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Comparative Institutional Approaches to Race and Ethnicity in American Politics

**Introduction**

McAdam s piece on tactical innovation describes a pattern of which we have seen the results throughout the literature of this quarter. Using the case of the Black insurgency of the 1955-70 period which he argues was a function of an ongoing process of tactical interaction between [African American civil rights] movement forces and southern segregationists (McAdam 735). African Americans in the South, like the peasant communities discussed throughout the course, lacking institutionalized power are often pushed to devise protest techniques. Where the literature has focused on the causes of insurgency, McAdam seeks to explore the dynamics of movement development and decline (McAdam 735). Three institutions dominated the protest infrastructure (1) the Black church (2) (historically-) Black colleges and (3) the southern wing of the NAACP (McAdam 737). Five protest tactics are identified (1) bus boycott (2) sit-in (3) freedom ride (4) community campaign and (5) riot; each of these are discussed in detail (McAdam 740). a key finding is that the number of actions is highest immediately following the using of a *new* protest technique (McAdam 740). a pattern becomes apparent (graph, p 746) there are large movement actions using the new technique, followed by smaller segregationist action and then yet-smaller government action. Development of a new technique changes the short-run outcomes in two ways (1) new-ness of a tactic encourages the variety of local groups to attempt its implementation as many old tactics are failing or structurally blunted (2) movement forces have a window of opportunity using a new tactic before

segregationists can develop a counter for it. This is very similar to the continuing struggle in military tactics between offensive innovation and defensive adaptation. To succeed proactive protest groups must constantly search for new tactics; that is what was done in the civil rights movement through the 1960's (McAdam 752).

Can this process of seeking and selecting unblocked tactics be extended to institutionalized channels? Below a test for just that question is suggested. Racial group elites attempt to gain a share of political power by using institutional channels where available.

**The Model**

There are three classes of institutionally-recognized routes to power within the American system of political parties: (1) electoral (2) financial and (3) organizational. Within these channels activists can challenge the features of the existing system without being fully excluded if they appeal to reforming claims made by already-integrated elites. The electoral channel is used with a sufficient number of registrations and voters can consistently participate as a bloc. That number is sufficient when it exceeds the margin of victory for issues and candidates. There are both hard and soft (PAC, corporate, unrestricted) money financial mechanisms. Organizationally the options are volunteer participation for candidates, party-building campaigns and community outreach. These tactics have two types of goals (1) face representation and (2) policy. Representation is sought in (1) government leadership (2) government (3) legislature (4) bureaucracy/administrative apparatus and (5) the party leadership. On the other hand, the goals can be policy-oriented including (1) hate crime legislation and enforcement (2) affirmative action in hiring, admissions and contracting (3) a non-discriminatory immigration policy (4) no English-only laws and (5) a Social Welfare safety net. Face representation may facilitate obtaining such

policy goals. However, the focus of this study is in selection of institutional tactics.

**Institutions**

The ideal institutional setup seeks to maximize the achievement of goals sought by its founders and those to whom it is responsible. Unfortunately, many of these goals when taken to their full extent conflict with each other. Democracy requires the institutionalization of conflict converting it from bullets to ballots. While a number of these objectives can be achieved under non-democratic institutions, democracy is the hegemonic paradigm upon which all other systems are currently measured. Indeed, non-democratic regimes such as that of Saddam Hussein provide democratic marketing implicitly accepting the standard. Thus this discussion will confine itself to democratic institutions. The key performance objectives are (1) conflict regulation and system maintenance (2) policy innovation and decisiveness (3) policy coherence and consistency (4) representation of social groups (5) protection of vital minority interests and (6) access to decision-makers (Gunther 61). One more executive goal would be implementation capability. Institutions provide a rule-bound mechanism for the peaceful resolution of conflict. The ideal of this objective is to ameliorate salient schisms in a society such that social elements support the system and see no favorable reward structure in promoting fragmentation. The goal is often put into conflict on the issue of representing disenfranchised groups. Policy innovation is the ability to adapt political manifestos to the circumstances in which they would be implemented. To some degree adaptability is a function of the number of veto points (as Tsebelis describes) in policy formulation. A leader cannot be as decisive if he lacks the ability to credibly make a given decision due to institutional constraints. Vote players can include courts, written constitutions, upper houses, head of state, super majorities, referenda and bureaucracies (Tsebelis 323). On the

other hand, policy coherence is strengthened by institutional restraints to decisive innovation. Coherence require the formulation of a broad set of policies placed together in a comprehensive package. Political representative seeks enfranchise social groups and facilitate the implementation of policies conducive to their interests. The ideal system in this regard is one which is responsive to public opinion. The dangers of concern for pursuing such a goal are policy consistency as public opinion can be fickle and majoritarian rule may damage minority rights (de Tocqueville s tyranny of the majority in the US states). The protection of *vital* minority interests is the next factor identified by Gunther. There are two potentially controversial notions in this statement: vital and interests. Both terms are intrinsically subjective and ambiguous risking abuse. Which minorities are vital? Who defines these interests? It may be useful to approach this from a more legalistic standpoint, viz., institutions should be created to protect the civil liberty *rights* of resident self-defined minority groups. In this way the majority cannot talk of promoting interests *for a minority* but simply extends the civil rights it enjoys to socio-politically disenfranchised groups. Gunther s final goal is the issue of access to decision-makers. This objective is of special saliency in the United States at the moment in discussions about campaign finance (discussed below) as some argue the system permits large contributors to buy access. Decision-makers are not only made accessible for policy choice influencing but as an advocate for dealings with the state bureaucratic apparatus (constituent services). A somewhat related goal that has been added is the capability of such institutions to implement policy. In other words, can politicians count on the bureaucracy to function apolitically and can the apparatus affect the desired change? Much of this is related to state intrusiveness, as a libertarian might label it, and can create follow-on effects which transform public opinion ( Wag the Dog -type scenario). A

useful way to understand the competing nature of these objectives is in description of real-world institutions.

The array of democratic states can be divided, or assigned adjectives, in a number of different ways on the basis of their institutions federal & unitary, presidential, parliamentary & semi-presidential, FPTP & PR with varying thresholds for victory, single & multi member districts, etc which have profound impact on which goals (above) can be achieved. In a sense, to select some of these specific institutions certain goals were prioritized over others. The first distinction drawn is whether there are administratively separative, though subordinate centers of power as in a federal system. Federalism adds additional veto players for policy formulation limiting decisiveness while increasing responsiveness, representation and accessibility. Federal systems have been implemented in states in which there are regional or regionally-concentrated ethnic interests conflict over which could not be full institutionalized at the sovereign state level (India, Canada, USA, etc) and often these are large (population and/or territory) states which could be more easily administered from local centers of power. The danger for the pro-system elite from a federal system is that by institutionalizing conflict the center has given potentially separatist elites the political apparatus upon which an alternate system could be based (e.g., Milosevic & Tudjman in former Yugoslavia).

How legislators are selected is also important. Proportional Representation (PR) (EU, Israel) uses closed lists or preferential voting to assign seats representing a district to parties which reflects the proportion of the popular vote received. The precise formula used to apportion seats varies and is sometimes called modified PR. For PR systems the issue of thresholds becomes salient. FRG requires 5% of the popular vote at the Länder level to be attained before a

party is seated, while an Israeli party needs only 1.5%. Lower thresholds produce more parties in legislatures and coalitions as well as reducing stability and legislation on controversial issues; on the other hand, they are more representative of popular vote. An advantage to PR is in terms of minority rights and representation; as small parties can be seated and potentially join a coalition, parties composed of and run for minorities can play a significant role. The Israeli Knesset which seats a number of minority (Arab, Sephardic) parties is a good example of this feature.

The alternative to PR is First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) or winner-takes-all (UK, Commonwealth, US) which seats legislators from districts according to who was an outright winner (passed a given threshold). All seats from the district are awarded to the winner. There are three major flavors of this form (1) FPTP majority (2) FPTP plurality and (3) FPTP majority run-off. In the first case a candidate to be seated must receive 50% +1 of all votes cast (US Mississippi); in the second, one more vote than the second-place candidate is needed (US Federal); in the final option if a candidate fails to achieve a simple majority a run-off is held between the two leading candidates (US California). These systems all require a party to be seated to have substantially more support in a given district to receive any seats than PR would. Large parties are strengthened at the expense of small ones. This scheme is less representative.

Beyond these classifications the array of democratic institutions varies on several other key issues. Voter turnout is used as an indicator of democratic participation of the population arguably reflecting legitimacy. The US scores relatively low in voter turnout among advanced heterogenous countries with consolidated systems. Presidentialism, federalism and FPTP fail to fully explain this variation. There are a number of other explanations which have been covered in the American politics literature but less comprehensively comparatively (a good study was

published in an article by Sears in the 1950's). To vote there are two steps which must be taken: registration and casting a ballot. Most OECD countries place the burden of activity for registering and maintaining such a registration on the state apparatus; the US does not. The American individual must present himself at the registrar in limited locations and hours. Sears found evening and week-end hours offered by registrars would increase registration rates. The Clinton Motor-Voter bill addresses this to some degree. In peer states the bureaucracy maintains and updates rolls of voters. American voters must take active steps to stay registered. They must transfer their registration if they move, instead of an automatic state update. Also a lapse in voting will force the purging of the registration from the rolls. Most states require registering 30 days prior to an election; Minnesota does not and in 1998 had a surge in election day registrations, enough to swing the election. All of these actions are taken to reduce vote fraud. The next activity is voting itself. Assuming the voter has properly registered himself, he must go to the polling station in his precinct on election day during specified hours. Unlike much of the democratic world where election day is a national holiday, Americans vote on a work day. For those with a significant commute or structured hours voting carries a high opportunity costs. This not only reduces turnout, but reduces it disproportionately deterring the working class from voting.

Electoral laws can be changed if those in the decision-making position see it to be in their interest, but why should people vote? A good portion of the electorate feels disenfranchised despite the right to vote. They are unconvinced their vote matters. This stems from two issues ballot access and campaign finance. America has a two-party system as Duverger would predict but the two parties have gone further to ensure continued dominant status by restricting the

access for potential competitors. In the UK 100 signatures and a £500 deposit (refundable if the candidate receives at least 5% of the popular vote in the district contested) are all that is required to be formally placed on the ballot. The US (varies state to state) can require tens of thousands of signatures from registered voters on a petition and proof of party organization. These rules are designed by bi-partisan commissions so are unlikely to amended in the foreseeable future.

The other issue which has been raised is campaign finance. The US has an abnormally long campaign cycle preceded by an even longer fund raising cycle. Money can be given to candidates, parties and issue campaigns. Most of the funds go to providing television advertising. The UK bans such political commercials and offers free and equal air time. This reduces the time a candidate must devote to raising money. Such public financing of political campaigns levels the playing field among candidates of different means and reduces dependence on particularistic interests (see my article in the *Northwestern Chronicle* 1996 for more discussion on this point).

**Electoral**

Rogowski put forward a model based upon data from the late nineteenth century which used the relative abundance or scarcity of factor endowments to predict salient political schisms in societies (Rogowski 6). This was the time period in which the still-dominant American political parties rose as the leading two. Rogowski predicted that where labor is abundant class becomes salient; where land is relatively plentiful the divide is between urban and rural (Rogowski 6). In the late nineteenth century, America was land-rich which would produce an urban/rural divide. (Excluding the former-C.S.A.), Democrats represented the cities and Republicans rural areas. Obviously at this point, minorities were not an electoral force. The party structure was created in such a context and therefore does not have minority interests built into it.

So, if neither party structurally represents minority groups, this channel is to some degree blocked. Another way this tactic is blocked is by using FPTP and the electoral college which minimize the influence of minorities concentrated in just a few states (e.g., Latinos). One option is seeking institutional change as suggested above; another is to pursue non-electoral mechanisms.

**Finance**

This is another way to go to enhance political influence. The American system has both hard and soft money channels. Most funding into the election cycle comes as unrestricted soft money as issue campaigns or getting out the vote . Soft money is primarily from PAC s, corporations and to a lesser degree labor unions, none of which have minority representation commensurate with their proportion of the population. While white Americans disproportionately account for contributors to hard money campaigns, the disequilibrium is not as great. Two minority groups Asian Americans and Jewish Americans have attempted to make use of this campaign finance tactic. An interesting development is in campaign finance reform (e.g. McCain-Feingold) which seeks to restrict or eliminate soft money contributions. Such action would relatively reduce white dominance over this means of candidate selection.

**Organization**

Voters only get to vote for candidates presented to them as nominees (or in primaries, credible potential nominees). State political party committees control most of the resources contributed to party organizations. Furthermore, in a country where the two parties collective control election commissions, the party organization can lock-out candidates not conforming to selected policies, etc. The 2000 campaign on both political sides, saw party establishments

leverage organization resources to destroy the insurgent campaigns of McCain and Bradley. In the latter case, this candidate in speeches had attempted to address the issue of white privilege. With barriers erected by the parties, entering into their organization may be a prerequisite for gaining substantive political power.

**Illustration: Asian Americans**

America's Asian population has been soaring since the 1965 immigration reforms and should reach 20 million by 2020 (Chang 1). In a democratic political system in which, theoretically, the number of voters is a predictor of political bloc power and status, Asian Americans are emerging, as they must to protect their interests, as a force. Asian American political involvement has, consequently, been acquiring a more significant focus (Nakanishi 1) by analysts and the media. However, their numbers at 4% are still too small to play a significant role by voting alone in most states. Their electoral involvement, however, is not the political activity upon which the mainstream media has concentrated recently.

The Fundraising Scandal

In the year since the 1996 elections, the media have described at length Democratic National Committee (DNC) fundraising in the Asian American community. U.S. law requires contributors to be U.S. citizens, noncitizen permanent residents (Nash and Wu 16), or corporations (or their subsidiaries) which generate revenue in the United States (Holloway 20). Asian Americans donated over $3 million to the DNC of which nearly $1 million was returned when its source was discovered to be foreign. Few donors or party members soliciting donations fully understood the campaign regulations. The DNC performed an audit to verify the sources of its donors' money, calling its Asian American supporters "to ask whether they were citizens; how

much money they earned; who employed them; and whether they would authorize the party to obtain a credit report on them" (Nash and Wu 15). There clearly were some intentional violations of campaign regulations and at the least impropriety on the part of the Clinton team, yet did that justify a racially-tinged audit and Thompson's hearings? DNC Chair Romer claims "We had to do it" (Nash and Wu 15).

The mainstream media have neglected to question the racial angle the proceedings are taking. Analysts, commentators and politicians overlook the difference between legal contributions from Asian Americans and illegal donations from nonresident foreigners. This "guilt-by-association" emphasizes the place of all of Asian ancestry as foreigners in the mainstream conception of America. Afraid of a tarnished image, the DNC announced January 21 (1997) it would no longer accept donations from noncitizen permanent residents (which is legal). Senator Feinstein (D-CA) has stated that she will be "very cautious" about all Asian American contributions (Nash and Wu 16). Ross Perot, the DNC and others have racialized the campaign finance system controversy, making Asian Americans a scapegoat for wider corruption. Professor Carol Izumi of GWU fears this scandal could isolate Asian Americans just as the emerge politically (Nash and Wu 16). This has the potential to block the financial tactic just recently being pursued successfully by Asian Americans. As this group is proportionately more dominant in New Economy industries, their financial clout has the near-term potential to grow rapidly (net worth of portfolios already exceeds African Americans). Given the comments above, this route seems closed.

Asian American Political Emergence

Asian Americans are emerging politically in the 1990's by both electoral and

non-electoral means. Renewed interest in politics seems to shatter the myth of the community being apathetic and apolitical. To protect themselves from discrimination and other crimes, Asian Americans must seize upon their opportunities in the American political system and not be discouraged by the odds. Below is a review of the scholarly literature which has discussed recent (the last ten years) Asian American political involvement, issues and the responses of the mainstream parties to these issues being raised.

Asian Americans have come to be regarded as politically apathetic and in most regions are underrepresented (Nakanishi 2). Traditional perspectives which are concentrated on electoral participation seem to substantiate this notion. However, Nakanishi is correct to note that most Asian American political participation has been of the non-electoral nature (Nakanishi 3). To be clear, political activity is performed not for an altruistic sense of civic duty but to protect and advance one's interests. To advance such interests Asian Americans have had to confront their near invisibility due to low numbers of voters.

Asian American voter turnout has traditionally been low. Ong and Nakanishi found that their registration rate like other minorities lags behind whites; however, of those registered 76% vote, a figure somewhat higher than the 73% of whites, 64% of Latinos and 63% of African-Americans (Chang 2). The problem is that of 4 million Asian Americans eligible to vote only 1.2 million were registered to vote in 1994 (Vietcurrent 2). This low rate of registration (the lowest of any race) muffles the community's voice.

Voting in the U.S., unlike many other countries, is voluntary and is made all the more burdensome by registration. In several studies conducted in the postwar period (on the general US population), University of Michigan researchers (led by Sears) found the constraints of

registration regulations had the greatest explanatory value for Americans not voting. Simply, potential voters did not know how to register or the registration facility was inaccessible. According to the FEC, Clinton's Motor-Voter Registration program and concerted efforts by community groups have helped to remedy the problem (FEC).

Constraints on Voter Participation

For the 1996 election, Asian American and Latino groups launched massive voter registration endeavors, targeting over one million new voters. Volunteers, such as Sandy Dang, discovered many potential voters simply did not know how to register (Vietcurrent 2). Overall in the US population, voter registration is highly correlated with income, education and percentage professionals/managers; however, among Asian Americans these socio-economic indicators are a weaker determinant (Nakanishi 17).

Nakanishi posits three major factors which diminish the propensity of Asian Americans to register: the language barrier; many immigrants come from countries with repressive political systems; and some are more concerned with home country politics than those of the US. Asian Americans are two-thirds foreign-born and more than one-fourth (of those over 18) say they cannot speak English well (Nakanishi 16). In the 1996 registration effort, community leaders specifically sought out multi-lingual registrars to deputize for the process. Chang suggests the state provide translators provide translators and bilingual voting materials (Chang 2). This further could explain why Asian Americans and Latinos are significantly below African-Americans (who are generally native speakers of English) in registration rates. A breakdown of registration rates among the Asian American ethnicities would be instructive (i.e., South Asians and Filipinos should be more literate in English, due to its use as a lingua franca in their home countries, and

more likely to register, ceteris paribus, than Chinese).

Of the major sources of Asian American immigrants (PRC/ROC, Philippines, Japan, India, Korea, Southeast Asia refugee sources) only India and Japan have maintained democracy (of the dominant-party form) for the entirety of the postwar period. ROC has had one free election and ROK has been without dictatorship for a decade. The Philippines has had mainly military dictatorships and PRC and several Southeast Asian countries (Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam) a "communist" oligarchy. Consequently, Asian immigrants to the US had little experience in democratic politics or even electoral procedures. When voting occurred in many of these states, it was accompanied by intimidation and a lack of choices (contestation) on the ballot. When they emigrated, they had little practice and less faith in a democratic electoral system. A concerted effort of political socialization, as was instituted for previous immigrant waves, is necessary to give Asian Americans confidence in the system.

Nakanishi discusses at length the political transnationality of Asian Americans. Immigrants have sought to influence events in their homelands as well as US policy through activities in the US. Of course, the KMT long maintained institutions in American Chinatowns to work on behalf of ROC interests. Many immigrants also have relations with and journey intermittently to the home country (due to improved transportation) which may spark interest in those countries' development. India and PRC are emerging as regional military powers and Japan a global economic one. Oftentimes, the émigrés (and even their children) are more concerned with the events occurring in the country of origin than political happenings in the US. For Nakanishi, and also Chang, these factors are the greatest deterrent to Asian American voter registration. When Asian Americans are registered, they vote at a higher rate than any other race (Chang 2).

Additional studies in this area are needed. Nakanishi's study concentrated on Asian Americans in two cities (San Francisco and Los Angeles) which respondents he selected by surname (Nakanishi 9). Cities tend to have a higher proportion of their populations industrial working class, unionized, and claiming Democratic party identification. By studying only cities (n=2) Nakanishi may not have a predictor of the nation-wide population. Also, as he is aware, the practice of identifying race by surname may inaccurately reflect many multiracial people, those who have Americanized their names, those who have interracially married, and names which are ambiguous as to origin. Nakanishi understands these weaknesses in his research methodology but due to the dearth of data on Asian American electoral participation has made an important contribution to the field. Chang confirmed many of Nakanishi's arguments some ten years later, relying on exit polls conducted by the Asian American Legal Defense Fund (Chang 6). (Asian Americans were selected by self-identification.) The ANES studies which, as of 1994 were still lodged in the black/white dichotomy need to begin work on Asian American politics.

Asian Americans in Office

The second form of electoral involvement is running for office. A long-established force in Hawaii, Asian American candidates are becoming more common on the mainland. Nationwide over 2,000 Asian Americans held political office in 1996 (Chang 9), mainly at the local level. As their party identification is split (discussed below), Asian Americans have been elected on both the Republican and Democratic tickets. Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-HI), Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI), Rep. Patsy Mink (D-HI), Rep. Robert Matsui (D-CA), Rep. Jay Kim (R-CA) and Gov. Gary Locke (D-WA) are among the most prominent Asian American politicians. Gov. Locke sees signs of Asian Americans breaking through the glass ceiling to higher offices (Chang 11). In its

October/November 1996 issue, A. Magazine asked prominent Asian American politicians and political scientists "How long will it really be before an Asian American sits in the Oval Office?" Responses ranged from "Now" (Rep. Kim) to "Never" (Prof. Peo-Te Lein) with most predicting in the first half of the next century (Chang 12).

Gov. Locke's election may well foretell of Asian American political success throughout the mainland. While Hawaii has a majority Asian Americans and California 11%, Washington has only 5%, much closer to the national figure of 3%. Locke's campaign received one-fourth of its funding from Asian Americans (one-third of which was out-of-state) (Ewell 3). Yet, with only a fraction of Washington of Asian descent, electorally Locke had to transcend race. Prof. Andrea Simpson argues that its easier for a minority to win in a state like Washington which is 87% white because there is less overt tension and consequently less backlash (Simon 2). Essentially, minorities must reach a critical mass for the white majority to perceive their numbers and clout as threatening. At the beginning of desegregation in the South, University of Michigan researchers found most whites willing to accept "a few" African-Americans as neighbors or schoolmates; however, when the African-American proportion climbed above 20%, the whites felt threatened and backlashed. For this reason, perhaps Rep. Bob Underwood (D-GU) is right when he suggests the first minority elected President will be an Asian American (Chang 12) as African-Americans and Latinos will have reached that threatening critical mass. Gov. Locke hopes Asian Americans will see benefits from the political system and increasingly participate as voters and candidates.

Non-Electoral Participation

Asian Americans have become more of presence in the US political system by non-electoral

means. Campaign contributions and labor (volunteering for candidates), registration efforts and political protests are the most common sorts of involvement. Asian American candidates have relied own their community much more for financing than votes (Chang 8). They also often contribute to candidates in different districts and states. Gov. Locke raised 15% of the funds for his campaign from Asian American communities outside of Washington (Chang 8). Asian Americans donate more to the political parties than any other group classification except Jews; this money is used to influence candidates especially regarding appointments. In California, Asian Americans represent 10% of the population but 30% of campaign contributions (Chang 8); Hamel and Schreiner argue that Asians use their money as a way to make up for politically insignificant numbers. They go on to argue for an alliance of Asian American money and Latino votes, on issues of agreement such as immigration and language (i.e. opposing English as America's official language), to contest for seats especially in California and New York (Hamel and Schreiner 52). Donating money to campaigns is the most important way which is currently politically feasible to advance Asian American political power; the recent fundraising scandal may scare many off from future contribution thus diminishing their ability to influence policy. Nakanishi cites domestic protest activity as an important form of non-electoral activity (Nakanishi 19). This includes strikes, petitioning, marches and recognition politics. Some recent examples of protest are JACL's internment struggle and opposition to California's Proposition 187. Such activity has a long history in the Asian American community as it was one of few ways to exert political influence before the granting of franchise. This will continue to be an important method of broadcasting the community's message until registered voter number increase to a non-negligible level.

Hamel and Schreiner evince that neither the Republican nor Democratic party is a perfect fit for Asian Americans (Hamel and Schreiner 52). Chang found 51% of Asian Americans were Democrats and 19% Republicans in New York City in 1996 and nationally there were slightly more Democrats than Republicans (Chang 6). Nakanishi found in Los Angeles 48.5% were Democrats and 29.4% were Republicans (Nakanishi 10). In both LA and NYC there were 20-30% who identified with third parties or no parties. Neither Chang nor Nakanishi provide numbers for the mainstream population to which to compare their data from the Asian American samples. Hamel and Schreiner make their assertion without providing data for it in their article. In studies conducted for his 1996 book The Decline of American Political Parties Wattenberg found that 20% of the American population did not identify with a major political party. The figures Chang and Nakanishi provide may not be significantly varied from the general population. Yet, Hamel and Schreiner's assertion may still be correct. In the classic studies of party identification, researchers generally adopt the ICPSR 7-point scale of identification or the "feeling thermometer" which allow respondents to indicate a difference between strong Democrat and weak Democrat, etc. Hamel and Schreiner's claim may well be true but take the form of Asian Americans weakly identifying with the existent political parties. This party identification is rooted in Asian American issues which have political salience and how the established parties address them. This reduces the appeal of joining party organizations and enhancing influence through that mechanism.

Asian American Issues

The issues with the most political salience for Asian Americans are immigration and language issues (Chang 4; Clark 12; Massey 2). Most Asian Americans are immigrants or children of

immigrants. Asians form the bulk of the INS's family-reunification preference immigration (which the Republicans have attempted to reduce). Proposition 187 in 1994 (which would cut off welfare and public health to all immigrants regardless of status) made immigrants feel attacked and galvanized the community in opposition to this issue. The second issue of importance deals with attempts to make English the official language of the US. Many Asian Americans speak little or no English; officializing the language would effectively cut off many from access to government services. Currently, the INS citizenship test is offered in Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese; English-only ordinances may be directed at limiting the size of the electorate of the speakers of such languages.

Other issues of importance to Asian Americans are welfare, admissions, affirmative action, small-business, economic/minimum-wage and foreign policy (Chang 4; UCLA-AASC 1; Takagi 1). Proposition 209 (1996) energized California's Asian American community in opposition to its proposed destruction of affirmative action. Asian Americans voted 76% in Los Angeles and 61% state-wide against Proposition 209. Opinions on discrimination and affirmative action were consistent with the voting patter and bipartisan as 73% of Asian American Republicans and 79% of Democrats opposed the measure in LA (UCLA-AASC 1). Behind this ballot issue was the question of whether affirmative action policies help or hurt Asian American chances in education (see admissions, below) and employment. In Proposition 210, Asian Americans endorsed an increase in the California minimum wage 66-34% (UCLA-AASC 2), an issue important to the working class and small-business owners. Asian Americans have also expressed interest in foreign policy, a subject of peripheral importance to the general US population. Especially "political" refugees from communist-controlled areas and émigrés from countries now emerging

as military and economic powers (PRC, India, Japan, ROK) take candidate positions on national security and foreign policy issues into account when voting. Recent immigrants and their children vary most from the general population in their international interest.

The Parties Respond

Above have been mentioned some of the issues which hold the most saliency in the Asian American community and earlier the assertion of weak party identification. Hamel and Schreiner argued that neither the Republican nor Democratic party is a perfect fit for Asian Americans (Hamel and Schreiner 52). How have established parties addressed the concerns of the Asian American community? The parties have adopted positions of a number of these issues (Takagi; Massey) and appointed members of the community to government posts (Wu 1) in response to growing political party. Due to the remarkable diversity of Asian Americans both ethnically and socio-economically the major political parties have been unable to present a platform which could address the community as a block. Even some general positions of the community appear to randomly take plank from each party: support for affirmative action, strong national security, open immigration, anti-communism, welfare and public services, small-business subsidies, etc. At the risk of oversimplifying, some trends in party identification shifts can be seen over the last twenty years. Parties have gained Asian American support as rewards for policy positions and lost it as a penalty. The 1965 immigration law revisions by the LBJ-directed Democratic party served to gain the support of a plurality of Asian Americans for a time. However, in the 1980's neo-conservative Republicans adopted foreign policy, admissions and small-business issues as their own, selling the package along with its contrived "model minority" theory (Massey 22). Republican President Reagan was very popular among Asian American voters (Massey 23) for

his staunch anti-communism and his support of small business initiatives. On the question of admissions, there has been a contentious debate of which policy is discriminating against Asian Americans. Takagi argues Asian Americans get squeezed out from both directions: from the bottom by affirmative action preferences (to benefit the poor and underrepresented minorities) and from the top by quotas (legacy, minority caps, "academic diversity" arguments, and in rare cases, racism) which are addressed by separate political alliances (Takagi 116).
Neo-conservatives gained many followers in the 1980's telling Asian Americans they were the model minority and that preferences for African-Americans and Latinos diminished their chances of acceptance. In studies conducted by universities, discrimination from both directions was found to be limiting Asian American admissions (Takagi 118). Schools responded by moving to class-based preferences which eliminated the saliency of this tool. Yet, many Asian Americans were Republicans for the Republican party to lose/scare away &which it promptly did. In the 1990's, Asian Americans heavily shifted to Democratic identification as the Republicans adopted extreme positions on immigration and language, scaring the community away (Clark 12). Clinton demonized the GOP on these issues gaining massive support from the Asian American and Latino communities. For now, Asian Americans give the Democratic party slightly more support but seem to identify with a moderate socially conservative Democrat such a President Clinton. No party has yet found a perfect fit but the candidate Clinton has come very close.

The other method of addressing concerns is through appointments. After being pressured by the OCA and other groups Bush appointed 30 Chinese Americans to posts. Clinton has recently nominated Bill Lann Lee as Attorney General for Civil Rights, the highest ranking position thus far in the bureaucracy for an Asian American. Wu writes that Clinton is very

committed to having Lee as the top civil rights enforcer (Wu 1). Both parties have rewarded Asian Americans for their support by appointments. Face representation is a greater priority for many community elites , including OCA, than specific redistributive policies.

Asian Americans are growing ever-stronger in the US political system. Neither major political party has successfully addressed Asian American concerns; until one does party identification will not strengthen to an "assured bloc" level as African-Americans have achieved. Asian Americans need the political system to promote their interests. They must register to vote; they must donate time and money to campaigns; they must run for election; they must make their voice heard by elected politicians. They parties will become less stable electorally and financially (given a growing Asian American population) if they do not address Asian American issues in a fair and honest manner as well as allow them to rise in governmental and political ranks. The future of American society lies in its increasing Asian American and Latino ranks which must be included in the system.

**Final Remarks**

Obviously, this is a very cursory look at the model for Asian Americans but it does seem to have some face validity. Future work would consider what community leaders are doing in the 2000 election, including the potentially-significant 80-20 Initiative. Yet, from what is evident here many institutional tactics have been closed off perhaps forcing Asian Americans to using protest strategies. Future work should also consider whether this framework hold for other subordinate minority groups.

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