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A Tale of Two Global Cities: The State of Asian Americans in Los Angeles and New York

Howard Shih and Melany De La Cruz-Viesca

Abstract

At the national level, the Asian American population has grown more than any other major race group. According to the 2010 Census, the Los Angeles metro area had 2,199,186 Asians, making it the home to the largest Asian population in the United States. Following close behind was the New York City metro area with 2,008,906 Asians. Over a quarter of the 14.7 million Asian Americans reside in either of the two greater metropolitan regions, where they comprise around a tenth of the total population in each metropolis. We begin with a brief historical overview of immigration legislation that has both invited and excluded Asian Americans, as a means of understanding how Asian Americans have been perceived over time. We will also compare some key characteristics of Asian American populations in Los Angeles County, New York City, the Balance of LA Combined Statistical Area (CSA) (excluding Los Angeles County), and the Balance of NYC CSA (excluding New York City), and the Balance of United States. The paper will cover: (1) demographic trends and patterns (2) economic status (3) political engagement and incorporation, and (4) residential settlement patterns. We close with a discussion of how these demographic changes have contributed to Asian Americans rapid social, economic, and political upward mobility in the last decade, at a time when the global restructuring of the economy has blurred nation-state boundaries that once existed and migration from Asia to the United States has become more complex, particularly over the past two decades.

Introduction

Los Angeles and New York have served as gateway cities for Asian immigration since the early 1900s, serving among the top

tier of cities that are both global economic centers and magnets for immigrants. In turn, Asian Americans have transformed these cities and played a fundamental role in the labor force, the social composition, and political life. The most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau confirm that in 2009, for the first time since this annual data series has been released, less than one half of all the three year-old children were white.¹ This racial and ethnic shift will be even greater over the next several decades, as the Asian population is expected to nearly double to constitute 9% of the population and Latinos are expected to double and become 29% of the total population by mid-century.² In the last decade, this racial shift was evidenced in politics, in which a record breaking number of Asian Americans were elected to office in both Los Angeles and New York (Nakanishi and Lai, 2011). This growth in political representation, engagement, and incorporation signals how both native born Asians and recent Asian immigrants are changing the structures of power. These trends hold important implications for both policy and politics, in particular to what extent Asian Americans will emerge as the new “sleeping giant” in American politics (Ong et al., 2008).

At the national level, the Asian American population increased by 43 percent between 2000 and 2010, more than any other major race group.³ Asians had the second-largest numeric change (4.4 million), growing from 10.2 million in 2000 to 14.7 million in 2010. The Los Angeles metro area with 2,285,029 Asians made it the home to the largest Asian population in the United States. Following close behind was the New York City metro area with 2,050,522 Asians. Over a quarter of the 15.7 million Asian Americans reside in either of the two greater metropolitan regions, where they comprise over a tenth of the total population in each metropolis. This paper analyzes data from the recently released 2005-09 American Community Survey (ACS) and 2006-08 ACS Detailed Tables and Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data. We begin with a brief historical overview of immigration legislation that has both invited and excluded Asian Americans, as a means of understanding how Asian Americans have been perceived over time in the United States. We will also compare some key characteristics of Asian American populations in Los Angeles County, the larger Los Angeles Combined Statistical Area (CSA), New York City, the larger New York CSA, and the rest of the country, such as: (1)

demographic trends and patterns (2) economic status (3) political engagement and incorporation, and (4) residential settlement patterns. We close with a discussion of how these demographic changes have allowed Asian Americans social, economic, and political upward mobility to a certain extent, at a time when the global restructuring of the economy has blurred nation-state boundaries that once existed and migration from Asia to the United States has become more complex, particularly over the past two decades.

History of United States Immigration Policies

It is important to note the historical, social, and spatial transformation of both Los Angeles and New York, to better understand the impact of Asian Americans on these cities. During the pre-World War II period, no group encountered more discriminatory immigration legislation than Asians, through such legislation as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, 1907-08 Gentlemen's Agreement (excluded Japanese and Koreans), 1917 Immigration Act (excluded Asian Indians) and the 1924 National Origins Act, a major form of legislation that limited and set quotas on the annual number of immigrants from China, Japan, Korea, and India (Ong and Liu, 2000). The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 added Filipinos to the list of excluded immigrants, removed their "national" status, and declared them as aliens (Ong and Liu, 2000). The policies of the early twentieth century severely limited the growth and settlement of Asian American communities.

A growing post-WW II economy coupled with a severe labor shortage in highly educated professions, resulted in a shift in immigration policy throughout the late 1970s, into the 1980s and 1990s. A significant turning point occurred with the passage of the 1965 Hart-Cellar Immigration Act, which abolished the National Origins formula that had been in place since the 1924 Immigration Act (Chan, 1991). A surge of immigrants from Asia arrived in the United States to fill a range of niches from professional to industrial and service sector jobs. The Fall of Saigon, end of the Vietnam War, and the passage of the Indochina Migration and Refugee Act of 1975 established a program of domestic resettlement assistance for refugees who fled from Cambodia and Vietnam. This prompted large-scale waves of immigration from Southeast Asia, with the majority of the population settling in the Midwest and California (Chan, 1991; Ong, Bonacich, and Cheng, 1994; Takaki,

1989). Among the top 10 nations sending Asian immigrants to the United States from 1990 to 1998, the Philippines, China, Vietnam, India, Korea, Pakistan, and Taiwan appeared every year. Asian immigrants in the 1990s went mainly to four states (in order from largest to smallest): California, New York, Texas, and New Jersey (Modares, 2003). Immigrant cities, such as Los Angeles and New York, have grown rapidly in population size due to globalization and the acceleration of immigrant flows driven by income differentials, social networks, and various state policies.

Spatial Formation of Los Angeles and New York

The development of the Los Angeles metropolitan area is highly complex and not as stratified as the New York metro area, because it grew by the accumulation of geographic fragments in the 1920s (Scott and Soja, 1996). Over time, the boundaries between the Los Angeles central city and surrounding suburban areas have been blurred; making it difficult to fit Los Angeles into a certain type of urban/suburban typology or dichotomy. In the 1960s, federal subsidies for urban sprawl led to de-investment in the central city of Los Angeles and increased development of suburban areas. Along with a combination of other factors (e.g., restrictive covenants in housing and mortgage lending), this caused “white flight”, in which many of the wealthy and white abandoned the inner-city for the suburbs (Davis, 1992). Consequently, employment and commercial growth would follow the population exodus to outlying areas, creating problems of spatial mismatch for the inner-city poor (Pastor, 2001). In comparison, New York’s development is deeply linked to its function as a world port (Abu-Lughod, 1999). New York is strategically located along a core waterway that made it central to “...commerce and trade orientated more toward Europe than toward the American hinterlands and designed to connect the ‘New World’ to a world system” and eventually into an urbanized region with a centralized inner city core (Abu-Lughod, 1999). Over time, New York also developed clear socialization patterns along race and class reflected by the “downtown vs. uptown” model, as described by Wei Li, “...posits that within one ethnic group, those who live in downtown enclaves are usually poor, less educated, and spatially concentrated, whereas residents of uptown, that is the suburbs, are well off, professionally trained and live in racially or ethnically mixed residential areas”

(2009). However, a new model of the contemporary urban ethnic community has emerged, the “ethnoburb” coined by Scholar Wei Li in 1997. According to Li, “Ethnoburbs have emerged under the influence of international geopolitical and global economic restructuring; changing national immigration and trade policies; local demographic, economic, and political contexts; and increasing transnational networks and connections (2009).” These spatial patterns have influenced the residential settlement of Asian Americans in distinct ways, as explored in the next section analyzing recent demographic trends in Los Angeles and New York.

I. Demographics

This section of the report compares the demographics for the five regions. The subjects covered are age, ethnicity, educational attainment, English ability and housing. What emerges is a clear split between the urban core and the suburbs in the New York City metro area compared to a less stratified and more fragmented Los Angeles metro area.

Age

Los Angeles County had the highest median age among the five regions at 39 years of age. The other four regions had nearly the same median age: 36 years for the Balance of LA CSA and for New York City and 35 years for the Balance of NYC CSA and the Balance of US. Los Angeles County had lower shares of children below the age of ten years and higher shares of adults age 45 and over than the other four regions. The Balance of LA CSA had higher shares of children under 10 years old and adults age 35 to 44 compared to Los Angeles County, indicating a slightly higher concentration of young families in the suburbs. New York City had more college age residents (18 to 24 year olds) and more seniors (65 years and older) than the Balance of NYC CSA.

Ethnicity

A comparison of the five regions using dissimilarity indices (DI) based on ethnic distribution further highlights the distinctiveness of each region. New York City in particular had DIs of 39.9 with Los Angeles County and 50.9 with the Balance of LA CSA. The two urban cores had less in common with the Balance of US than their respective outlying areas. New York City and Los

Angeles County had DIs of 33.3 and 25.1 respectively with the Balance of US, while the Balance of NYC CSA and the LA CSA had DIs of 23.8 and 21.8 respectively.

The uneven distribution of each ethnicity across the country is evident in the lists of the five largest ethnicities by region (Table 1). Only Chinese, Filipinos and Koreans appeared in the lists for all five regions, while Indians were in four. Both regions in the NYC CSA had a large South Asian component. However, New York City remained overwhelmingly Chinese, while Indians were the largest ethnicity in the Balance of NYC CSA. Los Angeles County had Japanese and Vietnamese communities in the top five while Vietnamese represented the largest Asian ethnicity in the Balance of LA CSA.

Educational Attainment

With educational attainment for Asians age 25 years and over, we see further evidence of an urban-suburban divide in the NYC CSA. In New York City, one quarter of Asian adults had less than a high school education and 39 percent had a college degree.

Table 1: Five Largest Asian Ethnic Groups in each of the Five Regions

Ethnic Group	LA County	Balance of LA CSA	NYC	Balance of NYC CSA	Balance of U.S.
Chinese*	29.5%	15.1%	45.6%	20.7%	20.8%
Filipino	24.1%	21.6%	7.0%	15.1%	18.3%
Korean	15.9%	13.4%	9.0%	12.3%	8.9%
Indian	N/A	9.1%	23.2%	38.3%	19.4%
Vietnamese	6.7%	25.0%	N/A	N/A	12.4%
Japanese	8.0%	N/A	N/A	3.0%	N/A
Pakistani	N/A	N/A	3.1%	N/A	N/A
Remaining Asian Groups	15.8%	15.8%	12.1%	10.6%	20.2%

Notes: N/A=Not in top five for region

* Chinese includes Taiwanese

Source: 2006-2008 ACS Summary File

The Balance of NYC CSA represented the other extreme, where only eight percent never graduated from high school and over two-thirds had a college degree. The other three regions were essentially the same with 13-14 percent having never graduated high school and 48-49 percent with college degrees.

Comparing the educational attainment of Asians and non-Hispanic whites (NHWs) in the five regions highlights the bimodal nature of educational attainment in the Asian community. Across all regions, Asians were more likely to never have completed high school than NHWs. In particular, Asians in both regions of the LA CSA and in New York City were more than twice as likely as NHWs to never have completed high school. Only in New York City were Asians less likely to have a college degree than NHWs, with 39 percent of Asians and 51 percent of NHWs graduating college. In LA County, Asians and NHWs had similar percentages of college graduates, with 48 percent of Asians and 45 percent of NHWs holding college degrees. For the other three regions, Asians had much higher percentages of college graduates than NHWs.

English Ability

Unsurprisingly, Asian limited English proficiency (LEP) rates reflected the educational attainment of each region. Asians in New York City had the highest LEP rates, with half of all Asians age 5 years and older with LEP. Asians in the Balance of NYC CSA were on the other end of the spectrum with the lowest LEP rate among the five regions at 30 percent, further highlighting the stark differences within the New York metro area.

When compared with NHWs, Asians had higher LEP rates across the five regions. Surprisingly, native-born Asians also reported much higher LEP rates than native-born NHWs. This was especially evident in New York City where one in seven native-born Asians had limited English proficiency compared to 3 percent of native-born NHWs.

Housing

Finally this section concludes by examining two dimensions of housing in the Asian community: homeownership and overcrowding. Homeownership has historically been a way for Americans to build wealth. Homeownership rates among Asian households were highest in the Balance of NYC CSA area at 65

percent for Asian-led households, with the Balance of LA CSA and the Balance of US close behind. Los Angeles County was a bit lower at 52 percent for Asian-led households. The rates were lowest in New York City at 40 percent for Asian-led households. Homeownership rates for Asians were lower than NHWs in each of the five regions.

Overcrowded living conditions are commonly defined as housing units with more than one occupant per room. In New York City, 15 percent of Asian households had more than one occupant per room. In the other four regions, 9 percent Asian households in Los Angeles County, 7 percent in the Balance of LA CSA, and 6 percent in each of the Balance of NYC CSA and the Balance of US lived in crowded conditions. For all five regions, Asian households lived in more crowded conditions than NHW-led households.

II. Economic Status⁴

This section compares income statistics, annual employment status and earnings for Asian Americans in the five geographic regions. The section also addresses the question of how Asian Americans are situated relative to non-Hispanic whites and others within each region.

The data reveal that Asian households in the two urban cores of Los Angeles County and New York City were less well off than Asian households in the rest of the nation (Table 2). In particular, New York City's Asians were well below the rest of the regions on all measures of income and poverty. Los Angeles County had the second lowest mean household income among the five regions.

The disparity in the New York CSA was substantial, mirroring the traditional urban/suburban divide. In fact, the Balance of NY CSA had the highest average household income for the five reporting areas, while New York City had the lowest average. More than one-third of Asian households in New York City reported less than \$35,000 in income, while more than half of Asian households in the Balance of New York CSA had incomes of \$100,000 or greater. Per capita income and poverty rates also showed this pattern, with New York City and the Balance of NYC CSA bookending the range of values and the rest of the regions in-between.

The inter-regional differences in income are rooted in large part to variations in earnings. The labor force participation among Asian Americans 16 years and older were very similar across all

Table 2: Income, Earnings and Employment

	LA County	Balance of LA CSA	NYC	Balance of NYC CSA	Balance of U.S.
Economic Measures for Asian Alone					
Households	412,323	224,390	301,594	273,845	2,948,112
Mean Household Income	\$84,672	\$96,296	\$76,481	\$125,665	\$88,139
Households by Income					
Less than \$35,000	28.1%	22.4%	34.6%	14.1%	25.3%
\$35,000 to \$99,999	41.6%	39.8%	41.6%	35.1%	43.0%
\$100,000 or more	30.3%	37.8%	23.8%	50.8%	31.7%
Per Capita Income	\$29,437	\$30,755	\$25,630	\$40,520	\$29,823
Poverty Rate	10.6%	9.7%	17.3%	5.6%	10.5%
16 and Older Population	1,067,713	614,951	788,350	697,623	7,381,304
Full-Time and Full-Year (FT/FY)	41.1%	41.9%	42.5%	48.4%	43.1%
Less than FT/FY	24.3%	24.9%	24.2%	23.8%	27.5%
Annual Earnings, all workers					
\$1 to \$19,999	28.9%	27.6%	35.7%	22.0%	31.1%
\$20,000 to \$49,999	36.5%	33.7%	35.1%	27.5%	35.0%
\$50,000 or more	34.6%	38.7%	29.2%	50.5%	33.9%
Mean FT/FY Earnings	\$59,203	\$64,793	\$55,320	\$81,946	\$61,666
Within Region Income Stratification (Normalized to Non-Hispanic White values within region)					
Mean Household Income (higher is better)					
Asian Alone Households	81	98	70	111	120
Other Households	56	68	47	60	67
Per Capita Income (higher is better)					
Asian Alone	62	76	51	92	97
Other	36	43	37	49	54
Poverty Rate (lower is better)					
Asian Alone	130	147	155	114	111
Other	241	236	212	304	247
Mean FT/FY Earnings (higher is better)					
Asian Alone	69	84	58	95	107
Other	44	54	44	54	67

Source: 2006-2008 ACS Public Use Microdata Set. PUMS Data computed by Ong.

the regions, with the exception of the balance of NYC CSA. Slightly more than two-fifth worked full-time and full-year, and about a quarter worked less than full-time and full-year in the four similar regions. On the other hand, nearly half of Asian workers in the balance of NYC CSA were fully employed, which contributed to the higher household and per capita incomes reported. While the ability to hold a full-time job helps account for higher household income, higher earnings has an even greater impact. For example, half of Asian American workers in the balance of NYC CSA earned at least \$50,000 annually, while the proportion for the other regions is closer to one-third. Among fully-employed workers in the former region, the average annual earnings were nearly \$82,000, nearly one and a half times more than the average of those in New York City. Although much has been asserted about Asian Americans being a model minority with expectations to outpace NHWs, a parity index analysis of income and poverty measures with NHWs as the bench mark show a different picture. In terms of mean household income, Asian Americans certainly fared better than other minorities, but Asian Americans were below parity relative to NHWs in Los Angeles County, the balance of LA CSA, and New York City. However, Asian households tended to be larger, resulting in per capita income parity levels to be well below NHWs across all regions. The same pattern held in terms of mean FT/FY earnings and poverty. The lower average earnings is intriguing given that Asian Americans had higher levels of educational attainment in most regions, and this likely due to the fact that many highly educated Asian immigrants experienced significant downward mobility in employment opportunities. It is also important to note that the statistics for the balance of US may be misleading because it does not take into account that Asian Americans were over concentrated in high income and high-cost metropolitan areas such as Honolulu, San Francisco Bay Area, and Washington D.C. Overall, the analysis indicates that Asian Americans occupied an income level between that of NHWs and the other races in the region.

III. Political Engagement and Incorporation

This section examines the civic engagement of Asian American communities in the five study regions by exploring both the naturalization rates and the voting participation rates of Asian Americans. Of the major race and ethnic groups in the United

States, the Asian American population has the largest proportion of immigrants. About two-thirds of Asians were foreign-born, followed by about two in five Hispanics.⁵ Thus, the growth of the Asian American population is still largely driven by immigration to the United States.

Citizenship and Nativity

In comparison to the country as a whole, Asians in each of the regions we examined were the only major race and ethnic group, in which the majority of the population was immigrant. New York City (NYC) led the five regions with 73 percent of Asians that are immigrant, followed closely by the balance of NYC Combined Statistical Area (CSA) with 72 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-09). The Los Angeles (LA) County Asian population was 68 percent immigrant with the balance of LA CSA consisting of 65 percent immigrant. The balance of United States was the same as the country as a whole. The Latino community had the second highest percentage of immigrants in each of the five regions.

Asians were more likely to naturalize than Latinos across all regions. Among the more recent immigrants (those who entered the US less than fifteen years ago), 31 percent in the balance of LA CSA and between 25 to 27 percent of the other four regions had become citizens. More recent Latino immigrants naturalized at rates ranging from seven percent to 18 percent among the five regions. Among long-time immigrants, New York City stood out with the lowest naturalization rates. Only 77 percent of New York City's Asian immigrants who entered the country 15 or more years ago were citizens, compared to 83 to 86 percent for the other four regions. For long-time Latino immigrants, the naturalization rate ranged from 45 percent to 62 percent among the regions. The differences in naturalization rates can be explained in part by geographic location. During the 1990s, the number of immigrants naturalizing in California swelled in response to growing anti-immigrant sentiment, politics, and legislation (Ong, 2010-2011). The surge in naturalization among Asian immigrants in California and other parts of the U.S. can also be explained by how assimilation is conceptualized--on the one hand, political incorporation is a key component of assimilation, and gaining citizenship is seen normatively by the larger society as a desirable behavior because it represents a change in allegiance from the sending country to

the receiving country (Ong, 2010-2011). On the other, Defensive naturalization is similar to economic assimilation, which is instrumental and rational rather than being sentimental and intrinsically valuable (Ong, 2010-2011). When the societal climate turns anti-alien, one potential response by immigrants is to seek protection through citizenship. Naturalization also opens up new opportunities to become politically active, thus influencing political decisions and public policy through voting and public demonstrations (Félix et al., 2008; Ong, 2010-2011).

Voting

According to the 2004, 2006, and 2008 Current Population Survey (CPS) data, naturalization rates were high in the Asian community, but voter registration and turnout was lower compared to Non-Hispanic Whites (NHWs). It is only in Los Angeles County that Asian voter registration and turnout rates were anywhere close to that for NHWs. In the presidential elections, the number of Asian voters grew exponentially from 2004 to 2008 in Los Angeles and New York. In the LA CSA, there were 493,395 estimated Asian voters in 2004, compared to 605,012 Asian voters in 2008 for a growth of 23 percent. In the NYC CSA, there were 315,315 estimated Asian voters in 2004, compared to 393,570 Asian voters in 2008 for a growth of 25 percent. In the midterm elections, the number of Asian voters fell between the 2006 and the 2010 midterm elections. In the LA CSA, there were 434,500 estimated Asian voters in 2006, compared to 394,097 Asian voters in 2010 for a decline of nine percent. In the NYC CSA, there were 297,880 estimated Asian voters in 2006, compared to 162,961 Asian voters in 2010 for a drop of 45 percent. Overall, the estimated number of registered voters is more stable. In the LA CSA, the number of registered voters increased from 584,382 in 2004; 626,356 in 2006; and 681,567 in 2008. The NYC CSA had a drop in the estimate in 2008. The number of registered voters increased from 368,518 in 2004 to 506,354 in 2006; and then dropped to 449,377 in 2008. These varying turnout rates can be explained through a number of factors, such as the degree of media attention placed on the elections, outreach, and accessibility at the ballot box (e.g. language assistance, identification requirements).

The 2004, 2006, and 2008 CPS November Supplement asks survey participants to give reasons for not registering to vote and

for not voting in a given election. Given the limited sample size of the CPS, we were only able to examine the data for these two questions for the LA and NY CSAs.

At the national level, about one-third of Asian and two-fifths of Non-Hispanic Whites (NHWs) voting age citizens cited disinterest as the most common reason for not registering to vote. However, from the total Asians who did not register, 28 percent in LA CSA and 38 percent in the NYC CSA stated that they did not know how to register, had language barriers, or believed themselves to be ineligible to vote as reasons for not registering. For the voting-age citizen NHWs who did not register; only nine percent in LA CSA and 13 percent in NYC CSA gave the same reasons. Moreover, the data indicates that while voter apathy lowered participation rates in both the NHW and Asian communities, structural issues played a larger role in reduced participation rates by the Asian community.

The reasons for not voting cited by Asians and NHWs living in the LA CSA were very similar in distribution, with being too busy as the most commonly cited reason by far (27 and 30 percent respectively). In the NYC CSA, Asians cited being too busy 41 percent of the time, compared to 25 percent of NHWs. Also, 21 percent of Asians cited being away from home as a reason for not voting, compared with 12 percent of NHWs. Curiously, only two percent of Asians and five percent of NHWs made use of voting by mail options in the NYC CSA, compared with one third of NHWs and 35 percent of Asians in the LA CSA. Despite these outcomes, the number and percentage of registered Asian voters has significantly increased during the last decade. This provides some insight into the increasing trend of the number of elected Asian American officials, particularly in Los Angeles and New York. Although the number of Asian voters is not as large as other racial groups, a few scholars have noted that while it has been difficult to construct Asian-majority districts, Asians have seen success in creating Asian-influence districts in the meantime (Ong and Lee, 2010).

IV. Residential Settlement Patterns

Although immigrant populations continue to grow in Los Angeles and New York—as well as other parts of the U.S., such as the south—traditional patterns of segregation continue to exist for the most part, in particular for Asians and Latinos. Small declines

Table 3: Asian-white Isolation in top 10 Metro areas with the largest Asian population in 2010

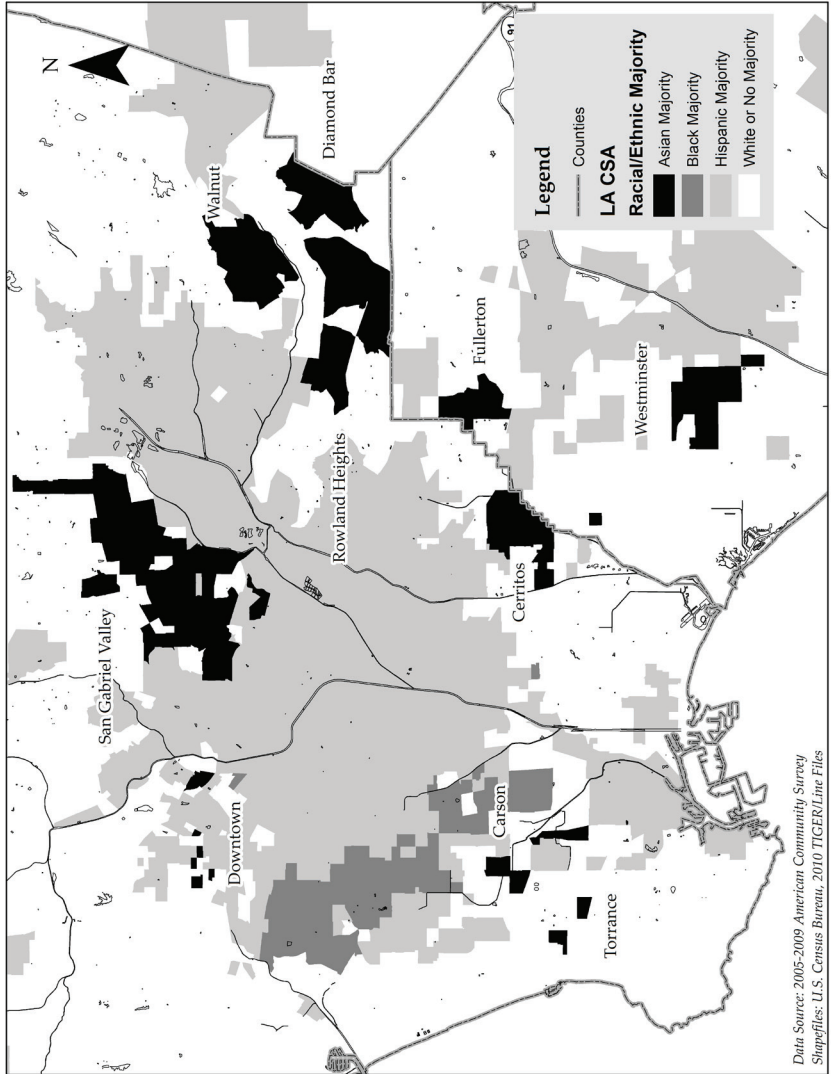
2010 Rank	Area Name	2010 Isolation	2000 Isolation	1990 Isolation	1980 Isolation
1	Honolulu, HI	74.7	75.1	68.2	65.2
2	San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	45.4	37.6	24.3	10.2
3	San Francisco-San Mateo-Redwood City, CA	42.2	39.6	35.1	29.0
4	Oakland-Fremont-Hayward, CA	36.3	29.2	20.4	11.9
5	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale, CA	31.9	28.5	21.9	14.7
6	Santa Ana-Anaheim-Irvine, CA	31.6	25.4	15.8	6.1
7	New York-White Plains-Wayne, NY-NJ	30.3	25.0	18.7	14.4
8	Edison-New Brunswick, NJ	29.3	20.2	9.9	2.9
9	Vallejo-Fairfield, CA	25.4	24.7	21.7	11.9
10	Stockton, CA	24.7	23.0	24.9	10.0

Source: American Communities Project, Brown University

in black and white segregation in recent decades have continued, while Asians and Latinos remain as segregated from whites as they were three decades ago. The two fast-growing segments of the U.S. population, Asians and Latinos, remain at the same levels of segregation from whites as in 1980; and their increasing numbers mean that their ethnic neighborhoods are increasingly homogeneous in many parts of the nation (Logan and Stults, 2010). At the same time, there is evidence in some major metropolitan regions that the growth in Asian and Latino population in many predominantly white neighborhoods has paved the way for blacks to live in those more diverse places (Logan and Stults, 2010). Table 3 lists the isolation index values for the ten metro regions with the most Asians.

Asian isolation, like that of Latinos, is closely related to the group's population size. Honolulu is an unusual case because the Asian population is especially large. In 2010, there are seven other metros where on average, Asians live in tracts that are more than

Figure 1. Los Angeles Combined Statistical Area:
Racial/Ethnic Diversity, 2005-09



25 percent Asian. The five highest of these are in California: San Jose and San Francisco (over 40%), Oakland (36%), Los Angeles (32%), and Santa Ana-Anaheim-Irvine (32%). The others are New York NY (30%) and Edison-New Brunswick NJ (29%). Despite being only moderately segregated (most often $D < 50$ in these metros), recent Asian population growth has apparently spurred the rapid growth of Asian residential enclaves in these regions.

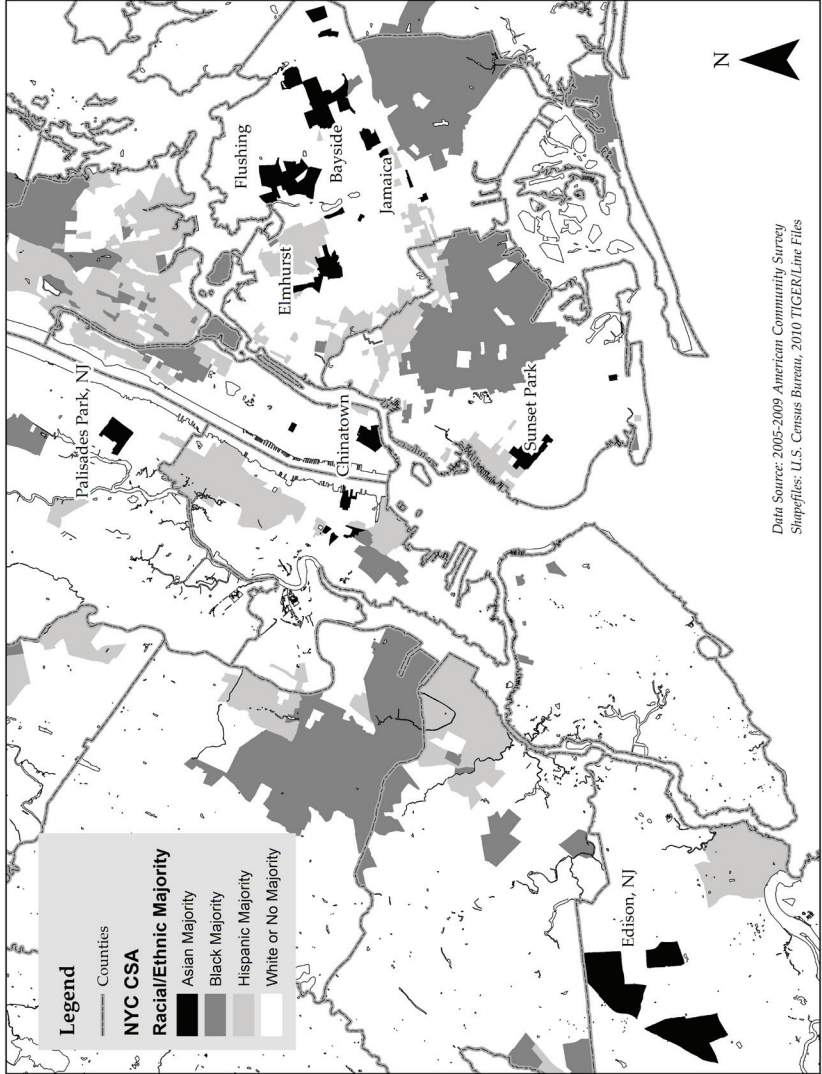
Focusing on the four metro areas in the Los Angeles and the New York CSAs, the isolation indices for the two metro areas outside of the urban core; Santa Ana-Anaheim-Irvine, CA and Edison-New Brunswick, NJ; rapidly grew from 1980 to 2010 to approach the isolation indices of the urban cores of Los Angeles and New York. The isolation indices points to the growth in ethnic enclaves outside of the urban cores as a new pattern of immigration emerges. Map figures 1 and 2 reveal that many new Asian immigrants are bypassing the traditional gateway cities and are moving directly into these newer enclaves.

In the Los Angeles metro area, Asian Americans overwhelmingly reside outside the downtown Los Angeles city core or boundary, in East Los Angeles areas such as San Gabriel Valley, Cerritos, Rowland Heights, Walnut and Diamond Bar; and South bay areas such as Torrance and Carson. In the Santa Ana metro area, a similar pattern emerges, in which Asians are settling outside the central city area, in the northern area, Fullerton; and the southwestern area, Westminster.

The New York metro area followed a similar trend. The traditional core of Manhattan's Chinatown has seen a decline in population while newer enclaves in the outer boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens have seen steady increases. Enclaves have also emerged outside of the New York City around Edison and Palisades Park in New Jersey.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, four out of every ten immigrants sidestepped the traditional urban core and settled directly in the suburbs in 2006 (Roberts, 2007). In Los Angeles, this phenomenon began in the 1970s and is attributed to the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, which resulted in a large influx of new Chinese immigrants to Los Angeles city. The limited resources of human service agencies in Chinatown could not handle their needs for housing and employment. Jobs were few, and wages were low, rents were high, and living conditions were bad (Li, 2009). These

Figure 2. New York Combined Statistical Area:
Racial/Ethnic Diversity, 2005-09



conditions combined with the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, which brought a large influx of Chinese from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to Los Angeles Chinatown. As the demographic composition of Los Angeles Chinatown changed, the ethnic Chinese began to reside outside of Chinatown and into the western and eastern areas of San Gabriel Valley, most notably Monterey Park. By 1980, the Chinese ethnoburb in San Gabriel Valley had already formed but had not yet become detached from Chinatown, the traditional center of Chinese people in Los Angeles. In the 1990s, the Monterey Park ethnoburb continued to significantly grow by adding a large number of Chinese, but it also matured by forming its own center and distinctive spatial form, becoming a more important Chinese residential area than Chinatown (Li, 2009).

Queens—a borough of New York City, but not technically a suburb—is an example of this trend outward. Newly arrived Chinese immigrants have bypassed residency in Manhattan downtown’s Chinatown for Queens. Wei Li explains, “The growth in the number of Chinese residents and businesses along with the IRT NO.7 subway line has caused the line to be nicknamed the Orient Express” (2009). She further notes, “Ethnic banks, real estate agents, and business organization have played important roles in attracting more minority residents and businesses to Queens” (Li, 2009).

The discriminatory U.S. immigration policies of the late 1800s and early 1900s heavily targeted Asians and forced them to live in restricted neighborhoods located in poverty-stricken downtowns that have been transformed over time. Many of these are now known as ethnic enclaves, such as Chinatown, Little Tokyo, Little Saigon, Thai town, Historic Filipino-town, Koreatown, Little India, and Little Phnom Penh or Little Cambodia. However, a new model of the contemporary urban ethnic community has emerged, the “ethnoburb” coined by Scholar Wei Li in 1997. As opposed to downtown ethnic enclaves, ethnoburbs are suburban residential and business areas with a notable cluster of a particular ethnic minority population. According to Li, “Ethnoburbs have emerged under the influence of international geopolitical and global economic restructuring; changing national immigration and trade policies; local demographic, economic, and political contexts; and increasing transnational networks and connections (2009).” The political implications of these residential

settlement patterns will play an important role over time, as Asian Americans become more visible in traditional gateway cities but also new geographic areas. It will be interesting to see to what extent Asian Americans make up an important share of the electorate in certain metropolitan areas, and influence American politics in the coming years.

Conclusion

While Asian Americans across the nation share many commonalities, a closer look at the data reveals a number of stark contrasts. A sharp divide exists within the New York City metro area, with poorer, less educated Asians more likely to be found in the urban core and higher-paid, better-educated Asians in the suburbs. Similar patterns exist in the Los Angeles metro area but at a much lower scale. Contrasts also exist between the regions. Asians in Los Angeles County stand out as more politically engaged with registration and voter participation rates similar to Non-Hispanic Whites. The growth in Asian American political representation, engagement, and incorporation can be tied in part and parcel to residential settlement patterns, and illustrates how higher income and well educated Asians living in suburbs, regardless if they are native born Asians or recent Asian immigrants, are changing the structures of power.

Rapid population growth has been the driving force behind the emergence of Asian Americans as a potential new “sleeping giant” in politics, and that force will not abate anytime soon (Ong et al., 2008). The most recent Bureau of Census population projections forecast that Asian Americans alone, a more restrictive definition that does not include those who are part Asian, will increase to 5.4 percent of the population by 2020, up from 3.8 percent in 2000.⁷ The more inclusive count of Asian Americans would put the 2020 figure at perhaps over 6 percent. If the percentage point increase in the Asian American share of the population is similar at the state level, then three to four states will join Hawai’i and California as having at least one-tenth of the population being Asian American.⁸ However, demographic and residential settlement patterns cannot completely determine the strength of political presence in particular electoral districts. Asian Americans still face a number of hurdles to translating their growing numbers into growing political strength.

Notes

- 1 U. S. Census Bureau, 2010b.
- 2 U. S. Census Bureau, 2010b; Rockey Moore, 2010.
- 3 These statistics are based on Asian alone data. The race-alone population is defined as, "Individuals who responded to the question on race by indicating only one race or the group that reported only one race category." U.S. Census Bureau, 2011.
- 4 Thank you very much to Paul M. Ong who contributed the analysis of the data and findings for this section of the paper.
- 5 The 2006-2008 American Community Survey was used for citizenship and naturalization statistics. The November 2004, 2006, and 2008 Current Population Survey Voting and Registration Supplements was used for the voting and registration rates.
- 7 U.S. Census Bureau, 2004, the number of Asian Americans is projected to increase by 67 percent over the two decades, from 10.7 million to 18 million. The more inclusive Asian American count for 2000 is 11.9 million.
- 8 The likely states are New Jersey, Washington, New York, and Nevada.

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