

KOREAN AMERICANS AND THE 2012 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

By Taeku Lee

Abstract

The 2012 election saw the rising prominence of Korean Americans as an increasingly visible force in U.S. politics. This paper discusses key features of the Korean American vote, using data from the 2012 National Asian American Survey. First, of those who favored a presidential candidate, Korean Americans were partial to Barack Obama over Mitt Romney by a nearly three-to-one margin. At the same time, nearly 40 percent of registered voters were undecided, even in the last weeks of the campaign. The paper further examines, among those who had a preference between Obama and Romney, the basis of this preference. The analysis finds three pivotal elements: whether Korean Americans identify as a Democrat or Republican or chose to remain non-partisan; President Obama's high candidate favorability among Korean Americans; and the electoral salience of policy issues like health care, immigration, the budget deficit, and U.S.-Korea free trade, issues on which Korean Americans were partial to the President's positions. The future of the Korean American vote – whether they will further consolidate as Democrats or find a home among Republicans in ensuing elections – will depend on party mobilization, the candidates they field, and the issues they champion.

Introduction

Long after the suspense over the outcome of the 2012 U.S. presidential election has been settled, one aspect continues to draw the abiding curiosity of many close observers of American politics: 2012 appears to have heralded a clear shift among Asian American voters in favor of the Democratic Party.¹ Most immediately, exit poll results showed that 73 percent of Asian Americans reported voting for the incumbent Barack Obama. This

is a high rate of Democratic voting that falls shy of the 93 percent vote share among African Americans, but closely compares to Obama's support among Latinos (71 percent), Jews (69 percent) and LGBT voters (76 percent). What makes the 2012 Asian American vote particularly notable is the trend over time. In an election in which nearly all politically noteworthy segments of the electorate shifted ever so slightly in their partisan voting towards the Republican Party's candidate, Governor Mitt Romney, the 73 percent figure for Asian Americans in 2012 marks a visible jump from 62 percent in 2008. No other group – across a broad array of markers like age, gender, race, education, income, marital status, sexual orientation, partisanship, ideology, religion, or urbanism – moved as dramatically toward the Democratic Party between 2008 and 2012.

Adding further ballast, the 73 percent figure in 2012 also represents a highwater mark of a sea change over a twenty year period. Figure 1 compares exit poll results over the last six presidential elections, from 1992 to 2012. In the 1992 contest between Bill Clinton, George Herbert Walker Bush, and H. Ross Perot, 55 percent of Asian Americans reported voting for the Republican Bush and only 31 percent for the Democrat Clinton.² From this solidly Republican vote in 1992, the degree of Democratic support among Asian Americans has risen steadily and surely with each ensuing election. Over this twenty year time period, no other demographic or political subgroup shifted as forcefully in their partisanship in either direction. These trends in exit poll findings are further supported by scholarly studies of Asian American politics. The earliest academic survey of Asian Americans in California, conducted in 1984, found that roughly 40 percent identified with the Republican Party, 35 percent with the Democrats, with 25 percent Independents. More recent

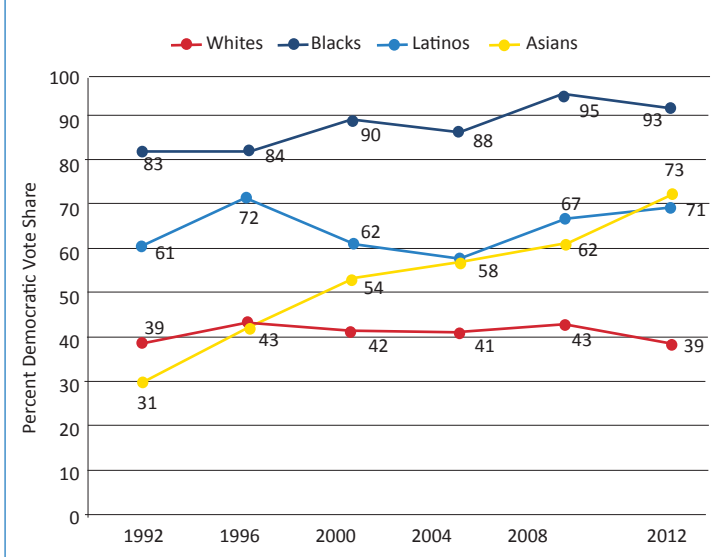
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studies, such as the 2000 Pilot National Asian American Study and the 2008 and 2012 National Asian American Surveys find a marked shift towards the Democratic Party over the Republicans among Asian American partisans.³

Figure 1: Presidential Vote Choice by Race/Ethnicity, 1992-2012



The clear shift over a relatively short time frame in the span of American political history has contributed to widespread speculation that 2012 may augur a new political realignment of Asian Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and traditional New Deal Democrats in a coalition that could re-define American electoral politics for the foreseeable future. Electoral realignments, of course, are rare and defining political moments and a full examination of whether 2012 represents such a “critical” election is well beyond the present scope. The aims of this paper are far more discrete. This brief narrows in on Korean Americans and their contributing role in the political emergence of Asian Americans.

The paper begins with a brief presentation of the demographic shifts that animate the intensified interest in Asians and Koreans in America. The U.S. Korean American population, like that of Asian Americans more generally, has soared in size since immigration reforms of the mid-1960s. This growth continues to the present day and is punctuated by high rates of population growth beyond traditional immigrant gateways and, of particular relevance to electoral politics, in key battleground states.

The main focus of the paper is on the 2012 presidential vote among Korean Americans. The primary data source for the analysis – the 2012 National Asian American Survey – shows two seemingly

paradoxical findings: a very high rate of support for Barack Obama over Mitt Romney; a very high rate of voter indecision and uncertainty between the two major party candidates. The paper then considers, in sequence, the contributing role of demographic factors, party identification, candidate traits, and policy issues in shaping the 2012 Korean American vote. The key findings here are that demographic characteristics like gender, age, education, income, and nativity are relatively minor players in the 2012 vote. In addition, partisanship – when Korean Americans avow it – is a powerful guide to voting behavior, but a very large segment of Korean Americans show no fealty to either major political party. Perhaps the most compelling elements of the 2012 vote appear to be a uniquely positive relationship that Korean American voters have to President Obama and the defining role of mostly liberal policy opinions that Korean Americans hold across a diverse range of issues from health care reform, immigration, fiscal policy, and trade policy.

Demographic Background

The reasons for the recent scrutiny on the Asian American vote start with the foundation stones of demographic change. With the possible exception of Latinos, no other major racial/ethnic group in the last half-century has grown as rapidly as Asian Americans. In 1960, there were fewer than one million Asian Americans, comprising less than 0.5 percent of the total United States population. By the most recent 2010 decennial census, the Asian American population grew to more than 17 million, or more than 5 percent of the total U.S. population. Between 2010 and 2000, the “Asian alone” population grew by more than 43 percent, outpacing any other major racial/ethnic group and far outpacing the national population growth over the same period of just under 10 percent. The growth of the U.S. Asian population, moreover, is expected to continue with seeming inexorable constancy into the future. Census projections estimate an Asian American population count of around 40 million by 2050, or nearly 10 percent of the total U.S. population expected that year.

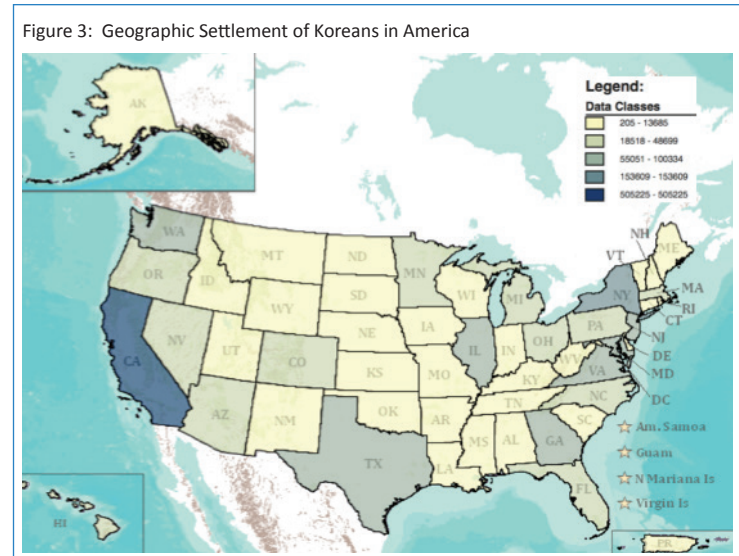
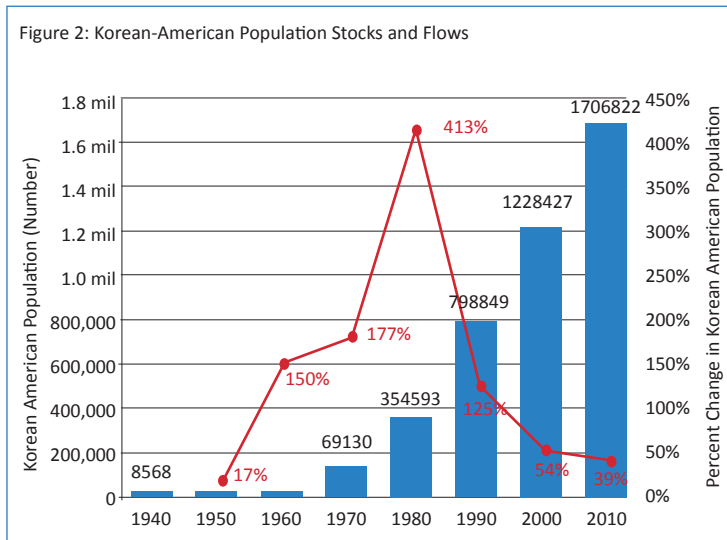
Do such patterns of change apply to Korean Americans as well? This question merits asking because one of the defining features of the Asian American population is its remarkable internal diversity: there are at least twenty distinct ethnicities, more than thirty different languages, and variation by gender, class, religion, migration histories, geographic settlement patterns, and the like. Patterns that characterize a “pan-ethnic” group like Asian Americans could look quite different for sub-groups. like Korean



Americans. A closer look at Korean Americans in the 2012 U.S. presidential elections is also of particular interest for reasons that are probably clear to readers of the KEI Academic Paper Series. In addition to Koreans being one of the largest Asian American groups in size, Korea is a nation of increasing economic and geopolitical interest vis-à-vis the United States, as evidenced most recently by the Obama Administration’s “pivot” from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific.

In numbers, the 2010 census counted roughly 1.7 million Korean Americans. This figure accounted for about 10 percent of the total U.S. Asian population, with larger proportions of Chinese (23 percent), Indian (19 percent), Filipino (17 percent), and Vietnamese (11 percent) descent. The size of the Korean American population today comes after several decades of quite explosive growth, shown in Figure 2, which represents population “stocks” (the total number in any given year) and “flows” (the change in number from one time period to the next). Between 1970 (when census counts reported roughly 70 thousand Koreans in America) and 2010, the population grew twenty-five times in total number. The peak decade of growth was in the 1970s (413 percent increase between 1970 and 1980), with slowed growth in the decades since. Since 2000, the size of the U.S. Korean population has increased 39 percent, a rate roughly comparable to the 43 percent growth rate for the Asian American population as a whole.

west, more recent settlement patterns are decidedly more dispersed (shown in Figure 3 below). By state, California remains a dominant hub, accounting for nearly one in three Korean Americans. Yet eight other states have populations of more than 50,000 Korean Americans, including states with sizeable numbers of electoral college votes such as New York, Texas, Illinois, Georgia, New Jersey, and Virginia. Moreover, in many of the key electoral battlegrounds of 2012, the 2000 to 2010 growth rates are quite impressive: e.g., 93 percent in Nevada, 65 percent in North Carolina, 62 percent in Virginia, 50 percent in Florida, and 39 percent in Colorado.



The 2012 Presidential Vote

How then, did Korean Americans vote in 2012? Most of our data on how Korean Americans voted in the 2012 election come from the 2012 National Asian American Survey. The National Asian American Survey (NAAS) is a groundbreaking project collecting the most exhaustive and systematic data available on the political and policy opinions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Two surveys have been conducted to date, in 2008 and 2012. Additional details on the 2012 NAAS are contained in the Appendix. All the analysis below is conducted on the 633 Korean American respondents to the 2012 NAAS unless the figures below or the discussion of their findings explicitly state otherwise. In several instances, where specified, the results are described for all Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) respondents to the 2012 NAAS, or compare the non-Korean AAPI respondents to Korean American respondents.

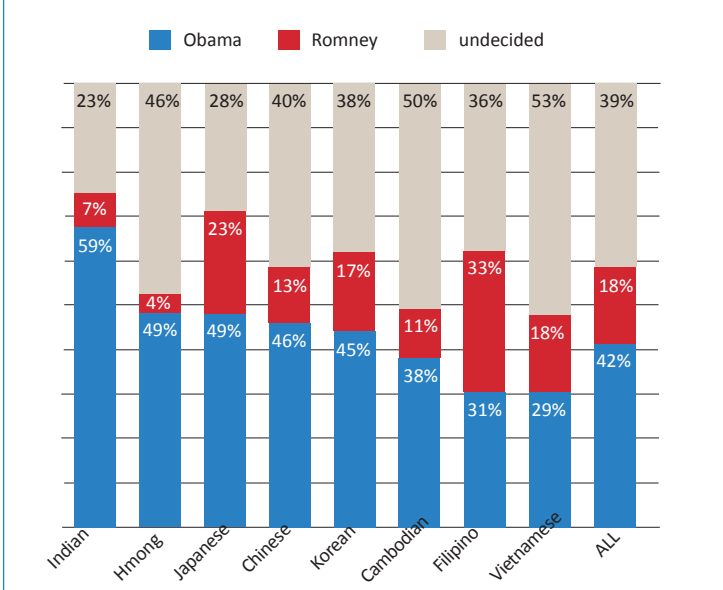
Two additional features of the U.S. Korean population are worth noting. First, unlike historic patterns of migration to gateway destinations like Ellis Island in the east and Angel Island in the



“Nearly 40 percent of Asian American registered voters indicated no preference between Obama and Romney.”

The main findings from the 2012 NAAS are that Korean Americans, consistent with exit poll data and in line with Asian Americans as a group, heavily favored Barack Obama over Mitt Romney, *among those who had an expressed preference between the two candidates*. At the same time, a very high proportion of Korean Americans (and Asian Americans writ large) were undecided between the two major party candidates even as late as the last weeks of the election. There were some demographic differences in which Korean Americans were likelier to support Obama over Romney, but the more striking differences were in terms of political factors like party identification, the personal favorability of President Obama, and substantive policy issues.

Figure 4: Vote Preference, by Ethnic/National Origin Group



Yet Figure 4 is perhaps more striking for the very high rate of voter uncertainty amongst Korean and Asian Americans. Nearly 40 percent of Asian American registered voters indicated no preference between Obama and Romney. This high rate of uncertainty barely budges between late July, when NAAS began interviewing and mid-September, hovering at between 40

percent and 43 percent. It only diminishes slightly after mid-September, dropping to 36 percent. Notably, most media horse race polls during this same period reported between 6 percent and 8 percent undecided voters. The rate of voter uncertainty is also high among Korean Americans at 38 percent.

Key Demographic Factors in the 2012 Vote

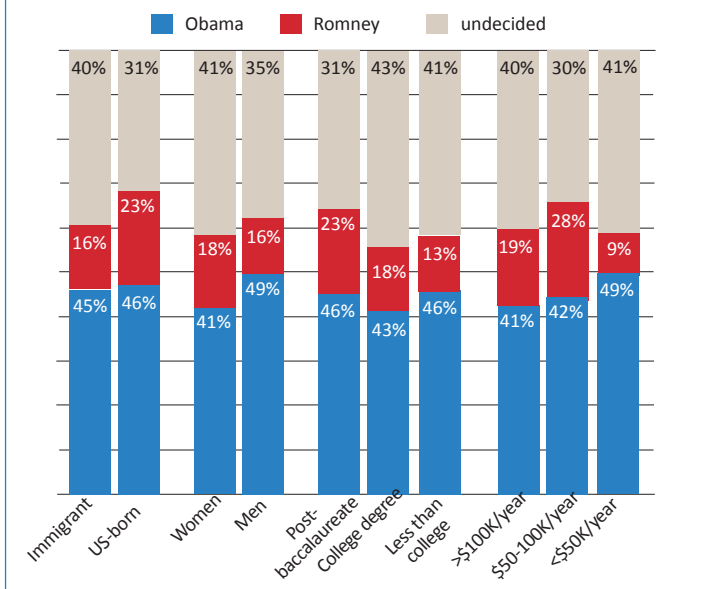
Which Koreans were most inclined to vote Democratic in 2012? As an initial cut, Figure 5 shows how the Korean-American vote sorts along several key demographic markers: nativity (born in the U.S. or in Korea), gender, educational attainment, and family income. There is some movement along these common divisions in electoral choice. The rates of voter uncertainty are quite a bit higher among naturalized Korean Americans than among their U.S.-born counterparts; this difference is largely offset by somewhat higher rates of support for Romney among the U.S.-born. By gender, President Obama’s support is stronger among Korean American men than women, reversing the gender gap found in the general electorate. By education and income, Governor Romney finds very little support among Korean Americans with less than a college education or those earning less than \$50,000 a year in garnished family wages. Romney’s highest support levels are found among middle-class Korean Americans (making between \$50,000 and \$100,000 a year) and among those with a post-baccalaureate degree.

While these differences are suggestive, they are for the most part modest in degree and it is hard to discern which of these effects hold sway over which others. A standard way of isolating the independent influence of any one factor, taking into account the influence of a range of other factors is through multivariate statistical regression analysis. In this and ensuing sections of this paper, the main results from deploying this method of analysis are shown. For the sake of simplicity, the analysis is focused only on explaining Korean Americans’ preferences for Mitt Romney or Barack Obama, leaving aside the very high proportion of Korean Americans who were undecided between these two major party candidates.

The analysis shown here examines the demographic factors in Figure 5 – gender, education, family income, and nativity – along with age and English language proficiency. Once these various potential influences on voting are taken together, only one measure remains statistically significant: education. As Figure A1 in the Appendix shows, the predicted effect that a Korean American with less than a high school degree will vote for Obama (roughly a 90 percent chance) is markedly higher



Figure 5: Vote Choice by Key Demographics (Korean-Americans)



than that of a Korean American with a post-baccalaureate degree (roughly a 60 percent chance). Except for this education effect, the differences we see in Figure 5 (between U.S.-born and Korean-born respondents, Korean American men and women, and mid-range wage earners and others) effectively wash away in a multivariate context. Even the education effect largely erodes when some of the political factors in the next sections are included in the statistical analysis. Moreover, the minimal effect among these demographic factors remain essentially unchanged even when other possible demographic measures are included in the analysis including unemployment, home ownership, marital status, and geography (e.g., whether or not respondents lived in a battleground state).⁴ On the whole, then, the 2012 NAAS finds that demographics were not a determinative factor in the 2012 Korean American vote.

Party Identification and the 2012 Vote

For political scientists, the limited power of demographic factors alone in explaining voting behavior is no surprise. Typically, the most visible element of a voter's electoral choice is found in his or her partisanship. At least since *The American Voter* was published in 1960, a canonical result has been that the political behavior of an individual starts with one's allegiance to a political party.⁵ Party identification lies at one end of the "funnel of causality" that leads, at the other end, to a vote for Barack Obama or Mitt Romney. In a synopsis of the field of political behavior, Donald Kinder and David Sears note, "party identification remains the single most important determinant of individual voting decisions."⁶

Indeed, when one's identification as Democrat or Republican is included in the multivariate regression on vote choice between Obama and Romney, they are the only factors that are statistically significant; all the demographic factors (including education) recede into the background and no longer help to differentiate between Korean American Obama and Romney supporters. Figure A2 in the Appendix graphically represents this relationship of party identification to vote choice. The predicted probability of Korean Americans who identify as Democrats voting for Obama – holding all other factors equal – is well above 90 percent and similarly, the likelihood of Korean Americans identifying as Republicans voting for Obama is less than 50 percent. Thus, party identification tells us a lot about which Korean Americans express a preference for Obama over Romney.

Figure 6: Party Identification, by Ethnic/National Origin Group

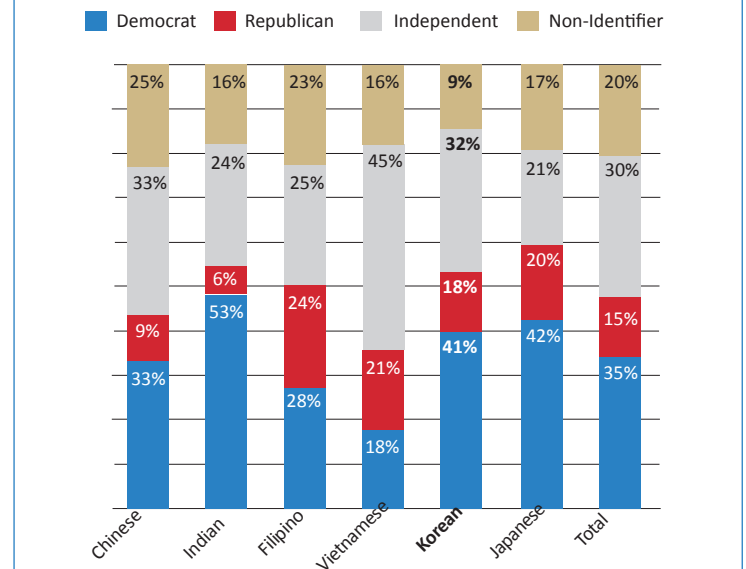
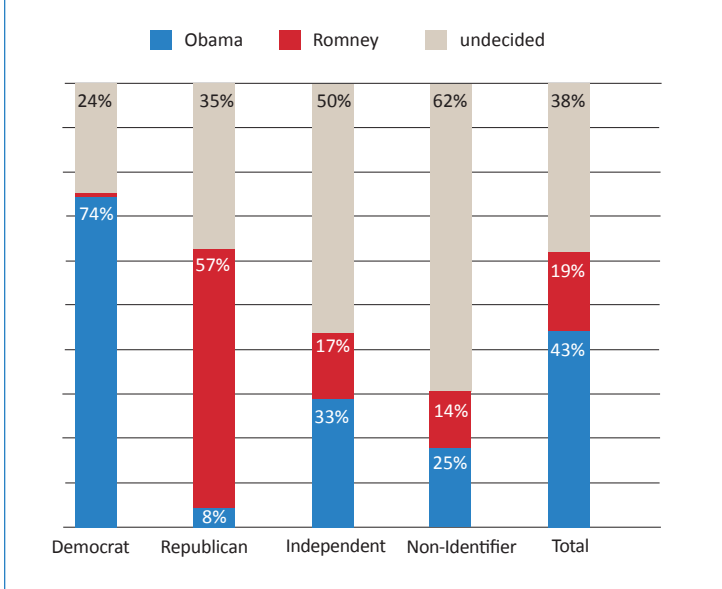


Figure 6 is equally notable for a second and perhaps more striking pattern: Asian Americans in the 2012 NAAS are just as likely to be non-partisans as they are to identify with a major party. Fully 30 percent identify as Independents and another 20 percent are "non-identifiers" – those who give a reply like "I don't know," "I don't think in terms of political parties," or simply refuse to answer the question. Among Korean Americans, despite the high rate of voting for Obama, only 41 percent opt to identify with the Democratic Party and another 41 percent are reluctant to ally with either major party in a U.S. political system defined by two-party competition.⁷

Figure 7: Party Identification and Vote Choice (Korean Americans)



The apparent paradox between voting for Obama and opting not to identify with the Democratic Party is somewhat clearer when the intended vote choices of Korean American respondents are compared to their party identification, shown in Figure 7. Self-identified Democrats overwhelmingly favored Obama to Romney and self-identified Republicans also heavily preferred Romney to Obama. For these partisans, moreover, rates of uncertainty over whom they will vote for are discernibly lower than for all Korean Americans (especially among self-identified Democrats). Yet as was just noted, a very high proportion chose not to identify as either a Democrat or a Republican. Among these non-partisans, rates of uncertainty between Obama and Romney are extremely high. Among Korean American Independents, half are undecided; among non-identifiers, the figure jumps even higher to 62 percent. Thus while Korean Americans exhibit a high level of political cohesion in the voting booth, this cohesion comes from some other source than their steadfast devotion to a political party.

The findings from the 2012 NAAS on partisanship and the 2012 vote – specifically, the juxtaposition of high rates of partisan voting together with the absence of high rates of party identification – are consistent with previous scholarship on the relatively weak role of political parties in the political incorporation of immigrant-based groups like Asian Americans and Latinos.⁸ In the 2012 NAAS, respondents were asked, “Over the past 12 months, were you contacted by anyone to register or to vote in this year’s election?” Only 29 percent of Asian Americans (and 28 percent

of Korean Americans) responded affirmatively. By comparison, in the 2008 National Election Study (ANES) – the gold-standard survey on voting and public opinion in the American general public – fully 46 percent of respondents reported being mobilized to vote or register to vote. Moreover in the ANES, 43 percent of the American public reported being contacted by a political party about the election. By contrast, only 7 percent of 2012 NAAS respondents reported being contacted by a political candidate or campaign and 8 percent reported being contacted by a political party (for Korean Americans, the relative ratios are 10 percent and 6 percent, respectively).

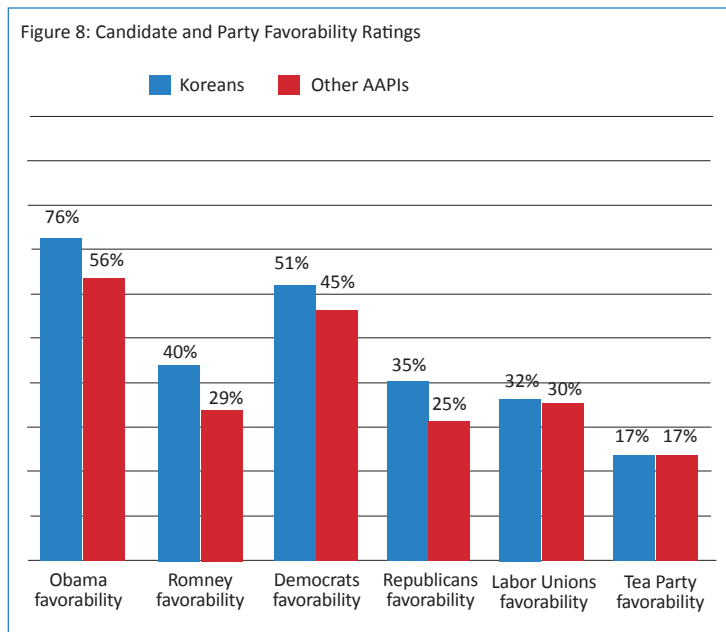
Candidate Favorability and the 2012 Vote

Given the incomplete accounting based on demographic factors and party identification, what were other keys to the Korean American vote in 2012? The two remaining sections on the 2012 vote present two important additional elements: candidate favorability and issues. On candidates, it is important to recall President Obama’s high popularity with Asian Americans in general and with Korean Americans more specifically. In the 2012 NAAS, Obama’s presidential approval ratings were a soaring 73 percent among Asian Americans and Korean Americans alike. This is especially impressive given that approval ratings for the president among the general public struggled to reach 50 percent during the same time period.⁹

Not surprisingly, the NAAS also shows a significantly higher rate of consistent partisan voting between elections among Democrats than Republicans. Korean Americans who reported voting for Obama in 2008 were overwhelmingly more likely to report that they intended to vote for Obama again in 2012: 69 percent of 2008 Obama voters favored Obama in 2012; 3 percent favored Romney; and 28 percent were undecided. By contrast, Korean Americans who reported voting for Senator John McCain in 2008 were a bit more mixed about how they would vote in 2012: only 51 percent of 2008 McCain voters favored Mitt Romney in 2012; 9 percent favored Obama; and 40 percent were undecided.

Perhaps the most telling marker of Obama’s special relationship to Korean Americans is in the relative favorability ratings given to the major party candidates and various political organizations. 2012 NAAS asked how favorably impressed respondents were by President Obama, Governor Romney, the Democrats and the Republicans in Congress, the Tea Party, and Labor Unions. The vital finding in Figure 8 is the difference in favorability ratings between each major political party and their presidential candidates. For Korean Americans, 76 percent held a favorable impression of

President Obama, a much higher level than the (still) high 51 percent favorability rating for Democrat Party elected officials in Congress. By contrast, the equivalent favorability ratings for Romney and the Republicans in Congress is far more similar (40 percent to 35 percent). Figure 8 also shows that this “favorability gap” between candidate and party is especially large for Korean Americans, as compared to other Asian American respondents in the 2012 NAAS.



To convey this relationship as precisely as possible, a measure of net favorability – how favorably Korean-Americans evaluated President Obama, net of how favorably they evaluated the Democrats in Congress – can be constructed and added to our multivariate statistical estimates of the two-way Obama-Romney vote in 2012. Even after party identification as a Democrat or Republican is factored into the results, this measure of net favorability remains a significant predictor of Korean Americans’ likelihood of voting for President Obama (shown in Figure A3 in the Appendix). Admittedly, for Korean Americans who rate the Democrats in Congress similarly to President Obama (a net favorability score of “0”), the likelihood of voting for Obama is already above 80 percent. Yet for those who rate Obama more positively than his fellow Democrats in Congress, that proportion quickly jumps to well above 90 percent.

Issues and the 2012 Vote

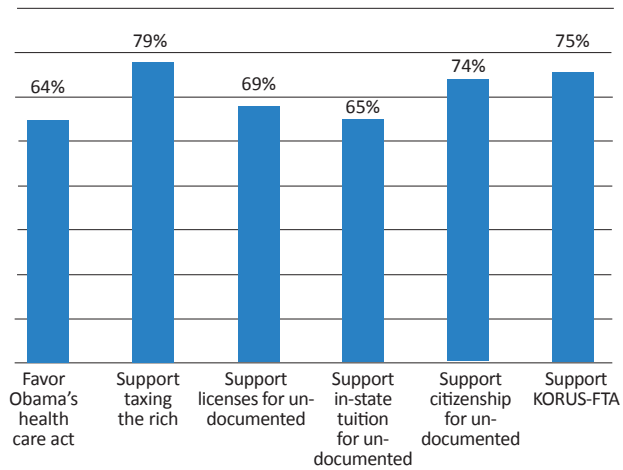
A final key to the 2012 Korean American vote that emerges from the National Asian American Survey is the differentiating role

of issues. One of the earliest scholarly articles on the politics of Latinos and Asian Americans hypothesized that there are two ways that issues might pull a group like Korean Americans to identify with the Republican Party and its candidates.¹⁰ The first among these is that largely immigrant-based groups might ally with the Republican Party out of an abiding set of foreign policy interests. The second is that immigrant groups that advance in material well-being are also likelier to support the Republican Party and its candidates. These hypotheses find little evidence from the 2012 NAAS data. To the contrary, Korean Americans on average are quite liberal across a wide range of policy areas and their liberal policy views were guides to their voting behavior in 2012. In this last section, this relationship between issues and voting behavior is shown in four diverse policy areas: health care reform, fiscal policy, immigration, and trade policy.

Health care reform – specifically the 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA) – was in many respects President Obama’s signature piece of legislation in his first term of office. Certainly, the Republican Party’s primary candidates made it clear that their opposition to what they termed “Obamacare” would be the focal point of their campaign. The 2012 NAAS asked respondents if they have a “generally favorable or generally unfavorable” view of the ACA. As Figure 9 shows, nearly two-thirds of Korean Americans either “strongly favor” or “somewhat favor” the ACA. (Among other AAPI respondents in the 2012 NAAS, roughly 60 percent favored the ACA.) Furthermore, Figure A4 in the Appendix shows that, controlling for demographic factors and party identification in a multivariate statistical regression, this support for the 2010 health care reform legislation is a significant predictor of Korean Americans’ likelihood of voting for Obama in 2012. In fact, the effect of Korean Americans’ opinions on the ACA was about as strong as any single factor examined in this paper as a predictor of support for Obama.

A third policy area that received somewhat faltering attention in the 2012 campaign was immigration reform. The 2012 NAAS focused on three policy proposals on issues affecting the large population of undocumented immigrants in the United States. Specifically, respondents were asked whether “undocumented or illegal immigrants should be allowed to get driver’s licenses ... pay in-state tuition at public universities ... have an opportunity to eventually become U.S. citizens.” Each of these approaches show significant support among Korean Americans, with the idea of a pathway to legal citizenship receiving the highest support. Notably, Korean Americans in each case supported the more liberal policy approach to immigration reform. Moreover, their

Figure 9: Korean Americans' Policy Views



support was markedly higher than that found among other AAPI respondents in the 2012 NAAS.¹¹ With immigration policy, the effects of Korean Americans' issued opinions on their support for Barack Obama are somewhat more modest, but nonetheless remain statistically significant, even after taking into account key demographic factors and partisanship (see Appendix Figure A6).

Lastly, the 2012 NAAS asked its Korean American respondents two items regarding U.S. policy toward the Koreans. One item asked if respondents agreed or disagreed that "[t]he recent Korea-US Free Trade Agreement will benefit the economies of both countries." The second one asked about reactions to the statement, "The United States should increase humanitarian food aid to North Korea even if it means keeping Kim Jong-un in power." On support for humanitarian aid, the opinions of Korean Americans are rather mixed, with 42 percent favoring the idea, 49 percent opposing it, and 10 percent opting to neither endorse nor object to it. By contrast, agreement that the KORUS-FTA would be mutually beneficial to both the United States and South Korea was widespread, with three out of four Korean Americans assenting to that view. This high level of support for the KORUS-FTA turns out to strongly predict whether or not Korean Americans, controlling for other factors, are likely to have voted for President Obama, an effect that is shown graphically in Figure A7 in the Appendix. The opinions on humanitarian aid to North Korea – conditioned on Kim Jong-un's hold on political power – proved not to be a significant predictor of Korean Americans' vote choice in 2012.

Summary and Implications

This paper has delved into the heavily Democratic 2012 Korean American vote. Nearly five decades of demographic changes have led to an Asian American population that is increasingly an electoral force with which to be reckoned. Korean Americans are an important element of this growing Asian American electorate, with a population that continues to grow through immigration. The story behind the high rates of support for the Democrat Barack Obama among Koreans (and Asian Americans more generally), is not a tidy one in which partisan voting is guided by demographic foundation stones like one's socioeconomic or immigration status, or by the ruling force of one's identification with a political party. Specifically, analysis of data from the 2012 National Asian American Survey finds three key characteristics of the 2012 Korean American vote:

- First, in addition to the high levels of support for Barack Obama over Mitt Romney, a sizeable proportion are indecisive between the two major party presidential candidates and ambivalent in their willingness to identify with either the Democratic and Republican parties.
- Second, Korean Americans exhibit a special bond with President Obama, net of how favorably they view the Democratic Party.
- Third, the Korean American vote is strongly influenced by their views across a broad cross-section of policy issues like health care reform, immigration reform, fiscal reform, and U.S. trade policy with South Korea.

These elements of the 2012 vote carry three critical implications for the future role of Korean Americans in electoral politics:

- First, given the growing size of the Korean American (and Asian American) population, this is a segment of the electorate that both Democratic and Republican parties can ill-afford to ignore.
- Second, notwithstanding the strong support for Barack Obama in 2012, the Democratic Party cannot take the partisan consolidation of Korean Americans for granted. Many Korean Americans appear to support Obama the candidate, and not the party he headlined. Furthermore, a solid majority of Korean Americans still choose not to identify with the Democratic Party.



- Third, based on the analysis in this paper, one of the most fruitful ways to appeal to Korean American voters is through their issue-based interests. In 2012, Korean Americans took views on issues that favored the Democratic Party. For the Republican Party to make a serious bid for a larger share of the Korean American vote in future elections, they will have to consider moderating some of their more extreme views on issues like health care reform, progressive taxation, and immigration reform.

Appendix

Additional details on the 2012 National Asian American Survey

The 2012 NAAS is the second of two comprehensive and groundbreaking surveys of the political attitudes and behaviors of Asians in the United States. The first survey, the 2008 NAAS, interviewed 5,159 persons in eight languages by telephone between August 18, 2008 and October 29, 2008. The 2008 NAAS aimed to have a sufficiently large representation of the six largest Asian ethnic/national origin groups and its final sample yielded 1,350 Chinese, 1,150 Asian Indian, 719 Vietnamese, 614 Korean, 603 Filipino, and 541 Japanese origin respondents, with 182 additional respondents from other countries of Asia. The 2012 NAAS interviewed 6,257 persons by telephone between July 31, 2012 and October 20, 2012. Surveys were conducted by telephone in eleven languages (English, Cantonese, Hindi, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Japanese, Tagalog, Thai, and Vietnamese). The sampling for the 2012 NAAS was broader than the 2008 NAAS, with oversamples of Native Hawaiian Pacific Islanders, Cambodians, and Hmong and companion samples of White, African American, and Latino respondents. The sub-group breakdown of our Asian American sample was 827 Asian Indians, 743 Chinese, 633 Koreans, 599 Filipinos, 537 Vietnamese, 525 Japanese, 319

Hmong, 305 Cambodians, and 251 additional respondents from other Asian backgrounds. The Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander sample was 419 Hawaiians, 104 Samoans, and 48 other NHPs. The non-AAPI comparison samples were 350 Whites, 309 African Americans, and 308 Latinos.

A description of and background materials on the National Asian American Survey project are available at www.naasurvey.com. The main findings of the 2008 NAAS are also contained in Janelle Wong, S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, Taeku Lee, and Jane Junn, *Asian American Political Participation* (Russell Sage Foundation Press, 2011). Junn, Lee, Ramakrishnan, and Wong were co-Principal Investigators of the 2008 NAAS; Lee and Ramakrishnan were co-Principal Investigators of the 2012 NAAS.

Details on the multivariate statistical analysis

The figures in this appendix show the predicted probabilities of key factors on Korean Americans' likelihood of voting for Obama. The likelihood of voting for Obama is measured as the two-way preference between Obama and Romney among those Korean Americans who expressed a choice between these major party candidates. Figure A1 specifies the following possible demographic sources of explanation for this choice between Obama and Romney: the respondent's age, gender, education, family income, nativity, and English language proficiency. Figure A2 adds to these factors whether respondents identify as a Democrat or Republican. The remaining figures specify the above demographic factors, these two measures of party identification, and then add each additional factor examined in the respective figures (e.g., net favorability, policy opinions). The predicted probabilities are calculated by holding each of the remaining explaining variables in the statistical model at their mean values using the *prgen* command in Stata version 12.



Figure A1: The Effect of Education on Likelihood of Voting for Obama

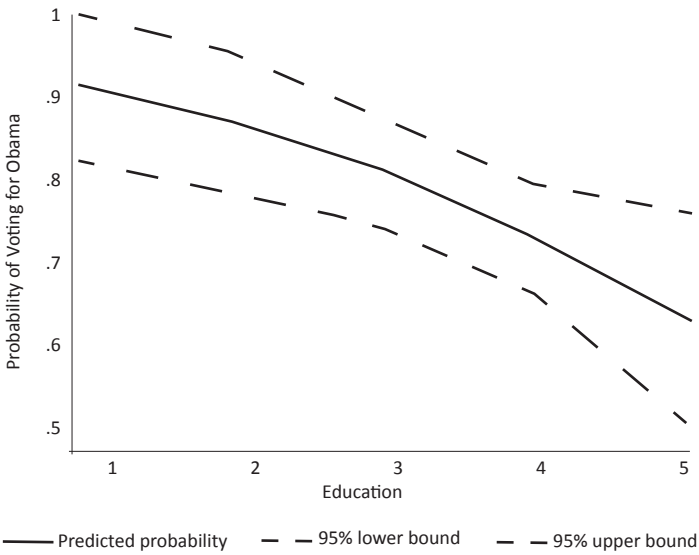


Figure A3: Obama's Net Favorability on Likelihood of Voting for Obama

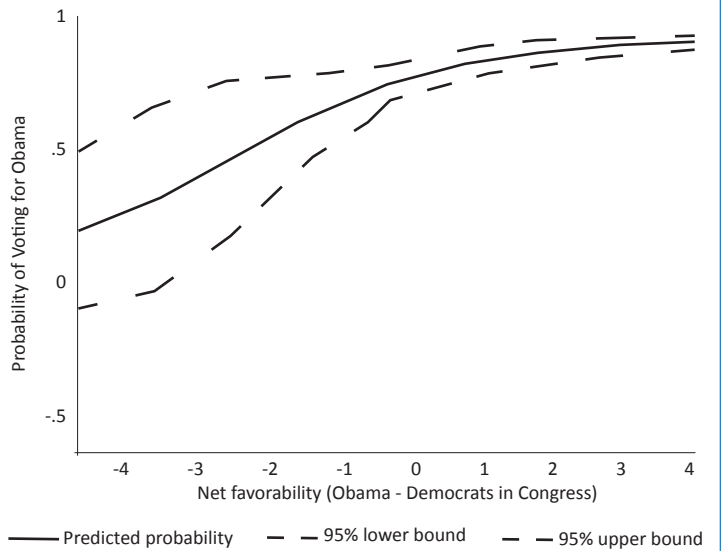


Figure A2: Effect of Party Identification on Likelihood of Voting for Obama

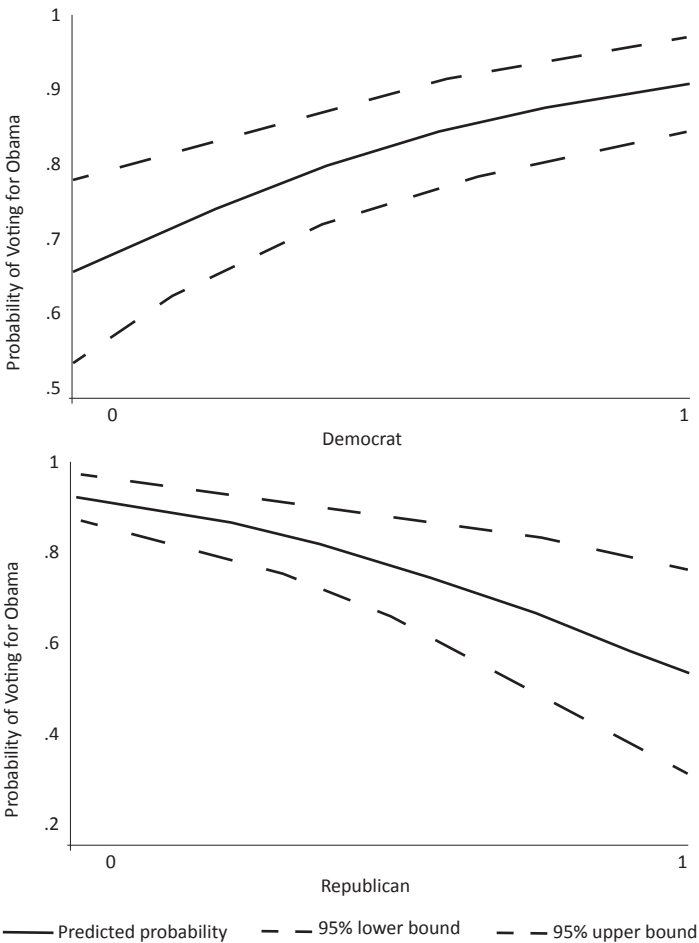


Figure A4: Support for Affordable Care Act on Likelihood of Voting for Obama

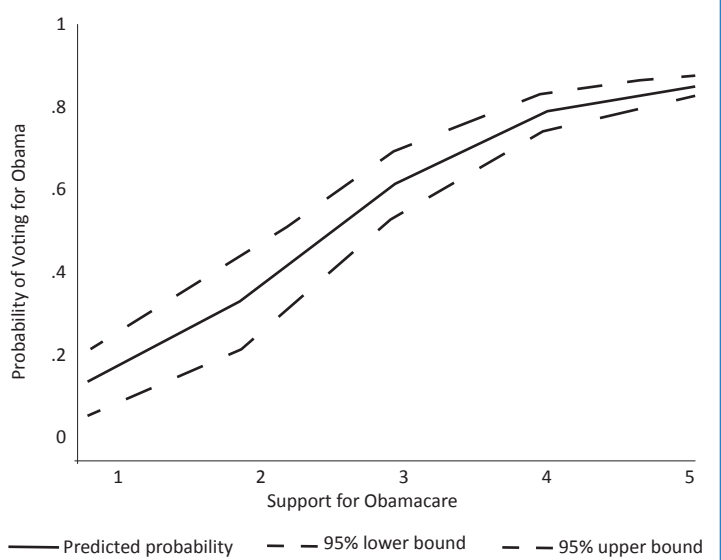




Figure A5: Support for Taxing the Rich on Likelihood of Voting for Obama

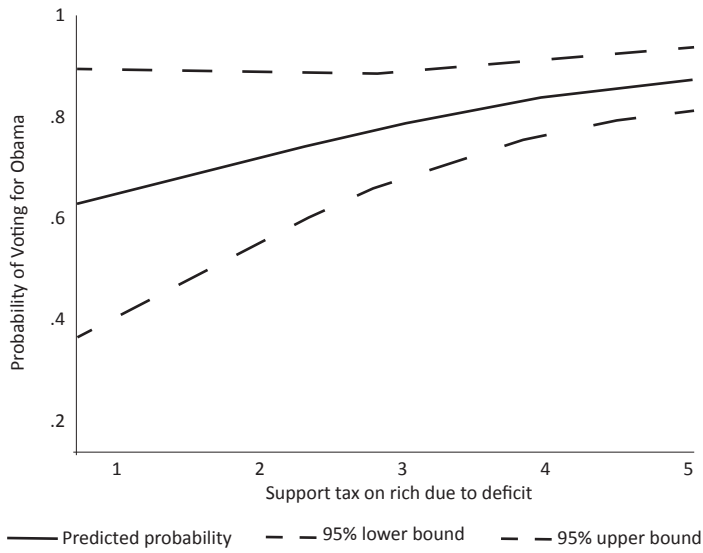


Figure A7: Support for KORUS-FTA on Likelihood of Voting for Obama

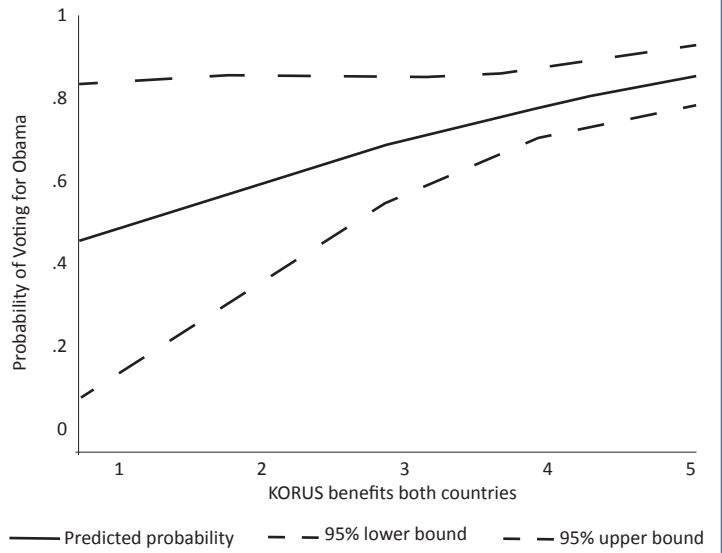
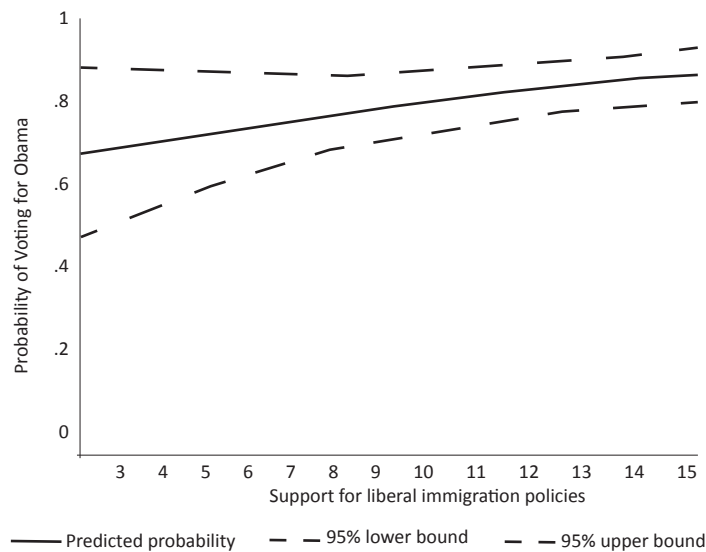


Figure A6: Support for Liberal Immigration Reform on Likelihood of Voting for Obama





Endnotes

- ¹ See, for instance, Charles Murray, "Why Aren't Asians Republicans?" *AEI Ideas* (November 26, 2012), at <http://www.aei-ideas.org/2012/11/why-arent-asians-republicans/>; David Brooks, "The Party of Work," *The New York Times* (November 8, 2012), at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/09/opinion/brooks-the-party-of-work.html>; Richard Posner, "Why Did Asian Americans Mostly Vote for President Obama," *Slate* (November 26, 2012), http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/view_from_chicago/2012/11/why_did_asian_americans_vote_for_president_obama.html.
- ² http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/elections/how_groups_voted/voted_92.html. Accessed December 20th, 2012. This was the first available exit poll data on Asian Americans by a national exit poll. Prior to 2002, exit polls were conducted by the Voter Research and Surveys, a consortium of ABC News, CBS News, CNN, and NBC News.
- ³ On these early studies, see Cain, Bruce E., D. Roderick Kiewiet, and Carole J. Uhlaner. 1991. "The Acquisition of Partisanship by Latinos and Asian Americans." *American Journal of Political Science* 35:390-422; Uhlaner, Carole J., Bruce Cain, and D. Roderick Kiewiet. 1989. "Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities in the 1980s." *Political Behavior* 17:195-231.
- ⁴ The effects of other demographic divisions, such as age, employment status, geography (both state of residence and residence in a battleground state), and language proficiency on the 2012 Korean American vote are either minimal or non-significant.
- ⁵ Angus Campbell, et al. 1960. *The American Voter*. John Wiley.
- ⁶ Kinder, Donald and David Sears. 1985. "Public Opinion and Political Action." In Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson, eds., *Handbook of Social Psychology*, vol. 2. New York: Random House.
- ⁷ In the 2008 NAAS, this reluctance to identify with either the Democrats or Republicans was even higher, with 55% of Asian Americans as a group exhibiting some form of non-partisanship (20% Independents and 35% non-identifiers) and 45% of Korean Americans (11% Independents and 34% non-identifiers). The higher rates of "non-identification" in 2008 are most likely due to a minor change in question wording between the two surveys.
- ⁸ See, e.g., Janelle Wong, *Democracy's Promise: Immigrants and American Civic Institutions* (University of Michigan Press, 2006); Thomas Kim, *The Racial Logic of Politics: Asian Americans and Party Competition* (Temple University Press, 2006); Zoltan Hajnal and Taeku Lee, *Why Americans Don't Join the Party: Race, Immigration, and the Failure (of Political Parties) to Engage the Electorate* (Princeton University Press, 2011).
- ⁹ See, e.g., <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx>.
- ¹⁰ Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlaner (1991). See endnote 3.
- ¹¹ Only 48% of other AAPIs were somewhat or strongly supportive of allowing undocumented immigrants to receive driver's licenses; 50% liked the idea that undocumented immigrants should be allowed to pay in-state tuition for college; 63% supported a pathway to citizenship.

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