Chapter One

Introduction: The Current State of East Asian American Political Participation

The fundraising scandals surrounding President Bill Clinton's reelection in 1996 shrouded East Asian American political participation in a cloud of suspicion and reinforced racial stereotypes. Within a year, East Asian Americans went from being largely ignored on the political stage to being the subjects of intense investigations and discrimination. Due to the illegal activities of a few individuals in the months before the 1996 presidential election, the entire East Asian American population of approximately ten million was suspected of wielding an undue foreign influence over the White House.[1]

The focus of the initial allegations was Democratic National Committee (DNC) fund-raiser John Huang, a Taiwanese-American businessman. As head of banking operations at the Lippo Group, Huang lobbied the federal government to lessen restrictions on business loans to racial minorities. Just prior to the 1996 election, Huang joined the DNC fund-raising staff, where he was assigned to raise money for the DNC from Asian Americans.[2] The first allegation surrounding Huang centered on his relationship with the Wiriadinatas, an Indonesian couple who lawfully donated $45,000 to the DNC, but who were suspected of having given money illegally on behalf of the Lippo Group; donors cannot act as conduits for another organization.[3] By the fall of

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[1] Frank H. Wu and Francey Lim Youngberg, "People from China Crossing the River: Asian American Political Empowerment and Foreign Influence." in *Asian Americans and Politics: Perspectives, Experiences and Prospects*, ed. Gordon Chang (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001), 312.

[2] Pei-Te Lien, *The Making of Asian America Through Political Participation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001) 73.

[3] Wu et al 2001, 317.

1996, it became clear that numerous Chinese Americans were acting as conduits in donating to the Democratic Party: Yah Lin "Charlie" Trie (an Arkansas restaurant owner), Johnny Chung (a California businessman), and Maria Hsia (a California consultant). The final straw came with Vice President Al Gore's visit to the Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple outside Los Angeles. Here, not only did Gore accept illegal donations from a religious organization, but the temple also later reimbursed the monks for donations to Gore and the DNC.[4]

By law, foreign nationals are allowed to donate to U.S. political parties. As taxpayers, "potential citizens" are granted some political leverage.[5] Foreign nationals who are not legal permanent residents, however, are banned from such contributions. The 1996 scandal developed because all campaign donors, regardless of citizenship status, are banned from giving money on behalf of another individual.

As evidenced by these scandals, East Asian Americans are unique among America's racial minorities for several reasons. First, they are one of the largest financial contributors to political campaigns.[6] East Asians are second only to Jewish Americans in per capita campaign contributions.[7] Overall, East Asian Americans' financial ability to contribute largely accounts for their willingness to donate to political campaigns. However, despite their high socioeconomic status and willingness to donate to campaigns,

[4] Wu et al 2001, 318.

[5] Wu et al 2001, 317.

[6] Compared to Latinos and African Americans, East Asian Americans are also unique in the stereotypes they typically face. While the media commonly casts other minority groups as uneducated and of a lower socioeconomic status, East Asian Americans are often portrayed as the "model minority" in terms of education, jobs, and class. Lien 2001, 75.

[7] Lien 2001, 74.

East Asian Americans rank among the lowest ethnic groups in terms of electoral participation.[8] Studies of first generation East Asian Americans tend to conclude that lack of citizenship, group cohesion, and poor English skills prevent this group from fully engaging in America's electoral system.

This thesis, though, seeks to expand such research to second generation East Asian Americans, who presumably do not face the same challenges to participation that the first generation faces. More specifically, this study sets out to investigate how the second generation's rate of participation compares to their parents and non-East Asian peers. Ultimately, while the campaign finance scandals underscore problems of participation among the first generation, this study seeks to determine how the second generation's political attitudes and actions are shaped. Moreover, I aim to use these findings to gain a better understanding of how to promote future East Asian American electoral participation.

Who are East Asian Americans?

In comparison to other ethnic groups residing in the United States, East Asians are arguably the most diverse in terms of culture, language, religion, and world views. I am using the term East Asian to those denote those who descend from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, and Singapore. They generally speak: Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese Chinese, Korean, or Japanese. Each of these countries has its own cultural beliefs and religious practices. Although other ethnic minorities, such as Latinos, are from a diverse set of countries, the majority of them speak Spanish and practice Catholicism.

[7] Lien 2001, 74.

The term "Asian American" was not invented and used until the late 1960s, when U.S.-born college students of Chinese and Japanese origin engaged in various protest activities. At this time, the creation of pan-Asian organizations, such as the Asian American Political Alliance and the publication of journals, such as the *Amerasia Journal*, helped to facilitate Asian group identity.[9] Gradually, the conception of East Asian American panethnicity was adopted by the government, political organizations, and the media in order to advocate for their political interests. Other scholars argue that the formation of a panethnic identity has helped East Asian Americans to combat common stereotypes.[10] Panethnic boundaries, then, have continually been reshaped by internal and external forces.

Panethnicity is not merely a theoretical construct: Lien, Conway, and Wong identify a clear difference in self identification between Asian-born and U.S.-born respondents. For example, 16 percent of U.S. born respondents identify as solely "American," whereas only 2 percent of foreign-born respondents do. Of those who identify as "Asian American," 63 percent were U.S. born, while 55 percent were foreign-born. Furthermore, one percent of U.S.-born respondents identify only as "Asian," yet two percent of foreign-born respondents do.[11] Ultimately, Lien, Conway, and Wong assert that East Asian citizens of the United States are increasingly identifying as Asian American.

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[9] Pei-Te Lien, *The Political Participation of Asian Americans: Voting Behavior in Southern California* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1997) 24-25.

[10] Janelle S. Wong, Pei-Tei Lien, and M. Margaret Conway, "Group-Based Resources and Political Participation among Asian Americans," *American Politics Research* Vol. 33 No. 4 (July 2005) 549.

[11] Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004, 39, 44.

Current Levels of East Asian American Participation

Today, with the suspicion of East Asian American political wrongdoings still lingering, this minority group has made little headway in terms of voting rates. Based on the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey from 2000-2001 (PNAAPS), Pei-Te Lien, identifies the current political trends in East Asian American electoral participation. In terms of voter registration, East Asian Americans display the lowest rates; 49%, compared to 55% for Latinos, 58% for Indians, 64% for blacks, and 69% for whites. Turnout rates among East Asian Americans (32%) is similar to Latinos (33%), but significantly lower than other ethnicities. These racial gaps persist even after controlling for variation in socioeconomic status, region, or social connectedness. In addition, Lien notes that, during the 1990s, East Asian Americans exhibited a greater decline in registration and voting rates than did other ethnic groups. This, she suggests, may have resulted from the campaign finance scandals.[12]

Although their low levels of electoral participation are similar to those of Latino Americans, East Asian Americans present a unique potential participation paradox for two reasons. First, Asian Americans have the greatest mean incomes among all other racial and ethnic groups.[13] Research indicates a direct correlation between socioeconomic status and political activity.[14] Second, East Asian Americans are among

[12] Lien 2001, 114-117.

[13] According to the 2005 U.S. census, East Asian men have the highest median earnings ($48, 693) of any single racial group, including whites. Likewise, East Asian women have the highest earnings ($37,792) among women of all other racial groups in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, "Median Earnings by Race and Hispanic Origin." *Income, Earnings, and Poverty Data from the 2005 American Community Survey*, (Washington, D.C., 2005) 10.)

[14] Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995) 523.

the fastest growing potential voting blocs. Between 1990 and 1998, the rate of East Asian citizenship increased by 2 percentage points in each election cycle, a rate that far surpassed all other immigrant groups in the United States.[15] Thus, as East Asian Americans continue to rank at the top of the income bracket and make substantial gains in citizenship, scholars of minority politics aim to explain their low levels of electoral participation.

Current Theories of Asian American Political Participation

Scholars posit three explanations for East Asian Americans' low rates of electoral participation. First, although their rates of citizenship have continually increased over the past decade, East Asians have historically faced more stringent immigration restrictions. While other immigrant groups gained the right to vote in the latter part of the nineteenth century, it was not until the passage of the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act that East Asian Americans were enfranchised.[16] These historical circumstances, combined with today's strict naturalization laws, still hinder East Asian American citizenship, and thus electoral participation.[17]

Another barrier to East Asian American electoral participation is a lack of English proficiency. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 63 percent of all East Asian Americans are foreign born. A high percentage of foreign-born people within an ethnic group tends to indicate a high percentage of individuals who are not fluent in English.

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[15] Lien 2001, 114.

[16] Lien 2001, 114.

[17] Patricia Jiayi Ho, "Asian voters' dormant power," *Pasadena Star News* 8 Sept. 2006.

Indeed, the 1990 census found that 39.8 percent of all East Asian Americans over the age of 5 did not speak English "very well."[18] To account for their lack of English proficiency, the 1975 and 1992 language amendments allowed East Asian Americans with limited English abilities to receive bilingual voting assistance. Currently, under this law, language assistance extends to over 672,750 East Asian Americans in 16 jurisdictions in seven states: Alaska, Hawaii, California, Illinois, New York, Texas, and Washington.[19] The total East Asian American population that is eligible to vote (citizens over 18), though, is around 5,445,799.[20] This leaves nearly 4 million East Asians outside major ethnic enclaves without bilingual ballots.

Scholars have also identified ties to the homeland as a significant barrier to East Asian Americans' electoral participation. East Asian Americans with intentions to return to their home countries tend to identify less with U.S. politics and parties. In addition, East Asian Americans who express a greater interest in homeland politics may harbor a lower sense of efficacy in terms of American politics. This decreased sense of political efficacy has been attributed to cultural influences.[21] Some scholars suggest, for example, that foreign-born East Asian Americans may be more accustomed to autocratic systems rather than democratic political traditions.[22]

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[18] Timothy P. Fong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 44.

[19] Phillip A. Olaya, Glenn D. Magpantay, Nancy W. Yu, Margaret Fung, "Asian Americans and the Voting Rights Act," *Report: Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund* (15 June 2006).

[20] U.S. Census Bureau, "Voting Age Population and Voting Age Citizens," *2000 Census Data* (2000).

[21] Pei-Te Lien, Margaret Conway, and Janelle Wong, *The Politics of Asian Americans: Diversity and Community* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 56.

[22] Ho 2006.

As East Asian Americans rapidly gain citizenship and the bilingual ballots are expanded, there is reason to believe that this population may soon be swinging more elections in some of the most politically powerful states. Nonetheless, most scholarship examines first generation East Asian immigrants' political behavior. This study, then, aims to fill the void in the current literature by offering an analysis of the second generation's political behavior and attitudes. Second generation is defined as individuals whose parents were foreign born, but later moved to the United States.

The current body of literature on East Asian American politics fails to provide an adequate understanding of participation among the second generation. Rather, it merely addresses East Asian cultural youth organizations and provides a general analysis of "Asian family values." Therefore, Pei-Tei Lien suggests that "because the majority of the contemporary Asian American population in the United States is adult immigrants, new conceptual models of Asian American political attitudes must take into account factors related to international migration and adult re-socialization."[23]

While there is a significant gap in the current literature on second generation East Asian American political participation, there is a substantial amount of literature on political socialization of children. Numerous political scientists have proven that by adolescence, most children have acquired the party identification of their parents.[24] If parents have been proven to be so influential in the formation of their children's political attitudes, there is great reason to believe that this may hold true for the transmission of political disinterest from first generation East Asian Americans to their children.

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[23] Lien 2001, 221.

[24] Christopher Achen, "Parental Socialization and Rational Party Identification," *Political Behavior* Vol. 24 No. 2. (Jun., 2002): 151-170. Kent M. Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, *Generations and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) 84.

Hypothesis

From the current literature, we can derive two distinct hypotheses. First, without the obstacles of citizenship, language proficiency, and homeland ties, second generation East Asians may exhibit higher voting and registration rates than the first generation. Because the second generation has been raised by relatively politically inactive parents, however, the second generation may still participate at low levels relative to their non-East Asian counterparts. Moreover, a general interest in politics may influence rates of participation regardless of ethnic background. More specifically:

1.) *Second generation East Asian Americans will engage in a greater number of political acts than first generation immigrants, due to the absence of barriers that were previously in place.*

2.) *Second generation East Asian Americans will register and vote at lower rates than their peers of other ethnic groups due to socialization with politically disinclined parents.*

The Importance of East Asian American Political Participation

With such low registration and turnout rates, who represents East Asian Americans' interests in the U.S. federal and local governments?[25] Like other minority groups, East Asians are far from achieving adequate representation in the U.S. political system. If their representation was in proportion to their population in the U.S., there

[25] Hanna Pitkin defines "representation" as the activity of making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives "present" in the policy making process. Heinz Eulau argues that an elected official should be an expert capable of determining the best course of action and policies for his constituents. Hanna Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 175. Heinz Eulau, "Changing Views of Representation." *Contemporary Political Science: Toward Empirical Theory*, ed. Ithiel de Sola (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976).

would be thirteen to seventeen House members and three to four Senators of East Asian descent. Currently, there are only four East Asian Americans serving in the House and two in the Senate. At the state level, too, East Asian Americans have not achieved descriptive representation. For instance, in California, with an East Asian population that is now more than 10 percent, only one East Asian American serves in the 40 member Senate.[26] These statistics prove that East Asian participation is necessary to achieve both substantive and descriptive representation in the American political process.

Jane Mansbridge expounds on the significance of descriptive representation among minorities. Descriptive representation is the notion that a policymaker, because his or her race, religion, gender, age, or occupation mirrors those attributes of the constituents, will be better able to represent their interests. "Essentially, when history is examined," writes Mansbridge, "it shows that a person who has experienced the legacy of a group of people can also appreciate what they are going through as an elected or appointed official."[27] She assumes that as minority groups participate at greater rates, policymakers will begin to reflect their interests more and more in the electoral arena.

Descriptive representation is not only theoretically important, but it has been proven to impact actual policy outcomes. Michelle Swers finds that, compared to male representatives, female representatives are better able and more willing to address women's issues in the legislature.[28] Similarly, Claudine Gay finds that Blacks contact

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[26] Okiyoshi Takeda, "The Representation of Asian Americans in the U.S. Political System," *Representation of Minority Groups in the U.S.* ed. Charles Menifield (Maryland: Austin & Winfield Publishers, 2001) 86.

[27] Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes,'" *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 61 (1999): 628-657.

[28] Michelle Swers, *The Difference Women Make: The Policy Impact of Women in Congress* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002) 199.

Black representatives more than they do White representatives. Thus, descriptive representation affects the relationship between citizens and elected officials (but see Lawless 2004).

Since descriptive representation is so low for East Asian Americans, substantive representation becomes all the more important. Substantive representation refers to the manner in which legislators represent the interests of constituents through voting and constituent service. Despite numerous studies regarding substantive representation of African American and Latino interests,[29] little scholarly research examines East Asians' substantive representation.[30] Scholars assert that, unlike other minority groups, East Asian Americans are more diverse in terms of partisanship, culture, religion, and language. Coupled with a lack of survey data on East Asian American public opinion, the intra-group diversity makes it difficult to determine whether legislative actions favor East Asian Americans.[31] Furthermore, scholars often find that some legislative acts are too inclusive to determine whether or not they favor East Asians. For instance, hate crime legislation would benefit the East Asian American community because hate crimes are still committed against this ethnic group. This legislation would also benefit other racial minority groups and it is difficult to determine whether elected officials support the

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[29] Rodney E. Hero and Caroline J. Tolbert, "Latinos and Substantive Representation in the U.S. House of Representatives: Direct, Indirect, or Nonexistent?" *American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 39 No. 3 (Aug. 1995): 640. Charles Cameron, David Epstein, and Sharyn O'Halloran, "Do Majority-Minority Districts Maximize Substantive Black Representation in Congress?" *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 90 No. 4 (Dec. 1996): 794.

[30] Lien 2001, 170.

[31] Takeda 2001, 92-93.

legislation to help East Asian Americans or minorities in general.[32] Because East Asian American voters have difficulty determining which legislative acts are in their favor, they may be less likely to coalesce around a particular candidate or political party the way that Latino or African American voters might.

On the other hand, some legislation is too narrow to judge its impact on East Asian Americans. The Civil Liberties Act of 1988, for example, authorized reparations to be paid to descendents of Japanese Americans interned in concentration camps during World War II. Although this bill was unanimously supported by all East Asian American political organizations, it is impossible to say whether all East Asians benefited from this legislation.[33] Since only Japanese Americans were interned in camps, would only their descendents benefit from reparations, or would all East Asians reap the rewards? Furthermore, it is difficult to determine how the monetary reparations would compare to the emotional rewards the bill might offer. This literature, then, suggests that though second generation East Asian Americans may have shared interests, it is possible that their differences may prevent them from uniting as a significant voting bloc in the future.

Organization and Contribution

This thesis seeks to determine second generation Asian Americans' rates of political participation and understand the factors influencing their activity. Based on a unique survey of 300 American college students, the research sheds light on East Asians'

[32] Okiyoshi Takeda, "The Representation of Asian Americans in the U.S. Political System," In Charles E. Menifield Ed. *Representation of Minority Groups in the U.S.: Implications for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryland: Austin & Winfield, Publishers, 2001): 93.

[33] Takesa 2001, 94.

political participation, political attitudes, parents' attitudes, and ethnic origin. Ultimately, the data allow me to draw causal links between culture, political socialization, and electoral behavior.

In order to gain a greater understanding of the factors influencing second generation Asian American political participation, it is necessary to understand more about the first generation's political experience. Therefore, Chapter Two begins with a discussion of the literature surrounding theories of first generation electoral and non-electoral participation, attitudes toward American politics, and East Asian group consciousness. In addition, I review the small amount of literature surrounding East Asian American youth and their participation in cultural and political organizations.

Chapter Three turns to the survey results. After establishing that the sample represents the nation's college population, I operationalize my hypotheses. As predicted, second generation East Asian Americans participate at higher rates than the first generation, but at lower rates than their non-East Asian peers. Multivariate results reveal that, in addition to race, parents' activism, parents' citizenship, respondents' political interest and partisanship influence participation levels. Overall, the data provide strong evidence that, compared to their peers, second generation East Asian Americans are at a distinct disadvantage because their parents' participation is so minimal. The situation is not hopeless for East Asians, however, as it is clear that an independent interest in politics can offset any disadvantage afforded by weak political socialization.

Chapter Four explains the broader significance of my findings for East Asian American political participation and democratic theory. I suggest channels through

which to increase the second generation's levels of political participation and then conclude by offering avenues for future research.

Chapter 2

First Generation East Asian American Political Participation; The Current Bodies of Literature

In May 2002, the Kansas state legislature repealed a series of "alien land laws," which had banned East Asian immigrants from owning and inheriting land in Kansas. This legal reform came in response to an information campaign led by law professor Jack Chin at the University and Nationality Law Review at the University of Cincinnati. In Florida and New Mexico, however, similar laws remain in the state constitutions. A ballot initiative in New Mexico to strike the law from the books actually failed in November 2002.[34] These laws are just one example of the persistent prejudice against East Asian Americans. Despite their "model minority" status, East Asian Americans encounter discriminatory laws that signify that they are unwelcome in the U.S. and its political process.

With prejudicial laws still in existence, the need to explore future prospects for East Asian participation become even more urgent. I therefore use the relatively abundant research on first generation Asian American political participation to provide valuable insight into the second generation's potential voting rates, political attitudes, and political behavior. Extant theories predict that the second generation will participate at higher rates than their parents, but at still lower rates than their peers. The current literature on first generation East Asian Americans generally concludes that their low levels of citizenship, English proficiency, ties to the homeland, and cultural differences hinder political participation. Nonetheless, their discussion of political participation among the second generation is often filled with mere speculations. While there is some

[34] Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004, vii.

literature on their participation in school politics or cultural organizations, there is little hard evidence of their actual participatory levels in electoral and non-electoral politics.

Because there is so little literature on the second generation's potential participation levels, this chapter begins by reviewing the current theories on first generation East Asian Americans participation and their attitudes toward government politics. The second section of this chapter outlines specific case studies and surveys analyzing current East Asian Americans' political attitudes and how they might influence the second generation's perceptions. The chapter then moves toward a discussion of panethnicity and its implications for Asian Americans' electoral participation. The chapter concludes by reviewing the small body of literature on Asian American youth political participation in order to provide us with a foundation from which to make more specific predictions.

Theories on First Generation East Asian American Electoral Participation

A review of the literature reveals a glaring gap pertaining to second generation East Asian Americans' political participation. The research on first generation East Asians, however, is relevant for hypothesis derivation. According to Pei-Te Lien, first generation East Asian Americans vote at a rate of only 32 percent.[35] Moreover, their levels of voter registration hover at 49 percent, the lowest among all ethnic groups. These statistics are startling when one considers that a majority of scholars deem voting the most basic indicator of the public's overall satisfaction with the government. It offers a brand of equality that no other type of participation can provide—each citizen gets only

[35] Lien 2001, 114-117.

one vote.[36] For most Americans, casting a vote requires minimal resources and is easily practiced. The requirements for voting are simple; one must be a U.S. citizen over the age of 18.

Tied into the second generation's levels of political participation is their feelings on political partisanship and ideology. Timothy Fong posits that East Asian Americans are unique among other ethnic groups in their party loyalty. While African Americans and Latinos have an overwhelming loyalty to the Democratic Party, East Asian Americans' party loyalty is strongly divided.[37] Don Nakanishi and James S. Lai conclude that this lack of partisan and ethnic unity highlights the diversity of the East Asian American community, and also illustrates why they have historically been ignored on the political scene.[38] Because East Asians have few concrete political leanings and interests, politicians have tended to focus on more cohesive groups, such as the African-American community.

This political division among Asian Americans did not always exist. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Republican Party successfully recruited numerous East Asian Americans. "We're trying to get more involvement in general activities with the Republican Party," stated Dennis See, the Republican insider in charge of recruiting East Asian voters. "Asian Americans need to gain political experience at all levels…This includes experience as candidates and voters, but also as campaign workers and precinct

[36] Verba, Brady, and Schlozman 1995, 38.

[37] Fong 2002, 287.

[38] Don Nakanishi and James S. Lai found that of East Asian Americans in Monterey Park, California, 43 percent were registered Democrats in 1984, 31 percent were registered Republicans, and 25 percent declined to state their preference.

leaders."[39] Thus, in the 1988 presidential election, 54 percent of East Asian voters supported George Bush, only 44 percent supported Dukakis. After numerous East Asians, such as Elaine Chao (Secretary of Labor), were named to political offices under George H.W. Bush, the Republican Party managed to maintain the loyalty of many East Asian Americans. In fact, according to exit polls, East Asian Americans supported George H.W. Bush over Bill Clinton in 1992 by a margin of 55 to 29 percent.[40]

By the mid-1990s, however, the Republican Party began to lose the support of East Asian Americans. First, in 1994, California's Republican governor, Pete Wilson, promoted the passage of Proposition 187. This bill sought to eliminate educational and social services to all undocumented immigrants, many of whom were Chinese. In 1996, the Republican-controlled Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PWORA), further limiting social services to legal immigrants.[41] This sequence of events motivated many East Asian American citizens to register and vote. Hence, many scholars attribute East Asian Americans' current support for the Democratic Party at least in part to anger over the Republicans' stance on immigration.[42] According to Pei-Te Lien:

> The occupancy of the White House by a Democratic president from 1992 to 2000 and the switch to a Republican-controlled Congress after the 1994 elections—which then passed welfare reforms to cut immigrant and

[39] Fong 2002, 287.

[40] Pei-Tei Lien, *The Making of Asian America through Political Participation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001): 107.

[41] Fong 2002, 290.

[42] Fong 2002, 289.

> minority benefits—may explain in part the dominance of Democratic identifiers among Asian American voters.[43]

Because they felt powerless against mainstream political parties, a group of prominent Chinese Americans created their own political action committee called the 80-20 Initiative. The initiative called for East Asian Americans to consolidate their power by rallying 80 percent of the East Asian American community to support one presidential candidate for the 2000 election. "We openly want to establish political clout for the Asian American community," explained S.B. Woo, Delaware's former lieutenant governor.[44] It was the first time an East Asian American political group sought to organize a bloc vote for the presidential nominee. In the end, the coalition was fairly successful, with exit polls indicating that 62 percent of East Asian voters chose Al Gore, only 34 percent voted for George W. Bush.[45] The success of this initiative indicates the potential second generation East Asian Americans have for influencing future political outcomes as a unified voting bloc.

Despite predictions that East Asian Americans may some day become a cohesive voting bloc, the current literature suggests that their access to this most basic form of political participation has been severely hindered by a number of structural, cultural, and social factors. These factors can theoretically be divided into two categories: "Old World" and "New World" impediments.[46] "Old World" attitudes were brought here by

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[43] Pei-Te Lien, *The Politics of Asian Americans: Diversity and Community* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 103.

[44] Fong 2002, 290.

[45] Pei-Tei Lien, *The Making of Asian America through Political Participation* 2001, 77.

[46] Harold Brackman and Steven P. Erie, "Beyond 'Politics by Other Means'?: Empowerment Strategies for Los Angeles' Asian Pacific Community." In Don T. Nakanishi and James S. Lai, eds., *Asian*

East Asian immigrants, while "New World" obstacles are products of the American historical, social, and political structure.

In explaining the low rates of electoral participation among first generation East Asian Americans, scholars generally point first to a key "New World" impediment; reduced levels of citizenship relative to other minority groups in America.[47] Currently, 55 percent of East Asian American adults are not citizens, and, therefore, are ineligible to vote.[48] The numbers for Latinos are similar.[49] Scholars hypothesize that once more East Asians become citizens, their electoral participation levels will increase. Given that citizenship is not a barrier for second generation East Asian Americans, they should vote at higher rates than the first generation. And we have reason to be hopeful, especially since research indicates that the longer one resides in the United States, the more likely that individual is to participate electorally.[50] In fact, studies show that those East Asians who gained citizenship through naturalization are more likely to vote than other East Asian Americans. According to registration data from the 2000 census, 77 percent of

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American Politics: Law, Participation, and Policy (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003): 233.

[47] Timothy P. Fong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002): 285; Pei-Te Lien, M. Margaret Conway, and Janelle Wong, *The Politics o f Asian Americans: Diversity and Communit*y, (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2004): 113; Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992): 57; Brackman and Erie 2003, 233.

[48] Fong 2002, 286.

[49] In order to judge East Asians' citizenship levels in relation to another large minority group in the U.S., I present statistics for the Latino population: approximately 60 percent of the population is ineligible to vote due to citizenship requirements. "The Latino Population and the Latino Electorate: The Numbers Differ," *Pew Research Foundation*, Internet, available from http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/5.pdf., 30 March 2007.

[50] Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004, 150.

foreign-born East Asian Americans registered to vote, compared with an average registration rate of 54 percent for this ethnic group.[51]

In addition to citizenship, scholars agree that English proficiency is still a significant hindrance to first generation East Asian American voting.[52] Only 60 percent of the East Asian American population speaks English. Furthermore, their diversity in language separates them from other minority groups in America. For instance, while Latinos generally speak Spanish, East Asian Americans speak languages ranging from Korean to Japanese to Chinese. Then, there are assorted Chinese dialects—ranging from Mandarin to Cantonese to Taiwanese.[53] Despite the bilingual ballot initiative, the current body of literature suggests that this Tower of Babel situation makes it more difficult to reach out to East Asian Americans during election cycles. Moreover, if the majority of information about American politics appears in English newspapers and English news broadcasts then, East Asian Americans lacking English literacy are at a further political disadvantage.[54]

Because the second generation does not face the same "New World" barriers as the first generation, I make several predictions. First, as first generation immigrants have aimed to educate their children in both their native languages and English, English proficiency is no longer an obstacle for most second generation East Asian Americans. Thus, as language requirements and citizenship are presumably no longer inhibiting the

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[51] Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004, 150.

[52] Patricia Jiayi Ho, "Asian voters' dormant power," *Pasadena Star-News* (8 Sept. 2006); Brackman and Erie 2003, 234-235; Pei-Tei Lien, M. Margaret Conway, and Janelle Wong 2004, 151; Espiritu 1992, 57.

[53] Ho 2006.

[54] Brackman and Erie 2003, 235.

second generation's participation, they should vote and register at rates higher than the first generation. Second, because the first generation donates to campaigns at such high rates, the second generation may take cues from their parents and also participate in a non-electoral setting.

In addition to the previously mentioned "New World" impediments to participation, "Old World" barriers, such as ties to the homeland, continue to inhibit the first generation's electoral participation. While connections to the homeland are difficult to measure, scholars concur that they are an important force both shaping and deterring East Asian American electoral politics.[55] For example, many East Asian American political organizations focus on politics abroad, such as the Taiwan Straight controversy, human rights in China, or the North Korean crisis, rather than on domestic political issues.

Along with homeland ties, cultural factors impede East Asian political participation. Lucien W. Pye argues, for instance, that East Asian Confucian ideals of authority clash with Western political concepts. In East Asia, people are group oriented and respectful of authority, while in the West, people search for personal identity and autonomy.[56] Thus, when it comes to political participation in American politics, the current literature often suggests that East Asians are not culturally suited for the autonomous acts of registration and voting. In commenting on a report authored by the Asian American Studies Center at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), former Monterey Park Mayor Lily Lee Chen confirms this theory: "In Asian countries,

[55] Ho 2006; Brackman and Erie 2003, 234-235; Pei-Tei Lien, M. Margaret Conway, and Janelle Wong 2004, 151; Espiritu 1992, 57; Fong 2002, 270.

[56] Lucian W. and Mary W. Pye, *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1985).

politics was something far away from the real people. The basic idea of serving the people, providing services, representing the voice of the people is different. When you are a ruler, you are powerful, you can do harm."[57] Essentially, "Old World" cultural forces have restricted the first generation's participation in the "New World."

Based upon the "New World" obstacles the first generation has faced, I formulate the several hypotheses on the second generation. Since the second generation has been raised and schooled in the U.S., they may be more knowledgeable and interested in American politics. Therefore, I predict that they will participate at higher rates than the first generation. In addition, with less emotional and familial connections to their parents' homelands, the second generation will not be distracted by politics abroad. On the other hand, because the second generation has been politically socialized by parents with an "Old World" cultural mindset, we might expect that they will participate at lower rates than their non-Asian peers.

Although the majority of literature focuses on first generation voting and the "New World" and "Old World" obstacles they face, several scholars address other forms of political involvement as well. Pei-Tei Lien, M. Margaret Conway, and Janelle Wong measure forms of non-electoral participation by surveying East Asian Americans about their activities in their communities.[58] Such activities included contacting a government official, donating to a political campaign, signing a political petition, and participating in a rally. Of all these forms of non-electoral participation, they conclude that "working with others to solve community problems" was the most common activity (21 percent).

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[57] Ho 2006; Letisia Marquez, "The New 'Sleeping Giant in California Politics: The Growth of Asian Americans," (UCLA 2006).

[58] Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004, 148.

In comparing U.S.-born to foreign-born respondents, though, native born respondents tended to be more likely to participate across all activities than immigrants.[59]

Although citizenship and English proficiency significantly impede first generation East Asian participation, Yen Le Espiritu finds that they make significant campaign contributions. Such donations are a unique form of political involvement because they require merely monetary resources, rather than time or English literacy.[60] Political candidates have actively begun to woo East Asian Americans as contributors because they are thought to be the second greatest campaign donors. East Asian Americans, in other words, have found a way to increase their political clout by making politicians dependent on them, not for support at the polls, but for financial support.[61]

East Asian American Attitudes about Government and Political Ideology

Aside from the campaign finance scandals of 1996, East Asians' confidence in the U.S. government was again shaken during the Wen Ho Lee case in December of 1999. This case involved a Taiwanese American scientist accused of selling nuclear secrets to China. Although Lee eventually pled guilty to improper handling of classified data, scientists of other ethnicities who had committed similar acts were never charged.[62] East Asian Americans argued that the charges against Lee were made solely on racial grounds—the U.S. government was suspicious of the Chinese nuclear potential.

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[59] Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004, 151.

[60] Espiritu 1992, 61.

[61] Espiritu 1992, 63.

[62] Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004, 79.

The Wen Ho Lee case illustrates that levels of governmental trust strongly influence political participation. Thus, it is essential to review the literature on political attitudes and its effect on future participation.[63] However, because almost no literature exists on this particular topic, reviewing the first generation's attitudes toward the U.S. government will best aid us in predicting the second generation's attitudes.

While this incident certainly diminished East Asian Americans' trust in the U.S. government, scholars believe that perceptions of corruption in home country governments also influence attitudes toward domestic politics. For instance, about one third of all East Asian Americans indicate that they trust the U.S. government "about the same" or "less" than the government of their home countries.[64] Only half trust the American government more than that of their native country. Survey data indicate that foreign-born East Asian Americans still have strong ties to, and possibly more trust in, their native countries' governments.[65]

With regard to levels of trust in government personnel, Lien et. al asked participants how much attention they thought a local public official would pay to a complaint. Ultimately, perceptions of government effectiveness were quite low among East Asians, with less than one-third of respondents saying that officials would pay "a

[63] Verba, Brady, and Schlozman 1995.

[64] Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004, 76.

[65] This lack of political trust among the first generation extends to the local U.S. government as well, where only four in ten respondents indicate that the government should be trusted "just about always" or "most of the time." Responses vary according to ethnicity, with 28 percent of Japanese and Chinese Americans trusting government "most of the time," but 33 percent of Koreans expressing the same sentiment. These levels are similar to those of African Americans. Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004, 79.

lot" or "some" attention to a complaint. Citizenship status, nativity, education, and income had weak correlations to overall perceptions of government effectiveness.[66]

Lien et. al's survey also questioned East Asian Americans about their perceptions of their ability to influence government decisions. The results indicate that 68 percent of respondents believed they had very little or no influence over local government decisions. Chinese Americans were the least likely to believe that they could have a lot or some influence on local government decisions. Being foreign-born also lessened rates of perceived influence on government decisions. For instance, those who did not expect to become citizens were least likely to perceive themselves as having significant control over government actions.[67] Since the second generation is entirely native-born, they presumably have higher levels of trust and feelings of efficacy in the U.S. political system than their parents have. It is possible, however, that since the second generation was socialized by their foreign-born parents, they may have internalized the first generation's lack of political trust and efficacy, causing them to participate at lower rates than their peers.

Literature on Second Generation East Asian Americans

We can make phone calls but I don't think we should be going door-to-door. Some people might not like it because of the way we look.

–An East Asian American Youth Volunteering for a Political Campaign

[66] Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004, 80.

[67] Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004, 81.

While second generation East Asian Americans may be gaining an interest in electoral politics, they often feel unwelcome on the American political scene. Due to past scandals and lingering prejudice, they may sense that they do not, and perhaps will never, represent the face of American politics. Nonetheless, scholars tend to focus solely on the attitudes, participation patterns, and organization of first generation East Asian American immigrants. But several scholars do briefly address the potential voting power of second generation East Asian Americans. Peter Nien-Chu Kiang provides a glimpse into the second generation's potential political involvement nationwide by interviewing second generation East Asian Americans about their attitudes toward and experiences in student government elections.

> Given the sheer amount of time that most young people spend in school each day and the formal role school plays in acculturating "citizens," particularly through the social studies curriculum, school is an essential domain in which Asian Pacific American youth develop sensibilities toward political participation based on their own direct experiences.[68]

In schools, students participate politically much the same way that citizens participate nationally, either by running for office or voting in an election. These early experiences, may motivate second generation East Asian Americans to participate more actively than their parents. Lee H. Ehman concurs; "student participation in school activities and the school organizational climate were main factors found to be related to student political attitudes."[69]

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[68] Peter Nien-Chu Kiang, "Asian Pacific American Youth," In *Asian Americans and Politics: Perspectives, Experiences, and Prospects* Ed. Gordon H. Chang (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001): 235.

[69] Lee H. Ehman, "The American School in the Political Socialization Process," *Review of Educational Research* Vol. 50 No. 1 (Spring 1980) 99.

Kiang not only cites second generation involvement in student government activities, but he also describes their participation in "cultural citizenship," a range of youth groups and political projects. An example of such a group is CAPAY, the Coalition for Asian Pacific American Youth. According to Kiang, "cultural citizenship" involves "the right to retain difference, while also attaining membership in society."[70] Often, because of a lack of family or school support, second generation East Asian Americans have found it helpful to reach out to their peers in similar situations.

While no national data on the second generation's voting patterns exist, data from the California state elections in the years 1994 through 2000 indicate that the second generation votes at a considerably higher rate (47 percent) compared to the first generation (42 percent).[71] However, a study of second generation immigrants in New York City finds that, compared to all other second generation ethnic groups surveyed, Chinese respondents were the third most likely to believe that elected officials did not care about them. They were also the least interested in New York City politics.[72] Nonetheless, because these studies concentrated on state and city politics, variations in local political issues and attitudes make it difficult to generalize them to the entire second generation East Asian American population. Thus, further study on a nationwide scale would better determine their voting potential and political leanings.

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[70] Kiang 2001, 254.

[71] Jack Citrin and Benjamin Highton, *How Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration Shape the California Electorate* (San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, 2002): 61.

[72] John Mollenkopf, Jennifer Holdaway, Philip Kasinitz, and Mary Waters, "Politics among Young Adults in New York: The Immigrant Second Generation," In *Transforming Politics, Transforming America* Eds. Taeku Lee, S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, and Ricardo Ramirez (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006): 181.

Conclusion

A substantial amount of scholarship investigates first generation East Asian Americans' barriers to political participation, attitudes about government, and levels of participation. Even the most prominent scholars in the field, though, have neglected to investigate the second generation's future voting potential on a national scale. The small amount of literature on the second generation offers only case studies in state politics and student government from which to draw. My study aims to research for the second generation much of what has already been discovered about the first generation.

Chapter 3

The Findings: Political Socialization versus Political Interest

Earlier this year, Leland Yee became the first Chinese American ever to serve in California's State Senate. The last time any East Asian American served in the California Senate was over 30 years ago. California's 4.4 million East Asians comprise the state's second largest minority (after Latinos). Yet this group continues to be sparsely represented in the state's political institutions. Furthermore, the current U.S. Congress has only four Asian-American members in the House and two in the Senate.[73]

Despite East Asians' numeric under-representation, California state politicians predict that things will slowly improve for this minority group. Last year, Asian candidates across California were backed by a prominent political action committee, the Asian American Small Business P.A.C. In addition, the California Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus, an alliance of Asian Democratic legislators, organized groups of bilingual volunteers to go door-to-door and persuade East Asians to come to the polls. The efforts appear to have worked; there are now nine East Asians in the state legislature, compared with just one a decade ago. Three of the five members of the state's tax collection committee are now also of East Asian descent.

Nevertheless, East Asians in California and across the nation still have a long way to go before they wield substantial power in local and national politics. And, in order to wield such influence, as candidates and elected officials, they need to increase their levels

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[73] "What is the ethnic make-up of the members of the current Congress?" *Indiana University*, Internet, available from http://www.centeroncongress.org, 16 March 2007.

of political participation more generally. According to Gary South, a political consultant who advises numerous East Asian candidates, if East Asians could match voter turnout with their share of the population in California, they would "literally be the balance of power in most elections."[74] Other political observers identify a more broad-sweeping problem among the East Asian population. Antonio Gonzalez, president of the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, a nonprofit organization that promotes civic participation among Latinos, claims that East Asians' lack of group cohesion inhibits their political involvement: "I don't think they conceive of themselves yet as coherent and cohesive as one needs to," in order to effect change during elections."[75]

Today's scholars and analysts certainly recognize the current problems with political participation among East Asian Americans. But their prognoses are potentially flawed because they do not recognize the second generation as the key force that could drive rates of future East Asian American political participation. By empirically comparing the second generation to their parents, as well as to their non-East Asian peers, this chapter sheds light on the participatory habits of the second generation and offers a prognosis for future levels of representation.

The Sample and Questionnaire

In order to measure the impact of political socialization on second generation East Asian Americans, as well as to compare second generation East Asian Americans' political participation to their peers, I administered a questionnaire to a national sample of

[74] Cindy Chang, "Asians Flex Muscles in California Politics," *New York Times* 27 February 2007.

[75] Cindy Chang, "Asians Flex Muscles in California Politics," *New York Times*.

294 undergraduate college students.[76] The survey asked respondents whether they were registered to vote, whether they voted, and whether they and their parents had engaged in a host of other participatory acts: volunteering for a candidate, wearing political clothing, joining political organizations, urging others to vote, and attending political rallies. In addition to a series of traditional demographic controls, respondents were asked to identify their citizenship status as well as that of their parents.

The sample respondents are diverse on a range of indicators as show in Table 3.1. First, in terms of ethnicity, nearly 70 percent of respondents are white, while the rest hail primarily from East Asian, African American, and Latino backgrounds. A majority of respondents are U.S. citizens and have taken at least one class in political science. Furthermore, the respondents are divided fairly evenly among their year and college major. Finally, while approximately half the respondents identify as Democrats, almost one third identify as Republicans.

[76] In gathering the most accurate data to test my hypotheses, survey distribution offered the greatest benefits. First, they are far less costly and time-consuming to complete than individual interviews with students. Second, questionnaires are anonymous, so socially desirable responses are less of a concern. This is particularly important when studying political participation because it can result in inflated levels of activism. Third, whereas interviews conducted in person can be subject to the interviewer's biases, a self-administered survey allows for the most accurate reporting of respondents' opinions. It is possible that respondents may not have accurately remembered their levels of electoral participation. But, the fact that the questionnaire was distributed immediately following the recent 2006 congressional elections increases the probability that respondents accurately reported their political acts. For more on the costs and benefits of survey administration see Alan Agresti and Barbara Finlay. *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997): 20.

Sample Demographics by School
Table 3.1

	Brown	UT Austin	Union
Year			
Freshman	17.6%	1.9%	64.4%
Sophomore	20.3	47.5	25.4
Junior	21.6	29.4	0
Senior	35.1	20.6	10.2
Partisanship			
Democrat	59.5	41.9	49.2
Republican	6.8	31.3	27.1
U.S. Citizenship			
Respondent	91.9	90.0	100.0
Respondent's Mother	86.5	85.6	100.0
Respondent's Father	87.8	85.0	98.3
Other Areas of Interest			
Receive Financial Aid	47.3	50.0	42.4
East Asian	18.9	8.8	1.7
Taken Politics Course	78.4	95.6	98.3
Social Science Major	40.5	12.5	61.0
Total N	75	160	59

I drew the sample from three universities: Union College in New York, the University of Texas at Austin, and Brown University in Rhode Island. Surveys were mailed to professors, who agreed to distribute the surveys in their classes and return them.[77] The three universities were selected for their diversity in student demographics, institutional structure, and geographic region. Brown's population is unique because it hails from a broad cross-section of the nation, with students from all fifty states. In addition, 14 percent of Brown students identify as "Asian American," which provides

[77] These professors had professional connections to my professors, which, therefore, facilitated survey distribution and boosted response rates. However, these professional connections in no way skewed the results since the professors that distributed my questionnaires had no prior knowledge about the surveys' specific intent to study East Asian American participation.

ample cases for which to test my hypotheses.[78] In contrast, Union College in Schenectady, NY has a population of 84 percent white students and a more regional demographic (87 percent are from the northeast).[79] The University of Texas at Austin was selected for its in-state population (94 percent) and its uniquely large percentage of Republican students (compared with the largely Democratic student bodies at Brown and Union).[80] Table 3.1 presents a comparison of the respondents from each of the universities.

The sample also differs with respect to the actual student demographics at each college surveyed. At Brown University, a greater percentage of East Asians were surveyed (nearly 19 percent) compared to the actual student population (14 percent). The opposite was true at both Union College and UT Austin, where fewer East Asians were surveyed than the true student populations (5 percent and 18 percent respectively). In addition, far fewer students in the sample received financial aid than the averages at both Brown University and Union College, approximately half the survey respondents received financial aid, while 74 percent at Brown and 85 percent at Union receive scholarships or grants.[81] Moreover, 61 percent of the Union respondents were social science majors, while only 29 percent of the school's students actually pursue this field of study.[82] Overall, these discrepancies reflect the types of classes surveyed—primarily

[78] Brown University Office of Admissions, http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Admission/

[79] Union College Office of Admissions, http://www.union.edu/Admissions/FAQs/#19

[80] University of Texas at Austin Admissions, http://www.utexas.edu/student/admissions/

[81] Approximately one half of students nationwide receive some form of financial aid from their four-year educational institution. (National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=72)

[82] College Board, http://www.collegeboard.com/splash/

social science classes. Though the sample may not accurately reflect the individual school populations, the fact that they more closely mirror national student demographics reaffirms the sample's worth and potential generalizability.

A closer look at the respondents' demographics indicates that there are also differences between the populations at each university surveyed. In terms of party identification, UT Austin and Union College have far greater percentages of Republican students than Brown. These differences, which cause the total sample to look representative of the general college population, may actually only reflect regional differences specific to the northeast and Texas. Therefore, if the results indicate that being Republican promotes or inhibits participation, it may simply mean that attending college in these geographic regions is the true driving force. Another key contrast between the individual schools and the total sample is the number of East Asian Americans. Brown University has a much greater percentage of East Asian respondents than any of the other schools. Because Brown's student population is so diverse in terms of geographic origin, though, this difference should not skew the results.

Although these factors may potentially skew the results, there is reason to believe that this is still an appropriate and unique sample. The sample is significantly diverse in terms of year in college, school attended, and partisanship. Also, the sample includes a fairly large number of East Asians and nearly all respondents are U.S. citizens. Still, I use multivariate analysis in order to control for any factors that might interfere with an accurate assessment of the results.

East Asian vs. Non-East Asian Political Activism

Perhaps the most appropriate place to begin the analysis is with a simple comparison of the levels of political activism between East Asian and non-East Asian respondents. Table 3.2 offers strong support for the hypothesis that East Asians will consistently participate at lower rates than non-East Asian respondents. In general, East Asians tend to participate only about one half as much as their non-East Asian counterparts. This is even true for activities that require very little time, money, or civic skills. Although the sample is small, the statistically significant differences between these two groups support the hypothesis that systematic differences do exist in levels of political activism between East Asians and other ethnic groups.

East Asian Versus Non-East Asian Political Activism
Table 3.2

	East Asian	Non-East Asian
Voting (Presidential Election)	1.7%*	35.6%
Voting (Local Election)	1.7*	41.6
Voter Registration	5.4*	76.9
Displayed Bumper Sticker	6.9	13.2
Wore Political T-Shirt	13.8*	32.8
Volunteered for a Candidate	17.2*	41.5
Joined Political Organization	10.3	22.6
Urged Others to Vote	24.1*	55.5
Attended Political Rally	34.5	41.1

Significance Levels: *p < .05

Not only do East Asian Americans participate at lower rates than their non-East Asian peers, but they also engage in different types of political activities. Table 3.2 illustrates how the majority of East Asians' activism focuses on urging others to vote and attending political rallies. For non-East Asians, however, the greatest amount of political activity revolves around registering to vote and voting. For example, while 76.9 percent

of non-East Asians report that they have registered to vote, only 5.4 percent of East Asians do. Likewise, whereas approximately 40 percent of non-East Asians report that they vote in local and national elections, under 2 percent of East Asian respondents do. These key differences in the most common types of political activism across ethnic groups underscore the need to perform further multivariate analyses on the findings.

Comparing First and Second Generation East Asians

The data also lend credence to the hypothesis that, at least at the aggregate level, second generation East Asians participate at higher rates than the first generation. On the scale of political activism (ranging from 0 to 6 acts), second generation East Asian respondents all fall within the 0 to 4 range. Table 3.3 indicates that forty five percent of respondents actually have a score of zero, which means that they have not engaged in any of the participatory acts. Despite these relatively low scores, the second generation still surpasses their parents on the political activism scale. No first generation East Asian Americans engaged in more than two acts. And in striking contrast to the second generation, more than three quarters of the first generation East Asian Americans score zero on the activism scale.[83]

The data reveal not only a striking difference between the first and second generation East Asians, but also between East Asian and non-East Asian parents. Whereas East Asian parents' scores range only between 0 and 2, non-East Asian parents' scores fall in the full spectrum of political acts. Moreover, more than twice as many East

[83] Parents' activism scores are coded out of a possible 12 points in order to include the possible activism of both the mother and father. In this way, the mother and father each have a total possible score of 6, but these scores are added to give a total "parents' score" from which to make comparisons to the second generation.

Asian parents participate in zero acts. This initial evidence not only confirms the hypothesis that the second generation participates at higher rates than the first generation, but it also suggests that East Asian parents' low levels of participation may affect their children's activism or lack thereof.

East Asians and Their Parents Versus Non-East Asians and Their Parents
Table 3.3

Levels of Activism	East Asian Respondents	Non-East Asian Respondents	East Asian Parents	Non-East Asian Parents
0 Acts	45%	26%	79%	47%
1 Act	28	20	3	11
2 Acts	10	16	17	20
3 Acts	10	13	0	6
4 Acts	7	13	0	5
More Than 4 Acts	0	22	0	10
Average # Acts	1	2	0	2

Other Factors Influencing Political Participation: A Multivariate Analysis

The results of the bi-variate analysis provide solid support for the hypotheses, but it is possible that other factors may also affect levels of activism separate and apart from race and ethnicity. In order to determine the independent effect of ethnicity on political participation, I conduct a series of multiple regression equations.[84] The results indicate that, apart from race, parents' political activism, respondents' partisanship, parents' citizenship, and respondents' political interest influence the second generation's levels of participation. These results are displayed in Table 3.4.

More importantly, we might not expect differences in registering to vote, since the surveys were conducted on a college campus, where students are often actively recruited to register. Although the cross-tabs reveal a striking difference between East Asian and

[84] For those equations measuring voting and registration, I restrict the sample to only those respondents with U.S. citizenship. This is because only those with U.S. citizenship are eligible to vote.

non-East Asian political participation scores, multivariate analysis reveals that being East Asian is a significant predictor only of voting.[85]

A Multivariate Analysis of Factors Influencing Political Participation
Table 3.4

	Registered to Vote	Voted in Presidential Election	Voted in Local Election	Political Participation Scale	Respondent Participates in ≥ 1 Activity
Asian American	-.623 (.662)	-2.229 (.917)*	-1.431 (.666)*	-.591 (.388)	-.488 (.533)
Socialization Effects					
Financial Aid	.738 (.482)	-.530 (.505)	.059 (.319)	.009 (.206)	.000 (.306)
Parents' Activism	.650 (.224)*	.297 (.168)	.058 (.075)	.176 (.046)*	.248 (.100)*
Lives With Both Parents	-.432 (.575)	-.602 (.776)	-.115 (.504)	-.486 (.309)	-.250 (.472)
Mother is a Citizen	2.188 (.892)*	-3.089 (1.587)	-1.082 (1.032)	.278 (.659)	-.082 (.800)
Father is a Citizen	1.938 (.894)*	3.795 (1.576)*	1.470 (.922)	.098 (.618)	.012 (.798)
Political Variables					
Social Science Major	-.301 (.543)	-.200 (.604)	.044 (.385)	-.257 (.229)	-.617 (.341)
Political Ideology	-.258 (.098)*	.128 (.088)	-.066 (.059)	.045 (.037)	.068 (.055)
Took Political Science Course	.837 (.719)	-.761 (1.141)	.053 (.675)	.748 (.433)	.872 (.584)
Political Interest	.245 (.184)	.357 (.177)*	.403 (.141)*	.377 (.087)*	.225 (.125)
Democrat	.990 (.562)	-.074 (.652)	.954 (.417)*	.420 (.267)	.362 (.371)
Republican	.633 (.726)	-.234 (.688)	-.409 (.455)	.445 (.311)	.860 (.461)
Constant	-.411 (2.144)	-2.249 (2.583)	-1.698 (1.863)	-1.315 (1.084)	-2.451 (1.524)
Cases Correctly Predicted	85.5%	80.6%	67.5%	R^2=.200	74.7%
Adjusted R^2	.458	.297	.200	.165	.128
N	269	134	209	268	269

Significance Levels: * $p < .05$

[85] But considering that voting in both local and national elections takes independent initiative, much like the other acts of participation, it is somewhat expected that East Asian students don't suffer from a deficit in other types of more passive political activities.

In addition to ethnicity, parents' citizenship also exerts a significant impact on both voter registration and voting in the presidential election. Parents who are not citizens and, therefore, who are ineligible to vote, are less likely to expose their children to American politics. Perhaps parents who are not citizens tend to discuss the politics of their home countries more often. The second generation, then, may gain a greater interest in foreign rather than American politics. While the results do not provide concrete evidence that second generation East Asians are more interested in politics outside the U.S., they do provide support for the fact that if a parent is an American citizen then the child is more likely to register and vote in national elections.

Apart from parents' citizenship, first generation levels of political activism exert an independent effect on second generation political participation. The multivariate results also confirm that parents' activism has a significant positive impact on children's voter registration and political activism scores. For every one unit increase in parents' activism, respondents' political participation scores increase by .170. Someone with the least politically active parents, in other words, engages in approximately two fewer acts of political participation than someone with parents who participate at the highest levels. Since East Asian parents tend to participate at nearly half the levels that their non-East Asian counterparts do, second generation East Asian Americans are at a substantial disadvantage when it comes to registering and engaging in various forms of political activism.

Although parents' levels of activism are strong predictors of political participation, respondents' levels of political interest are equally important. Political interest is a significant positive influence for voting in presidential and local elections, as well as on

the political activism scale; a one-unit increase in political interest yields a .377 unit increase on the political participation scale. Thus, someone with the lowest levels of political interest engages in approximately two fewer political acts than someone with the highest levels of interest. These results are particularly important because they demonstrate that East Asians' inherent disadvantage due to their parents' low levels of activism can be offset by an interest in politics.

Finally, identifying as a Democrat correlates positively with voting in local elections. This may have less to do with any long term trends and more to do with the fact that this survey was administered just prior to the November 2006 elections. These elections were unique in that presidential approval ratings were at a record low. And with support for the war in Iraq dwindling, Americans across the country were clamoring for a change in partisan leadership in Congress.[86] The results are corroborated by the effect of political ideology, though. On a 25-point scale of political ideology, lower scores indicate a conservative political ideology and higher scores indicate a more liberal ideology. The regression analyses prove that the higher a respondent scored (the more liberal he was), the more likely he was to have registered to vote.

The strong evidence for the two hypotheses is bolstered when we take into account issues of non-response The response rate for the survey is unknown because the professors who distributed the surveys on my behalf never recorded the ratio of surveys administered to surveys returned. Therefore, it is possible that the majority of students who voluntarily took the survey were also the most politically active. If East Asians are the least likely to participate politically, then they may also have been the least likely to

[86] Steve Chan and William Safran, "Public Opinion as a Constraint against War: Democracies' Responses to Operation Iraqi Freedom," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 2 (2006): 137–156.

complete the survey. Hence, it is possible that only the most politically engaged East Asians completed the survey. The results, therefore, are conservative estimates of East Asians' lack of political participation.

Conclusion

The multivariate analysis, in combination with Leland Yee's recent election to the California State legislature, offers us hope that the second generation may soon take on a more active role in the American political process. The survey results provide overwhelming support for the expectation that second generation East Asian Americans participate at higher rates than the first generation. But the second generation's lower participation than their peers of other ethnicities indicates that East Asian Americans are still far from achieving electoral representation proportional to their population.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Implications for Future Political Participation and Representation of East Asian Americans

You don't sit around in an Asian house and say, 'Oh, you should grow up to be a bureaucrat.' We've done very well with lawyers, doctors, scientists and engineers. But public service has not been sold as a worthy calling.

-Eugene Leong, Executive Director of the Association of Bay Area Governments

America was founded on a tradition of immigration. Regardless of the current controversy over visas and citizenship, immigrants have undeniably made the U.S. what it is today. Connie Chung, the daughter of a high-ranking diplomat from Taiwan, rose to become the first East Asian American anchor in national television. Maggie Q, a Chinese American actress born in Hawaii, has attained worldwide celebrity status for her roles in such films as *Rush Hour 2* and *Mission Impossible III*. David Ho, a Taiwanese-born molecular biologist, was recognized as 1996 *Time's* Man of the Year for his work in designing drug "cocktails" to help AIDS patients.

Immigrants have also played an important role in shaping America's political landscape. Emma Lazarus, a fourth generation descendent of Jewish immigrants wrote the words that don the Statue of Liberty. In 1968, Austrian-born Arnold Schwarzenegger moved to the United States with little money and basic English skills. He later became a world-renowned bodybuilder/actor, and then the 38th Governor of California. Barack Obama, the son of a Kenyan man, grew up to become the nation's fifth African-American senator and a candidate for the presidency in 2008. America, then, has always

represented the land of opportunity, where hard work and determination are the only requirements for success.

Though East Asian Americans have made momentous contributions to America's scientific and cultural development, they have, for the most part, been glaringly absent from the political scene. With the monetary and educational resources necessary to facilitate political participation, their lack of political engagement becomes even more confounding. Thus, this thesis set out to investigate prospects for future East Asian American political participation. While the extant literature focuses only on first generation immigrants, my study sought to investigate the second generation's rates of electoral participation. Table 4.1 summarizes the key findings of the study.

Summary of Findings
Table 4.1

Race As an Indicator of Political Activism:

- Second generation East Asians participate at approximately half the rate of their non-East Asian peers. This holds for voting, registering to vote, wearing a political t-shirt, urging others to vote, and volunteering for a candidate.
- Second generation East Asians are more politically active than the first generation.
- East Asian American parents are far less politically active than are non-East Asian parents.

Socialization Effects:

- Parents' citizenship is a positive predictor of political participation. Respondents with parents who are citizens are more likely to vote.
- Respondents whose parents had higher political activism scores are more likely to vote and engage in other forms of participation.

Political Factors:

- Respondents' political interest (taking politics classes, discussing politics frequently, and paying attention to the daily news) positively predicts voting, registering to vote, and other forms of political activism.
- Democratic partisanship and political ideology are positive predictors of voter turnout.

The findings of this thesis confirm the two initial hypotheses. Compared to first generation East Asian Americans, the second generation is more politically engaged in terms of voting, registration, and activism. Granted, the second generation is still far less politically active than their non-East Asian peers, due in large part to their parents' lack of activism. This said, there is reason to believe that second generation East Asians can close the participation gap. Although parents are highly influential in shaping the level of their children's political participation, the results from this study suggest that an individual's interest in politics has the potential to offset the disadvantage associated with their parents' lack of activism.

The findings of this study are important not only in terms of East Asian American politics, but also when considering the broader goals of democratic government. Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people."[87] When certain groups do not participate in proportion to their populations, the government is no longer administered "by the people."[88] When women lacked the vote, election outcomes mirrored only the sentiments of men, and when African Americans lacked the vote, white Americans spoke for all Americans. This study reveals that today, even without legal barriers to voting eligibility, East Asians remain an ethnic group that continues to be underrepresented at the polls. Democracy, then, has yet to reach its full goal of representing the will of the people. With such low rates of participation compared to their peers, second generation East Asian Americans may continue to lack adequate substantive and descriptive representation. This creates a

[87] Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address," In *Primary Sources for the Civil War*, ed. Jennifer Smith, 32-34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

[88] John Burnheim, *Is Democracy Possible?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989): 1.

situation in which East Asians may feel like perpetual foreigners in their home countries. As the second generation participates at increasingly higher rates, however, democratic objectives will become more of a reality.

Avenues for Improving the Second Generation's Political Involvement

Because of their unique positions in the community, non-profit organizations, activist groups, and educators should begin paying particular attention to East Asian Americans and their political potential. One of the most promising opportunities for increasing the second generation's political interest lies in the U.S. education system. The respondents in this study consisted solely of college students. Thus, one would assume that any disadvantage that East Asian students face due to socialization should be offset by the civil education a university offers its students. With so many opportunities to take politics classes, attend on-campus lectures, and join political-oriented student groups, a university education would seem to even the playing field for East Asian students. This is not the case. Therefore, we continually need to seek ways to improve the second generation's understanding of the U.S. electoral process and the importance of participation.

Currently, the East Asian Studies departments at most universities offer classes focusing primarily on East Asian language, literature, art, and history.[89] These departments, however, often fail to offer classes that highlight modern-day issues facing East Asians, especially in politics. At Union, for instance, course offerings center around music, literature, philosophy, language, anthropology, and history. Only three East Asian studies classes pertain to politics, and of these, none highlight modern topics related to

[89] Espiritu 1992, 91.

American foreign policy.[90] Brown's East Asian Studies Department is also limited in its politically-themed course offerings. Approximately two thirds of its classes are dedicated solely to language study. Moreover, the other courses deal primarily with historical topics.[91] Though UT Austin has the most extensive course offerings for East Asian languages, it too does not offer courses on modern politics in Asia or among East Asian Americans.[92] Offering such classes could stimulate interest in current problems confronting East Asian Americans and ultimately inspire the second generation to become more politically involved.

Student groups on university campuses could also serve as a means for increasing the second generation's political interest and participation. Most campus organizations serving the East Asian community focus on preserving their culture and learning about issues facing East Asian societies abroad. At Brown, the Brown Taiwan Society (BTS) focuses on coordinating cooking workshops, games nights, and night markets.[93] At Union, the Asian Student Union is mainly responsible for organizing events centered around East Asian holidays, such as Lunar New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival.[94] At UT Austin, there are a range of organizations to support East Asians in business, pharmacy, law, communications, and religion.[95] Once again, there are no student groups to promote

[90] Union College East Asian Studies Department, http://www.union.edu/PUBLIC/EAS/CKJ/courses.shtml.

[91] Brown University Department of East Asian Studies, http://www.union.edu/PUBLIC/EAS/CKJ/courses.shtml.

[92] University of Texas Austin Department of Asian Studies, http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/asianstudies/courses/.

[93] Brown Taiwan Society, http://students.brown.edu/bts/.

[94] Asian Student Union, Asian Student Union.

greater political awareness or participation. In addition to these activities though, campus organizations should encourage student groups to address political issues affecting East Asian Americans. These groups have the power to educate not only their members, but also the entire East Asian community on campus. By inviting prominent East Asian American political leaders to speak on campus, second generation college students may come to understand the potential power the East Asian community holds in the political sphere.

Non-profit East Asian community organizations outside the university can also help reach out to the second generation. Groups such as Asian Americans for Progress and Asian-Americans for Equality acknowledge both their potential for political influence as well as their present inability to influence policy. The following is an excerpt from the Asian Americans for Progress' mission statement:

> In 2004, [Asian Pacific American] APA Voters are estimated at 2.5 million (2.2% of the national vote): however, APAs are not yet "counted" because of our low numbers of voter turnout. APA for Progress offers two emerging organizations, a 501(c)4 advocacy organization to increase opportunities for APA's to get involved at the grassroots level, and a separate action fund to help progressive APA candidates.[96]

This organization, then, aims to encourage political action among the entire East Asian American community. It might better serve the second generation in particular, though, by developing specific campaigns to target college and high school students around the

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[95] University of Texas Austin Student Organizations, http://utdirect.utexas.edu/dsorg/lists.wb?method=K&data=asian

[96] Asian Americans for Progress, http://apaforprogress.org/drupal/.

country. In this way, the second generation might meet other politically involved East Asian Americans and feel compelled to support the cause.

Topics for Further Research

The aim of this study was to improve our understanding of second generation East Asian American political participation. Although East Asian respondents' participatory levels are comparatively low, the findings offer hope that the second generation can overcome the obstacles of socialization and become more politically engaged. Of course, the desire to increase the second generation's participation rates rests on the assumption that this ethnic group will substantially influence the direction of American electoral politics.

The current literature suggests that East Asians are not yet a cohesive group with concrete interests.[97] Therefore, further research should investigate the policy implications of increased second generation participation and cohesion, at both the local and national levels. If participation is significantly higher among the second generation than the first generation, it is likely that they may soon come to rally around particular issues. This is because higher levels of participation may spur the second generation to recognize their potential political impact through greater group cohesion. Such unifying issues could include immigration reform, affirmative action in universities, and American foreign policies toward North Korea and China. Future research might include questions on a number of politically controversial issues to determine whether East Asians' views

[97] Okiyoshi Takeda, "The Representation of Asian Americans in the U.S. Political System," In Charles E. Menifield Ed. *Representation of Minority Groups in the U.S.: Implications for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryland: Austin & Winfield, Publishers, 2001): 93.

converge along any traditional ideological lines. A future study might also track trends of East Asian participation at the local level. Only then can we be confident about conclusions pertaining to substantive representation.

The desire to learn more about the second generation's levels of political activity is also grounded in the assumption that increased East Asian American participation will translate to changes in the electorate. Research has shown that minority voters are more likely to support minority candidates, especially in the candidates' first bid for office.[98] Increased activism among second generation East Asian Americans, therefore, may result in more East Asians being elected to office. Further research should investigate the most effective ways to motivate East Asians to run for office as well as the best ways for them to attract voters once they toss their hat into the ring. Similar studies have compared women's political ambition to men's[99] and African-Americans' to Whites.'[100] This vein of research might begin by asking respondents about their political ambition and then comparing the results of East Asians to their non-East Asian peers. This research would allow East Asian activist groups to be better equipped to identify potential East Asian candidates and urge them to run for office.

Aside from these possible future studies on East Asians' prospects for full political integration, it is also necessary to conduct a broader study on the second generation. While Pei-Tei Lien's research sheds significant light on the first generation, my study is merely a pilot study; for the findings highlight the importance of conducting

[98] Robert M. Stein, Stacy G. Ulbig, and Stephanie Shirley Post, "Voting for Minority Candidates in Multiracial/Multiethnic Communities," *Urban Affairs Review* Vol. 41 No. 2 (2005) 157-181.

[99] Richard L. Fox and Jennifer L. Lawless, "Entering the Arena? Gender and the Decision to Run for Office," *American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 48 No. 2 (April 2004) 264.

[100] Claudine Gay, "The Effect of Black Congressional Representation on Political Participation," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 95 (2002) 589-602.

research, though. This future study should be broader in scope, including both East Asian college and high school students throughout the U.S. This study might ask respondents questions about their political participation as well as their parents' attitudes toward their involvement. In addition, it should take my study one step further by asking respondents questions to determine whether gender significantly influences East Asian participation. Further, a larger sample study would not have to assume a panethnic Asian identity. It could offer a more detailed comparison of Koreans, Japanese, and Chinese respondents in terms of their levels of political ambition and participation.

Implications for the 2008 Elections

Although the 2008 presidential election is still one and a half years away, candidates have already begun to court the votes of various interest groups. Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama are vying for the Black vote. Rudy Giuliani and Mitt Romney are competing for the support of the conservative Christian base. John Edwards is working diligently to capture the environmentalists' votes. It is clear, though, that no presidential candidates are actively seeking to capture the "Asian vote." Candidates, as well as political advisors, merely assume that East Asians lack the citizenship, English proficiency, and group cohesion required to influence election outcomes.

The evidence presented in this study suggests that politicians need to start looking at the data, which reveal an emerging voting bloc. This voting bloc consists primarily of second generation East Asian Americans who identify as Democrats. In fact, the survey data reveal that while 55 percent of East Asian respondents identify as Democrats, only 13 percent identify as Republicans. Thus, Democratic politicians could begin to court

this group by delivering speeches in areas heavily populated by East Asian Americans. They might also send volunteers to distribute literature to potential East Asian voters. Bilingual volunteers would be especially useful in gaining the votes of first generation East Asian Americans. This type of recruitment effort might foster a type of "reverse socialization," in which children who learn about politics from exposure to American politics at school or in organizations might persuade their parents to vote, register, or become politically engaged in other ways. In areas with particularly large East Asian populations, candidates should consider producing direct mail, voter contact, and campaign advertisements in their native languages. If candidates actively solicit votes from the East Asian American community, it is possible that this untapped voting bloc may come to realize the political power they could potentially wield.

Conclusion

The campaign finance scandals nearly eleven years ago did much to discourage further first generation East Asian American political participation. With the names of John Huang, "Charlie" Trie, Johnny Chung, and Maria Hsia now pushed away from the political spotlight however, the opportunity for increased second generation participation has become apparent. In addition, without the restrictions of citizenship, English proficiency, and homeland ties, one would expect that the second generation participates at similar levels to their non-East Asian peers.

Although the second generation has made significant headway compared to the first generation, as the hypotheses predicted, they still lag behind their non-East Asian peers in terms of voting, registration, and political activism. The results of this study

reveal that political socialization is the key factor inhibiting second generation East Asian American participation—being raised by politically apathetic parents dampens children's political activism. However, the data shows that an independent interest in politics can offset this critical disadvantage. Thus, it is only through future research, political activism, and educational reforms that second generation East Asian Americans may gain parity with their non-East Asian counterparts in the political arena. Without an equal voice in American politics, second generation East Asians risk inadequate representation by a nation that espouses a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people."