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Disillusionment and Disaggregation: Why Did Asian Americans Vote for Trump?

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Claremont McKenna College

**Disillusionment and Disaggregation:
Why Did Asian Americans Vote for Trump?**

submitted to
Professor Jon Shields

by
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Abstract

In one of the most controversial and interesting election cycles in American history, Republican nominee, Donald Trump prevailed over his Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton. To many, his victory was shocking, if not completely unexpected, yet the circumstances that catalyzed such a defeat lie in the characteristics of his supporters, made up of several classes, races, and identities. Among them are the multifaceted Asian American population – diverse ethnically and politically. This thesis aims to unravel the reasons for which many Asian Americans gave their vote to Trump on November 8, 2016 through distinctions between their ethnic groups and demographics. It also suggests that Asian Americans who supported Trump believe that they are different than other minorities – the “model minority,” and highlights the importance of nonprofit research that has disaggregated the Asian subgroups. With these observations and analysis in mind, the American public and politic can no longer reduce the voting behavior of Asian Americans to a monolithic entity.

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Introduction

America is the melting pot of the world and is home to an incredible range of cultures. In terms of the sociopolitical nature of this constituency, most politicians and policy makers alike turn to black and Latino communities as target minorities. Small but quickly growing – set to outpace Latinos by 2065,¹ the Asian American population has had its own profound impact on the United States, especially in the 2016 presidential election. While it would seem contradictory for a population predominantly comprised of immigrants and children of recent immigrants to support a candidate who has expressed many xenophobic and controversial views about women and minorities, a vocal minority of Asian Americans supported Donald Trump this election cycle.

To understand the Asian American voters who chose Trump over Clinton, special attention must be given to the nuances within the Asian American population, such as religious and socioeconomic differences between the multiple ethnicities. Upon disaggregation of ethnicities, voter trends based on age and other factors used to predict the behavior of white voters become applicable. Certain issues hold more weight for the Asian American community and cause more political engagement, like affirmative action. The Californian case studies of its 17th and 32nd Congressional Districts are examples of the voting behaviors and the special efforts needed to reach out to the Asian American community, respectively. Filipino Americans, Chinese Americans, and Vietnamese Americans have been historically more conservative than other Asian ethnic groups and were proportionately the highest supporters of Trump this election cycle. At

¹ “The Rise of Asian Americans,” Pew Research Center, April 04, 2013, accessed December 04, 2016. <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans/>.

the same time, Asian Americans were not more likely to vote for the Republican Party than past presidential elections – turning out the same, if not in lower numbers. Each subgroup has specific reasons for their overall political behaviors, but opinion polls suggest a trend of a belief in a dichotomy of “good” and “bad” immigrants, minorities, and refugees. Compared to their other minority counterparts, Asian American² voters’ political participation has a very different and complex character, and politicians who wish to win their vote cannot afford to group black, Latino, and Asian American voters together.

The History of Asian Americans in the U.S.

The history of the Asian population in America started with huge waves in migration from China, following the discovery of gold in California, which stirred up anti-Asian sentiments.³ The 1879 Constitution of California had an article on Chinese immigrants that barred them from most areas of employment, including in the public sector, and explicitly stated the discouragement of further Chinese immigration to the state.⁴ Shortly after, President Chester Arthur passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which banned the immigration of all Chinese laborers, stemming Chinese numbers even further.⁵ Only after the ratification of the 15th Amendment on February 13, 1913⁶ did Asian men have the explicit guarantee of the right to vote. Since the repeal of the Chinese

² This paper uses the terms “Asian” and “Asian American” interchangeably to indicate the collective U.S. native born and foreign-born Asian population unless otherwise stated.

³ Mark Kanazawa, “Immigration, Exclusion, and Taxation: Anti-Chinese Legislation in Gold Rush California,” *The Journal of Economic History* 65, no. 3 (2005): 779-805, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3875017>.

⁴ California Constitution, 1879. art. XIX.

⁵ Kanazawa.

⁶ “The Constitution of the United States: Amendments 11-27,” The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, accessed December 5, 2015, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_amendments_11-27.html.

Exclusion Act and of other anti-immigration legislation, the Asian population in the United States has become one of the fastest growing ethnic groups and is expected to nearly double from a current 8 percent to 15 percent of the population in 2060, only having been recently surpassed by Hispanics and Latinos.⁷

Asians are a special racial group because of the vastly different and multiple ethnicities within this one grouping. Unlike Hispanics and most Latinos, the Asian American community does not share a common language. The Black-American population arguably has a common history and diverse culture while the Asian American population is a mishmash of languages, cultures, and ethnicities, far from being monolithic. According to the Office of Management and Budget, being of Asian descent is defined as any “person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent.”⁸ This includes East Asians – like Chinese, Japanese, and South Koreans; Southeast Asians – Filipinos, Vietnamese, and Laotians; and South Asians – Indians, Sri Lankans, and Pakistanis. To this day, the Chinese population is the largest subgroup of Asians in the United States, followed by the Filipino population.⁹ Hailing from multiple countries, 75 percent of the Asian population is foreign born.¹⁰ In 2010, 46 percent of this overall Asian population, which includes Asian alone and mixed race with Asian, resides in the western part of the United States, and

⁷ Robert J. Samuelson, “The ‘Next America’ Is Now,” *The Washington Post*, March 1, 2015, accessed November 20, 2016, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-next-america-is-now/2015/03/01/d385e334-bea8-11e4-8668-4e7ba8439ca6_story.html.

⁸ Elizabeth M. Hoeffel et al., *The Asian Population: 2010*, census brief no. C2010BR-11, 2010 Census Briefs (n.p.: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

⁹ Hoeffel et al., *The Asian Population*.

¹⁰ Bobby Calvan, “GOP and Democrats Slow to Woo Booming Asian American Electorate,” *Al Jazeera America*, November 2, 2015, accessed November 23, 2016, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/11/2/gop-and-democrats-slow-to-woo-booming-asian-american-electorate.html>.

about 32 percent of the Asian population lives in California alone.¹¹ Also, the multiracial Asian population of having mixed heritage was about 0.9 percent of the country's population, or about 2,646,604 individuals who identified as being Asian and at least one other race.¹² Of the different mixed Asian combinations, white and Asian were the most common, making up 61.3 percent of the Asian in combination population.¹³

Historically, the Asian population has had one of the lowest voter turnout rates out of any of the racial groups. Asians made up about 3.8 percent of the total eligible electorate, and were 2.9 percent of the voting population in 2012. In the presidential election of that same year, which usually has the highest turnout rate of any kind of election,¹⁴ Asians had the lowest voter turnout percentage of all the racial subgroupings – a mere 47.3 percent.¹⁵

Overall, Asians tend to favor the Democratic Party, but not overwhelmingly, and are slightly progressive in their views. For example, in 2008, 62 percent of Asian voters voted for then-Senator Obama while only 35 percent voted for Senator John McCain.¹⁶ Of these voters, those who voted in the California 2008 state elections put in their votes for or against Propositions 4 and 8. Proposition 4 was ultimately rejected and would have prohibited abortions for minors until 48 hours after the physician informed their legal

¹¹ Hoeffel et al., *The Asian Population*.

¹² Hoeffel et al., *The Asian Population*.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Thomas J. Hayes, "Responsiveness in an Era of Inequality: The Case of the U.S. Senate," *Political Research Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (2012): 585-99, <http://prq.sagepub.com/content/66/3/585.full.pdf.html>.

¹⁵ Thom File, *The Diversifying Electorate—Voting Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin in 2012 (and Other Recent Elections)*, census brief no. P20-568, 2010 Census Briefs (n.p.: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

¹⁶ "National and California Exit Poll Results," chart, *Los Angeles Times*, November 11, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/politics/politicsnow/la-110608-me-superchart-g-graphic.html>.

guardians. The voters ratified Proposition 8, which banned same sex marriage. 59 percent of Californian Asian voters voted in favor of Prop 4, but 49 percent voted yes on Prop 8. These results appear to show polarization on these issues and possibly a wide variety in opinions across the racial group. When it came to abortion, Asians were overall slightly more conservative, but on the issue of gay marriage were slightly progressive.

It hasn't always been this way – the Asian population in America used to vote consistently Republican in the past; this support for the Democratic Party is fairly recent. In terms of official party affiliation, Asian Americans are not loyal to either side – 47 percent are not registered to any political party.¹⁷ In 1992, the incumbent Bush senior won 55 percent of the Asian vote, and candidate Bob Dole followed with 48 percent four years later.¹⁸ Even before that, President Reagan enjoyed much of the Vietnamese American support due to his fight against communism.¹⁹ Many Vietnamese voters were refugees who fled their communist government of their native country, an example of how home governments can play a part in political behavior. Because of their relatively high average household incomes, Asian Americans should be leaning more right according to the convention that those with higher incomes identify more often with the Republican Party.²⁰ One reason for this moving trend could be the increased rates of immigration and the change in the makeup of recent immigration. More importantly,

¹⁷ “National and California Exit Poll Results.”

¹⁸ Calvin, “GOP and Democrats Slow to Woo.”

¹⁹ Asma Khalid, “How Asian-American Voters Went from Republican to Democratic,” NPR, September 15, 2015, accessed November 20, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2015/09/16/439574726/how-asian-american-voters-went-from-republican-to-democratic>.

²⁰ Ibid.

there are wealth disparities within the AAPI community that are ignored in the overarching statistic of a high average household income.

Research Overview

For the purposes of this research, I will omit the Pacific Islander population from my analysis because of this community's lack of shared similarities with the Asian American population. Within the Pacific Islander population of the United States, there are even more nuances and subtleties among their own ethnic groups. Most of the information and research available regarding the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) population does not disaggregate the data for Pacific Islanders, whether that is due to the small population size or the conflation of Pacific Islanders with Asians. Another facet that I do not cover is the voting behavior and other information on the multiracial Asian population because of its lack of availability. Sources usually do not take into account the various ethnic and racial combinations, so at the risk of discarding nuance, most information is based on one ethnicity alone, as opposed to in any combination. The groups I will focus on are Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Hmong Americans.

Literature Review of Ethnic Minority Political Participation

The literature concerning ethnic minority political participation is mainly divided into focuses on black, Asian, and Hispanic voters, with a far greater selection on the first category. Most resources offer cultural and social explanations for the voting patterns of each group. What is lacking in writing about minority voters is available disaggregated information on the different ethnic groups in the AAPI population. Most Asian American authors focus on East Asians, particularly Chinese Americans, and there is very little if any coverage of Pacific Islanders. Most of the writing covered touches briefly on the Pacific Islander population, as the small population could be stunt data availability.

Sources discussed include Andrew Aoki and Okiyoshi Takeda's *Asian American Politics*, *The Making of Asian America through Political Participation* by Pei-te Lien, and Christopher Stout's *Bringing Race Back In: Black Politicians, Deracialization, and Voting Behavior in the Age of Obama*.
The Asian American Voter

Aoki and Takeda propose the concept of “racial formation” and “panethnicization” which are characteristics closely related to the AAPI population.²¹ Lien also goes over the topic, and they actually cite her several times but provide a more general overview meant for a textbook. Asian Americans, over time, are all of the same race but make up multiple ethnicities and have developed a panethnic identity because of the diversity in their backgrounds. Some are immigrants, and others are American born. This panethnic identity is important in politics as its strength has a symbiotic relationship with the strength of the AAPI community.

Lien in *The Making of Asian America through Political Participation* attempts to balance the two approaches of quantitative analysis and historical accounts of the sociopolitical nature of AAPI communities, as Lien believes there is a lack of the former. Her focus is to provide a resource that combines Asian American studies and political science. She uses the theories of racial formation and panethnicization to argue that coalition-building movements are the catalyst for transitioning from a single ethnic identity to a panethnic one.²² Her first thesis is that Asian Americans have had an active

²¹ Andrew L. Aoki and Okiyoshi Takeda, *Asian American Politics*, Malden, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 2008.

²² Pei-te Lien, *The Making of Asian America through Political Participation*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 2001.

role in creating a place for themselves in American political society with a multifaceted approach that combines means like protest and litigation. Through their unique brand of politics, Asian Americans have shaped their identity as one that is both ethnic and American. She then contests the cultural deficiency hypothesis – the theory that cultural practices and norms hold back historically disenfranchised groups from assimilating into society, and claims that Asian American political participation is important. Lien continues to her second thesis that the presence of Asian members of Congress is most significant because it helps to create “a viable political community for Asian Americans nationwide”²³ and in turn, garners mass electoral participation. Additionally, increased electoral participation of Asian American voters will help ease conflicts between Asians and other minorities and will create a more cohesive Asian community.

Models of Political Participation

Asian American Politics notes two main models for explaining participation levels that are most relevant to minority politics, particularly to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.²⁴ The socioeconomic status (SES) model theorizes that income and education levels affect political participation rates. Those with higher levels of income and education participate politically more than those with low levels of such. Findings show that education is more of the driving factor while income plays a smaller role. In relation to Asian Americans, the SES model fails to explain their very low voting participation, which is similar to that of Hispanics, but at the same time, relatively high average incomes. The authors are correct in indicating the SES model is not sufficient for Asian

²³ Lien, *The Making of Asian America through Political Participation*, xiv.

²⁴ Aoki and Takeda, *Asian American Politics*, 62.

American voters but they do not return to the disparities in income within the Asian American population that they mention earlier.

The other model mentioned is the civic voluntarism model, which divides political participation into “resources, political engagement, and recruitment and mobilization.” Resources here mean time, money, and also skill while political engagement is mostly interest in politics. Recruitment and mobilization is the effort of individuals to engage others in political activity; the authors claim the historical attempt at Asian disenfranchisement weakens the ability of the civic voluntarism model.

Black and Hispanic Voters: the Other Minorities

Stout covers the role of race in contemporary American elections, focusing on incumbent president, Barack Obama, as he is the first African-American president. In his second chapter, he covers the role of race in elections and reviews the effects on black, white, and Latino voters but Asian American voters. Like most voters, black voters turn out for elections when the costs associated with voting or learning about an election are decreased. Black candidates can decrease this associated cost for multiple reasons – perceived increased responsiveness to their needs and prescribed “favorable features”²⁵ to black candidates. Mobilization also increases within the black community with the presence of a black candidate, but black voters are turned off by racial appeals and racialized candidates because of their desire for a post-racial society. Stout does not provide any evidence for this claim, like a poll of black voters’ opinions on societal race relations. Stout also finds that the white electorate has higher turnout rates with racialized

²⁵ Christopher T. Stout, “Black Candidates and Voter Turnout: Does Racialization Matter?” in *Bringing Race Back In: Black Politicians, Deracialization, and Voting Behavior in the Age of Obama*, University of Virginia Press, 2015, 40.

candidates because they do not want their interests to be compromised for those of African Americans, and feel an increased dividedness which can alienate some voters. He ultimately claims that deracialized black candidates perform better among black and white voters since they are perceived as less of a threat. As for Latino voters, they can also be discouraged by black candidates as they see them as competition for Latino candidates, but black candidates who make “pan-minority mobilizing efforts” can succeed in gaining the Latino vote.²⁶

Trends in the Literature

The literature shows some similarity among minorities, like how black voters are similar to Asian American voters in that mass mobilization is pertinent to increasing their turnout rates, but case studies and data show that these similarities are but surface level. Discussed later in this paper, Congresswoman Judy Chu’s enormous grassroots effort to canvass the Asian American community in Southern California is a prime example, as well as Hawaiian voters and California’s 17th Congressional District which is the only Asian majority district nationwide. Lien, Aoki, and Takeda’s theses are most relevant to this discussion while Stout’s analyses further demonstrate the political dissimilarities of minorities. The voting models are most salient to this discussion when contrasted to the diversity and uniqueness of the Asian American population

Chapter 1: Asian American Voting Choices in the 2016 Presidential Election

Analysis of Asian American Poll Data

The Spring 2016 Asian American Voter Survey (AAVS), conducted by APIAVote, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, and AAPI Data, collected information

²⁶ Stout, “Black Candidates,” 44.

on the current opinions of Asian American voters.²⁷ The survey was conducted over the phone from April 11 to May 17, 2016 of 1,212 registered voters in various Asian languages. The groups targeted were Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese, which are the top six highest Asian populations in the United States. While this is not comprehensive, combined with the demographic data, it sheds light on the influences on voting patterns in this community. Overall trends show that Asian Americans favor the Democratic Party over the Republican Party, and favor Clinton over Trump. Asian Americans in general are put off by anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric while Chinese Americans appear to be the most divided from a partisan viewpoint and are the least swayed by such rhetoric. Notably, young Asian Americans, aged 18 to 24, were the most affected by anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric and more often chose to vote for a different candidate who expressed those sort of views.

One question dealt with party affiliation, indicates on a surface level how each ethnicity identifies on the party level. Overall, Asian Americans have a slightly unfavorable view of the Republican Party and a much more favorable view of the Democratic Party. More specifically, Vietnamese American voters have the highest percentage of favorability of the Republican party, but also one of the highest for the Democratic Party. Japanese Americans have proportionately the most unfavorable opinion of the Republican Party and the other most favorable of the Democratic Party. Chinese Americans appear to be ambivalent towards the Republican party with their numbers spread almost evenly across the choices of unfavorable, no opinion or never

²⁷ Asian Americans Advancing Justice, Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIA Vote), and AAPI Data, *Inclusion, Not Exclusion: Spring 2016 Asian American Voter Survey*, PDF, September 8, 2016.

heard of it, and favorable. The structure of how the questions were asked probably changes the data in that participants were not asked to make a preference for either party but to judge each separately and give their opinions for each. Arguably, this creates more nuance of party perception because it does not polarize the opinions.

The survey also asked for opinions on Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton with the same choices as another table – “unfavorable,” “no opinion,” or “favorable.” Overall, Donald Trump is seen quite unfavorably and Hillary Clinton favorably. Filipinos had the highest percentage of favorable opinions of Trump by one percentage point while Koreans had the highest percentage of unfavorable opinions of Clinton.

Candidate Choice among Asian Americans gave the choices of Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, John Kasich, Bobby Jindal, and a candidate not listed – “someone else.” Bobby Jindal’s numbers were very low and were rounded to zero, thus they were not included in the table. Clinton and Sanders had most of the choice in general among Asian Americans. Japanese Americans had the highest percentage of support for Clinton, combined with very low support for Sanders and Trump, as well as the highest percentage of support for a different candidate. Indian Americans were next but also had high support for Sanders and very low support for Trump. Vietnamese, Chinese, and then Filipinos had the highest support for Trump out of all the Asian American groups surveyed. Interestingly, foreign born, or naturalized Asian Americans were more likely to support Clinton while native born Asian Americans had higher support for Sanders. On the flip side, foreign born Asian Americans also had a slightly higher level of support for Trump.

Two tables surveyed how Asian Americans would react to anti-immigrant rhetoric and anti-Muslim rhetoric, respectively, in terms of their candidate choices. Chinese Americans were the least swayed by anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric with the lowest percentage of choosing to vote for someone else. Indian Americans were the most affected by anti-Muslim rhetoric and had a significant majority of still voting for that candidate.

National Asian American Fall Survey Analysis

Another notable survey is the 2016 National Asian American Survey (NAAS) of 1,694 Asian American and 261 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander registered voters between August 10 and September 29, 2016 also conducted over telephone and covered nine different Asian American and Pacific Islander groups, including the six in the spring Asian American Voter Survey. They talked to registered voters of Indian, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Native Hawaiian origins, with interviews in both English and the respective Asian languages.

Compared to the Asian American Voter Survey, the National Asian American Survey covered more Asian American groups, and their methodology was more specific in having data removing “leaners,” or individuals without a concrete position. While many of the trends shown in the Asian American Voter Survey are also visible in the National Asian American Survey, there are subtle differences. Some of such differences are the increased numbers of Filipino Americans to become the most supportive Asian American group of Trump, and a general increase of Clinton’s support in the Asian American community.

Table 1: Party Favorability By Detailed Origin	<u>Republican Party</u>						<u>Democratic Party</u>					
	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall
	Unfavorable		No opinion/never heard		Favorable		Unfavorable		No opinion/never heard		Favorable	
Total	46%	58%	23%	13%	31%	29%	19%	30%	16%	10%	64%	60%
Asian Indian	58%	71%	24%	9%	18%	20%	17%	22%	18%	6%	65%	73%
Chinese	30%	51%	32%	18%	38%	31%	16%	29%	23%	13%	61%	58%
Filipino	48%	53%	21%	10%	31%	37%	21%	28%	15%	8%	64%	64%
Japanese	64%	62%	12%	6%	24%	32%	24%	27%	8%	6%	68%	67%
Korean	62%	68%	12%	9%	26%	23%	24%	30%	10%	5%	66%	65%
Vietnamese	34%	51%	21%	20%	45%	29%	19%	49%	13%	20%	68%	31%
Cambodian	N/A	48%	N/A	5%	N/A	47%	N/A	45%	N/A	7%	N/A	48%
Hmong	N/A	56%	N/A	10%	N/A	35%	N/A	17%	N/A	8%	N/A	76%
18 to 34	73%	71%	16%	3%	12%	26%	12%	33%	11%	3%	77%	64%
35 to 64 / 34+	41%	53%	24%	17%	35%	31%	20%	29%	17%	13%	63%	58%
65+	39%	N/A	24%	N/A	37%	N/A	22%	N/A	18%	N/A	61%	N/A
Male	40%	59%	23%	10%	37%	31%	24%	32%	16%	32%	60%	59%
Female	50%	57%	23%	16%	27%	28%	15%	29%	17%	29%	68%	60%
California	47%	N/A	24%	N/A	29%	N/A	18%	N/A	15%	N/A	67%	N/A
New York	41%	N/A	23%	N/A	36%	N/A	15%	N/A	12%	N/A	73%	N/A
Nevada	46%	N/A	18%	N/A	36%	N/A	34%	N/A	13%	N/A	53%	N/A
Virginia	38%	N/A	25%	N/A	37%	N/A	24%	N/A	24%	N/A	52%	N/A

Sources: Inclusion, Not Exclusion: Spring 2016 Asian American Voter Survey; Asian American Voices in the 2016 Election: Report on Registered Voters in the Fall 2016 National Asian American Survey

Table 2: Candidate Favorability By Detailed Origin	<u>Donald Trump</u>						<u>Hillary Clinton</u>					
	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall
	Unfavorable		No opinion/never heard		Favorable		Unfavorable		No opinion/never heard		Favorable	
Total	61%	67%	20%	10%	19%	23%	26%	35%	12%	7%	62%	58%
Asian Indian	62%	79%	16%	10%	22%	11%	25%	23%	12%	7%	63%	71%
Chinese	50%	67%	33%	15%	17%	19%	22%	38%	17%	9%	61%	54%
Filipino	62%	62%	15%	8%	23%	30%	28%	33%	13%	4%	59%	63%
Japanese	76%	72%	9%	6%	15%	22%	30%	39%	5%	5%	66%	57%
Korean	80%	84%	10%	4%	10%	12%	37%	41%	2%	1%	60%	58%
Vietnamese	57%	43%	22%	11%	22%	45%	19%	50%	14%	12%	66%	38%
Cambodian	N/A	76%	N/A	3%	N/A	21%	N/A	24%	N/A	3%	N/A	73%
Hmong	N/A	80%	N/A	7%	N/A	13%	N/A	31%	N/A	7%	N/A	63%
18 to 34	86%	81%	5%	3%	13%	16%	12%	36%	11%	4%	77%	60%
35 to 64 / 35+	63%	62%	16%	13%	22%	26%	20%	35%	17%	8%	63%	57%
65+	48%	N/A	30%	N/A	22%	N/A	22%	N/A	18%	N/A	61%	N/A
Male	52%	68%	22%	8%	26%	24%	24%	39%	16%	6%	60%	55%
Female	69%	66%	18%	12%	13%	22%	15%	32%	17%	7%	68%	61%
California	62%	62%	21%	11%	17%	27%	18%	36%	15%	8%	67%	56%
New York	48%	73%	27%	15%	25%	12%	15%	22%	12%	6%	73%	72%
Nevada	56%	N/A	13%	N/A	31%	N/A	34%	N/A	13%	N/A	53%	N/A
Virginia	58%	N/A	17%	N/A	26%	N/A	24%	N/A	24%	N/A	52%	N/A
Hawaii	N/A	70%	N/A	12%	N/A	18%	N/A	29%	N/A	29%	N/A	62%
Minnesota	N/A	63%	N/A	9%	N/A	28%	N/A	37%	N/A	37%	N/A	55%
Texas	N/A	66%	N/A	11%	N/A	23%	N/A	32%	N/A	32%	N/A	60%
Washington	N/A	65%	N/A	5%	N/A	29%	N/A	41%	N/A	3%	N/A	56%

Sources: Inclusion, Not Exclusion: Spring 2016 Asian American Voter Survey; Asian American Voices in the 2016 Election: Report on Registered Voters in the Fall 2016 National Asian American Survey

Table 3. Candidate Choice Before and After Primary	<u>Donald Trump</u>		<u>Hillary Clinton</u>		<u>Bernie Sanders</u>	
	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall	AAJC Spring	NAAS Fall
Total	10%	15%	33%	53%	26%	22%
Asian Indian	7%	7%	42%	60%	30%	23%
Chinese	12%	9%	27%	52%	26%	32%
Filipino	11%	30%	36%	45%	24%	9%
Japanese	7%	15%	44%	63%	9%	11%
Korean	7%	14%	29%	68%	20%	15%
Vietnamese	14%	19%	24%	41%	46%	23%
Cambodian	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hmong	N/A	8%	N/A	26%	N/A	56%
18 to 34	3%	6%	15%	36%	61%	47%
35 to 64 / 35+	14%	18%	34%	60%	27%	11%
65+	12%	N/A	44%	N/A	2%	N/A
Male	14%	19%	30%	43%	24%	27%
Female	8%	10%	35%	62%	28%	18%
Native Born	7%	9%	16%	45%	54%	33%
Foreign Born	12%	19%	43%	58%	10%	14%

Sources: Inclusion, Not Exclusion: Spring 2016 Asian American Voter Survey; Asian American Voices in the 2016 Election: Report on Registered Voters in the Fall 2016 National Asian American Survey

Table 4. 2012 Asian American Presidential Vote	<u>Obama</u>	<u>Romney</u>
Total	68%	31%
Asian Indian	84%	16%
Chinese	69%	29%
Filipino	62%	37%
Japanese	70%	29%
Korean	66%	33%
Vietnamese	61%	39%
Cambodian	77%	23%
Hmong	76%	24%
Laotian	71%	29%
Male	68%	31%
Female	69%	30%

Source: Behind the Numbers: Post-Election Survey of Asian American and Pacific Islander Voters in 2012

Notable Trends of the 2016 Election Cycle

This election cycle was remarkable in that Asian Americans strengthened their support for the Democratic Party, increasing from 56 percent in party identifiers compared to 49 percent last election cycle four years ago.²⁸ While the popular vote count shows that 47.8 percent of Americans voted for Clinton,²⁹ exit polls suggest a majority of Asian Americans, like African Americans and Latinos, supported her, specifically at 65 percent, but the Asian American National Election Eve Poll taken the week before Election Day indicates this number is even higher with 75 percent of Asian Americans voting for Clinton.³⁰ Overwhelming numbers of young Asian Americans³¹ had an unfavorable view of Donald Trump at 81 percent after the June primary. Asian Americans also appeared to gain a more unfavorable opinion of not only Trump but also Clinton, as the campaign continued based on the numbers taken before and after the primary. After the primary, the number of responders who had never heard of or had no opinion of either presidential candidate decreased across all subgroups. Favorability of Trump went up after the primary compared to before while Clinton's overall favorability decreased, except among Indian Americans. A majority of Asian Americans said Trump's actions and words made them feel "angry" or "afraid" and very low numbers said they were "proud" or "hopeful." On the other hand, Clinton also had a majority of responders feel "proud" or "hopeful," but about a quarter were "afraid" and 38 percent had felt "angry."³²

²⁸ "Asian American Election Eve Poll Toplines and Slide Deck," AAPI Civic Engagement Fund, November 09, 2016, accessed November 13, 2016, <http://aapifund.org/poll/>.

²⁹ "2016 Election Results," November 8, 2016, accessed November 13, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/election/results>.

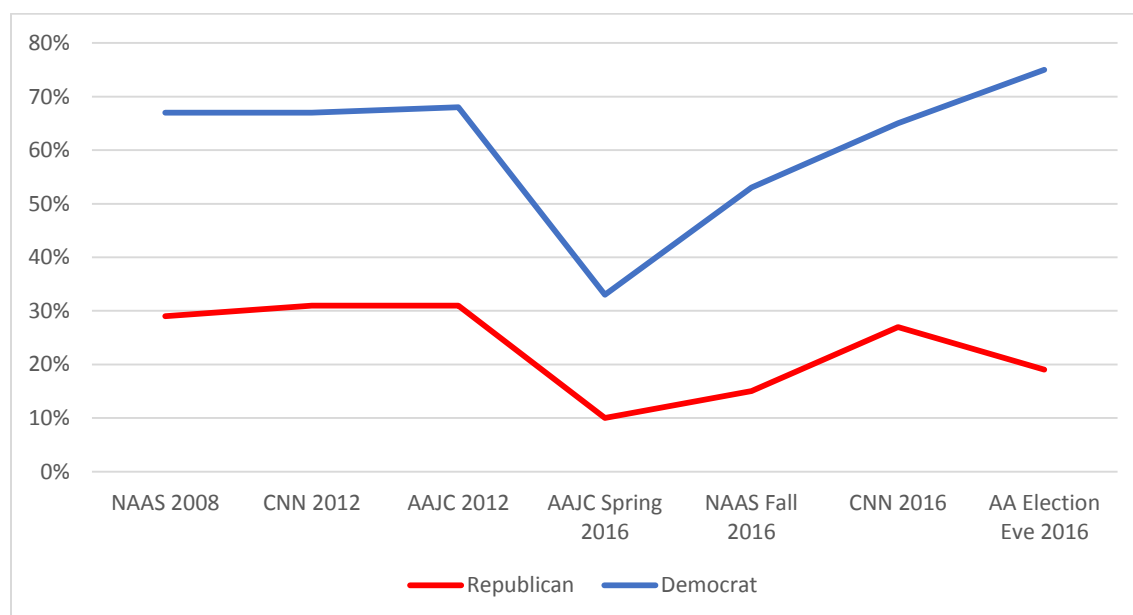
³⁰ "Asian American Election Eve Poll."

³¹ Aged 18 to 24.

³² "Asian American Election Eve Poll."

Most Democratic Party identifiers voted along party lines, but 26 percent of Republicans voted for Clinton and non-partisan voters, 63 percent, voted mostly for Clinton as well. The economy and jobs were the issues overwhelming cited as the “most important issues facing the Asian American community that politicians should address,” and others, like race relations, education, immigration, terrorism and security were less emphasized. Not only were the economy and jobs important to Asian Americans, but they were also a key driving factor in who they voted for, 87 percent of responders indicated that it was most or one of the most important factors in their decision to vote. In both surveys, native born Asian Americans more closely identified with the Democratic Party than naturalized Asian Americans, the vast majority of young Asian Americans are Democrats, and Asian American women are more Democratic leaning than Asian American men.

Table 5. Asian American Voters in the 2008, 2012, and 2016 Presidential Elections



Sources: Public Opinion of a Growing Electorate: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in 2012; Behind the Numbers: Post Election Survey of Asian American and Pacific Islander Voters in 2012; CNN 2012 Exit Polls; Inclusion, Not Exclusion: Spring 2016 Asian American Voter Survey; Asian Am. Voices in the 2016 Election: Report on Registered Voters in the Fall 2016 National Asian American Survey; Asian American Election Eve 2016 Poll

Comparison of 2012 and 2016 Election Cycles

Asian Americans have been consistently supporters of the Democratic Party for the most part, as demonstrated last election cycle in which 68 percent voted for Barack Obama. 31 percent voted for Mitt Romney, and the remaining 1 percent voted for a third party candidate.³³ Another turnaround was with Vietnamese Americans who, while having historic Republican leanings, voted for Obama's reelection at 61 percent. Nonpartisanship also decreased by 15 percent, going from 45 percent to 30 percent of Asian Americans who do not identify with a party.³⁴ In general, voter trends based on age and region that hold true for other races were applicable to Asian American voters. Asians under the age of 40 tended not to vote for Romney while Obama did not receive as strong support from Asians from Southern states than he did in Northeastern ones.³⁵

Chapter 2: Differences among Asian Ethnic Groups

While this is a table that is by no means comprehensive, it does provide some background information on 15 of the nearly 50 Asian countries that many American citizens were born in. Socioeconomic class, which includes income levels;³⁶ age;³⁷ education levels; and gender influence voting behavior, so deriving these statistics for the Asian American population gives more insight on their predicted voting behaviors.

³³ Behind the Numbers: Pre and Post-Election Surveys of AAPI Voters in 2012, report, April 21, 2013, accessed December 4, 2016, http://advancingjustice-aaajc.org/sites/default/files/2016-09/Behind_the_Numbers-2012_AAPI_Post-Election_Survey_Report.pdf.

³⁴ "Asian American Election Eve Poll."

³⁵ Calvin, "GOP and Democrats Slow to Woo."

³⁶ Sean McElwee. "Why Voting Matters: Large Disparities in Turnout Benefit the Donor Class," An Equal Say and an Equal Chance for All, September 16, 2015, accessed October 10, 2016, <http://www.demos.org/publication/why-voting-matters-large-disparities-turnout-benefit-donor-class>.

³⁷ "2014 Youth Turnout and Youth Registration Rates Lowest Ever Recorded; Changes Essential in 2016," The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, accessed October 10, 2016, <http://civicyouth.org/2014-youth-turnout-and-youth-registration-rates-lowest-ever-recorded-changes-essential-in-2016/>.

Additionally, many Asian Americans are limited English proficient (LEP), meaning they do not speak English very well, and thus would require translated materials and a translator to help them participate civically. Each ethnicity has different proportions of its limited English proficient population, and this would affect how many of their members turn out at the polls. This information is from the 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, including median household income; median age; percentage of citizens who have bachelor's degrees or higher, who are naturalized citizens, who speak English less than "very well," who are unemployed, and who lack health insurance.

Table 6. Selected Asian American Demographics

Ethnicity	Total Population	Median Household Income	Median Age	Bachelor's Degree or higher	Naturalized Citizens	Naturalized Citizens (%)	LEP³⁸	Unemployment	No health insurance
Chinese	3,507,072	65,752	38.2	51.40%	1,393,499	39.73%	46.20%	4.00%	14.20%
Indian	3,049,201	96,782	32.8	72.20%	1,071,333	35.13%	20.50%	4.40%	11.60%
Filipino	2,658,354	80,172	39.8	48.00%	1,140,766	42.91%	22.10%	5.30%	11.70%
Vietnamese	1,675,246	55,022	36.9	25.70%	845,833	50.49%	51.80%	5.10%	19.50%
Korean	1,450,401	53,760	37.8	53.60%	603,033	41.58%	43.80%	4.00%	24.60%
Japanese	780,210	71,029	49.5	49.00%	88,894	11.39%	22.60%	2.40%	6.60%
Pakistani	366,407	69,042	29.2	54.10%	146,507	39.98%	27.10%	5.30%	22.80%
Hmong	265,415	46,080	21.8	15.00%	73,395	27.65%	33.60%	7.30%	15.60%
Cambodian	256,956	52,612	31	17.30%	104,394	40.63%	41.10%	6.80%	18.30%
Laotian	212,340	50,902	33.7	12.40%	84,587	39.83%	37.80%	8.00%	15.60%
Thai	182,708	54,246	38.3	43.10%	65,258	35.72%	45.70%	4.80%	24.50%
Taiwanese	153,587	78,731	36.2	76.90%	72,261	47.05%	41.30%	3.10%	9.40%
Bangladeshi	146,612	44,293	30.8	44.70%	54,741	37.34%	45.90%	5.00%	17.80%
Indonesian	65,208	51,076	36.5	48.00%	17,354	26.61%	37.80%	5.90%	20.50%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

³⁸ Limited English Proficiency – speak English less than “very well”

Religious affiliation ranges greatly as well; only about 42 percent of Asian Americans are Christian. Within that Asian Christian population, most Filipinos identify as Catholic while Koreans are mostly Protestant. About 50 percent of Chinese Americans have no religious affiliations. The Vietnamese population has a significant number of Buddhist followers – 43 percent, and the Japanese community is “a mix of Christians, Buddhists and the unaffiliated.”³⁹ Even more interestingly, the religious variation within the Asian American community is stronger than that of the overall U.S. population. Mainline Protestant Asian Americans, mostly Korean Americans, attend church and pray more often, and are more likely to say that living a religious life is important to them than white American Protestants. Asian American evangelicals are similar to white evangelicals in these indicators of religious commitment, but Asian American Catholics have stronger commitment than both white and non-white Hispanic Catholics.

Chinese Americans – Politically Ambivalent

Using these theories of participation reveals more insight on the differences in voting behavior among Asian American ethnicities. Chinese Americans have the largest Asian population in the United States at about 3.5 million individuals,⁴⁰ and are arguably one of the most interesting subgroups in context of the 2016 presidential election. The most ambivalent of all the Asian subgroups surveyed, Chinese Americans consistently had the highest percentage of responders who had no opinions or never heard of presidential candidates, including Clinton and Trump. Additionally, they were also the group least swayed by anti-immigrant rhetoric and had the highest percentages of responders who would have continued to support a candidate who expressed such

³⁹ *Asian Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths* (n.p.: Pew Research Center, 2012).

⁴⁰ Table 6.

sentiments. It is possible that the high numbers of foreign born individuals in this community combined with the communist nature of the Chinese government creates Chinese Americans' political ambivalence. Because many Chinese Americans grew up in a country with less political participation than the United States, they are unaccustomed to being involved and staying informed.

Young Progressive Hmong Americans

Hmong Americans are a small, often overlooked but remarkable subgroup within the Asian American population. With a significantly low median age of 21.8 years of age, Hmong Americans are made of mostly refugee families and suffer from high poverty and low average household income and education attainment levels.⁴¹ This group had the strongest support for the Democratic presidential hopeful, Bernie Sanders at 56 percent.⁴² 56 percent of American voters aged 18 to 24 voted for Clinton, indicating that the young median age of the Hmong population would influence it to lean to the left.⁴³ While Hmong Americans' low average income levels would explain their preference for the Democratic Party since 52 percent of Americans with incomes of \$50,000 and lower voted for Hillary Clinton, white voters, with and without college degrees, voted mostly for Trump at 49 percent and 67 percent respectively. This trend would suggest that individuals without degrees would be more likely to have voted for Trump. On the other hand, 71 percent of minority college graduates and 74 percent of minorities without

⁴¹ 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

⁴² Karthick Ramakrishnan, Janelle Wong, Taeku Lee, and Jennifer Lee, *Asian American Voices in the 2016 Election*. Report, October 5, 2016, <http://naasurvey.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/NAAS2016-Oct5-report.pdf>

⁴³ "Exit Polls 2016," CNN, November 9, 2016, accessed November 16, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/election/results/exit-polls/national/president>.

college degrees voted for Clinton, suggesting there was a racial component to the support or lack of support that Trump received.

It is also possible that as a population consisting mostly of refugees, Hmong Americans have a different perspective from other Asian American subgroups and Americans in general, and are more likely to support the Democratic Party. In fact, 74 percent of Hmong Americans in the 2016 Fall National Asian American Survey were in favor of accepting Syrian refugees. Hmong Americans would be inclined to support Clinton, as she indicated she would increase the number of Syrian refugees allowed into the United States from 10,000 to 65,000 if elected.⁴⁴ Contrastingly, Trump attacked Clinton's statement, exaggerating it to several hundred thousand refugees, and criticized the vetting process, linking radical Islamic terrorism to the Somali refugee population in Minnesota.⁴⁵

Filipinos in Politics at Home and Abroad

The Asian American population is unique in several aspects – one of which is being significantly made up of immigrants. For many of these naturalized citizens, American politics can be alienating for several reasons, such as having limited English proficiency or simply the lack of interest in favor of their home country politics. At the same time, this interest in foreign affairs from the motherland could possibly influence their political behaviors in their new home country.

⁴⁴ "Hillary Clinton: U.S. Should Take 65,000 Syrian Refugees," CBSNews, September 20, 2015, accessed November 16, 2016, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/hillary-clinton-u-s-should-take-65000-syrian-refugees/>.

⁴⁵ "Donald Trump's Plan to Bar Muslim Immigrants from Entering the United States, Annotated," Washington Post, August 15, 2016, accessed November 16, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/08/15/donald-trumps-plan-to-bar-immigrants-from-entering-the-united-states-annotated/>.

Many have drawn a parallel between the Filipino president and current candidate, Rodrigo Duterte, and the Republican candidate, Donald Trump. While not having the strongest support for the Republican party, Filipinos, at 30 percent, have the most Trump supporters out of the Asian American groups surveyed this fall.⁴⁶ The Philippines and the United States' longstanding and tumultuous relationship started with the arrival of Philippine sailors on the Californian coast in the late 1500s.⁴⁷ American colonization of the Philippines is another grievance that many Filipinos, Duterte included, bring up in their criticism of the United States.

Duterte, like Trump, is not one to hold his extremely sharp tongue, committing what would be considered a series of political gaffes in the United States, but still enjoys overwhelming support and a 91 percent approval rating from his constituents.⁴⁸ Ranging from an insensitive comment about a gang rape victim's physical beauty, having said he "should have been first,"⁴⁹ to his desire to "kill all" criminals in his war on drugs, Duterte's strong, harsh choice of words win him support among his people who call him "our mayor."⁵⁰ Similarly, Donald Trump has received criticism for his offhand remarks about women, and was under fire for saying he was so famous that he could simply grab

⁴⁶ Ramakrishnan, et al.

⁴⁷ Eloisa Gomez Borah (1997). "Chronology of Filipinos in America Pre-1989" (PDF). Anderson School of Management. University of California, Los Angeles. Retrieved February 25, 2012.

⁴⁸ "Duterte Enjoys Record-high 91% Trust Rating – Pulse Asia," Rappler. July 20, 2016, accessed October 30, 2016, <http://www.rappler.com/nation/140318-duterte-trust-rating-july-2016>.

⁴⁹ Travis M. Andrews, "Leading Philippine Presidential Contender: Gang Rape Victim 'so Beautiful' He Wishes He Had 'been First'," Washington Post, April 18, 2016, accessed October 30, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/04/18/leading-philippines-presidential-contender-gang-rape-victim-so-beautiful-he-wishes-he-had-been-first/>.

⁵⁰ Emily Rauhala, "Before Duterte Was the Philippines' President, He Was 'the Death Squad Mayor'," Washington Post, September 28, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/before-duterte-was-the-philippines-president-he-was-the-death-squad-mayor/2016/09/28/f1d1ccc4-800b-11e6-ad0e-ab0d12c779b1_story.html

women by their genitals.⁵¹ Both individuals have arguably unconventional plans for rescuing a country they believe has been underserved and is regressing. Donald Trump's proposal for an "impenetrable, physical, tall, powerful, beautiful, southern border wall" between the United States and Mexico⁵² finds support in Americans who are worried about job displacement with an increasing immigrant flow while Filipinos favor Duterte's hardline policy on drug criminals; both parties most likely finding stability and peace of mind that someone would be looking out for them.

Divided Vietnamese Americans Moving to the Left

Arriving largely in the waves of immigration after President Gerald Ford signed the Indochina and Migration Act of 1975 into law, Vietnamese refugees, along with Cambodian and Lao refugees, fled communist governments to resettle in the United States.⁵³ President Reagan's stance against communism helped strengthen this aforementioned Vietnamese American support and loyalty for the Republican Party, but this trend has started to dwindle in recent years. While many Vietnamese Americans were political refugees, 34 percent of them opposed accepting Syrian refugees because they considered them "dangerous" and thought of themselves differently, or as good refugees.⁵⁴ According to Professor Taeku Lee at the University of California, Berkeley, 58 percent of Vietnamese Americans over the age of 50 voted for Obama in 2012, yet

⁵¹ David Fahrenthold, "Trump Recorded Having Extremely Lewd Conversation about Women in 2005," Washington Post, October 8, 2016, accessed October 30, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-recorded-having-extremely-lewd-conversation-about-women-in-2005/2016/10/07/3b9ce776-8cb4-11e6-bf8a-3d26847eed4_story.html.

⁵² "How Realistic Is Donald Trump's Mexico Wall?" BBC News, September 1, 2016, accessed October 30, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-37243269>.

⁵³ Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act, 22 U.S.C. ch. 36 § 2601 (1975).

⁵⁴ Kat Chow, "Asian-Americans Continue to Drift Away from The GOP, But It's a Complicated Story," NPR, October 12, 2016, accessed December 02, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2016/10/12/497063888/asian-americans-continue-to-drift-away-from-republicans-but-it-s-a-complicated-s>.

President Bill Clinton's lifting of the trade embargo on Vietnam in the past could have hurt Vietnamese American support for Hillary Clinton while in contrast, Donald Trump took a strong stance against China in the South China Sea disputes involving Vietnam.⁵⁵ At the same time, Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric steered Asian Americans, including Vietnamese American voters, away for the most part since 46 percent chose Clinton and 20 percent Trump.⁵⁶

Chapter 3: Case Studies in Asian American Politics

Case Study: California and Affirmative Action

Although Asian Americans overall do not have strong civic engagement, they have canvassed support for issues of interest to them, such as race-based affirmative action. Affirmative action has also been an issue for which the Democratic Party has consistently garnered support but has also split opinions among Asian Americans. Both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump have expressed support for affirmative action; Trump disagreed with Justice Scalia's remarks that low income students would perform better at less elite schools⁵⁷ while Clinton expressed her support for affirmative action to increase diversity in a 2008 presidential debate.⁵⁸

For example, in 1996, California Proposition 209 banned the use of affirmative action in the spheres of public employment, public contracting, and public education, specifically banning the use of "race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin." A

⁵⁵ Farai Chideya, "Vietnamese-Americans Are No Longer a Lock for The Republican Party," *FiveThirtyEight*, October 18, 2016, accessed December 02, 2016, <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/vietnamese-americans-are-no-longer-a-lock-for-the-republican-party/>.

⁵⁶ Ramakrishnan, et al.

⁵⁷ Bradford Richardson, "Trump: 'I Don't Like' What Scalia Said about Affirmative Action," *TheHill*, December 13, 2015, accessed December 02, 2016, <http://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/presidential-races/263074-trump-scalia-affirmative-action>.

⁵⁸ "Democratic Debate in Philadelphia," *The New York Times*, April 16, 2008, accessed December 02, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/16/us/politics/16text-debate.html>.

California State University, Hayward professor of anthropology, Dr. Glynn Custred, along with Tom Wood, modeled Proposition 209, also known as the California Civil Rights Initiative, after the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁵⁹ Wood, at the time, was a recent graduate of the University of California Berkeley's program of philosophy and was on the job hunt when he found an opening at San Francisco State University. After an African-American woman was hired over him, he decided that he was the victim of reverse discrimination, and co-authored this initiative, which passed by a 55 percent vote by the population. Since then, public universities in California are barred from using race as a factor in their admissions policies.

One bid to increase racial diversity in Californian public schools was Senate Constitutional Amendment 5, proposed by California State Senator, Edward Hernandez (D-West Covina). SCA-5 would have removed the "public education" clause from Proposition 209, effectively allowing the consideration of race in the admission practices of California's universities. Asian American politicians who came out in opposition to SCA-5 included California State Assembly Members Ed Chau (D-Monterey Park)⁶⁰ and Young Kim (R-Fullerton),⁶¹ as well as then-State Senator Judy Chu (D-Pasadena),⁶² but the most vocalized opinions came from Asian American advocacy groups, especially after Chinese language networks caught wind of the legislation. Such groups included the East Coast-based 80-20 Initiative, headed by S.B. Woo, the former Lieutenant Governor

⁵⁹ Lydia Chávez, *The Color Bind: California's Battle to End Affirmative Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998)

⁶⁰ Zen Vuong, "Asians Rally Against SCA 5, Call It Revival of Affirmative Action," Pasadena Star-News, <http://www.pasadenastarnews.com/social-affairs/20140308/asians-rally-against-sca-5-call-it-revival-of-affirmative-action>, accessed November 20, 2016.

⁶¹ "Young Kim Announces Opposition to SCA 5," Young Kim for State Assembly 2014, <http://us7.campaign-archive2.com/?u=e0c9b81523ccab9609753658c&id=4249c5f4b2&e=e1370d297e>, accessed November 20, 2016

⁶² Ibid.

of Delaware. East and South Asians provided most of the opposition because they believed affirmative action would only hurt them in California public schools, which already have overrepresented numbers of Asian students. At the same time, some East and South Asians supported the amendment since some Asian ethnicities, mostly South East Asians, would benefit from affirmative action.

Case Study: Judy Chu for California's 32nd Congressional District

One successful example of the high levels of coordination needed to rally the Asian vote is the Judy Chu Congressional Campaign. After Hilda Solis left the House of Representatives to become President Obama's Secretary of Labor, Judy Chu was among the handful of candidates who decided to run for her now vacant seat. Her campaign included a multifaceted outreach program targeted towards the AAPI population. Because of the format of the special election – an open primary, Chu needed to stand out among the multiple candidates, including one with the same last name, and looked to the AAPI population for extra support. Chu also used her Chinese name to distinguish herself from the other Chu and gain appeal with Chinese voters. One of the characters in her Chinese name means “heart,” a symbol that her campaign played up. Among the many aspects of this program were direct voter contact, targeted mail, earned media, and official voter guides to encourage voting by mail in five different languages – English, Chinese Mandarin, Chinese Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Tagalog.⁶³ The field program turned out to be incredibly successful. Not only did Chu win the primary election and the House seat, but AAPI voter turnout, 25.1 percent, was higher than the total voter turnout

⁶³ Clark Lee and Tommy Tseng, “Judy Chu for Congress: A Case Study for Mobilizing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders for Legislative Campaigns,” *Harvard Journal of Asian American Policy Review* 19 (2010): 49-58.

at 23 percent.⁶⁴ It is possible that her campaign strategy can be used as a model for future campaigns, especially in areas with a sizeable Asian population.

The success of Chu's use of native language underscores the importance of native language resources, especially news outlets. In the Spring 2016 AAJC Asian American Voter Survey, 32 percent of survey participants rely on Asian media, specifically television programs. Notably, 63 percent of Vietnamese Americans and 48 percent of Vietnamese Americans watch Asian or ethnic-oriented television as a news source. Similarly, about 21 percent of Asian Americans surveyed in the Fall 2016 NAAS report rely on ethnic media for their political news sources – 39 percent of Vietnamese Americans, 34 percent of Chinese Americans and 33 percent of Korean Americans use ethnic media.

Case Study: California's 17th District

California's 17th Congressional District, also informally known as the Silicon Valley, is interesting in present-day politics for several reasons. It boasts ethnic diversity, being the only Asian majority district in the country, but at the same time lacks balanced socioeconomic diversity.⁶⁵ It has a higher percentage of Asians than other districts and a higher average household income throughout the cities it represents. It also has a distinctly Democratic leaning voting history,⁶⁶ which remained undisrupted after the redistricting that took place in 2011. The presence of large technology companies also adds to the uniqueness of the district. Because of the nature of Asian voting patterns, the 17th District is set apart from the rest of California. The future of Asian and Asian

⁶⁴ Lee and Tseng, "Judy Chu."

⁶⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, "Mean Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2013 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)."

⁶⁶ Ibid.

American political participation, which is greatly important as a swing vote, can be anticipated from the history of this district.

The 17th District's Voters

Like the rest of the state, the 17th District is a heavily blue district, which has not voted for a Republican governor for many years, save Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2006.⁶⁷ Santa Clara County, which encompasses nearly all of the District, among others, has been a strongly Democratic county. It voted in strong numbers, 72.9 percent, for Jerry Brown in the past 2014 gubernatorial election,⁶⁸ and has voted for almost exclusively Democratic candidates in past elections. On the 2014 state ballot measures, it had supporting voter majorities for Propositions 1 and 47, which would have authorized spending to improve water supply infrastructure projects and reduce sentences for certain nonviolent property and drug-related crimes, respectively.⁶⁹ In the 2016 presidential election, the majority of Santa Clara County's voters, 73.37 percent, supported Hillary Clinton over a 20.77 percent for Donald Trump.⁷⁰

The 17th District's former incumbent representative, Mike Honda who has served the district since 2001, leaned heavily on the progressive side on most issues, ranging from health care to human rights. A prominent minority and LGBT rights activist with a 100 percent scorecard from the Human Rights Campaign, Honda spoke up in his support for his transgender granddaughter, as her "proud *ji-chan*," or grandfather.⁷¹ Honda is also

⁶⁷ Bruce McPherson, Secretary of State, *Statement of Vote: Gubernatorial Primary Election, June 6, 2006*.

⁶⁸ Debra Bowen, Secretary of State, *Statement of Vote: November 4, 2014, General Election*.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ November 8, 2016 - Presidential General Election Results, Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters, http://results.enr.clarityelections.com/CA/Santa_Clara/64404/184320/Web01/en/summary.html

⁷¹ Marsha Aizumi, "A Grandfather's Love: Congressman Mike Honda Opens Up about His Transgender Granddaughter," *The Huffington Post*, February 18, 2015.

a third-generation Japanese American and puts special focus on minority issues, especially those pertaining to AAPIs. This past summer, he introduced H.Res.390 to recognize July 28, 2015 as World Hepatitis Day. Hepatitis affects a proportionately large part of the Asian population, so this resolution was to raise awareness about testing and susceptibility to the disease.⁷²

Demographics of the 17th Congressional District

The 17th District's population makeup likely contributes to its more progressive track record. The racial breakdown of the 17th District is roughly 52 percent Asian, 33 percent white, 15.5 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 3 percent black.⁷³ Pacific Islanders only make up about 0.5 percent of the District's population. About 5 percent of the population identifies as mixed race or multiracial. Of the Asian American population, about 29 percent is Asian Indian, and about 28 percent is Chinese, not including Taiwanese. At the same time, the socioeconomic status of its citizenry conflict with preexisting trends. Its average household income last year was \$121,997, compared to the state average of \$85,707 and the national average of \$73,767.⁷⁴ Even though research suggests that individuals with higher income tend to vote Republican,⁷⁵ the 17th District is an exception in that regard. This high average income can be attributed to the numerous local tech employers, including giants like Apple, Intel, and Yahoo, which rightfully give it the nickname, the Silicon Valley.⁷⁶

⁷² "H.Res.390 - 114th Congress (2015-2016): Recognizing July 28, 2015, As 'World Hepatitis Day'" Congress.gov, accessed November 24, 2016, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-resolution/390>.

⁷³ U.S. Census Bureau, "Mean Income."

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Gerhart H. Saenger, "Status and Political Behavior," *American Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 2 (September 1945)

⁷⁶ Philip Rucker, "In Silicon Valley, Tech Titans Try to Replace a Longtime Democratic Congressman," *The Washington Post*, June 2, 2014.

In fact, the technology industry recently played a significant role in 2014's Congressional District elections. Ro Khanna, a patent lawyer, challenged the incumbent and fellow Democrat, Mike Honda, for his Congressional seat. Khanna garnered much of his support from the large Indian American community, in addition to big-name endorsements from Yahoo chief executive Marissa Mayer, Facebook executive Sheryl Sandberg, Google Chairman Eric Schmidt, and Napster founder Sean Parker.⁷⁷ His endorsers cited reasons such as a younger age and better attunement to the growing technology industry for supporting Khanna. Even though Honda eventually defeated Khanna in 2014, he only received 51.8 percent of the votes, by a 5,000-vote margin that required three days to count.⁷⁸ The push for a younger and more vibrant candidate who could keep up with the local constituency showed in that past election and continued in 2016 when the 40 year old Khanna finally defeated Honda.⁷⁹

The 2011 redistricting influenced the distinct characteristics of the 17th District for several reasons. Firstly, Congressman Mike Honda was redistricted from the 15th District while the original Representative, Sam Farr, moved to the 20th District.⁸⁰ The 17th District acquired the cities of Cupertino and Sunnyvale,⁸¹ both cities with significant Asian populations, mostly Chinese and Indian, and relatively high average household incomes. In the past 12 months, the mean household income for Cupertino was \$152,150 in 2013 inflation-adjusted dollars and for Sunnyvale, \$121,541 – both about a quarter higher than

⁷⁷ Rucker, "Tech Titans."

⁷⁸ Bowen, *Statement of Vote: November 4, 2014, General Election*.

⁷⁹ "Khanna Defeats Eight-Term Incumbent Honda for Congress," NBC Bay Area, Associated Press, November 9, 2016, accessed December 04, 2016, <http://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/Khanna-Defeats-Eight-Term-Incumbent-Honda-For-Congress--400510431.html>.

⁸⁰ Alia Wilson, "Cupertino, Sunnyvale enter new legislative districts," *San Jose Mercury News* (California), September 1, 2011, accessed November 20, 2016, <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/Inacademic/?shr=t&sfi=AC00NBGenSrch>.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

the aforementioned state average.⁸² Upon this acquisition, the 17th District became the only Asian majority congressional district in the United States, but not including Pacific Islanders.⁸³

Conclusions Drawn from the 17th District's Behavior

Because of its high population numbers of Asian Americans and the prominent presence of the tech industry, California's 17th Congressional District makes for an exceptional political arena. Asians tend to be moderately progressive while those with higher incomes tend to lean more conservatively. Most of the issues voted on do not get a large majority, indicating possible polarization and lack of consolidation on one side. Overall, the district generally votes for Democratic candidates with a few exceptions, and voted overwhelmingly for the Democratic candidate in the 2016 presidential election.

No concrete assumptions can be made about the connection between Asian Americans overall and Asian Americans in the 17th Congressional District, and the reliance on county data as opposed to exclusively district curbs the accuracy of possible conclusions. A more thorough breakdown of the different Asian subgroups could possibly help draw a more specific conclusion about the voting behavior of the 17th District. They appear to exhibit the same kind of political preferences and behaviors for the most part. The high percentages of Chinese and Indians could also play a larger role than is readily visible. The higher incomes, however, are a little less conventional, most likely because of their location and are not as conservative as expected. California is a solidly blue state, and its citizens tend to be more liberal than the rest of the country. As

⁸² U.S. Census Bureau, "Mean Income."

⁸³ Hawaii has the biggest majority of Asians out of all the states and has the district with the greatest Asian American and Pacific Islander population, but the only Asian majority district is the 17th District.

many Asian Americans indicated in this year's Election Eve poll, problems with jobs and the economy were the most important to them, thus it is possible to assume that the minority of Asian Americans, regardless of socioeconomic class, that were attracted to Trump prioritized the issues and the way the candidate handled them.

Conclusion

As tempting as it would be to make sweeping generalizations about the modern Asian American electorate, the specific disparities in this racial grouping have created a web of complex identities and characteristics, ultimately forming a community that is difficult to pinpoint politically. The myriad cultures, socioeconomic classes, religions, and native country politics create ranging political ideologies within this community that can explain the seemingly unpredictable nature of its voters that does not follow the conventional patterns of other minorities. Patterns in the opinion polls taken by several AAPI focused nonprofits suggest that Asian American who supported Trump were able to reconcile his anti-immigrant, anti-refugee beliefs with their perception that they were different, rather the model minority. The concept of Asian Americans as a model minority was initially applied to Japanese Americans; the idea that Asian Americans perform better in school, are economically more affluent, and commit fewer crimes than other minorities. While the validity and harmfulness of this concept can be disputed and discussed further, the data in the independent opinion polls indicates that Asian American Trump supporters most likely adhere to this stereotype and do not feel attacked by Trump's rhetoric.

The importance and need for disaggregated data has been highlighted through the lack of available data on Asian Americans. It was only this year that CNN's Exit Polls

included an Asian category instead of an “other.” Making separated categories for ethnicities would greatly impact policymaking and improve the responsiveness of lawmakers and politicians to the Asian American community’s unique issues, as well as the Latino community. Both of these groups have high concentrations of immigrants and individuals with limited English proficiency, yet the differences among the ethnic groups call for more accessible data. As the number of immigrants will continue to rise in America, the government under president-elect Donald Trump, as well as those of his successors, need to further develop the study of minority political behavior, especially the Asian American population.

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