

CHAPTER FIVE

**ASIAN AMERICANS AS THE MEDIAN
VOTERS: AN EXPLORATION OF
ATTITUDES AND VOTING PATTERNS
ON BALLOT INITIATIVES**

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If history is a reliable guide, immigration could have a substantial impact on the makeup of the United States and thus on U.S. electoral alignments in the near future. Immigration policies can preserve the dominant culture (the result of the pro-European bias in the pre-1965 U.S. immigration policies) or dramatically diversify the national mix (the unintended result of the post-1965 U.S. immigration policies).¹ Moreover, immigration policies can have an enduring effect on party loyalties, if allegiances are formed or solidified at the policy-making stage. A party that favors restrictionist immigration policies or nativist culture positions may be able to gain the immediate support of a dominant population group, but it may simultaneously risk losing the potential votes of immigrant groups for a generation or more. The same implications apply to policies that appear to primarily affect immigrant groups. Although these policies may not be immigration laws per se, they have the same potential impact on electoral alignments.

Once electoral alignments are created, they are strengthened by the inertial forces of party identification and collective memory. The predominantly Protestant Republican Party, for example, did not begin to make serious inroads into the Irish and Italian Catholic vote until the late 1960s and early 1970s, even though the processes of upward mobility were operating on these groups throughout the first half of the twentieth century.² Groups that are not predominantly affiliated with a given party are particularly vul-

nerable to important aligning events. Asian Americans are a case in point. At present, their loyalties, unlike those of blacks and Latinos, are not predetermined. Garnering Asian American support would benefit either party given its potential to swing an election.³

The loss of support from a generation of voters is heightened when policies have racial overtones. If the restrictionist, nativist party is predominantly white and the target groups are predominantly nonwhite, the restrictionist/nativist policy may have the appearance of being a racial policy even if the reality is more complex. The Republican Party has faced this situation at several recent junctures. The Clinton administration's appointment of Bill Lann Lee, for example, was embroiled in racial overtones. The Democrats claimed that the Republicans' unwillingness to confirm Lee's appointment as assistant attorney general for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Justice was evidence that they harbored anti-Asian sentiment. The Republicans countered that they opposed Lee based on his affirmative action stance, but the Democratic tactic clearly rattled them all the same. Similar types of arguments surrounded two initiatives on recent California ballots, Propositions 187 (1994) and 209 (1996). Proposition 187 dealt with the rights of undocumented immigrants to state services and Proposition 209 with affirmative action policies. Opponents of the initiatives dwelled on race and alleged prejudice; proponents talked about economics and the ideals of equal protection and equality. Both propositions passed, but there is a lingering suspicion that the rhetoric of the opponents "worked" insofar as most discussion of the propositions in the aftermath of their passage was couched in racial terms.

While it would be inaccurate to say that all restrictionists are Republicans and all opponents of such policies are Democrats, the more visible proponents of restrictionist policies (for example, presidential candidate Pat Buchanan and former California governor Pete Wilson) are Republicans and the more visible opponents (for example, the Latino congressional caucus) are Democrats. This situation has prompted at least one prominent Republican consultant to worry about the long-term consequences of recent Republican policies in the areas of immigration, language policy, and affirmative action.⁴

If immigration policies in the late twentieth century prove to have the political consequences they had in the early twentieth century, they may critically affect Asian Americans' political attitudes. Cultivating Asian American loyalties would be a highly coveted accomplishment. The overwhelming reason is that the Asian American population has recently expe-

rienced unparalleled growth. Like Latinos, Asian Americans constitute a major proportion of the recent immigration surge. Mexico provides the largest number of immigrants to the United States, but the next four countries are Asian: the Philippines, Korea, China, and Vietnam.⁵ Latin America and Asia now account for over 80 percent of all immigration to the United States. Unlike Latinos, however, Asian American immigrants are less likely to be undocumented immigrants and the lag between their arrival and their naturalization is shorter. Thus, Asian Americans are uniquely poised to make a grand entrance onto the political scene. Although there is some question about whether they will make this grand entrance at all, there is even more uncertainty about what type of grand entrance they could make because their political attitudes remain largely unknown.

This chapter seeks to provide some insight into Asian American attitudes by exploring the roots of Asian American preferences on the two California initiatives. Because Asian Americans are predominantly foreign-born but legal immigrants, they have to contend with two potentially competing interests. The first interest opposes restrictionist and racially discriminatory policies toward immigrants. The other interest distinguishes between the restriction of legal versus illegal immigrants.

This chapter analyzes data from a 1996 California statewide survey that oversampled the minority populations. In particular, the chapter examines two specific questions. First, how do Asian Americans view other immigrants and minority groups? Second, to what extent do these perceptions and other factors, such as party and ideology, structure the Asian American vote?

PERCEPTION OF OTHER ETHNIC AND RACIAL GROUPS

Immigration has created an unusually multiracial mix in California. Outside of a few urban areas such as Miami, Chicago, New York, and Dallas, significant concentrations of more than one racial or ethnic minority are rarely found in the United States.⁶ California, however, has a significant share of each of the major racial groups, Asian Americans (10 percent), blacks (9 percent), and Latinos (30 percent). Even though the distribution of these groups is far from uniform, all of the major urban areas (the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, and San Diego) have sizable numbers of all three minority groups. A consequence of this multiracial environment is that the Asian Americans in California experience not only the effects

of their own group's rising immigrant numbers but also those of other groups—especially Latinos.

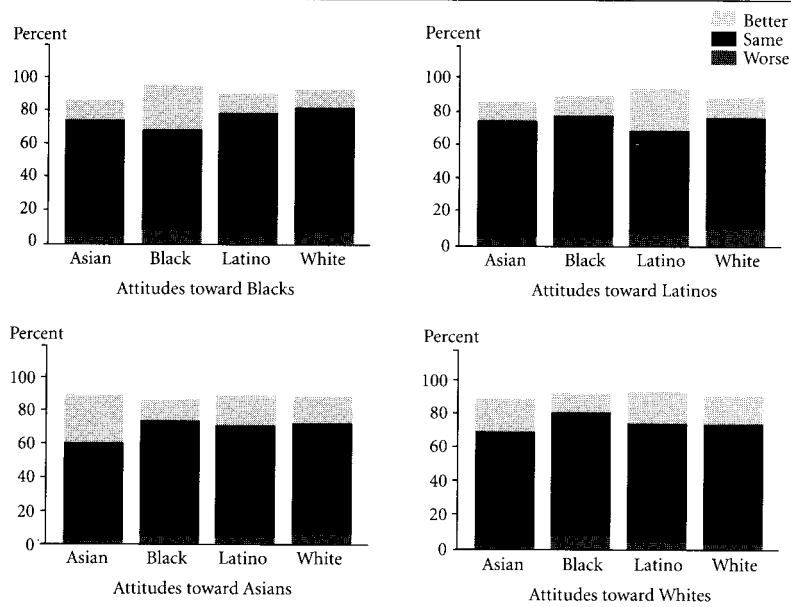
According to the survey described later in this chapter, in the uniquely multiracial environs of California, Asian Americans are the most residentially dispersed—that is, the least likely to live in a neighborhood in which their group is a majority (approximately 3 percent of California's Asian Americans live in such circumstances). Whites are the most concentrated; 85 percent of whites live in majority white areas. By contrast, 29 percent of blacks live in majority black areas, and 44 percent of Latinos live in majority Latino areas. Of the minority groups, Asian Americans are the most likely to live in majority white tracts—51 percent of Asian Americans live in these tracts compared with 31 percent of blacks and 35 percent of Latinos. In summary, the Asian American experience is unusually multiracial and almost evenly divided between those who live in predominantly white neighborhoods and those who live in more heavily Latino and/or black neighborhoods.

Through these multiracial circumstances, Asian Americans are exposed to the experiences of the other groups. The 1996 survey probed whether this environment produces positive or negative perceptions of other groups by asking respondents about their perceptions of other minority groups and types of immigrants. A special feature of this study was that it incorporated contextual information about the type of neighborhood and racial circumstances in which the respondent lived. This information allows a closer look at whether Asian Americans living in white neighborhoods have similar attitudes to those living in majority-minority neighborhoods.

Figure 5.1 reveals that, on the whole, Asian Americans have fairly positive perceptions of the other racial/ethnic groupings. When asked whether the effect of Latinos, blacks, and whites living in their neighborhood improved conditions, made them worse, or kept them about the same as before, the vast majority of Asian American respondents chose “better” or “about the same.” They were somewhat more positive about the effects of whites than Latinos and blacks, and substantially more positive about Asian Americans than all the other groups. This preference for one's own group holds for blacks and Latinos as well.⁷

The most dramatic distinction made by Asian Americans was between legal and illegal/undocumented immigrants (Figure 5.2). Twenty-eight percent indicated that legal immigrants improved the neighborhood, but only 6 percent thought that illegal immigrants did. By comparison, 5 percent thought that legal immigrants made conditions in their neighborhood

Figure 5.1
Attitudes of Racial and Ethnic Groups toward Each Other

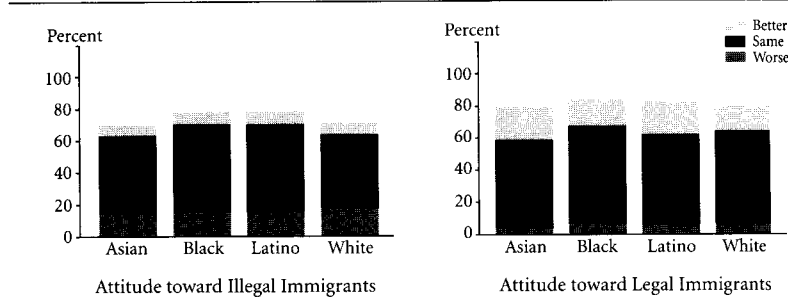


Respondents were asked: “Now I am going to ask you what effect different groups of people have had on the quality of life in the neighborhood where you live. After I give you the name of the group, please tell me whether that group has improved, made worse, or had no effect on the quality of life in your neighborhood.”

worse versus 15 percent for illegal immigrants. Although all racial groups express similar attitudes, the Asian American preference for legal immigrants is distinctively stronger than those of Latinos and blacks. These numbers might suggest that even though most Asian Americans voted against Proposition 187, they were less opposed than Latinos or blacks.

The patterns just described hold for these ethnic groups when the groups are considered as a single bloc. However, as previously suggested, the neighborhood context may have a significant impact on these patterns and may serve as a dividing line for attitudes even within a single ethnic group.⁸ Since daily interactions differ, it may be important to distinguish between Asian Americans who live in majority-minority neighborhoods and those who live in predominantly white neighborhoods. If in multiracial settings there is less tolerance for other groups, the future of race relations in Cali-

Figure 5.2
 Attitudes of Racial and Ethnic Groups toward
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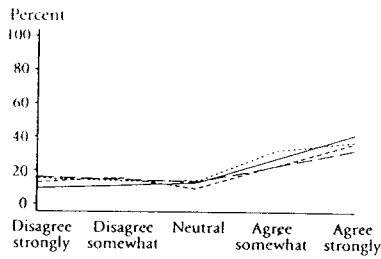
For question, see Figure 5.1.

fornia would not be promising. Fortunately, however, the data do not reveal such a pattern. Indeed, insofar as there is a difference, the data suggest a slightly more positive perception of other groups by those Asian Americans who live in majority-minority areas rather than elsewhere. Undocumented immigrants are the only case in which this pattern is reversed. The difference here, however, is not large.

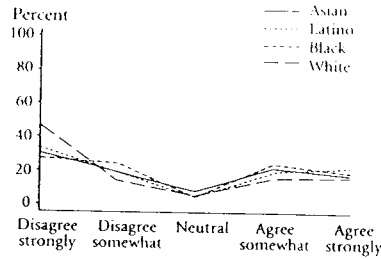
PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY
 AND RACE RELATIONS

In addition to questions about specific perceptions of other racial and ethnic groups, the 1996 survey included more general questions about race relations in California that are worth noting (Figure 5.3). Specifically, survey participants were asked to respond to the statement “People of different ethnic and racial groups are generally happier when they live and socialize with others of the same background.” A majority (65 percent) of Asian American respondents, like all other racial groups, tended to prefer their own group; they replied with either “Agree somewhat” or “Agree strongly.” The percentages for blacks (63 percent), Latinos (60 percent), and whites (64 percent) were about the same. This pattern holds for those who lived in majority-minority settings as well as those who did not. Combined with earlier observations, this finding suggests that while Asian Americans are more comfortable in purely Asian American settings, they

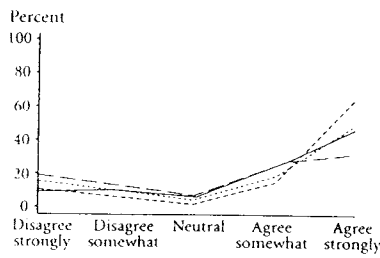
Figure 5.3
Perceptions of Diversity and Race Relations



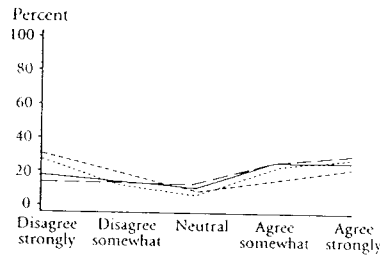
People of different ethnic and racial groups are generally happier when they live and socialize with others of the same background.



In our lifetime, America can become a colorblind society.



Members of certain ethnic or racial groups still have fewer opportunities to get ahead than other people.



Members of particular ethnic or racial groups use special programs to get more benefits than they deserve.

have overall positive or neutral views of other groups. The only exception lies in attitudes toward undocumented immigrants, and it would seem that Asian Americans distinguish between Latinos and undocumented immigrants.

Asian Americans' attitudes toward affirmative action are very similar to those of the other major racial/ethnic groups. Like Latinos and blacks, a majority of Asian American respondents tend to believe that minorities have fewer opportunities to succeed in America. In fact, Asian American and Latino responses are virtually identical (Figure 5.3). Blacks believe this statement most strongly, and whites trail behind all ethnic groups in supporting this claim. A significantly larger proportion of blacks also tended to disagree strongly with the claim that America could become a colorblind

society in their lifetime; whites join Asian Americans and Latinos in yielding similar responses.

Finally, Figure 5.3 reveals that many Asian Americans believe that some groups receive more than they deserve from affirmative action programs, and a quarter claim to know an individual who received an undeserved position or promotion as a result of an affirmative action program. Asian American attitudes on this question mimic white attitudes. Despite their beliefs, a majority of Asian Americans still believe that Latinos, blacks, women, and Asian Americans need the affirmative action programs that Proposition 209 would eliminate. A vast majority of Asian Americans prefer a merit system over one that rewards sheer diversity. For them, affirmative action is a means of remedying unfairness in the merit system, not a rejection of that system per se.

None of the survey questions alone displays much evidence that the Asian American group differs much from other minority groups. The only notable difference is its weaker support for affirmative action. Given this finding, the next section describes a more sophisticated analysis of the two ballot propositions.

THE PROPOSITION 187 AND 209 VOTES

In California, Propositions 187 and 209 were two of the most controversial and hotly debated initiatives in recent memory. In 1994, Proposition 187 was passed overwhelmingly (59 percent to 41 percent) by California voters. The proposition made illegal aliens ineligible for public social services, nonemergency public health care services, and public school education at elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels. It also required various state and local agencies to report persons who were suspected illegal aliens to the California attorney general and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. At a time when the California economy was slumping, support for the initiative ran high.

On November 5, 1996, the voters of California approved Proposition 209 by 55 percent to 45 percent. As a result, Section 31 was added to Article I of the California constitution. The first clause of the section succinctly describes the proposition: "The state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment,

public education, or public contracting.” Some commentators believe that Proposition 209 was not a clear vote on affirmative action because of the way the initiative was worded and presented to the public. The concern began with the title of the proposition, which was “California Civil Rights Initiative.” The implication was that Proposition 209 was building on civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination and that the new initiative would dispose of government-imposed quotas, preferences, and set-asides. Many felt that the true impact of the proposition, the abolition of affirmative action, was carefully veiled and that the civil rights wording was improper.

The data suggest that of all California’s minorities, Asian Americans were the most divided by these two propositions, with about a third supporting them, 40–50 percent opposed, and the balance undecided. What distinguishes those Asian Americans who voted for the measures from those who opposed them? This question is explored further by means of two models that explain Asian American positions on these propositions as a function of various perceptions and background factors. Comparison of the Asian American model with similar models for blacks, whites, and Latinos allows an assessment of whether the factors that divide Asian American opinion are the same as the factors that explain the vote divisions of the other groups. Given the high level of opposition by blacks to Proposition 209 and Latinos to Proposition 187, these two specific models are not likely to account for a large degree of variation. With near consensus, there is little variance to explain. For this reason, the most interesting comparison is likely to be between the white and Asian American models.

The logic behind these models becomes clearer by examining three factors. The first is the partisan and ideological basis of the vote. Decades of public opinion research have revealed that opinions are often structured by a person’s overall ideological orientation and party preference. Thus voters who are liberal or conservative may be predisposed to oppose or support a given measure. For Propositions 187 and 209, the expected mapping from ideology to issue would be from liberal to opposition and from conservative to support. This mapping seems initially plausible, but it is not without problems. Some liberals supported Proposition 187 because of environmental concerns (for example, the Sierra Club felt an influx of illegal immigrants would adversely affect the environment), or because they felt that immigrants should conform to the federal rules for entry and citizenship. Some economic conservatives may have voted against Proposition 187 because the loss of illegal immigrants would adversely affect the supply of

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labor to businesses such as agriculture and light manufacturing. Similarly, some liberals may have voted for Proposition 209 because they believed affirmative action programs were flawed and prone to abuse even though they believed that discrimination is an important residual problem. Some conservatives and moderates may have voted against it for fear that it would be too sweeping or might adversely affect women's rights. Generally, however, conservatives supported the measure, and liberals opposed it.

Party preferences also are likely to be important. Overall, Democrats were more likely to oppose both Propositions 187 and 209 and Republicans were more likely to support them. Because Asian Americans are more or less evenly divided between the parties, it is plausible to believe that this might be an important explanation for differences among Asian American voters. Yet, previous studies have suggested that partisanship is not as strong among Asian American voters as it is among other racial and ethnic groups.⁹ If so, partisanship may be too weak to structure Asian American attitudes in any significant way.

The second factor is the circumstances and experiences in which Asian Americans find themselves. These include their economic conditions, their perceptions of how other groups affect their neighborhood, the degree to which they see diversity as a positive, variable-sum experience (as opposed to a negative, zero-sum experience), and their perceptions about what government programs groups need in order to be successful. In contrast to ideology and party, these variables describe the direct experiences/effects of diversity rather than the symbolic element of these issues. If economic times are perceived to be poor, if respondents think that diversity leads to zero-sum competition, if the neighborhoods are thought to be adversely affected by demographic change, and if others seem to be benefiting from programs and preferences that they do not need, then Asian American voters will be inclined to support restrictionist measures.

The third factor is socioeconomic characteristics such as gender, age, education, and type of neighborhood. The relationship between these variables and voter preference is by now well established.¹⁰ Among white voters, the better educated voters, younger people, and those living in a multiracial environment tend to be more liberal, more Democratic, and more tolerant. These predispositions may carry over to the issues prevalent in Propositions 187 and 209. The mapping here is likely to be fairly precise for nonminority voters and even for black and Latino voters. For Asian Americans, however, the direct translation from these predispositions to voter preference is less clear.

DATA ANALYSIS

The survey conducted among California voters in 1996 included a total of 1,500 respondents with an oversampling of minority groups. Of the total, 262 identified themselves as Asian American, 167 as black, 416 as Latino, and 427 as white. They were asked forty-two questions. The first step in analyzing the survey data was to create a manageable set of variables.¹¹ Although the survey encompassed forty-two questions, they fell into four distinct and logical categories: need for affirmative action, attitudes toward different groups, effect of diversity, and economic outlook.

The Proposition 187 Vote

Table 5.1 displays the results of a logistic regression analysis in which voting for Proposition 187 is the dependent variable. None of the variables appears to explain the black vote for Proposition 187, primarily because the heavy opposition of blacks to Proposition 187 produces little variation for the model to explain. For similar reasons, the model explaining the Latino vote also is not very illuminating. Two variables seem to matter for Latinos—whether they see a continued need for affirmative action and whether they think diversity is desirable. Figure 5.4 reveals, however, that Latino support for Proposition 187 runs from low to almost nonexistent based on these two variables. At no point is their support for Proposition 187 substantial.

For whites, Proposition 187 support is predominantly affected by partisanship, the state of the economy, and beliefs about diversity and affirmative action. Intuition says these are exactly the types of variables that would divide opinion on Proposition 187. They also are the variables that were stressed in the campaigns and by the politicians. It is curious, then, that these sets of variables explain the attitudes for whites but not for Asian Americans, blacks, or Latinos. The impact of these variables is dramatic for whites. Figure 5.4 shows that the change in support as the variables change is substantial, and that whites supported Proposition 187 at far higher rates than those of any of the minority groups.

Asian Americans display attitudes that are not as widely contrarian as those of blacks and Latinos but also are not as divided as those of whites. Some of the variables that divide whites do not divide Asian Americans. Most notably, party is not significant in predicting Asian American attitudes on Proposition 187, yet ideology plays a part. The more conservative

Table 5.1
Logistic Regression with Proposition 187 as Dependent Variable

	White	Asian	Black	Latino
Intercept	.7662 (.8619)	-.8908 (1.2732)	-.7557 (1.4996)	-.6893 (.8051)
<i>Factor 1: Need for affirmative action</i>	-1.0643 ^b (.1651)	-.6845 ^b (.2175)	-.1787 (.2792)	-.5059 ^b (.1590)
<i>Factor 2: Attitude toward other groups</i>	-.2192 (.1443)	-.3884 ^a (.2133)	-.1209 (.2560)	-.1267 (.1580)
<i>Factor 3: Effect of diversity</i>	-.5329 ^b (.1669)	-.7090 ^b (.2415)	-.1616 (.2342)	-.8985 ^b (.1812)
<i>Factor 4: Economy</i>	-.4324 ^b (.1551)	-.0330 (.2032)	-.3696 (.2379)	-.1218 (.1605)
Age	.3080 (.2033)	-.1405 (.3214)	-.2071 (.3486)	.0741 (.2231)
Democrat	-.5831 ^a (.3274)	.3562 (.4837)	.5725 (.7341)	-.5476 (.3350)
Education	-.0124 (.0994)	-.1767 (.1481)	-.0505 (.1653)	.0235 (.1071)
Ideology	.0055 (.2298)	.6556 ^b (.3291)	.0132 (.3292)	-.0698 (.2120)
Nonminority neighborhood	-.2622 (.3140)	-.5768 (.4566)	-.5814 (.5120)	-.2487 (.3308)
Gender	-.2375 (.3037)	.9447 ^b (.4303)	.2360 (.5082)	.1893 (.3304)
<i>n</i>	290	135	98	233

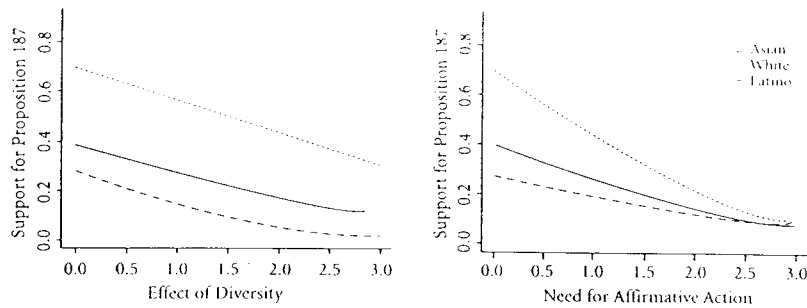
a. $p < .10$

b. $p < .05$

the Asian American voter, the more likely he or she is to vote for Proposition 187. However, even the support of the most conservative Asian American hovers in the low 30 percent range. Finally, Asian American men are more likely to support Proposition 187 than Asian American women.

Like white opinions, Asian American opinions on Proposition 187 are affected by their attitudes toward diversity and the need for affirmative action. In addition, Asian American preferences on Proposition 187 are based on their experiences and attitude toward other racial groups. The signifi-

Figure 5.4
 Change in Support for Proposition 187 Holding All
 Other Variables at Their Mean



Note: Both the “Effect of diversity” and the “Need for affirmative action” variables are measured on a 3-point continuous scale. The higher the score, the greater is the level of support. Thus those scoring 3 on the “Effect of Diversity” value diversity the most; those with a score of 0 find the least value in diversity. The “Need for affirmative action” scale is similar, with 3 representing the attitude that affirmative action is very important.

cant factors thus tend to change from issue to issue. In summary, partisanship is not a defining variable for Asian Americans as it is for whites. Moreover, unlike for blacks and Latinos, Asian American opposition to Proposition 187 is not a foregone conclusion.

The Proposition 209 Vote

The results of a logistic regression model with the Proposition 209 vote as the dependent variable are displayed in Table 5.2. Again, the equation for blacks is strikingly unilluminating. Only a respondent’s view about the effect of diversity provides any explanation; a respondent’s education is marginally important. The level of black support for Proposition 209 declines insignificantly as beliefs about diversity change, suggesting that the model for blacks is interesting only insofar as it clearly indicates their strongly uniform opposition to Proposition 209.

The Latino model has many more significant variables than the black model, but the strength of these effects is not very substantial (Figure 5.5). For Latinos, support for Proposition 209 declines as the strength of one’s belief in the need for affirmative action increases, but less dramatically than

Table 5.2
Logistic Regression with Proposition 209 as Dependent Variable

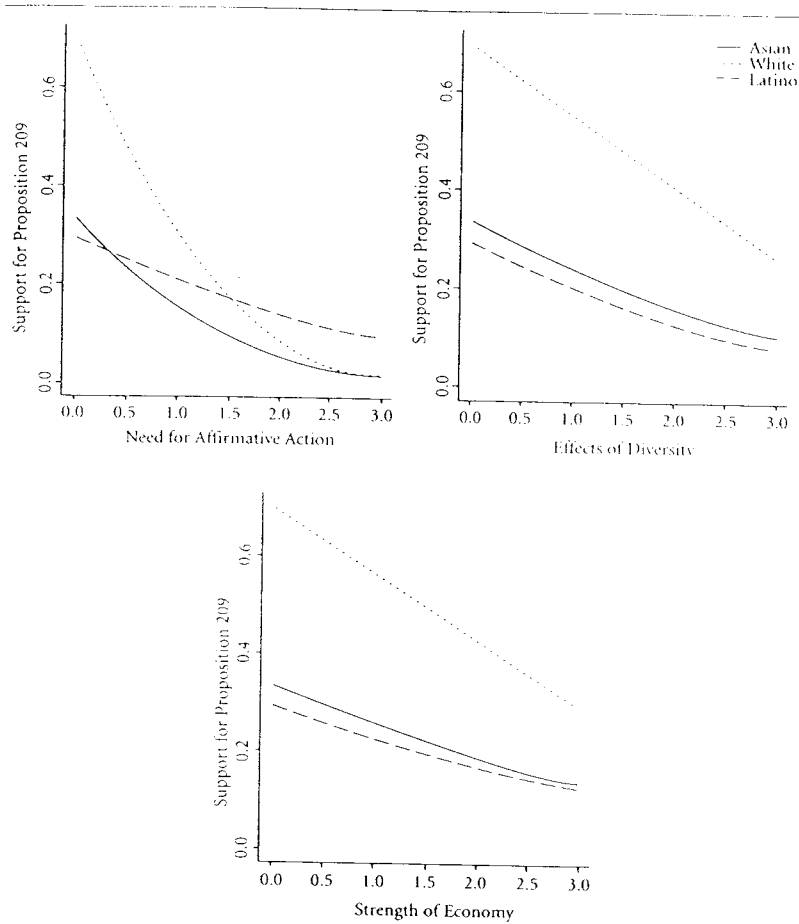
	White	Asian	Black	Latino
Intercept	.3537 (.8343)	-1.6469 ^a (.9368)	-2.0595 (1.3986)	-1.2010 ^b (.5880)
<i>Factor 1: Need for affirmative action</i>	-1.6215 ^b (.1824)	-1.0775 ^b (.1767)	-.2822 (.2093)	-.4578 ^b (.1202)
<i>Factor 2: Attitude toward other groups</i>	-.0900 (.1481)	.0594 (.1588)	-.2314 (.2753)	-.1403 (.1241)
<i>Factor 3: Effect of diversity</i>	-.6123 ^b (.1664)	-.4871 ^b (.1805)	-.5537 ^b (.2524)	-.5211 ^b (.1316)
<i>Factor 4: Economy</i>	-.5716 ^b (.1638)	-.3899 ^b (.1661)	.0524 (.2348)	.3506 ^b (.1299)
Age	.3310 (.2021)	.3427 (.2247)	.4418 (.3081)	.1569 (.1688)
Democrat	-.8600 ^b (.3337)	-.1418 (.3531)	.0194 (.6839)	-.7141 ^b (.2550)
Education	-.0566 (.1020)	.1246 (.1141)	-.2762 ^a (.1596)	.0098 (.0840)
Ideology	.2268 (.2257)	.0184 (.2391)	.3930 (.3191)	.1797 (.1638)
Nonminority neighborhood	-.5650 ^a (.3357)	-.3316 (.3433)	-.3981 (.5036)	.2919 (.2675)
Gender	.5995 ^a (.3234)	-.3654 (.3364)	.1976 (.4645)	-.0011 (.2544)
<i>n</i>	354	220	142	362

a. $p < .10$

b. $p < .05$

for Asian Americans and whites. The same effect is evident for the economic variables: the stronger one thinks the economy is, the less likely one is to vote for Proposition 209. Likewise, the more one believes in the value of diversity, the less likely one is to support Proposition 209. Finally, Latinos demonstrate a party effect; Democratic Latinos are less likely to vote for the proposition. However, as shown in Figure 5.5, the support levels change but not dramatically. These effects are real, but the magnitude of their impact on the Latino vote is not substantial.

Figure 5.5
 Change in Support for Proposition 209 Holding All
 Other Variables at Their Mean



Thus the most interesting variations lie once again with the Asian American and white groups. The changes in the white response are dramatic (Figure 5.5). Levels of support for Proposition 209 decline precipitously as attitudes toward diversity and affirmative action change. These results are similar to those reported earlier for Proposition 187.

As with Proposition 187, Asian Americans hold the median position for Proposition 209—between the greater opposition of blacks and Latinos, on

the one hand, and the greater support of whites, on the other. Although the impact of the various variables is less for the Asian American group than for the white group, in all significant respects, with the exception of partisanship, Asian American behavior weakly mimics white behavior. The strong effect of party on whites but not on Asian Americans is noteworthy. Party does not predict the Proposition 209 vote for blacks and Latinos because so few Republicans are in both groups. Because party positions were emphasized in the campaigns, one would expect that any variation in partisanship would serve as a source of division within a group. This expectation does not manifest itself in the Asian American attitudes, however.

CONCLUSION

Asian Americans, according to the data in this study, are the median voters. On immigration and race issues, their attitudes sit squarely between the attitudes of whites and those of other minorities. For the two measures examined here, Propositions 187 and 209, Asian Americans opposed both, but by smaller margins than blacks and Latinos. One reason may be the absence of strong party effects. Although race has increasingly defined party, and party has increasingly structured racial attitudes among whites particularly, neither is true for Asian Americans. Race does not define party for Asian Americans in the sense that Asian Americans, as a pan-ethnic category, do not have strong allegiances to one party, as is the case for blacks and Latinos. Disaggregating from the pan-ethnic category, this generalization does not hold completely for all the Asian American nationalities (for example, the Japanese are predominantly Democratic), but that caveat aside, it holds for most of the larger Asian American subgroups. Thus, uniquely among the major nonwhite minorities, Asian Americans are a genuine swing group. They are capable of voting predominantly for either party in a given election and are not bound by strong partisan identifications.

Indeed, unlike for white voters, party does not strongly influence attitudes among Asian American voters. For white voters, party is strongly correlated with views about immigration and race. In the 1994 gubernatorial race the Democratic candidate, Kathleen Brown, opposed Proposition 187, and the Republican incumbent, Pete Wilson, supported it as a centerpiece of his campaign. Exit polls and a county-based analysis of the returns revealed a similarly sharp partisan split among white voters.¹² The picture, however, is not quite so simple. White environmentalists may oppose im-

migration for quality of life reasons, and business-oriented groups on the right may support immigration for economic reasons. But all in all, party divisions often mirror attitudinal differences for whites. The statistical models described here, however, suggest that the pattern does not hold for Asian Americans. Asian American Republicans were no more likely to have supported Propositions 209 and 187 than Asian American Democrats. In other words, a party or candidate supporting these measures would have found a majority of the Asian Americans in his or her party in opposition to them. This finding is also consistent with the thesis that Asian American party identification seems to have less to do with race and immigration policy and more to do with other factors such as positions on economic and foreign policy matters.

As the models demonstrate, Asian American views on immigration and racial policies are derived from their perceptions of and experiences with other racial groups. Socioeconomic status and partisanship are not as prominent.¹³ As noted earlier, Asian Americans have an unusually multi-racial experience; only a small percentage live in majority Asian American neighborhoods. California's Asian American community has relatively positive perceptions of other racial and ethnic groups as neighbors. It also believes that the problems of discrimination are real and that the needs for programs such as affirmative action still exist. The one exception—and even here Asian Americans are relatively neutral—is undocumented aliens. This finding relates to the point made at the beginning of this chapter: Asian Americans differ from Latinos in the ratio of documented immigrants to undocumented noncitizens in their respective communities. Anyone concerned about an Asian-Latino rift might do well to focus on this aspect of immigration policy and the similarly pessimistic views both groups share about the future of race relations and the job opportunities. But on the whole, despite the Los Angeles riots in 1992 sparked by the Rodney King case and the party differences that separate Asian Americans from Latinos and blacks, Asian Americans and Latinos appear to have more in common than not on issues of race and immigration.

NOTES

The authors of this chapter would like to thank Gordon Chang, Brian Gaines, and participants at the Asian Americans and Politics Conference in Washington, D.C., March 1998, for their helpful comments.

1. On the influx of the Irish, see George E. Reedy, *From the Ward to the White House: The Irish in American Politics* (New York: Scribner's, 1991). On immigration in New York, see Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1963). For a polemical, contemporary argument, see Peter Brimelow, *Alien Nation: Common Sense about America's Immigration Disaster* (New York: Harper-Perennial Library, 1996).

2. See Raymond E. Wolfinger, "The Development and Persistence of Ethnic Voting," *American Political Science Review* 59 (1965): 896-908.

3. Other discussion of the swing vote potential includes Don T. Nakanishi, "The Next Swing Vote? Asian Americans and California Politics," in *Racial and Ethnic Politics*, ed. Byran O. Jackson and Michael B. Preston (Berkeley: IGS Press, 1991).

4. Personal correspondence with Stuart Spencer, former top Reagan adviser and current GOP consultant.

5. Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

6. Bruce E. Cain, "Racial and Ethnic Politics," in *Developments in American Politics*, Vol. 2, ed. Gillian Peele, Christopher Bailey, Bruce Cain, and B. Peters (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House, 1995).

7. For an analysis of American attitudes to neighborhood integration in general, see, for example, William G. Mayer, *The Changing American Mind: How and Why American Public Opinion Changed between 1960 and 1988* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

8. William L. Miller, *Electoral Dynamics in Britain since 1918* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977).

9. See, for example, Wendy K. Tam, "Asians—A Monolithic Voting Bloc?" *Political Behavior* 17 (1995): 223-249.

10. See, for example, Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Norman H. Nie, Sidney Verba, and John R. Petrocik, *The Changing American Voter* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1976); Raymond E. Wolfinger and Steven J. Rosenstone, *Who Votes?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); Warren E. Miller and J. Merrill Shanks, *The New American Voter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

11. Including forty-two independent variables in a model depletes a significant number of the degrees of freedom. Even more troublesome, however, is the fact that many of the survey items attempt to tap the same attitudes. This portends a high degree of multicollinearity in the potential regressors. Thus, even if the degrees of freedom could be afforded, the high variance of the estimated coefficients is likely to produce an unnecessary and unworkable degree of insignificance.

12. Bruce E. Cain, Karin MacDonald, and Kenneth McCue, "Nativism, Partisanship, and Immigration: An Analysis of Proposition 187," paper presented at the an-

nual meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, August 29–September 1, 1996.

13. Although socioeconomic status (SES) factors are well known to have a strong relationship with political acts such as voting turnout and voter preferences, Tam shows that these general theories need to be adapted to the immigrant communities with caution. In short, SES variables have their expected impact only when immigrant communities are socialized in a fashion similar to the native community. The findings in this paper further back this claim. See Wendy K. Tam Cho, "Naturalization, Socialization, Participation: Immigrants and (Non-) Voting," *Journal of Politics* 61 (November 1999).

APPENDIX: FACTOR ANALYSIS

Each of the four factors resulting from the factor analysis was labeled, and the questions encompassed by each factor are listed below. In the actual factor analysis, a varimax rotation was used.

Factor 1. Need for affirmative action

Q6. As you know, Proposition 209 will eliminate all state and local governmental actions which in the past have provided special programs intended to benefit certain groups of people. Which of the following groups do you think still need the programs eliminated by Proposition 209?

- Q6a. Blacks
- Q6b. Latinos
- Q6c. Asians
- Q6d. Women

Factor 2. Attitude toward other groups

Q4. Now I am going to ask you what effect different groups of people have had on the quality of life in the neighborhood where you live. After I give you the name of a group, please tell me whether that group has improved, made worse, or had no effect on the quality of life in your neighborhood.

- Q4a. Blacks
- Q4b. Latinos
- Q4c. Asians
- Q4d. Illegal Immigrants
- Q4e. Legal Immigrants
- Q4f. Whites

Factor 3. Effect of diversity

Q10. I am going to read you some statements which some people agree with, while others do not. Please tell me if you agree strongly, agree somewhat, are neutral, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly.

Q10a. The more good jobs and places in college provided to minorities, the fewer there are for people who are not members of those groups.

Q10d. Members of particular ethnic or racial groups use special programs to get more benefits than they deserve.

Q10e. People of different ethnic and racial groups are generally happier when they live and socialize with others of the same background.

Q11. Which of these statements comes closer to the way you feel?

1. Diversity benefits our country economically and socially, so race, ethnicity and gender should be a factor in determining the type of person who is hired, promoted or admitted to college.
2. Hiring, promotion and college admissions should be based solely on merit and qualifications and not on characteristics of race, ethnicity or gender.

Factor 4. Economic outlook

Q18. Would you say over the past year your personal finance situation has gotten better, worse or stayed the same?

Q19. What about the economy of California? Would you say over the past year it has gotten better, worse or stayed the same?