CIVIC

CASE STUDY PROJECT API VOTE

ENGAGEMENT

Policy Issues in Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities of Orange County

table of contents

Executive Summary

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) civic engagement in Orange County is a critical issue for the civic health of AAPI communities and all communities in Orange County. In general, civic engagement encompasses a wide range of activities that enable individuals to participate meaningfully in the civic activities of a community. While civic engagement ranges from volunteer work to holding political office, this report focuses on voter participation.

The purpose of this report is to provide local public policy makers and community members with insights into the state of civic engagement by Asian Americans in Orange County. To accomplish this goal, the report examines data drawn from several studies that analyze the November 2006 General Election. While many of these reports focus on quantitative aspects of voter participation, this report focuses on the qualitative experience of voters from the Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese American communities. The rubric "AAPI" masks unique issues in specific communities and this report focuses on these three communities as examples of Asian Americans in Orange County. As part of a broader project supported by The James Irvine Foundation, the Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Inc. (OCAPICA) is implementing a voter mobilization campaign called Project Asian and Pacific Islander Vote (Project API Vote). A case study approach examines this project and current findings to illustrate the critical role that community-based organizations perform in fostering vibrant communities and the productive insights drawn from community perspectives.

Key recommendations from this study include:

Foster Trust
Community groups such as OCAPICA should continue to serve as liaison between AAPI communities and established governmental and other civic engagement institutions. The key role of community-based organizations as a trusted community member facilitates and enhances community health and development.

Increase Knowledge
Continue to share information that is not only translated, but communicated at level of depth that is meaningful and helpful to voters. Translating materials into voters' primary language is not the end, but beginning of communicating necessary information needed by voters to make informed and sound decisions.

Ensure Accountability
Coordinate collaboration between community-based non-profit groups, governmental agencies, and other organizations such as private foundations. The different reports surveyed were all supported by different funding streams and written from a range of perspectives. Each one provided insight into the complex workings of social life in understudied communities. By coordinating resources, we can maximize the benefits from these studies.

Build Community Capacity
Create the conditions within communities to enable community members to empower themselves with the information and resources to make informed decisions.

Introduction:
Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Orange County

Voting is one of the fundamental cornerstones of a democratic nation. The right to cast a ballot is one that denotes full civil membership in our society. It is also an essential building block of a minority community's political infrastructure and a major asset that can advance as well as protect its group interests.

- Don Nakanishi and Paul Ong (2004)

As elections at the local and national level continue to demonstrate, even the smallest group can wield decisive voting power over who is elected and who is not. (Vo 2007) The *Orange County Community Indicator Reports* monitor a range of social, demographic, and economic measures to profile the overall health of Orange County. One consistent change has been the increase in racial and ethnic diversity. From Latina/os in Santa Ana to Korean Americans in Fullerton, there are a multitude of ethnic communities that are thriving and actively engaged with their communities. Yet, as the County and individual cities become more diverse, a major concern is practicing our democratic ideal of equal access to how we govern ourselves, provide services, and maintain the conditions in which Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities and all communities in Orange County can live and thrive.

Specifically, the profile of AAPIs in Orange County illustrates a dynamic vibrancy of growth and development. Nationwide, AAPIs are the 4th largest population of AAPIs. Locally, AAPIs are the third largest racial/ethnic group in Orange County with 395,723 representing 14% of Orange County's total population of 2,846,289 (U.S. Census 2000). However, State of California (2007) projections indicate that by 2010, there will be no single racial/ethnic majority in Orange County. Projections further predict that by 2050, AAPIs (791,644) representing 20% of the Orange County's total population of 3,987,625 will outnumber Whites (665,410) at 17% of the total. Hispanics (2,072,192) are projected to be a majority of 54% of the total population in 2050. AAPI communities of Orange County include over ten different Asian groups and more than five Pacific Islander groups.[1] While useful, the demographic categories, "Asian" and "Pacific Islander" also obscure the multiple histories of individual groups. This report seeks to shed some light on this diversity and AAPI voter participation
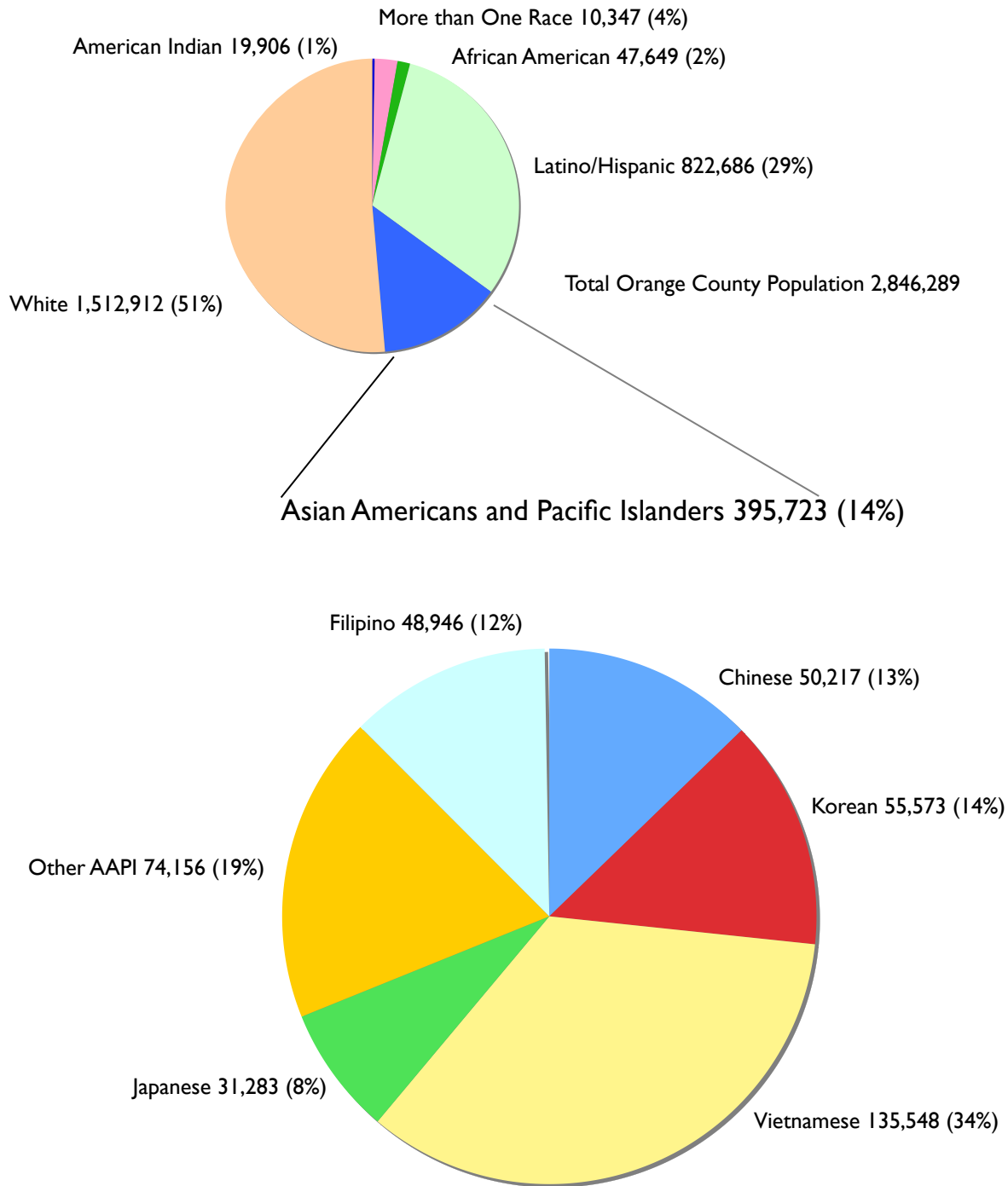
This report brings together the findings of the annual *Orange County Community Indicators Reports* published by the County of Orange, the *Asian Americans at the Ballot Box* series of reports by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, and The James Irvine Foundation's *New Experiments in Minority Voter Mobilization: A Report on the California Votes Initiative*. While each of these reports provides critical information about voter participation, they rely largely upon quantitative research methods. This report provides a case study approach to highlight the qualitative aspects of voter participation. By giving voice to the concerns of voters themselves and those involved in fostering AAPI voter participation, the report illustrates the practical challenges that voters encounter while exercising their right to vote.
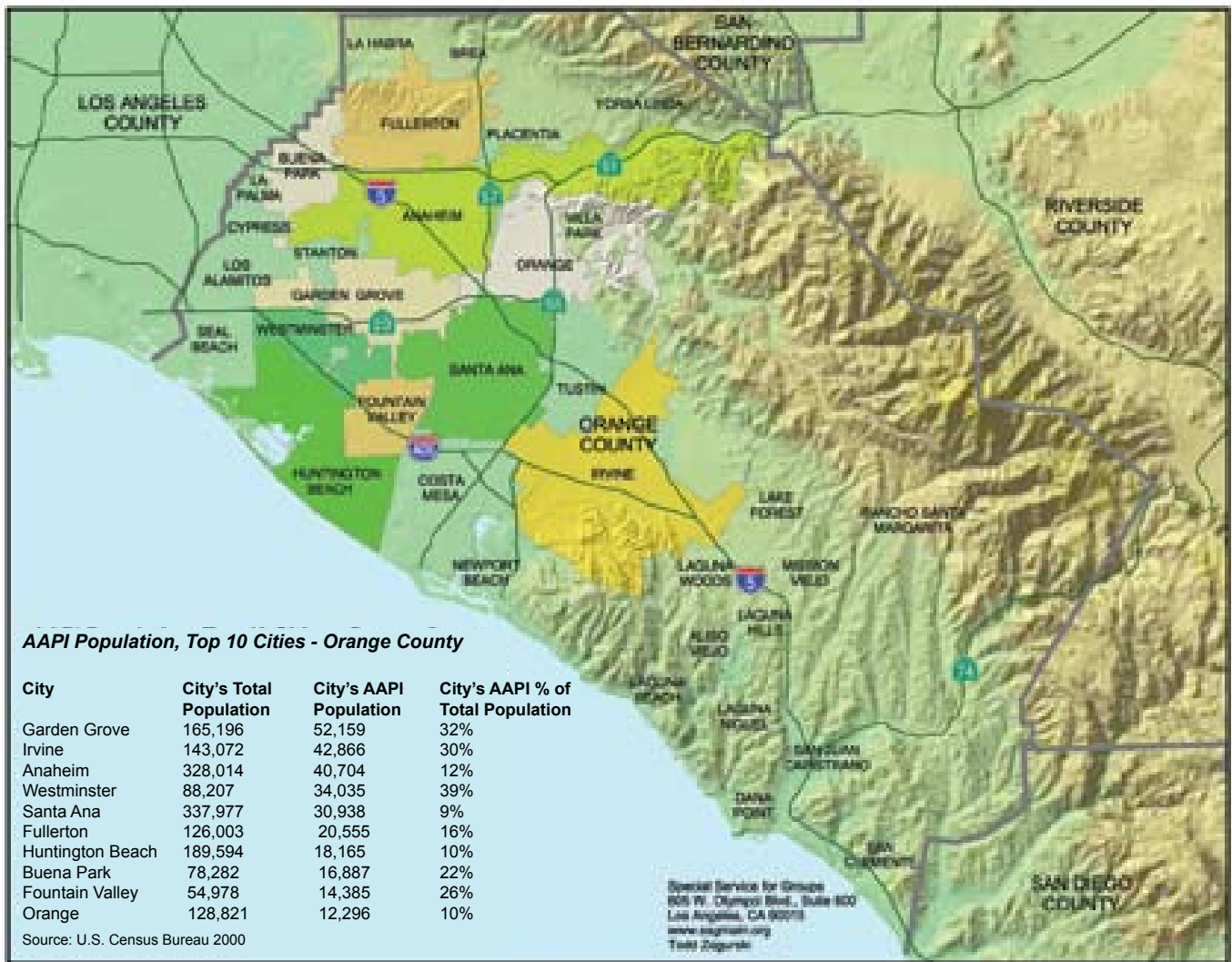
Orange County is home to a diverse range of racial and ethnic groups. As the chart below shows, Orange County is far more racially and ethnically heterogeneous than what is typically depicted in popular culture. More importantly, within the AAPI category, there are substantial communities of different AAPI ethnic backgrounds.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Groups in Orange County (Source: U.S. Census 2000)

More than One Race 10,347 (4%)

American Indian 19,906 (1%)

African American 47,649 (2%)

Latino/Hispanic 822,686 (29%)

Total Orange County Population 2,846,289

White 1,512,912 (51%)

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders 395,723 (14%)

Filipino 48,946 (12%)

Chinese 50,217 (13%)

Korean 55,573 (14%)

Other AAPI 74,156 (19%)

Vietnamese 135,548 (34%)

Japanese 31,283 (8%)

AAPI Population, Top 10 Cities - Orange County

City	City's Total Population	City's AAPI Population	City's AAPI % of Total Population
Garden Grove	165,196	52,159	32%
Irvine	143,072	42,866	30%
Anaheim	328,014	40,704	12%
Westminster	88,207	34,035	39%
Santa Ana	337,977	30,938	9%
Fullerton	126,003	20,555	16%
Huntington Beach	189,594	18,165	10%
Buena Park	78,282	16,887	22%
Fountain Valley	54,978	14,385	26%
Orange	128,821	12,296	10%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

The map above shows that AAPIs live throughout Orange County with concentrations in the central and northwest parts of the County. Garden Grove with its large population of Vietnamese Americans has the largest number of AAPIs (52,159) representing 30% AAPIs of the total city population. Yet, Westminster has the highest percentage of AAPIs in relation to total city population with its AAPI population of 34,035 comprising 39% of Westminster's total population.

Case Study:
OCAPICA'S Project API Vote

One of the enduring questions in American politics is, "why do some people vote while others do not?" Regardless of racial and ethnic identity, geographic affiliation, gender, or economic status, and other factors, the challenge of ensuring high voter participation rates is complex. (Clark 1995, Lien 2001, Xu 2005) These challenges involve a range of factors including population size, demographic structure (race, ethnicity, age, etc.), geography (clusters, neighborhoods, networks), historical experiences (multiple generations, immigration both forced and voluntary, discrimination), and other variables. For AAPI communities, the struggle to overcome these challenges has a long history and many studies have identified the complex relationship between these factors. (Lee 2006, Nakanishi 2003, Wong 2006, Zukin 2006)

In Orange County, AAPI communities face these challenges. As a result, community groups have sought to increase voter participation in underserved communities. In 2006, Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Inc. (OCAPICA) began to implement a multi-year effort to increase voter participation through Project Asian & Pacific Islander Vote (Project API Vote). Established in 1997, OCAPICA is a non-profit community-based organization that "is dedicated to enhancing the health, and social and economic well-being of Asians and Pacific Islanders in Orange County" and works "to improve and expand the community's opportunities through service, education, advocacy, organizing and research. These community-driven activities seek to empower Asians and Pacific Islanders to define and control their lives and the future of their community."[2] OCAPICA's services range from after-school youth programs and community health services to community development and policy advocacy. OCAPICA works with over twenty community-based organizations serving AAPIs in Orange County. As an organization that fosters collaborative partnerships across a number of communities and organizations throughout Orange County, OCAPICA is uniquely positioned to impact civic engagement in AAPI communities. (Wong 2006)

Kimmy Nguyen

The goal of Project API Vote is to increase voter participation of low propensity voters in the Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese American communities in Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. As part of their California Votes Initiative, The James Irvine Foundation has funded OCAPICA to implement Project API Vote since 2006. The California Votes Initiative also includes other community-based organizations targeting other minority and geographic areas throughout California.[3] Project API Vote was designed to identify the barriers to increasing voter participation, design appropriate interventions, and evaluate the impact of these interventions. As such, the program provides us with insights into voter behaviors.

OCAPICA has implemented Project API Vote under its socioecological model that defines social problems within a context of multiple factors. Subsequently, OCAPICA's programs are designed with multi-level approaches to meet the challenge of these complexities. OCAPICA's model identifies five specific levels of intervention: individual, interpersonal, institutional, community and public policy. The underlying assumption of the model is that building healthy communities requires identifying and building cyclical and systemic relationships to foster community-based empowerment to benefit all communities. (Nguyen 2003, Sallis 1997, Stokols 1996). Recognizing that interventions at any one level must be complemented and coordinated with other interventions at other levels, OCAPICA developed a multipart strategy to link communities, public policy and voting power. The following diagram illustrates OCAPICA's model for how healthy communities, public policy, and voting power are interrelated.[4]

[2] See OCAPICA's website at <http://www.ocapica.org>.
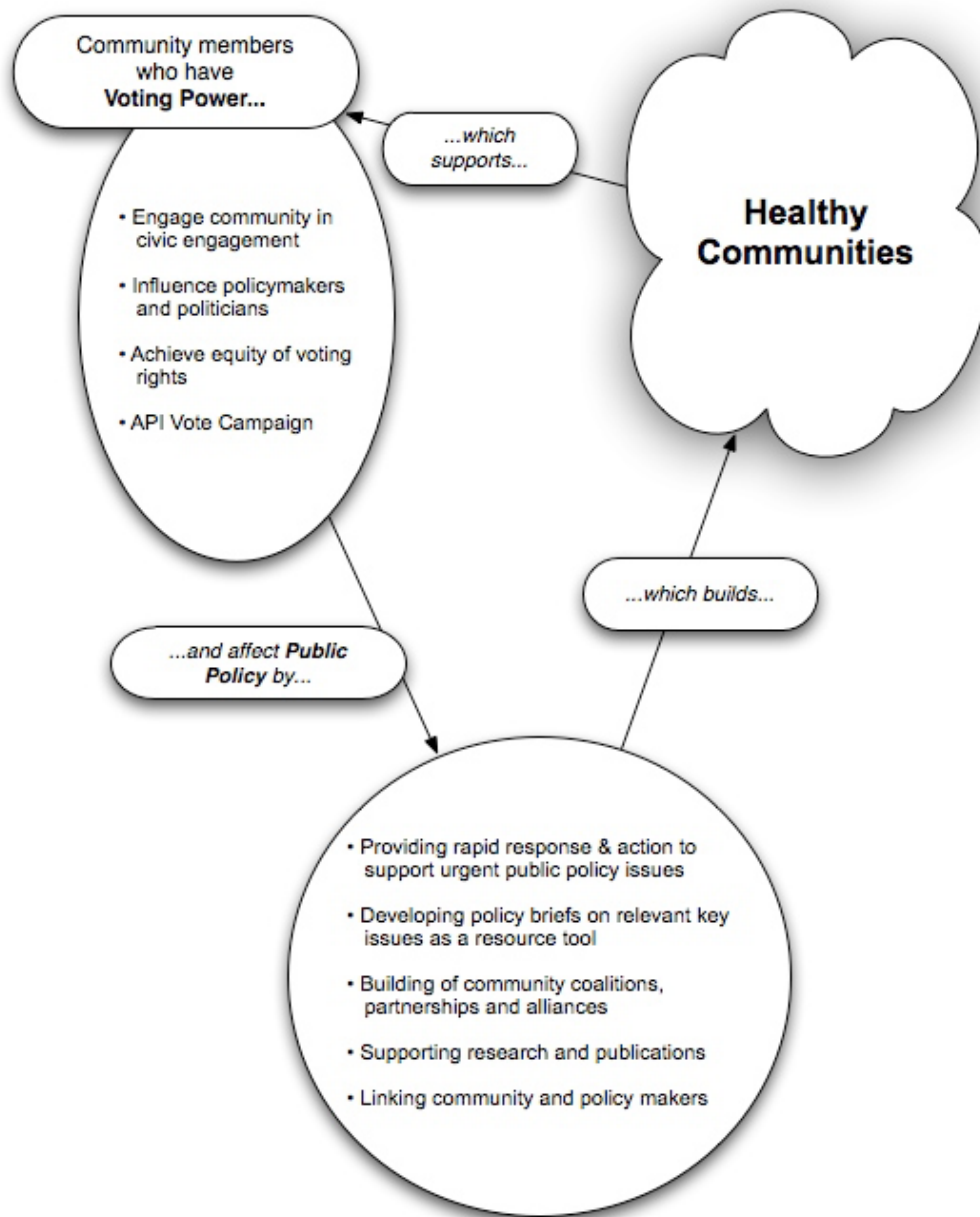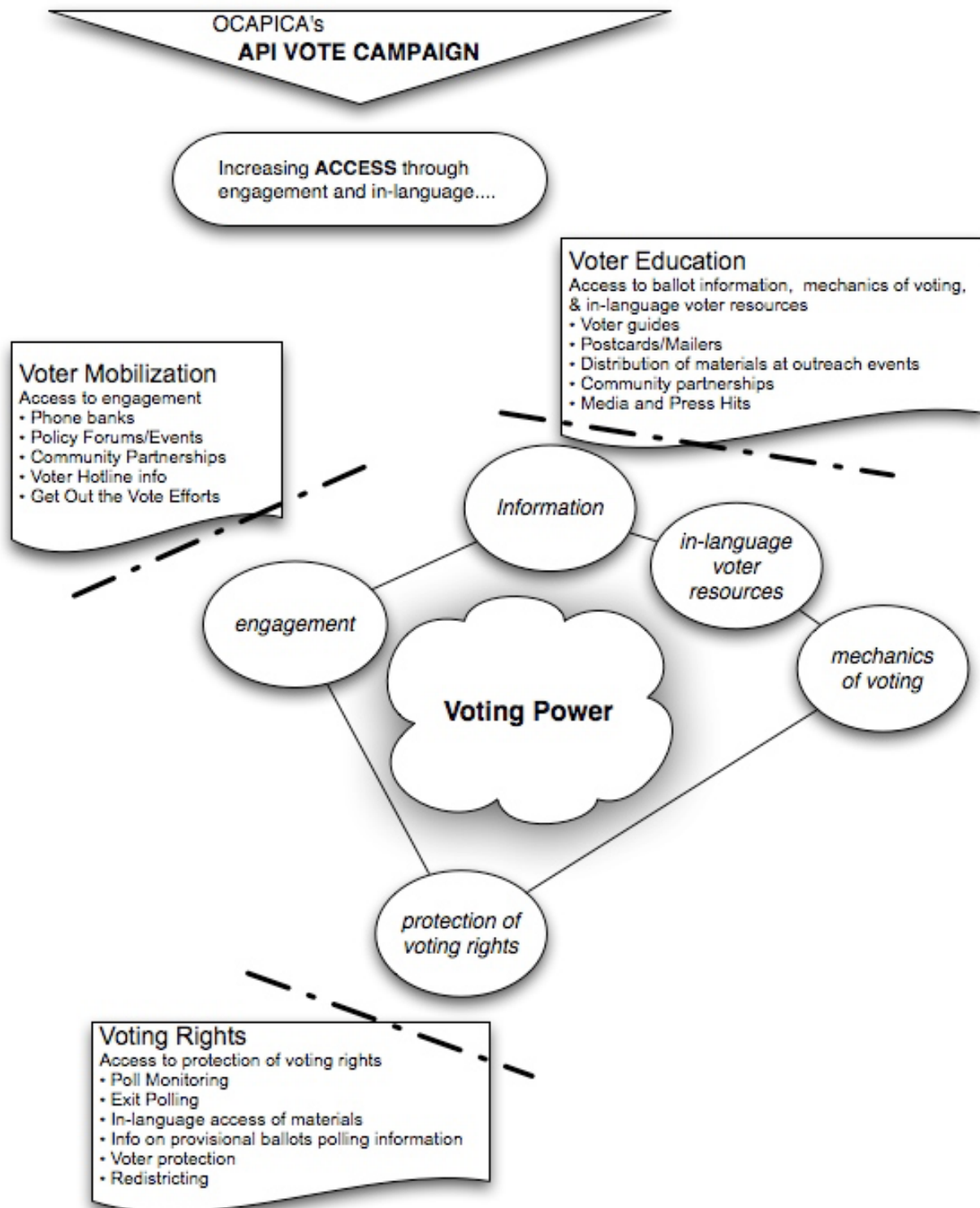[3] See California Votes Initiative at <http://www.irvine.org/grants_ program/cp/cvi.shtml>.
[4] Following diagrams adapted from Project API Vote materials prepared by OCAPICA Policy Manager Tanzila Ahmed.

Community members
who have
Voting Power...

- Engage community in civic engagement
- Influence policymakers and politicians
- Achieve equity of voting rights
- API Vote Campaign

...which supports...

Healthy Communities

...which builds...

*...and affect **Public Policy** by...*

- Providing rapid response & action to support urgent public policy issues
- Developing policy briefs on relevant key issues as a resource tool
- Building of community coalitions, partnerships and alliances
- Supporting research and publications
- Linking community and policy makers

Project API Vote activities have been designed with the initial hypothesis that the key barrier to civic engagement for AAPI communities is *lack of access*. To increase access, the Project utilized a three-part strategy of *Voter Mobilization*, *Voting Rights* and *Voter Education* to foster voter participation. The diagram below illustrates how the project implemented a strategy of community-based engagement and in-language activities to break through barriers to access.

OCAPICA's API VOTE CAMPAIGN

Increasing **ACCESS** through engagement and in-language....

Voter Education
Access to ballot information, mechanics of voting, & in-language voter resources
• Voter guides
• Postcards/Mailers
• Distribution of materials at outreach events
• Community partnerships
• Media and Press Hits

Voter Mobilization
Access to engagement
• Phone banks
• Policy Forums/Events
• Community Partnerships
• Voter Hotline info
• Get Out the Vote Efforts

Information

in-language voter resources

engagement

mechanics of voting

Voting Power

protection of voting rights

Voting Rights
Access to protection of voting rights
• Poll Monitoring
• Exit Polling
• In-language access of materials
• Info on provisional ballots polling information
• Voter protection
• Redistricting

Language has been identified as a barrier to voter access. To address this issue, Section 203 was added to the Voter Rights Act in 1975 and extended for 25 years in 2006. Under this provision the Orange County Registrar of Voters is required to provide translated materials to Chinese, Korean, Spanish and Vietnamese-speaking communities. In addition to materials from the Registrar of Voters, Project API Vote collaborated with the Registrar to produce translated materials specifically for the Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese communities. The project tailored specific strategies for each of these AAPI communities to acknowledge and utilize the uniqueness of each community. Working together, the two groups' concerted effort addressed the issue of language access.

For the November 2006 election, project activities included:

For Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese American communities

- Language-specific community workshops and presentations on how to participate in the voting process in collaboration with Orange County Registrar of Voters

For Chinese American communities

- Distribution of 3,000 Easy Voter Guides at Chinese churches, community organizations and markets
- Placement of 5 articles on voting in Chinese-language newspapers
- Language-specific phone-based voter mobilization

Examples of Translated Voting Materials

For Korean American communities

- Distribution of 5,000 Easy Voter Guides at Korean churches, community organizations, markets and festivals
- Language-specific phone-based voter mobilization

For Vietnamese American communities

- Distribution of 2,000 Easy Voter Guides at local businesses
- Language-specific phone-based voter mobilization
- Placement of 13 articles in Vietnamese-language newspapers
- Participation in 3 Vietnamese-language radio talk shows
- Production of "voting song" entitled, "Power of the Ballot"
- Collaboration with local Vietnamese-language radio to play the song daily on three Vietnamese radio programs from September 17 to Election Day

Community Outreach

Effective outreach depends upon clear communication in terms of content and distribution. (Wong 2004, Wong 2006) For underserved communities, both the lack of and quality of communication affect how messages are heard and understood. Understanding these fundamental aspects of effective outreach, the voter educator, Kimmy Nguyen, wrote and recorded the 30 second song, *Power of the Ballot*, for the Vietnamese American community.

While the use of music and songs in politics is not unique to Vietnamese American communities, the use of Vietnamese-specific music and song provided Vietnamese Americans with a sense of familiarity. Ms. Nguyen understood that traditional methods of outreach may not be the most effective and theorized that a song played on local Vietnamese-language radio would reach a broader audience and increase the probability that listeners would remember the message to get out and vote. This approach created a new way of engaging Vietnamese voters that previous voter mobilization efforts had not tried.

The use of the song highlights ways to reach underserved communities:

Language-appropriate message: People need to hear messages in their language. Vietnamese-speaking members regardless of their English-language proficiency could hear and understand the message.

Culture-based content: People need a context to understand messages. Although not explicit, the song replicates 1960s political songs in Vietnam and infers how our right to vote is a privilege not granted to all people.

Community-specific distribution: People need to hear messages in places that they already get other information. Using Vietnamese-language radio focused distribution of the song directly to a captive audience who already were used to receiving information in this way.

This triple strategy of *language-appropriate*, *culture-based*, and *community-specific* outreach reflects Project API Vote's strategy to meet the needs of each community's unique historical and social situation.

Former OCAPICA Policy Manager Duc Nguyen on local Vietnamese-language radio.

Power of the Ballot

Let us vote in multitude
To echo the voice of community
Only when we vote
Then needs and concern will be addressed
We would no longer be ignored

Power of the ballot is immeasurable
One day, our dream will take shape
So don't take democracy lightly

We feel pity for our homeland
Still living in tyranny, destitution
Many have fallen to have privileges to vote
Here we have the rights to contribute
To speak and to voice our will

Let us remind each other
Let all corners turn out to vote
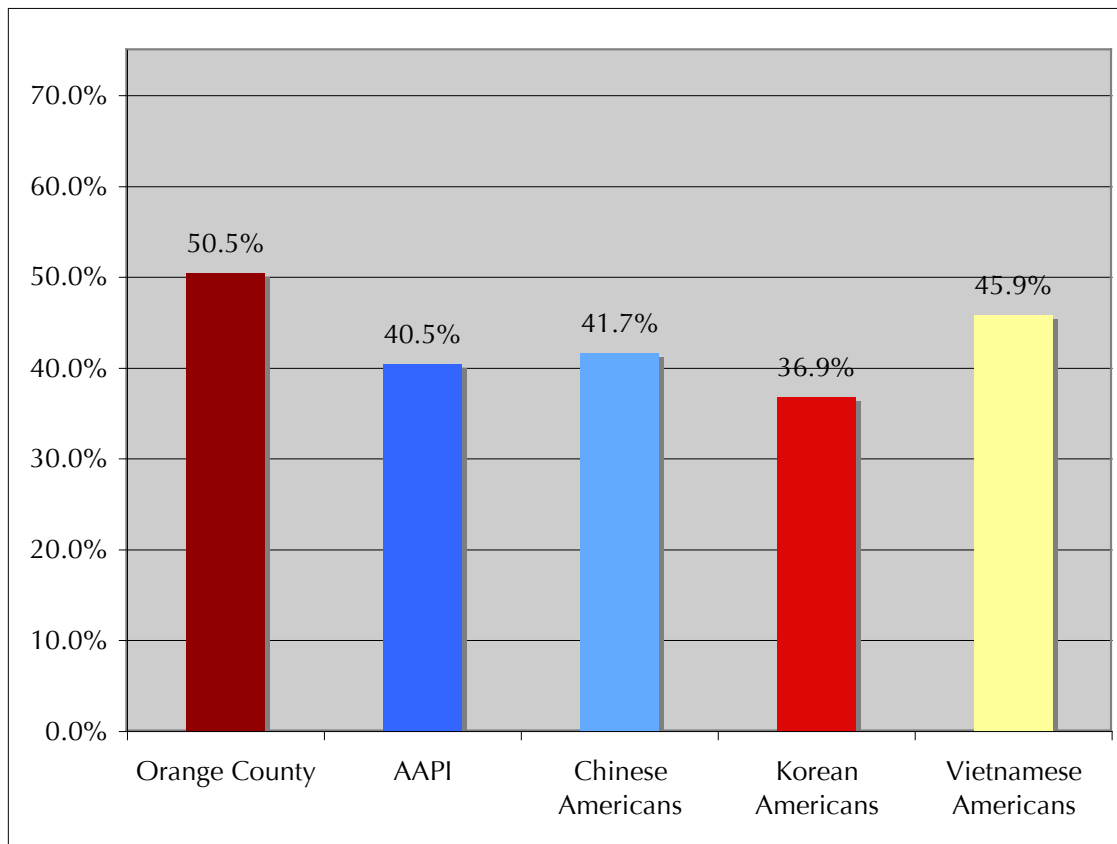*Aunties, uncles and friends*

Let us pledge with the ballot in hand

Song written and translated by Kimmy Nguyen (2006)

Voters Vote, Voters Speak

In the November 6, 2006 General Election, slightly over 50% of Orange County's registered voters participated in the election. Neither the AAPI community in general nor individual ethnic communities reached this level of turnout. Why and how this happened provides us with a roadmap on how to improve civic engagement in general for all.

Voter Turnout in Orange County – November 7, 2006 General Election

	Orange County	AAPI	Chinese Americans	Korean Americans	Vietnamese Americans
# of voters	756,348	84,581	15,089	7,489	39,621
# of registered voters	1,497,397	208,918	36,190	20,307	86,333

Source: Orange County Registrar of Voters

Volunteer Phone Bankers

The James Irvine Foundation's *New Experiments in Minority Voter Mobilization*, Asian Pacific American Legal Center's *Asian Americans at the Ballot Box*, and Orange County Community Indicators Project's annual report each provide insights into aspects of AAPI civic engagement. *New Experiments* presents the preliminary analysis of interventions made by Project API Vote, while *Asian Americans at the Ballot Box* provides documentation of wider AAPI voter participation. *Community Indicators Reports* highlight voting behavior at the aggregate county level and compares voting participation rates with other counties and states. Both Project API Vote and the Orange County Community Indicators Project are on-going and undoubtedly will continue to provide insights into civic engagement in Orange County. However, voting behavior is also a subjective and qualitative experience. In other words, while useful these reports do not necessarily provide us with how voters themselves experience civic engagement.

What helps and hinders voters from voting?

How do voters feel about voting?

What kind of experiences do they have at the voting locations?

How do various kinds of outreach welcome or distance them into the voting process?

To explore these questions, Project API Vote conducted post-Election Day focus groups with Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese American communities in Orange County. Focus group participants included voters, community members and or community leaders of the above three communities. Facilitators were bilingual and members of the respective communities. Additionally, to provide qualitative feedback on our interventions, project staff conducted three focus groups with volunteer phone bankers from each group. While the focus groups represented a sampling of community members, they do not represent the feelings and thoughts of all community members. Nevertheless, the insights from the focus groups provide us with a window into the voting experience of these communities.

General Themes from All Focus Groups

Overall, focus group participants expressed a strong desire to vote while identifying interrelated barriers to voting:

Theme	Explanation
Lack of Comprehension and Incomplete Knowledge	There was a sense of hesitation to vote because voters felt that they did not have an adequate grasp of the issues that were being proposed. Voters felt that the materials did not provide the in-depth information that they needed in order to make an informed decision. Voters feared that they could make a wrong choice that would ultimately hurt them in the long run such as voting for a proposition or candidate that would increase taxes.
Low Quality of Translated Communication	Although translated voting materials were made available, the quality of the translation and the complexity of the propositions' original language did not meet the needs of voters.
Disassociation from Election Process	Voters did not see the relationship between their votes and the impact on their lives. Many voters felt that whether they voted or not would not make a difference. In addition, voters felt that elected officials too often made promises yet failed to keep them.
Inaccessible Institutional Support	Voters had difficulty reaching the bilingual outreach staff of the Orange County Registrar of Voters. Although there is a bilingual phone line, focus group participants reported that there was often no one answering the phone.

Chinese American Community

Based on the 2000 U.S. Census, in Orange County 50,217 Chinese Americans live throughout the County. However, unlike Los Angeles, there are no distinct Chinatowns here. Except for Irvine, which has almost a quarter of all Chinese Americans in Orange County, Chinese Americans are not concentrated in one area and live dispersed throughout the County in cities such as Anaheim, Huntington Beach, Fullerton and Garden Grove.

Chinese American focus group participants shared some of their concerns about access to voting and what it means for them:

Older Voters
Participants noted that older Chinese American voters with limited English proficiency tend to hesitate getting involved because of a lack of understanding of propositions and the language skills that would make them more comfortable to be in the polling places.

Technical Difficulty of Propositions
Participants also shared that the language of the propositions were so complex that the Chinese language translation itself was even more confusing to those who were bi-lingual. Translation of the Easy Voter Guide was not enough to develop an in-depth understanding of the propositions and the candidates.

Low Quality of Translation
While participants valued the voting materials in Chinese as important for Chinese American voters, the quality of the translation seemed to be the problem.

Lack of Knowledge of Existing Resources
Participants also noted that voters did not know whom or where to turn for clarification when they were confused about issues.

Lack of Informed Interest
During the focus groups, many spoke about how voters are disinterested because they think that his or her vote is simply one vote and it does not matter.
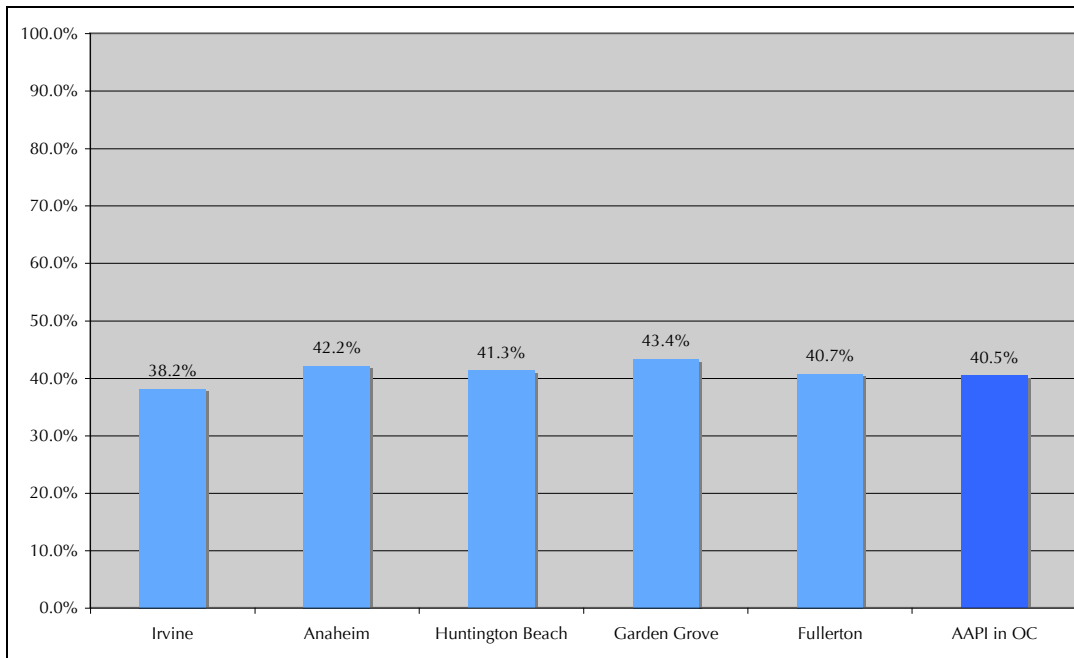
The polling place that I went to for the last election did not provide a good service for voters who don't speak English. There wasn't really anyone available to help. I had a question and asked around at the poll, but no one could provide me with a satisfactory answer. Some people left the poll because they were frustrated that they did not have their questions answered. It was truly a pity to lose some votes that way. The services were better for the two elections before this past election. It is so important to have someone at the poll to assist the voters.

My wife and I didn't really know how to use the electronic machine. The machine or high technology (everything is computerized) is too complicated for seniors.

We need more educational seminars and outreach events to educate the community about the different measures and propositions. However, the Chinese translations do need to be better. I would suggest using simple language Chinese to translate the issues so more people can understand them.

-Selected comments from
Chinese American focus group participants

Top 5 Cities of Voter Turnout for Chinese Americans

	Irvine	Anaheim	Huntington Beach	Garden Grove	Fullerton	AAPI in OC
# of voters	3,351	1,038	897	924	764	84,581
# of registered voters	8,782	2,462	2,170	2,131	1,875	208,918

Orange County - Chinese Americans
Top 5 Cities by Population

City	Population
Anaheim	4,068
Fullerton	2,822
Garden Grove	2,129
Huntington Beach	3,042
Irvine	12,175

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

Korean American Community

When considering the AAPI communities of Orange County, the Korean American community is often overlooked. Yet, the number of Korean Americans (55,573) is only second to the large number of Vietnamese Americans (135,548).

During focus group discussions, participants highlighted a range of concerns:

Voter Information
Focus group participants noted the usefulness of bilingual voter information, but some also noted that even though information was translated, the content was still difficult to understand.

Healthcare Issues
A majority of the participants reported that issues on healthcare are their top concern during election.

Absentee or In-Person Voting
Participants reported that they voted using absentee ballots or in person for a range of reasons. Absentee voters voted before Election Day due to physical or health problems, lack of transportation, difficulty in finding a polling site, and simple convenience. In contrast, the other participants said that they vote at the polling site because they enjoy the interaction with poll workers and other voters.

Uncertainty over Impact of Voting
There is a sense of hesitation to vote when voters feel that they do not clearly understand the propositions or the point of view of the candidates.
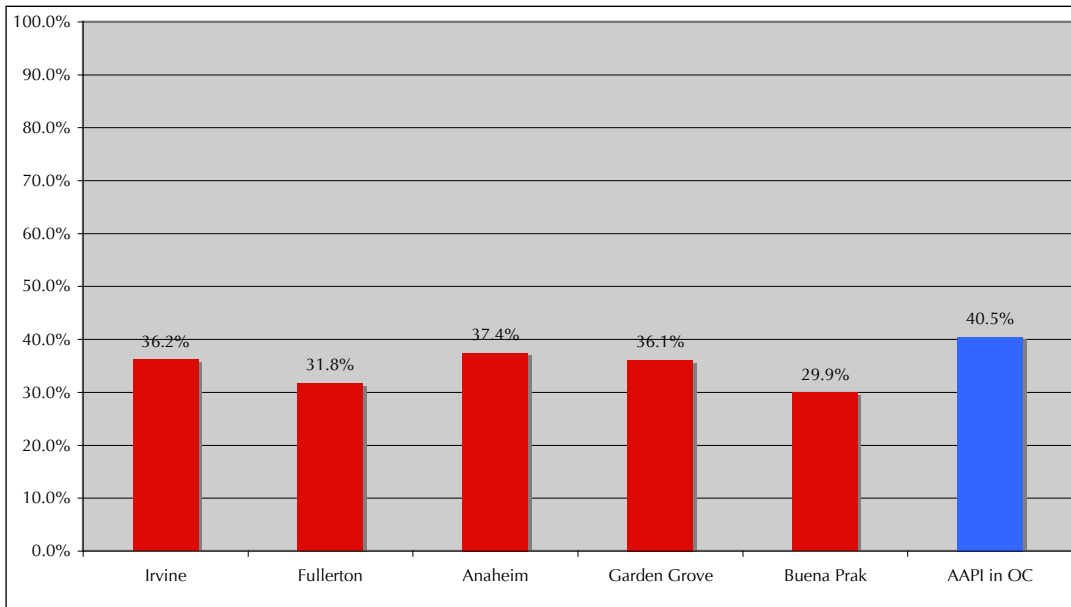
We need to vote to claim our right as a citizen.

The candidates should visit many organizations to express their opinions to the voters. They can use telephone, radio, and television. They should tell people what they will do for American so that everybody will be impressed. I think churches can contribute a lot if they involve voting. The candidates can visit churches and explain their ideas.

When the candidates come to the Korean community to express their opinions, they should be accompanied by their interpreter. Political terms are difficult to understand.

-Selected comments from
Korean American focus group participants

Top 5 Cities of Voter Turnout for Korean Americans

	Irvine	Fullerton	Anaheim	Garden Grove	Buena Prak	AAPI in OC
# of voters	1,308	986	652	614	405	84,581
# of registered voters	3,611	3,105	1,742	1,700	1,353	208,918

Orange County - Korean Americans
Top 5 Cities by Population

City	Population
Anaheim	6,160
Buena Park	4,965
Fullerton	9,093
Garden Grove	8,240
Irvine	7,593

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Special Service for Groups
605 W. Olympic Blvd., Suite 600
Los Angeles, CA 90015
www.ssgmain.org
Todd Zagurski

Vietnamese American Community

Vietnamese American communities comprise the largest AAPI group with over 135,000 residents. The top three cities of Garden Grove, Westminster, and Santa Ana account for over 85% of all Vietnamese Americans in Orange County. Similar to Chinese and Korean American voters, communicating and communicating well are major issues:

Vietnamese-Language Media
Focus group participants emphasized that Vietnamese American voters rely on the Vietnamese-language media, particularly radio, as a major source for information on voting.

Trusted Organizations
Participants noted that there is a lack of non-partisan organizations or groups that could provide un-biased information on issues important to the Vietnamese American communities. They also shared that prominent activists have become involved in partisan politics and that many voters no longer trust these activists when they promote issues because it is seen as self-serving or partisan.

Access to Registrar
Participants commented that voters could not reach the OC Registrar of Voters and that the number was always busy and often did not return calls.

Absentee Voting
Focus group participants talked about how Vietnamese American voters preferred to vote with absentee ballots because they could discuss the issues at home, make decisions together, and have time to think over their choices. Limited language skill to interact at the polling site, lack of transportation, and physical limitations also were issues.

Quality of Translation
Participants noted that translated voting materials were difficult to understand because of literal and word for word translation.
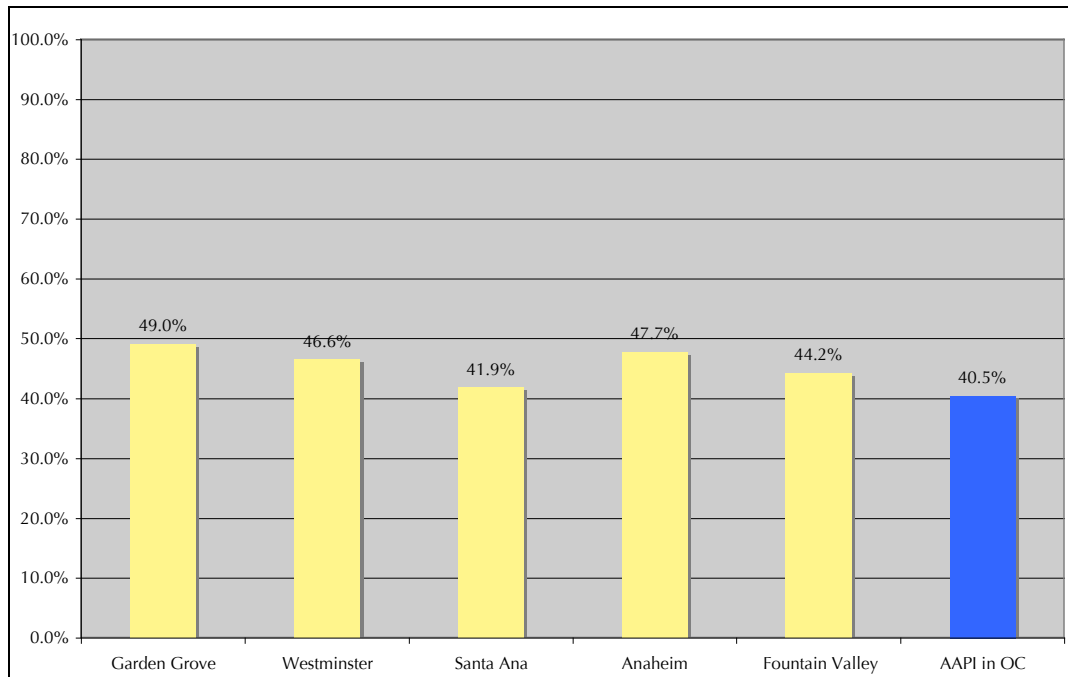
Need for Clearer Information
Focus groups suggested that voting materials such as the Easy Voter Guide needed to provide direct pro and con arguments to help voters understand the propositions. The guides needed to explain what does a vote "yes" means versus what does a vote "no" means.

It's better to leave it blank because we don't want to choose the thing we don't understand. It's very dangerous.
I have a question. I wonder whether the Vietnamese candidates talk on the American radio stations. Our kids don't understand when they listen to the Vietnamese radio. So there is a need to talk on the American radio too.

And I had also thought of the need of a talk show on the radio or TV. For instance, whichever organization doing the mobilization, it will have the talk, very much unbiased talk. It will present the necessary information. And I found this is very effective. We had complained of unreliable media. If we are the one who is going to do this kind of program, it is certainly reliable.

-Selected comments from
Vietnamese American focus group participants

Top 5 Cities of Voter Turnout for Vietnamese Americans

	Garden Grove	Westminster	Santa Ana	Anaheim	Fountain Valley	AAPI in OC
# of voters	9,700	7,759	3,774	3,269	2,301	84,581
# of registered vote	19,779	16,666	9,016	6,848	5,202	208,918

Bar values: Garden Grove 49.0%, Westminster 46.6%, Santa Ana 41.9%, Anaheim 47.7%, Fountain Valley 44.2%, AAPI in OC 40.5%

Orange County - Chinese Americans
Top 5 Cities by Population

City	Population
Anaheim	10,025
Fountain Valley	7,088
Garden Grove	35,406
Santa Ana	19,226
Westminster	27,109

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

Special Service for Groups
605 W. Olympic Blvd., Suite 600
Los Angeles, CA 90015
www.ssgmain.org
Todd Zagurski

Conclusions and Recommendations

Civic engagement through voting participation indicates the extent to which we include and exclude citizens within our democratic political practices. For AAPI communities in Orange County, the issues of access to in-language information and voter resources, knowledge of the mechanics of voting, and protection of voting rights remain vital for increasing voter participation. Reflecting the diversity of AAPI communities, AAPI voters across ethnic communities voiced both similar and different concerns when discussing their voting experiences. Focus group participants emphasized the right to vote as a key part of their responsibility of being part of a community. They understood that voting is a way to voice their concerns and address the challenges that their communities face. They noted several factors that made it more difficult to vote including a lack of comprehension and knowledge, low quality of communication, disassociation from the election process, and inaccessible institutional support. Nevertheless, the underlying desire to fulfill their civic responsibilities as actively engaged community members was heard. Their voices gathered through Project API Vote, project activities, and recent public policy and research reports indicate that fostering voter education, rights, and mobilization can address these factors and hopefully increase civic engagement.

Lack of Comprehension and Knowledge

Voter Education

Low Quality of Communication

Voter Rights

Voter Mobilization

Disassociation from Election Process

Inaccessible Institutional Support

Appendices

Asian American and Pacific Islanders in Orange County

Based on 2006 population estimates, the following tables show the large number of communities usually combined under the "AAPI" category. Note that these estimates do not include individuals who identify with two or more racial group.

Asian Alone by Selected Groups	Estimate	Margin of Error +/-
Chinese, except Taiwanese*	75,609	6,993
Korean*	79,657	7,040
Vietnamese*	154,419	10,775
Asian Indian	44,869	7,343
Bangladeshi	399	547
Cambodian	4,368	1,667
Filipino	60,261	6,782
Hmong	438	427
Indonesian	3,842	1,793
Japanese	33,302	4,797
Laotian	2,543	1,426
Malaysian	- 0	289
Pakistani	3,048	1,933
Sri Lankan	408	299
Taiwanese	4,326	1,832
Thai	5,617	2,961
Other Asian	7,670	1,701
Other Asian, not specified	1,060	581
Total	481,836	4,232

Source: Table B02006. U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey
*Project API Vote Targeted Community

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone by Selected Groups	Estimate	Margin of Error +/-
Native Hawaiian	1,811	1,004
Samoan	3,774	1,818
Guamanian or Chamorro	2,457	1,542
Other Pacific Islander	1,801	1,078
Total	9,843	855

Source: Table C02007. U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey

References

Reports

Asian Pacific American Legal Center (2004). *Asian Americans at the ballot box. The 2004 general election: growing voter participation in Southern California*. Los Angeles: Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

Asian Pacific American Legal Center (2006). *Asian Americans at the ballot box. The 2006 general election in Los Angeles*. Los Angeles: Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

Asian Pacific American Legal Center (2008). *Asian Americans at the ballot box. The 2006 general election in Orange County*. Los Angeles: Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

Asian Pacific American Legal Center (2005). *The diverse face of Asians and Pacific Islanders in Orange County*. Los Angeles: Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

Michelson, R. Melissa, Lisa García Bedolla, and Donald P. Green (2007). *New experiments in minority voter mobilization*. Irvine, CA: The James Irvine Foundation.

Orange County Community Indicators Project (2008). *Orange County community indicators 2008*. Irvine, CA: Orange County Community Indicators Project.

State of California, Department of Finance (2008). *Population projections for California and its counties 2000-2050, by age, gender and race/ethnicity*. Sacramento, California, July 2007.

U.S. Census Bureau (2000) *Census 2000 summary file 1 (SF 1) 100-percent data*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce.

U.S. Census Bureau (2005) *We the people: Asians in the United States* Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce.

U.S. Census Bureau (2008). *Projected population by single year of age, sex, race, and hispanic origin for the United States: July 1, 2000 to July 1, 2050*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce.

Datasources

Orange County Registrar of Voters
Focus Group Transcripts – Project API Vote

Research Books and Articles

Baldassare, M. (2000). *California in the new millennium: the changing social and political landscape*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Clark, W. and Morrison, P. (1995). Demographic foundations of political empowerment in multiminority cities. *Demography* 32(2), 183-201.

Lee, T., Ramakrishnan, S., and Ramirez, R. (2006). *Transforming politics, transforming America: the political and civic incorporation of immigrants in the United States*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press.

Lien, P., Collet, C., Wong, J. and Ramakrishnan S. (2001). Asian Pacific-American public opinion and political participation. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 34(3), 625-630.

Nakanishi, D. and Ong, P. (2004). Voting: the biggest challenge and what can be done. *AAPI Nexus: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Policy, Practice, and Community* 2(2), v-x.

Nakanishi, D. and Lai, J. (2003). *Asian American politics: law, participation, and policy*. Lantham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Nguyen T.N., Kagawa-Singer M., & Kar S.B. (2003). *Multicultural health evaluation: literature review and critique*. Oakland, CA: The California Endowment.

Sallis J.F. & Owen N. (1997). Ecological models. In Glanz K., Lewis F.M., & Rimer B.K., eds. *Health behavior and health education: theory, research, and practice, (pp. 403-424)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Stokols D. (1996). Translating social ecological theory into guidelines for community health promotion. *American Journal of Health Promotion* 1996; 10(4), 282-298.

Vo. L.T. (2007). "Whose school district is this?" Vietnamese Americans and coalitional politics in Orange County, California. *AAPI Nexus*. 5(2), 1-31.

Wong, J. (2004). Getting out the vote among Asian Pacific Americans: The Effects of Phone Canvassing. *AAPI Nexus: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Policy, Practice, and Community* 2(2), 49-66.

Wong, J. (2006). *Democracy's promise: immigrants and American civic institutions*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Xu, J. (2005). Why do minorities participate less? The effects of immigration, education, and electoral process on Asian American voter registration and turnout. *Social Science Research* (34), 682-702.

Zukin, C., Keeter, S., Andolina, M., Jenkins, K., and Carpini, M. (2006). *A new engagement? Political participation, civic life, and the changing American citizen.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Acknowledgements

Suggested Citation:

Asian American Studies Program, CSUF and Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Inc. (2008). *Civic engagement: case study of Project API Vote*. Garden Grove, California: Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Inc.

Lead Author:
Eric Estuar Reyes, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Asian American Studies, CSU Fullerton

Contributing Authors:
Tanzila Ahmed, Policy Manager - Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Inc.
Mary Anne Foo, Executive Director - Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Inc.
Daniel Kikuo Ichinose, Demographics and Research Director - Asian Pacific American Legal Center
Duc Nguyen, former Policy Manager - Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Inc.
Jacqueline Tran, Director, CEED - Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Inc.
Eric C. Wat, Data Manager - Center for Data and Geographical Information Services, Special Service for Groups

CIVIC

ENGAGEMENT

CASE STUDY PROJECT API VOTE

For more information, please contact:

Eric Estuar Reyes, Ph.D.
800 N. State College Blvd.
Asian American Studies
CSU Fullerton
Fullerton, CA 92831-3599
714-278-5195
ereyes@fulleton.edu

Mary Anne Foo, Executive Director
Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Inc.
12900 Garden Grove Blvd., Suite 214A
Garden Grove, California 92843
714-636-9095
www.ocapica.org