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# Beyond Symbolic Representation: A Comparison of the Electoral Pathways and Policy Priorities of Asian American and Latino Elected Officials

Kim Geron<sup>†</sup>

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*This is an exploratory study of the impact of Latino and Asian American elected officials on their respective groups' political incorporation. The authors argue that Latino and Asian American elected officials' paths to elected office do not always fit the biracial coalition model of political incorporation for minorities, and instead suggest a reconstructed model to explain the distinctive character of Latino and Asian American group efforts toward political representation.*

*The results of this paper are based on information gathered from two nationwide mail surveys of Latino elected officials (LEOs) and Asian American elected officials (AAEOs). The 2000 National Asian American and Latino Elected Officials Survey was conducted in Fall 2000 with interviews of elected officials held in 2001. The 1999 National Asian American Elected Officials Survey was conducted in May 1999 with interviews of elected officials held throughout 2000. This paper focuses on analyzing the means by which Latinos and Asian Americans have achieved political power, their sources of community support, and the resources they needed to successfully win office. It also examines current Latina/o and Asian American office-holders and explores whether they direct policy benefits to their respective communities.*

*The results of these surveys indicate that Latino and Asian American politicians are on average older, more financially secure, and better educated than their respective general populations. They also are more liberal ideologically than the general populations. The analysis further*

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*reveals that the percentage of ethnic population is a stronger determinant for the election of Latino politicians than for Asian American politicians. A significant number of LEOs aim their policies to benefit primarily the Latino community, whereas AAEOs focus on broader community issues due to their districts' demographics. Ethnicity, however, can play a significant role for AAEOs, particularly in raising campaign contributions from their communities. This paper concludes that despite internal heterogeneity and structural barriers that have limited both groups' political advancement, Latino and Asian American political activists are using a variety of methods to achieve political incorporation and policy responsiveness at the local and state levels.*

#### INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Latino and Asian American elected officials is transforming racial and ethnic politics in numerous local and state political arenas. According to the 2000 U.S Census, Latinos and Asian Americans have constituted the fastest growing groups in the United States during the past decade. Their rise in elected representation parallels their demographic growth over the past decade. This is particularly evident in key states such as California, Texas, and New York, where both groups have increased both their populations and elected representation. The growth in the number of Asian American and Latino elected officials in the last two decades has been overshadowed by the portrayal of their communities as "sleeping giants" in state level politics.<sup>1</sup> This article addresses the main question of whether or not recent Asian American and Latino candidates and elected officials have any impact on their respective minority group's electoral mobilization and policy priorities. This study finds that recent candidates from both groups are adding new dimensions to the campaign strategies and demographic characteristics associated with other disenfranchised groups, such as women, gays and lesbians, and African Americans.

This article also represents a preliminary study on the ways in which Latino elected officials (LEOs) and Asian American elected officials (AAEOs) impact the political incorporation processes of their respective groups. The term "political incorporation" is defined as "the extent to which group interests are effectively represented in policy making."<sup>2</sup> The three ascending levels of political incorporation are exclusion (little or no incorporation), formal representation (minority office-holding), and substantial authority and influence (institutionalization of minority political incorporation).<sup>3</sup> Previous studies have found that none of the minority

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1. See Don T. Nakanishi, *When Numbers Do Not Add Up: Asian Pacific Americans and California Politics*, in 2 RACIAL AND ETHNIC POLITICS IN CALIFORNIA 3, 3-44 (Michael B. Preston et al. eds., 1998).

2. Rufus P. Browning et al., *Can People of Color Achieve Power in City Government? The Setting and the Issues*, in RACIAL POLITICS IN AMERICAN CITIES 9 (Rufus P. Browning et al. eds., 2d ed. 1997).

3. See Rufus Browning et al., *Taken In or Just Taken? Political Incorporation of African Americans in Cities*, in MINORITY POLITICS AT THE MILLENNIUM 131 (Richard A. Keiser & Katherine Underwood eds., 2000) [hereinafter *Taken In*].

communities have attained substantive influence in local and state politics.<sup>4</sup> This article will primarily focus on the factors needed for Latinos and Asian Americans to gain elected office. As will be discussed in the respective subsections on the 2000 National Asian American and Latino Elected Officials Survey and the 1999 National Asian American Elected Officials Survey Findings, such factors include district demographics, campaign strategies, extent of coalition building, and the reliance on community support. The subsection on Asian American and Latino Elected Officials' Impact on Political Mobilization supports previous studies that have found that the presence of a minority candidate positively impacts the represented community's political mobilization (e.g., voter turnout and campaign contributions). The respective subsections on Policy Priorities of Asian and Latino Candidates illustrate group awareness of candidates of their respective community's concerns.

## I. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Beyond the Black-White Paradigm: Latino and Asian American Struggles for Political Incorporation*

Political representation is an important goal that has been at the center of the struggle for political equality by people of color, women, and other historically disadvantaged groups. Political representation refers to a prescribed relationship between elected officials and their constituents. There are four different dimensions of representation: formal, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive representation.<sup>5</sup> Formal representation refers to the representative's acting with authority through an institutional arrangement on behalf of others. Descriptive representation is the degree to which a representative reflects the characteristics of the constituents that he or she represents. Descriptive representation for people of color matches the race of the representative and his or her constituents.<sup>6</sup> Symbolic representation is the extent to which a representative is accepted by his or her constituents as being "from the community." The highest form of representation is substantive representation, through which a representative acts "in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them."<sup>7</sup> The main component of substantive representation is policy responsiveness, which requires that legislators "be aware of and sensitive to the policy preferences and wishes of the represented and implement policies that reflect their interests."<sup>8</sup> There are, however, limitations to what an individual representative can accomplish for one's

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4. See *Taken In*, *supra* note 3, at 150-51. See generally Richard A. Keiser, *Analyzing Urban Regime Change: Black Power, White Backlash, and Shades of Gray*, in *MINORITY POLITICS AT THE MILLENNIUM* 157-177 (Richard A. Keiser & Katherine Underwood eds., 2000).

5. See HANNA F. PITKIN, *THE CONCEPT OF REPRESENTATION* 11-12 (1967).

6. See CAROL SWAIN, *BLACK FACES, BLACK INTERESTS: THE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN CONGRESS* 5 (1993).

7. PITKIN, *supra* note 5, at 209.

8. KENNY J. WHITBY, *THE COLOR OF REPRESENTATION: CONGRESSIONAL BEHAVIOR AND BLACK INTERESTS* 5 (1997).

constituents in a democracy, where competing interests and priorities vie for the attention of lawmakers at all levels of government. The ascendancy to local electoral leadership, particularly for minority legislators, has historically not always benefited the constituents that helped put them into office.<sup>9</sup>

An important weapon in the efforts for representation by minorities was the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The Act abolished formal structures of intimidation and exclusion of African Americans in the South and Latinos in the Southwest, such as the literacy test, poll tax, and other discriminatory practices.<sup>10</sup> The 1975 amendment to the Voting Rights Act extended basic protections of the Act to specific language minorities.<sup>11</sup> African American elected officials attempted, in the aftermath of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, to build African American political empowerment with the goal of achieving proportional representation to the African American population in the South.<sup>12</sup> The challenge was to organize and turn out sufficient numbers of African Americans to vote African Americans into office to achieve parity with whites in the electoral arena. However, changing the direction of government to provide equitable policy benefits to those previously disenfranchised required a more substantial change than, for example, replacing official A with official B. In many cities, financial crises, limited resources, and strong opposition from economic and political elites made the job of governing for African American leaders problematic in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>13</sup>

The rapid growth of Latino populations in the Sunbelt, Midwest, and on the East Coast, and of Asian American populations throughout the West and East Coast states in the past few decades has catapulted both groups into the electoral arena. The emergence of the modern Latino and Asian American civil rights and nationalist movements in the 1960s and 1970s has forced open the political process to previously disenfranchised groups.<sup>14</sup> Both Latinos and Asian Americans have used a variety of

9. See ADOLPH REED, JR., STIRRINGS IN THE JUG: BLACK POLITICS IN THE POST-SEGREGATION ERA 79-115 (1999). See also Robert C. Smith, *Recent Elections and Black Politics: The Maturation or Death of Black Politics?*, 23 PS: POLITICAL SCIENCE AND POLITICS 160, 160-62 (1990); Jaime A. Regalado, *Minority Political Incorporation in Los Angeles: A Broader Consideration*, in 2 RACIAL AND ETHNIC POLITICS IN CALIFORNIA 381, 381-409 (Michael B. Preston et al. eds., 1998).

10. See Chandler Davidson and Bernard Grofman, *Editors' Introduction to QUIET REVOLUTION IN THE SOUTH: THE IMPACT OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT, 1965-1990* at 3 (Chandler Davidson & Bernard Grofman eds., 1994).

11. See Rodolfo O. de la Garza & Louis DeSipio, *Save the Baby, Change the Bathwater, and Scrub the Tub: Latino Electoral Participation after Twenty Years of Voting Rights Act Coverage*, in PURSUING POWER: LATINOS AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM 72-78 (F. Chris Garcia ed., 1997).

12. See LAWRENCE J. HANKS, THE STRUGGLE FOR BLACK POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT IN THREE GEORGIA COUNTIES xi-xii (1987).

13. See REED, *supra* note 9.

14. See Leobardo F. Estrada et al., *Chicanos in the United States: A History of Exploitation and Resistance*, in LATINOS AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM 28-64 (F. Chris Garcia ed., 1988); THE PUERTO RICAN MOVEMENT: VOICES FROM THE DIASPORA (Andrés Torres & José E. Velázquez eds., 1998); CARLOS MUÑOZ JR., YOUTH, IDENTITY AND POWER: THE CHICANO MOVEMENT (1989); James S. Lai, *Asian Pacific Americans and the Pan-Ethnic Question*, in MINORITY POLITICS AT THE MILLENNIUM 218 (Richard A. Keiser & Katherine Underwood eds., 2000) [hereinafter *APAs and the Pan-Ethnic Question*]. See generally JAMES JENNINGS & MONTE RIVERA, PUERTO RICAN POLITICS IN URBAN

methods to gain entrance to institutions that had excluded them, but both groups remain underrepresented. For Latinos, it is still difficult to overcome inequalities in employment, unequal access to education, limited opportunities for social advancement, and a cultural bias that privileged the language, customs, and values of whites. Rodney E. Hero's "two-tiered pluralism" aptly describes the system's formal political inclusion of minorities, while minorities actually remain marginalized and stigmatized.<sup>15</sup> Asian Americans have also faced barriers to participation in mainstream political institutions, particularly due to language and non-citizenship issues.<sup>16</sup>

One approach to understand the ascension to power of minorities is the theory of political incorporation, which explains how local movements demand the power of political equality and their ability to achieve it.<sup>17</sup> Political incorporation is a widely used term to measure the extent to which group interests are effectively represented in governmental policy making.<sup>18</sup> The notion of political incorporation is a central idea in the study of politics. When a group is politically incorporated it has the opportunity to influence public policy.<sup>19</sup> Political incorporation theory offers a useful framework to analyze the efforts of electoral mobilization and policy implementation at the local level. The importance for minority groups of forming biracial coalitions with white liberals, and the presence of a large racial/ethnic population base are two factors that have been found necessary for substantial political incorporation, particularly for African Americans.<sup>20</sup> These struggles have been discussed in previous studies.<sup>21</sup>

According to the Browning, Marshall, and Tabb studies of racial politics in ten Northern California cities, Asians and Latinos improved their status in local government, moving from a limited presence and achieving close to near parity in city employment with their local population. However, they continue to lag behind in electoral representation.<sup>22</sup> For example, in 1994, even though Asian Americans in Daly City were more than 42 percent of the population, they filled only one of five seats on the city council. In San Francisco, Asian Americans were more than 29

AMERICA (1984).

15. RODNEY E. HERO, *LATINOS AND THE U.S. POLITICAL SYSTEM: TWO-TIERED PLURALISM* (1992).

16. See Paul M. Ong & Don T. Nakanishi, *Becoming Citizens, Becoming Voters: The Naturalization and Political Participation of Asian Pacific Immigrants*, in *REFRAMING THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE* 275 (Bill Ong Hing & Ronald Lee eds., 1996).

17. See RUFUS P. BROWNING ET AL., *PROTEST IS NOT ENOUGH: THE STRUGGLE OF BLACKS AND HISPANICS FOR EQUALITY IN URBAN POLITICS* 240 (1984) [hereinafter BROWNING ET AL., *PROTEST IS NOT ENOUGH*].

18. See Rufus P. Browning et al., *Minority Mobilization in Ten Cities: Failures and Successes*, in *RACIAL POLITICS IN AMERICAN CITIES* 9 (Rufus P. Browning et al. eds., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1997) [hereinafter BROWNING, *RACIAL POLITICS* (1997)].

19. See ARTHUR L. STINCHCOMBE, *CONSTRUCTING SOCIAL THEORIES* (1987).

20. See Rufus P. Browning et al., *Minority Mobilization in Ten Cities: Failures and Successes*, in *RACIAL POLITICS IN AMERICAN CITIES* 21-22 (Rufus P. Browning et al. eds., 1990) [hereinafter BROWNING, *RACIAL POLITICS* (1990)].

21. See BROWNING, *RACIAL POLITICS* (1990), *supra* note 20; BROWNING, *RACIAL POLITICS* (1997), *supra* note 18; *Taken In*, *supra* note 3, at 131-56.

22. See BROWNING, *RACIAL POLITICS* (1997), *supra* note 18, at 22-24.

percent of the population, but only held one of eleven seats. In San Jose, the largest city in the study, Latinos were more than 26 percent of the population, but held only one of eleven seats on the city council. Since then, there have been some incremental improvements, including the election of a Mexican American mayor and an additional Latina council member in San Jose.

Still, the emergence of Latino and Asian American political activity raises the question of whether they should follow a similar path to empowerment as African Americans. The barriers that Latinos and Asian Americans face in gaining access to mainstream political institutions must be taken into consideration when analyzing their struggles for political incorporation. For Latinos and Asian Americans, the factors of forming biracial coalitions with white liberals and the need for a large racial/ethnic population base are important, but do not completely reflect the socio-political nuances that they experience in their struggles for political incorporation.

Both groups lag behind African Americans in political incorporation efforts. Both populations live in less compact areas and are more dispersed than African Americans, making it difficult to create districts that favor the election of a Latino or Asian American. High percentages of both populations were born outside the United States and are less familiar with the political rules. In 1997, six out of ten Asians were born outside of the United States;<sup>23</sup> in 2000, 39.1 percent of the Hispanic population was foreign born. Of this group of foreign-born Hispanics, 44 percent entered the U.S. in the 1990s.<sup>24</sup> Many are not yet citizens, and those that are citizens, do not usually vote in high numbers relative to other ethnic and racial groups. In addition, a large portion of the Latino population is too young to vote. In 2000, for instance, 35.7 percent of Latinos were less than 18 years of age.<sup>25</sup> These factors have limited the ability of these groups to achieve representation and incorporation equal to their population numbers.

### B. *Latino and Asian American Political Incorporation*

One result of their exclusion from mainstream political institutions is the under-representation of minority groups in elected office. Do the claims for representation of marginalized groups depend on their presence within legislative bodies? According to one author, "when historically marginalized groups are chronically underrepresented in legislative bodies, citizens who are members of those groups are not fairly represented."<sup>26</sup> It is not enough for a minority group to press its claims for equality without a call for fair representation in legislative bodies. For example, Latinos and

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23. A. Dianne Schmidley & Campbell Gibson, *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 1997*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS, Series P 23-195, at 24 (1999), available at <<http://www.census.gov/prod/99pubs/p23-195.pdf>>.

24. *From the Americas: A Profile of the Nation's Foreign-Born Population From Latin America (2000 Update)*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, CENSUS BRIEF: CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY 2 (2002).

25. *Id.*

26. MELISSA S. WILLIAMS, VOICE, TRUST, AND MEMORY: MARGINALIZED GROUPS AND THE FAILINGS OF LIBERAL REPRESENTATION 3 (1998).

Asian Americans have used legal tactics and group efforts to gain access to the electoral process.<sup>27</sup> The passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, the extension of voting rights legislation to language minorities in 1975, the elimination of structural barriers to participation, and the creation of single member districts eliminated many of the formal barriers to inclusion. These legal and structural changes, combined with group mobilization efforts, have enabled both Latinos and Asian Americans to hold elected office in unprecedented numbers and locations.

In 1973, a few years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act, there were only 1,438 Spanish surnamed officials in the six states with the largest Latino populations.<sup>28</sup> Most of these positions were in areas where Latinos were the overwhelming majority population. However, barriers that serve to dilute the voices of minority voters continued to exist in electoral structures. The 1975 and 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act, "while eliminating the barriers to registration and voting did not result in the election of minority candidates."<sup>29</sup> Several barriers still persisted, the most notable being the use of at-large elections, racial gerrymandering, and malapportionment of voting districts. These barriers, when combined with racialized voting by whites, have prevented a cohesive group of minority voters from electing candidates of their own choosing.<sup>30</sup> Latino voting rights and civil rights groups were also instrumental in bringing lawsuits that challenged the at-large members' districts. Between 1974 and 1984, there were 88 lawsuits filed in Texas by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF).<sup>31</sup> Groups such as MALDEF, the Southwest Voter Registration Project, the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the Hispanic Coalition on Reapportionment, among many others, lobbied and litigated to shape how state representative and congressional district boundary lines were drawn, which resulted in increased opportunities for Latinos to be elected to state and federal offices in many states.<sup>32</sup>

In the post-Civil Rights era of the 1980s and 1990s, evidence of the growth of Latino political efforts is evident in the numbers who hold elective office on all levels of government. In 2001, Latinos held 4,060 elected offices nationwide at all levels of government.<sup>33</sup> Yet, the total

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27. See generally JENNINGS & RIVERA, *supra* note 14; James A. Regalado & Gloria Martinez, *Reapportionment and Coalition Building: A Case Study of Informal Barriers to Latino Empowerment in Los Angeles County*, in *LATINOS AND POLITICAL COALITIONS: POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT FOR THE 1990S* 120-143 (Roberto Villarreal & Norma G. Hernandez eds., 1991); ARMANDO NAVARRO, *LA RAZA UNIDA PARTY: A CHICANO CHALLENGE TO THE U.S. TWO-PARTY DICTATORSHIP* (2000).

28. THE NATIONAL ROSTER OF SPANISH SURNAMED ELECTED OFFICIALS (Frank Lemus ed., 1973).

29. Robert Brischetto et al., *Texas*, in *QUIET REVOLUTION* 242 (Chandler Davidson & Bernard Grofman eds., 1994).

30. *Id.* at 243.

31. *Id.* at 242.

32. See RICHARD GRISWOLD DEL CASTILLO AND ARNOLDO DE LEÓN, *NORTH TO AZTLÁN: A HISTORY OF MEXICAN AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES* 154 (1996).

33. In Chicago, each school in the city's school district has an elected governing board called a "local school council" (LSC). These LSCs were first formed in the 1990s. The National Directory of Latino Elected Officials includes these numbers, but many scholars of LEOs do not include them as the



number of LEOs is now still woefully below the Latino percentage of population. Today, Latinos represent less than one percent of the nation's 513,200 elected officials,<sup>34</sup> while the population of Latinos has increased by 57.9 percent between 1990 and 2000 to comprise 12.5 percent of the total U.S. population in 2000.<sup>35</sup> By comparison, there were 8,936 African Americans holding office in January 1999<sup>36</sup> more than double the number of LEOs for a comparable minority population. The imbalance in the number of LEOs in proportion to the Latino percentage of the population reflects a combination of factors, such as the legacy of exclusion and structural barriers facing Latino candidates for office, low participation rates in politics by many Latinos, and the relatively high rates of new immigrants not yet engaged in the political system. Although the number of LEOs remains well below their proportion of the population nationwide, LEOs are concentrated in nine states including three of the four largest states in the country (see Table 1). These nine states represented 82 percent of the Latino population and accounted for more than 97 percent of LEOs.<sup>37</sup> In three states alone, California, New Mexico, and Texas, LEOs represented 80 percent of all Latinos elected in this country.

Table 1. Latino Elected Officials by Gender in Selected States

State	Total	Male	Female	Percentage Latina
Arizona	264	163	101	38.3
California	762	499	263	34.5
Florida	83	57	26	31.3
Colorado	151	107	44	29.1
New York	78	57	21	26.9
Texas	1724	1312	412	23.9
New Mexico	602	463	139	23.1
Illinois	34	27	7	20.6
New Jersey	51	42	9	17.6
Total	3749	2722	1022	27.3

Source: Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, 1999 National Directory of Latino Elected Officials compiled by R. Hero, F.C. Garcia, J. Garcia, and H. Pachon, in PS: September 2000.

number of LSCs of Latino descent vary a lot from year to year. In Chicago, there were 1145 Latino Local School Council members of Latino descent in 2001. The number of LEOs used in this research excluded the LSC numbers. If these numbers are included, the total number is 5205 elected officials in 2001. See NALEO EDUCATIONAL FUND, 2001 NATIONAL DIRECTORY OF LATINO ELECTED OFFICIALS vii (2001).

34. U.S. Census Bureau, *Popularly Elected Officials*, 1 1992 CENSUS OF GOVERNMENTS 1 tbl. 1 (1995).

35. U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 BRIEF: THE HISPANIC POPULATION 1-2 (2001), available at <<http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-3.pdf>>.

36. Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, *Number of Black Elected Officials in the United States, by State and Office*, JOINT CENTER DATABANK 10 (1999), available at <<http://www.jointctr.org/databank/BEO.htm>>.

37. Rodney Hero et al., *Latino Participation, Partisanship, and Office Holding*, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND POLITICS 533 (2000).

During the twenty-year period from 1978 to 1998, AAEOs were traditionally elected from two states: Hawaii and California. According to Table 2, there was a steady increase in the number of AAEOs elected during that period. Over 300 AAEOs representing 31 states held key local, state, and federal level positions during the year 2000.<sup>38</sup>

Table 2. Total Number of APA Elected Officials in Key Positions

Year	Federal	State	City	Total
1978	5	63	52	120
1979	6	68	69	149
1980	6	69	98	173
1982	6	59	109	174
1984	5	59	109	173
1990	2	111	185	298
1995	8	66	157	231
1996	7	66	181	254
1998	7	67	187	261
2000	8	70	231	309

Source: Compiled by author from the *National Asian American Political Almanac*, First to Eighth Editions.

Among them was the only non-white Governor on the mainland, Gary Locke (Washington), 25 state senators in five states (Colorado, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington, and Hawaii); 42 state representatives in five states (California, Maryland, Washington, West Virginia, and Hawaii); and 15 city mayors in seven states (California, Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, Texas, Washington, and Hawaii).<sup>39</sup>

The greatest increase in Asian American elected representation has been at the state and local levels between 1978 and 2000 in particular. At the state level, the number of AAEOs has remained relatively steady during this time, except in 1990 when the number increased to 111. Although the number of U.S. Representatives has remained constant, the number of states where Asian Americans are elected has increased. In 1998, over 180 AAEOs, representing 31 states, held key federal, state, and local elected positions—including 22 state senators in three states (Colorado, Oregon, and Hawaii); 40 state representatives in six states (Arizona, California, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Utah, and Washington); and 26 city mayors in 12 states (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington).<sup>40</sup>

38. See 2001-02 NATIONAL ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN POLITICAL ALMANAC 152 (Don T. Nakanishi and James S. Lai eds., 10<sup>th</sup> ed. 2001-02).

39. *Id.*

40. 1998-99 NATIONAL ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN POLITICAL ALMANAC 186 (Don T. Nakanishi

The significance of this increase in state representation over the last twenty years is that many AAEOs are emerging from non-Asian majority districts. Thus, many of these candidates must appeal more broadly to their diverse electorates. This will be discussed *infra* in further detail. Although these numbers indicate a growth in elected representation, Asian Americans are still underrepresented in comparison to other racial minority groups. Nevertheless, the significance of the increase in number and ethnic representation among AAEOs illustrates a positive growth in the politicization occurring within this diverse group, particularly on the U.S. mainland.

AAEOs on the U.S. mainland are different from other minority elected officials in one aspect—they are likely to be non-ethnic representatives.<sup>41</sup> AAEOs on the U.S. mainland emerge from non-Asian majority districts that are either heavily white or multi-racial. African American and Latino elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels mostly emerge from political districts in which they represent the majority or a substantial portion of the total population.<sup>42</sup> For instance, in 1998, 23 of 39 African American House Representatives were in districts where 50 percent of more of the African American population was of voting age.<sup>43</sup> Seventeen of 19 Latino House of Representatives were elected from districts where Latinos were at least 50 percent of the population.<sup>44</sup> In contrast, all AAEOs on the U.S. mainland represent non-Asian majority districts. For example, the two congressional seats held by Asian Americans on the mainland are overwhelmingly non-Asian majority districts. One study found that AAEOs are more likely than African Americans and Latinos to be elected by voters of a different ethnic group.<sup>45</sup> One explanation for the lack of Asian majority districts on the U.S. mainland, as illustrated by Table 3 below, can be attributed to geographic residential dispersion.<sup>46</sup>

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& James S. Lai eds., 8<sup>th</sup> ed. 1998-99).

41. See Carole J. Uhlaner et. al, *Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities in the 1980s*, 11 POLITICAL BEHAVIOR 195, 218 (1989).

42. See BROWNING, RACIAL POLITICS (1990), *supra* note 20, at 16.

43. David A. Bositis, *Black Elected Officials: A Statistical Summary 1993-1997*, in JOINT CENTER FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STUDIES 14 (1998).

44. See *The Growth of Latinos in the Nation's Congressional Districts: The 2000 Census and Latino Political Empowerment*, in NALEO RESEARCH BRIEF 5-8 (NALEO Education Fund 2001).

45. See Uhlaner et. al, *supra* note 41.

46. See Gregory Rodriguez, *Minority Leader: Matt Fong and the Asian American Voter*, THE NEW REPUBLIC, Oct. 1, 1998, at 21, 22.

Table 3. Top 10 Congressional Districts with Asian Pacific American Population in 1990 and 2000

1990			2000		
Rank					
1	HI-1	66.57%	1	HI-1	69.93%
2	HI-2	57.09%	2	HI-2	61.27%
3	CA-8	27.80%	3	CA-12	33.23%
4	CA-12	25.69%	4	CA-8	33.10%
5	CA-31	22.84%	5	CA-16	30.53%
6	CA-30	21.27%	6	CA-13	27.54%
7	CA-16	21.14%	7	CA-31	25.13%
8	NY-12	19.68%	8	CA-30	23.77%
9	CA-13	19.40%	9	CA-9	21.74%
10	CA-9S	15.67%	10	CA-7	21.14%

Source: Office of Asian Pacific American Outreach, Democratic National Committee.

During 1990 and 2000, Asian Americans comprised the majority population (greater than 50 percent) in all but two state electoral districts in Hawaii. In contrast, the largest concentration of Asian Americans in Congressional districts on the U.S. mainland occurs in California. In 1990, 40 percent of Asian Americans in the U.S. lived in California.<sup>47</sup> Another factor contributing to the lack of an Asian majority congressional district on the U.S. mainland is the group's high degree of geographic dispersion of this group. In response to this residential trend, many AAEOs in districts with a white majority on the U.S. mainland must rely on political strategies that have a mainstream platform or a multi-racial platform focusing on both inter and intra-racial coalition building in order to be successful.

*C. Beyond Descriptive Representation: Are There Different Types of Latino and Asian American Candidates and Elected Officials? Does Running an Ethnic Candidate Make a Difference in the Turnout of Racial and Ethnic Communities?*

As the structural barriers to political participation and office-holding have come down, Latinos and Asian Americans have increased their participation in electoral efforts. Not all electoral processes begin the same, seek the same objectives, nor accomplish the same goals. There are distinctions in the process of empowerment for Asian Americans and Latinos that reflect differences in political conditions and perspectives of the role of government. There are both internal dynamics within ethnic communities and forces external to them that influence their political development.

47. See Don T. Nakanishi, *When Numbers Do Not Add Up: Asian Pacific Americans and California Politics*, in 2 RACIAL AND ETHNIC POLITICS IN CALIFORNIA 12, 12-14 (M. B. Preston et al. eds., 1998).

The election to office of Asian Americans and Latinos is, at a basic level, descriptive representation—the degree to which a representative mirrors the social characteristics of a given social group. In addition to descriptive representation, Latino and Asian American officeholders bring potentially symbolic and material benefits to their respective communities.<sup>48</sup> Symbolic representation is important because elected officials become role models within communities lacking visible political leaders. Yet, symbolism is not enough. Latinos and Asian Americans are underrepresented and have many social needs.<sup>49</sup> In urban centers material resources are needed to provide affordable housing, improve the quality of education, spur economic development, create jobs with livable wages, and build local recreational facilities for poor and working-class Asian and Latino immigrant communities. This does not mean that AAEOs and LEOs can come into office and erase inequality and poverty. Rather, we argue that under certain circumstances, some Asian American and Latino officials can take steps to direct resources toward their respective communities.

Of course Latino and Asian American politicians are not a monolithic group. LEOs and AAEOs may prioritize universal issues such as fiscal accountability, crime reduction, environmental preservation, or traffic congestion reduction. While these universal issues are also a concern within their respective communities, the benefits are not specifically directed at an elected official's own national origin community. However, with regard to the impact Asian American and Latino candidates can have on mobilization of their respective communities, there is previous research indicating minority voters are motivated to support candidates of their own race and ethnicity. For Asians, AAEOs can help to mobilize both old and new Asian Americans into electoral politics. For example, one study found that 60 percent of Asian American respondents from Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco indicated a preference to vote for an Asian American candidate over a non-Asian candidate, all else being equal between the two candidates.<sup>50</sup> This finding is supported by Matt Fong's 1998 U.S. Senate bid in California, where his candidacy brought Asian immigrants into the electoral arena as voters and contributors.<sup>51</sup>

Latinos are also motivated to support Latino candidates. In a survey conducted on Latinos, when asked how they would vote in a race between a co-ethnic and an Anglo candidate, 77.1 percent of Mexicans, 79.5 percent of Puerto Ricans, and 77.2 percent of Cubans said they would support the

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48. See Kim Geron, *The Political Incorporation of Latinos: Symbolic or Substantive Changes at the Local Level?* (1998) (unpublished Ph.D. manuscript, University of California, Riverside) (on file with author). See also *APAs and the Pan-Ethnic Question*, *supra* note 14, at 204.

49. See *BEYOND ASIAN AMERICAN POVERTY: COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES 13-17* (Paul Ong ed., 1993); Rebecca Morales, *U.S. Urban Policy and Latino Issues*, in *A NEW INTRODUCTION TO POVERTY: THE ROLE OF RACE, POWER, AND POLITICS 105-118* (Louis Kushnick & James Jennings eds., 1999).

50. Pei-te Lien et al., *A Summary Report of the Pilot Study of the National Asian American Political Survey*, in 2001-02 NATIONAL ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN POLITICAL ALMANAC 81 (Don T. Nakanishi & James S. Lai eds., 10th ed. 2001-02).

51. See Rodriguez, *supra* note 46, at 24.

co-ethnic candidate.<sup>52</sup> More recently, there is growing evidence that the presence of a viable Latino candidate in a race with a non-Latino increases the turnout of Latinos. In the 2002 Democratic Party primary in Texas, a record Hispanic turnout enabled Tony Sanchez, a Mexican American, to easily win the primary. Political observers attributed his victory to an effective media campaign that mobilized voters in counties with large numbers of Latinos.<sup>53</sup>

#### D. Research Questions

This preliminary study of LEOs and AAEOs examines their processes of winning elections and their policy priorities. The study explores answers to the following questions:

- 1) What are the socio-economic-political backgrounds of LEOs and AAEOs? How are they similar and dissimilar?
- 2) Why do Latinos and Asian Americans seek office? Who are their biggest supporters and what are their major assets: resources, organization, interest group support, or ties to community-based organizations?
- 3) Are the major campaign priorities of Latino and Asian American candidates designed to address the specific needs of their respective communities, or to address more universal problems?
- 4) For those who have achieved electoral office, what are their policy priorities? Is there a Latino and Asian American agenda that dominates their respective issue concerns, or are universal needs for a cleaner environment, less traffic congestion, safer streets, and more efficient government services more predominant in their policy priorities?

These research questions address the larger picture of whether it is enough to have symbolic representation of Latino and Asian American elected officials for their respective communities. In other words, as both groups seek greater political incorporation, can Latino and Asian American candidates make a difference through just their campaigns, or, if elected, do they make a difference with regard to group electoral mobilization (i.e., voting, contributions, policy priorities)? In examining this larger question through descriptive data, this study will shed light on the differences and similarities in the political ideologies, socio-economic backgrounds, campaign strategies, and respective representative district demographics of LEOs and AAEOs in their paths to elected office.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Two different mail surveys and extensive personal interviews with AAEOs and LEOs were conducted by the authors of this article in 1999-

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52. RODOLFO O. DE LA GARZA ET AL., *LATINO VOICES: MEXICAN, PUERTO RICAN, AND CUBAN PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICAN POLITICS* 138 tbl. 9.13 (1992).

53. See Carolyn Barta & Arnold Hamilton, *Latinos Show Strength with Record Turnout: Returns Suggest Group has Matured as Voting Bloc, Analysts Say*, DALLAS MORNING NEWS, Mar. 13, 2002, at 1A.

2001. The first survey that will be discussed is the 2000 National Asian American and Latino Elected Officials Survey (LEO Survey). The second is the 1999 National Asian American Elected Officials Survey (AAEO Survey).

*A. 2000 National Asian American and Latino Elected Officials Survey*

A detailed mail survey, called the 2000 National Asian American and Latino Elected Officials Survey (LEO Survey) was sent out in September and October 2000 to local, state, and federally-elected LEOs.<sup>54</sup> As this research focuses on policy choices among a broad range of issues, only LEOs serving as city council members/alderman, mayors, county supervisors/commissioners, state representatives, state executive officers, and congressional members were included in the survey. For LEOs, the 2000 National Directory of Latino Elected Officials was used to obtain names and addresses. This resulted in a total of 1863 elected officials.<sup>55</sup> From this number, surveys were sent to all congressional members, and a random stratified sample of all others was used. A stratified sample enables the researcher to divide a population into sub-divisions.<sup>56</sup> In this study, we divided LEOs by state, and names were selected at random within each state with LEOs.<sup>57</sup> Due to cost and time constraints, 411 names were selected, or approximately one out of 4.5 LEOs in office as of January 2000.

The sample stratification method was used to represent the proportionate number of LEOs in each of the nine states with the highest number of LEOs. For all other LEOs in the remaining states, the same random rate of selection was used. Only one response from the Latino congressional delegation was received. This response was not included, as it may not be representative of others in the same office. This paper will

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54. The 2000 National Asian American and Latino Elected Officials Survey was also sent to all Asian Pacific American elected officials to compare the responses of Asian and Latino elected officials. The survey data for Asian Pacific American elected officials has only been partially analyzed. Only information about Asian Pacific American elected policy priorities from the survey will be cited in this article, in which case the survey will be referred to with its full name, 2000 National Asian American and Latino Elected Officials Survey instead of as the short name "LEO Survey."

55. The number 1863 is based on combining all federal positions (19 Congressional members), 193 state-elected officials (state executives, representatives, and senators), and 1649 county and municipal positions (county supervisors/commissioners, city council/alderman, mayors, and elected city managers). Some positions were not considered if they involved duties focused on only one function such as a town clerk positions, county treasurer positions, sheriff positions, etc. As our interest was to measure the policy positions of LEOs on a similar range of issues, only individuals with decision-making power on comparable issues at a municipal, county or state level were selected.

56. See STUART REID, *WORKING WITH STATISTICS: AN INTRODUCTION TO QUANTITATIVE METHODS FOR SOCIAL SCIENTISTS* 92-93 (1987).

57. The NALEO Directory is organized by state, listing state-level representatives first, followed by county, city and then other representatives. As we were only concerned with municipal, county and state representatives, the names of people who were sent surveys were selected at random within each state. This method was chosen, rather than placing all names together and then randomly selecting names, in order to maintain the same proportion of elected officials that could potentially be selected for the survey from the true population of LEOs. For example, for the nine states where LEOs are primarily located, the names were selected at random beginning with the state level, county and municipal level. In all other states, NALEO places these officials together by state. The same random selection process identified the potential survey respondents.

report on local and state level elected officials' views.

Out of 411 surveys distributed, 112 completed surveys were returned, a 28.6 percent response rate,<sup>58</sup>—a respectable return rate for busy elected officials, the vast majority of whom are part-time officials who hold full-time jobs. The response included 26 responses (a 24.1 percent response rate) from Latinas, which corresponds to the percentage of Latinas in elective office nationally (see Table 1). The sample is highly representative of where LEOs are located. Eighty-nine percent of the responses came from the nine states with the highest concentration of LEOs. Moreover, 66 percent of the respondents of this survey were from the three states where 80 percent of LEOs resided: California, New Mexico, and Texas. The level of office held by the respondents is as follows: 81.1 percent local government officials, 7.2 percent county officials, 10.8 percent state representatives, and less than 1 percent federal elected officials. The response rates approximate the true population percentages of LEOs.<sup>59</sup> This leads to the conclusion that the reported results fairly reflect the subjective views of LEOs about themselves and their political priorities.

### *B. 1999 National Asian American Elected Officials Survey*

A comprehensive 22-question survey entitled the 1999 National Asian American Elected Officials Survey (AAEO Survey) was distributed on May 6, 1999 to the 240 current AAEOs at the local, state, and national levels. A second mailing went out three weeks later to those elected officials who had not responded. A total of 241 surveys were mailed to the currently identified AAEOs across the country, with 131 surveys being completed and returned—a response rate of 54 percent. Survey respondents included 48 school board members from California (36.6 percent of the respondents); 35 city council-members (26.7 percent of the respondents); nine city mayors (6.9 percent of the respondents); 37 state representatives (28.2 percent of the respondents); and 2 federal representatives (1.5 percent of the respondents). Overall, the survey respondents represented a cross-section of the current Asian American elected leadership at the local, state, and federal levels. Consequently, this paper will report on AAEOs at each level of representation.

The AAEO survey consisted of two sections: a political background information section and a demographic background section. In the first section, specific survey questions were asked about each elected official's political background, such as his or her political party affiliation, his or her political philosophy, the demographic make-up of the Asian American population in his or her district, whether Asian American community-based

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58. The 28.6 percent figure excludes the 19 Congressional members. This response rate is comparable to other surveys of elected officials such as the survey conducted by the National League of Cities. In their most recent random mail survey in 1998 of city council members, the National League of Cities obtained a response rate of 30 percent. See Emily Stern, *The State of America's Cities: The Fifteenth Annual Opinion Survey of Municipal Elected Officials*, A RESEARCH REPORT OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES 43 (1999).

59. See NATIONAL ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN POLITICAL ALMANAC, *supra* note 38.



organizations played a role in his or her campaign, and the extent each official relied on his or her party and Asian Americans for political resources (e.g., campaign contributions, get-out-the-vote efforts on election day, voter registration drives, and precinct walking). The second section dealt with questions on issues such as age, ethnicity, generation, educational background, language fluency, and an open-ended question asking each official how and why he or she became involved in electoral politics.

A list of current AAEOs was updated from the most recent edition (2000) of the *National Asian American Political Almanac*, published by the Asian American Studies Center at the University of California at Los Angeles. This list of elected officials represents the most comprehensive listing of AAEOs in the nation; therefore, a high level of certainty exists that a large percentage of current AAEOs were included in the survey.

### III. FINDINGS

#### A. LEO Survey Results: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The LEO survey findings show the average age, years of prior political experience and heritage of current elected officials. There were 112 LEOs that responded to the survey. The average age when they were elected to office for the first time was 41 years old. Their average age when elected to their current office was 46 years old. On average, LEOs have held elected office for eight years. Approximately 75 percent of the sample were Mexican American, 7.3 percent Puerto Rican, 7.3 percent Cuban, 1.8 percent indicated that they were of Spanish descent, and less than one percent were Dominican. Another 8.1 percent identified themselves as Latino/Hispanic "mixed heritage." This response rate is consistent with the high percentage of elected officials of Mexican national origin in the Southwest.<sup>60</sup>

The National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO) reported that among the LEOs for whom a partisan affiliation can be determined, 65 percent identify themselves as Democrats, 5 percent as Republican, and the remainder as Independents.<sup>61</sup> In this study, 86.9 percent identified themselves as Democrats, 8.4 percent as Republicans, and only 8.3 percent as independents or failed to state their political affiliation. The fact that this study did not include school board, special district, or judicial office members, which are traditionally non-partisan positions, is one possible explanation for the lower percent of Independents as compared to the NALEO data.

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60. This ethnic information is comparable to the ethnic heritage of Latinos in the U.S. Of the total number of Latinos in the U.S., 58.5 percent are Mexican, 9.6 percent are Puerto Rican, and 3.5 percent are Cuban. What is not reflected in the LEO survey data is the growing number of Spanish-language origin peoples from the Caribbean, Central and South America. The Census reported that there were 4.8 percent Central Americans and 3.8 percent South Americans, 2.2 percent Dominicans, and 17.6 million Latinos that did not specify a detailed Hispanic origin. See U.S. Census Bureau, *supra* note 23, at 2.

61. Hero et al., *supra* note 37, at 533.

The ideological orientation of the sample LEOs is moderately liberal, with 37.4 percent reporting that they were very liberal or somewhat liberal, 38.3 percent responding that they were "middle of the road," and only 24.3 percent stating that they were very conservative or somewhat conservative. This finding is consistent with the large percentage of self-identified Democrats among the survey respondents who were also self-identified as liberal ideologically. In the general population, Latinos identified themselves as predominantly moderate to conservative. For example, in a recent survey, 26 percent of Latinos viewed themselves as liberal, 34 percent as moderate, and 34 percent as conservative.<sup>62</sup> This apparent difference between the leaders and the led may not be as great as it appears at first glance because most Latinos self-identify themselves as socially conservative, but support a liberal social agenda.<sup>63</sup>

The LEO survey also delineated the LEOs' generational status, their marriage rate, their children's education, and their religious affiliation. While the Latino community is 39 percent foreign born,<sup>64</sup> 88.8 percent of the sample LEOs were born in the United States. Conversely, this means that more than 11 percent of the survey respondents were born in another country, became naturalized U.S. citizens, and now hold elected office. In terms of marital status, 79.2 percent were married, a higher percent than the marriage rate of 55.3 percent for all Latinos and 59.2 percent for all Americans.<sup>65</sup> For those respondents with children, 79.2 percent answered that their children attended public schools, 19.5 percent attended private schools or they have children that have attended either/both public and private schools. The religious affiliation of the respondents was 79.2 percent Catholic and roughly 5 percent indicating Christian, other, or no religious preference. The church attendance of LEO respondents indicated that 60.4 percent attended church weekly, 18.8 percent attended monthly, and 19.8 percent attended less than monthly. The religious affiliation of LEOs was consistent with a previous study of the Latino population and the church attendance appears to be higher than that of the Latino population as a whole. Previously, U.S. citizens of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban descent reported that more than 50 percent of them attended church infrequently or not at all.<sup>66</sup>

To find out about the prevalence of Spanish language usage, we asked about the primary language currently spoken in their homes. Over 65 percent of the respondents reported that English was their primary language, 14.6 percent reported Spanish was their primary language, and 19.4 percent stated they were bilingual. These results indicate that Spanish language usage is common but not necessarily predominant among LEOs.

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62. See Washington Post/Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University National Survey on Latinos in America (1999), available at <<http://www.kff.org/content/2000/3023/>>.

63. See LOUIS DESIPIO, COUNTING ON THE LATINO VOTE: LATINOS AS A NEW ELECTORATE 50-55 (1996). See generally DE LA GARZA ET AL., *supra* note 52.

64. U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, *supra* note 24.

65. *The Hispanic Population in the United States March 1999*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY 3.

66. DE LA GARZA ET AL., *supra* note 52, at 39.

To understand the impact of socialization of culture and values, we asked a number of questions. Officials reported that for 56.5 percent of them, Spanish was the primary language spoken in the home when they were growing up. Only 19.4 percent spoke English in the home when they were growing up. To further understand how early socialization operated among LEOs, we also asked respondents about their family's economic level when they were growing up. Overall, 47.3 percent, or nearly half of all respondents indicated they were "working class with at least one full-time working parent;" another 35.3 percent indicated that they were "poor with unstable finances." Only 18 percent said they were middle class with one parent working as a professional or businessperson, and less than one percent indicated they were from an upper-middle-class background. Even though a relatively high percentage reported they were poor growing up, only 23.8 percent said that they received some form of government assistance. The humble working class origins and predominance of the use of Spanish in the home when growing up by the majority of LEOs may help explain the importance they indicated in the survey on providing benefits for those disadvantaged in society.

The level of education for LEOs was on average higher than that of the general Latino population. For the sample LEOs, 31.8 percent had a college degree, and an additional 25.5 percent had an advanced degree, far exceeding the average educational attainment of the general Latino population. Only 10.9 percent of the Latino population 25 years old and older has obtained a bachelor's degree.<sup>67</sup> The high educational level of LEOs is also reflected in the careers of those who held a part-time elective office. More than 53.4 percent listed their occupation as professional or technical, and an additional 23.9 percent reported they were a manager or administrator. An additional 14.3 percent reported they were retired or otherwise not employed. The occupational information is dramatically different than for the Latino population as a whole where only 38.6 percent were employed in the combined categories of manager, professional, technician, or administrator.<sup>68</sup>

Overall, 21.7 percent of the sample respondents worked full-time as legislators. The mean salary for full-time LEOs was \$44,768. This far exceeds the mean household income for Latinos of \$38,280, and the mean individual income of \$20,106.<sup>69</sup> The mean salary for part-time LEOs was \$8,355. More than 50 percent of part-time LEOs were paid less than \$5,700 per year, and 17.6 percent did not receive any salary at all for their work as elected representatives. However, these lower salaries were not representative of the total income of these LEOs. The average income for part-time officials, excluding pay from holding elected office was \$60,153, which also reflects the high concentration of LEOs in the managerial and professional occupations discussed above. This demographic description

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67. See U.S. Census Bureau, *supra* note 65, at 1.

68. U.S. Census Bureau, *Table 10.1: Occupation of the Employed Civilian Population 16 years and Over by Sex, Hispanic Origin, and Race*, CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY (2000).

69. *Id.*

of LEOs indicates that they were better educated and wealthier than the average member of the Latino community. They also tend to hold professional and management positions outside of their political careers.

### B. AAEO Survey Results: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The average age of the 131 AAEO survey respondents was 50.8 years. The youngest and oldest respondents were 28 and 82 years old, respectively. Four respondents did not answer this question. The majority of the respondents were male (71 percent). This figure was greater than the actual gender representation of the 241 current elected officials of which approximately 60 percent are male.

With regard to Asian ethnic representation, a broad ethnic representation exists among the respondents. Chinese and Japanese Americans historically dominated elected positions among Asian Americans. Chinese and Japanese Americans still make up a majority (67 percent) of the respondents. However, nearly 33 percent of the respondents belonged to a different Asian ethnic group. This finding suggests that other Asian ethnic groups (e.g., Filipino, Korean, and Vietnamese) are becoming more politically acculturated and incorporated into American politics. This increased ethnic representation parallels the overall increase in the total number of elected officials during the past twenty years.

In regard to party affiliation, the majority of the respondents were Democrat (64 percent). An interesting finding was that 9.2 percent of the sample identified their party affiliation as "Other." The overall findings of this survey were comparable to the findings of previous exit polls of the general Asian American voting population. According to one 1994 poll conducted by the Field Institute, the political partisanship of California Asian American voters was 48 percent Democrat, 32 percent Republican, and 20 percent "Other." Other scholars of Asian American politics have found that increasing numbers of newly-registered Asian voters do not identify with either the Democratic or Republican Party.<sup>70</sup> The survey findings suggest that this is also the case for a growing number of local level AAEOs who identify themselves as neither Democrat nor Republican but as "Other." One explanation for this finding may be recent political events such as the 1996 Senate Investigation that focused on possible illegal contributions by Asian contributors to the Democratic National Committee, which alienated many Asian Americans from partisan politics.<sup>71</sup>

The political philosophies of respondents represent a bell-shaped curve whereby the largest group identified themselves as "middle of the road" and the rest were distributed fairly evenly on both sides of the political spectrum. The moderate political stance mirrors the results of a national phone poll conducted of Asian American voters.<sup>72</sup> Another

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70. See Ong & Nakanishi, *supra* note 16.

71. See generally Rodriguez, *supra* note 46.

72. See *Asian Americans on the Issues: The Results of a National Survey of Asian American Voters*, ASIANWEEK 1996 POLL 14-17 (August 23, 1996). This telephone poll randomly sampled 807

national study of Asian American voters found a similar trend in which the largest percentage of respondents (32 percent) identified themselves to be “middle of the road.”<sup>73</sup>

The survey findings indicate that an inverse relationship exists between the nativity of AAEOs and the nativity of the general Asian American population. The majority of respondents were U.S.-born (67.2 percent). In comparison, nearly 65 percent of the national Asian American population was foreign-born.<sup>74</sup> This inverse relationship suggests that the current AAEOs tend to be more acculturated than the general Asian American population. As a result, the majority of the respondents possess skills (e.g., public speaking) and have access to important professional and political networks that are necessary to become political candidates. As one study found, factors such as perceived language and cultural barriers can inhibit Asian Americans from voting.<sup>75</sup>

A majority of the respondents (71.8 percent) speak English as their primary language. This finding supports a previous finding in which nearly 75 percent of the respondents were second generation or more. As a result of acculturation, a large number of the respondents indicated they spoke English as their primary language. As a follow-up to the English as the primary language question, respondents were asked about their fluency in any languages other than English. Approximately 44 percent of the respondents were fluent in another language besides English, mainly due to growing up in a bilingual household. The bilingual abilities of the respondents is less than the predominantly bilingual-speaking general Asian American population, yet it is a strong indication of the strong language and cultural ties that Asian American office-holders have to their respective ethnic communities.

In regard to education attainment, the Asian American elected official respondents were by and large highly educated. The largest group of respondents (40.5 percent) stated they held a bachelor's degree. Approximately nine percent of the respondents held a doctorate degree. Approximately a quarter (22.1 percent) of the respondents held a professional degree (e.g. a business or law degree).

### C. *Why Did AAEOs and LEOs Get Involved in Politics?*

In addition to the economic mobility and educational success of AAEOs and LEOs, the 2000 National Asian American and Latino Elected Officials Survey (previously also referred to as the “LEO survey”) was interested in the how both groups of elected officials achieved political

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registered voters identified by Asian surnames as listed on voter registration roll sheets. The number of voters who responded are as follows: 596 from California, 57 from Massachusetts, 53 from Ohio, 45 from Pennsylvania, and 56 from Washington. The survey was conducted by Meta Information Services.

73. See Lien et al., *supra* note 50, at 84.

74. See Paul M. Ong & Suzanne J. Hee, *The Growth of the Asian Pacific American Population: Twenty Million in 2020*, in THE STATE OF ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICA: POLICY ISSUES TO THE YEAR 2020 19 (1993).

75. See Carole Uhlaner et al., *Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities in the 1980s*, 11 POLITICAL BEHAVIOR 195, 210 (1989).

office. We asked a number of questions to explore their campaigns for office. Specifically we asked questions regarding the identity of their main supporters, the costs of their campaigns, and their policy priorities both prior to and after being elected to office. One half of all LEO respondents indicated that they coordinated their campaigns with other like-minded candidates, with 36.4 percent indicating that they ran on a slate or coalition of candidates. Also, 66 percent of all respondents reported that race/ethnicity made a difference in his/her election.

The LEO sample respondents had strong aspirations to hold office. When asked what their main reason was for seeking their current position, 56.6 percent of the LEOs reported a "desire to seek elected office," 13.2 percent were encouraged to seek the position by community leaders, and 8.5 percent were dissatisfied with the performance of the incumbent.

The majority of the AAEO respondents (68.7 percent) answered that they had not held an elected position prior to their current position. This finding suggests that a majority of the current AAEOs were relatively new to the electoral political scene. Among respondents who held prior elected positions, the majority was at the local level (22.9 percent) as opposed to the state level (7.6 percent). This finding supports the claim that a majority of AAEOs, whether they are serving their first terms or not, come primarily from local and state districts. In many instances, local elected positions such as school board or city council positions have served as "stepping stones" for future higher level positions. For example, California Congressional Representative Mike Honda (D-San Jose) began his political career at the school board level, moved to a state assembly seat, and then won his congressional seat.<sup>76</sup>

The respondents were asked to identify other elected offices, if any, that they had ran for prior to their current elected office. The purpose of this survey item was to determine whether the respondents had any prior experience in running for an elected office. Indeed, many Asian American candidates run in local, state, and federal level elections but do not win. For example, during the 1998 California elections, a record number of seven AAEOs ran for offices in Los Angeles County with only one (State Assembly Representative George Nakano) winning. The majority of the respondents (78.6 percent) had not run a prior campaign for elected office. This finding suggests that most of the 241 AAEOs are first-time officeholders. Surprisingly, a majority of the respondents (55.7 percent) claimed they would not run for a future elected office. However, such opinions may change in the future if they are given support through political networks and through potential elected positions opening up.

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76. See James S. Lai et al., *Asian Pacific American Campaigns, Elections, and Elected Officials*. 34 PS: POLITICAL SCIENCE & POLITICS 611, 612 (2001).

*D. The Importance of Community Support for Asian American and Latino Candidates*

In the 2000 National Asian American and Latino Elected Officials Survey, we also asked a series of questions about the importance of community support received during campaigns. In response to an open-ended question about the major stakeholders backing their candidacy, most of the LEO respondents identified more than one group. When this answer was disaggregated and all responses were counted as distinct categories, 58.9 percent of the respondents identified ethnic community groups as major stakeholders backing their candidacy, 28.6 percent identified ethnic business groups, 39.4 percent identified unions, and 35.1 percent identified non-ethnic business groups. Also, 23.4 percent of the sample respondents identified women's groups, and 11.7 percent identified environmental groups. We also asked respondents to identify their main ethnic community supporters. As shown in Table 4, respondents identified personal or family members as their most important Latino community supporters, and identified ethnic businesses as the next most influential community supporters.

Table 4. Top Ethnic Community Supporters for LEO Respondents

Community Group	Percentage Support
Business	23.5
Labor	11.1
Women	1.2
Single Issue Group	1.2
Personal/Family	39.5
Other groups	11.1
More than one answer	8.6
Total	100 (does not total 100 due to rounding and missing data)

Source: 2000 APA and Latino Elected Officials Survey (LEO Survey).

The respondents also said that their main non-ethnic community supporters were personal friends, business, and labor groups (See Table 5). Only 7.2 percent reported that they had no non-ethnic group support for their election. This finding substantiates the Browning, Marshall, and Tabb thesis that minority candidates use non-minority community support to win elections.<sup>77</sup>

77. See BROWNING ET AL., PROTEST IS NOT ENOUGH, *supra* note 17, at 104-106.

Table 5. Top Non-Ethnic Community Supporters for LEO Respondents

Community Group	Percentage Support
Business	26.1
Labor	14.5
Women	2.9
Single Issue Group	1.4
Personal friends	24.6
Other groups	13.0
No non-ethnic support	7.2
Total	100 (does not total 100 due to rounding)

Source: 2000 APA and Latino Elected Officials Survey (LEO Survey).

The findings indicate that ethnic community support, particularly from family members, community organizations, and local businesses was a strong factor in the election of LEOs. More than half of the AAEO respondents (55 percent) of the AAEO survey stated that they utilized a “multi-racial” campaign strategy. The second largest group of respondents (41.2 percent) utilized a “mainstream” campaign strategy (see Table 6).

Table 6. Campaign Strategy of AAEO Respondents

Campaign Strategy	Total Number	Percent of Total
Mainstream	54	41.2
Multi-racial	72	55
Minority Group Candidate	1	0.8
APA Candidate	3	2.3
N/A	1	0.8

Source: 1999 National Asian Pacific American Elected Officials Survey (AAEO Survey).

The Hawaii respondents to the AAEO survey emerged from only Asian majority districts, and as a result, their campaigns stressed issues that reflected the mainstream majority Asian American population in Hawaii. In contrast, U.S. mainland elected officials in states like California must emphasize either a “multi-racial” or “mainstream” campaign strategy because of their districts’ demographics. The overall findings suggest due to the districts’ demographics, that AAEOs outside of California would most likely pursue a mainstream campaign strategy. This finding is understandable given the typical demographic profile of the political districts for non-California AAEOs. For example, how politically astute would it be for an AAEO in Oregon with a district of less than three percent Asian American to pursue a non-mainstream strategy? The electoral competitiveness of such an AAEO would likely be diminished if he or she were to pursue any other type of campaign strategy. However, as discussed earlier in regard to community resources (i.e., campaign contributions), such situations do not prevent some AAEOs from seeking



support from Asian Americans outside of their district, as exemplified by Michael Woo's 1993 Los Angeles mayoral campaign in which he received contributions from Asian Americans in seventeen different states.<sup>78</sup>

The above findings allude to the idea that district demographics are a primary reason why AAEOs on the U.S. mainland pursue either a "mainstream" or "multi-racial" campaign strategy. As mentioned earlier, Asian Americans are one of the most residentially dispersed minority groups in the nation.<sup>79</sup> On the U.S. mainland, no Asian American majority district exists, even in highly populated states such as California, where seven out of ten Asian Americans reside. This belief was supported by the survey findings. A majority of respondents (68.4 percent) in Hawaii represented political districts that contained Asian American constituencies "greater than 40 percent." In fact, all but one of the AAEOs in Hawaii represented a political district that contained an Asian American constituency ranging from "21 to 30 percent" to "greater than 40 percent" of the total population. The largest group of respondents (68.4 percent) of elected officials in Hawaii represented an Asian American constituency of "greater than 40 percent." In comparison, the largest group of respondents (31.8 percent) from Los Angeles County, California represented Asian American constituencies of "31 to 40 percent" or "11 to 20 percent." It is important to note that these respondents in the "31 to 40 percent" category were local school board members who were in the only districts with substantial Asian American populations on the U.S. mainland. Among AAEOs from California, outside of Los Angeles County, the largest group of respondents (26.7 percent) represented an Asian American constituency of "21 to 39 percent."

Two AAEO survey questions inquired about respondents' campaign reliance on various political resources (e.g., campaign contributions, precinct walking, "get out the vote" ("GOTV") drives, and voter registration) of political parties and from the Asian American community. Overall, the largest group of respondents stated that they did not rely at all on the above political resources during their campaigns. A substantial portion of the respondents relied between "A Lot" and "Entirely" on the following types of political resources: campaign contributions (10.7 percent), precinct walking (23.7 percent), GOTV (19.9 percent), and voter registration drives (16.8 percent).

Another AAEO survey item asked the respondent whether he or she received any campaign assistance from Asian Americans for the same types of political resources. The overall findings suggest differences between the respondent's campaign reliance on the above political resources and those from the political parties. The largest group of respondents stated that they did not receive any assistance from Asian Americans for the above political resources except for campaign contributions. A larger portion of the respondents relied between "a lot" and "entirely" on Asian American support, more than on the political

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78. See *APAs and the Pan-Ethnic Question*, *supra* note 14, at 216.

79. See *Rodriguez*, *supra* note 46, at 22.

parties, for the following political resources: campaign contributions (31.3 percent), precinct walking (26 percent), GOTV (19.9 percent), and voter registration drives (18.4 percent). The respondents' reliance on Asian American campaign contributions in this range was nearly three times larger than their party reliance. In all of the remaining categories, the respondents' reliance on Asian Americans was more than or equal to their party reliance.

Table 7 summarizes the findings from the survey item that asked respondents to describe the geographic source of campaign contributions received from Asian Americans.

Table 7. Geographic Source of Asian American Contributions for AAEO Respondents

Geographic Source of AA Contributions	Total Number	Percent of Total
Local	86	65.6
State-wide	14	10.7
Nation-wide	6	4.6
N/A	25	19.1

Source: 1999 National Asian American Elected Officials Survey (AAEO Survey).

The largest group of respondents (65.6 percent) stated that their Asian American contributions were local. Nearly 80 percent of the respondents stated that they received campaign contributions from Asian Americans, which supports previous findings that Asian Americans tend to contribute to the campaigns of Asian American candidates.<sup>80</sup>

Politically oriented community-based organizations play both supportive and proactive roles in assisting AAEOs. The largest group of respondents (71 percent) answered "No" in regard to receiving campaign assistance from an Asian American community-based organization. Nevertheless, over a quarter of the respondents (26 percent) stated "Yes" to receiving campaign assistance from an Asian American community-based organization (see Table 8).

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80. See, e.g., James S. Lai, *At the Threshold of the Golden Door—Ethnic Politics and Pan-Asian Pacific American Coalition Building* (1994) (unpublished Master's thesis, University of California, Los Angeles) (on file with author); Judy Tachibana, *California's Asians: Power from a Growing Population*, 17 CALIFORNIA JOURNAL 534 (1986); Wendy K. Tam Cho, *Demythologizing the Asian American Campaign Contributor* (1999) (paper presented at the 95<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, Georgia).

Table 8. Assistance from Asian American Community-Based Organizations for AAEO Respondents

Assistance from Community Organization	Total Number	Percent of Total
Yes	34	26.0
No	93	71.0
N/A	4	3.0

Source: 1999 National Asian American Elected Officials Survey (AAEO Survey).

A supportive role entails helping AAEOs and candidates, particularly those whose campaign strategies focus on gaining access to important community resources (e.g., votes, campaign volunteers, and campaign contributions). For example, the Asian Pacific Planning and Policy Council in Los Angeles County, which represents an umbrella organization of over fifty civil rights and social service organizations, plays an integral role in assisting Asian American political candidates through non-partisan “get out the vote drives” and candidate forums. A proactive role of Asian American community-based organization and leaders involves workshops that provide prospective candidates necessary skills and training to run effective political campaigns. For example, in 1999, two national political education workshops in Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles were sponsored by Asian American community-based organizations for the first time. The specific mission was to train prospective Asian American candidates to run for elected office.<sup>81</sup>

It is important to understand the different classification characteristics of Asian American community-based organizations. Many of these community-based organizations are non-profit 501(c)(3) classified, and as a result, these groups are prohibited from engaging in partisan political activities. According to Warren T. Furutani, former Executive Director of the Asian Pacific American Planning and Policy Council, a “gap” exists between these community-based organizations’ non-profit status and their leaders’ activities. Furutani observes,

Because of their 501(c)(3) status, such groups that conduct political activities cannot be political. However, the types of activities conducted by their leaders can fill this gap. In order to do this, these leaders must differentiate their individual actions from the organizations they represent.<sup>82</sup>

As the survey findings suggest, a heavy reliance exists on behalf of AAEOs and community-based organizations for access to political networks and resources, such as the ability to guarantee a critical mass for campaign fundraisers at the local and state levels. Not every Asian American elected

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81. See James S. Lai, *Beyond Voting: The Recruitment of Asian Pacific Americans and Their Impact on Group Electoral Mobilization* (2000) (unpublished Ph.D. manuscript, University of Southern California) (on file with author).

82. Interview with Warren Furutani, former Executive Director of the Asian Pacific American Planning and Policy Council, in Los Angeles, Cal. (Aug. 18, 1999).

official will pursue such community resources and networks, but those who choose to target them can greatly benefit. An example of this can be seen during the 1998 elections when Congressional Representative David Wu (D), from Oregon's First District near Portland, held fund-raisers in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas with the assistance of Asian American community-based organization leaders and other community activists.<sup>83</sup> In the South Bay of Northern California, Wu's candidacy was able to mobilize community resources toward his campaign with the assistance of community-based organization leaders such as Cupertino, California School Board Member Barry Chang. The resources that Wu received from various Asian American community organizations provided the necessary support to bolster his mainstream support in Oregon and win his first bid to the U.S. Congress.

*E. Impact of an Asian American or Latino Candidate On Group Political Mobilization*

Does the presence of an ethnic candidate influence the group behavior of the ethnic or larger racial group? Research on African American communities indicate that in campaigns for mayor and other prominent positions, African American candidates used covert and overt appeals to racial solidarity that effectively mobilized African American voters.<sup>84</sup> We wanted to explore whether the presence of an Asian American or Latino candidate influences the group behavior of the ethnic community's group political efforts. As discussed earlier, one recent major study that surveyed Asian American voters' attitudes in five of the largest Asian populated cities (Chicago, Honolulu, New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco) found that 60 percent are more inclined to vote for an Asian American candidate than a non-Asian American candidate, with all else being equal.<sup>85</sup> To explore this question further from the perspective of AAEOs, the AAEO survey focused on AAEOs' impact on Asian American political mobilization through such activities as voter turnout, campaign volunteering, issue awareness, and campaign contributions. The survey findings are illustrated in Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12.

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83. Telephone Interview with Barry Chang, Board of Education Member of Cupertino, California (August 20, 1999).

84. David R. Colburn, *African-American Mayors from 1967 to 1996*, in *AFRICAN-AMERICAN MAYORS: RACE, POLITICS, AND THE AMERICAN CITY* 42-46 (David R. Colburn & Jeffrey S. Adler eds., 2001).

85. See Lien, *supra* note 50.

Table 9. Impact on Asian American Voter Turnout

Impact on AA Voter Turnout	Total Number	Percent of Total
Less than	18	13.7
Equal to	24	18.3
More than	84	64.1
N/A	5	3.9

Source: 1999 National Asian American Elected Officials Survey (AAEO Survey).

The impact of an Asian American candidate on group voter turnout is extensive. A majority of the respondents ( 64.1 percent) answered that an Asian American candidate's impact on Asian American voter turnout was "more than" the impact of a non-Asian candidate. These findings support previous exit polls at the local and statewide level that found that Asian American voters tend to turnout in greater numbers, particularly when an Asian American candidate is running for election.

Table 10. Impact on Asian American Campaign Contributions

Impact on AA Campaign Contributions (N=131)	Total Number	Percent of Total
Less than	21	16.0
Equal to	34	26.0
More than	69	52.7
N/A	7	5.3

Source: 1999 National Asian American Elected Officials Survey (AAEO Survey).

Respondents (52.7 percent) answered that an Asian American candidate's impact on Asian American campaign contributions was "more than" the impact of a non-Asian candidate (see Table 12). This finding supports previous studies that found Asian Americans tend to give campaign contributions to Asian American candidates.<sup>86</sup> The reason for this trend is that many Asian American candidates tend to rely on Asian American campaign contributions because one does not have to be either a U.S. citizen or a registered voter to give a campaign contribution. As mentioned previously, nearly 65 percent of the national Asian American population in 1990 was foreign-born.<sup>87</sup> As a result, this area of campaign contributions has been one of the most viable avenues for Asian Americans to participate in American politics.

86. See, e.g., Lai, *supra* note 80, at 69; Cho, *supra* note 80, at 11.

87. See Ong & Hee, *supra* note 74.

Table 11. Impact on Asian American Campaign Volunteering

Impact on AA Campaign Volunteering	Total Number	Percent of Total
Less than	22	16.8
Equal to	29	22.1
More than	74	56.5
N/A	6	4.6

Source: 1999 National Asian American Elected Officials Survey (AAEO Survey).

Table 12. Impact on Asian American Issue Awareness

Impact on AA Issue Awareness (N=131)	Total Number	Percent of Total
Less than	17	13.0
Equal to	47	35.9
More than	63	48.1
N/A	4	3.1

Source: 1999 National Asian American Elected Officials Survey (AAEO Survey).

Asian American candidates can have a positive impact on other forms of political participation aside from voting and campaign contributions. Two of these areas include group campaign volunteering and issue awareness. A majority of the respondents (56.5 percent) answered that an Asian American candidate's impact on group campaign volunteering was "more than" that of a non-Asian candidate. A near majority of respondents (48.1 percent) answered that an Asian American candidate's impact on Asian American issue awareness was "more than" that of a non-Asian candidate. The findings in Tables 11 and 12 suggest that Asian American candidates may have a positive impact on Asian American group mobilization through other forms of political participation, aside from voting and campaign contributions. It is important to analyze a broader context of political participation for Asian Americans in order to understand the full impact of Asian American candidates given their large foreign-born populations.

As discussed earlier, when Latinos run for office, Latino ethnic communities are also motivated to support Latino candidates. When Latinos were asked in a previous survey how they would vote in a race between a co-ethnic and an Anglo candidate, 77.1 percent of Mexicans, 79.5 percent of Puerto Ricans, and 77.2 percent of Cubans said they would support the co-ethnic candidate.<sup>88</sup> More recently, a majority of all Latinos (56 percent) reported that Latinos are working together to achieve common political goals, and 84 percent said that if various Latino groups worked

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88. See DE LA GARZA ET AL., *supra* note 52, at 138.

together politically, Latinos would be better off.<sup>89</sup> In two mayoral races in 2001 involving Latino candidates, according to knowledgeable observers, Latino voters were energized to go to the polls to back Fernando Ferrer in New York City and Antonio Villaraigosa in Los Angeles.<sup>90</sup>

*F. Biracial Coalitions: Useful, Irrelevant or Obstacle to Success for Asian and Latino Elected Officials?*

For Asian Americans and Latinos, there are distinct characteristics that affect their ability to build biracial coalitions. While Latinos need both community and non-community support to achieve office, only 28 percent reported in the LEO Survey that they ran as part of a slate or coalition of candidates. Nearly 50 percent indicated that they coordinated their campaigns with other like-minded candidates who were usually either other Latino or party candidates. This finding indicates that in addition to forming biracial coalitions for ideological or issues-based reasons, Latinos are also likely to build ethnic and non-ethnic community campaign support because of on electoral necessity.

Today, contemporary Latinos find themselves in a wide variety of electoral contexts that have produced distinct political strategies for electoral empowerment. Since the 1980s, in South Florida, Cuban Americans used inter-ethnic unity and a demographic majority (they comprise 60 percent in Miami Dade County) to win a majority of political contests. Multi-racial coalitions among African Americans, white liberals, and Cubans have rarely been built.<sup>91</sup> In the Southwest, Mexican Americans are challenging Anglos for political control, and in many areas, there are few white liberals with which to coalesce in electoral politics. For example, in El Paso, Texas, Mexican Americans have recently gained a majority of the city council and won the mayor's office only in the late 1990s. El Paso's population was more than 70 percent Latino, but the city has historically been dominated by Anglos.<sup>92</sup> In El Paso and many other areas, Latino empowerment has come at the expense of Anglo politicians. This tradeoff rarely produced strong biracial liberal coalitions.

Typically, Latino candidates are running for office in districts that are majority Latino, and they may be less reliant on white liberal support to achieve office. On average, in the LEO Survey, LEOs reported that their electoral districts were nearly 60 percent Latino. The lack of reliance on white liberal support may be born out of political reality. In electoral districts where Latinos are not the majority population, it is still extremely rare to find Latinos holding prominent electoral offices, such as U.S.

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89. See U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, *supra* note 24.

90. See Harry P. Pachon, *Latino Voters Come Into Their Own*, NEWSDAY, June 14, 2001, at A51. See also Matea Gold, *An Upside Seen for Latinos, Despite Villaraigosa's Loss*, L.A. TIMES, June 14, 2001, at B1.

91. Dario Moreno, *Cuban Americans in Miami Politics: Understanding the Cuban Model*, in THE POLITICS OF MINORITY COALITIONS: RACE, ETHNICITY, AND SHARED UNCERTAINTIES 154-57 (Wilbur C. Rich ed., 1996).

92. BENJAMIN MARQUES, POWER AND POLITICS IN A CHICANO BARRIO 30-31 (University Press of America 1985).

Senate positions or governorships. There are currently no Latinos or African Americans in these positions. Furthermore, at the present time, San Jose Mayor Ron Gonzalez is the only Latino elected to a large non-majority Latino population city in this country. Thus, the ability of Latinos to form biracial or multiracial coalitions for Latino political empowerment is by no means clearly evident. The examples of conservative South Florida, racially polarized South Texas, and liberal Northern California, illustrate the complexities of using only one model of Latino politics.

For Asian Americans, given the lack of electoral districts with sizeable Asian American populations, a symbolic and politically experienced Asian American elected official/candidate represents another political factor that can inhibit or facilitate the development and maintenance of inter-ethnic and racial coalitions.<sup>93</sup> The symbolic leader may promote a collective Asian American identity, as demonstrated by the campaign contribution findings during Michael Woo's 1993 Los Angeles mayoral campaign. According to Stewart Kwoh, the Executive Director of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California:

A candidate who is going to receive the backing of a cross-section of Asian Pacific Americans has to represent the aspirations and hopes of those people. The same is true for Asian American candidates seeking the support of non-Asian American voters. Much of the time that will mean that the person has to have some track record in the other minority communities in fighting for certain interests, being visible in the broader communities, and having some demonstrated support for relevant issues or services.<sup>94</sup>

As a result of the limited electoral presence of Asian American voters in most electoral districts, Asian American political leaders must possess cross-over appeal to other groups beside their own.<sup>95</sup> However, it is not necessarily the traditional political incorporation model of a biracial coalition comprised of a minority of white voters and an overwhelming majority of minority voters. Moderate democrat George Nakano was such a candidate during his 1998 California 53rd Assembly District election against Republican challenger Bill Eggers. The 53rd Assembly District encompasses the following nine cities along the Los Angeles coast line: El Segundo, Hermosa Beach, Lomita, Manhattan Beach, Marina Del Rey, Redondo Beach, Torrance, Venice, and Westchester. Political partisanship in this district was approximately 42 percent Democratic and 41 percent Republican and two-thirds of the 53<sup>rd</sup> district's population is white.<sup>96</sup>

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93. See, e.g., CLARENCE N. STONE, *REGIME POLITICS: GOVERNING ATLANTA 1946—89* (1989); BROWNING, *RACIAL POLITICS* (1990), *supra* note 20.

94. Interview with Stewart Kwoh, Executive Director, Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California, in Los Angeles, Cal. (January 25, 1994).

95. See Harold Brackman & Stephen Erie, *Beyond "Politics by Other Means": Empowerment Strategies for Los Angeles' Asian Pacific American Community*, in *THE BUBBLING CAULDRON: RACE, ETHNICITY, AND THE URBAN CRISIS* 282, 294 (Michael P. Smith & Joe R. Feagin eds., 1995).

96. See 1999-2000 Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, *Summaries of California State Assembly Districts*, CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE DATABASE, at <<http://www.igs-ucb.caltech.edu/igs/CALJOURNALlinks/ASSEMBLY.html>> [hereinafter CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE DATABASE].



Nakano was able to parlay his fourteen-year political experience as a Torrance city council member, along with his reputation as a consensus builder, to an impressive victory (see Table 13).

Table 13. 1998 California 53rd Assembly District Exit Poll of Voters by Race

Candidate	Asian Pacific American	Latino	Caucasian
Bill Eggers (R)	14.7%	18.8%	43.2%
George Nakano (D)	85.3%	81.3%	50.0%

Source: Asian Pacific Legal Center. November 1998 Southern California Voter Survey Report, p. 24.

Nakano was able to appeal to voters across racial, ethnic, and political lines in the District. During the general election, Nakano captured an overwhelming majority of the votes among Asian Americans (85.3 percent) and Latinos (81.3 percent). At the same time, Nakano was able to appeal to white voters and received half of their votes.<sup>97</sup> These findings suggest that Asian American candidates tend to run in districts where Asian Americans are a minority and must be cross-racial candidates who cannot simply rely on their respective ethnic groups to get elected. Given these characteristics, Nakano built a broad coalition of the majority white Democrats and Republicans, combined with support from minority groups, particularly liberal Asian Americans. Nakano was the only Asian American candidate to win a State Assembly seat in 1998.

#### G. *Economic Resources*

Besides community and non-ethnic community support, economic resources are an important commodity in electoral campaigns in contemporary American politics. Surprisingly, most LEOs indicated that money was not the crucial factor in their election to office, and four percent did not raise any funds whatsoever. They reported that the average amount of money received in the most recent campaign was \$39,430. More than 60 percent received less than \$10,000, and an additional 10 percent raised less than \$20,000. The average amount raised by Latino candidates seeking a full-time elected position was \$48,431, while the mean amount of campaign funds raised for part-time positions was only \$31,653. The LEOs also reported that financial support for their electoral campaign from their ethnic community was 41.8 percent of the total amount raised. These findings indicate that many LEOs relied on non-ethnic community supporters for the majority of the material resources for their campaigns.

The AAEO survey findings illustrate that AAEOs on the U.S. mainland rely heavily, but not exclusively, on Asian American community

97. See NOVEMBER 1998 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA VOTER SURVEY REPORT 24 (Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California 1998).

support for economic resources, and they rely less on party support, particularly in the area of campaign contributions. More than 10 percent of the respondents relied “a lot or entirely” on party resources for campaign contributions, while 31.3 percent relied “a lot or entirely” on Asian American campaign contributions. The reliance on this form of community economic support is nearly three times their level of party reliance. This heavy reliance on economic funding supports the earlier findings (see Table 7), in which the geographic source of Asian American contributions to their campaigns was local (65.5 percent), followed by state-wide (10.7 percent) and nation-wide (4.6 percent). Both findings support other studies, which found that Asian Americans are one of the most frequent campaign contributors to Asian American political campaigns at the local, state, and federal levels.<sup>98</sup> These survey findings support a recent study that found Asian American donors responded foremost to Asian American candidates in federal level campaigns during the period from 1978 to 1998, and are not a source of funds for all candidates as the media generally portrays.<sup>99</sup> Based on these findings, Asian American campaign contributions are positively impacted with the presence of a visible and politically experienced Asian American candidate.

#### *H. Policy Priorities of Latino Candidates and Elected Officials*

Are Asian American and Latino candidates conscious of highlighting issues that benefit their respective communities or, once they are in elected office, do they simply become part of the mainstream? To identify what AAEOs and LEOs viewed as their campaign priorities, respondents from the LEO Survey were also asked to select their top five campaign priorities from a list of 24 possible responses. Some of the issues clearly addressed specific policies such as “diversify[ing] appointments to boards/commissions,” and “improv[ing] the quality of education in minority communities;” other issues addressed neutral or more universal policies, such as “traffic congestion” and “improv[ing] efficiency of government services.”

The LEOs focused most on the category of issues concerning “increase[ing] public safety and reduc[ing] crime” (11.7 percent). The second most popular category of issues (10.7 percent) was “redevelopment/economic development to help ethnic communities.” The third most popular category (8.7 percent) was “quality of life issues such as no growth development, air and water pollution.” The fourth most popular categories of issues (a tie at 7.8 percent) were “affordable housing for ethnic minorities” and “improv[ing] efficiency of government services.” The combined scores of “improve quality of education” and “improve quality of education in minority communities” were 8.7 percent, demonstrating the importance of this issue for LEOs, even though more than 88 percent of the respondents are not responsible for educational

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98. See, e.g., Tachibana, *supra* note 80; Lai, *supra* note 80; Cho, *supra* note 80, at 11.

99. Lai et al., *supra* note 76, at 615.

decisions or funding in their positions as city or county officials. Each respondent's first choice was also recoded into a dichotomous variable, either ethnic specific or universal needs, and the results indicated that 27.6 percent of the sample selected as their primary campaign priority an ethnic specific issue/problem.

In addition to individual policy priorities, another measure was created to examine if Latino candidates' campaign priorities addressed the needs of the Latino community. The survey asked a question, "How much do you think your major policy positions were specifically designed to address the needs of the Latino community?" The respondents were asked to select a number between 0=solely address the broader community, 5=equally address the needs of the Latino and broader community, and 10=solely address the needs of the Latino community. The average score of all respondents was 5.1, which indicates that Latino candidates equally address the needs of the Latino and the broader community. When this number is disaggregated by national origin, Puerto Ricans were on average (7.5) the most likely to support policies that directly benefit their ethnic community, and respondents of Mexican ancestry were about as likely to support policies that equally support both the Latino community and the broader community (5.2) as respondents of mixed heritages, including those with Native American heritage were (5). Cubans were least likely to support policies that directly benefit their ethnic community (4.8). This finding is somewhat surprising given that the Cuban respondents were from the South Florida area, where high concentrations of Cuban Americans reside, and where ethnic political solidarity remains strong.<sup>100</sup>

To identify what AAEOs viewed as their campaign priorities, respondents from the 2000 APA and Latino Elected Officials Survey (LEO Survey) were asked to select their top five campaign priorities from a list of the same 24 possible responses as LEOs. The number one answer to this question (21.3 percent) was "improv[ing] the business environment." The second most popular answer (17 percent) was "improv[ing] the quality of education for all students." In addition, 4.3 percent of the respondents selected the campaign priority of "improving the quality of education in ethnic minority communities to the level of more affluent schools." The third most popular answer (10.6 percent) was a tie between "improv[ing] the fiscal climate" and "improv[ing] the efficiency of government services." When asked what their policy priorities were after assuming office, there was a slight change. The number one priority (21.7 percent) was to "improve the quality of education," the second priority (17.4 percent) was to "improve the business environment," and the third priority was a tie (8.7 percent) between "increasing public safety and reducing crime and "quality of life issues such as slow or no-growth development, air and water pollution, increased use of bike lanes, etc." The results of this survey indicate that, as candidates or as office-holders, AAEOs do not view policies that directly benefit Asian and other minority communities as a top

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100. See Dario Moreno, *The Cuban Model: Political Empowerment in Miami*, in PURSUING POWER: LATINOS AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM 208-226 (F. Chris Garcia ed., 1998).

priority. However, similar to LEOs, the issue of education is a high priority for AAEOs, even for those officeholders who are not directly responsible for this issue.

In addition to individual policy priorities, another measure was created to examine if Asian American candidates' campaign priorities addressed the needs of the Asian American community. The same question that was posed to LEOs was posed to AAEOs: "How much do you think your major policy positions were specifically designed to address the needs of the APA community?" The respondents selected a number between 0=solely address the broader community, 5=equally address the needs of the Asian and broader community, and 10=solely address the needs of the Asian community. The average score was 3, which reflects the fact that Asian American candidates generally do not represent large numbers of Asian Americans. In fact, 25 percent indicated that they "solely address the broader community." This substantiates the claim that on the mainland, AAEOs are conscious of addressing the needs of a diverse electorate. This is less true of the LEOs.

*I. Views of Asian American and Latino Elected Officials on Contemporary Issues*

Finally, to determine if there were similar perspectives between Asian Americans and Latinos, we asked AAEOs and LEOs their views on important issues confronting the nation. Their responses are shown in Table 14.

*(Continues with table on next page.)*

Table 14. Views of Asian American and Latino Elected Officials on Contemporary Issues

Issues	Percent LEOs answered "very" or "fairly important"	Percent AAEOs answered "very" or "fairly important"
Great community control over your ethnic community	94.9	88.6
More ethnic studies programs in H.S. and colleges	85.0	81.8
More of your ethnic students enrolled in college	100.0	86.4
Improve quality of education	100.0	100
Affirmative Action Programs	93.8	86.4
Third party or independent party	13.2	6.8
More of your ethnic group elected to government positions	98.1	93.2
Mass protests to achieve equality	29.3	21.4
Liberalization of drug policies	30.0	11.4
Cuts in defense spending	50.5	26.8
More attention to moral values	87.2	64.3
Greater emphasis on law and order	87.9	70.7
Greater birth control efforts	76.3	47.6
Reduce total number of legal immigrants	34.8	17.1
Limit the number of illegal immigrants entering this country	45.3	36.6
Build coalitions with others	90.3	85.4
Free or low-cost health and day care centers	96.9	74.4
Greater emphasis on environmental preservation programs	84.2	58.5

Source: 2000 National Asian American and Latino Elected Officials Survey (LEO Survey).

Consistent with their liberal ideology, the respondents were strongly in favor of increased social services, greater ethnic economic control in their communities, and support for affirmative action programs. Almost twice the percentage of LEOs as AAEOs believed that we should cut defense spending. Also, there was universal support for quality of education and for an increase in the numbers of Asian American and Latino students in college. In addition, ethnic studies programs in secondary and higher education received substantial support. There was limited support for drug liberalization laws, and limited support for reducing the flow of legal immigrants. Respondents were divided over the issue of limiting the

number of undocumented immigrants entering the country. The majority of both groups of elected officials did not view this as an important issue. AAEOs were even less concerned with the importance of this issue than LEOs. On the other hand, environmental preservation programs received the support of a majority of both groups' elected officials, with LEOs registering a stronger support for environmental preservation. Both groups of elected officials felt that there needs to be greater attention to moral values and law and order. However, LEOs were more likely to view these issues as important. Finally, there was little support among either LEOs or AAEOs for the idea of joining a third party effort or forming a new independent political party to achieve more progress for their racial groups.

The policy priorities of both LEOs and AAEOs and their views on contemporary issues provide some insight on how this relatively new group of elected officials view their policy priorities. Moreover, the findings illuminate the similarities and differences between the values they uphold as elected officials. This study did not fully explore other levels of political incorporation achieved by these two groups or how successful these two groups of elected officials were at achieving influence in governing coalitions at the state and local levels.

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

LEOs and AAEOs share much in common in regard to their paths to political incorporation. They are both demographically similar in composition (i.e., highly educated, well trained, and financially secure). Many of them were successful professionals or business people, while others were community activists before they sought electoral office. Both sets of elected officials are slightly more liberal than their constituents. Significant portions of both groups were raised in households where English was not the predominant language. This reflects the immigrant origins of these populations, and reflects the working class origins of most LEOs and AAEOs. The survey findings also indicate the strong motivation by most of these individuals to seek elected office without necessarily following the traditional electoral path to office-holding, such as political party endorsements and working as aides to elected officials. They both rely heavily on their ethnic communities for political and financial support, yet both sets of elected officials built support beyond their ethnic communities for their electoral victories.

The theory of political incorporation posits that a large minority population combined with a biracial coalition of minority and liberal white voters is necessary to achieve political empowerment for historically disenfranchised groups. The findings of this study demonstrate that the path to electoral office for AAEOs and LEOs does not necessarily follow this model. Instead, in order to win offices on the mainland, Asian Americans must rely on a much broader and diverse base of support than envisioned in the political incorporation model. Latinos follow the traditional political incorporation model more closely. However, because

they have historically needed a super majority of the population in order to achieve electoral office, the need for biracial coalitions was diminished. For those LEOs who participated in the survey, the average Latino population in their districts was nearly 56 percent, which is a strong indicator that Latino population size still matters for electoral success. Latinos in this survey deviate from the political incorporation model in that they relied more heavily on family and friends rather than political parties, interest groups, or coalitions with white liberals to achieve office.

The current trend of AAEOs on the U.S. mainland being elected from districts where their ethnic community is not the dominant population will most likely continue in the future. One central finding of this paper is that AAEOs on the U.S. mainland emerge from non-Asian majority districts and must subsequently run as cross-over candidates. The primary reason is that no Asian American majority district currently exists on the U.S. mainland, either at the state or federal level. However, this trend will likely change in the near future due to their surge in population between 1990 and 2000.<sup>101</sup> As a result, Asian Americans have the potential to become a significant member of the governing coalition in future state and federal politics in highly populated states as California and Hawaii. It is likely that additional Asian American candidates will arise from areas where Asian Americans represent a substantial portion of the population, even if they are not the majority of the population. Moreover, Asian American candidates can be expected to run in other states on the mainland where the Asian American population is insignificant and therefore not considered a political threat by other racial groups. The elections of Washington Governor Gary Locke and Oregon Congressman David Wu are examples of this type of cross-over political effort.

The current trend of LEOs being primarily ethnic representatives is based not on a stronger sense of ethnic solidarity than Asian Americans, but rather is predicated on the structural arrangement where they have been elected from predominantly majority Latino districts. This situation will also most likely continue in the near future to be the predominant means that Latinos will be elected to office. The concentration of Latinos into relatively compact electoral districts remains the primary means that Latinos will be elected to office. However, as the Latino population disperses throughout the U.S., an increasing number of Latinos will seek office in areas where Latinos are not the majority population.

In a relatively new demographic development, Latinos are moving into areas where they have had little or no presence previously, and it is anticipated that the number of LEOs elected in these districts will grow in the future. Already Latinos have been elected in 38 states. For example, in the year 2000, there were four Latino Republicans elected to the California State Assembly in districts with less than 30 percent Latinos.<sup>102</sup> In one

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101. For the top ten U.S. Congressional Districts with Asian Pacific American population, see NATIONAL ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN POLITICAL ALMANAC 51 (Don T. Nakanishi & James S. Lai eds., 9<sup>th</sup> ed. 2000-01).

102. See CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE DATABASE, *supra* note 96.

suburban Southern California district, Republican Assemblyman Robert Pacheco won the election for the 60<sup>th</sup> Assembly seats district, which was less than 40 percent Republican. This is one example of the cross-over appeal of some non-threatening Latinos in middle class areas.<sup>103</sup>

In areas where Latino candidates have run and where Latinos were near or slightly in the majority, the Latino voting age population was reduced dramatically due to large numbers of youth and non-citizenship factors. For example, in the recent Los Angeles mayoral election, while Latinos comprised 47 percent of the population, they comprised only 22 percent of the voters.<sup>104</sup> The lack of a solid majority of Latino voters requires the ability of Latino candidates to cross-over and appeal to non-Latinos. After winning the largest number of votes in the Los Angeles mayoral election, Antonio Villaraigosa spent almost all of his efforts appealing to non-Latino voters in the run-off against the eventual winner James Hahn. He was unable to overcome a negative media campaign and the “fear” factor among a majority of non-Latinos that Latinos were taking over Los Angeles.<sup>105</sup> In the victorious campaign of Ed Garza for Mayor of San Antonio, Texas, in 2001, his strategy was to actively campaign for white voters, and virtually ignore Mexican American voters in the barrios. He counted on Mexican Americans turning out to vote for him without having to heavily campaign for them.<sup>106</sup>

In areas where Latinos and Asian Americans are not the majority population, the reliance on mainstream issues and universal rather than ethnic specific issues is more appropriate. This electoral strategy was characterized as a “deracialization” strategy by academics to explain how African Americans were able to get elected in large cities and the State of Virginia in the late 1980s by de-emphasizing racial issues.<sup>107</sup> We prefer to use the term “cross-over” strategy to refer to Asian Americans and Latinos that run as cross-over candidates in districts where there are diverse population groups. Some of these candidates prioritize building ties with liberal white voters, e.g., the Antonio Villaraigosa campaign for Los Angeles Mayor in 2001. Others will focus on building coalitions with African American voters against entrenched Anglo power holders, as exemplified by the Chicago mayoral campaign of Harold Washington in 1983. Still others will form candidate-centered campaigns where race is not a dominant part of the campaign message, such as the Federico Pena campaign for Mayor of Denver in 1982, the Ron Gonzalez electoral victory in San Jose in 1998, and the Ed Garza campaign for Mayor of San Antonio

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103. *See id.*

104. Mickey Ibarra, *Second Place Isn't Good Enough*, POLITICO, available at <<http://www.politicomagazine.com/ibarra820.html>> (posted Aug. 2, 2001).

105. *See id.*

106. *See* Henry Flores, Mayor Ed Garza of San Antonio, Texas: A Cisneros Legacy: Paper Delivered at the Western Political Science Association Annual Conference in Long Beach, Cal. (Mar. 22-24, 2002) (on file with author).

107. Joseph P. McCormick & Charles E. Jones, *The Conceptualization of Deracialization*, in DILEMMAS OF BLACK POLITICS: ISSUES OF LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGY 66 (Georgia A. Persons ed., 1993).



in 2001. The utility of building the traditional model of political incorporation—biracial coalitions of liberal whites and Asian Pacific Americans or Latinos—may be appropriate only under certain circumstances, such as where there is a strong liberal tradition of electing minority candidates or supporting biracial coalitions.

In districts where Latinos are the dominant majority population (70 percent or more), one will continue to find LEOs who run as ethnic candidates and fight for the interests of their ethnic communities almost exclusively. In other locations, they are a small percentage of the population and may be elected because they are not perceived as a threat taking over political control of the area. This is a reflection of the duality of Latino politics, in which they have been placed into overwhelmingly Latino majority districts in order to have the strongest opportunity to elect an ethnic candidate of their choosing. However, as naturalization and voting rates grow among Latinos, and non-Latinos change their racialized voting patterns, the necessity of having super majority Latino districts may no longer be a requirement to achieve elected office. This duality of majority and minority electoral districts is less evident for Asian Americans, as they are only a majority in one state. Nevertheless, both groups have traditional areas where their populations are concentrated. On the one hand, the electoral districts where they are the majority of the population remain the best locations to achieve electoral representation for Asian Americans and Latinos. On the other hand, they are running and beginning to win in districts where they are a small percentage of the population. This was inconceivable just a few years ago.

In the areas where Asian Americans and Latinos are the predominant social group, the struggle is no longer for descriptive representation; rather, it is for more substantive representation. In these districts, ethnic voters have been voting for ethnic candidates for many years, and they vote for the candidates that most closely represent their views and are well known to them through community involvement as business people or community activists. In addition, there are differences between various political camps, usually within the same political party, that exist in most cities and electoral districts nationally. These races become contests between the different organized interests seeking to maintain or to transform the existing political order. For example, the 2001 New York City Council District 1 race in the lower Manhattan area around Chinatown included three Chinese American candidates and three white candidates. Not surprisingly, in a district where Chinese voters were not the majority, none of the Asian American candidates were successful. In a highly competitive race, the failure of the Chinese American community to unite around one candidate made it extremely difficult to elect an Asian American. In Chicago, the pro-Daley (regular) Latino Democrats and the independent Latino Democrats have waged intense intra-ethnic campaigns for electoral power in Latino majority districts for more than a decade.<sup>108</sup>

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108. See Michael Gillis, *Contests Split Local Hispanic Democrats: Primaries Pit Independents, Party Regulars*, CHI. SUN TIMES, Mar. 9, 1998, at 8.

## CONCLUSION

This exploratory research into the electoral efforts and policy priorities of a new cohort of ethnic elected officials finds that they have both drawn on ethnic support to achieve elected office. A significant number of AAEOs have relied on outside pan-ethnic funding support to compensate for limited voting power in their non-Asian districts. LEOs, on the other hand, have relied on family and friends, combined with selective interest support, including unions and business interests, to achieve electoral office. Their policy priorities reflect their similar immigrant origins and liberal backgrounds. This paper represents the beginning of ongoing research on historically understudied groups of elected officials. Future research is needed to explore the levels of political incorporation for LEOs and AAEOs and to measure the extent of incorporation in different locations and under different circumstances. Whether LEOs and AAEOs can become part of the governing coalitions in urban cities beyond the level of formal representation remains to be seen. Also, more research is needed to explore the impact of Latino and Asian Pacific American political incorporation on the political fortunes of African Americans, as all these groups increasingly find themselves pitted against each other for electoral positions in areas where they are concentrated. Furthermore, the growth of political participation of other people of color such as Caribbean Island immigrants, Native Americans, and people of mixed race backgrounds will create new areas of research into the different pathways of political incorporation.

In a society as diverse as the United States, equality for all remains an elusive goal. In a nation where the dominant majority has used physical and cultural differences to discriminate and to marginalize minority groups, the need for symbolic and substantive representation is a necessary step in a much longer process of full equality for historically underrepresented groups. The political representation of minority groups is exclusively the responsibility of its members. However, the historical divisions amongst the racialized peoples of this country require continued exploration of how minority representatives act to represent their own historically underrepresented group members and others in a similar situation. As Williams notes, "Although representation for marginalized groups is not in itself a cure for injustice, there is good reason to believe it is at least a healing measure."<sup>109</sup>

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109. WILLIAMS, *supra* note 26, at 243.

