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THE UCLA ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN VOTER REGISTRATION STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

Asian Pacific American political involvement is not a new phenomenon, but it has clearly become a significant focus of attention for the Asian Pacific American population. Perhaps at no other period in Asian Pacific American history have so many individuals and organizations of different issue orientations participated in a wide array of political activities, especially in relation to American electoral politics, but also in the affairs of the Pacific Rim. At the same time, what has come to be taken as a quite expected occurrence in Hawaii, namely the election of Asian Pacific Americans to public office, has suddenly become a less than surprising novelty in the Mainland states with the election and appointment of Asian Pacific Americans to federal, state, and local positions in California and elsewhere. Most importantly, perhaps, Asian Pacific Americans have demonstrated that they, too, have resources and talents-- financial, organizational, and otherwise--to advance their specific concerns in a host of political arenas, and to confront political issues and actions which are potentially damaging to their group interests and welfare. After decades of being politically disenfranchised because of laws preventing the naturalization of the pioneering immigrant generation, Asian Pacific Americans are now seeking access to major political institutions of our nation.

In many respects, our scholarly attention to this major community development has been extremely limited. Aside from the biannual Asian Pacific American National Roster: A Listing of Major Asian-Pacific American Elected and Appointed Officials, which is published by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, and the occasional newspaper articles on the subject, we lack both empirical data and theoretical perspectives for assessing recent Asian Pacific American political activities, especially electoral

involvement. In an effort to rectify this glaring gap in our knowledge about the contemporary Asian Pacific American experience, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Los Angeles, with funding and support from the Southwest Voter Registration Project of San Antonio and the Research Committee of the UCLA Academic Senate, sponsored this study of the voter registration and political party affiliation patterns of Asian Pacific Americans in Los Angeles County.

Los Angeles County has the largest Asian Pacific American community in the nation, and is an especially important site to explore a variety of issues dealing with the electoral participation of Asian Pacific Americans. According to the 1980 census, there were close to half a million Asian Pacific Americans who resided in the county, and many researchers estimate that the population will double by 1990 if current rates of overseas immigration and domestic, secondary migration to the area remain at their current high levels. If these projections hold true, the Asian Pacific American population may well exceed that of Blacks in the county, and become second only to the similarly growing Chicano and Latino communities in the region in terms of minority membership. As in the latter communities, the issue of fair and equitable political representation and access will become even more paramount for Asian Pacific Americans.

Although no Asian Pacific American has ever been elected to any county-level position, it is obvious that Asian Pacific Americans have begun to nurture a more visible political presence at other levels of government in the region. Michael Woo, the first Asian Pacific American ever elected to any office in the City of Los Angeles, is only the latest in a recent string of Asian Pacific Americans who have been elected to municipal offices in cities such as Monterey Park, Gardena, Cerritos, Torrance, Carson, Long Beach, and Montebello, to name a few. However, since the defeat of former Assemblyman Paul Bannai in the mid-1970s, no Asian Pacific American has been a member of the state legislature, and no Asian Pacific American from the area has ever served in Congress (with both Representatives Robert Matsui and Norman Mineta hailing from Northern California). Although this record of political representation is uneven, it nonetheless represents a significant degree of progress, especially when it is measured against the long history of total non-representation of Asian Pacific Americans in local politics.

Aside from their recent electoral victories, Asian Pacific Americans have dramatically increased their participation in other forms of electoral politics. Indeed, the financial backing which Asian Pacific Americans provide to political candidates, especially Democrats like Los Angeles Mayor Thomas Bradley and former Governor Jerry Brown, has become legendary, and the focus of much attention by the media and the two major political parties. During election periods, the number of fundraising activities in Asian Pacific American communities reaches staggering numbers. However, it also is clear that Asian Pacific Americans are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with this form of political involvement, because it has not consistently resulted in greater attention being paid to the needs and concerns of Asian Pacific American communities, or in increased access to political decision-making. Indeed, a growing number believe that their financial resources could be better used in further supporting a number of vital, and yet financially strapped, community-based organizations, as well as encouraging the development of potential Asian Pacific American candidates who might seek public office in their local communities.

Although Asian Pacific Americans have become more visible as political candidates and financial contributors, it has been less evident whether the Asian Pacific American population as a whole has become more involved in electoral activities. Until now, the size and characteristics of the Asian Pacific American electorate in Los Angeles County were matters of much speculation, but no systematic, empirical investigations. Although 1980 census information provides us with rough, and somewhat outdated, estimates of Asian Pacific American residential concentrations in the county, it is not a reliable guide for assessing the electoral strength and potential of Asian Pacific Americans, or indeed that of any other group, on a county-wide basis, or in relation to specific municipalities within the county. The reasons for this are quite simple: all potentially eligible individuals do not necessarily register to vote and, among the large numbers of recent Asian Pacific Americans immigrants and refugees, many are simply not eligible to register to vote. At the same time, we do not have any reliable estimates of the patterns of political party affiliations of Asian Pacific American voters, and whether there are differences among them in terms of specific ethnic groups, where they reside, their socioeconomic characteristics, and other factors. Although Democratic Party activists have clearly been more visible as candidates, financial contributors, and

campaign workers in the local Asian Pacific American community, it has not been clear up to now whether the Asian Pacific American electorate is also tied to this one political party.

The UCLA Study

The UCLA Asian Pacific American Voter Registration Study was designed to provide the first empirical estimates of the size and characteristics of the Asian Pacific American electorate in Los Angeles County. It had a dual purpose of augmenting our scholarly understanding of recent Asian Pacific American electoral involvement, as well as of providing guidance to local voter registration campaigns in Asian Pacific American communities. It identified Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, and, to a limited extent, Samoan and Asian Indian surnamed individuals who were listed as registered voters on the official county registration indexes for the June, 1984 primary for 20 suburban cities of Los Angeles County with large numbers of Asian Pacific Americans, and the so-called "Asian Corridor" of the City of Los Angeles. The results were aggregated to the precinct, census tract, neighborhood, and city levels, and comparisons of party preferences and registration rates between the various groups of Asian Pacific American registered voters and other voters in their local communities were undertaken. Also, 1980 census data were used to develop hypotheses to account for differences and similarities in the electoral characteristics of voters of different geographic areas and ethnic groups.

The 20 suburban cities of Los Angeles County that were examined by the UCLA study are located in the San Gabriel Valley and the South Bay regions, and have a combined population of 129,804 Asian Pacific Americans, according to the 1980 census. This represents 10.8 percent of the total population for these cities, and ranges from Monterey Park's 33.7 percent to Covina's 2.9 percent. On the other hand, the "Asian Corridor" is a contiguous geographic region within the City of Los Angeles, which has the largest number and heaviest concentration of Asian Pacific Americans in the city (76,731 of 359,992, or 21.3 percent of the area's population in 1980), and includes the neighborhoods of Highland Park/Mount Washington, Chinatown, Temple, Silverlake, Los Feliz, East Hollywood, and Korea- town/Uptown. It is not a single political entity, but is divided among five larger city councilman districts, one of which is represented by Michael Woo of the 13th district. The overall total for the Asian Pacific American population in the suburban cities and the "Asian Corridor" is 206,535, which represents 47.4 percent of all Asian Pacific Americans in the county.

The Methodology

The identification of Asian Pacific American registered voters would have a simple task if individuals were asked to specify their ethnicity when they registered, or if a computer-based program was available to identify Asian Pacific American surnames. However, neither was the case, and a methodology involving the identification of Asian Pacific American voters through sight recognition of surnames was selected because it appeared to be the most systematic, replicable, inexpensive, and practical alternative. A multiethnic team of researchers with a strong knowledge of different Asian Pacific American surnames, as well as the various ethnic communities in Los Angeles County, was assembled, and performed the analysis. The reliability of the overall identification process was controlled through multiple verification of names in which two, or more often, three researchers analyzed and confirmed the same registration lists.

The selected methodology fulfilled both the research and practical purposes of the project. In terms of research, it provided the first empirically-based estimates of the size and characteristics of the Asian Pacific American electorate in relation to specific geographic areas, which could be used to provide guidance for the subsequent development of samples for survey analyses, or more in-depth explorations of other electoral issues, such as voting trends of selected precincts with extremely high concentrations of Asian Pacific Americans. The method also met its practical goal of maximizing the effectiveness of local voter registration drives and political campaigns in Asian Pacific American communities in the county. The method is perhaps the only one that can provide highly localized information about current and potential Asian Pacific American registration rates at the precinct or city level, and pinpoint specific areas within the county's expansive geographic area to undertake voter registration activities.

The method of sight recognition of Asian surnames, of course, has limitations. However, similar limitations would probably be found if a computer-based program of Asian surnames was available. One limitation, for example, involves the identification of Asian Pacific American women who married non-Asian Pacific American men and adopted their husbands' surnames. These individuals, for the most part, cannot be identified in any systematic fashion, although through sight recognition it is possible to locate some who have distinctly Asian names.

Although intermarriage is high among some Asian Pacific American groups, it is not possible to estimate the number of Asian Pacific American women who have adopted their husbands' surnames, especially in relation to any geographic locale, and this factor would clearly contribute to an overall undercount of Asian Pacific American voters.

There are also two corollaries of this methodological problem, which could contribute to the opposite result of an overcount. The first involves non-Asian Pacific American women who have married Asian American men and have adopted their husbands' Asian surnames, and the second are the siblings of all intermarriages involving Asian Pacific Americans. It is largely a subjective judgment whether or not to categorize all these individuals as Asian Pacific Americans, even if distinctions could be made. In this study, a set of highly conservative decision rules was systematically employed in relation to intermarriages, which probably accounts for an overall undercount of Asian Pacific American voters. For example, if a woman with a surname of Smith and a first name of Kimiko was identified by chance sight recognition, she was counted as a Japanese American voter, but her children were not counted. At the same time, though, no attempt was made to determine whether the spouse of an Asian surnamed male was Asian Pacific American or not.

Two additional methodological limitations are also posed by sight recognition. The first, of course, are Asian surnames which are identical to those of non-Asian Pacific Americans, like those of Lee for Chinese and Korean Americans, Sanchez for Filipinos, or an assortment of surnames for Samoans. Again, the sight recognition of first names allows for some differentiation, especially for individuals who have retained an Asian first name, but becomes more judgmental for others who have Anglo first names, or those named Mendoza having first names like Emilio, who live in areas with sizable Latino populations. Similarly, we are potentially faced with the problem of differentiating Asian surnames which are common for more than one Asian group, as in the surnames of Lee, Young, and Chang for Chinese and Korean Americans.

These limitations are real, and again attempts were made to confront them in a systematic and largely conservative manner throughout the investigation. To begin with, tract data from the 1980 census were used as rough gauges for estimating the size and characteristics of the Asian Pacific American population, or subgroup of it, in specific geographic areas, and matched with precincts encompassed by these census tracts. For example, the identification of an individual named Lee in a specific area was determined, first by the individual's first name, and then by considering the relative size of the Chinese or Korean American population in the census tract relative to other groups of individuals, like Blacks and Whites, which have similar surnames. If the size of the Chinese or Korean population was relatively small in comparison with other groups, the decision rule was not to identify such individuals as Asian Pacific Americans. Similar decision rules were established for other surnames that are common for Asian Pacific Americans and other groups.

In the case of Korean Americans, an additional methodological approach suggested by sociology Professor Eui-Yang Yu of California State University, Los Angeles was also employed. According to Yu, individuals with the surname of Kim almost always are Korean, and they tend to constitute 22.5 percent of the Korean American population in a given area. In the UCLA study, all registered voters named Kim were systematically identified for each precinct, and this served as an alternative check for the potential size of the Korean American electorate, especially in areas with sizable numbers of potential Korean American voters. It was less reliable when the size of the Korean population was small, and not altogether accurate in making projections of the political party affiliations of Korean American voters in a specific geographic area. For example, only three Kims, all members of the same household, were identified for the city of San Gabriel, and there were extreme disparities between the projected and actual numbers of Korean American voters, as well as their party affiliations.

However, the overall aggregate results were amazingly close in terms of both the number of registered voters and their patterns of party identification. Yu's method would have projected 2,880 Korean American registered voters based on the identification of 648

voters named Kim, while the study identified 3,089. At the same time, 48.8 percent of the Kims (316) were Democrats, 27.3 percent were Republicans (177), 1.5 percent were affiliated with smaller parties (10), and 22.3 percent were independents (145). The corresponding results of the UCLA study found that 48.5 percent of the Korean American voters were Democrats (1,496), 29.4 percent Republicans (905), 2.0 percent smaller party affiliates (61), and 20.1 percent independents (620).

The selected methodology, despite the above limitations, has numerous advantages in being unobtrusive, relatively inexpensive, and capable of generating highly localized data, which can be analyzed with tract or block census data, or used in an assortment of grassroots mobilization activities. It should be replicated for other areas with sizable Asian Pacific American populations to gain further, empirically based insights into local Asian Pacific American electorates.

The Asian Pacific American Electorate of Los Angeles County

In 1980, Asian Pacific Americans represented approximately 6.0 percent of the overall population of Los Angeles County. Based on the findings of the UCLA study, there are now between 100,000 and 150,000 Asian Pacific American registered voters, who comprise between 2.9 percent and 4.3 percent of the total electorate of the county. The Asian Pacific American electorate is largely concentrated in the San Gabriel Valley, South Bay, and Los Angeles city's Asian Corridor, and represent a significant share of the local electorates in the municipalities of Monterey Park where they are 29.2 percent of all voters in the city), Gardena (20.0 percent), Cerritos (12.2 percent), and Montebello (11.1 percent). Japanese Americans, who have the largest population of all the Asian Pacific American groups and the largest proportion of citizens, have the largest number of registered voters and the highest registration rate, and are followed by Chinese Americans, Pilipino Americans, Korean Americans, Asian Indian Americans, Samoan Americans, and Vietnamese Americans. Although Asian Pacific Americans as a whole have a majority of Democratic party affiliates (52.4 percent), the strength of Democratic identification varies from one group to another, as well as from one community to another. At the same time, the large proportion of

RANKING OF ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN VOTERS BY CITIES

RANK CITY	TOTAL APA VOTERS	% OF ALL VOTERS IN CITY/AREA
1 MONTEREY PARK	6441	29.2%
2 TORRANCE	4502	6.5%
3 GARDENA	3567	20.0%
4 CERRITOS	2569	12.2%
5 CARSON	2487	7.1%
6 MONTEBELLO	2104	11.1%
7 GLENDALE	1793	2.8%
8 WEST COVINA	1606	4.1%
9 ALHAMBRA	1595	6.0%
10 HACIENDA HEIGHTS	1327	6.0%
11 PALOS VERDES AREA	1199	4.5%
12 NORWALK	1175	3.7%
13 ROSEMEAD	720	5.6%
14 SOUTH PASADENA	692	5.5%
15 HAWTHORNE	678	3.2%
16 SAN GABRIEL	622	4.8%
17 ROWLAND HEIGHTS	557	3.1%
18 EL MONTE	640	2.7%
19 COVINA	417	2.3%
20 LOMITA	398	4.8%
SUBTOTAL WITHOUT LA CITY	34,989	6.7%
L.A. CITY ASIAN CORRIDOR		
AREA TOTAL	8969	9.1%
HIGHLAND PARK AREA	773	5.5%
GREATER CHINATOWN AREA	1123	21.6%
SILVERLAKE AREA	985	12.0%
TEMPLE AREA	1154	12.8%
EAST HOLLYWOOD AREA	1379	6.7%
LOS FELIZ AREA	502	5.8%
KOREATOWN/UPTOWN AREA	3053	9.1%
TOTAL WITH L.A. CITY	43,958	7.1%

RANKING OF ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN POPULATION BY CITIES

RANK	CITY	TOTAL POPULATION	APA POPULATION	(PERCENT OF POP)
1	MONTEREY PARK	54338	18312	(33.7%)
2	TORRANCE	129,881	13663	(10.5%)
3	GARDENA	45,165	12493	(27.7%)
4	CARSON	81,221	12458	(15.3%)
5	CERRITOS	53,020	11700	(22.1%)
6	ALHAMBRA	64,615	8046	(12.5%)
7	GLENDALE	39,060	7853	(5.6%)
8	MONTEBELLO	52,929	7195	(13.6%)
9	WEST COVINA	80,291	5857	(7.3%)
10	HACIENDA HEIGHTS	49,422	5547	(11.2%)
11	RPV*	50,953	4291	(8.4%)
12	HAWTHORNE	56,447	4076	(7.2%)
13	ROSEHEAD	42,604	3764	(8.8%)
14	ROWLAND HEIGHTS*	51,443	3595	(7.0%)
15	NORWALK	85,286	3464	(4.1%)
16	SOUTH PASADENA	22,681	2569	(11.3%)
17	SAN GABRIEL	30,272	2549	(8.4%)
18	EL MONTE	79,494	2246	(2.8%)
19	COVINA*	53,218	1534	(2.9%)
20	LOMITA	18,807	1023	(5.4%)
	SUBTOTAL			
	WITHOUT L.A. CITY	1,198,440	129,804	(10.8%)
	L.A. CITY			
	ASIAN CORRIDOR TOTAL	359992	71297	(19.8%)
	HIGHLAND PARK AREA	38210	4059	(10.6%)
	GREATER CHINATOWN	29219	11780	(40.3%)
	SILVERLAKE AREA	16061	3001	(16.6%)
	TEMPLE AREA	43470	9436	(19.5%)
	EAST HOLLYWOOD	77644	12057	(15.5%)
	LOS FELIZ	16542	1640	(9.9%)
	KOREATOWN/UPTOWN	131646	29324	(22.3%)
	OVERALL TOTAL			
	WITH L.A. CITY	1,556,432	201,101	(12.9%)

*In order to maintain consistency between the official registration indexes and census tract data, "Rancho Palos Verdes" includes Palos Verdes Peninsula, Rancho Palos Verdes, and Rolling Hills; "Rowland Heights includes the unincorporated areas of Rowland Heights and South San Jose Hills; and "Covina" Includes the city of Covina and unincorporated Covina Islands.

Republicans (31.0 percent), and the extremely high percentage of independents (15.0 percent), suggests that Asian Pacific Americans do not represent a solid bloc of voters for either major political party, and generally may have weak party affiliations.

The Asian Pacific American electorate in Los Angeles County is in the process of realizing its full potential. Its future size, features, and direction will be influenced by a host of factors. For example, voter registration drives which have been undertaken from time to time with uneven results by the two major political parties, as well as different Asian Pacific American electoral organizations, will have to develop more effective strategies to court the ever-growing pool of potential Asian Pacific American voters. In the total Southern California area, which includes more than Los Angeles County, Asian Pacific Americans consistently represent the largest group of newly naturalized citizens, and annually gain close to 50,000 new citizens in the region. At the same time, the contours of the future Asian Pacific American electorate will be influenced by public officials, as well as those seeking public offices, and the extent to which they begin to explicitly address the concerns and needs of the Asian Pacific American community, and view Asian Pacific Americans as a significant group of potential voters and not simply as financial contributors. Finally, like many citizens, the issues, events, and political climates of their local communities will influence Asian Pacific Americans. For example, the extent to which local political leaders come to grips with and meaningfully resolve controversial and highly emotional issues such as the campaigns to declare English as the official language in cities such as Monterey Park and Alhambra may either lead to political alienation, or have the opposite effect of compelling Asian Pacific Americans to have a greater stake in local affairs.

The UCLA study cannot accurately forecast the future, but it can provide a glimpse of the present condition of Los Angeles County's Asian Pacific American electorate. One finding of the project, which is not too surprising, is that the size of the Asian Pacific American electorate in a particular community is closely related to the size of its overall population. As Tables 1 and 2 illustrate, the ranking of the total number of Asian Pacific American voters for the 20 suburban cities parallels the ranking of those same cities in terms of their total Asian Pacific American populations. The differences in registration rates between those cities, which range from 49.2 percent for Asian Pacific Americans in Lomita to 20.2 percent in Hawthorne, do not appear to have a measurable effect on this relationship when the unit of analysis is the entire Asian Pacific American population.

The registration rate, though, would matter if we designated the Asian Corridor as a single entity, and hypothetically compared it with an imaginary municipality composed of a comparable number of Asian Pacific Americans from the suburbs. The Asian Corridor, for example, with its 71,297 Asian Pacific Islanders in 1980 would be comparable to the 68,626 Asian Pacific Islanders who resided in Monterey Park, Torrance, Gardena, Carson, and Cerritos. However, the Asian Corridor had half as many registered voters, with 8,969 versus a total of 19,566 for the five cities.¹

Asian Pacific American registered voters reflect both differences and similarities between themselves and other voters in their local communities. The general electorates, for example, in 15 suburban cities and all areas of the Asian Corridor have a plurality or majority of Democrats. In contrast, Asian Pacific Americans in all cities except South Pasadena and Rancho Palos Verdes, as well as all areas of the Asian Corridor, have a plurality or majority of Democrats. In Democratic strongholds, though, the proportion of Asian Pacific Americans who are Democrats is usually less than the electorates as a whole, and also tends to be somewhat higher in the percentage of Republicans. However, in the five cities which have a majority or plurality of Republicans, namely Torrance, Glendale, Rancho Palos Verdes, South Pasadena, and Covina, Asian Pacific Americans are less likely to be Republicans than other voters, and indeed are more likely to be Democrats in Torrance, Glendale, and Covina.

This lack of uniformity in party identification, especially among groups of voters in the same city who probably reflect comparable socioeconomic characteristics, may suggest that different combinations of factors (or, in a statistical sense, different regression equations) would be necessary to explain party affiliation patterns for different Asian Pacific American groups. It also suggests that Asian Pacific American voters, despite their aggregate leanings towards the Democrats, cannot be viewed as a monolithic bloc of voters in any local community, and that their potential electoral impact would be lessened in partisan primaries, two factors which might be considered by a potential Asian Pacific American candidate. Finally, the unexpected finding of the large number of independent Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Asian Indians, in which one in five decline

to state a party preference, should be noted. Although recent polls and studies of the American electorate report that a growing number of voters now consider themselves to be independents, the official registration list for Los Angeles County indicates that only 10 percent of all voters, like the Japanese, Pilipinos, and Samoans, decline to specify a party affiliation.

The contrasts in electoral characteristics and involvement between Asian Pacific Americans and others can be gleaned through a variety of macro-level, census indicators, which illustrate profound differences in the group profiles of Asian Pacific Americans versus others in their local communities. Like other regions across the nation, Los Angeles County has witnessed a dramatic growth and diversification of its Asian Pacific American population in recent years due to increased immigration. Although it is important to note that 62.6 percent of the county's Asian Pacific American population is now foreign born, another census indicator based on the percentage of individuals, five years and older, who resided abroad in 1975 provides a more revealing view of this sizable recent influx. In 1980, for example, 29.5 percent (125,545) of all Asian Pacific Americans, five years and older, in the county reported that they lived abroad in 1975. This percentage is close to five times more than the overall county figure, and Asian Pacific Americans accounted for approximately 30 percent of all individuals who lived abroad during this period.

The Asian Pacific American populations in half of the 20 suburban cities, as well as the entire Asian Corridor, had percentages of those living abroad which exceeded the high county-wide figure for Asian Pacific Americans as a whole, and all exceeded that of the county's general population. Hawthorne had the highest percentage, with 42.7 percent of its Asian Pacific Americans living abroad, followed by the Asian Corridor with 42.5 percent, Glendale with 40.8 percent, and El Monte with 40.4 percent. Gardena had the lowest percentage at 14.0 percent, but even this figure was almost twice that of both the county and the entire population of the city of Gardena. The recency of their arrival in the United States, and their greater likelihood of not being naturalized, serves as another major factor contributing to their lower than average registration rates. At the same time, other related variables, such as lack of fluency in English, should be considered. For instance, 26.7 percent of all Asian Pacific Americans 18 years and older, and therefore of voting age, in Los Angeles County in 1980 indicated that they did not speak English well or did not speak it at all; and in every city or Asian Corridor area which was surveyed, Asian Pacific Americans had a higher proportion of such individuals than their local communities. In past years, when bilingual ballots were more prevalent in California, only San Francisco was required to provide election ballots and other materials in the Chinese language. No city or area in Los Angeles County has ever had Asian language electoral materials, be they for election purposes or encouraging individuals to register to vote.

At the same time, although it appears that the overall voter registration rates for all 20 cities and the areas of the Asian Corridor are highly correlated with commonly used and well-substantiated predictors such as median family income, educational attainment levels, and occupations, the same relationship is much weaker for Asian Pacific Americans. Again, it appears that other group-specific factors aside from socioeconomic characteristics must be taken into account in analyzing Asian Pacific American electoral participation. Indeed, Asian Pacific Americans may exhibit a group socioeconomic profile which is comparable to that of others in the communities, and yet have other distinguishing features which are negatively correlated with electoral involvement. South Pasadena's Asian Pacific Americans, for example, have a higher family median income (\$32,077 versus \$27,283 for the overall population), a higher proportion of college educated individuals (74.9 percent versus 63.8 percent), and a greater percentage of professionals and managers (46.1 percent versus 41.0 percent) than the city as a whole, but nonetheless have a registration rate of 35.2 percent as opposed to 67.9 percent for all residents. However, they also are significantly higher on indicators, which would work against electoral involvement: 26.1 percent of the Asian Pacific Americans versus 5.5 percent of the entire population lived abroad five years ago; 58.0 percent versus 17.0 percent were foreign born; and, as we will soon discuss, 25.6 percent versus 47.6 percent lived in the same house in 1975 as they did in 1980. Similar contrasts in the group profiles between the other Asian Pacific American populations and their local communities were also apparent (see footnote #1).

A large number of Asian Pacific Americans in Los Angeles County are recent immigrants to the United States, but an even greater number of both foreign and American born are relative newcomers to their local communities in Southern California. Indeed, the

geographic movement of Asian Pacific Americans from one community to another--be it from a port-of-entry neighborhood like Koreatown to a secondary one like Glendale, or from one rung on the social mobility ladder like Torrance to another like Rancho Palos Verdes--also is a significant macro-level feature of Los Angeles' changing Asian Pacific American population which must be considered in assessing their present and future electoral participation. For example, Gardena's Asian Pacific Americans who were five years and older in 1980 were the only ones who had a greater proportion of individuals (56.1 percent) who lived in the same house five years previously than the overall city rate (52.7 percent). For all other Asian Pacific American populations, the differences in the longevity of residence were quite pronounced, and underscore the fact that most are relatively new settlements in well-established communities. For example, 7.9 percent of the Asian Pacific Americans in Rowland Heights, 14.4 percent in Glendale, 15.8 percent in West Covina, and 17.9 percent in Alhambra lived in the same house versus 40.5 percent, 45.2 percent, 46.7 percent, and 43.6 percent for the overall populations of those cities, respectively.

To be sure, all cities and areas of Los Angeles County experienced dramatic growth, diversification, and movement, be it inward or outward, of their populations during the past decade. However, the evolving presence of Asian Pacific Americans in those communities varied substantially, and must be considered in analyzing their current and potential involvement and impact on local politics. Generally speaking, cities that have elected Asian Pacific Americans to public office, like Monterey Park, Gardena, Torrance, and Montebello, all had large, long-standing, and relatively stable Asian Pacific American populations, which became even larger, more diverse, and represented a greater proportion of the city's total population in recent years. The involvement of Asian Pacific Americans in the local political and economic structures of these cities usually has not been a recent phenomenon, although the augmentation of the potential base of electoral support by Asian Pacific American voters in largely non-partisan, municipal elections has clearly enhanced the election of Asian Pacific American candidates.

In contrast, most of the other cities have growing, but largely new populations of Asian Pacific Americans, which have not been integrated or recruited into long-prevalent, local political systems or political cultures. It is difficult, of course, to predict with any certainty whether Asian Pacific Americans will, or will be encouraged to, establish a stable and permanent presence in these communities versus treating them as temporary, and perhaps less than hospitable, way stations; and the extent to which they will, or will be encouraged to, become viable political actors in them. The future reality will be determined not only by Asian Pacific Americans, but also others in their local communities.

At the same time, the geographic movement of the Asian Pacific American population may very well account for the differences in their patterns of party preference versus other voters in their local municipalities. These differences may result from the cultural, political, and other types of baggage that they carry with them to their new homes, but for whatever reasons are not willing to replace so easily. Asian Pacific American voters in Torrance, for example, are largely Democrats, whereas the plurality of the general electorate are Republicans. All things being equal, one factor which may account for this phenomenon may be the large and continuous movement of Japanese Americans, who represent over half of both Asian Pacific American voters and Democrats, from the neighboring, and predominantly Democratic city of Gardena to Torrance. Similar patterns can also be seen in other, adjacent communities.

Finally, the UCLA study provides an interesting contrast with a similar investigation of Chinese and Japanese American registered voters in San Francisco, which was recently completed by Coro Fellow Grant Din. Using an identical methodology of sign recognition of surnames, Din found that San Francisco Chinatown's Chinese American voters had a slightly higher percentage of Democrats, and a greater proportion of independents, than those who lived in the outlying, and more affluent Richmond and Sunset districts of the city. He argued that this less than obvious finding concerning Republican strength among inner city Chinese Americans could be explained by the continued "strong influence of the Kuomintang, or Chinese Nationalist Party, and its affiliated family and merchant associations which are headquartered directly in Chinatown." The UCLA Study, on the other hand, came to the opposite conclusion. For Chinese American voters in half of the cities in Los Angeles County, but none in the areas of the Asian Corridor, Republicans were the plurality of voters. Indeed, all areas of the inner city Asian Corridor, including Chinatown, reflected a plurality of Chinese American Democrats, although the percentages of independent voters remained high for both the county and city areas. The

differences in the two findings may be due to the relative strength of internal community organizations in the two areas, as well as other group differences between the Chinese American populations in San Francisco and Los Angeles. It might be mentioned, though, that Chinese Americans have never been elected to any of the 10 cities in Los Angeles County which have a plurality of Chinese American Republicans.

The within-group differences between those who reside in the Asian Corridor versus the suburban cities are not as great for other groups of Asian Pacific American voters. Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese voters in the Asian Corridor are more Democratic, less Republican, but slightly more independent than their counterparts in the county. Japanese Americans across all geographic areas have a plurality or majority of Democrats, while Koreans and Vietnamese Americans exhibit areas of Republican support in the suburbs. Filipino American voters, in contrast, reflect almost no differences between those in the city and suburbs, and tend to be overwhelmingly Democratic. And, finally, there are significant differences between the groups in terms of their projected registration rates. As mentioned above, Japanese Americans, who have the highest proportion of citizens of all the groups, have the highest voter registration rate (approximately 43.0 percent of all individuals 18 years and older). They are followed by Chinese Americans, who are projected to have a rate of 35.5 percent, Samoans with 28.5 percent, Filipinos with 27.0 percent, Asian Indians with 16.7 percent, Koreans with 13.0 percent, and Vietnamese with 4.1 percent. All of these rates are substantially lower than that of Los Angeles County's overall rate of approximately 60 percent.

Conclusion

Asian Pacific Americans have clearly increased their level of involvement in electoral affairs in Los Angeles County, as well as other areas across the nation during the past decade. They have witnessed the election of a growing number of Asian Pacific Americans to public office, their appointment to important commissions and judicial positions, and have been intensely courted by both major political parties for their financial contributions. However, Asian Pacific Americans are far more significant in terms of their potential rather than present impact on electoral politics for the county as a whole, or specific municipalities of it.

The future size, characteristics, and impact of the Asian Pacific American electorate in Los Angeles County remain to be shaped. Hopefully, this study has served to move us a step beyond our previous uncertainty and speculation about Asian Pacific American voters, and has provided some insights into a variety of factors which appear to influence their present reality, along with their future potential. The study clearly underscores the need for further voter registration efforts by Asian Pacific American organizations, the two major political parties, and others who believe that the right of political franchise must not be taken for granted, and hopefully pinpoints specific local communities and ethnic groups which deserve greater attention. Although Asian Pacific Americans as a whole currently reflect a majority preference for the Democratic party, it should be obvious that the large and growing pool of non-registered voters could have a profound impact on the overall partisan identification of Asian Pacific Americans, and especially among groups like Koreans and Vietnamese, which are overwhelmingly composed of recent immigrants. Therefore, the extent to which the two major parties further cultivate their relations with, and address and the specific concerns of, the Asian Pacific American community will greatly determine the future partisan direction of the Asian Pacific American electorate. We, of course, cannot accurately predict the future of the Asian Pacific American electorate, but all of this should suggest that there is definitely much that can be done to shape its potential future.

1. Tables containing detailed summaries of the number of Asian Pacific American registered voters, as well as their patterns of party identification, for all areas which were investigated in the project can be obtained by contacting Don Nakanishi, Graduate School of Education, University of California, Los Angeles, California 90024. These summaries rank the 20 cities in terms of the size of their Asian Pacific American electorates, provide separate data on the Asian Corridor, differentiate among all the Asian Pacific American groups, and indicate the proportion of the total electorate in each city or area which is Asian

Pacific American.

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