

and political equality. If the results so far fall short of the standards of old and well-established democracies, they nevertheless represent a huge advancement in terms of the creation of new democracy in the developing world.

**Asian American Political Action: Suburban**

**Transformations.** By James S. Lai. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2011. 279p. \$62.50.

**Envisioning America: New Chinese Americans and the Politics of Belonging.** By Tritia Toyota. Stanford: Stanford

University Press, 2009. 256p. \$65.00 cloth, \$21.95 paper.  
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— Christian Collet, *International Christian University, Tokyo*

Asian American politics, as old practice and new scholarly subfield, has always been filled with challenges: overcoming stereotypes and ostracism; reconciling disparate elements of nationality, generation, class, gender, and party; and finding space for nuance amid the enduring consumption with the black/white paradigm. These two works, built around the problems of local incorporation and national belonging, take important steps toward addressing these challenges and together broaden our understanding of what Asian American politics is. By combining fresh insights with illustrative detail and diverse methodological approaches, they demonstrate further the possibilities for what it can be a domain for working through the complexities of race, ethnicity, and transnationalism in American life and for understanding the factors that shape the socialization and participation of its newest populations.

Where James S. Lai employs a comparative sites framework, seeking to broaden Rufus P. Browning, Dale Rogers Marshall, and David H. Tabb's (1984) classic study of minority influence in California cities, *Protest Is Not Enough*, Toyota's focus on "new Chinese activists" in East Los Angeles is ethnographic, drawing upon interviews and participant observations starting the late 1970s, when the author began as a pathbreaking journalist in the region. The literature Toyota engages and the language she employs will be most familiar to cultural anthropologists and ethnic/Asian American studies scholars. Her explicit engagement ("I argue for a rediscovered activist role in confronting the enormously complex and lightening-fast changes occurring in these constructions of race" [p. 5]) distinguishes *Envisioning America* from many in the political science genre, like *Asian American Political Action*, that emphasize process over agency. At the same time, the theoretical problems with which Toyota is concerned—How do individuals become politicized? How do first generations navigate and reconcile multiple nationalisms and identities? When, how, where and why do they participate?—are central questions across disciplines. For this reason, the work serves as a complement to other group-specific, place-centered, qualitative studies in urban and racial politics, such as Lisa

Garcia Bedolla's excellent *Fluid Borders* (2005), as well as mixed-method/comparative studies like Janelle Wong's innovative *Democracy's Promise* (2006) that discusses Chinese Americans in New York.

As her title suggests, Toyota emphasizes that ethnic politics in the United States is, above all, an American endeavor predicated on the romanticization (initially from abroad) of democratic values and the racialization of domestic politics. With this as a premise, the author weaves diverse stories of personal resistance and group mobilization into a tapestry that decimates stereotypes of Asian Americans as apathetic, "forever foreign" and uniform and defies facile efforts at categorization. The richly drawn vignettes—revealing frustration and determination among Hong Kong, Taiwanese, and mainland Chinese newcomers and American-born Chinese ("ABCs") as they recognize (and sometimes deny) their politicization—will be of value to those seeking to give students exposure to the diversity of immigrant America and a better understanding of how racial identities and local political projects are forged within the context of suburban, transnational living. One hopes further that the author's strong effort to tie the geopolitical dynamics of Asian American relations into the personal dynamics of Asian American politics will be observed, for participation models have, until very recently, been reluctant to incorporate international influences on behavior occurring in domestic sites.

Toyota's prose and purpose are straightforward. Her argument and findings remain somewhat complex. The locus of the study is CAUSE (originally Chinese Americans United for Self Empowerment, now Center for Asian Americans United for Self-Empowerment), but the book is built around the lives that have intersected the group since its founding in the early 1990s. The mix includes names familiar to observers of Los Angeles politics—including Mike Woo, onetime mayoral contestant, and Judy Chu, now a member of Congress—and some of the most compelling sections of the book shed light on their historic candidacies. But the primary characters are three dozen or so anonymous community elites, identified by pseudonym and mostly first generation, who were mobilized by events like the English-only movement in Monterey Park, the Wen Ho Lee affair, and the Democratic National Committee's fund-raising debacle. Their stories are interspersed throughout the book, used to support chapter themes concerning the origins and impact of the Asian American movement in the 1960s (Chapter 2); American representations in Asia and early socialization (Chapter 3); racialization, identity formation, and transnationalism (Chapter 4); and group mobilization and formal engagements with electoral politics (Chapters 5 and 6).

The book's organization around stages in individual politicization seems a logical framework and is suggestive of a life-course approach that can inspire different ways

for political scientists to tackle the puzzles of pan-ethnic/transnational identity and group formation. Toyota highlights the limits of existing approaches to Asian American participation, among them a dependency on the “statistical and policy driven” (p. 6) and constrained definitions of what constitutes political action (p. 12). Both points are well taken, even if they do not fully consider the contributions of works such as Pei-te Lien, Wong, and Margaret Conway’s *The Politics of Asian Americans* (2004) that have been instrumental in demonstrating the frequent extensions of Asian American political behavior into non-electoral realms. The point, it seems, is to argue for more nuanced inquiries into the “everyday” nature of transnational politics (e.g., “The emphasis on life makes for a more intimate, lived, everyday experience” [p. 106]), and *Envisioning America* is perhaps best read in concert with volumes like Lien, Wong, and Conway’s that are built on survey or ecological research.

At the same time, the study’s reliance on wealthy and upper-middle-class professionals and candidates—several of whom came from political families—naturally raises questions about how representative their identity formations really are or how “from below” their politics and what conclusions one can derive about the “commonalities of the American experience that they share with other Asian Americans” (p. 185). Toyota does note, in confronting the “model minority myth,” the significant inequalities in Asian American and class considerations in community politics, but the primary tensions revealed in the data remain generational, partisan, and strategic. “If [CAUSE] doesn’t represent more bodies,” asks one U.S.-born interviewee, “what is the concept of turning Asian American?” (p. 143).

Yet it is these detailed personal reflections (including the author’s own) that are the book’s biggest strength, for few recent studies of participation have portrayed intra-group dynamics so vividly or frankly. Toyota’s attention to CAUSE’s debates over names, issue positions, and candidate selection in the latter sections of the book not only make for some of the most interesting reading one is likely to find on contemporary Asian or Chinese American politics but also give one a fly-on-the-wall perspective that complements our theoretical understanding of how ethnic community organizations work—and sometimes do not.

Lai, too, envisions incorporation as a sequential process and, like Toyota, gives emphasis to elites—candidates and Asian American organizations—as central to progress. For Lai, the prevailing factor is context: Small-to-medium-size suburbs are where Asian Americans are having the most electoral influence, which leaves the bulk of the book devoted to illustrating that influence in communities from California to Massachusetts. The author provides a set of diverse case studies of incorporative efforts in the mainland United States, which he groups typologically: Cupertino (Chapter 5), Garden Grove/Westminster (Chapter 6),

and Gardena (Chapter 7) in California represent “Transformed” areas due to their large Asian American populations and significant electoral gains. Montgomery County, Maryland (Chapter 8), Sugarland, Texas (Chapter 9), and Bellevue, Washington (Chapter 10) represent “Emergent” areas—large populations with limited representation. Daly City (Chapter 11) is a “Delayed” community, a large population where little progress has been made. Eau-Claire, Wisconsin (Chapter 12) and Fitchburg, Massachusetts (Chapter 13) are examples of “Class II: Transformed” and “Class II: Emergent” areas, labeled as such because of their smaller Asian American populations.

The collection, taken together, represents one of the more ambitious efforts to date to analyze local pan-ethnic campaign dynamics, and it contributes to the efforts made in recent years, such as that by Wendy Tam Cho, to explain the effects of context and develop a more comprehensive, national framework for Asian American politics. This is no insignificant undertaking, for the literature has sometimes faced the problem of sampling on the dependent variable and has given disproportionate attention to individual-level effects. Context clearly seems to be relevant to the incorporation model, and Lai’s comparative case approach is useful in the quest to understand how and why.

Where raw and electoral population size were seen as key factors in *Protest Is Not Enough*, Lai adds other variables to the incorporation equation. Most notable are the “loci” of ethnic and pan-ethnic organizations, media and candidates whose strength, according to the author, can make the difference between exclusion and descriptive representation. Central to the argument is the leadership abilities of candidates and the strategies they undertake to attain office (pp. 32–4). “Successful Asian American candidates must be strong leaders . . . must hold a strong track record of public service, must have personal charisma, and must demonstrate the ability to form multi-racial and multiethnic coalitions” (p. 31). Coalitions, typically with whites, are built from a successful campaign template where candidates toggle between “mainstream” and tailored messages, relying on parties to mobilize one constituency and ethnic media and organizations to mobilize the other; once elected, they create a “pipeline” for future politicians through appointment powers.

It is the emphasis on candidate messaging and the potential for conservative Asian–White coalitions that constitutes the most significant distinctions from the Browning, Marshall, and Tabb model, for the study does not delve into the policy responsiveness stage that the *Protest* authors thought critical in measuring the value of group influence. At the same time, any consideration of responsiveness might be premature; only in Cupertino, Westminster, and Gardena would there be significant opportunities to examine whether and how Asian American representation might be affecting policy outcomes.

*Asian American Political Action* may, thus, be read as the portrayal of an incorporative project-in-progress, a consultant's manual of sorts. Like *Envisioning America*, it is an important story of change that impacts the whole of American politics, and observers hoping to know more about the entrepreneurs who are transforming local landscapes would do well to consult it.

**Boundaries of Contagion: How Ethnic Politics Have Shaped Government Responses to AIDS.** By Evan S. Lieberman. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009. 368p. \$67.50 cloth, \$25.95 paper.

**The Church and AIDS in Africa: The Politics of Ambiguity.** By Amy S. Patterson. Boulder, CO: First Forum, 2011. 238p. \$58.50.  
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— Jeremy Youde, *University of Minnesota Duluth*

Since AIDS first emerged 30 years ago, it has been nearly impossible to divorce the disease from issues of religion, morality, ethnicity, class, race, and gender. These associations and accusations have greatly complicated the policymaking enterprise, as AIDS policy intersects with a host of potentially explosive domestic political concerns. Curiously, though, the effects of these divisions on domestic policymaking on AIDS, especially in developing countries, have received relatively little attention. Seeking to fill this gap, Evan S. Lieberman and Amy S. Patterson each present insightful and thought-provoking volumes. Each book focuses on a fault line that can complicate the crafting of effective AIDS policies—Christian churches in sub-Saharan Africa for Patterson and the strength of ethnic divisions for Lieberman.

Patterson opens her book bluntly: “Churches in sub-Saharan Africa have been maligned, vilified, praised, and ignored for their role in the fight against the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)” (p. 1). She recognizes that churches can stigmatize those with HIV/AIDS, but that they can also be at the front line providing services and education. Patterson wants to complicate the reader's assumptions about both the role of civil society in sub-Saharan African politics and the willingness of Christian churches—often seen as impediments to effective AIDS programming—to address the AIDS epidemic. Churches, she argues, are political actors in their own right in most of sub-Saharan Africa, and their actions are so intertwined with the state that we cannot effectively analyze state responses to AIDS without understanding how churches position themselves. She neither reduces churches to reactionary moralizers nor trumpets them as selfless do-gooders. She offers nuanced frameworks for analyzing whether, how, and when sub-Saharan African churches get involved in addressing HIV/AIDS by focusing on historical experiences, resources, leadership styles, and theology. To make her argument, she draws heavily

on interviews and news reports from Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia.

Lieberman calls attention to the ways in which ethnicity, and the divisions it can introduce into a society, affect the forcefulness of a government's response to AIDS. Going beyond traditional assumptions that ethnic diversity undermines the provision of public goods, he argues that it is not ethnic diversity per se but, rather, the rigidity of ethnic divisions that explain policy commitment. States in which ethnic boundaries are more rigid are less likely to introduce aggressive AIDS responses because policymakers and publics can more easily argue that AIDS is a disease of the “other.” This attitude both discourages action by those who are not part of the stigmatized group and makes members of the stigmatized group less interested in calling attention to the disease. Where ethnic boundaries are more fluid, AIDS is framed as a disease that could affect everyone, not just members of a particular group. This, he asserts, leads to more forceful responses. He builds his argument around the contrasting case studies of Brazil (fluid ethnic boundaries, aggressive AIDS response), South Africa, and India (rigid ethnic boundaries, less aggressive AIDS response). From there, he presents a large-n quantitative analysis of AIDS policy responses in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Patterson's and Lieberman's monographs demonstrate that we cannot reduce domestic AIDS policymaking simply to a series of rational, incremental decisions made solely on the basis of scientific evidence. Instead, they forcefully and rightfully remind us how much existing social structures and institutions complicate the policymaking process. Both incorporate path-dependent explanations, highlighting how contemporary decisions about AIDS policy made by a wide range of actors reflect historical legacies, past experiences, and contextual variables. In this way, they geographically extend Peter Baldwin's approach in his 2005 book on AIDS policymaking in Western states, *Disease and Democracy*. While celebrating the importance of context, though, Patterson and Lieberman provide frameworks by which we can identify generalized patterns to be used for analyzing additional cases. In this way, they find that sweet spot of acknowledging the unique qualities of their own case studies while simultaneously appreciating the regularities and patterns to which these cases point.

Both volumes also admirably demonstrate that developing states exhibit some measure of agency and policy autonomy in the face of international consensus about appropriate treatment regimes, financing from donor states, and international scientific opinion. The churches described by Patterson undertake their actions for reasons that appeal to their spiritual nature and to their understanding of their religious mission on earth. They do not simply respond to the changing whims of international donors.