*Tables mentioned within are available online at
www.aaprjournal.org*

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Exploring the Divide Between APA History and Storytelling: A Film Review of *Journey from the Fall*

By Jimmy Tran

The Statue of Liberty stands proudly on Liberty Island, a few hundred yards from Manhattan's Southern shore. The pedestal upon which the statue rests is inscribed with several lines from Emma Lazarus's 1883 poem *The New Colossus*:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

I have always found this passage strikingly beautiful. Although less than fifty words in length, this verse embodies the intricate histories that define and embody the American spirit. While it is true that we all share a common American identity,

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it is also true that our family histories possess unique stories of courage, determination, and will. Unlocking these family histories can often be painful, for embedded within these histories are narratives of religious, ethnic, or political persecution.

African American familial histories, for example, demonstrate hope and courage, but also reveal hundreds of years of captive slavery. All too often, we shelter and hide these stories from public view, under the impression that they would hinder, rather than advance progress.

A look at the Asian American community also reveals a huge disparity between history and storytelling. Chinese Americans can be traced as far back as the mid-19th century Gold Rush, which brought thousands of Chinese immigrants to the western United States. According to the Asian-Nation news blog, Chinese American storytelling, however, contains little evidence of systematic exclusions such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which prohibited Chinese immigration and naturalization for ten years and was subsequently extended through the Geary Act of 1892.

The Japanese American experience is peculiarly familiar. Japanese Americans first came to the United States in the late 1900s, but their stories seldom mention painful episodes such as during WWII when Japanese Americans were uprooted from their homes and sent to internment camps throughout the United States.

Despite the significance of the hardships endured by some of the first Asian American ethnic groups, the Asian Pacific American (APA) community is often reluctant to discuss periods of pain or tribulation.

While the histories of Chinese and Japanese immigrants in the United States extend beyond 100 years, other Asian immigrant and refugee groups have much shorter histories in America. Specifically, individuals of Vietnamese, Hmong, and Cambodian ancestry have histories in the United States that span only several decades. Furthermore, few public documentaries or films portray the journeys of these ethnic groups and how they arrived in the United States. Of the material available, an overwhelming majority is from a Western or U.S.-centric point of view.

In *Journey from the Fall*, writer, director, and producer Ham Tran reveals the Vietnamese American experience from the perspective of a particular family in South Vietnam. The date is 30 April 1975, and the last Americans have left Vietnam, marking the “Fall of Saigon.”

Tran pieces together a story from personal narratives gathered through first-hand interviews with survivors that have resettled in the United States. It is a story of courage and hope in the midst of intense suffering.

“Our story begins where the history books end,” remarks Tran. Indeed, this is a visceral story that captures the hardships endured by the nearly two million refugees from South Vietnam after 1975, only a fraction of whom made it safely to U.S. shores. This is a story that is not found within the confines of our history books, a story that even Vietnamese Americans are reluctant to pass down to younger generations.

During their escape from Vietnam, the family undergoes tribulations that are reminiscent of the Vietnamese refugee experience—the father is captured and sent

to a “reeducation camp,” while rest of the family narrowly escapes Saigon on a rickety boat (thus the term “boat people,” often used by the Western world) only to be attacked by Thai pirates in the Gulf of Siam.

The family eventually arrives in America and immediately meets harsh prejudice and criticism. This attitude is reflective of the sentiment of many Americans at the time, who were understandably exhausted from a long, resource-heavy war and, ironically, confused that the refugees were Communist Viet Cong.

The young grandson, Lai Nguyen, is played by Thai Nguyen, who in real life had just come to the United States six months prior. The film portrays Lai’s difficulty in school as he struggles academically and faces discrimination from other students. The mother works long hours and loses connection to the family; a rift soon develops between her and Lai. The grandmother is played by Kieu Chinh, a veteran actress who has appeared in many films, including *The Joy Luck Club*. In the film, Chinh gathers aluminum cans from dumpsters to occupy her time while her daughter-in-law and grandson are busy with work and school.

This story is not entirely unique; in fact, it is story that is all too familiar for refugee populations resettling in America. They come with emotional connection and deep tribulations that few Americans can even imagine. These refugees are the survivors of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, genocides in Sudan, and ethnic persecution in the Balkans. They come without English skills and education, and immediately face new realities in the United States.

Despite the injustices endured by refugee populations and the psychological hardship they’ve endured, public policy seldom considers these stories and the paths our refugees must blaze to come to America. Yet these very stories and experiences should form and shape the way we approach and integrate refugee populations into the main fabric of American society.

Without proper support and social networks, segments of these refugee groups become alienated and turn to gangs as a means to connect. This is a major issue in our cities and a problem that public policy efforts to date have been unable to address.

Storytelling serves as a wonderful way to connect generations and serves this capacity irregardless of space or time. In the same way that *Journey from the Fall* uses storytelling to document the Vietnamese American refugee experience, the grandmother in the family uses a legend to embed a memory of Vietnam to her grandson. We are left pondering our own familial histories and how these histories have shaped our personal circumstance.

Through storytelling, the experiences and personal stories of the past are carried forward into new generations, who seek to make sense of their past as they create their future.

A Political Powerhouse in Search of a Home

Wendy K. Tam Cho

James G. Gimpel

The last several elections have taught us a valuable lesson: a few voters, in battleground areas, have the potential to determine or alter the results of an election. From a historical standpoint, the 2000 presidential election between George W. Bush and Al Gore will be notable for illuminating this fundamental truth about American politics. An artifact of our system of government is that a strategy that cultivates all voters equally is plainly not as effective as one that is intently focused on key voting blocs. The natural next question then is, what are these key voting blocs? Would this description, for instance, aptly describe the Asian

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American

population? On its face, Asian Americans appear to compose or have the potential to compose a voting bloc given their large and growing population. Yet, even after more than 40 years of escalating immigration, with current numbers now surging to over 13.5 million, Asian Americans generally remain poorly understood and largely neglected by mainstream politicians.¹

There are more than a handful of reasons why politicians might regard Asian Americans as an unimportant political faction. First, the group's political cohesiveness is at issue. The Asian American community encompasses a diverse mix of individual ancestry groups whose differences are significant. As a category, Asian Americans speak over a hundred different languages, align with many different cultures, and have a sense of belonging to different ethnic groups who have exhibited unquestionable and enduring historical animosity toward one another.² Second, even if the group were cohesive, their political importance as a bloc vote is lessened because they are not as geographically segregated as Blacks or Latinos. Accordingly, they are more difficult to target on a geographic basis, and their influence is not concentrated in many districts or locales across the United States. Finally, even if they were cohesive and geographically compact, the proportion of the group that is foreign born and not naturalized is high. Since many of them are unable to vote, their sheer numbers sound more impressive than the reality in most election districts. These reasons may explain why political outreach efforts have been less than spirited, with a few exceptions sprinkled about in California and Hawaii, where the Asian Americans have historically rooted populations along with a scattering of local majorities.

Whether these outreach efforts should be expanded is debatable. Would a more vigorous and passionate outreach effort toward Asian Americans yield valuable political returns? We argue that it would, given the right circumstances and sensitivity, and that the lack of effort thus far is a missed opportunity. While the differences that have defined Asian Americans remain evident, especially among the foreign born, the base of Asians born in America continues to grow, lending signs of an increasingly assimilated population with an increasingly common identity and sense of linked fate. By 2005, an estimated 36 percent of all Asian Americans were born in the United States, and their naturalization rate (52 percent) remains much higher than the corresponding rate for the foreign-born population as a whole (38 percent). While not all Asian Americans are eligible to vote, even among the foreign born, Asians naturalize at much faster rates than Latino immigrants. This has been a longstanding trend and an essential precursor to political incorporation. One might also consider the rise in newly naturalized citizens as an instance of enormous political potential for either party. While the Democratic Party often appears to take support from Blacks and Latinos for granted, few would describe Asian Americans as similarly beholden to one party or the other. That is, a higher percentage of their vote can still be won by either party.

Given their greater geographic dispersion, highly targeted communications efforts will not make sense in every contested election, and we do not intend to argue that the Asian American electorate is the hidden key to victory in all elections. If they are key in some elections, however, campaigns must give some

thought to strategies that incorporate Asian Americans more generally to avoid the appearance of courting the population only when convenient. To be sure, there are pockets of concentration, and official census figures on Asian American settlement suggest that sincere efforts may have important consequences in Arizona, Nevada, Alaska, Utah, and Washington in the West; Missouri and Illinois in the Midwest; New Jersey, Maryland, New York, and Massachusetts in the Northeast; and Texas and Virginia in the South. If the presidential contest is close, Asian American outreach will realize its greatest potential in battleground states such as Oregon, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Florida, and possibly Virginia, if it proves to be the battleground that some are predicting. In each of these states, the potential votes are there and not predisposed to a particular party.

Another important insight is that while parties understandably aim to win every election, they are exercising a shortsighted strategy if their focus is solely on the immediate payoffs of outreach. Even if Asian Americans are not a consequential voting bloc in a current election, campaigns should not discount the future of this rapidly growing population. Culling the favor of the Asian American group now may have enormous impact upon their longstanding allegiances even while the short-term payoffs are smaller than a campaign might like. In short, a successful strategy must encompass vision. From this particular vantage point, the disregard for the nation's Asian American subgroups is antiquated and ill advised.

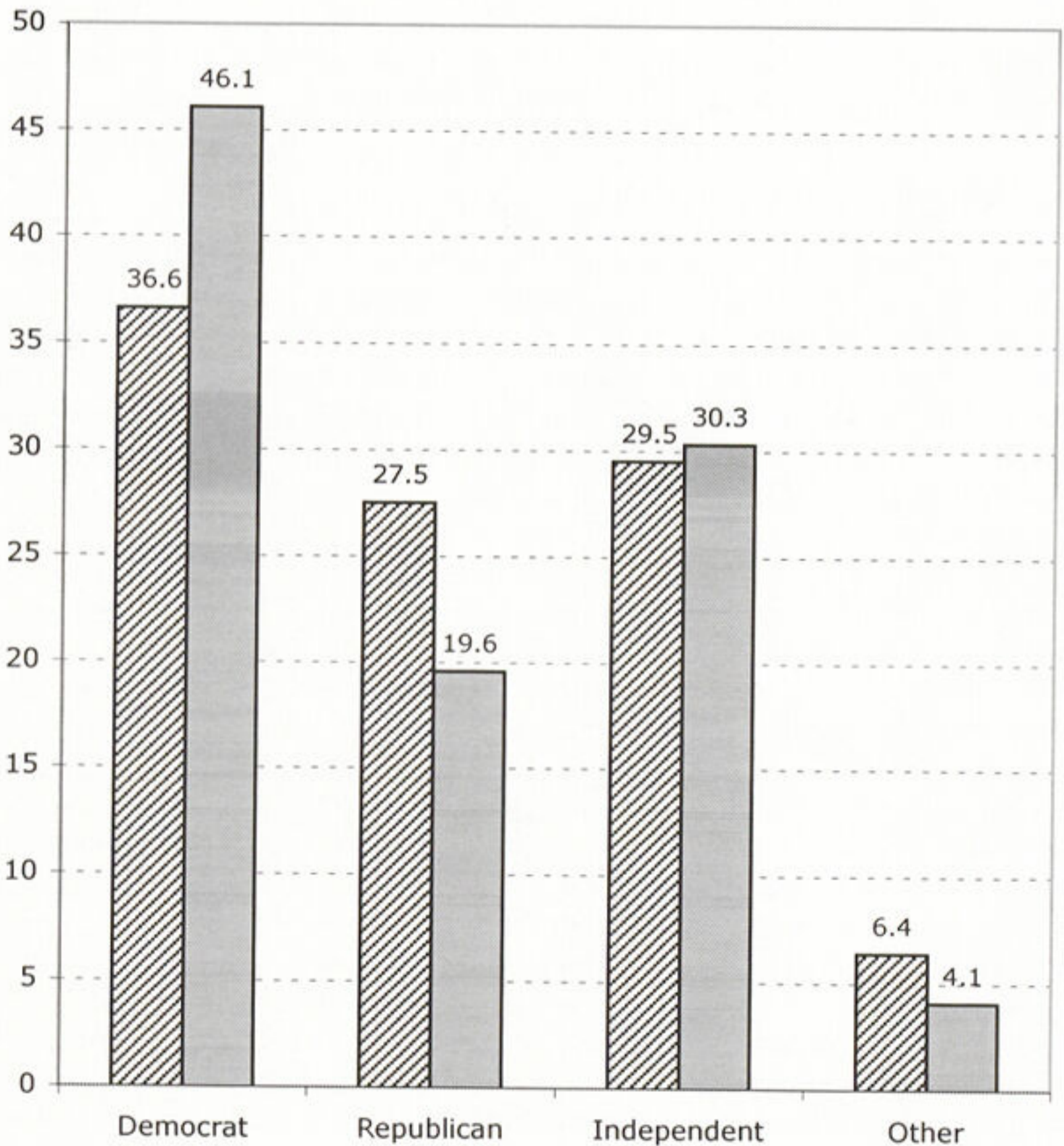
Looking Beyond California

One important theme in our writing on Asian Americans is how dominant the California experience has been in our understanding of Asian American political life (Cho, Gimpel, and Dyck 2007). Although the prevailing image of Asian Americans continues to be California-centric, based on research conducted on the large concentration and extensive history of Asian Americans in the Golden State, about half of the nation's Asian Americans live outside of California and Hawaii, and their histories, life circumstances, and patterns of political incorporation bear unique geographic imprints.

Like any other population that has come to reside in a particular place, that location's history and political traditions are integral to political socialization. That is, we should not be surprised to discover that the many Asian Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area have been steered by the area's history and political environment toward the politics of the Democratic Party. The preponderance of Asian American members of Congress has emerged from California, and the majority of them have been Democrats. The Bay Area is especially lopsided in this regard. Similarly, New York City polls routinely reveal a Democratic bias in its Asian American population, as they do for nearly any significant population in the Big Apple. Asian Americans are no different than other voters whose views are shaped by efforts to work within dominant local political institutions and parties. At the same time, there is nothing inherent in Asian American life or history that fuses them to the Democratic Party. What might appear to be a bias toward the Democrats must be viewed with an understanding of the highly selective lens of convenience sampling that may be employed. In addition, the seeming bias does

not speak to how the various Asian American diaspora would emerge politically if they have streamed away from traditional ports-of-entry and toward Tampa, FL; Houston, TX; Washington, DC; and St. Louis, MO. The Asian American group defies simple political categorization in this way just as it defies simple categorization in so many other ways.

Asian American voters in the touted 2008 battleground states are considerably less attached to the Democratic Party than Asian Americans in the traditional states of Asian concentration—New York, Hawaii, and California. Across 12 potential battleground states (New Hampshire, Oregon, Wisconsin, Florida, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington, New Mexico, Nevada, Colorado, and Virginia), Asian American voters were divided 37 percent Democratic to 28 percent Republican in adherence to the political parties in 2004, compared with a much wider 46 to 20 percent gap in California, Hawaii, and New York (see Figure 1). Notably, about one-third of Asian American voters insisted they were independents or “something else” in the 2004 national exit polls, regardless of where they lived.



Similarly, in our prospective battleground states, far more Asian Americans are willing to label themselves as conservatives, than are Asian Americans who reside in California, Hawaii, and New York. Though typical surveys indicate that the overall Asian American group leans Democratic—reflecting the sizable influence of the California component of the survey—they also show that large percentages do not see themselves as party adherents and are not highly ideological (Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004, 16). For those serious about political recruitment, these patterns are worth careful study at a more local scale, within states.

Moreover, we should recognize that the Democratic bias has strong roots in the Japanese American community. While Japanese Americans are generally more Democratic than the other Asian ethnics, this is, in fact, one of many ways in which the Japanese community is unique politically among Asian Americans. Because of the history of exclusion primarily toward other Asian groups and the “privileges” of family reunification the Japanese gained through the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907, the Japanese have the longest-standing roots in America. They also register to vote at higher rates. Among those registered, they turn out to vote at higher rates (Tam 1995). As well, a disproportionate share of Asian American elected officials has been Japanese (Cho 2002).

Importantly, while the Japanese were the largest Asian American ethnic group from 1910 to 1970, this stature has unambiguously declined since 1965. Contrast the Japanese community with the Vietnamese community. The Vietnamese community was almost nonexistent prior to 1975. Since the fall of Saigon, however, the Vietnamese presence in America has exploded and has overtaken the Japanese population in sheer numbers. The Vietnamese community also leans as heavily Republican as the Japanese lean Democrat. In fact, every Asian ethnic group with the exception of the Japanese is growing rapidly. Furthermore, virtually every group leans politically to the right of the Japanese and has a larger base of uncommitted voters. The Democratic bias that we see among Asian Americans, then, is deceiving and not clearly enduring, but likely ephemeral.

Understanding Uncommitted and Swing Voters

Research on voting behavior has provided us with some understanding of why voters fail to commit to regular participation, to a political party, or to call themselves political moderates. Most politically literate natives settle on their partisan affiliation at a young age and retain that identity through adulthood (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). Many of those who are not committed to a party, on the other hand, have not been socialized into the politics of either party by their parents or by living around other politically active adults. The lack of parental socialization into American politics is a significant deficit in the personal histories of many Asian American immigrants as well as those who follow as the second generation. Some have not been raised with the norm of political participation, and if their countries of origin had no tradition of mass participation, the notion of regular political involvement may be a difficult concept to grasp and embrace.

For others with weak or wavering commitments to one of the major parties, the root cause has been sometimes identified as a feeling of being torn by conflicting

political impulses. Political scientists have labeled this condition as one of being cross-pressured. "They are attracted to each party by one set of opinions and repelled by another. . . . They are inconsistent," as Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954, 200) famously put it in their landmark study of political behavior. Asian Americans may well have instincts that pull them toward the Democratic Party, such as the sense that they are at a disadvantage as ethnic minorities or experiences of discrimination. At the same time, they may have other traits that pull them toward the other political party, such as their socioeconomic status or an emphasis on individual initiative and personal responsibility. Certainly there is a difficult history of exclusion, discrimination, and internment, but the immigrants who arrived in droves post-1965 have reshaped the Asian American group. The high income and soaring educational attainment that has marked many of the post-1965 immigrants may be an important source of cross-pressures. Japanese Americans and Asian Indians have surged ahead of their Anglo counterparts on key sociodemographic indicators. The annual median income of Asian American households is the highest of any ethnic group. In 2005, half of the Asian American group over the age of 25 possessed a bachelor degree or higher, compared with a significantly lower 27 percent for all adults in this age range. In addition, 19 percent of this Asian American group have an advanced degree (e.g., Ph.D., M.D., J.D, M.B.A.), compared with 9 percent in the overall population. The impressive summary statistics are, by now, familiarly connected to the phrase *model minority*, perhaps not descriptive of all Asian ethnicities, but an aggregated summary statistic nonetheless. Asian American voters are, unsurprisingly, even more upscale than the Asian population in general.

With rising socioeconomic status often comes geographic mobility out of lower income, immigrant-receiving areas, for example, and into more affluent suburbs. Geographic mobility then may also create cross-pressures inasmuch as this mobility is associated with moving from one social and political context to another. We have evidence that migratory citizens are commonly characterized as more politically ambivalent and more independent-minded than those who do not move (Brown 1988). Moreover, upward economic mobility is commonly associated with moving from more Democratic origins to more Republican destinations (Gimpel 1999). Under these circumstances, the cross-pressure pits childhood socialization experiences in which loyalty to one party may have been learned against the new friendship network that may be more politically divided or inclined toward the opposite party. Within the United States, where a dizzying array of choices on issues is forced into a selection of one of two political parties, it is not surprising that a fierce ambivalence may ensue. Voters respond sometimes by refusing to vote at all and at other times by registering as Independents, changing their minds during the campaign, settling on a candidate very late in the election, splitting their ballots, or engaging in related behavior often described as "independent" of partisanship. These are among the very voters toward whom the bulk of campaign advertising is directed.

Given the diversity in ancestral heritage and rising geographic diversity of interests, there winds up being no substitute for detailed local knowledge of particular communities. Moreover, in many areas, a great deal of homogeneity is obvious.

Chinatowns, Koreatowns, and Little Saigons are so named because of ethnic homogeneity, not because the wide array of different ethnicities is concentrated in a single location. The importance of local knowledge is difficult for us to admit given our social science craving to formulate law-like generalizations that neatly package populations and their behavior. We also risk rendering the term *Asian American* meaningless in suggesting that, in addition to the strong ethnic divisions and categorizations, there are such strong currents of local diversity as well. One way to understand the Asian American community, then, is as local blocs and local communities, much as we would characterize any other group as subject to local, contextual forces. In this sense, Asian Americans depart from the simple characterizations that have served Blacks and Latinos, who are much more cohesive nationally as well as locally.³

All *effective* political outreach efforts must proceed to a large extent on a community-by-community basis, with a generous sprinkling of local understanding of the arrival, settlement patterns, and roots of particular groups. Arguably the failure of many costly political communications strategies to effectively move their audiences is precisely that these efforts do not show sufficient sensitivity to local conditions and local populations. The locally based political organizations of old were in a much better position to engage nearby populations than the overly centralized political bureaucracies that are today's political parties. Asian Americans are no different from any other Americans in the sense that they adapt to their local environment. Arguably, in areas where they are least likely to be a strong or large presence, the pressures for conformity are even greater, which may explain why Asian American voters are less distinct from non-Asian voters in battleground states than they are in California.

The Outlook

The preference of Blacks and Latinos for the Democratic Party is well entrenched. While they are free to abandon the Democrats at any juncture, the likelihood of a mass exodus is not high. In fact, this type of enduring partisan attachment among the electorate is closer to the rule rather than the exception and characterizes a behavior that transcends race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). Few of us ever change our partisan affiliation once the choice has been made. In this sense, Asian Americans, with their large proportions of uncommitted partisans, represent not only a true swing constituency, but an unprecedented opportunity for the political incorporation of individuals who are grouped together racially in the United States. Since we have ample evidence of enduring partisan choices, an investment now will pay off well into the future, given what we know about the intergenerational transmission of political attitudes.

Cross-pressures are resolved and decisions are reached as individuals weigh some aspects of their experience more than others in making up their minds during a campaign. The astute political party will carefully examine inconsistencies and cross-pressures and provide the kind of information that assists individuals in reaching a decision by prioritizing certain issues and concerns over others. For the

legions of voters without strong party attachments, including millions of Asian Americans, the coming campaign stands in a critical position to be the primary socializing event in their personal histories (Sears and Valentino 1997). We are not optimistic that the fall 2008 campaign will fulfill this promise for very many Asian Americans, but we are certain that the opportunity to politically incorporate a racial group is rare and the future political spoils of a successful venture would be hard to overstate.

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Endnotes

¹ For ease of exposition, the term *Asian Americans* will be used interchangeably with *Asian Pacific Americans* and *Asian Pacific Islander*.

² The Chinese, with an estimated 2,829,627 million living in the United States, make up 23.4 percent of all Asian Americans. They are followed by Asian Indians at 18.6 percent, Filipino Americans at 17.8 percent, Vietnamese Americans at 10.5 percent, and Korean Americans, rounding out the five largest ethnic groups at 10.3 percent.

³ To be sure, there are few groups that truly are nationally cohesive or monolithic. National surveys only fool us into believing that such cohesion exists because they do not contain sufficient numbers of respondents to allow us a glimpse into the local diversity that surely exists.

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