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Chapter 14

From Central Cities to Ethnoburbs: Asian American Political Incorporation in the San Francisco Bay Area

James S. Lai

INTRODUCTION: POLITICAL INCORPORATION BEYOND CENTRAL CITY LIMITS

Asian Americans are increasingly more active and visible in local politics, extending beyond central city limits. While central cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Houston, and New York City remain vibrant 21st-century gateways for contemporary Asian immigrants and community formation, a majority of the U.S. Asian American population currently resides in suburban cities. Between 2000 and 2010, Asian American population growth in the suburbs reached 1.7 million, which was nearly four times the growth during the same period for those Asian Americans living in central cities.[1] Approximately 62 percent of the U.S. Asian American population is situated in the suburbs compared to 59 percent for Latinas/os, 51 percent for African Americans, and 78 percent for whites.[2] Variations of suburban settlement exist among Asian ethnic groups with Asian Indians being the most likely to live in the suburbs at 56 percent followed by Filipinos (54%), Koreans (54%), Japanese (52%), Vietnamese (50%), and Chinese (45%).[3]

In 2010, the national Asian American population reached 17.9 million in 2010, an increase of 250 percent from 1990.[4] California and New York remain the two most prominent states with Asian American populations at 32 percent and 9 percent of the national Asian American population, respectively. Each of these states contains different variations of Asian ethnic populations. In California, the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles metro area contain the most diverse Asian ethnic groups among central cities in the state with significantly large numbers of Filipinos (27%), Chinese (26%), Asian Indians (11%), Japanese (9%), and Koreans (8%).[5] In New York, New York City's Asian American population is tilted toward Chinese (39%) and Asian Indians (23%).[6] While California and New York are major destination states, they are by no means alone. Nevada, Arizona, North Carolina, North Dakota, and Georgia each witnessed their respective Asian American populations' growth between 80 and 116 percent from 2000 to 2010.

Nearly 3.9 million Asian Americans, or 3 percent of the electorate, voted in the 2012 elections. This represented an increase of 547,000 voters from 2008.[7] The impact of the growing Asian American voter base in the suburbs of battleground states was witnessed during the 2012 U.S. presidential election. For example, in the suburbs of Northern Virginia, outside of Richmond, the Asian American population has doubled during the past decade, according to the 2010 U.S. census. These Asian-influenced suburbs were the focus of both President Obama and Republican challenger Mitt Romney in their efforts to sway potential Asian American swing voters. According to Shawn Steel, a Republican National Committee member and an outspoken evangelist about the importance of the Asian American vote for his party: "We've got to get communicating (with Asian American voters). We've got to get on it, and we're running out of time."[8] Both political parties are likely to contend for Asian American voters in key battleground states such as Nevada, Virginia, Texas, Ohio, and Florida.

The Asian American Voter: Trending toward the Democratic Party

According to the 2012 National Election Pool (NEP) exit polls, 73 percent of Asian American voters supported President Obama. This percentage was comparable to the 71 percent support among Latinas/os and 76 percent among lesbian, gay, and bisexual voters. Indeed, according to the NEP, Asian Americans were the only demographic group that Obama was able to build upon from 62 percent in 2008 to 73 percent in 2012. National political commentators such as the *New York Times* columnist David Brooks and *Bloomberg News* editor Albert Hunt began to postulate about the GOP's inability to capture a majority of the Asian American electorate, which shared many of the party's core values—family, faith,

education, and business. Given these traits, why did Asian Americans overwhelmingly vote Democratic in the 2012 presidential election?

Before addressing this question, it is important to note that the 2012 Democratic turn of Asian American voters did not happen overnight but was the result of a steady progression since 1992. In the presidential election, Bill Clinton received only 31 percent of the Asian American vote. Since then, every election year has witnessed an increase in Asian American support: 43 percent in 1996, 54 percent in 2000, 58 percent in 2004, 62 percent in 2008, and the most recent 73 percent in 2012. Even with this upward trend, the Asian American vote has not yet crystallized for the Democratic Party. According to a 2012 National Asian American Survey (NAAS) finding, the month prior to the November 2012 election, 30 percent of Asian American voters were undecided. A different set of opportunities and challenges exist for both Democrats and Republicans when it comes to recruiting and incorporating this emerging electorate.

The voting trend toward the Democratic Party is due to a multitude of policy issues that influence Asian American voters such immigration, higher education, fair pay, and health care reform. A 2012 NAAS study found that a majority of Asian Americans supported Obama's Affordable Care Act, a pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants, higher taxes for the wealthy, and even affirmative action policies in education and employment.[9] While socioeconomic traits help predict how a racial minority group will vote, perceptions of the two parties around the future direction of this group on these critical policies can also shape voter attitudes that transcend socioeconomic status. Whether fair or not, the Republican Party has been perceived by Asian Americans and other racial minorities as a party for only wealthy white males and social conservatives whose interests are counter to those of racial minority groups, regardless of median family income and educational attainment levels. Conversely, the Democratic Party has been perceived as more inclusive of racial and ethnic group interests. For example, a 2013 NAAS postelection survey found that among the 43 percent of Asian American voters who identified "immigration reform" as a very important issue, 70 percent supported Obama compared to 30 percent for Romney. For the 54 percent of Asian American voters who identified "racial discrimination" as a very important issue, 74 percent favored Obama compared to 26 percent for Romney.[10]

Another influential factor on Asian American voters is the nebulous issue of racial and ethnic identity. For example, in a 2008 NAAS finding on racial and ethnic self-identification,[11] 52 percent of Asian American respondents in the San Francisco Bay Area identified with the "Ethnic American" category followed by 35 percent for "Ethnic Group," 23 percent for "Asian American," 19 percent for "Asian," 4 percent for "American,"

and 3 percent for "Other."[12] These percentages varied by Asian ethnic group with Korean American respondents having the highest percentages across all identification categories. Another key finding was 57 percent of the Asian American respondents in the San Francisco Bay Area stated they would vote for a coethnic candidate.[13] Similar to racial and ethnic self-identification, these percentages varied by Asian ethnic group with 53 percent of Chinese, 63 percent of Filipinos, 60 percent of Japanese, 88 percent of Koreans, and 63 percent of Vietnamese answering "Yes" to whether they would vote for a co-ethnic candidate. Such findings support previous findings on coethnic candidate support such as the 2000–2001 Pilot Study of the National Asian American Political Survey.[14]

These NAAS findings suggest that racial and ethnic identity has yet to crystalize as a key mobilizing factor among Asian American voters. However, the findings suggest that Asian Americans are gradually developing a pan-ethnic or an Asian American identity as illustrated by the percentage of respondents identifying with the "Ethnic American" and "Asian American" categories among the various ethnic groups. While the percentages vary by Asian ethnic group, factors such as acculturation, geographic location, and racial discrimination (real or perceived) are likely facilitating the gradual formation of a racial group identity. The importance of Asian American elected leadership and community-based organizations at the local and state level that can articulate and foster pan-ethnic coalition-building among the ethnically diverse Asian American population will be central to future group political action in central cities and suburbs.[15]

A key question for the political future of Asian Americans is whether they can continue political incorporation efforts that extend beyond voting in cities and counties with significant Asian American populations. The concept of political incorporation is defined as "the extent to which group interests are effectively represented in policy making."[16] This broad definition includes political behaviors such as voting, donating to campaigns, participating in political coalitions, and running for elected office. For Asian Americans, contemporary political incorporation efforts begin at the local level in the context of central cities and suburbs. Perhaps nowhere on the continental United States is this more evident than the San Francisco Bay Area.

THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA AS THE EPICENTER OF ASIAN AMERICAN POLITICAL INCORPORATION

The San Francisco Bay Area, which includes the counties of San Francisco, Alameda (East Bay), San Mateo (West Bay), Santa Clara (South Bay), is a prime example of the dramatic Asian American demographic shifts

occurring in both central city and suburban contexts and how this has positively impacted their local political incorporation. Since the Immigration Act of 1965, a monumental congressional act that allowed mass Asian emigration to the United States for the first time in U.S. history, Asian American community formation patterns have taken dramatic shape in all major regions throughout the continental United States.[17] These population shifts have simultaneously redefined the political identities of neighborhoods and districts in the cities within this region.[18] For example, in San Francisco, Asian Americans currently account for 33 percent of the entire citywide population, the second largest population behind whites.

The San Francisco Bay Area's rapid Asian American population growth has been followed by gradual local political incorporation as evidenced by the increasing numbers of Asian Americans elected to represent local political districts. Among San Francisco's 11 Board of Supervisors (BOS) districts, five are currently represented by Asian Americans. Two districts contain Asian American majority populations. District Four has elected five successive Asian American supervisors dating back to the 1990s. This level of political incorporation in San Francisco is both unprecedented and a fairly recent phenomenon, as BOS supervisors Mar and Chiu were elected in 2008, supervisor Kim in 2010, and supervisor Yee in 2012.

San Francisco's central city is not alone in experiencing seismic demographic and political shifts. In the South Bay, several suburbs have undergone similar demographic transformations in their respective Asian American populations that rival or even surpass San Francisco. During the 1980s, the Los Angeles County suburb of Monterey Park, known as the "first suburban Chinatown," was the sole Asian American majority city on the continental United States.[19] Thirty years later, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, 15 California cities contained Asian American majority populations.[20] One-third of these Asian American majority cities were in the South Bay: Daly City, Fremont, Cupertino, Milpitas, and Union City. Scholars have termed these Asian-influenced suburban cities as "ethnoburbs"—cities transformed by transpacific capital and immigration and whose economies are interconnected by these linkages.[21] These majority Asian American suburbs are characterized as small- to medium-size cities with total populations ranging from 35,000 to 110,000.

Asian American candidates in small- to medium-size suburbs have demonstrated a critical marker for political power, namely, the ability to elect and replace outgoing ethnic city council members.[22] The reasons for Asian American candidates' success in the suburban context are factors such as the presence of a majority or significant population base, issue saliency around public education, and electoral procedures, such as citywide elections as opposed to district, which allow ethnic candidates to parlay citywide Asian American voters.[23] A large population base is the first but not sole step necessary for successful group mobilization as seen with African American and

Latina/o districts in large urban cities.[24] Even within the context of majority Asian American suburbs, successful Asian American candidates must foster multiracial political coalitions in diverse cities regardless of the Asian American population size due to this group's low voter turnout.[25]

No other region on the continental United States, with the exception of the ethnoburbs in San Gabriel Valley in the eastern part of Los Angeles County, has achieved a level of local political incorporation as measured by the number of Asian American elected officials than the San Francisco Bay Area. Its long and rich history dates to the Chinese contract laborers, who arrived in San Francisco during the California Gold Rush in the mid-1800s, formed communities and settlement patterns, and helped to establish North America's oldest Chinatown. Since the Immigration Act of 1965, this region has served as a major gateway for Asian immigrants from a variety of socioeconomic classes. The Bay Area's Asian American population grew from 1.4 million in 2000 to 1.9 million in 2010, becoming the second largest racial group behind whites. While the Bay Area's total population increased 5 percent from 2000 to 2010, the Asian American population increased 31 percent.[26] San Francisco County witnessed a 14 percent growth in the Asian American population during this period compared to 4 percent for the general population. Other counties, particularly in the South Bay and East Bay, have witnessed more rapid growth. Approximately one-third of the entire Asian American Bay Area population currently resides in the South Bay region of Santa Clara County with Asian American majority suburbs like Cupertino, Sunnyvale, Milpitas, and Fremont leading the way. In the East Bay's Alameda County, the Asian American population grew from 20 percent in 2000 to 26 percent in 2010 with Asian Indians representing the largest population growth, at 74 percent increase, for any ethnic group.

Asian American immigrants are making the San Francisco Bay Area suburbs in the South and East Bay regions key destinations with the exception of Daly City, which is the nation's largest Asian American majority city located south of San Francisco. Asian American majority cities in the East Bay, for example, Union City, and South Bay, for example, Cupertino and Milpitas, are taking shape as a result. Approximately one-third of the entire Asian American Bay Area population currently resides in the South Bay region of Santa Clara County that has facilitated the rise of Asian American majority suburbs like Cupertino, Sunnyvale, Milpitas, and Fremont.

With the invention of the microprocessor in 1971, Santa Clara County, also known internationally as Silicon Valley, emerged as home to highly educated Asians recruited and trained in the United States and abroad, immigrant entrepreneurs, and blue-collar workers.[27] In 1990, nearly 9,000 Asian Americans accounted for 47 percent of the total 19,000 blue-collar workers in Silicon Valley. In 2013, Asian Americans surpassed whites, for

the first time, to become the majority of Silicon Valley's high-tech workers. High-tech companies such as Google, Intel, and Apple have contributed to this diversity with their recruitment of HI-B visa workers, an overwhelming majority of whom are from India and China. In 2010, the Asian American population in Santa Clara County was 32.9 percent compared to 58.4 and 27.2 percent for whites and Latinas/os, respectively.[28] These shifts have made Santa Clara County an important region for understanding the recent evolution of Asian American politics in California, where over 40 percent of the entire Asian American population resides and but also for speculating what the future portends for the political incorporation of this group in these regions and localities.

Table 14.1 captures the Bay Area's ethnically diverse population of Asians and Pacific Islanders. Asian American population growth presents

Table 14.1
Ethnic Diversity of the Bay Area Asian and Pacific Islander Population, 2010

Ethnic Group	Number
Chinese (except Taiwanese)	630,467
Filipino	457,857
Indian	264,533
Vietnamese	205,766
Japanese	109,879
Korean	86,497
Taiwanese	34,095
Native Hawaiian	19,385
Cambodian	16,024
Pakistani	15,368
Samoan	14,770
Laotian	14,288
Thai	12,388
Tongan	12,083
Guamanian or Chamorro	11,249
Fijian	10,153
Burmese	8,778
Indonesian	8,119
Nepalese	3,277
Sri Lankan	2,280
Malaysian	2,095
Bangladeshi	1,980
Hmong	1,523
Bhutanese	410
Marshallese	99

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census SF1 Tables QT-P8 and QT-P9.

both political promise and challenges for this community with regard to issues related to pan-ethnic identity construction and political action.[29] Yet despite such challenges, one fact is certain, successful Asian American candidates today, whether in a central city or ethnoburb, must build multiracial coalitions that articulate common interests and ideologies through strong leadership, regardless of the size of the Asian American population, due to low U.S. naturalization rates for a majority immigrant community that may result in low voter turnout. For example, Ed Lee was elected in 2011 as San Francisco's first Asian American mayor, despite the 150-year history of Asian Americans in the "City by the Bay."

ED LEE, THE MODERATE GOVERNING COALITION, AND THE 2011 SAN FRANCISCO MAYORAL ELECTION

Ed Lee's historic election as San Francisco's first Asian American mayor in 2011 represents an analogy for the larger shifts taking place in one of the most famous cities of the Pacific Rim. Like much of the San Francisco Bay Area, San Francisco's demographics are rapidly changing. In 2010, Asians and Pacific Islanders accounted for 33 percent of the entire citywide population. In various neighborhoods such as Sunset and Excelsior, Asian Americans account for the majority populations. In the Tenderloin, a blighted and historically African American neighborhood, Asians and Pacific Islanders are now the plurality population. These demographic shifts would fuel future political shifts at the BOS level and the mayor's office along with competing progressive and moderate coalitions within the city.

While the 1995 San Francisco mayoral election was described as the "perfect storm" that unseated two-time political veteran Willie Brown from office, the 2011 mayoral election was described as the "perfect confluence of intersections" that brought Ed Lee to the city's most powerful position with the electoral backing of the city's moderate governing coalition in the form of votes, political endorsements, and campaign contributions.[30] One critical juncture of Asian American political incorporation in San Francisco history took place during the 2000 BOS elections in which the city's governing moderate coalition supervisors decreased from three to two during an anti-Mayor Willie Brown movement.[31] The 2000 election further exacerbated the political disconnect between the growing liberal coalition led by former Supervisor Bevan Dufty, BOS District 8, the liberal Democratic County Central Committee (DCCC), and the emerging Asian American electorate. The city's liberal coalition had historically relegated Asian Americans to peripheral status, but it was the moderate coalition that began to see political opportunity with the emerging Asian American electorate and worked to incorporate them. Such a strategy that marginalized Asian American voters pursued by the liberal coalition will likely

prove to be political suicide as politicians in San Francisco must give atten-
tion to the emerging Asian American electorate.

Since the watershed 2000 election that empowered the liberal coalition,
the DCCC has missed important opportunities to reach out to the city's
growing Asian American population. One recent example was in 2011
when it failed to endorse any of the four Asian American mayoral can-
didates, including Ed Lee, among its top three endorsed candidates for
San Francisco mayor. Instead, the DCCC endorsed two Latinos, Supervi-
sor John Avalos and City Attorney Dennis Herrera, as its first and second
choice, respectively, with no third choice identified. The result was pub-
lic anger among Asian American political activists and leaders. Attorney
Doug Chan's public statement captured this feeling:

> In San Francisco, four Chinese American officeholders—the Mayor,
> President of the Board of Supervisors, A State Senator, and the
> Assessor—are running, and the Democratic County Central Com-
> mittee could not find a way to endorse any of them for even a third
> choice? This is either a tribute to the political pluralism in my com-
> munity, or the DCCC is a seriously disturbed institution in a hyp-
> ocritical manner? The DCCC fumbled its history-making moment
> badly. Here we are in San Francisco, the Capital City of Chinese
> America, where eight generations of Chinese Americans have done
> their part to contribute not only to the building of a great metropoli-
> tan area and the American West for more than 160 years. The DCCC
> had three chances to endorse for election to the highest city office a
> qualified Chinese American, and it went small.[32]

The DCCC may have chosen to court the emerging Latino vote in San
Francisco by endorsing the two most visible Latino candidates in Avalos
and Herrera, a progressive and moderate. However, DCCC's reluctance
to endorse any of the four Chinese American candidates with the third
choice in some ways represents how the liberal coalition failed to under-
stand the intersections of identity and ideology for Asian Americans, even
as Asian Americans increased their number on the BOS to five. Concomi-
tantly, the progressive coalition's reluctance to endorse an Asian American
candidate led to a political opportunity for the ruling moderate coalition
given the common interests and ideology with the city's expanding Asian
American electorate. All that was needed to complete the coalition was a
strong, symbolic leader such as Ed Lee, a long-time, San Francisco polit-
ical insider with a strong reputation for building grassroots alliances.
Indeed, Lee's emergence as the city's governing moderate coalition fig-
urehead was by no means an accident, rather largely attributable to two
intersections in development since the 1970s that facilitated the moderate

governing coalition's willingness to include Asian Americans: (1) race and geopolitical space and (2) identity and ideology.

Intersection One: Race and Geopolitical Space

In San Francisco, the intersection of race and geopolitical space has extended well beyond the pre-1965 urban core of Old Chinatown, BOS District 3. In the post-1965 immigrant-influenced communities, new Asian American majority and plurality districts have added the following BOS Districts: District 1 (Richmond), District 4 (Sunset), District 6 (South of Market/Tenderloin), and District 10 (South San Francisco). In 1960, non-whites accounted for only 18 percent of San Francisco's population. By 1990, the figure increased to 53 percent making it a "minority majority city."[33] Asian Americans represented the city's largest minority racial group at 33 percent, followed by Latinos at 14 percent, and African Americans at 11 percent. As mentioned, a primary factor facilitating this demographic shift in the 1960s was the Immigration Act of 1965, which allowed Asians to immigrate en masse as a racial group. Previously, the 1924 National Origins Act excluded all Asians on the basis of their race. The counterbalancing factors that drew Asian immigration to and resettlement in San Francisco during this period included established ethnic communities, such as Old Chinatown, that provided security and social services to recent immigrants, San Francisco's prime location as a U.S. gateway for the Pacific Rim, and the subsequent globalization that created the need for both cheap and professional labor that complemented the skill sets of the post-1965 Asian immigration.

Population growth presents unique challenges for local Asian American candidates. Since 1965, the large foreign-born population influx along with the early-20th-century Asian pioneer immigrants and their descendants of Old Chinatown created two cleavages: pre- and post-1965 immigrants, and Chinese and "Other" Asians. The latter cleavage is important to consider given that the Immigration Act greatly diversified the Asian American community beyond the large, historic Chinese and Japanese American communities to include other Asian ethnicities, such as Taiwanese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, and Korean as well as Pacific Islanders, namely Hawaiian and Samoan. Whether these recent Asian ethnic groups can identify with and participate in local politics as Asian Americans with other single- and mixed-race Asians has been a great challenge at the local and state levels.[34]

In 2004, San Fransisco's Districts 1 (Richmond), 3 (Chinatown/North Beach), 4 (Sunset), 6 (South of Market/Tenderloin), and 7 (W. Twin Peaks) contained Asian American populations between 32 and 92 percent. Since

then, the 2010 census findings confirmed that Asian Americans are the city's fastest-growing racial group. The Asian American population grew 31.5 percent from 2000 to 2010. With the city's Asian American population now at 33 percent—265,700, it is likely to surpass the white population, which currently stands at 42 percent—337,451—by 2020. The Latino population grew the second fastest with a 27.8 percent increase.[35] In comparison, the white and African American populations grew by 6.4 percent and 1.6 percent, respectively, from the 2000 census.

What is significant about the Asian American population growth is not only the magnitude but also the community settlement patterns throughout San Francisco's neighborhoods. Prior to 1970, the largest Asian American population base was located in Old Chinatown, BOS District 3. However, from 1980 to 2000, the Asian American population extended into the new immigrant communities of Richmond, BOS District 1, and Sunset, BOS District 4, which are known as the New Chinatowns. For example, the 2010 census revealed that Old Chinatown's Asian population decreased to 86.2 percent from 92 percent in 1990, making Old Chinatown less Asian.[36] At the same time, the white population in Old Chinatown rose from 6.7 percent (1990) to 10 percent (2010). In adjacent Nob Hill and Russian Hill, which contain parts of Old Chinatown, the Asian American population also declined. In Nob Hill, the Asian American population declined from 47.8 percent in 1990 to 36.5 percent in 2010. Similarly in Russian Hill, the Asian American population declined from 48.9 percent in 1990 to 40.6 percent in 2010.

While the Asian American population stagnated and declined in the District 3 neighborhoods of Chinatown, Russian Hill and Nob Hill, the opposite was occurring in other areas located in the city's western, eastern, and southern regions. These areas include significant Asian American and Latino population growth in the Outer Mission, Excelsior, Sunset, and Parkside. In contrast, the white population decreased, but more affluent neighborhoods, such as the Marina district, Pacific Heights, the Presidio, the Castro, and Glen Park, remain the whitest neighborhoods. The impact of these community formation patterns extended well beyond mere population and into the political realm. Given the increasingly diverse, multiracial and ethnic characteristics, the importance of multiracial coalition building becomes more salient, and it provides political opportunity for a candidate who can construct and maintain such coalitions.

Intersection Two: Identity and Ideology

Identity and ideology matter in the context of contemporary racial politics in America's cities for African Americans and Latinos.[37] A 2008 national, multilingual survey of 5,000 Asian American voters found a

similar trend emerging.[38] As the Asian American community continues to grow in San Francisco, the interplay between identity by which they see themselves through the lenses of race or ethnicity, and ideology, defined as a set of beliefs that deeply affects political opinions, will become increasingly salient factors in determining the city's future political coalitions.

The emergence of a vibrant Chinese American community, specifically, and the Asian American community, generally, illuminates the intersection of racial ideology and identity during the 2011 mayoral election. According to a recent national survey of Asian Americans, residential location was not a strong predictor of Asian American voter support for Asian American candidates in gateway cities.[39] However, this was not the case in San Francisco during the 2011 mayoral election, as a majority of Asian Americans in election precincts located in highly populated Asian American BOS districts ranked-ordered Ed Lee as their first choice. The strong support that Lee received from Asian American voters over other Asian American candidates may likely be the influence of Lee's racial identity on Asian American voters' candidate preferences. Other contributing factors include Lee's front-runner status and the historical significance of this mayoral election that galvanized many Asian Americans to Lee's support despite the presence of four other Asian American candidates.

According to the San Francisco Progressive Voter Index (PVI), in 2004, the top four BOS districts containing the largest Asian American populations in relation to their ideological identification were District 4 (57.8%)/Mostly Conservative; District 11 (51.4%)/Moderate-Conservative; District 3 (45.7%)/Moderate-Conservative, and District 1 (44%)/Moderate-Conservative. The identity/ideology overlap occurring at the BOS district level throughout San Francisco appears to align Asian American voter interests with the moderate governing coalition's interests.

The intersection of racial ideology and identity combined with the intersection of race and geopolitical space made Ed Lee an attractive figurehead for the moderate governing coalition. With no strong, white moderate candidate emerging among the 2011 mayoral candidates, Lee became the symbolic leader to represent the new face of San Francisco's changing demographics and the moderate coalition's newest partner. With the progressive coalition's backing of Avalos in 2011, it will be interesting to see how future Latina/o and Asian American candidates and voters are courted by the rival coalitions.

2011 San Francisco Mayoral Election Results

In the 2001 citywide, mayoral election that featured ranked choice voting, Ed Lee won after the 12th round of vote redistribution with 84,457 votes for 59.6 percent. Although Lee received a majority after the first

round, he was the top vote getter with 59,775 votes for 30.8 percent followed by John Avalos (37,445 votes for 19.3%), Dennis Herrera (21,914 votes for 11.3%), David Chiu (17,921 votes for 9.2%), and Leland Yee (14,609 for 7.5%). Among the field of 16 candidates who officially entered the mayoral election, 5 of them were Asian American, which could have potentially divided the large, diverse Asian American electorate. Moreover, there were three high-profile candidates: David Chiu, then BOS president and supervisor of District 3: California Senator Leland Yee, who began his political career as supervisor of District 4; and then Interim Mayor Ed Lee. With the support of various San Francisco city elites, Lee withstood the ethnic competition, and defeated other Asian American mayoral candidates in their former or current supervisor districts. In District 4, Lee received 44 percent, the highest of all candidates, in the first round of votes compared to Yee's 11 percent, and in District 3, Lee received 37 percent, again the largest total and more than double that of Chiu's 15 percent.

Lee's victory was due, in part, to the strategy of reaching out to the city's Asian American voters through the absentee vote process. The nonpartisan Chinese American Voter Education Committee (CAVEC) executive director David Lee estimated that the grassroots voter outreach and bilingual education media campaign resulted in the targeting of 78,000 Asian American voters to vote by absentee ballot.[40] The result of this strategy likely benefitted Lee's campaign the most, as 63.4 percent of his votes came from absentee ballots compared to second place finisher Avalos with 46.1 percent.[41]

Asian American leadership's gradual incorporation into the city's moderate coalition has continued to facilitate further political shifts since the 2011 mayoral election. In the 2012 BOS District 1 election, where Asian Americans comprised nearly 44 percent of the population, the moderate coalition led an unprecedented effort in support of David Lee, the executive director of CAVEC, to unseat Eric Mar, the incumbent, with liberal coalition backing. Lee's supporters spent a record-setting sum nearing $1 million, or an expenditure of $94 per vote cast in this election. Of this amount, nearly $700,000 was soft money spent by independent expenditure committees against Mar, the largest amount for any San Francisco BOS election.[42] Despite this unprecedented amount, Mar was successful in winning nearly 54 percent compared to Lee's 38 percent. Mar later declared his victory over Lee the result of people power over financial power.[43]

THE ETHNOBURBS OF SILICON VALLEY: POLITICAL INCORPORATION IN CUPERTINO

Approximately 45 miles south of San Francisco County is Santa Clara County, which comprises of 15 incorporated cities and towns. Among these municipalities is the region's central city of San Jose, the nation's

10th largest city in 2010. Beyond the city limits, the region contains multiple 21st-century ethnoburbs with significant and majority Asian American populations. For example, the small suburb of Cupertino, corporate headquarters of Apple Computers, has become the archetype California Asian-influenced suburb, with the Asian American population increasing from less than 10 percent in 1980 to 63 percent in 2010.

Cupertino may be the archetype Asian-influenced ethnoburb but it is certainly not alone in Santa Clara County. Table 14.2 illustrates that Cupertino is among six other emerging ethnoburbs, such as Milpitas with 62 percent, Sunnyvale with 41 percent, and Santa Clara with 32 percent Asian American populations. Over the past decade, each ethnoburb underwent varied stages of political incorporation for local elected positions. Cupertino led the way, electing five Asian Americans to the five-person city council since 1995. In 2007, Cupertino became the first Asian American majority city council in Santa Clara County with three Asian American members. In contrast, Santa Clara city has never elected an Asian American to its city council while the cities of Mountain View and Sunnyvale have elected one and two Asian Americans, respectively.

Unlike many central cities, such as Los Angeles, where the Asian American community's interests and ideologies are often splintered around ethnic factions, small ethnoburbs like Cupertino are better able to circumvent such divisions if two important components are present: first, strong, community-based organizations and leadership; and second, a guiding political ideology that unifies the community. Strong leadership and vision are necessary to guide and establish the latter, a strong ideology. Ideology represents a key reason why Asian Americans in Cupertino have been able to mobilize their large population base and successfully

Table 14.2
Santa Clara County Cities by Race, 2010

Santa Clara County City	% Asian American	% Latina/o	% African American	% White
Majority-Minority Cities				
Cupertino	63	4	4	29
Gilroy	7	58	4	31
Milpitas	62	17	7	15
Mountain View	26	22	7	46
San Jose	32	33	6	29
Santa Clara	37	19	7	36
Sunnyvale	41	19	6	35
Subtotal	35	29	6	30

elect Asian Americans to the city council. The presence of a strong political ideology and strategy in the Asian American community has guided its leadership's quest around a common goal: descriptive representation. Its ideology and strategy are modeled after the Asian American Movement of the 1960s, which advocated self-determination and group empowerment for Asian Americans in civil rights and access to higher education in public universities.[44] In many ways, Cupertino politics today represents a continuation of this movement into the field of electoral politics, focusing on Asian American political incorporation and self-determination to achieve descriptive representation in city government.

One of the most influential Asian Americans who helped to establish the foundation for Asian American politics in Cupertino during the mid-1990s is Dr. Michael Chang, the first Asian American elected to the Cupertino city council in 1995 and who also directs the Asian Pacific American Leadership Institute at De Anza College in Cupertino. The vision that guided Chang to run for city council was based on the need for increased Asian American elected representation in city government. Underlying this need for greater elected representation were the principles of the Asian American Movement of the 1960s. Chang, who earned a doctorate from Stanford University and teaches Asian American Studies at De Anza Community College, was a participant in the student movements of the sixties that defined the Asian American Movement's origins. He applied these principles to the electoral arena. After his election, Chang began appointing Asian Americans to key citywide commissions and recruiting future Asian American council members, with the goal of creating a future candidate pool for local elected offices so that political power could be sustained over time.

Another Asian American who was instrumental in establishing the Asian American Movement as the primary ideology guiding Asian American politics in Cupertino is Paul Fong, a former professor of political science and Asian American studies at Evergreen Community College in San Jose. He was elected to the California State Assembly from District 28, which contains Santa Clara County cities and communities of Burbank, Cambrian Park, Campbell, Cupertino, Fruitdale, Lexington Hills, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, San Jose, Santa Clara, and Saratoga. Fong, like Michael Chang, also participated in the Asian American Movement in the Bay Area. During the late 1960s, he was concerned with minority students' access to public, higher education institutions like San Francisco State, UC Berkeley, and CSU San Jose State. Fong realized the necessity of extending the Asian American Movement beyond higher education to other public sectors, such as city government, through Asian American political action by creating local political institutions that reflected their group's interests and concerns.

Cupertino's suburban dynamics not only fostered the development of an Asian American ideology that focused on pan-ethnic or shared

identities rather than the typical ethnocentric interests that have limited Asian American political representation in larger cities but it also helped to establish active and vital community-based institutions that reflect and practice these ideological interests. In Cupertino, not only do Asian Pacific American community-based organizations exist, but many of them work together for a common purpose—the local political incorporation of Asian Americans. An example can be seen with Chang's Asian Pacific American Leadership Institute (APALI), which trains future generations of high school students for civic participation and education. A Senior Fellow program, headed by both Chang and Ruben Abrica, the first elected Latino city councilmember of East Palo Alto, was established to train both Latina/o and Asian American professionals for civic engagement and to understand the common historical and contemporary issues within both communities as they become more politically engaged in racially commingled communities throughout Santa Clara County/Silicon Valley. Asian Americans and Latinas/os together represent over 65 percent of Santa Clara County's 2010 total population with additional increases likely in the future. Consequently, Chang and Abrica foresee the need to establish common ground among the region's future Asian American and Latina/o candidates. APALI is arguably the first local, nonpartisan institute of its kind in the nation with this particular focus and mission.

The sponsorship for many of APALI's events, including the summer institute aimed at college students and recent graduates, comes from many local nonprofit Asian American community organizations such as the Robert Chang Foundation, Asian Americans for Community Involvement, the Asian Pacific Bar Association of Silicon Valley, Chinese Historical & Cultural Project, and Vision New America, a local, nonpartisan organization that seeks to improve Asian American awareness through civic education and participation. Unlike many urban cities, where similar organizations exist but are hampered by competing interests, these organizations pull their resources together to support important institutions like APALI and Asian American candidates, due to the establishment of a pan-ethnic model based on the Asian American Movement ideology.

As seen in mature, Asian American suburbs like Cupertino, the pathway to political incorporation that begins with elected representation is arguably moving faster in the suburbs than in central cities.[45] As political pipelines are established, suburbs with large Asian American populations serve as a foundation for future Asian American candidates at the local, state, and federal levels. One vivid example is current U.S. Congressional Representative Judy Chu, who began her political career on the school board and city council of Monterey Park before her election to the State Assembly and later to Congress.

New Challenges to the South Bay Asian American Coalition

Despite positive trends of political incorporation in local cities, Asian Americans still face challenges creating and maintaining pan-ethnic coalitions, whose leadership is often dominated by Japanese and Chinese Americans among Santa Clara County's ethnically diverse Asian American population. In particular, emerging Asian ethnic groups, such as Vietnamese and Asian Indians, are seeking political representation in Santa Clara, which raises the question of whether these groups should align themselves with the established Asian American Democratic coalition or challenge it. This question was at the heart of the high-profile 2014 California Congressional District 17 election, which pitted two Asian American Democrats against each other in the nation's first majority Asian American congressional district on the continental United States.

Michael Honda, the symbolic leader of the region's Asian American-led Democratic coalition defeated fellow Democrat Ro Khanna, a 36-year-old Indian American attorney, in the 2014 general election with 51.8 percent (69,561 votes) compared to Khanna's 48.2 percent (64,847 votes). In 2016, Honda will again square off with Khanna, who has already announced that he will run again.

In 2012, Khanna raised nearly $1.2 million for a Congressional run against Democrat incumbent Congressman Fortney "Pete" Stark in District 13.[46] Instead, Khanna decided to run in the 2014 Congressional District 17 election against Congressman Honda. The reaction by Honda's supporters and the Democratic coalition's members was that Khanna should have run against Democrat Stark in 2012 when he had a chance to win, and most importantly, would have received the support from the Asian American Democratic coalition. According to Paul Fong, California State Assemblyman, District 28, "We could have gotten behind Ro if he ran against Stark, but he's going against our leader. Mike is the leader of the Asian Pacific Islander Movement."[47]

Other Asian American elected officials and community leaders feel this is necessary, however. Milpitas's former mayor, Jose Estevez, who rallied Filipino Americans in support of Khanna's 2014 campaign, said: "Ro is more focused on Silicon Valley."[48] Despite Khanna's support from local leaders, Honda received major political endorsements from Democratic Party leaders such as President Obama and Representative Nancy Pelosi. Given Khanna's ethnic background, another significant challenge to the South Bay Asian American coalition is whether it can maintain its pan-ethnic nature as emerging Asian American groups, such as Asian Indians, flex their political muscle and challenge the status quo. The political emergence of rising Asian ethnic groups such as Asian Indians and Filipino Americans, who are challenging the established Asian American coalition led by Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans such as Congressman

Honda in the South Bay, should not be viewed as surprising with the Bay Area's increased Asian American immigration and ethnic diversity. Time will tell whether Asian Indians and Filipino Americans will align with the established Asian American coalition or with another coalition that will determine the future impact of Asian American voters in local and state elections in the region. This represents a unique situation for Asian Americans, and it speaks to why the South Bay region is vital to understand the challenges facing contemporary Asian American political incorporation.

CONCLUSION

With its rich and long Asian American history, the San Francisco Bay Area is undergoing new political shifts that are redefining the demographic and political identities in its various cities as illustrated by San Francisco and its South Bay suburbs. Since 1965, San Francisco and its suburbs have been shaped by a stable influx of Asian immigration. As these Asian American communities within the metropolitan region mature, so to have their levels of political incorporation. Asian Americans are key partners in central city governing coalitions that allow for Asian American elected representation to not only continue but also flourish. In San Francisco, Asian American elected officials now represent 5 of the city's 11 BOS districts and the mayor's office. Meanwhile, South Bay ethnoburbs, such as Cupertino, serve as political incubators for horizontal, or citywide, and vertical, or county and state levels, political incorporation bolstered by an extensive network of Asian American community-based organizations that cultivate and support Asian American candidates through political action at the local and state levels. As California and the San Francisco Bay Area transform into majority minority populations containing large, ethnically diverse Asian American populations, the ability to build multiracial and pan-ethnic coalitions will become even more critical to the future success of Asian American and non-Asian candidates. Asian Americans now find themselves as a central component of a multiracial political equation in the San Francisco Bay Area that is unrivaled and will serve as a blueprint for future Asian American political engagement in other regions throughout the United States.

NOTES

1. Frey, *Melting Pot Cities and Suburbs.*
2. Ibid.
3. Logan and Zhang, "Separate but Equal."
4. Hoeffel, et al., *Asian Population.*
5. Logan and Zhang, "Separate but Equal."
6. Ibid.

7. Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote, "Behind the Numbers."

8. Goldmacher, "Undecided Asian Americans Prove to be a Powerful Voting Bloc."

9. Lee and Ramakrishnan, "The 2012 Asian American Vote?"

10. Ibid.

11. For this finding, the 2008 National Asian American Survey asked the following: "People of Asian descent in the United States use different terms to describe themselves. In general, do you think of yourself as . . . ?" The respondent was then read the following categories: Ethnic American, Ethnic Group, Asian American, Asian, American, and Other.

12. Wong, et al., *Asian American Political Participation*.

13. Wong, et al., *Asian American Political Participation*; this question asked: "Suppose you have an opportunity to decide on two candidates for political office, one of whom is (respondent ethnic group)-American. Would you be more likely to vote for the (respondent ethnic group)-American candidate, if the two candidates are equally experienced and qualified?"

14. Lien, et al., "Summer Report of the Pilot Study," 80–95.

15. Lai, *Asian American Political Action*.

16. Browning, Marshall, and Tabb, *Racial Politics in American Cities*.

17. Lai, *Asian American Political Action*.

18. Worth, "San Francisco Neighborhoods Have Changed Faces"; Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell, *Twenty-First Century Gateways*.

19. Fong, *First Suburban Chinatown*.

20. These majority Asian American suburbs in 2010 were the following California cities: Daly City, Fremont, Monterey Park, Walnut, Cupertino, Milpitas, Cerritos, San Gabriel, Rosemead, Rowland Heights, Arcadia, Temple City, Alhambra, Diamond Bar, and Union City. All of these cities are from 25,000 to 110,000 in total population.

21. Lai, *Asian American Political Action*; Li, *Ethnoburb*.

22. Lai, *Asian American Political Action*; Lai and Geron, "When Asian Americans Run," 62–88.

23. Lai and Geron, "When Asian Americans Run," 62–88.

24. Browning, Marshall, and Tabb, *Racial Politics in American Cities*.

25. Lai, *Asian American Political Action*.

26. Asian American Center for Advancing Justice 2013, *Community of Contrasts*.

27. Park, "Asians Matters," 155–168.

28. Nakaso, "Asian Workers Now Dominate Silicon Valley Tech Jobs."

29. Lai, *Asian American Political Action*.

30. DeLeon, *Left Coast City*.

31. Ibid.

32. SFNewsfeed.us, "San Francisco Democratic Party Locks Out Asian Candidates."

33. DeLeon, *Left Coast City*, 14.

34. Junn and Masouka, "Asian American Identity," 729–740; Masouka, "Political Attitudes and Ideologies of Multiracial Americans," 253–267.

35. Fagan, "Census Shows Big Gains by Asian Americans, Latinos."

36. Worth, "San Francisco Neighborhoods Have Changed Faces over Two Decades."

37. Sonenshein, "Do Asian Americans Count in L.A.?"; Browning, Marshall, and Tabb, *Racial Politics in American Cities*; Bowler and Segura, *The Future Is Ours*.
38. Wong, et al., *Asian American Political Participation*.
39. Ibid.
40. Lee, "Presentation Slides."
41. Ibid.
42. Sabatini, "Record-Setting Spending by Challenger in District 1 Didn't Out Mar."
43. Ibid.
44. Omatsu, "Four Prisons and the Movements of Liberation," 135–162.
45. Lai, *Asian American Political Action*; Lai and Geron, "When Asian Americans Run," 62–88.
46. Pulcrano, "Is Rho Khanna the Valley's Next Big Thing?"
47. Onishi, "Rivalries Begin to Emerge in a New Seat of Power."
48. Ibid.

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