

Gender, Partisanship, and Office-Seeking among Asian Pacific American Elected Officials

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Abstract: What is the relationship between political parties and the election of Asian Pacific American (APA) women? How different is their experience from that of their male counterparts? Past research on the relationship between gender and political parties in the recruitment and election of American women (who are mostly white) has presented a mixed picture. Support from political parties can be critical to the election of American women, but parties can also present major barriers to their election. American political women of Asian descent may be no different from their white counterparts in their relationship with political parties. On the other hand, APA women belong to a race that has a long history of exclusion and misrepresentation in US politics and society. The location of APA women at the nexus of racial and gender hierarchies in the United States presents intriguing opportunities for researchers to think beyond single-axle social markers and consider the mutual constitution of social structures by adopting an intersectionality framework to identify and deconstruct the structural barriers to their political inclusion and empowerment. In this paper, we present preliminary results from a pilot study that aims to help determine the role and influence of political parties in the election of APA women and men to local offices. Both primary quantitative and qualitative data are used in the analysis.

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What is the relationship between political parties and the election of Asian Pacific American (APA) women? How different is this experience from APA men? Past research on the relationship between gender and political parties in the recruitment and election of American women has largely focused on white women. Furthermore, the literature presents mixed results. For example, while support from political parties can be critical to the election of American women, parties can also present major barriers to their election. American political women of Asian descent may be no different than their white counterparts in their relationships with political parties. On the other hand, APA women belong to a race that has a long history of exclusion and misrepresentation in U.S. politics and society. The location of APA women at the nexus of racial and gender hierarchies in the United States presents intriguing opportunities for researchers to think beyond single-axle social markers and to consider the mutual constitution of social structures by adopting an intersectionality framework to identify and deconstruct the structural barriers to their political inclusion and empowerment. In this paper, we present results from a pilot study that aims to determine the role and influence of political parties in the election of APA women and men to local offices. We utilize a primary dataset of APA elected officials at the state, local, and federal levels nationwide who were in office as of August 2014 to examine differences between APA women and men elected officials. We also take advantage of qualitative evidence from interviews with members of community and party organizations, as well as APA elected officials, from Northern California and Southern California to further examine the role of parties in the recruitment and election of APAs. We hope our pilot study sheds further light on the role of political parties in the recruitment and election of APA women.

Asian Americans and the Two Parties

As a nonwhite race, Asian Americans have been found to have an ambiguous relationship with the two major political parties in the United States. In part because the passage of landmark legislation for U.S. minorities in the mid-1960s was achieved under the watch of Democrats in Congress and the White House, the Democratic Party has been regarded as the party for minorities in the post-1965 era. In response, the Republican Party has used race to drive a wedge into Democratic Party's electoral coalition. To attract and keep the median voters who are predominantly white, both parties have strategically avoided addressing policy issues related to

race and discussions of causes and solutions to racial inequality (Frymer 2005). Yet, this strategic concern did not prevent the major parties from seeking campaign donations from Asian Americans, who were considered the new money bags in American politics beginning in the early 1990s. The DNC was particularly eager and successful in courting APAs for money. It even appointed an immigrant from Taiwan, John Huang, to be the first Asian vice chair of Finance to target Asian American donors. However, once Republicans in Congress started to question the campaign donations made by APAs to President Clinton's re-election campaign in late 1996, Asian American donors were quickly abandoned as toxic waste by the Democratic Party (Kim 2007). Innuendos and assumptions of divided loyalty as well as allegations of the channeling of foreign money from Asia to US presidential campaign by Asian American operatives associated with the Democratic Party were sufficient evidence of guilty by association for the entire community (Wang 1998; Chang 2004; Toyota 2010).

When presented with a choice between the two parties, survey research in the past two decades or so has shown Asian American voters to have a steady and increasing trend of identification with the Democratic Party (Lien 2001; Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004; Zolton and Lee 2011; Wong et al. 2011). Yet, among voting-age adults, Asian Americans have also been found to be lacking in their identification with either of the major parties. In fact, about half of voting-age adults of Asian descent were found to not identify with either of the two parties. The predominantly foreign-born and non-Anglophone characteristics of the rapidly growing population through international migration may partially explain the deficit in partisanship. Another plausible reason is the reduced resources and limited abilities of the two major parties to mobilize APA and Latino immigrant voters in the post-1965 era (Leighley 2005; Wong 2006; Andersen 2008). These studies show that local community-based partisan clubs and nonpartisan organizations have risen to fill the gaps left open by national party organizations in incorporating immigrants. On the other hand, journalistic evidence also suggests some renewed interest and effort by the two major parties to mobilize support from this rapidly growing community (Becerra 2012; Ricardi 2014).

How relevant is political party affiliation to elected officials from a nonwhite and majority-immigrant community such as Asian Americans? Again, although a cursory look into APA elected officials in major national and state level positions show a predominantly

Democratic legion, we know little about the partisan orientation of the majority of APA elected officials who serve in non-partisan positions at local levels of office (as members on county commissions, city councils, and school boards). Are they also mostly Democrats or are they to reflect the non-partisan orientation of their constituents and nature of office? And how does their partisan identification influence their electoral experience? More importantly for this paper, how does gender matter in the calculations of responses to the above questions?

Gender, Race, and Political Parties

Despite strong signs of minority progress since the mid-1960s, there is also mounting evidence to suggest that the political landscape American women encounter is gendered and has many barriers. Studies that empirically assess the effects and implications of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 on nonwhite communities have observed both enormous gains in the number of elected officials of color nationwide as well as the continuing and severe underrepresentation of people of color in elective office (Lien 2006; Brown-Dean, Hajnal, Rivers, and White 2015). In 2014, Asian Americans are found to be less than 2% of state legislators and 0.4% of city council members, even if they are 5.6% of the US population. Whereas close to two-fifths of US population is nonwhite, of the 41,372 elective officeholders in the 2014 data assembled by the New Organizing Institute (NOI), only one-tenth are nonwhites, including .73% (.23% women and .50% men) of Asian American descent. An earlier study also shows that women elected officials of all races are significantly disadvantaged in parity ratios of descriptive representation compared to their male counterparts. For example, white women scored .52, Latina women scored .49, black women scored .46, and Asian women scored .15, while white men scored 2.04 among state legislators in 2004 (Hardy-Fanta, Lien, Pinderhughes, and Sierra 2007).

A continuing problem for women who aspire for candidacy is reaching the point of competitiveness (Burrell 2010). Political parties can facilitate the entrance of women into the political arena by providing campaign resources. Recruitment is a crucial step for many aspiring individuals who wish to enter the electoral arena. Recruitment is especially important for women since women are just as likely as men to respond favorably to the suggestion of a candidacy from a party leader, an elected official, or a political activist. Parties help facilitate candidacy by providing resources, such as money and party label recognition. Among women who have considered running for office, they consider parties as most helpful in fundraising (Baer et al.

2014). Party recruitment may be particularly helpful to women because women candidates may need more encouragement to run (Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell 2001; Fox, Lawless, and Feeley 2001; National Women's Political Caucus 1994). However, in recent interviews done with experienced candidates, officeholders, and congressional staff, political parties are found to be nearly absent in the recruitment of women (Baer and Hartmann 2014).

Due to changes in the political landscape, political parties have found it to their advantage to promote women candidates. There is a strong and statistically significant correlation between individuals who have been asked to run by a party and those who have considered running for office (Baer et al. 2014). The gender of gatekeepers also shapes candidate recruitment of women. For example, women candidates are more likely to be nominated when a gatekeeper, such as the local party president, is also a woman (Cheng and Tavits 2011). Once women become nominees, they often have the same degree of access to party resources as men, especially in competitive races (Burrell 2010). Nearly all women candidates, however, report receiving "inappropriate and sexist treatment not just from the media, but also from political groups, peers and colleagues, donors, and the parties" (Baer and Hartmann 2014, iv).

Despite the importance of political parties for recruiting women and the significance of women for parties, women are less likely to be recruited than men (Lawless and Fox 2012). In addition, though party organizations play an important role in women's recruitment, recruiting women candidates has rarely been used as an explicit strategy to increase the number of women in elected office (Burrell 2010). Qualitative interview data shows that the party support that women received is usually through informal networks by individuals or former elected officials (Baer and Hartmann 2014). Furthermore, strong party organizations typically have a negative effect on women's presence in state legislatures (Nelson 1991; Sanbonmatsu 2002). Most locally elected women in Niven's (1998) study of four states report that party leaders discouraged potential women candidates from running for office. Other research finds that women are often slated to run as sacrificial lambs in difficult races (Carroll and Strimling 1983; Carroll 1994; Baer and Hartman).

In the NOI data of 2014, close to nine in ten (87.6%) of all women elected officials who were in federal and state legislatures and statewide and county offices were white. As a group, white women elected officials are the basis of nearly all empirical work in the American political

science literature on women and political representation. We suspect much of the gender-based barriers faced by white women can apply to other groups of women and it is important to review the literature for this reason. On the other hand, we also hope to unveil the unique barriers women of color and of Asian descent face through our research. Our focus on Asian American political women and men, whose community bears the twin images of being both model minority and perpetual foreigners, can shed light on the relatively unknown but intriguing question of gaining access to the system for the intersectionally disadvantaged.

Data and Methods

The empirical basis of our research comes from a multi-method pilot study in 2014-15 that aims to gather preliminary information concerning the contours of political partisanship among APA political women and men and the role and influence of political parties in their election to (local) offices. Our focus is on understanding electoral politics at the local level, for elections to school boards and city/county councils are often considered the jumping boards to state and federal positions (Trounstine 2009; Lien and Swain 2012). In addition to offering the chance to elucidate national-level (and other) political happenings, a focus on the local is also important given the devolution of federal power to state and local governments over the past few decades. Moreover, limited past research has shown that at least two-thirds of APA elected officials are found to serve in city/county governments and on school boards (Hardy-Fanta, Lien, Pinderhughes, and Sierra 2007; Filler and Lien 2014).

The quantitative portion of our data comes from a unique database that collects individual information of the nation's elected officials of APA descent who were in office between October 2013 and August 2014. Our original source of information was the on-line roster of the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies that we secured in early 2014. APA elected officials in our database include members of Congress, statewide elected officials, state legislators, county commissioners/supervisors, city/town council members, and school board members. With the help of undergraduate research assistants, we used online search engines to gather publicly available information about APA elected officials in our database. We specifically searched for information about gender, party identification, locality, ethnicity, nativity/immigration history, level of education, marital status, number of children, current office/occupation, past office/occupation, year of first public office, political socialization,

professional affiliation, and key issue concerns when available (see Filler and Lien 2014 for more on methodology).

Our qualitative data come from in-depth interviews with reputable local party and community-based political organizations in two metropolitan areas with high concentration of Asian American population in California. A total of five elected officials and five political organization leaders were interviewed by our undergraduate assistant between late January and early March, 2015 (Appendix A). Interview questions for elected officials centered on the nature and level of support received from political parties and other local or community-based organizations in their first and (if applicable) subsequent election campaigns. Interview questions for organizations centered on the organization's record and type of support for APA candidates (see Appendix B for interview questions).

Major Party Affiliation among APA Elected Officials

An individual's political party affiliation is one of the most important identities for political elite and it provides an important cue for voters when they make decisions before casting the ballots. The acquisition of political partisanship for typical Americans has been mostly through family socialization—that children typically inherited the partisanship of their father and/or mother. For majority immigrant communities, and especially for elected officials who are not U.S.-born, the acquisition of political partisanship may involve the multi-prong process of adult (re)socialization, mobilization, and recruitment. For political marginalized communities whose members have not been prime targets by major parties for strategic mobilization and recruitment, their levels of identification with the major parties may be relatively weak or even missing. This has been found to be the case for ordinary adults in the Asian American community. How would this observation be true for APA elected officials serving at the local level?

Searching for political party affiliation information for holders of partisan positions is relatively straightforward. It takes a considerable amount of time and persistence, however, when it comes to gathering information for nonpartisan position holders who are mostly found at the local level of government as municipal officials or school board members. Going through individual website and biography are just the beginning. When self-identification information on

partisanship is not readily available, we look for clues in major party endorsement lists as well as information on their involvement in local party clubs or participation in party-based leadership development programs. In the end, we find that, among those who are able to identify, close to nine in ten APA women EOs (87%) have an affiliation with a major party--two-thirds of them (67%) as Democrats, compared to 20% Republicans (Table 1). About one in ten women do not identify with either party; we also could not find the partisanship information for another one-tenth (who are mostly on local school boards). On the men's side, only 5% do not identify with either party. Among those who do, the ratio is nearly three to one favoring the Democratic Party. Compared to the partisanship among APA women, a higher proportion of APA men are either Democrats or Republicans. Although APA men identified more strongly with major parties, APA women have a higher partisan ratio in favor of the Democratic Party.

When analyzed by level of office, we find women and men share similar proportions of partisan breakdown at federal and state level offices. However, a higher proportion of women than men are Democrats at the county level, with up to one-fifth of APA male county officials not identifying with either party. Among municipal and school board officials, APA women are found to have lower proportions of identification with either the Democratic or the Republican Party than their male counterparts. The gender gap is especially stark among school board members on the Democratic side, in part because up to one-third of women school board members are non-partisan. Up to a quarter of APA women serving at nonpartisan positions at the local level are Republicans by personal orientation. This figure is higher among their male counterparts when up to one third of those in local offices are Republican identifiers.

Compared to findings in the GMCL survey reported in Lien et al. (2008), the partisanship distribution among APA women is less polarized with 62% women identified as Democrats and 17% as Republicans in that 2007 study. The partisanship breakdown among APA men in that survey is even less polarized with 54% identified as Democrats and 28% as Republicans. The GMCL survey is based on a sample of APA elected officials, while our study looks at the entire population. Differences in research methodology, in addition to differences in study timeframe, may account for the differences in findings.

Engagement with Political Party and Other Community-Based Organizations

Although APA elected officials were found to be affiliated predominantly with the two parties, their reported level of involvement with political party organizations was fairly limited at 15% for women and 12% for men as of 2014 (Table 2). We coded elected officials' level of engagement in civic organizations by their organizational affiliations or participation in group- or organization- based activities listed on their own or other websites. Examples of party organizations include APA Democratic Caucus of Alameda County, the Democratic Club of Taylor, MI, Fort Bend Democratic Party, Texas Democratic Women, Gardena Valley Democratic Club, and Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club. On the Republican side, the list is a lot shorter and it includes Republican Liberty Caucus, El Paso County Young Republicans, and Texas Asian Republican Club.

As noted earlier, local community-based partisan and non-partisan political organizations are increasingly relied upon to perform the traditional functions of political parties in immigrant incorporation. Table 2 shows that, in comparison to their involvement in party organizations, both APA political women and men have much greater engagements with other civic organizations such as neighborhood/community organizations and (pan) ethnic organizations and these two types of organizations ranked top two in civic engagement for both women and men. However, gender matters in that women's degree of involvement with political party organizations is ranked 5th and just below their participation in PTA/O and women's organizations. Among men, their degree of involvement with political party organizations is ranked 4th and just below their participation in business groups. For both women and men, the organization that they are least involved with is labor unions. The ranking order on the polar ends for both women and men is similar to what found among female and male elected officials in the GMCL survey.

Qualitative Interview Findings: Elected Officials

With assistance in data gathering from our undergraduate student assistant, we were able to conduct interviews with five elected officials—three men and two women--all at the municipal level and from either Southern or Northern California (Appendix A). They also represent four ethnic origins and two immigrant generations. Four out of five have completed a graduate degree and four of the five are Democrats by partisanship. Compared to the national database reported in Filler and Lien (2014), our informants are better educated, more Democratic

in partisanship, and more foreign-born. However, it seems about right in terms of experience in office when only one in five was in his first term in office.

Although municipal offices are non-partisan, APA candidates for municipal offices still found the need to seek party support for their campaigns. However, because parties tend to support likely winners, APA candidates in their first run for public office often faced a cold shoulder from their own local party organizations. A foreign-born Filipina councilwoman from Northern California said that when she first ran for office, she was invited by the local party for an endorsement interview, but the party ended up endorsing the incumbents. Luckily, her active participation in ethnic community organizations paid off and she received support from Filipino American organizations in the city and the Bay area such as Association of Filipino Americans of Hercules, Fil-Ams of Hercules, and Filipino Americans of Contra Costa. She also received support from other Filipino American groups such as NaFFAA (National Federation of Filipino American Associations District 8) and Filipina Women's Network in the Bay area. According to her biography, her prior appointment and reappointments by the city council to the planning commission and having served in the leadership ranks also helped groom her for elected public service.

Our other informant and councilwoman from the Bay area also shared a similar experience of exclusion in her first run for office. She said that during her first campaign she did not receive any encouragement from any political party or organized groups such as labor or unions, nor did she receive any assistance or support from any organized groups. While she sought their support, the endorsements of party, labor, unions, public safety, special interest groups all went to her opponent who came in 4th place. She attributed the success of her first campaign to a true grassroots effort, which was related to her extensive community involvement and service as a Planning Commissioner for three years. She said she was encouraged to run for city council in a city with an Asian majority by a number of community groups and elected officials. Her campaign finance did benefit from her being married to a prominent dentist who helped raise money from organized dentistry. In fact, even if the maximum financial contribution was \$500 for each individual, she raised the most funds in a group of 10 candidates. As a non-incumbent, she also won by the greatest margin in the city's history. Based on her experience of success, she did not think it is necessary to receive party endorsement or organized

support to win. Instead, according to her, the key is to connect with voters. Her advice for us is that: “Without community support, particularly local voters, winning an election is not possible. An organized group can be helpful but a successful candidate connects with voters based on ideology, knowledge of issues, sound decision making, and track record of service.”

On the men’s side, a first-time city councilman in the Los Angeles area also commented that he was not asked by, nor received campaign support from, any party or community organizations. He thought he did not have the reputation nor the resume to ask for endorsements or support from political party and other organizations. However, prior to seeking for a seat on the city council, he was involved with the local community through volunteer services with the Red Cross and participation in community events. These involvements helped him see the concerns of residents and motivated him to run for office so as “to make real change for the city and its residents.” Another male municipal official who arrived from S. Korea as adult also mentioned the absence of party encouragement or support of any kind when he first ran for office at the school board level back in the late 1990s. As a passionate and experienced educator, he was encouraged by friends, but not party or any organized group, to run for school board.

Because the previous informant is a Republican, we know the feeling of exclusion by one’s own political party is not restricted to Democratic candidates of APA descent. It does not apply only to women or persons with immigrant background, either. However, being US-born and having an active record of participation in local party organizations prior to seeking a popularly elected position may help secure party support, as this was the case of our fifth informant. This third-term city councilman reported having received support from the Democratic Party, labor unions, ethnic Democratic Club, and other local Democratic Clubs. Being a professional social worker and lifelong Democrat, he also actively sought the endorsement of the Democratic Party and he was able to receive them in all his bids for office.

For the four other informants who failed to receive any party support in their first bid for office, the story seems to be a different when they became incumbents seeking re-election or election to a higher office. One of the councilwomen from the Bay area mentioned that, when running for re-election, although she did not receive any encouragement from party organizations, she did receive endorsements from the Democratic Club of Contra Costa County and the West County Democratic Club. She attributed the change to her becoming more active

with the Democratic Party during her first four years in office. Her husband's forming a local Democratic Club during her first term in office also helped. Similarly, our second councilwoman from the Bay area mentioned that, unlike her first campaign, she was able to secure endorsements from the majority of organized groups and the Party. Her becoming very actively involved in the Party during her first term may explain the sharp difference. On men's side, our veteran councilman said that, during his recent campaigns for mayoral office, he received many community and Republican Party support. Meanwhile, our first-term councilman has been actively involved in many community groups, including Asian American ones, and is the Democratic Party chair for his district. These steps are expected to put him in a good position to receive party support in his future campaigns.

Getting party endorsement is just one type of support a local elected official can receive from the party. Once endorsed by a party, the candidate can use that message on campaign materials and provide an important cue for voters who need this kind of summary information of a candidate's likely ideology and issue stance to decide on whom to vote for. This partisan cue may be particularly important for voters in low-information campaign settings such as most local elections. Our three-term councilman certainly saw the value of party endorsements when he said that, even in non-partisan elections, parties could be very helpful by lending credibility to the candidates. His (prospective) voters received "robo-calls" from the chair voicing support for his election and reminding residents to vote. Our sole Republican council member mentioned that his party helped send out "member communications" mailer on his behalf to encourage voters to vote in his last two mayoral campaigns. He also mentioned there were many non-coordinated independent expenditure groups behind him and they helped provide campaign mailers.

Our women elected officials interviewed seemed less enthusiastic about the level of party support they received. Our Filipina two-term councilwoman mentioned that, in her second campaign after receiving party endorsement, she received 2,000 door hangers with the printed endorsements of local and state candidates which party volunteers helped distribute in several precincts. She did not think the party influenced that much of her non-partisan municipal campaign, but thought the party would play a more key role if she seeks a higher office. Our Chinese two-term councilwoman did not mention having received any specific support from the

party that endorsed her re-election campaign. She noted that being a Democrat helped in winning support from voters in the San Francisco Bay Area, but cautioned the limitation of the party label given the growing significance of the Independents and the Declined-To-State voters.

Qualitative Interview Findings: Party and Community Organizations

Our understanding of the role of parties in campaigns and elections involving APA women and men may be limited by the number and type of informants we were able to secure interviews for the pilot project. To get a better picture, we interviewed five leaders associated with local community-based partisan and nonpartisan organizations. Because we were unable to schedule interviews in the Bay Area, all the organizations are based in the Los Angeles area and three of them are associated with the Democratic Party.

One of the organizations interviewed is the California Democratic Party (CDP) Asian Pacific Islander Caucus (API Caucus), which is the officially chartered caucus of the CDP. According to its bylaws, it was formed “to act as a vehicle to disseminate Democratic Party values and implement policies of the Party in the Asian Pacific Islander American communities, to provide a forum for addressing their political concerns, to promote participation and representation of its members in the legislative executive, judicial and political process of California, and to recruit, train and support candidates of Asian and Pacific Island origin to run for public office.” According to Clark Lee, the State Chair of the Caucus, the CDP API Caucus has “since its creation a few decades ago been working to elect Asian Americans to public offices, increase Asian American voter registration and political participation, and expand outreach to the various Asian American communities.” Examples of targeted support for API communities mentioned by Lee include the production of in-language voter outreach materials and the launching of the CDP’s Chinese language website, making CDP the first state political party in the nation with such a feature.

Lee was proud of the party’s record of supporting candidates and elected officials whose background was diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, and immigration generation. He stressed that many had broken the “bamboo ceiling” and become the first person of his/her ethnic origin to hold a particular public office in any level of government. Our tally of the list of endorsed APA candidates at the federal, state, and local levels in the 2014 General elections suggests that

Democratic APA women candidates had a better chance of winning than their male counterparts. Although only 18 out of the 56 endorsees or 32% are women, 11 or 61% won. In comparison, 18 of the 38 male candidates or 47% won. Looking only at candidates for local offices, the winning ratio is also higher for women (46%) than for men (30%) in this most recent election cycle. This suggests that once Asian women candidates received party endorsement, their identity being at the intersection of race and gender may constitute an asset rather than a liability compared to Asian men. The challenge for women's inclusion is to break down the initial barriers to their endorsement, which cannot happen until they decide to run for an office.

Although the CDP API Caucus has been instrumental to the elections of many APA women and men to local, state, and federal offices, its operations are guided by the general rules set by the CDP, which assigns County Democratic Parties in each of California's counties the exclusive jurisdiction over the endorsement process for local and municipal offices in California. Lee reminded us that the party endorsement process is a two-step process, featuring an endorsement recommendation and a ratification process, and that it is generally open to the public. All candidates who are registered Democrats who have submitted a candidate questionnaire and appropriate administrative fees are eligible for endorsement consideration. Candidates who received more than 60% of the votes in the endorsement recommendation meeting will have their cases brought forward to the monthly general meeting for ratification. Only candidates who received 60% of the votes or above can be considered officially endorsed. Lee stressed that the Democratic Party's endorsement process is open to the public, with the exception of the actual candidate interview, which is the only closed portion of these meetings.

Because women typically need to be encouraged to run for public office, we wonder if the party is engaged in candidate recruitment. Lee said that from time to time the Los Angeles County Democratic Party (LACDP) engages in candidate recruitment process. According to the LACDP bylaws, the process is afforded for offices historically or currently held by a non-Democrat, offices whereby it is historically difficult for a Democrat to be victorious, jurisdictions with Democratic disadvantage in voter registration, and/or jurisdictions with Democratic jurisdiction in voter performance. Lee said if research shows that a district falls under any or all of the criteria set above, it may cause LACDP to actively recruit candidates for those offices. These candidates will be eligible for early endorsement consideration before the

candidate filing deadline. Upon further query on whether the party would actively seek out API candidates, Lee said that, beyond the aforementioned procedures, “much of the process is driven by local political dynamics, local organizational network, and common sense.” Demography is just one consideration besides resources, local support infrastructure, candidate background, voter performance, and historical voter turnout. Thus, the party takes the totality of circumstances into consideration rather than relying on just one set of identity attributes such as race, ethnicity, or gender when they engage in candidate recruitment for a particular district.

LACDP happens to be the nation’s largest local Democratic Party entity and in a region that is also considered the most demographically diverse. In 2010 Census, LA County had 14% Asian, 48% Latino, 9% Black, and 28% Anglo White in the population. This exceptional level of local diversity may have shielded the party from the need to proactively seek out APIs for leadership training and recruitment. However, Lee said the party has been doing its share to mobilize the base by producing in-language materials and running automated robo calls in targeted Asian languages for campaigns in jurisdictions with significant Asian American constituencies. It will take further research for us to determine how similar or different local parties in other states are engaged with candidate recruitment and endorsement as well as voter mobilization processes.

Although Asian American candidates have been observed to do increasingly well in selected ethno-burbs in California (Lai 2011) and they currently occupy the majority seats in city councils of Monterey Park, San Marino, Cupertino, and Daly City, they are only among at least 17 California cities that are majority-Asian in population. The disproportionality in political representation is especially steep in Los Angeles. In LA County, where Asians are 15% of the county’s 10 million population, there has never been an Asian on the 5-seat Board of Supervisors. In LA City, where Asians are 13% of the population, there has only been one Asian (Michael Woo) who served between 1985 and 1993. This year the Korean American Democratic Committee (KADC) tried to change the trend by supporting two Korean American candidates—David Ryu and Grace Yoo—to run for the 15-seat council. The KADC was founded in 1992 after the LA Riots to mobilize the Korean American communities in Southern California to vote and to participate in the local, state and federal electoral process. The organization has endorsed candidates and provided monetary and volunteer support to the extent it could. It also

does GOTV, but its President Jimmy Chai wanted to emphasize that their work is not just for Korean Americans. To gain political empowerment, he did not believe it is enough to mobilize just Korean Americans. Rather, there is a need to go beyond identity politics in building mass support and to focus more on issues, projects, and policy plans.

Another Democratic organization, the United Democrats of the San Gabriel Valley (UDSGV) was founded in 2004 and has hosted candidate forums, endorsed candidates, and made campaign contributions to those they endorsed—including Asian Americans. This is an area with at least one-fourth of the population being Asian and mostly Chinese by descent, but it also has nearly half of the population of Latino background. The founding President Ronald Vrooman claimed that the Valley has one of the highest proportions of Asian American elected officials in the nation--16% of its current club members are Asian/Chinese Americans, including half a dozen of locally elected officials and Congresswoman Judy Chu. He did not mention any specific project targeting Asian Americans. Neither did Joe Gardner, the Chair of the 48th Republican Assembly District, which encompasses the eastern San Gabriel Valley, along with several foothill communities, and is 13% Asian, 64% Latino, and is currently represented by a Latino Democrat. Mr. Gardner happened to be the twice-defeated Republican candidate for that seat. He said his Republican party has not been very active in local politics in the past few years, and he is looking to change that. We were unable to secure other interviews on the Republican side to learn more. Recent news about the election of three Asian American to the Board of Supervisors in Orange County suggests that perhaps we should look for interviews with Republican organizations in that County to have a more balanced understanding of the relationship between Asian Americans and the Republican Party (Aguilar 2015).

To help politically empower Asian Americans, it would take a non-partisan, non-profit organization such as CAUSE or Center for Asian Americans United for Self-Empowerment to fulfill that goal through voter registration and education, community outreach, and leadership development. According to Assistant Director Kim Yamasaki, although a non-partisan organization such as CAUSE cannot endorse political candidates, it can still impact local campaigns and elections by collaborating with other Asian American organizations that share the same mission and goal. Specifically, she mentioned the Asian American Advancing Justice (AAJC), which is headquartered in Washington, DC but has a branch in Los Angeles as an

example of its organizational network. To support Asian American candidates who share the values and purpose of CAUSE and are involved with its programs, the organization has held special gatherings for them to connect with donors and voters and to also try to support them indirectly. In addition to organizing voter registration drives, CAUSE also runs special programs for leadership development of youth, veterans, and women. In particular, since its inception in the early 1990s, CAUSE has run a leadership academy each summer that aims to cultivate leadership skills among Asian American college students who are interested in exploring a career in public office, public service or community advocacy, which includes becoming an elected or appointed official. The linkage function provided by organizations such as CAUSE has been recognized by several scholars (e.g, Lien 2001; Wong 2006; Toyota 2010) as exemplary of how a fast-growing, majority-immigrant, and extremely diverse nonwhite community such as Asian Americans can still make political gains despite the decline of political parties from its heyday in the early part of the last century.

Discussion and Conclusion

While the majority of existing research on Asian American electoral involvement has focused on the racialized barriers that limit prospects of democratic inclusion and empowerment of Asian Pacific Americans in the U.S. political system, in general, and the two-party system, in particular, few studies have considered the intersections of race and gender in examining barriers in the recruitment and election of APA women and men elected officials. This paper begins to address the gap through an examination of gender differences in party affiliations and non-partisan and partisan organizational involvement surrounding the election of APA women and men.

Overall, we find a greater proportion of APA women EOs to identify with the Democratic Party compared to men and that the partisan breakdown for both women and men are similar at the federal and state levels. The picture is more mixed at county, municipal and school board levels. Women comprise a higher percentage of Democratic identifiers at the county level but lower ones at the municipal and school board level. Parties are certainly present in non-partisan elections; however, it seems their supportive edge is afforded more among APA men than women.

We also find evidence through in-depth interviews with APA women and men EOs that both mainstream party organizations at the local level are (un)equal opportunists in their support or lack thereof of APA candidates, particularly in their first run for office. While support from the party in some form was extended to most of our informants, it was usually upon their bid for re-election or after some hours invested to secure support themselves. Both women we interviewed for this study were less enthusiastic and attributed their success more to grassroots involvement in the community and support from non-partisan community-based organizations.

With what can be gleaned from our interviews with leaders of local partisan and nonpartisan organization, efforts at increasing the support for APA candidates are well underway. However, the extent to which these efforts take into account some of the unique constraints APA women face in their bids for office is not so clear. Partisan and non-organizational support and mobilization surrounding the election of APAs, coupled with their increasing presence, suggests these efforts do matter. Not facing the same constraints as party organizations, however, non-partisan organizations at the local level might be uniquely to achieve objectives of greater participation and representation of Asian Pacific Americans.

Looking forward, our focus on local elective offices which often serve as the launching pad for state and federal offices, demonstrates the potential for future research in further examining the gatekeeper role of political parties and other local/community-based organizations in the political incorporation of Asian American women and men. Furthermore, differences in the types of organizations women and men APA elected officials affiliate with may shed light on gender differences with regards to the networks they belong to and the types of organizations they may rely on for support. Our qualitative evidence further demonstrates the need for examining differences in the relationship among political parties, local organizations, and APA women and men elected officials. Though our sample is very small, the interviews show that there may be possible differences in the types of support women and men APA candidates seek when trying to run for office. We hope to use this pilot study as a way to further explore the role that political parties play in the recruitment and election of APA women, with a focus on the role of intersectionality of race and gender (but also ethnicity and nativity) in the political process.

Appendix A: Profile of Informants

Elected Officials	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5
Gender	M	M	M	F	F
Ethnicity	Filipino	Korean	Pakistan	Filipina	Chinese
US born	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Education	PhD	PhD	MPA	BS	MS
Party Id	Dem	Rep	Dem	Dem	Dem
Region (in CA)	S	S	S	N	N
Title	Mayor Pro Temp	Mayor	Councilman	Councilwoman	Vice Mayor
Term in office	3rd	2nd	1st	2nd	2nd
First elected	2007	1998	2012	2010	2008
Community Org.	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5
Gender	M	M	M	M	F
Ethnicity	Chinese	Korean	White	White	Japanese
US born	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Party Id	Dem	Dem	Dem	Rep	Nonpartisan
Region	S	S	S	S	S
Org. Name	LACDP	KADC	UDSGV	48 th Rep Assembly Dist.	CAUSE

Note: Interviews were conducted between late January and early March, 2015.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

A. Questions for Elected Officials:

1. Is this your first time in elected office?
 - a. How many attempts have you made to become elected? / Is this your first attempt?
2. How did you become involved in the political world?
3. When running for office, were you asked to run? If yes, by whom? Did it involve any organized effort by a political party group or some community-based organization?
4. Have you received any support from community-based or party organizations when running for office? Please provide some examples.
5. What kinds of support did you receive from a party or other organization or group? How important was this to the success of your campaign?
 - a. How active were/are you in the party?
6. In what ways did your political party/affiliation play a role in your campaign?
7. Are you active in any party organizations or groups affiliated with Asian Americans (either local, statewide, or national)?
8. Do you think support from party or community groups could affect the success of a local political campaign?
9. Anything else you'd like to add?

B. Questions for organizations:

1. What is your organization's history of working with Asian American candidates? Who are they--such as in terms of gender, ethnic origin or country of birth, immigration generation, and offices sought?
2. What's your organization's process of identifying candidates to support?
3. In what way and how much does your organization contribute to a candidate's campaign? (Monetary or otherwise).
4. Do you notice an increasing trend of Asian American candidates in the past 5 years or so in your region? If so, why do you think that is? If not, why not?
5. How much of a role, do you believe, a community organization such as yours can play into a candidate's campaign for public office? Does it matter if it is for the seeking of a local or higher level of office? If they are running for a local office, are you more likely to give a certain type of help versus another? (Money vs. endorsements)
6. Would it be possible for me to pay a visit to your office or headquarters to learn more about your organization?
7. Can you suggest someone else for me to interview for this project?

Table 1. APAEO Political Partisanship by Gender and Office Level

	Women's		Men's	
	%Democrat	%Republican	%Democrat	%Republican
All	67	20	71	24
Congress	100	0	100	0
Statewide	67	33	67	33
State legislature	87	13	84	16
County	86	14	67	10
Municipal	58	25	65	30
School board	41	26	62	32
N	74	22	183	61
% Non-identifier	12		5	
% Unknown	9		6.5	
Total N	122		275	

Source: Asian Pacific American Elected Officials (APAEO) database of 2014 compiled by the authors.

Table 2. APAEO Civic Engagement by Gender

Civic Engagement	Women's		Men's	
	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency
Neighborhood/Community Org.	42.6	52	49.5	136
(Pan)Ethnic Org.	30.3	37	34.2	94
PTA/O	23.0	28	7.2	20
Women's Org.	23.0	28	3.6	10
Political Party	14.8	18	12	33
Civil Rights Org.	13.9	17	9.5	26
Business Group	13.1	16	19.3	53
Faith-based Org.	12.3	15	10.5	29
Election Campaign	9.8	12	3.6	10
Arts/Music	4.9	6	5.1	14
Labor Union	3.3	4	3.4	11

Source: (see Table 1)

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