

# Engaging Online

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## Introduction

The Internet has rapidly become a familiar communications medium at the workplace, at home, and on the streets. To appreciate the speed of penetration, consider that fact that back in 1997, according to U.S. census statistics, less than a fifth of American households (18.6%) had Internet access at home. But by 2003, a majority (54.6%) did, and over a third of those with connections had broadband (U.S. Department of Commerce 2004). Still more recent surveys have found that over two-thirds of Americans have access to the Internet at home (68.1%), and over two-thirds of the connected enjoy broadband (USC Annenberg School Center for the Digital Future 2007). Without question, we are getting increasingly “wired.”

Fortunately, this trend has not passed Asian Americans by. To the contrary, Asian Americans appear to have Internet access that is at least as high or higher than the rate enjoyed by other racial groups, including non-Hispanic Whites.<sup>1</sup> Of course, with any “model minority”-consistent statistics, we should be wary of upward biased measurements. Specifically, these surveys are conducted in English (sometimes also Spanish), which means that Asian Americans (a third who have limited English proficiency) who are not able or willing to answer long surveys over the telephone in English are undercounted. This selection bias inflates the numbers because those with limited English have lower Internet connectivity.

In addition, we should be mindful of the large variance among the various ethnic communities that constitute Asian America. Ten Asian American ethnic groups have high school completion rates that are below the national average. Further, thirteen percent of Asian

Americans live in poverty, compared to the national average of 12% (APALC 2006). Because education and income correlate positively with Internet use, the high averages about Asian American connectivity conceal substantial variance, with specific subpopulations potentially many standard deviations below the mean.

Still, it remains fair to say that Asian Americans as a racial group are on average well-connected to the Internet. *What then are the implications for Asian American civic engagement?* By “civic engagement,” I mean the various ways in which individuals engage social, legal, and political institutions that extend past the boundaries of the family or the marketplace. This capacious definition includes not only politics in the forms of voting, donating time and money to campaigns, and debating political options but also engagements with civil society. Moreover, such engagements do not have to be serious or lofty; instead, they can revolve around hobbies (e.g., hiking), interests (e.g., gadgets), aesthetics (e.g., runway fashion), even celebrities (e.g., fan clubs).

The Internet clearly has had a large impact on civic engagement, defined in this broad sense. But even in core political domains, we see remarkable findings. For example, the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that during the 2004 campaign, 52% of Internet users went online to get information about the elections; 35% used e-mail to engage in political discussions; 11% directly engaged in campaign activities, such as donating money and volunteering. The survey found that 23% of respondents claimed that using the Internet for political engagement encouraged them to vote (Rainie et al. 2005).

Data specific to Asian American usage are limited, but what exists indicate that the Internet is a vitally important source of political and government information. A special 2001 Pew report found that nearly half of (English-speaking) Asian Americans used the internet to “get political news and information” (49%) and to “visit a government Web site” (47%) (Spooner 2001). These proportions are comparable to those for Whites and higher than for African Americans and Latinos, although as explained above, the Asian American figures may be biased upward.

Given the growing importance of the Internet, it seems worthwhile to examine, even speculate about, its implications for Asian

American civic engagement. This essay answers that call. The first part examines how Asian Americans are using online communities right now, with special focus on ethnic-specific forms of Internet-mediated engagements. In part two, this essay explores a specific aspect of political engagement - voting - which may soon be strongly influenced by the Internet. Finally, the third part reaches out still farther in time, to imagine how the increasing significance of computer-mediated communications might alter or disrupt how race operates both online and off, and what that might mean for Asian America.

## I. Now: Online Communities

The academic literature has highlighted various Asian American online communities. For instance, a much publicized example is SAUNET, the South Asian Women Network (<http://sawnet.org>), which is a "forum for and about women from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka" (South Asian Women's NETwork). It is a moderated mailing list for adult women only, run by a group of volunteer moderators, with a companion website regularly updated with news links and resources on useful topics (e.g., "domestic violence").

The book *AsianAmerica.Net*, edited by Professors Rachel Lee and Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, pulls together additional case studies (Lee and Wong 2003). For instance, Kim-An Lieberman describes how Vietnamese nationalists, both in the United States and elsewhere, have taken strong political stances online on Websites and newsgroups. In turn, these cyber engagements have helped shape a modern Vietnamese identity and even a translation of the Vietnamese language to ASCII text. Vinay Lal critiques the Hindu Student Council's Global Hindu Electronic Network (GHEN), which he suggests propagates Hindutva philosophy and "aggressive Hindu nationalism." Yuan Shu describes the rise of two different Chinese language networks — Chinese News Digest (created in direct response to the political strife that would lead to the Tiananmen massacre) and Chinese Media Net (self-styled as a CNN for Chinese) — which have come to cater to different political viewpoints for Chinese in North America. Emily Noelle Ignacio describes how Filipinos in America

and the Philippines use the Internet to share jokes that both reaffirm and reproduce Filipino culture and identity.

These examples display certain patterns. First, these online communities tend to be ethnic-specific. Second, and related, they tend to be transnational, linking immigrant communities with their countries of origin. Why might this be so?

Anyone who reads or writes a blog knows that the Internet decreases the cost of producing and distributing information such that speakers who would not have had the audience necessary to survive in the print world may nevertheless flourish in cyberspace. The Internet also decreases the significance of physical distance or geographic dispersion especially when what is being exchanged is information. When groups are talking in a chat room or exchanging posts in a web forum, the physical distance separating the community members is essentially irrelevant. Accordingly, the underlying economics of information production and exchange on the Internet permits widely dispersed populations who share some common interest or connection to form online communities that both substitute for and enhance offline communities.

This technological advantage seems perfectly suited for the needs of various Asian diasporas: communities tied together by ethnicity, culture, immigration experience, and language can bridge physical distance through online networks. Put another way, although the Internet can help facilitate a local condominium association's deliberations, the Internet provides comparatively far greater cost savings in facilitating communications across thousands of people separated by thousands of miles spanning oceans.

Another factor that likely influences community adoption of online technologies is the intensity of interest within that community. Again, we should not be surprised that ethnicity drives some of that interest. Immigrants and their children are often highly motivated to maintain homeland connections. Familial, social, and cultural ties are powerfully felt.

I do not want to exaggerate these observations. For example, there are many Asian American online communities that are pan-Asian in framing and participation, with focus on domestic politics or social exchange. A political example is <modelminority.com>, which

has the following subtitle: "A Guide to Asian American Empowerment." A more social example is <AsianAvenue.com>. In some sense, what is taking place online tracks the ways in which Asian people have formed social, civil, and political communities off-line. The typical pattern is to construct an ethnic-specific social or civil institution by tapping into shared culture, experience, history, and language. But soon thereafter, and often simultaneously, pan-ethnic social and civil institutions are built, with less emphasis on culture and homeland countries and more emphasis on politics and domestic matters.

In short, Asian Americans are participating in various online communities. Not surprisingly, many of the most vibrant, thriving communities are ethnic-specific and transnational. But as in the offline world, there are many communities that are pan-Asian and more domestic and political in orientation.

## II. Soon: Online Voting

The Internet has had a general positive effect on Asian American participation in both civic and political processes. In this part, I discuss how in the near future, the Internet might have an especially significant impact on online voting. By "online voting" I mean to adopt a broad definition. In its boldest form, it could mean casting a valid vote remotely "through any computer-mediated device (e.g., desktop computer, cellular telephone, personal digital assistant, Internet appliance) connected through a network, such as the Internet" (Kang 2001, 1155 n.1). Or, more modestly, it could mean online-assisted voting, which could entail reading some bar code or radio frequency identification (RFID) tag on the ballot sheet with one's mobile phone, and immediately receiving contextual information including specific voting recommendations, all inside the traditional ballot booth.

Any discussion of online voting should raise alarms associated with direct-recording electronic (DRE) voting machines, which have failed abysmally. Manufactured by incompetent and untrustworthy firms, they have been adopted pell-mell by non-expert government bureaucrats without sound scientific or engineering advice. These machines feature remarkably poor security and suffer from an embarrassing lack of transparency, which further erodes trust. That said,

these failures are political more than technological. In other words, I am confident that over the long term, we will see computer voting that generates voter-verifiable paper audit trails that ensure voting integrity and secrecy.<sup>ii</sup>

For readers skeptical that online voting will ever become commonplace, consider the fact that we already allow remote voting in the form of snail mail via absentee ballots. For example, “in the 1978 California general election, 314,258 absentee votes were cast (4.41% of all votes cast); but by the 2004 general election, 4,104,179 absentee votes were cast (32.61% of all votes cast)” (Alvarez et al. 2005). For those who think that hacking threats make online voting a fantasy, consider how mainstream online banking has become, which allows massive fund transfers at the click of a key. In sum, online voting is not so implausible; certainly, online-assisted voting is just around the corner if not here already.

## Getting Out the Vote

If lower voting turnout is driven partly by the transaction costs of voting (physically getting to the ballot box through rush hour traffic or bad weather), then online voting can increase turnout. Because Asian Americans, at least English speaking ones, are as well connected to the Internet as any other racial group, there is no reason to be concerned about a negative disparate racial impact on Asian Americans. Whether there is a disparate impact on other racial minority groups is an important but separate question (Alvarez and Nagler 2001).<sup>iii</sup>

What about the non-English speakers? Current immigration and demographic projections predict that by 2030, Asian Americans will make up 7.1% of the United States population. What’s interesting is that a majority of them (52.2%) will probably still be foreign-born. Will these Asians, many of them with limited English skills, be left on the sidelines?

Perhaps not. Consider how online (or online-assisted) voting can tackle the critical problem of limited English proficiency, which is a serious obstacle to voting. For instance, one exit poll study of the 2006 midterm elections by the Asian American Legal and Education

Fund (AALDEF) reported that “nearly half of all [4,700] voters surveyed (46%) needed interpreters to vote, and 38% used translated written materials” (AALDEF 2007, 2). In a state such as California, ballots often feature complex initiatives or referenda on a broad range of issues as complicated as term limits and HMO regulation. Even native speakers have difficulty understanding what’s going on. For those with limited English, understanding is nearly impossible.

Unfortunately, translating ballot and election materials into just a few of the popular Asian languages — Mandarin, Hindi, Tagalog, Korean, Vietnamese — is cost-prohibitive in the print world. Although federal law (the Language Minority Provision of the Voting Rights Act) and state election law sometimes require translations, often the trigger for such requirements (a minimum percentage of voting-age citizens must be members of a single language minority group) is not technically satisfied. Even when it is, the requirements are sometimes resisted or inadequately implemented (Electionline.org 2006).

Here the Internet could be leveraged, either by the state or by private actors, to produce and distribute the relevant explanatory materials in Asian languages. Very crude translations can be made available at nearly zero marginal cost using existing services such as Google translate <<http://translate.google.com>>. More accurate translations created by bilingual humans are more expensive to produce, but once created, they can be distributed at nearly zero marginal cost. Examples of such multi-lingual voter education and ballot translation initiatives exist. But, just-in-time translations, available in a multitude of Asian languages — all made possible through the Internet — could be a substantial boon to Asian voting.

### **New Intermediaries**

But maybe the suggestion that motivated voters will engage in online translations of difficult ballot materials to make the right policy choice is naively optimistic. Frankly, even when our English is excellent, we will often not know how to vote on a particular question (think about some complex referendum) or candidate (think about some school board or judicial retention election). Often, choosing in-

telligently between one option and the other requires research that we simply lack the time or interest to complete. In such cases, we will not vote at all, or at least not on that matter — unless we can turn to trusted intermediaries for recommendations. By “trusted intermediaries,” I mean individuals, organizations, or entities that can serve as rough proxies for one’s own values and judgment. Examples include: political parties; ethnic press, which for example, has covered the 2008 presidential election aggressively (Santos 2008); local politicians; political action committees; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)<sup>iv</sup>; media celebrities; and public intellectuals.

Again, such recommendations are regularly made through paper voter guides from the local peace officer association, the Republican party, and the like. But as explained, paper mailings are expensive. By contrast, spreading recommendations through the Internet is cheap. Thus, new breeds of political intermediaries are made possible. The restraint is no longer the cash necessary to print and distribute voting guides; instead, the constraint is the degree to which the voters’ trust and cognitive attention can be won by a particular intermediary.

So, in the actual online voting scenario, imagine the following: [Consider] the electronic extension of the paper voter guides we already receive in the mail before Election Day. But the e-version can be far more than an html or pdf version of the paper mailing. Instead, it could be a website that frames the ballot website and “checks” off the recommended votes with the user having to do nothing but click the “submit” button. In fact, on 12:01 a.m. Election Day, trusted political organizations could send to their constituents or target audiences an e-mail with the appropriate URL for this assisted voting site. Two clicks, and you are done. To be sure, security protocols may require some changes in this approach of facilitated e-voting. In addition to the e-mail, there may have to be small software programs, a.k.a. “applets,” delivered as well (Kang 2001, 1168).

In the more modest online-assisted voting scenario, imagine receiving just-in-time election recommendations in the ballot booth — all with explanations why, to the extent that we are curious. No doubt some will complain that such technology-assisted voting invites not



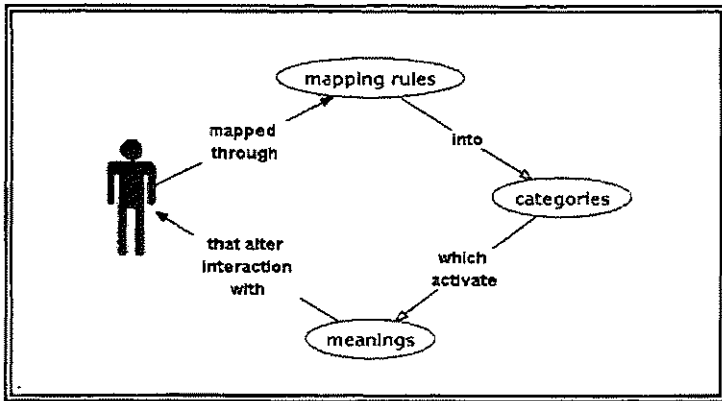
individualized deliberation but mindless adherence to some third party's recommendation. (There may also be some legal constraints against cell phones with cameras being brought into polling booths in order to deter vote buying.)<sup>v</sup> But a more realistic assessment asks whether individualized deliberation is the accurate baseline for comparison. As compared to randomly voting for or against some initiative, or not voting on that item at all, or even voting straight along crude party recommendations, online-assisted voting enables a citizen to defer to a trusted intermediary (such as Amnesty International or the Sierra Club), who is more narrowly tailored to her particular values or loyalties.

Online(-assisted) voting enables a new set of intermediaries poor in money but rich in community trust to engage in political recommendations. My guess is that there are many such potential intermediaries within the Asian American communities. So, a political action committee such as the 80-20 Initiative, ([www.80-20initiative.net/](http://www.80-20initiative.net/)), which tries to produce 80% of the Asian American vote to swing an election, could be more effective through just such technologies. Grassroots organizations such as AsianAmericansforObama.com ([www.asianamericansforobama.com](http://www.asianamericansforobama.com)) could do the same for their preferred candidate. Celebrities, as well as elected political officials, could communicate their judgments. Indeed, even academics and their think tanks could provide useful recommendations on various policy initiatives or specific candidates (Kang 2008).<sup>vi</sup>

### III. Later: Cyber-race

In the prior part, we focused on a concrete problem — voting — and speculated how Asian Americans could do more of it and differently, via the Internet, in the near future. Let us now speculate still further along the time horizon to ask a provocative question: In what ways might online engagements alter the fundamental ways that race functions both online and off? To appreciate this as an intelligible question, we must first parse a simple model of “racial mechanics.”

Consider the following diagram, which explains how race influences a simple bilateral interaction between some perceiver and target individual.



As I have described in prior work:

Through law and culture, society provides us (the perceivers) with a set of racial categories into which we map an individual human being (the target) according to prevailing rules of racial mapping. Once a person is assigned to a racial category, implicit and explicit racial meanings associated with that category are triggered. These activated racial meanings then influence our interpersonal interaction (Kang 2005, 1499).

The refrain that “race is a social construction” familiar in Critical Race Studies can be recast in terms of this racial mechanics model. Each of the ovals — the racial *mapping rules*, the racial *categories*, and the racial *meanings* associated with those categories — are provided neither by nature nor deity. To the contrary, each is a product of human culture, history, politics, and agency—in these senses, social constructions.

To be more concrete, consider the set of racial *categories* that are in operation today, and how they have changed over time based on both the “science” of the day as well as administrative understandings (consider, e.g., shifting census categories). Back in 1977, the Census considered “Asian or Pacific Islander” as one of the four principal racial categories (with American Indian or Alaskan Native, Black, White, and Some Other Race). As of 1997, the Census added a new racial category by segmenting Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Is-

lander off from the Asian category (with American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, White, and Some Other Race) (U.S. Census Bureau nd(b)). For those curious why Latino/as are not mentioned, "Hispanic" has always been deemed an "ethnicity" variable, not a "racial" one. Thus Hispanics may be of any race.

Consider also how *mapping rules* are socially constructed. For example, when it was first passed in 1790, the federal naturalization statute only permitted "free white persons" to naturalize. After the civil war, in 1870, that statute was amended to include persons of African descent or nativity. But what about Asians? In *Ozawa v. United States*, 260 U.S. 178 (1922), the Supreme Court clarified that Japanese were not "white" because that term should be understood to mean "Caucasian." Whatever the Japanese were, they were certainly not Caucasian.

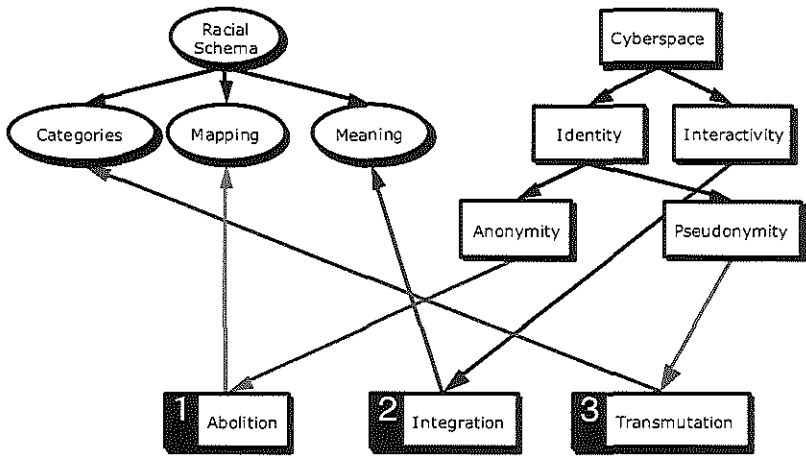
The very next year, Bhagat Singh Thind took advantage of *Ozawa's* "white equals Caucasian" formula and argued that the best science of the day recognized "Hindus" as Caucasian (*United States v. Thind*, 261 U.S. 204 [1923]). Accordingly, Thind should be deemed White and allowed to naturalize. When confronted with this logical but undesirable consequence of their prior holding, the Supreme Court simply changed its mind. The Supreme Court backtracked and said that "white" really should be understood in terms of its plain meaning, not according to any scientific discourse, which was itself confusing. And according to this plain meaning, the legislature that passed the naturalization statute would have instinctively rejected Thind as not White.

Finally, it should be obvious that the racial *meanings* associated with the Asian American category are highly malleable, changing sometimes dramatically. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Asians (consider the Chinese) were viewed as lying illegal immigrants cheating themselves through the Chinese Exclusion laws to infiltrate the United States. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, East Asians became the model minority. Of course, the "model minority" stereotype can quickly transmogrify into the "yellow peril" (Kang 1993). But one cannot deny that stereotypes and attitudes toward Asian Americans have changed substantially, and in complex ways, in the past century.

Having sketched out a model of racial mechanics, we now focus

on the Internet. First, we have already observed that cyberspace allows for greater *interactivity* with other persons who may not be within the same geographic community but nevertheless inhabit some joint community of interest. Second, the Internet allows identity to be expressed or performed differently because we typically avoid the architecture of face-to-face interactions. In particular, the Internet often allows for both racial *anonymity* as well as *pseudonymity*. For example, in text-based interactions, we cannot see the human body, which means that we cannot apply informal visual-based mapping rules to place an individual into a racial category according to looks. To be sure, text may provide information (e.g., surname or ancestry, "slang," or even zip code), which can be used to map roughly or tentatively an individual into some racial category, but such information need not be shared, in which case, racial anonymity is preserved. As for pseudonymity, in various online arenas including virtual worlds such as Second Life, an individual can create some identity, represented by name and avatar, which persists over time, but need not in any way represent a race generally or represent the same race that that individual represents off-line. In other words, online we can engage in a form of "cyber-passing."

By cross-applying the racial mechanics model with the flexibilities introduced by Internet communications, we can see that the Internet can potentially disrupt racial mechanics in three ways. First, anonymity can disrupt "racial mapping" in pursuit of what might be called an *abolition* paradigm. Second, greater interactivity can alter the cache of "racial meanings" in pursuit of what might be called an *integration* paradigm. This is just a cyber version of the social contact hypothesis, which suggests that under the right circumstances of repeat cooperative engagements, attitudes between groups can improve. This is the liberal hope latent in racially integrated schools and neighborhoods. Finally, pseudonymity can challenge our complacent acceptance of the various racial categories given to us by culture and law (and their connection to biology) in the pursuit of what might be called a *transmutation* paradigm. If we flit through multiple identities online, perhaps our very conception of racial identity can be reworked in anti-essentialist ways. Schematically, the three options look like this:



To repeat, Internet anonymity disrupts racial mapping to produce abolition. Internet interactivity reforms racial meaning to promote integration. Internet pseudonymity unravels our presumptions about racial categories in the service of transmutation.

In prior work, I have examined these three paths and pointed out that society does not have to adopt a single design strategy for all of cyberspace (Kang 2000). Instead, we can intentionally diversify our policy risk and zone different cyber spaces in accordance with different racial environments. For instance, I suggest that most market places be zoned abolition: in such zones, Asian Americans cannot be given worse offers in product purchases, leases, and the like because racial mapping is made impossible. Consider, for instance, how using a car-buying agent who charges a flat fee above dealer's invoice can racially anonymize a buyer, which then prevents the possibility of racially discriminatory negotiations.

But the focus of this essay is not the marketplace but civil society and the political realm. In these domains, I have argued in favor of integration as the recommended zoning strategy, with special emphasis on establishing those environmental characteristics that social psychologists have long identified as being crucial to decreasing racial bias. The basic idea is that Internet-mediated interactions can help improve attitudes and decrease stereotypes about Asian Americans.

If this seems far-fetched, consider the following data. The 2001 Pew Special Report pointed out that 72% of (English-speaking) Asian Americans used the Internet to seek out hobby information, and that 32% of them engaged in online chat, which entails going into virtual “rooms” to discuss matters of common interest. This sort of online interaction need not be superficial (Spooner 2001). The Center for Digital Future’s most recent report defined an online community as “a group that shares thoughts or ideas, or works on common projects, through electronic communication only” (CDF 2007, 97). These online communities are of various natures, ranging from “professional, social, relationships, spiritual, hobbies, and politics.” According to its survey, those who participate in online communities seem to take them quite seriously. For example, 67.2% thought the community was very important or extremely important. This attitude is reflected in their time commitments: 56.6% log into their community at least once a day, during which time they post messages (18.8%); talk to any available member (8.7%); browse for information (7.0%); or ask for help (2.7%). (*Id.* at 97-98)

The online community interaction often translates into some real world engagement as well. For instance, 20.3% said that they take offline actions, such as attending a meeting, at least once a year that is related to their online community. (*Id.* at 99) Interestingly, 43.7% also claim that they have participated more in “social activism” since they got involved in online communities. Relatedly, 29.7% claim that their involvement in nonprofit organizations have increased since Internet usage (69.6% stayed the same) (102).

All this suggests that Asian Americans can use the Internet to engage in online communities addressing hobbies, art, culture, politics and the like, and that these engagements can be deep, persistent, and cooperative—which satisfy some of the conditions necessary for social contact to decrease racial prejudice. So, to take a simple example, someone living in Idaho who has never before befriended an Asian American, partly due to the fact that so few live in that vicinity, may come to “meet” one online through some common interest, such as cooking or foreign policy. That actual experience could alter the racial meanings that the Idahoan had previously about Asian Americans, which were produced by what might be called vicarious

interactions — principally, stories or images consumed through mass media.

Even more intriguing is the possibility of a slight delay in racial decloaking. At the beginning of some online engagement, suppose that participants of a community know each other only by username, which prevents racial mapping into the Asian category. After some interactions, suppose that the racial cloak is lifted through some biographical detail that is revealed. An interaction partner, whose race was previously not salient (i.e. presumed to be White), turns out to be Asian (or Black or Latino). An online user interface that merges a short-term abolition approach with a long-term integration approach could facilitate interactions that might have been otherwise biased or short-circuited by pre-existing biases.

Although this is a mere sketch of a more complicated argument, the general points can be easily summarized: the Internet enables intriguing strategies of abolition, integration, and transmutation that Asian Americans can benefit from. How, then, does this connect back to civic engagement? The most important linkage, in my view, is promoting integration. The Internet will allow individuals that are physically separated to interact in a community driven by shared interests and commitments. As already explained, although some of these shared interests will be common ethnicity, most will not. This means that many Americans who live in areas with negligible Asian American populations might interact with them for the first time online. And if these engagements are structured in a particular way, then negative attitudes toward Asian Americans could improve and stereotypes of Asian Americans could be weakened.

## Conclusion

The Internet provides new ways to promote various forms of civic engagement. It can, for example, facilitate the creation of online communities, which can range from the ethnic-specific and transnational to the more pan-Asian and domestic. The Internet and related communications technologies can make possible online voting and online-assisted voting. Finally, the Internet can facilitate interracial interactions that can rework the racial meanings associated with the

Asian American racial category.

For Asian Americans, the obstacles to such Internet-assisted civic engagement is not any digital divide. To the contrary, on matters of connectivity, Asian Americans seem to have an edge (at least on average). What's more important is how this connectivity is leveraged. Much of the increase in civic engagement will happen naturally, as the Internet becomes an ever richer medium through which we explore our interests and commitments. That said, specific user interface interventions – such as those that promote an integration paradigm – can produce superior environments.

In my view, those especially interested in Asian American political engagement should experiment aggressively with the “trusted intermediary” idea. The goal would be to offer a localized recommendation clearance site, which matches Asian American voters with the views of Asian American trusted intermediaries. For instance, for states that elect judges, it would not be difficult to have local Asian American law faculty who enjoy a “trusted” status to make recommendations and provide the reasons why. Those recommendations could be translated into multiple Asian languages and pushed out through various electronic media, including the Internet. If such a system works well in one election, it will be viewed as a useful resource in the next election.

Engaging online presents tremendous opportunity for Asian Americans. With some forethought, that opportunity can be translated to greater civic and political engagement.



## Notes

- <sup>i</sup> According to the NTIA, as of October 2003, Asian Americans appeared to have at least as much access to the Internet as Whites. For example, on basic *usage of the Internet anywhere* (e.g., school, home, work), approximately 63.1% of Asian Americans and 65.1% of Whites used the Internet somewhere, as compared to 45.6% of Blacks and 37.2% of Hispanics. If we change the measure to the percentage who *live in a broadband household*, Asian Americans were clearly at the top: 34.2%, as compared to Whites (25.7%), Blacks (14.2%), and Hispanic (12.6%). (NTIA, 2004, Appendix Table 1)
- <sup>ii</sup> See, e.g., <Punchscan.org>.
- <sup>iii</sup> Finding that in the 2000 Arizona Democratic primary, those who voted using the Internet were more female, more urban, and less minority than those who voted using paper ballots (R. Michael Alvarez and Jonathan Nagler, "The Likely Consequences of Internet Voting for Political Representation").
- <sup>iv</sup> Ethnic organizations such as the Organization of Chinese Americans., the Japanese American Citizens League, and the National Korean American Service and Education Consortium regularly issue "action alerts" on various policy issues. Civil rights organizations such as the Asian Law Caucus, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, and the Asian American Justice Center do the same. Other organizations, such as the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF) and the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO), focus on specific subject matter areas, such as health.
- <sup>v</sup> See, e.g. Ga. Code Ann. § 21-2-413(e) ("No elector shall use photographic or other electronic monitoring or recording devices or cellular telephones while such elector is within the enclosed space in a polling place.").
- <sup>vi</sup> See, e.g., Jerry Kang, *Why Obama*, Korea Times, Feb. 4, 2008 (in Korean); Jerry Kang, *Obama and Ozawa*, National Law Journal, March 21, 2008.



Part II  
Racial  
& Ethnic  
Identification

