The Political Interests and Representation of a Growing Minority Group:

The Case of Asian Americans

By

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Abstract

How well are Asian Americans represented? The election of Asian American candidates to public office falls short of the Asian American share of the electorate. However, scholars have yet to test if this lack of Asian American descriptive representation also limits the substantive representation of Asian American interests in the policy making process. This dissertation is one of the first to examine the state of Asian American political representation in contemporary U.S. politics. To do so, I employ a multi-method approach using a variety of datasets. First, using an original data set of content from the websites of 161 Asian American interest groups, I identify "Asian American issues": community, immigration, election, youth, discrimination, representation, healthcare, women, education, and senior. Second, I discover the disconnection in issue priorities and preferences between interest groups and Asian Americans in the public based on the analysis on existing public opinion surveys. For instance, the biggest disparity in terms of ranking and preference was found in immigration issues that are heavily addressed by interest groups, but not by the public. Third, through face-to-face interviews with 12 representatives of Asian American interest groups in New York, California, Illinois, Ohio, and Wisconsin, I show that while Asian American organizations provide broad representation of pan-Asian American interests, they are substantially more active when it comes to issues affecting disadvantaged subgroups of Asians than those affecting more advantaged subgroups of Asians. By providing evidence on the current state of political inclusion and representation of a marginalized group like Asian Americans, this dissertation advances our understanding of the overall well-being of American representative democracy.

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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 The Place of Asian Americans in U.S. Politics[1]

In many ways, the results of the 2012 presidential election were not surprising. Barack Obama won the popular vote and the Electoral College by comfortable margins, as many political scientists and pundits predicted. Looking closely at the source of these votes shows that Obama had repeated electoral success among racial and ethnic groups, at levels similar to those he achieved in 2008 (Ramakrishnan and Lee 2012). What did surprise many, however, was that Asian Americans also voted, overwhelmingly, for Obama (73%). Unlike African-American and Latino voters, Asian Americans do not to have a strong history of voting Democrat, particularly in presidential elections according to the previous exit polls. For instance, Asian Americans

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[1] I use the non-hyphenated term, Asian Americans. Although there was an academic debate on Asian Americans as a hyphenated identity, Asian American versus Asian-American, scholars who study Asian American politics today seem to agree with using the non-hyphenated term. Beyond a grammatical effect, a hyphenated term Asian-Americans reflects the uniqueness of racial identity as a whole. However, it also functions as placing Asian Americans as aliens who are subject to mainstream prejudice and permanently unable to fit the society (Eng 1997). For this reason, the current studies about Asian American politics avoid using the hyphenated term with a purpose of entitling Asian Americans within the larger American society. I respect this line of scholarly consensus to use the non-hyphenated term of Asian Americans throughout my dissertation.

supported Bill Clinton at a rate of only 31% in 1992 (Best and Krueger 2012). Change in the partisan direction of Asian American votes, therefore, intrigued many people.

Asian American voters became a visible and relevant force in U.S. elections for the first time in 2008 when Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama scrambled for voters to secure the Democratic nomination. Though Clinton drew endorsements from several Asian American elected officials and campaign donations from prominent Asian Americans in New York, Obama was able to appeal to this constituency by enlisting the support of his Hawaiian family members, including his Indonesian-American sister, Maya Soetoro-Ng, and her Chinese American husband, Konrad Ng (Wong et al. 2011, 1). This broad mobilization led to a significant Democratic Primary turnout: Asian Americans voted in New York, California, Washington and Virginia at previously unobserved rates (*ibid.*).

The growing visibility and influence of Asian American voters in the recent two presidential elections has caught the attention of the major news outlets.

"GOP Sees Need to Woo Asian-American Voters." [April 11, 2013. *USA Today*]
"Asian American Vote Key for Both Parties." [July 28, 2012. *Politico*]
"Could 2012 Be The Year of The Asian Voter?" [August 5, 2012. *NPR*]
"How Nevada's Asian American Vote Can Swing Election." [October 26, 2012. *The Hill*]
"Asian Voters Send a Message to Republicans." [November 8, 2012. *Bloomberg*]
"Asian-American Voters Pivot Toward the Democrats." [November 18, 2012. *NY Times*]
"Post-Election Poll Finds Record Turnout of Asian American Voters." [December 12, 2012. *UCR Today*]

The national media seems eager to discuss Asian Americans' influence at the polls and in higher political positions. However, the media's discussion about Asian American public opinion has been generally misleading. For instance, some sources mistakenly indicated that Obama had "an Asian problem" — that Asian Americans had a pre-existing prejudice against black candidates,

which he would need to overcome in order to carry the group for the 2008 presidential election (Cullen 2008; Tuchman 2008). To explain Asian American votes in the 2012 presidential election, other political pundits have reached for a cultural explanation: Asian Americans coming from countries that have less support for individualism and more obedience to government thus would necessarily vote for the incumbent (Brooks 2012). Although these examples are appealing political stories, media coverage about Asian American voters rarely references solid data to support any coherent hypotheses (Wong et al. 2011, 2).

To most Americans and American organizations, including news organizations, Asian Americans still lack a clear place in the American political system. The paucity of knowledge about Asian Americans among the general public is somewhat understandable because this population composes a relatively small portion of the country's population. In addition, it is challenging to understand the political behavior and opinion of Asian Americans as a whole without understanding the nuance of internal diversity within the population. Moreover, much of our knowledge about Asian Americans comes from the "model minority" image of this population: "the belief that Asian Americans, through their hard work, intelligence, and emphasis on education and achievement, have been successful in American society."[2] While this stereotype is conventionally received by the public, it also apparently leads many to assume that Asian Americans are politically inactive and unimportant (McGowan and Lindgren 2006, 331). Perhaps for these reasons, journalists tend to provide only a cursory sketch about Asian American voters, and political scientists have not been interested in collecting data about the Asian American population until recently.

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[2] For the in-depth discussion about the model minority image of Asian Americans, see chapter 8 in *Asian American Politics* (Aoki and Takeda 2008) and section 3 "Model Minority Myth" by Kwon and Au in *Encyclopedia of Asian American Issues Today: Diversity and Demographics* (Chen and Yoo 2010).

This is the context that motivates this project. I examine manifestations of Asian Americans' political interests within the public and among Asian American interest groups and investigate what discrepancies between them teach us about representation. We know that Asian Americans are not descriptively represented because the election of Asian American candidates to public office falls short of the Asian American share of the electorate. However, it is unknown if Asian American interests are substantively represented in U.S. politics despite this lack of Asian American descriptive representation. This dissertation is one of the first to investigate the state of Asian American substantive political representation. To do so, I examine the issues that are important to Asian Americans and then how these issues are represented in the American political system through interest groups.[3] Through a multi-method approach using a variety of datasets, I show that while Asian American interest groups provide broad representation of pan-Asian American interests at the local-level beyond the policy change, they are substantially more active when it comes to issues affecting disadvantaged subgroups of Asians than those affecting more advantaged subgroups of Asians. This research ultimately provides a more definitive account about the place of Asian Americans in U.S. politics.

Before I delve into the analysis of Asian American substantive political representation, I will address a basic question: why is it important to draw academic attention to Asian Americans? In other words what is the importance of Asian Americans in U.S. politics? In the following

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[3] Another term I use in this project is interest groups. David Truman ([1951] 1971) defines interest group as "any group that, on the basis of one or more shared attitudes, makes certain claims upon other groups in society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by the shared attitudes" (33). I use the term interest group more narrowly than Truman. When I refer to interest groups, it usually means organizations advocating a specific social or political goal to benefit either a broad Asian American population or a specific group within this population unless specify otherwise. There are a variety of terms that might be used interchangeably for interest groups: pressure system, pressure groups, citizens group, organized interests, and interest groups. Although I do not have preference, I stick with the more traditional term interest group throughout the dissertation.

section, I argue that there are three reasons that make Asian Americans politically important: their increasing numeric power, increasing pan-Asian identity among the young generation of Asian Americans, and their growth as an electoral force.

1.1.1 The Fastest-Growing Racial Group

The United States has experienced demographic shifts as a result of the growing size of the non-white population. Although Asian Americans currently compose only 6 percent of the U.S. population (See Table 1.1), they are actually the nation's fastest growing population by race. Between 2000 and 2010, the Asian American population grew faster than any other racial group, at a rate of 46%, which increased four times faster than the total U.S. population (See Figure 1.1). In addition, the Asian population is projected to more than double from 16 million in 2012 to 34.4 million in 2060.[4] Its share of nation's total population will be climbing from 6 percent to 10 percent in the same period.

Given the nature of a democratic system in which numbers matter, it is increasingly difficult to understand American politics without reference to the explosive growth of Asian Americans because this population has the potential to reshape the political landscape in the United States (Lien et al. 2004; Wong et al. 2011).

1.1.2 Increasing Pan-Asian Identity

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[4] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau. "2012 National Population Projections." Released December, 2012. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html.

A group's numeric power can be transferred to political power when this group has a coherent political identity. Previous studies (Miller et al. 1981; Shingles 1981; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Stokes 2003; Allen et al. 1989; Dawson 1993: as cited in Wong et al. 2011, 157) show that "group identities appear to play a key role as a collective resource that can be mobilized" and "to serve as powerful heuristic in one's general political calculus" (*ibid*.). Unlike the previous research about Asian Americans that is skeptical about the pan-Asian identity and its link to political power because of internal diversity within the community, I claim the opposite. My face-to-face interviews found that interest groups are helping forge a pan-Asian identity and holding the belief that the young generation of Asian Americans is able to overcome internal variation within the community.

It is well known that Asian Americans are heterogeneous in many ways. The predominant Asian Americans studies stress that Asian Americans have been lumped together as one group despite their different nationalities. The label *Asian Americans* includes more than 19 different countries (see Table 1.2). The official definition of Asian, which was created by the Office of Management and Budget and is respected by the U.S. Census, is "a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asian, or the Indian subcontinent, including, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam" (Barnes and Bennett 2002, 1; U.S. Bureau of Census 2010). Scholars in Asian American politics argue that "Asian American identity varies in their experiences and expressions in different regions of the United Sates" so that this group's identity hardly constitutes "the sturdiest base from which Asian Americans may organize politically" (Wong et al. 2011, 155).

In addition, Asian Americans should be differentiated in other various categories beyond nationality. For instance, this population is largely foreign-born (60 percent; see Figure 1.2) and generally bilingual (71%; see Figure 1.5). Some Asian ethnic groups, such as the Japanese and Hmong, tend to have the longest history of living in the United States, longer than other ethnic groups (see Figure 1.3) and these groups are less likely to speak a language other than English at home (see Figure 1.6). Socioeconomic variables such as educational attainment and income also show internal diversity in the Asian American community. Although about half of Asian Americans earn a bachelor's degree or higher (see Figure 1.9), and their per capita income and household income is higher than other racial groups (see Figure 1.11), there is a great disparity in educational attainment (see Figure 1.10) and in per capita income (see Figure 1.12) across Asian ethnic groups.[5]

Surveys, such as the 2000-2001 Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS, hereafter) show that many Asians in the United States think of themselves first in ethnic-specific terms, not in terms of their pan-Asian identity (Lien et al. 2004). Their weak group identity seems to make sense because these individuals are grouped together into the minority identity of Asian Americans by society even though Asians constitute the majority ethnicity in the world's population and they have a significant presence of every continent.[6] However, some scholars argue that the ascribed group identity appears to have reduced internal diversity and promoted unity among them. In other words, external identification strengthened pan-Asian ethnic unity because Asian Americans embraced the singular identity as a defensive

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[5] Note that Asian American households tend to be overcrowded than other racial groups, occupying more than one person in a room (see Figure 1.14), and this fact makes the average household income of Asian Americans the highest among other racial groups. Since the density of overcrowded household varies across Asian American ethnic groups, household income is also different among Asian Americans.

[6] [Source] Population Reference Bureau. ""2011 World Population Data Sheet." Released in July 2011. Retrieved from http://www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2011/world-population-data-sheet/data-sheet.aspx.

measure when outsiders failed to observe distinctions among Asian ethnic groups (Aoki and Takeda 2008, 28; Cho 2001; Lien et al. 2003). My in-depth interviews with representatives of Asian American interest groups support this line of argument.[7]

Organizations working for Asian Americans in face-to-face interviews are fully aware of internal diversity in terms of nationality, language, and socioeconomic status with respect to this population. Yet, they also recognize the strong pan-Asian identity among the young generation. All of my interviewees shared their positive views and experiences with young Asian Americans. As scholars in Asian American politics point out, "the extent to which individuals identify with the pan-Asian category depends on how long ago they or their families arrived" (Wong et al. 2011, 159). Interest groups observe that Asian American youth who were born in the United States and immigrated at an early age prefer to be global and beyond ethnic boundaries, honoring their pan-Asian identity. I also notice that organizations understand the importance of pan-Asian identity for the group's political power. For this reason, interest groups are putting great efforts into strengthening the group's identity among the young generation because they would be the driving force to form a political bloc for Asian Americans in general.

Although previous research about Asian Americans stresses differences within the group and doubts the presence of group identity as a result of internal diversity, I found potential for Asian Americans' numeric power to be transferred to political power because of increasing pan-Asian identity, especially among the young generation.

This project takes this complex narrative of identity into account when exploring Asian American political dynamics.

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[7] Chapter 4 provides the detailed information about face-to-face interviews.

1.1.3 The Increasing Power of Asian Voters in American Elections

As mentioned previously, Asian Americans are becoming a powerful electoral influence (Lien et al. 2001; Wong et al. 2011). With its increasing population share, particularly significant in California, New Jersey, Washington, and New York (see Table 1.3), Asians' political importance to state politics is already apparent. In national politics, these are also powerful states overall. Among Nevada, Virginia, and Florida, Asian Americans are electorally important because the margin of victory in the 2012 presidential election was smaller than the percentage of Asian American population in these states.[8]

These are reasons to believe that Asian American voters could change electoral outcomes, but there has been very little research that might demonstrate how and in what direction. First, the central tendency of public opinion, voting behavior, and party identity among Asian Americans is not clear to scholars of political behavior. Although it seems that Asian Americans are becoming Democrats, it is a fluctuating group in contrast to African Americans where we generally expect them to vote for Democrats at over 90%. The surveys such as the 2000-2001 PNAAPS, the 2008 National Asian American Survey (NAAS, hereafter), and the 2012 survey by Pew Research Center, "The Rise of Asian Americans" constantly show large numbers of nonpartisan and undecided voters among Asian Americans. It would be possible that four years from now, Asian Americans become even more Democratic or revert back to being more Republican as they once were in the 1990s.

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[8] [Source] The Presidential Election Results in *the Washington Post*, retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/politics/election-map-2012/president/.

Second, data show that "Asian American are becoming citizens, registering to vote, and voicing their concerns at the ballot box" (Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, 2011, 13). Despite language and cost barriers to citizenship, approximately 57% of Asian American immigrants are U.S. citizens, an increase from 50% in 2000.[9] In addition, considerable numbers of Asian Americans are legal permanent residents who are eligible to naturalize once they have held that status for five years (see Table 1.5 and Figure 1.18). The fact that more Asian Americans are becoming citizens and that there are significant numbers of potential citizens is critical to political parties because of the possibility that Asian Americans can be mobilized for either Democrats or Republicans.

My dissertation investigates the unresolved picture of Asian American public opinion on various issues and how these interests manifest through other channels that could impact Asian American politics, such as interest groups. These findings will contribute to our understanding of growing electoral influence of this population.

1.2 Studying Asian American Politics

While increasing attention has been paid in political science studies to African American politics and recently to Latino politics, research exploring Asian Americans is scarce. A few but important works studied political participation and voting behavior of Asian Americans (Aoki and Takeda 2008; Jang 2009; Lien 2001; Lien et al. 2004; Wong et al. 2005; Wong et al. 2011; Uhlaner et al. 1989). However, topics such as what kind of issues are emphasized by Asian

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[9] See Figures 1.16 and 1.17 as well as "Asian Immigrants in the United States," published by Migration Policy Institute (Batalova 2011).

Americans and in what ways these interests are reflected in the American political system are largely understudied. Given the increasing political power Asian Americans wield, American political science studies would benefit from thoroughly understanding Asian American interests, and the manner in which these interests may be brought to bear; knowing political interests is a prerequisite for understanding people's political behavior (Griffin and Newman 2008).

My dissertation is one of the first attempts to address these topics in detail. By examining political opinions of marginalized Asian Americans, this project advances our understanding of the interests of all citizens. In addition, this dissertation also speaks to the interest group literature by investigating the current state of political inclusion and equality of Asian Americans through interest group representation. Thus, this dissertation contributes to an evaluation of the well-being of American representative democracy. In the subsequent sections, I will briefly introduce the current research on public opinion and American pluralism.

1.2.1 Public Opinion Literature

Political scientists who study public opinion and public policy agree that the appeal of modern representative democracy hinges on how well constituency opinion gets translated into public policy. Previous research finds that public opinion is the dominant influence on policy making, not only at the national level of the three branches of government (Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995) and specific policies, such as defense spending (Bartels 1991), but also at the state level, on the state policy-making process (Erikson et al. 1993). In addition, scholars have also discovered that any correlation between public opinion and policy responsiveness is higher when a given public opinion shift is larger, more stable, or more salient (for a detailed review, see

Burstein 2003; Page and Shapiro 1983). However, some studies claim that the relationship between public opinion and policy congruence is mitigated by political parties and elections (Key 1961) and economic elites (Smith 1999). Others doubt that the public can have meaningful political opinions, so they argue that policy is the product of other forces (Glynn et al. 1999; Schumpeter 1942).

Starting from the above-mentioned studies, many scholars who study the politics of race and ethnicity seek to determine within which policy areas racial minority groups' public opinions differ, and whether these differences have influence overall. Scholars find that the views of African Americans and of whites differ systematically and substantially in policy areas such as welfare, crime, civil rights, health care, poverty, and redistricting (Bobo and Johnson 2004; Canon 1999; Griffin and Newman 2008; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Kinder and Winter 2001; Schuman et al. 1997; Tate 1994, 2003; Tuch and Weitzer 1997). Recently, scholars have focused more on public opinion among Latinos, and they have confirmed that policies such as education, income, security, abortion, immigration are important to Latinos (Claassen 2004; Espino et al. 2007; Griffin and Newman 2008; Kerevel 2011; Leal 2004; 2005; Sanchez 2006). As a result, scholars (and politicians) have learned what issues are salient to African Americans and Latinos and are therefore able to determine the types of policies to which these communities will respond.

Thanks to the growing body of literature on African American politics and emerging studies on Latino politics, we now also understand the areas where whites are better represented than minority groups and vice versa. However, insufficient scholarly attention has been given to Asian Americans, and therefore we have yet to fully know whether cohesive Asian American interests exist and how this group's set of public opinions might be met in the policy-making

process. Although the number of scholars contributing to Asian American politics is increasing,

they are mostly focusing on political participation and party identification of Asian Americans

(Cain et al. 1991; Lien 1994; Ong and Nakanishi 2003; Ramakrishnan et al. 2009; Rim 2009;

Tam 1995; Uhlaner et al. 1989).

Junn and her colleagues (2010) address this focus in a recent review in the *Oxford Handbook of Public Opinion*. They attribute the lack of emphasis on analysis of Asian American public opinion to limited data availability. For instance, the 2000-2001 PNAAPS is considered the first national survey of Asian Americans. This data is very important because "much of the existing and recent research on Asian American political behavior in a national context has drawn description and inferences" from this survey (Junn et al. 2010, 523). However, its geographically specific samples limit scholars to broad accounts of the national Asian American population. The media and exit polls generally available are also not suited for in-depth research because they have limited explanatory variables, small numbers of questions, and imperfect sampling frames (Junn et al. 2010).[10] A few studies examine Asian American views on affirmative action in employment (Bell et al. 1997), foreign policy concerns (Cain et al. 1991), and immigration (Berry 2012). Yet, the recent study by Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee, and Junn (2011), who conducted the 2008 NAAS, is regarded as the first systematic research about political behavior and attitudes of Asian Americans with a nationally representative sample.

Given the lack of academic attention and limited data on Asian Americans' public opinions, any accurate assessment of the extent to which Asian American interests are included

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[10] Examples of media and exit polls are *Los Angeles Times* polls in the 1990s, the Kaiser Family Foundation's surveys with the Washington Post in 1995 and 2001, Voter News Service/National Election Pool exit polls, and Asian specific exit polls by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Chinese American Voters' Education Committee (see Junn et al. 2010, 522).

in the political system is scarce. My dissertation seeks to fill this gap by identifying Asian

American interests as well as by investigating the state of political representation of Asian

Americans.

1.2.2 American Pluralism Literature

This dissertation is also grounded in another source of political science literature — that of

pluralism, which has a legacy that stretches back to James Madison and Alexis de Tocqueville.

In *The Federalist Papers*, Madison ([1788] 2009) saw plural interests in a political society as a

public good because they are "checks and balances both against each other and, in combination,

against a republican government" (Waste 1987, 3). Alexis de Tocqueville ([1835]1999) also

believed that tyranny of the majority is resolvable in the American context because "a

democratic man" is constrained by "a sociopolitical network of pluralistic beliefs and institutions"

so that he or she would "be inclined against faction" (Waste 1987, 4). Modern pluralists such as

Robert Dahl ([1967] 2005) and David Truman ([1951]1971) popularized the classic pluralistic

idea that interest groups or advocacy organizations are a crucial channel for a healthy American

democracy because they play a role as representatives for marginalized groups that "are

continuously ill-served by the two major political parties" (Strolovitch 2007, 4). To these neo-

pluralists, interest groups are the essence of American politics where "public policy is the result

of a tug of war, often ending in a delicate balance or compromise," between various interest

groups (Waste 1987, 3). Unlike the early studies, the recent interest group literature investigates

the direct connections between interest group advocacy and the formulation of policy (Hojnacki

et al. 2012).[11] Although not all interest groups will have the same degree of effective access to policy arenas, depending on the issue and available resources (Truman [1951]1971, 33), organizations are usually influential in policy making, especially when these organizations' goals are consistent with public opinion (Denzau and Munger 1986; Kollman 1998).

I respect this theoretical framework in my dissertation. The existence of political equality (Dahl 1961) or the equal consideration of the preferences and interests of all citizens (Verba et al. 2003) is a fundamental premise of democracy. Therefore, whether or not historically marginalized groups like Asian Americans are represented in American politics is a critical question as we evaluate the well-being of American representative democracy. To examine the quality of Asian American representation, I reorient traditional questions about representation by moving away from the typical focus on elected officials. I instead concentrate on interest groups that play a more substantial role as representatives for Asian Americans who continue to have insufficient formal electoral representation (Strolovitch 2007). Not only are they formed to advocate interests on behalf of their members but interest groups also identify issues that they believe are important to their constituency. For this reason, I believe that Asian American interest groups are a useful source for identifying the issues Asian Americans find collectively significant, as well as for investigating the level of Asian American substantive interests' representation.

As many studies about interest groups have established, interests of more powerful and affluent people have an advantage over the concerns of less powerful groups such as women,

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[11] In *Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science* (1998), Baumgartner and Leech evaluated interest groups literature emerged between 1950 and 1995. They noted that "the behaviors of groups have often been studied in isolation from the complexities of the policy process" (174). Fortunately, Hojnacki and her colleagues (2012) discover that recent studies largely focus on the group dynamics of public policy making.

racial minorities, and low-income groups (Domhoff 1978; Gilens 2005; Golden 1998; Schattschneider 1960; Schlozman 1984; Yackee and Yackee 2006). Within the overall interest groups system, only a fraction works on social and economic justice for the voiceless population (Strolovitch 2006). Likewise, we can observe the bias in interest group literature because only limited numbers of scholars have studied interest groups working for minority groups in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and class (Fennema and Tillie 2001; Hero and Preuhs 2009; Strolovitch 2006, 2007). Particularly, there is virtually no systematic research about Asian American interest groups, though a simple profile of the Asian American nonprofit organizations (Hung 2008) and studies about the link between pan-Asian identity and community organizational activities (Geron et al. 2001; Okamoto 2006) are available. Therefore, my dissertation investigating Asian American political representation through a different channel, that of interest groups, broadens the scope of interest group literature, which at this time fails to notice the importance of interest groups serving racial minority groups.

1.3 Study Methodology

To answer the main question, what are Asian American political interests and how well are these interests represented, I employ a multi-method approach using several datasets in different ways, along with in-depth qualitative interviews. The data collection for this project is summarized in Table 1.6.

First, I created and analyzed an original dataset of content from the websites of 161 Asian American interest groups, in combination with existing data from public opinion surveys such as the 2004 National Politics Study and NAAS of 2008 and 2012. Content analysis on the data

collected from interest groups as well as survey data analysis allows me to identify the comprehensive list of issues that are salient to Asian Americans as a whole. Second, I used the merged General Social Surveys datasets to analyze the public opinion of Asian Americans. These particular data are useful to compare with the findings from content analysis of interest groups' websites. Lastly, I used in-depth interviews with 12 representatives from Asian American interest groups located across the country. I selected organizations to interview based on the following criteria: geographical representation, pan-Asian or ethnic focus, and the degree of political advocacy. Information collected from face-to-face interviews enabled me to examine Asian American substantive representation by interest groups.

Through the multiple methods used in this dissertation, I gained a variety of useful data that provide insights about the state of Asian American political representation. My content analysis is an innovative way to identify Asian American issues given that public opinion surveys with a large enough sample of Asian American respondents to be statistically significant are limited. In addition, my analysis of public opinion surveys provides an opportunity to discover one of the important findings in my dissertation: the disconnection in opinions between interest groups and the Asian American public. Moreover, my interviews offer details on the activities, perceptions of representative behavior, organizational tactics, and coalition strategies among Asian American interest groups. With this approach, I am able to present a more comprehensive analysis of political interests and representation of Asian Americans.

1.4 Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 is devoted to uncovering Asian American interests through the content analysis of websites of interest groups explicitly working for Asian Americans. This chapter starts by presenting the means by which I identified Asian American interest groups, laying out the sampling procedure, and then introducing the method of content analysis conducted by human coders and the software program Yoshikoder. I provide in-depth discussion about ten issues of importance to Asian American interest groups I identified through the content analysis: community empowerment; immigration-friendly policy; participation in elections; youth leadership; fighting against discrimination; representation in federal agencies; government, business, and media; health care reform; assisting women victims of domestic violence; increasing opportunities of education; and providing senior care.

In Chapter 3, I report the analysis of public opinion survey data conducted on the merged datasets of the General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. While the previous chapter focuses on investigating issues emphasized by interest groups for Asian Americans, this chapter pays particular attention to issues Asian American members of the public identify as important, and their stances on those issues. In this chapter, I find evidence to suggest a disconnection among issue priorities and preferences between interest groups and Asian Americans in the public. For instance, the biggest disparity in ranking and preference was found in immigration, which is one of the top advocacy issues for interest groups that claim to represent Asian Americans. In contrast, immigration rarely emerges among Asian Americans as an important Asian American issue, and this segment of the public is generally not in favor of more immigrant-friendly policies.

Chapter 4 expands the discussion of this striking finding — the mismatch between interest groups and Asian Americans generally – through an analysis of face-to-face interviews.

I examine the degree to which Asian American interest groups perceive their role as representatives, and how organizations attend to the particular challenges of the disconnection from the broader Asian American population. I present findings that Asian American advocacy organizations deliberately choose to represent marginalized subgroups within the community, and that they are aware of the mismatch between their issue priorities and the public's preferences. In-depth discussions about how interest groups reconcile the disconnection from the public are also provided.

My final chapter discusses the academic and practical implications of my findings. First of all, this research provides a better understanding about the public opinion of disadvantaged Asian Americans. It also offers a comprehensive analysis of Asian American substantive representation through interest groups, a non-traditional channel. Second, there are additional insights to be gained about political representation by interest groups as a result of a counter-intuitive finding in this project: disadvantaged subgroups among Asian Americans are over-represented by interest groups. Neither majority members (Olson 1965) nor influential funders (Walker 1983) of interest groups determine the substantive work and preferences in serving Asian Americans. In real-world politics, including major elections, Asian American interests shape a population that has become a critical voting bloc in electoral outcomes. I conclude that this dissertation advances the evaluation of representation in the electoral and civil-social dynamics of American democracy.

Table 1.1 Population by Race and Hispanic Origin, United States 2010[12]

Race and Hispanic Origin[13]	Number	Percent
White	196,817,552	64%
Hispanic	50,477,594	16%
African American	42,020,743	14%
Asian American (AA)	17,320,856	6%
American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN)	5,220,579	2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders (NHPI)	1,225,195	0.4%
Total Population	308,745,538	100%

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[12] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census. Note that this table is reprinted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice.

[13] Figures are for the inclusive population, single race and multi-race combined, and are not exclusive of Hispanic origin. For White, however, figures are exclusive of singe race and non-Hispanic. It applies to all tables and figures taken from the report by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice unless it specifies otherwise.

Figure 1.1 Population Growth by Race and Hispanic Origin, United States 2000 to 2010[14]

Category	Percent
Asian American	46%
Hispanic	43%
NHPI	40%
AIAN	27%
African American	15%
Total Population	10%
White	1%

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[14] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Censuses. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice." AIAN refers to American Indian and Alaska Native, and NHPI refers to Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander throughout tables and figures.

Table 1.2 Numerical Numbers of Asian Americans by Ethnic Groups[15]

Ethnic Group	Number
Chinese (except Taiwanese)	3,794,673
Filipino	3,416,840
Indian	3,183,063
Vietnamese	3,183,063
Korean	1,706,822
Japanese	1,304,286
Pakistani	409,163
Cambodian	276,667
Hmong	260,073
Thai	237,583
Laotian	232,130
Taiwanese	230,382
Bangladeshi	147,300
Burmese	100,200
Indonesian	95,270
Nepalese	59,490
Sri Lankan	45,381
Malaysian	26,179
Bhutanese	19,439

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[15] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census. Note that figures are ranked in order of population. Note that this table is reprinted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice.

Figure 1.2 Percent of Foreign-Born Population by Race and Hispanic Origin, United States 2007 to 2009[16]

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[16] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2009 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice."

Figure 1.3 Percent of Foreign-Born Population by Asian Ethnic Groups, United States 2007 to 2009[17]

[17] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2009 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice."

Figure 1.4 Undocumented Asian American Immigrant Population in the United States by Country of Birth, 2005 to 2011[18]

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[18] [Source] U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Estimates of Unauthorized Immigrant Population residing in the United States: January 2010." The 2011 data is compiled by author. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice." The vertical axis indicates number of undocumented immigrants whereas the horizontal axis indicates years. Estimates of the unauthorized resident population are the remainder after estimates of the legally resident foreign-born population are subtracted from estimates of the total foreign-born population.

Figure 1.5 Percent of Population Who Speak a Language Other Than English at Home by Race and Hispanic Origin, United States 2007 to 2009[19]

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[19] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2009 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice." Figures are for those 5 years of age and older.

Figure 1.6 Percent of Population Who Speak a Language Other Than English at Home by Asian Ethnic Groups, United States 2007 to 2009[20]

Ethnic Group	Percent
Bangladeshi	92%
Hmong	91%
Pakistani	86%
Vietnamese	84%
Taiwanese	82%
Laotian	81%
Cambodian	81%
Indian	77%
Chinese	75%
Sri Lankan	72%
Korean	71%
Indonesian	67%
Thai	66%
Malaysian	65%
Filipino	57%
Japanese	36%
Total Population	20%

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[20] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2009 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice." Figures are for those 5 years of age and older.

Figure 1.7 Percent of Population with Limited English Proficiency by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2007 to 2009[21]

Category	Percent
Hispanic	38%
Asian American	32%
Total Population	9%
NHPI	8%
AIAN	6%
African American	3%
White	2%

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[21] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2009 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice." Figures are for those 5 years of age and older.

Figure 1.8 Percent of Population with Limited English Proficiency by Asian Ethnic Groups, 2007 to 2009[22]

Group	Percent
Vietnamese	51%
Bangladeshi	46%
Cambodian	43%
Hmong	43%
Taiwanese	43%
Chinese	42%
Korean	41%
Laotian	40%
Thai	36%
Indonesian	30%
Pakistani	28%
Malaysian	23%
Indian	22%
Sri Lankan	22%
Filipino	19%
Japanese	18%
Total Population	9%

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[22] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2009 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice." Figures are for those 5 years of age and older.

Figure 1.9 Educational Attainment by Race and Hispanic Origin, United States 2009[23]

■ High School Degree or Higher ■ Bachelor's Degree or Higher

Race/Origin	High School Degree or Higher	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
White	90%	31%
Asian American	86%	49%
NHPI	85%	17%
Total Population	85%	28%
African American	81%	18%
AIAN	80%	16%
Hispanic	61%	13%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

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[23] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2009 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice." Figures are for those 5 years of age and older.

Figure 1.10 Educational Attainment by Asian Ethnic Group, United States 2007 to 2009[24]

■ High School or Higher   ■ Bachelor's Degree or Higher

Ethnic Group	High School or Higher	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Taiwanese	95%	73%
Indonesian	94%	47%
Japanese	94%	46%
Malaysian	93%	57%
Sri Lankan	93%	56%
Korean	92%	52%
Filipino	92%	46%
Indian	91%	68%
Pakistani	87%	55%
Total Population	85%	28%
Thai	84%	42%
Chinese	82%	50%
Bangladeshi	81%	47%
Vietnamese	72%	27%
Laotian	66%	12%
Cambodian	62%	14%
Hmong	61%	14%

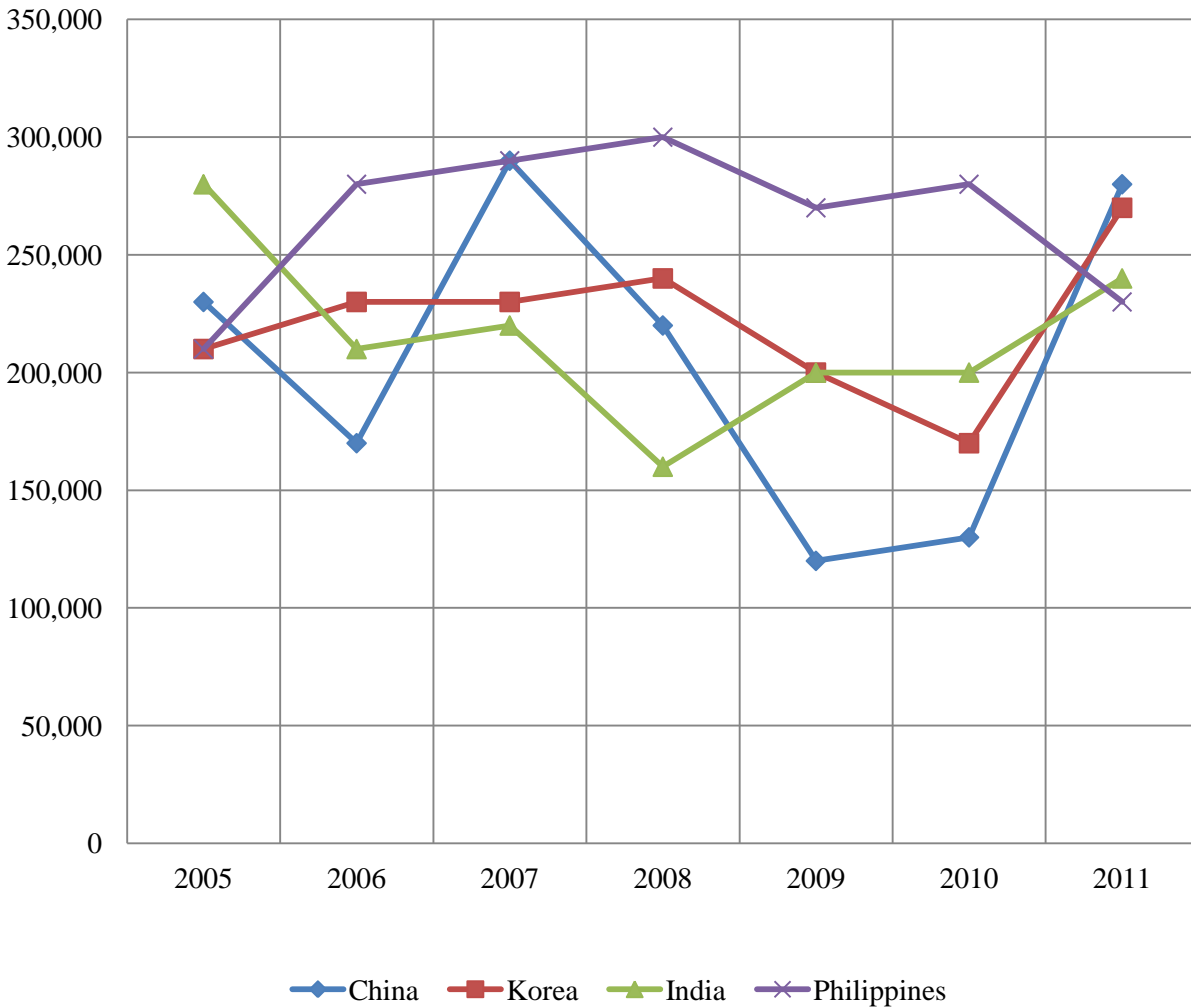[24] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2009 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice."

Figure 1.11 Per Capita Income vs. Household Income by Race and Hispanic Origin, United States 2007 to 2009[25]

■ Per Capita   ■ Household Income

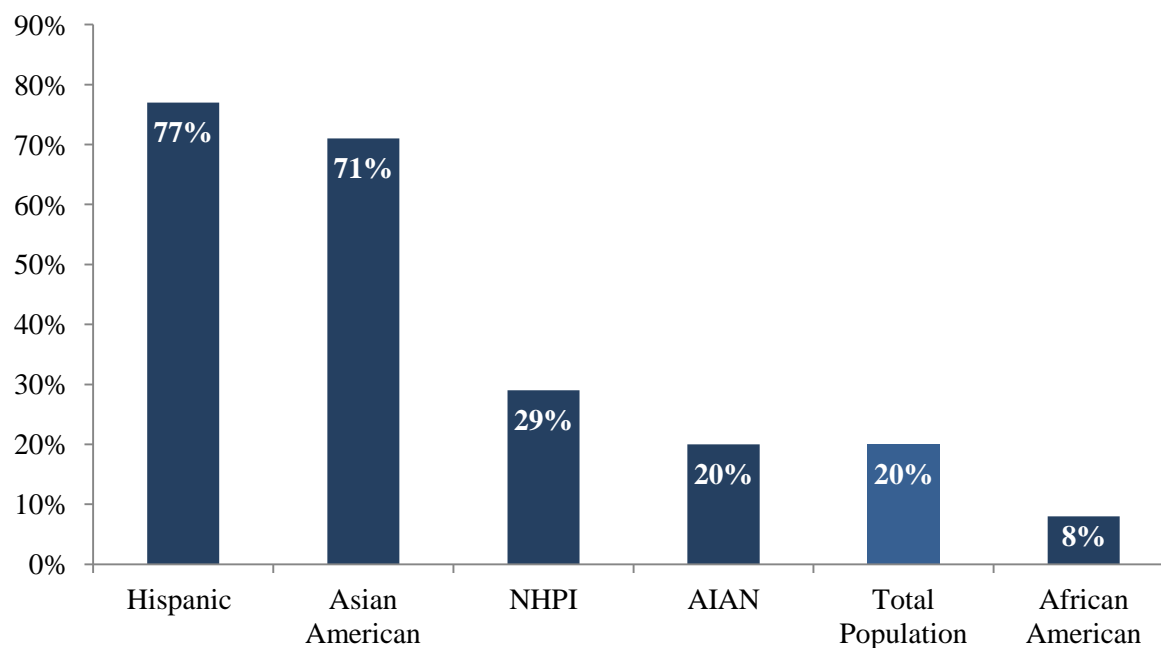|	Per Capita	Household Income
White	$31,735	$55,906
Asian American	$28,342	$68,549
Total Population	$27,100	$51,369
NHPI	$19,020	$57,664
AIAN	$17,933	$38,515
African American	$17,549	$34,585
Hispanic	$15,506	$40,920

[25] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2009 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice." Per capita income is the mean income computed for every man, woman, and child in a particular group, which is derived by dividing the total income of a particular group by the total population of that group. Median household income divides income distribution of households (all persons living in the same residence) into two equal parts, half falling below and half above the median household income.

Figure 1.12 Per Capita Income by Asian Ethnic Groups, United States 2007 to 2009[26]

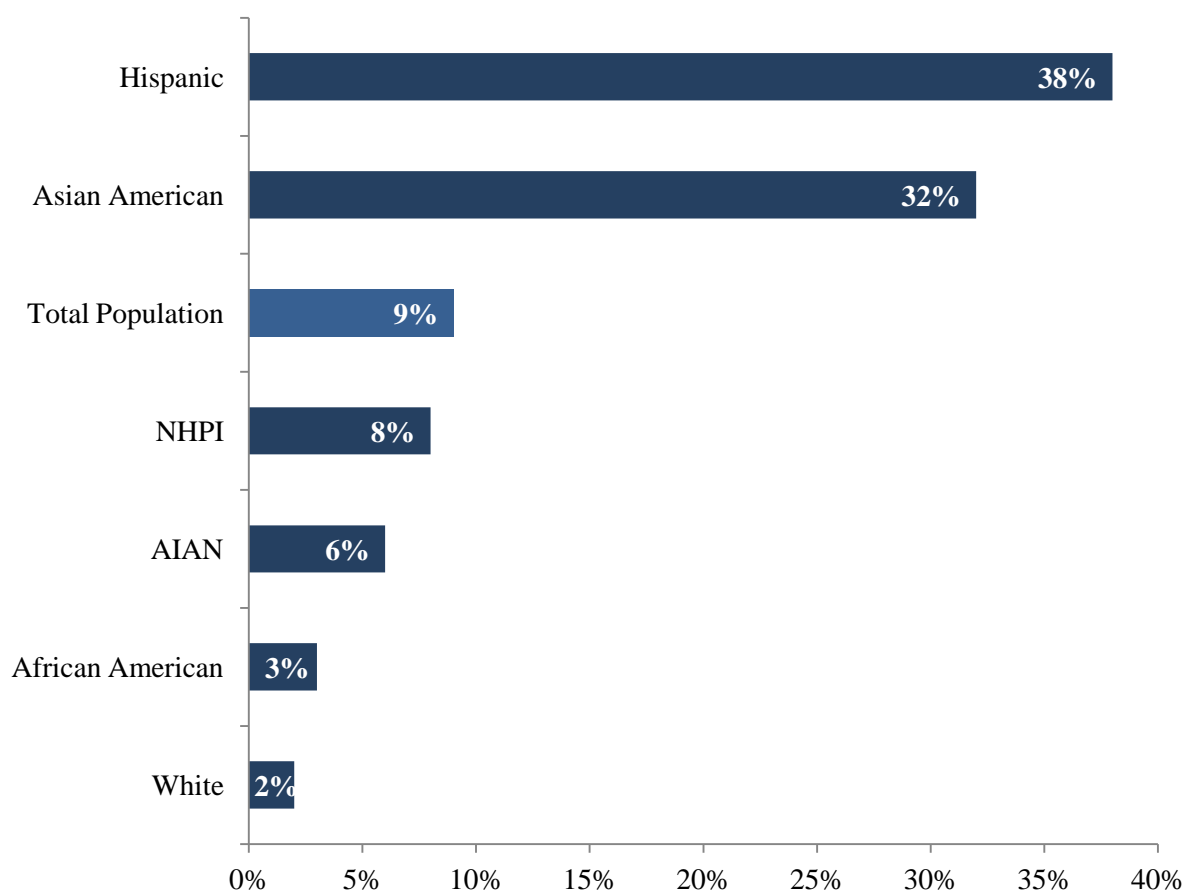| Ethnic Group	Per Capita Income
Taiwanese	$38,312
Indian	$36,533
Malaysian	$33,264
Sri Lankan	$32,480
Japanese	$31,831
Chinese	$30,061
Total Population	$27,100
Korean	$26,118
Filipino	$25,799
Indonesian	$25,729
Pakistani	$24,663
Thai	$21,708
Vietnamese	$21,542
Bangladeshi	$16,784
Laotian	$16,585
Cambodian	$15,940
Hmong	$10,949

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[26] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2009 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice."

Figure 1.13 Percent of Population: Homeowners vs. Renters by Race and Hispanic Origin, United States 2007 to 2009[27]

■ Renter ■ Owner

Group	Renter	Owner
African American	55%	45%
Hipanic	51%	49%
NHPI	52%	48%
AIAN	44%	56%
Asian American	41%	59%
Total Population	34%	66%
White	27%	73%

Figure 1.14 Percent Who Live in Overcrowded Housing by Asian Ethnic Group, United States 2007 to 2009[28]

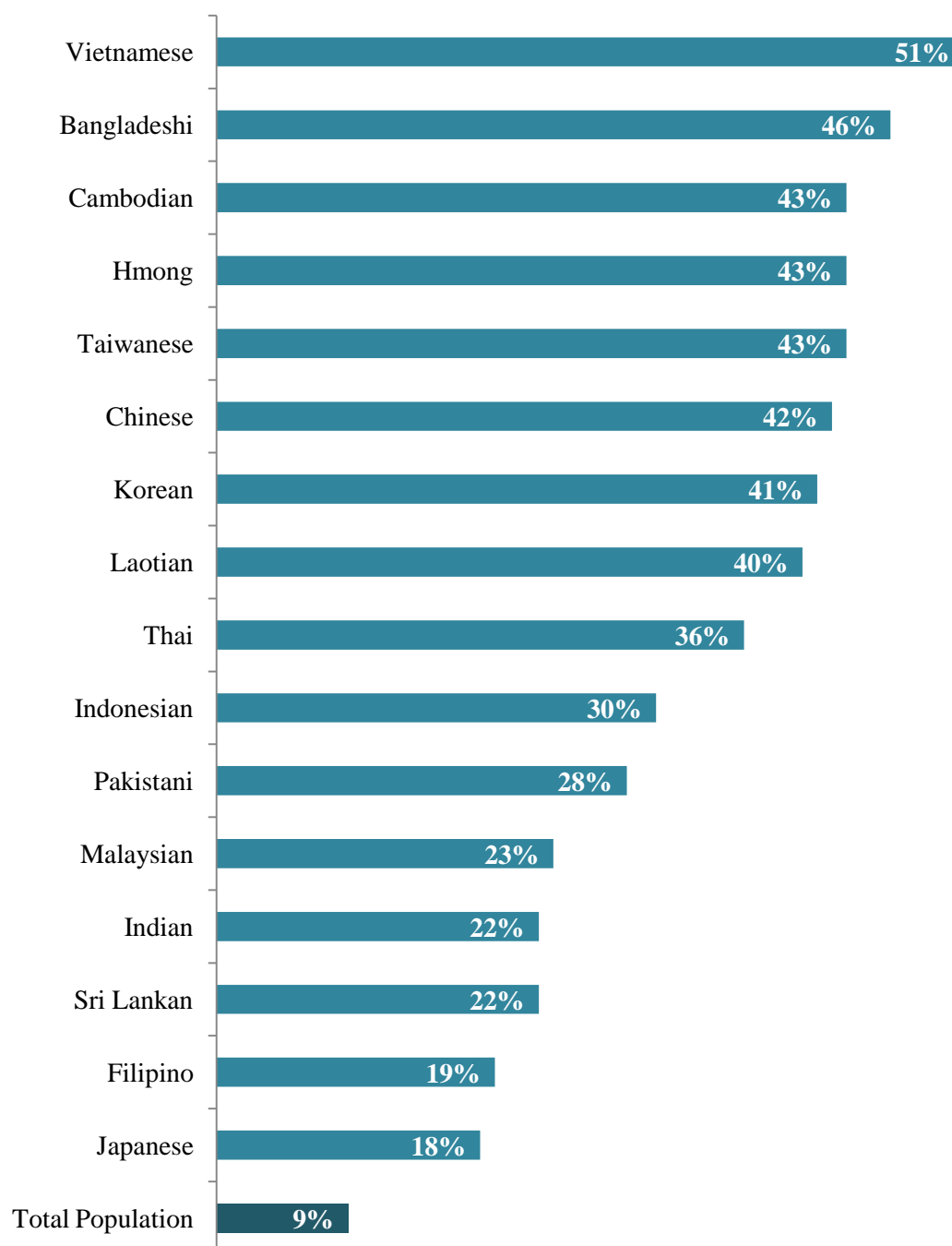| Ethnic Group	Percent
Hmong	32%
Bangladeshi	24%
Pakistani	14%
Cambodian	14%
Laotian	11%
Vietnamese	8%
Filipino	8%
Sri Lankan	6%
Indian	6%
Chinese	6%
Thai	5%
Malaysian	5%
Korean	5%
Indonesian	5%
Total Population	3%
Japanese	3%
Taiwanese	2%

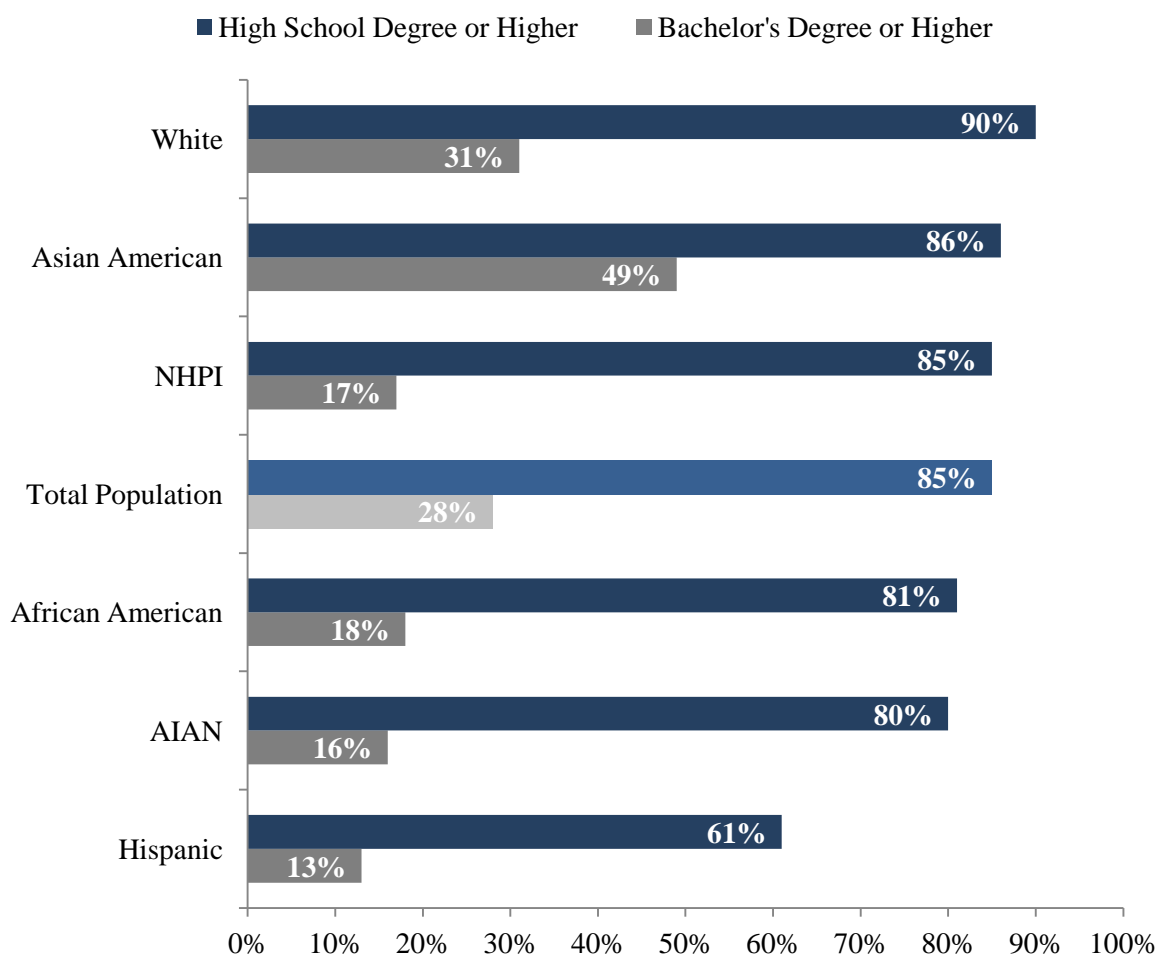[28] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2009 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice." Overcrowded housing refers to occupied unites in which there are more than one person per room.

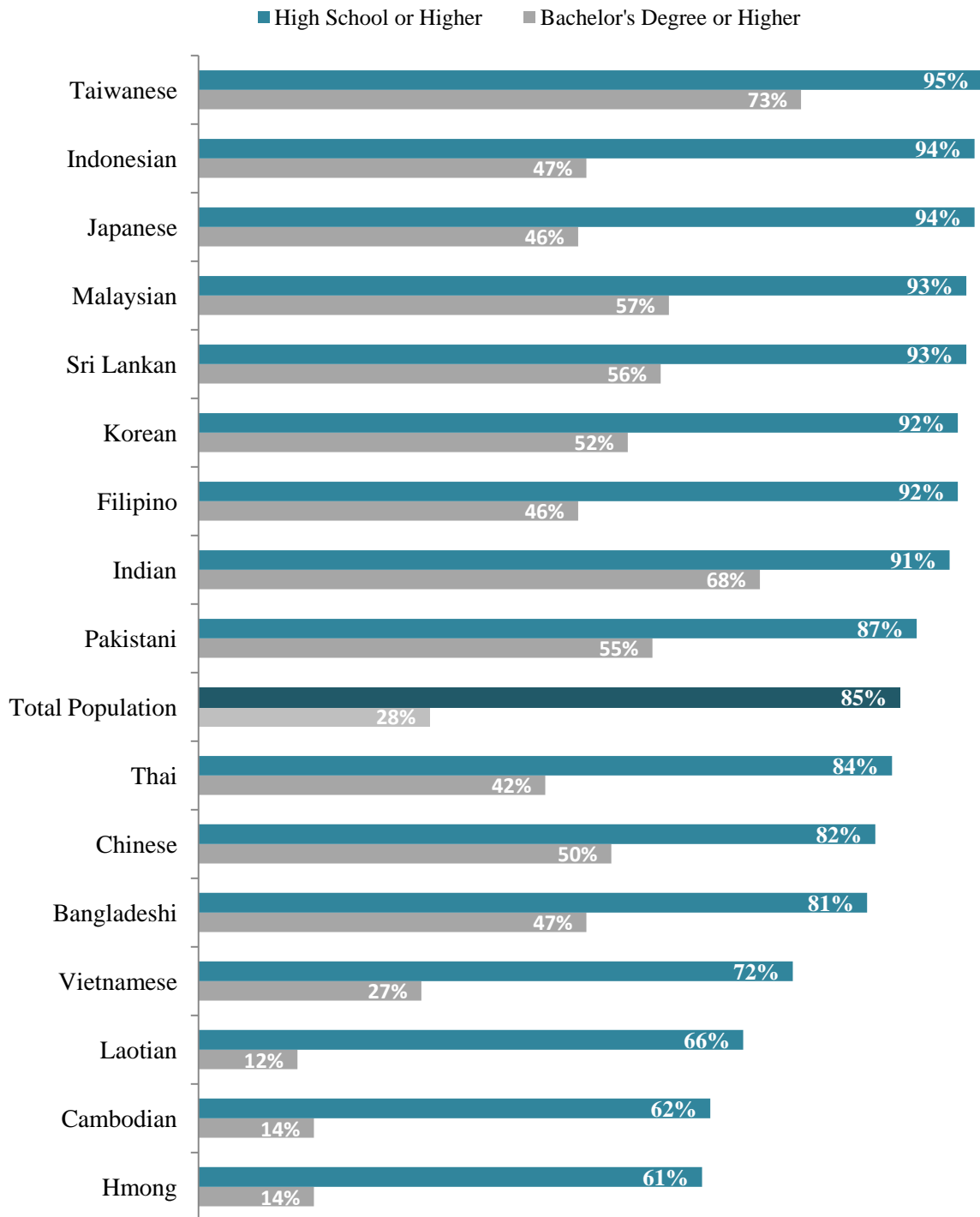**Figure 1.15 Percent Uninsured by Asian Ethnic Group, 2009**[29]

[29] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice."

Table 1.3 States with Highest Number of Asian Americans[30]

U.S. States	Number	% of State Population
California	5,556,592	15%
New York	1,549,494	8%
Texas	1,110,666	4%
New Jersey	795,163	9%
Hawai'i	780,968	57%
Illinois	668,694	5%
Washington	604,251	9%
Florida	573,083	3%
Virginia	522,199	7%
Pennsylvania	402,587	3%
Massachusetts	394,211	6%
Maryland	370,044	6%
Georgia	365,497	4%
Michigan	289,607	3%
North Carolina	252,585	3%

[30] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census.   Note that this table is reprinted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice.

Table 1.4 States with Highest Growth of Asian Americans, United States 2000 to 2010[31]

U.S. States	% Growth
Nevada	116%
Arizona	95%
North Carolina	85%
North Dakota	85%
Georgia	83%
New Hampshire	80%
Delaware	78%
Arkansas	77%
Indiana	74%
Texas	72%
Florida	72%
Virginia	71%
Idaho	71%
South Dakota	70%
Alabama	70%

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[31] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census. Note that this table is reprinted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice.

Figure 1.16 Percent of Naturalized Foreign-Born Population by Race and Hispanic Origin, United States 2007 to 2009[32]

■ Naturalized ■ Not Naturalized

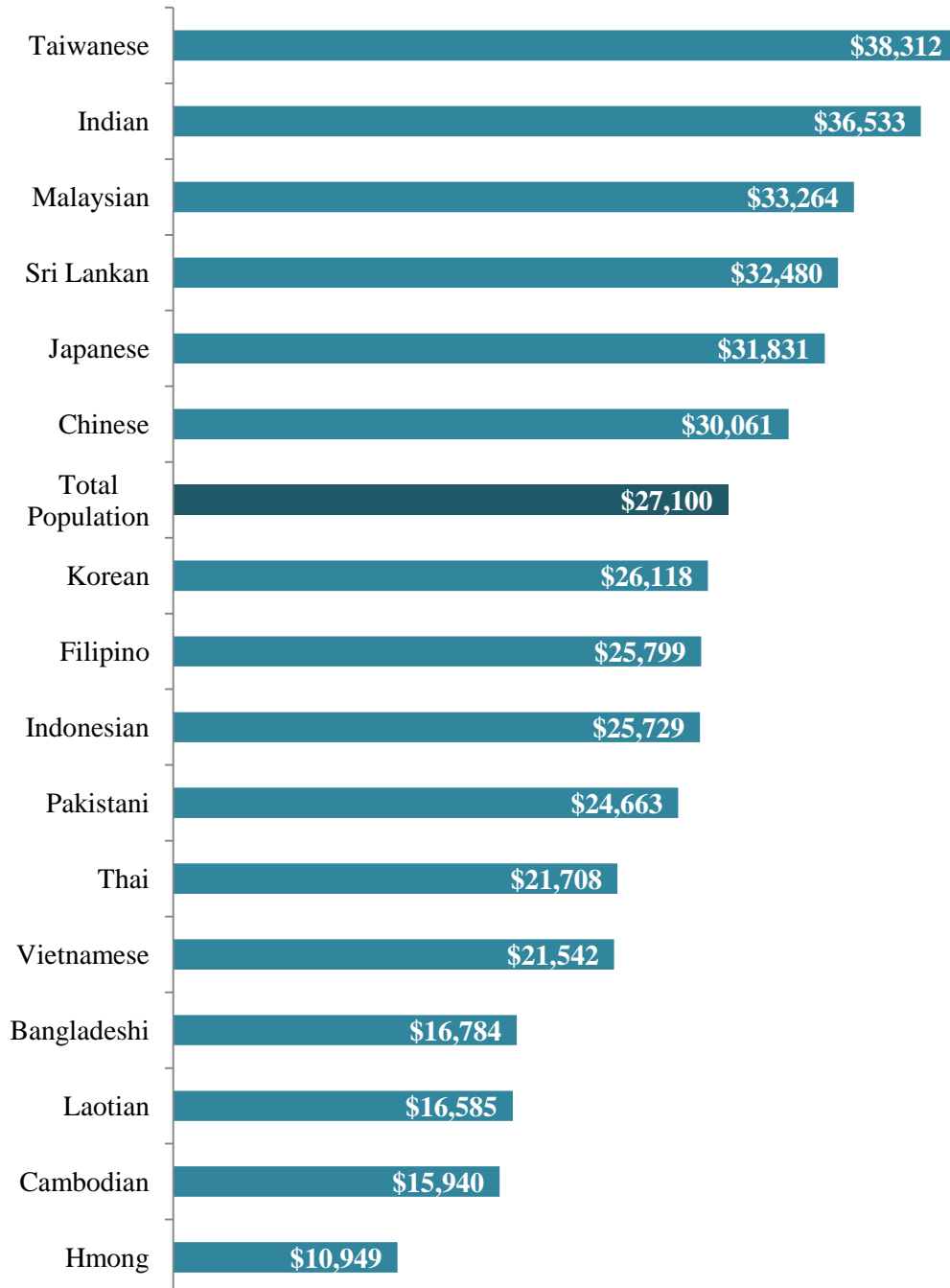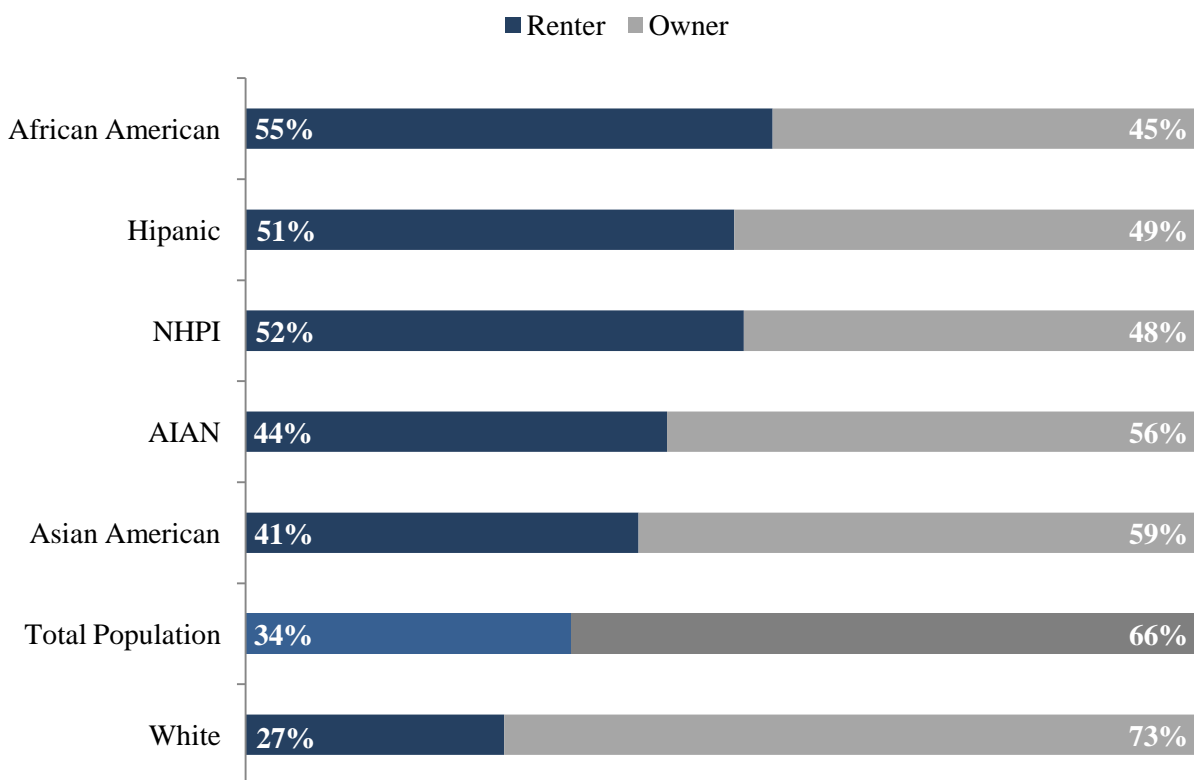|	Naturalized	Not Naturalized
White	58	42
Asian American	57	43
African American	46	54
Total Population	43	57
NHPI	40	60
AIAN	32	68
Hispanic	29	71

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[32] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2009 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice." The foreign-born population includes both those eligible and ineligible to naturalize.

Figure 1.17 Percent of Naturalized Foreign-Born Population by Asian Ethnic Groups, United States 2007 to 2009[33]

■ Naturalized   ■ Not Naturalized

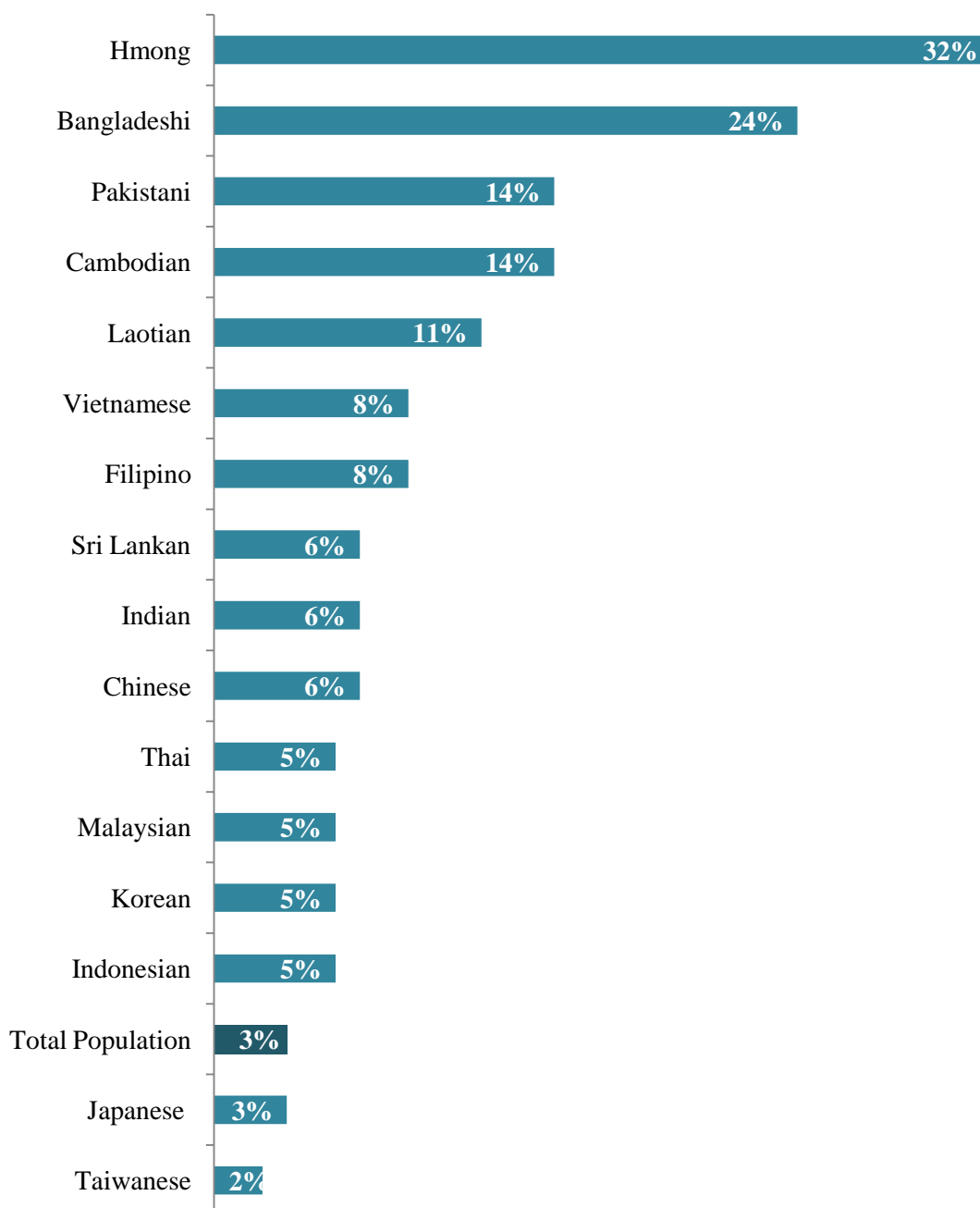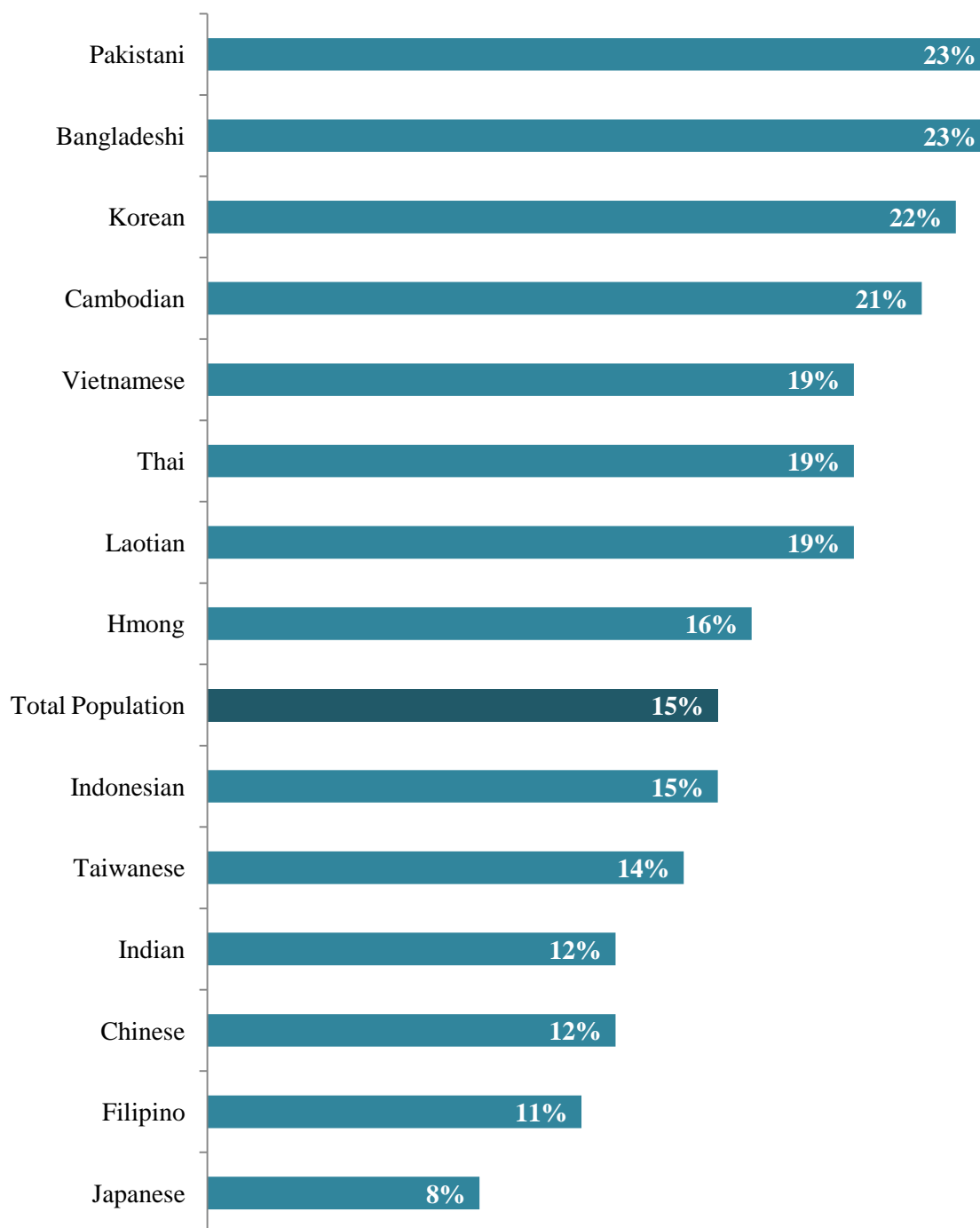| Ethnic Group	Naturalized	Not Naturalized
Vietnamese	73	27
Taiwanese	67	33
Filipino	64	36
Cambodian	63	37
Laotian	62	38
Chinese	60	40
Pakistani	57	43
Hmong	57	43
Korean	54	46
Bangladeshi	50	50
Thai	49	51
Indian	47	53
Sri Lankan	43	57
Total Population	43	57
Indonesian	35	65
Japanese	33	67
Malaysian	27	73

[33] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2009 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates. Note that figures are adapted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice."

Table 1.5 Asian American Legal Permanent Residents Eligible to Naturalize by Country of Birth, United States 2008[34]

Country of Birth	Legal Permanent Residents	Number Eligible to Naturalize	Percent Eligible to Naturalize
Philippines	550,000	280,000	51%
China	530,000	190,000	36%
India	500,000	200,000	40%
Vietnam	320,000	200,000	63%
Korea	240,000	140,000	58%
Japan	130,000	110,000	85%
Pakistan	120,000	50,000	42%

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[34] [Source] U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Estimates of the Legal Permanent Resident Population in 2009." Note that table is reprinted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice."

Figure 1.18 Citizenship, Voter Registration, and Voting by Race and Hispanic Origin, United States – November 2008[35]

- ■ Percent of Voting-Age Population Who Were Citizens
- ■ Percent of Citizens Voting Age Population Who Registered to Vote
- ■ Percent of Registered voters Who Voted

[35] [Source] U.S. Census Bureau, November 2008 Current Population Survey. Note that figures are adopted from "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011" by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice. Copyright 2011 by Asian American Center for Advancing Justice."

Table 1.6 Description of Data

Method	Description
Content Analysis	Compiled by author : the contents collected from the web sites of 161 Asian American interest groups working on social and political issues
In-Depth Interviews	Conducted June 2012 - August 2012 : with the representatives of 12 Asian American interest groups in five states (CA, NY, IL, OH, and WI)
Public Opinion Surveys	Analyzed by author 1) the merged data sets of General Social Surveys (3 years) 2) the 2004 National Politics Study 3) National Asian American Survey (2008, 2012)

Chapter 2

Asian American Interests: Evidence from Content Analysis of Asian American Interest Groups

2.1 Introduction

Asian American interest groups provide an excellent resource for examining Asian American issue concerns. The U.S. Department of Labor defines "advocacy, grant-making, and interest groups" as groups of people "working to better their communities by directly addressing issues of public concern through service, independent action, or civic engagement." These organizations often are collectively called "nonprofits" to describe their nature as being neither government nor business.[36] I use the term "interest groups" more narrowly to describe a type of nonprofits that advocate a specific social or political goal to benefit either a broad population or a specific group within the population. Throughout this chapter, I specifically address the findings from investigating Asian American interest groups.

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[36] They are tax-exempt organizations under the Internal Revenue Code, 501(c)(3). Please see the definition at the IRS website: http://www.irs.gov/Charities-&-Non-Profits/Other-Non-Profits.

One reason for individuals—in this case, Americans with Asian origins—to form a organization is to maximize their common interests with regard to social or political issues (Olson, 1965). A member of a given organization is presumed to possess cooperative skills and a sense of shared responsibility in order to bear the costs or burdens of involvement in that group (Putnam, 1994). Starting with this presumption in an analysis of Asian American interest groups, uncovering the shared agendas across members within various interest groups is then a useful way to identify the issues that Asian Americans prioritize.

This chapter will proceed as follows. First, I present an overview of electronic sources of Asian American interest groups sampled from *the 2008 Asian American Yearbook* and *the 2011-12 National Asian Pacific American Political Almanac*. Second, I lay out the sampling procedure used to identify the shared issues among Asian American interest groups. In addition, I briefly introduce the data collected from the semi-structured face-to-face interviews with representatives of Asian American interest groups. These data supplement the data gathered from the electronic sources. Next, I describe the content analysis software program, Yoshikoder, and discuss the software's advantages and limitations for the purposes of this analysis. Finally, I provide the results from the content analysis of the interest groups' websites. To display similarity and difference in between Asian American issues and African American or Hispanic issues, I also present the racial comparison analysis in brief.

2.1 Data

2.2.1 The Electronic Sources of the Asian American Organizations

There are two reliable directories of Asian American interest groups. One is *the Asian American Yearbook* of 2008, published by TIYM Publishing Company, and the other is *the National Asian Pacific American Political Almanac* of 2011-2012, published by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies. They are the most up-to-date directories of Asian American organizations at the national, state, and local levels. Both directories include basic information about individual Asian American interest groups, such as mailing addresses, telephone numbers, website addresses, and the names of contact representatives. Although these directories do not contain information about all the Asian American interest groups in the United States, the listings provide a reasonable amount of information for content analysis. Based on that information, I explored the organizations' websites to collect data on the missions, goals, objectives, history, main programs or activities, and additional available documents, such as press releases and research reports, for each organization. I twice conducted content analysis—in the fall of 2012 and the spring of 2013 in order to confirm website access, update web content data, and validate the continuity of specific findings.

The websites for these organizations might not provide sufficiently representative materials from which to gather information about issues of concern to Asian Americans. First, not all interest groups have a website, even if the group currently exists.[37] A regional chapter of a national organization might not have its own website even if it operates different programs or advocates unique issues distinct from the national organization. A group's web domain might be suspended or expired, making it difficult to determine if the organization is still active. If the

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[37] For instance, the websites of Chinese American Association of Southern California and Indian American Center of Political Awareness are under construction.

existence of websites determines the sampling procedure, it might create a sample-selection bias

because any resulting list of Asian American interest groups I then examine would not be a

randomly collected, representative sample (Stockmann, 2010). Second, due to the Internet's

dynamism, electronic sources can change rapidly, so the information may not be permanent, and

information on a website might change before or after data collection begins. If it does change,

these changes could generate internal consistency and reliability issues. That is, examining

website content might be an inconsistent measurement for issues advocated by Asian American

interest groups.

Nonetheless, using electronic sources of websites provides more advantages than

limitations for the purpose of identifying Asian American issues. First, the number of Asian

American civic groups without a website is small. According to the recent report from Pew

Research Center on Americans' Internet use (2012), over 90 percent of young Americans

between the ages of 18 and 49, 77 percent of Americans in their 50s and 60s, and even 53% of

American adults ages 65 and older use the internet occasionally. Given this heavy Internet usage

by Americans, most nonprofit organizations recognize the importance of maintaining websites to

improve a group's accountability and relevance. For instance, the report published by Blackbaud

"The State of the Nonprofit Industry Survey of 2010" shows that virtually all participant

organizations rate that maintaining their website is extremely or very important, especially for

marketing and education the public about the organization's mission. In addition, over 90

percent of these organizations are communicating with their members and the public via the Web

and email. Therefore, we can hypothesize that American nonprofits tend to have websites.

To validate my assumption, I randomly checked one hundred organizations in California,

which are registered with the Internal Revenue Service and not necessarily listed in my sample

directory. I discovered that over 75 percent of Asian American organizations in California have websites or a relevant webpage containing organizational information. This test supports that relying on web contents does not seriously bias data about Asian American interests because only a small portion of Asian American organizations do not maintain websites. Indeed, my sample is likely representative for the larger selection of Asian American interest groups, as I show later in the method section that only five out of 161 organizations in the final list do not have an official website.

Second, the raw data I collected from the websites are the type of data that remain relatively unchanged over the course of an organization's existence. Every Asian American interest group clearly states who they are, why they are formed, how they act, and what they pursue. Even if a group has transformed, it is mostly an organizational change, rather than a fundamental change to the mission of the group, as I noticed during the process of revisiting organizations' websites to validate their status and information. Thus, it is safe to say that the information of a group's fundamental motive and mission stays consistent from the time of a group's founding. In addition, the electronic sources provide many practical benefits relative to the potential selection bias. Theoretically, having a face-to-face conversation or a phone interview with a staff member working at an interest groups on the list is the best way to collect the organization's agenda when we consider some groups are without websites. However, it would not be feasible to visit or to call 161 organizations. Therefore, the electronic data accessible on the websites are valuable sources for the assessment of Asian American interest groups' agendas.

2.2.2 Filtering the Sample Directory

The lists of interest groups in two directories are representative and manageable. *The Asian American Yearbook* of 2008 contains information on 3,824 interest groups, which completely includes the 108 interest groups listed in *the 2011-2012 National Asian Pacific American Political Almanac*. The yearbook classifies organizations in 15 categories such as "artistic," "business," "cultural," "political action," "special interests," and so on. Among them, the parent category of "special interests" contains 21 sub-categories, including 'education,' 'employment,' 'gay & lesbian,' women', and more (see Table 2.1). However, the yearbook did not provide any information about how it defined Asian American organizations, how it created the directory, or why it classified groups in these categories. Due to the sample directory's lack of clarity, I created a systematic standard to extract Asian American interest groups, which fit my definition of interest groups as social advocacy groups.

The primary principle used to refine the list was that an organization's membership or programs must be related to Asian Americans, not Asians outside of the United States. I found that some organizations were improperly listed just because their titles included an Asian country's name. To illustrate, the Japan Pacific Resource Network in California, which was categorized under 'special interests-education,' should not have been included in the directory because the group's mission and activities do not focus on Asian Americans, or, more narrowly, on Japanese Americans. Instead, this organization seeks to provide aid to victims of tragedy in Japan. The mission of this group was internationally focused, so I excluded it from the list. Another example was the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, which was listed under the category of "special interests-immigration." This group serves all groups of newcomers from any part of the world and is not exclusive to Asian American immigrants or refugees, and so I omitted this group in the directory. The most difficult case to clean was the

category of "student organizations." Out of 245 Asian student organizations, some state in their title or website that they are a group of international students with Asian origin (non-Asian Americans) whereas the others state that they are American student organizations with Asian origins. If an organization was difficult to categorize even after examining the contents of its website, I eliminated it from the directory because I presumed that the members of this group were not American citizens. I also found that some organizations were listed in the wrong category. Therefore, I took this error into consideration and re-sorted them when I cleaned the directory.

It was quite surprising to find that the directory included many non-Asian American organizations. For instance, most groups in the religious category were Jewish churches or Israeli institutions. Also, organizations of various Middle Eastern ethnic backgrounds were found. Today, the official definition of Asian American identity comes from the Office of Management and Budget: "an Asian American is a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam."[38] Therefore, for example, I removed the Armenian National Institute in Washington, D.C. and the Afghan Community Foundation, Inc. in Georgia from the list. After a careful cleaning procedure, I narrowed the total number of Asian American interest groups down to 1,504.

The next process was to classify the organizations that met my definition of Asian American interest groups: advocacy groups founded to improve the social and political

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[38] The U.S. Census follows this definition and collected racial data in accordance with guidelines provided by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. See the explanation at http://www.census.gov/population/race/.

conditions of the Asian American community and to involve in addressing Asian American interests to the political process. Among the 1,504 organizations, some groups were purely artistic, religious, academic, or recreational. Their missions, goals, and programs had nothing to do with social or political issues. For example, what the Coral Springs Chinese Cultural Association in Florida offers are language class, dance lessons, and ping pong club. Another example is the Asian Cinevision in New York where develops and provide exhibitions of Asian an Asian American film and video. Because these groups neither strived to change the existing social and political system nor tried to influence current policy-making process, I sorted them as non-social as a matter of convenience and exclude them from the directory. Also, I excluded academic institutions like the Asian American Studies Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison because they are not purely civic but academic, although the research of the academic center could include a policy recommendation.

Not all organizations in the non-social and political categories in the directory were excluded, however. As I pointed out, the categorization in the original directory was not the criteria for the filtering process. Instead, I examined what organizations are actually doing for Asian Americans, as it is possible that interest groups categorized as 'business' or 'professional association' can advocate for the social and political concerns of Asian Americans. For instance, the Pakistan American Business Association in Virginia works to enhance the business environment for their members through lobbying and policy evaluations. Thus, I included it in my analysis. On the other hand, the Korean American Scientists and Engineers' Association in Texas was not considered because it provides programs mainly for networking and sharing job information.

After a thorough screening, I found 202 Asian American interest groups whose mission and activities were social and political. Of the 202 organizations, 14 are nation-wide and have various regional chapters. For instance, the Organization of Chinese Americans has 50 regional chapters, so some of these chapters are listed multiple times in the directory. Excluding the 41 regional chapters that are double-counted yields 161 Asian American interest groups engaged in social and political issues. I am aware of the biases that my selection process could introduce. First, some organizations categorized as 'artistic' and 'cultural' may run programs working for social and political interests of Asian Americans despite their websites not reflecting this. Second, it would be possible that some regional chapters of a few interest groups might have different missions, goals, and programs from the national head quarters. These cases could promote sample selection bias because I excluded organizations that would have been part of a valid sample. This problem may be resolved if I contacted the relevant interest groups to ask for more information about their work in reality. Due to time constraints, I saved this task for my future research.

To sum up, I refined the list of interest groups in the Asian American Yearbook of 2008 based on a three-step screening procedure (Figure 2.1). After filtering non-Asian American organizations out, I refined the list of 1,504 Asian American interest groups to single out "socially active groups" for content analysis. Several tables and figures provide the detailed information about the filtering process. Table 2.1 displays the numbers of Asian American civic groups by various categories before and after cleaning the directory. Table 2.2 shows the refined directory of interest groups in the fifty states and the District of Columbia. Appendix A is the entire list of the resulting 161 Asian American interest groups.

2.2.3 The Information from the Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews

Since the data in which I am interested in using to identify Asian American issues is available

online, I use text from websites as a main source. Besides this electronic source of the

information, I am able to supplement it with the data collected from my fieldwork. Based on the

refined list, I numbered 161 organizations and generated the random 30 numbers. I then

contacted the randomly selected 30 organizations whose leaders I asked for interviews. Out of

30, 12 organizations positively responded to my invitation. During the summer of 2012, I

conducted face-to-face interviews with representatives of 12 Asian American interest groups in

five states of California, New York, Illinois, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Chapter 4 includes the

detailed information about the in-depth interviews, and the interview protocol is available in the

appendix.

The purpose of conducting interviews was to identify general missions that interest

groups seek to achieve, programs that they currently address, organizational tactics that are used

to operate the programs and coalitions that interest groups partner with. A part of this personal

conversation with an interest group representative provided me with a fruitful opportunity to

discover two categories of Asian American issues: the general issues that are constantly

addressed for the community and the current hot-button issues that are presently being

emphasized by interest groups. This information will enrich the findings from the content

analysis provided in the section 2.4.

2.3 Method

2.3.1 Content Analysis

Through the interest groups listing process, I also collected information about a group's motive, mission, goals, programs, history, and achievements from its website. Because this information is a collection of simplified texts, content analysis is the proper approach to analyze data. Content analysis refers to "an approach to the analysis of documents and texts that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner" (Bryman, 2008, 274). It produces quantitative accounts of the raw text, sorted into categories specified by the rules. Thus, I can identify Asian American issues in a systematic manner.

Content analysis has various advantages for my research. First, this technique allows me access to information, such as non-numerical texts, that may be difficult to research through conventional quantitative methods (Johnson et al., 2001). Second, content analysis provides a systematic assessment of the raw data which is nonreactive (Bryman, 2008; Johnson, et al., 2001). If I had gathered the raw data from human subjects like staff members of the Asian American pressure groups, my presence could have influenced their behavior in ways that might have confounded the results of the study. Third, this research method is very transparent. I can clearly set out the coding scheme and the analysis procedures so that replications and follow-up studies are feasible (Bryman, 2008; Johnson, et al., 2001).

Like other research techniques, however, content analysis is not free from limitations. The raw data might be incomplete if a web maintenance manager selectively posts the information on the website or a record keeper might unconsciously miss materials while

skimming through the web contents. If so, preserving all pertinent materials from websites would be difficult (Johnson, et al., 2001, 265). However, I used a number of methods to systematize the data collection and reduce errors. For the reliability test, I had a second person replicate the process of collecting data from websites in the directory. When I compared the collected information with the one gathered by a second coder, I could confirm that my raw data is the complete set of web contents from the 161 interest groups in the sample. Also, I found other sources to collect the information about some Asian American interest groups whose official website lacked substantive contents. For instance, I explored the 990 or 990 EZ forms of Internal Revenue Services filed by nonprofit organizations, newspaper articles, Facebook or Wikipedia, and the yellow pages to obtain relevant information for those groups. By doing this, the incompleteness in the raw data was resolved in my analysis.

Scholars agree that the validity of content analysis can usually be improved with a precise explanation of the procedures followed and the content categories used (Bryman, 2008; Johnson, et al., 2001). A common way to boost the reliability of the content analysis measures is to have two or more analysts use the same procedure and definitions and then agree on the content categories applied to the analyzed material (Johnson, et al., 2001, 257). Consequently, I employed a second human coder for the data collection. Yet, I was also cautious about the potential problems of inconsistency that multiple coders might create. Unlike the process of mechanically gathering web contents, coding involves human coders' judgments: it is likely that coders do not use consistent standards to code the data (Stockmann, 2010, 116). Therefore, I chose to use a digital technology to ensure the consistency and reliability of the content analysis, in addition to having another coder. A detailed explanation of the coding scheme comes in the following section.

2.3.2   Ten Key Issue Dimensions

Scholars recommend using a coding manual, which is a statement of instructions to coders that

includes all the possible categories for each dimension being coded, to ensure consistency and

reliability in content analysis (Bryman, 2008, 289). To follow this suggestion, I constructed a

coding manual containing a list of all the dimensions while I was screening Asian American

organizations that were socially and politically active. By reading the contents of the websites, I

quickly identified keywords and put them into a list of dimensions. For instance, a group

founded to represent Asian American women was coded under the dimension of "women."[39]

Ten issue dimensions were created based on this procedure: "community," "immigration,"

"election," "youth," "discrimination," "representation," "health," "women," "education," and

"senior." The coding manual also includes the different categories subsumed under each

dimension. If the aforementioned group focused on assisting Asian American women suffering

from *domestic violence*, this subcategory was checked under the parent dimension of "women."

Likewise, I grouped terms associated with "immigration," such as *assistance for naturalization*

process, *comprehensive immigration reform*, *DREAM Act*, and so forth. It is important to note

that all interest groups in my analysis work on multiple issues for the Asian American

community. Table 2.3 displays ten issue dimensions and the list of subcategories for each issue

dimension.

Among the ten issue dimensions, the four categories such as "community," "immigration,"

"election," and "youth" are noteworthy. Issues associated with these conceptual categories are

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[39] Throughout this chapter, I indicate the parent ten issue dimensions in a quotation mark and the subcategory in italics. Note that the section 3.4.1 will provide the full explanation about each issue dimension.

addressed by more than half of organizations in my analysis. The next prioritized issue dimensions are "discrimination," "representation," and "health," which at least 40 percent of interest groups in my analysis are working on. Three issues of "women," "education," and "senior" are the least addressed agendas. For a precise count of ten issue dimensions and their ranking order, I used a technological device of enumeration for the contents coded.

2.3.3 Using Digital Technology: Yoshikoder

Yoshikoder is a type of "open source software available for free on the Internet" that analyzes text files in UTF-8 format (Stockmann, 2010, 116). It generates a raw word count, which allows me to figure out which words were most frequently mentioned in the texts. If the ten issue dimensions counted by human coders also occurred in a Yoshikoder output, I could validate that my coding scheme was systematic and consistent.

With a function of the word frequency test, Yoshikoder also caught ten conceptual dimensions listed in the previous section. Table 2.4 shows the Yoshikoder report on the words that are mentioned a minimum of one hundred times in the collected web content. "Community" is the most repeated word in the agendas that human coders analyzed, and the four issue categories that were mentioned more than two hundred times follow in order from most to least mentioned (?): "immigration," "discriminations," "health," and "voting rights (election)." The next most mentioned (but less than 200 times) issue dimensions were "youth," "representation," "education," and "women."

The Yoshikoder results verify the ten coding dimensions that human coders analyzed as the most important issues for Asian American interest groups. A few things are significant for

this validation process. First, the conceptual dimension of "senior" is not seen in Table 2.4 because this issue category is ranked forty-fifth in the list (mentioned 58 times) despite the fact that it is also commonly addressed by Asian American interest groups. Second, the rank order of ten key issues in Table 2.4 is somewhat different from the one displayed in Table 2.3. For instance, the issue dimension of "health" is ranked sixth when human coders analyzed whereas it is ranked as the fourth most important issue for Asian Americans according to the Yoshikoder analysis. Nonetheless, the main reason to use this software is to confirm ten key issues found by human coders, not to compare the priority of issues one by one. Actually, the top two issue dimensions of "community (a non-policy issue)" and "immigration (a policy agenda)" still appear as the most popular terms in the Yoshikoder output. Likewise, "discrimination" and "representation" are placed in the similar rank in both analyses.

Next, I validated the subcategories in Table 2.3 with Yoshikoder as well. Merely showing Yoshikoder frequency reports of subcategories cannot demonstrate that they are correctly associated with each parent issue dimension. Therefore, I used a concordance or KWIC report, which stands for "key word in context." This function indicates the searching and identification of all cases of a word or phrase shown in context, and the concordance output displays the contents of the located strings (Neuendorf, 2002). The beauty of using a concordance report is that it gives us a better understanding of the use of the search term than would be granted by a raw dictionary count (Neuendorf, 2002, 131). The example of the concordance report in Yoshikoder is shown in Figure 2.3.

For instance, the subcategory of *access* was usually subsumed under the dimension of "health" as I read through the texts of the issues collected from the 161 Asian American interest groups. Specifically, many interest groups advocate for expanding linguistically accessible,

culturally competent, and affordable health care services to Asian Americans. With a lesser extent, I noticed that this term *access* was also associated with the dimension of "education." It is true that the organizations working on the issue of education also ask for expanding educational opportunities and resources to Asian Americans. I ran a KWIC analysis for all 137 words which are used in the raw contents more than fifty times and received the concordance reports. Due to the high volume of these outputs, I do not include them in this chapter, but this analysis verifies that the subcategories were associated with each parent dimension in the way displayed in Table 2.3.

2.4 Findings

2.4.1 Asian American Issues Addressed by Interest groups

Some key issue dimensions and sub-categorical terms are not self-explanatory, so this section provides the full explanation about ten Asian American issues in rank order. Figure 2.2 visualizes the priority of these issues. Throughout this section, I incorporate the conversation from my face-to-face interviews with interest group representatives to enrich the analysis.

To begin with, "community" is the top priority for Asian American interest groups. Most groups want their fellow Asians in the U.S. to preserve their *cultural heritage* and to *unite* within the community. Since Asian Americans are underrepresented in politics and society, interest groups encourage *civic engagement* and seek to cultivate *civil minds* (citizenship not in a legal term) that can bring the community *well-being* and *empowerment*. To achieve this goal, many organizations run educational workshops, community outreach programs, or cultural festivals. In

addition, organizations advocate for providing *affordable housing* to the Asian American

population and protecting tenants' rights because more than 44 percent of them are renters,

subject to unlawful eviction and harassment from owners.[40]   It is noticeable that interest groups

working for Asian Americans prioritize a non-policy issue. In other words, programs they are

running for the issues related to "community" have nothing to do with political advocacy, not

focusing on changing certain legislation or influencing the decision-making process but on

strengthening community identities as Asian Americans.

Since Asian Americans are a largely immigrant-dominated group, one might take

"immigration" for granted as a key issue. As expected, immigration appears as the number one

policy issue addressed by Asian American interest groups. They strongly support *comprehensive*

immigration reform, *the DREAM Act*, and *reuniting immigrants' families* while opposing the

deportation of undocumented Asian immigrants. To illustrate, the health policy director of the

Voices for Asian American Children and Families in New York (VAACF) stresses that the

majority of Asian Americans are immigrants with limited English proficiency, and some of them

are undocumented. Because access to social services is critical for their daily lives, Asian

American organizations including VAACF, work on expanding social services to undocumented

immigrants and promoting immigrant-friendly policies.[41] Besides evaluation and

recommendation on immigration policies, interest groups provide direct services to Asian

American immigrants. For instance, they operate legal advice, language interpretation, and case

management to assist recent immigrants and refugees who are in legal trouble. The interest

groups provide these services because there is a general understanding that due process of law is

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[40] [Source] The 2010 U.S. Census. See Figure 1.13 in Chapter 1.
[41] The examples of benign government immigrant policies are increasing immigrant quota and expediting the visa issuing process for immigrants' family members.

not well respected with regard to Asian American immigrants. It is noteworthy that about two thirds of interest groups who address immigration-related issues actively engage in policy advocacy works. Specifically, they mobilize people to rally and lobby politicians to support the comprehensive immigration reform.

The third issue commonly addressed by about 51 percent of interest groups in the content analysis is "elections." Although it is the fastest growing racial group that will constitute about 10 percent of the U.S. population in 2050, Asian Americans are currently 5 percent of the national population.[42] In addition, this population is perceived as politically inactive. Therefore, possessing political power becomes important to interest groups. To make Asian voices heard in the political process, the groups encourage the *political participation* of Asian Americans by *mobilizing* them to register to vote. Also, many efforts are made to ensure Asian Americans' *voting rights* by advocating for printing *a bilingual ballot*, providing the voter guide in Asian languages, *monitoring the polling sites* to prevent suppression toward Asian American voters. Some organizations take somewhat of an aggressive approach by *endorsing* and *donating* to the candidates who are expected to represent Asian American interests.

Like the previous issue of "elections," about half of interest groups in my analysis work on "youth" programs. These groups believe that it is necessary to nurture *future leaders* who can develop the community's well-being in order to empower the whole population of Asian Americans. Specifically, organizations run leadership workshops and conferences to train young Asian American leaders as well as internship programs at nonprofits or legislative offices to provide hands-on opportunities to Asian students. Like the issue dimension of "community," interest groups do not address "youth"-related issues in the context of policy advocacy.

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[42] [Source] The 2010 U.S. Census. See Table 1.1-1.3 in Chapter 1.

The next set of issues frequently addressed by at least 40 percent of interest groups in the content analysis is "discrimination," "representation," and "health." First, organizations seek to protect the civil and human rights of Asian Americans. They recognize that Asian Americans still face "discrimination" in the *workplace*, *bullying* at school, and *unfair treatment in bank loans or credits* due to race or religion. In an interview, the executive director of the Center for Asian Americans in Ohio emphasized educating the public and policy makers because the above mentioned issues of discrimination against Asian Americans are largely unknown. Many groups claim that Asian Americans are not the only group subject to hate crimes. In addition, they stress that South Asian Americans are in particular victims of racial profiling and illegitimate law enforcement as are Hispanics. Thus, many interest groups strive to solve this problem by supporting various laws such as minimum wage law, racial preferential hiring and promotion, and fair housing laws.

Second, interest groups strive to achieve "representation" not only in the electoral process but *in the three branches* of the U.S. government. They want to elect more Asian Americans to Congress, nominate more Asian Americans in the judicial system, and appoint more Asian faces in federal agencies. Another frequently addressed issue in this parent category is to make sure Asian Americans are counted *in the U.S. Census*. Organizations realize that the Census data is a basis for a variety of programs and policies critical to the everyday life of Asian Americans. For this reason, organizations encourage every Asian American household to fill out the Census form in order to show numeric power to policymakers. In addition, interest groups seek to persuade local, state, and federal governments to offer opportunities to Asian American business people *in government contracts and procurements*. Moreover, some groups want to see more Asian Americans *on corporate boards* and as heads of private institutions. Other groups

address the importance of accurate images about Asian Americans *in media coverage*. For

achieving representation, Asian American nonprofits actively engage in political tactics such as

lobbying and direct communication with policy makers.

The high rate of uninsured individuals in several Asian American ethnic groups is a

particular concern among many interest groups: "health" is another important issue. According

to the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, many Asian Americans are uninsured

due in part to high employment in or ownership of small businesses that do not offer health

insurance benefits and in part to misinformation about eligibility for public health programs.

Therefore, many interest groups advocate *more accessible health care services*, help Asian

Americans to receive *welfare benefits* such as food stamps or Medicare, strongly support *health*

care reform to expand the health care coverage for particularly Asian American immigrants, and

promote *culturally-appropriate and linguistically-competent health services*. Throughout

analyzing the web contents, I notice that cultural competency and language accessibility in health

care services are the most important issues for interest groups. My in-depth interview with the

national director of Asian Americans Fighting Against Substance Abuse (AAFASA) in

California reveals why Asian American interest groups particularly emphasize the importance of

cultural competency and language accessibility in health care services. Many Asian Americans

are discouraged from using health care services because of cultural difference in medical

practices and language barrier. They also hesitate to receive welfare benefits and to

communicate with healthcare providers about their health problems due to the shame of a

stigmatized status. For this reason, interest groups offer interpretation and translation services

for Asian American patients who encounter language barriers or cultural differences in using

American medical systems. At the same time, interest groups participate in lobbying to support the Obama Care or the Affordable Health Care Act.

To a lesser extent, Asian American interest groups work on issues related to "women," "education," and "seniors." First, about 33 percent of interest groups in my analysis focus on assisting "women" of Asian origins. Those groups particularly care about the issues of *domestic violence* and *sexual harassment* because spousal abuse in the immigrants' families is still tolerated in the name of cultural difference. Organizations notice that many South Asian women are victims of *human trafficking*, so various forms of assistance, such as counseling and shelter, are provided. Meanwhile, these organizations are strongly involved in renewing the legislation like the Violence Against Women Act. Another issue related to women is to empower Asian American women so that they possess leadership skills through the educational workshops and conferences offered by interest groups.

Interestingly, "education" is less likely to be prioritized in the agendas among interest groups. One fifth of interest groups in the content analysis advocate for expanding *educational opportunities* to Asian American kids from low-income families and increasing *federal funding to the public school districts* where many Asian American students reside. Many of these interest groups believe that *affirmative action* is still critical for many Asian students, especially from certain Asian ethnic communities. For instance, the civic participation coordinator of Civil Liberty Center (CLC) in New York provided striking data about Asian American youths in the state of New York during my interview: the high school dropout rate of Asian American children from immigrant families is the highest among other racial groups. He also shared that many Asian American college students in New York areas are the first ones to have benefitted from higher education in their families, unlike the conventional image about Asian Americans as the

model minority, and being, as a group, educated and affluent. Considerable numbers of interest groups share this view, like the CLC, so they exercise several tactics such as visiting the legislature with education policy recommendations and mobilizing people to march for affirmative action for college admission. Additionally, interest groups hope to change the school system. For instance, they request *the inclusion of Asian American history in the school curriculum* and implementing *bilingual education* for Asian American students with a lack of English ability. A few interest groups work on educating Asian American parents in order to change the quality of education at schools. They believe that *parents' engagement* is important for students' educational development and integration in schools, so organizations often run workshops about the American school system to inform Asian American parents.

Only 14 percent of organizations in my analysis address the issues related to "seniors." Asian American elders are facing particular challenges that prevent them from having a good quality of life. Due to a language barrier, Asian American seniors are limited from using social services and even basic infrastructures like the postal service or the Department of Motor Vehicles. In addition, the older generations of Asian Americans tend to not fully grasp American culture because many of them immigrated at a late age. A lack of cultural competency is also an obstacle for Asian American seniors. Therefore, some organizations provide direct services to help seniors survive in day-to-day activities and educate them to become self-sufficient. As with the "community" and "youth" issues, organizations working for Asian American seniors do not engage in any policy advocacy activities aimed at influencing the policy-making process.

To this point, I have documented the ten key issue dimensions and various sub-categorical issues that most Asian American interest groups care about. Several things are

important to note. First, I have discovered that organizations generally take a liberal stance in their positions for policy issues such as "immigration," "discrimination," "health," and "education." With the exception of a few cases found in the Asian American Republican Council of California and the Filipino American Republicans of Virginia, almost all Asian American interest groups are liberal in terms of ideological orientation. Second, some non-policy issues such as "community" and "youth" are ranked high in the interest group agenda. Without any goal to change the existing laws or influence the legislative process, interest groups are purely interested in empowering the Asian American community and young Asian American leaders. Other non-policy issues of "women" and "seniors" are less emphasized but still considered important to the Asian American population. Third, it is interesting to find that Asian American interest groups do not see "the economy" or "unemployment" as important to the community despite the economic downturn and record-high unemployment rates in recent years.

My finding of ten Asian American issues are the result of analysis treating all 161 Asian American interest groups as the same. That is, I did not consider differences in each group's characteristics. Are these key issues still the main agenda across the groups when we take group differences into account? In other words, do organizations with a different focus advocate for different issues for Asian Americans? In the following section, I will validate these ten issues and subcategories as truly Asian American issues by arguing commonality in issue concerns across various groups with different focuses.

2.4.2 Similarity in the Issues among Interest groups across Group Classifications

161 Asian American interest groups in the final sample can be grouped in three different classifications by each groups' characteristics. I was able to collect data about whether a group focuses on a specific Asian ethnic group, whether an organization works on issues about a subgroup of women, youth, seniors, or professionals, and whether a group exercises tactics of political advocacy such as lobbying, direct communication with elected officials, and policy recommendation and evaluation. I coded three organizational characteristics as ethnicity, subgroup, and political advocacy respectively. It is noticeable that interest groups are evenly distributed in the category of high or low political advocacy. In addition, the final sample in my analysis contains more interest groups classified in focusing on pan-Asian Americans (57%) than a specific Asian ethnic community (43%). Moreover, only 10 percent of organizations in the sample I examined represent subgroups of Asian Americans in terms of gender, age, and professions. The question raised here is if we can observe the ten Asian American issues across interest groups regardless of difference in the organizations' characteristics. To answer this question, I ran the simple descriptive statistics, and Table 2.5 displays a cross tabulation of three variables and ten issue dimensions.

In general, the ten key terms found in the content analysis represent issues for all Asian American groups but to a different degree according to group characteristics. I found four interesting findings from this descriptive analysis. First, three non-policy issues such as "community," "youth," and "senior" are consistently advocated by all organizations regardless of differences in group variables.

Second, it turns out that the degree to which interest groups focus on "representation" is significantly influenced by all three group characteristics. Specifically speaking, organizations representing a certain Asian ethnic community or a subgroup are less likely to address the issue

of Asian American representation in government, business procurements, or media. If interest groups heavily exercise the various forms of political advocacy tactics, the likelihood that these organizations address the issue of representation is 16 percent higher than the opposite case.

Third, two different variables of group characteristics impact on the level of issue advocacy efforts by interest groups: "election," "discrimination," and "health." For instance, interest groups using a variety of political tactics tend to advocate more for the issues related to elections (17%) and discrimination (12%). In the case that organizations represent a subgroup of Asian Americans in terms of sex, age, and professions, I found that they are more likely to encourage political participation of Asian Americans in elections (32%) and address the mental and behavioral health problems of the community (22%). Likewise, health issues are more likely to be addressed by groups representing a specific Asian ethnic community. These organizations, however, are less likely to address the issue related to discrimination, which implies that discrimination is a general topic for the pan-Asian community.

Finally, one group characteristic explains the degree to which the issue agendas of "immigration," "women," and "education" are addressed across organizations. If interest groups working on a subset of the Asian American population such as women, the young, elders, or professionals, these organizations are heavily addressing issues related to "immigration" (18%) and "women" (26%). As observed in the case of discrimination, "education" seems to be a general issue for the pan-Asian American population. In other words, the ethnic-focus interest groups are less likely to address education-related issues.

This test verifies that the ten issues are truly emphasized across interest groups. In the following section, I will briefly address my second research question: how Asian American interests are different or similar to those of other racial groups.

2.5 Racial Comparison: Issue Priorities for Interest Groups

The main approach to identify Asian American interests in this project is to discover the issues commonly emphasized across diverse Asian ethnic communities. Another way of finding Asian American interests is to compare them to those of other racial groups. In thinking relationally, we can clearly see uniqueness or distinctiveness of what Asian Americans care about. The best comparison could come from replicating my unique approach for Asian American interest groups for the interest groups of other racial groups. However, examining all African-American and Hispanic organizations in the U.S. requires enormous time and in-depth analysis to complete. For this reason, I save this comparison project for future research and found alternative methods for comparing issue priorities across ethnic groups.

According to Hero and Pruehs (2009), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA, hereafter) are considered the representative interest groups for African-Americans and Hispanics respectively because they constitute the largest membership and largest chapters throughout the country. I collected information from the websites of NAACP and NHLA and then conducted content analysis on the collected data. Figure 2.4 displays the degree of uniqueness and overlap in issues in which the three racial organizations engage.

To begin with, it turns out that "health" and "voting rights in election" are important issues not only for Asian Americans but also for African-Americans and Hispanics. Interest groups recognize the importance of providing affordable health care to these groups, who also tend to be poor, low-income, and uninsured. In addition, these organizations seek to ensure voting rights of the politically marginalized communities such as African-Americans, Hispanics,

and Asian Americans. The overlapping area of A in the diagram shows this commonality in issue priorities.

Second, some issues such as "education," "representation," and "discrimination" are commonly emphasized by both Asian American and African-American interest groups (see the area of B in Figure 2.4). Increasing federal and state funding to public schools where minority kids attend is a critical issue. Groups in this analysis are also heavily involved in redistricting in order to make sure that their constituents are represented. Moreover, nonprofits that address that both African-American and Asian American concerns face discrimination in housing, employment, bank loans, and credits.

As expected from the unique nature as the immigrant-dominant population, "immigration" is an important issue for both Asian Americans and Hispanics (see the overlapping area of C in Figure 2.4). Organizations working for two racial communities strongly support comprehensive immigration reform, favor immigrant-friendly policies, and promote bilingual education for immigrant kids. In addition, these organizations seek to have more representation of their constituents in federal workforces and government contracts.

Lastly, some issues are exclusively emphasized for Asian Americans whereas African Americans and Hispanics do see them important to the communities. For instance, the four non-policy issues related to "community," "youth," "women," and "senior" are solely addressed by Asian American interest groups. Both NAACP and NHLA do not specifically identify work on empowering the community, training young and women leaders, assisting female victims of domestic violence, or providing senior health? care and services as part of their agendas. Instead, these organizations try to solve economic disparities resulting from poverty and unemployment, secure environmental justice, and seek to abolish discriminatory standardized tests at schools. It

is surprising to discover that Asian American interest groups do not address the economy or unemployment as important to the Asian American community in contrast to the NAACP and the NHLA. When considering the recent years of recession, Asian American interest groups' silence on issues related to the economy and the unemployment rate is noticeable.

I am aware that this racial comparison is a limited approach that cannot provide a full picture of the relationship among African-American, Hispanic, and Asian issues. For instance, Figure 2.4 does not indicate which issues are most emphasized by NAACP and NHLA although I am confident that all issues listed in this venn diagram are the current agenda for both organizations. Nonetheless, I believe that this analysis tentatively illustrates issue congruence and divergence among racial minority groups.

2.6 Conclusion

I analyzed interest groups' agendas to explore issues salient to Asian Americans. After filtering the existing lists of Asian American group directories, I collected mission statements, goals, programs, and relevant information of 161 Asian American organizations. Then I analyzed the collected contents in the simplified text format and compared the analysis with the results from the software program, Yoshikoder.

Using content analysis, I found ten issues emphasized by interest groups for Asian Americans as a whole: "community" empowerment, "immigration"-friendly policy, participation in "election," "youth" leadership, fighting against "discrimination," "representation" in federal agencies, government, business, and media, "health" care reform, assisting "women" victim of domestic violence, increasing opportunities of "education", and providing "senior" care.

According to the word frequency reports by Yoshikoder, none of these key terms dropped out of the agenda list across the various group categories. In other words, Asian American interest groups, regardless of varying foci on political advocacy activities, subgroups, or ethnicity, emphasize these ten issues, although to different degrees. Lastly, I compared the ten issue agendas to the issue concerns addressed by other racial interest groups. I discovered that four issues— "health," "election," "education," and "discrimination"—are commonly stressed among interest groups for all three racial groups. On the contrary, I found that four non-policy issues of "community," "youth," "women," and "seniors" are addressed only by Asian American interest groups.

In this chapter, I identified ten Asian American issue concerns. The next chapter will investigate issues emphasized by Asian Americans more broadly by analyzing the public opinion data set, focusing on whether issue priorities for interest groups are shared by Asian Americans generally.

Table 2.1 The Numbers of Asian American Organizations in the 2008 Asian American Yearbook

Classification		Total Number of Asian American Organizations Listed in the Year Book	Total Number of Asian American Organizations after Cleaning
Artistic		93	62
Business		105	53
Chamber of Commerce		81	59
Communication		9	1
Cultural		341	172
Entertainment		3	3
Law Enforcement		12	8
Multi-Purpose		14	8
Political Action		112	51
Professional		148	113
Religious		583	224
Research		41	4
Scientific		13	4
Special Interests	AIDS	10	6
	Alcohol/Drug	5	4
	Child Care	56	10
	Counseling	26	7
	Education	356	101
	Employment	17	4
	Family Planning	13	7
	Gay & Lesbian	25	19
	Health Services	97	49
	Housing	10	5
	Human Relations	148	15
	Immigration	52	15
	Information Referral	11	8
	Legal Assistant	18	8
	Mental Health	20	9
	Seniors	55	23
	Social Interests	872	287
	Sports	41	32
	Voluntary Service	6	3
	Women	104	41
	Youth	82	27
Student Organizations		245	62
		Total 3,824	**Total 1,504**

Table 2.2 The Numbers of Asian American Organizations by State

State	Original	Wrong	True	Social	State	Original	Wrong	True	Social
AL	13	6	7	1	PA	141	106	35	3
AK	3	0	3	0	RI	16	11	5	1
AZ	54	21	33	2	SC	9	6	3	0
AR	2	2	0	0	SD	2	1	1	0
CA	970	393	577	45	TN	16	9	7	2
CO	62	31	31	1	TX	150	86	64	10
CT	73	58	15	1	UT	11	9	2	0
DE	9	6	3	1	VT	3	2	1	0
D.C.	192	129	63	27	VA	105	72	33	9
FL	104	84	20	3	WA	122	70	52	10
GA	71	44	27	5	WV	3	3	0	0
HI	61	39	22	3	WI	37	23	14	1
ID	2	0	2	0	WY	1	1	0	0
IL	181	104	77	8					
IN	38	30	8	0	**Total**	**3824**	**2320**	**1504**	**202**
IA	12	11	1	1					
KS	15	14	1	0					
KY	14	9	5	1	[Note] the titles in this table refers to:				
LA	22	15	7	0	(1) Original: the numbers of all organizations				
ME	10	10	0	0	in the list				
MD	112	72	40	12	(2) Wrong: the numbers of non-Asian				
MA	177	124	53	6	American organizations				
MI	74	60	14	2	(3) True: the numbers of Asian American				
MN	93	55	38	4	organizations after a cleaning process				
MS	4	1	3	1	(4) Social: the numbers of Asian American				
MO	23	14	9	3	organizations that are engaged in				
MT	5	4	1	0	social and political issues				
NE	7	6	1	0					
NV	12	8	4	1					
NH	5	3	2	1					
NJ	121	92	29	1					
NM	17	14	3	0					
NY	455	338	117	27					
NC	41	21	20	0					
ND	2	2	0	0					
OH	81	61	20	5					
OK	16	10	6	1					
OR	55	30	25	3					

Table 2.3 Ten Issue Dimensions and Subcategories: Content Analysis by a Human Coder

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Dimension in rank order

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1. Community (81%)[43]
   empowerment, well-being
   civic engagement, unity
   cultural heritage
   affordable housing
   accessibility to social services

2. Immigration (57%)
   protection of immigrant rights
     : due process, against deportation
   the comprehensive immigration reform
     : the DREAM act
     : family reunification act
     : expanding visa and residence

3. Election (51%)
   voter mobilization and registration
   political participation
   voting rights, against voter suppression
   candidate endorsement, donation
   bilingual ballot

4. Youth (47%)
   leadership development
   empowerment

5. Discrimination (45%)
   Hate crimes, racial harassment
   Discrimination in
     : employment
     : housing, loans, credit, etc.
   Unlawful enforcement, racial profiling

6. Representation (43%)
   in the U.S. Census
   in the government branches
     : judicial nomination, in particular
   in media coverage
   redistricting

6. Health (43%)
   health care reform
   affordability, accessibility
   mental and behavioral health issues
     : smoking, drinking, gambling
     : cancer, Hepatitis B, obesity

8. Women (37%)
   domestic violence, human trafficking
   leadership development
   female workers' rights

9. Education (21%)
   educational equity and opportunities
   funding to public schools
   bilingual education
   affirmative action
   Asian American history in curriculum
   parent engagement at schools

10. Senior (14%)
   well-being
   elderly cares

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[43] Numbers in parentheses indicate percentage of interest groups addressing the given issues. Because equal numbers of civic organizations advocate for issues related to "representation" and "health," both issues are placed in sixth.

Table 2.4 The Most Commonly Mentioned Issues: Word Frequency Test By Yoshikoder[44]

	Word	Count
1	**Community**	860
2	Asia	720
3	American	715
4	Serve	395
5	**Immigration**	342
6	Organize	335
7	**Discrimination**	283
8	Develop	247
9	Advocacy	246
10	**Health**	236
11	Policy (legislation)	217
12	Leadership	214
13	Provide	210
14	**Voting rights**	204
15	Civic	190
16	Culture	190
17	Promote	184
18	China/Chinese	177
19	Social	176
20	**Youth**	169
21	Political	168
22	Legal	149
23	Business	148
24	**Representation**	147
25	Organization	143
26	Support	135
27	**Public education**	125
28	Assist	123
29	Act	122
30	Affordable/affordablity	120
31	Law	118
32	Justice	117
33	Need	108
34	Empower	107
35	Participation	107
36	**Domestic violence (women)**	101
37	Association	100

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[44] Bold indicates the same issue dimensions presented in Table 2.4. The issue dimension of "senior" is not reported in this table because it was mentioned fewer than hundred times in the web contents of 161 civic organizations. Yoshikoder identifies that "senior" is ranked at 45th (counted 58 times).

Table 2.5 Ten Asian American Issues by Interest Group Characteristics[45]

	Political Advocacy		Subgroup Focus		Ethnic Focus	
	High	Low	Subgroup	General	Ethnic	Pan-Asian
	(n=79)	(n=82)	(n=16)	(n=145)	(n=69)	(n=92)
Community	82.3%	80.5%	75.0%	82.1%	79.7%	82.6%
Immigration	58.2%	58.5%	**75.0%**	**56.6%**	60.9%	56.5%
			(+18%)			
Elections	**59.5%**	**42.7%**	**87.5%**	**55.2%**	52.2%	50.0%
	(+17%)		(+32%)			
Youth	49.4%	53.7%	56.3%	51.0%	56.5%	47.8%
Discrimination	**50.6%**	**39.0%**	43.8%	44.9%	**34.8%**	**52.2%**
	(+12%)				(-17%)	
Representation	**52.0%**	**34.2%**	**31.3%**	**44.2%**	**29.0%**	**53.3%**
	(+16%)		(-13%)		(-24%)	
Health	38.0%	47.6%	**62.5%**	**40.7%**	**53.6%**	**34.8%**
			(+22%)		(+19%)	
Women	35.4%	30.5%	**56.3%**	**30.3%**	37.7%	29.4%
			(+26%)			
Education	22.8%	18.3%	25.0%	20.0%	**10.2%**	**28.3%**
					(-18%)	
Senior	11.4%	15.9%	18.8%	13.1%	16.0%	12.0%

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[45] Cell entries indicate the percentage of interest groups in the given category. Bold prints show the issues where interest groups with three characteristics are different from the one without variable in a great degree (greater than ten percentage points' difference). Figures in parentheses are percentage point differences as compared to organizations without a given characteristic.

Figure 2.1 The Three-Step Screening Process for Asian American Interest Groups

Step I: 3,824 organizations listed in the original directory of the 2008 *Asian American Yearbook*

Step 2: 1,504 Asian American groups after eliminating groups not involved with Asian Americans from the directory

Step 3: 161 Asian American civic organizations with social and political concerns

Figure 2.2 The Rank Order of Ten Key Issue Dimensions[46]

Figure 2.3 The KWIC report on a Subcategory of "Access"

resource	*access*	to affordable health care
make health services more	*accessible*	and culturally-sensitive
promote	*access*	to resources for students
legalize more	*accesses*	to education

Figure 2.4 Racial Comparison: Issue Priorities for Interest Groups[47]

A		B	
Category	*Example*	*Category*	*Example*
Health	Health care reform	Education	Public school funding
Election	Voting rights protection	Representation	Redistricting
		Discrimination	Discrimination in housing, bank, and employment

C		D	
Category	*Example*	*Category*	*Example*
Education	Bi- or multilingual education	Economy	Poverty & Unemployment
Immigration	Comprehensive immigration reform	Education	Against discriminatory standardized tests
Representation	Representation in federal workforce	Community	Environmental justice

E	
Category	
Community, Youth, Women, Senior	

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[47] NAACP and NHLA stand for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and National Hispanic Leadership Agenda respectively.

Chapter 3

Divergence in Asian American Interests: Evidence from Public Opinion Surveys and its Comparison to Content Analysis

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I identified the ten issues emphasized by Asian American interest groups. Evidence from my analysis on interest groups showed that these ten issues are what Asian Americans are most concerned about and revealed what organizations they believe are important for the community. Are these issues also prioritized by the Asian American public? If we assume that organizations are formed to advocate for the common interests of themselves and their communities (Olson 1965), it is reasonable to expect that most interest groups and the Asian American public also are aware of these ten issues. In contrast, scholars of the "mobilization bias" in interest group formation have argued that only a certain set of Asian American interests are represented by interest groups (Domhoff 1978; Gilens 2005; Golden 1998; Schattschneider 1960; Schlozman 1984).

This chapter investigates the similarities and differences in issue priorities and preferences between interest groups and the public among Asian Americans. By comparing the evidence from the content analysis in Chapter 2 and the public opinion survey in this chapter, I will show that interest groups and the public among Asian Americans are not similar in what they emphasize and what they prefer with regard to social and political issues. In the subsequent sections, I will explain a variety of public opinion surveys used in the analysis and present the findings of mismatched Asian American opinions between interest groups and the public. I will then provide a racial comparison analysis to highlight the distinctiveness of opinion disconnection among Asian Americans.

3.2 Data and Method

The first task in this chapter is to identify issue priorities and positions by the Asian American public. The next task is to show how similar or different Asian American interests are from those of other racial groups. Unfortunately, existing data that includes information relevant to these tasks is less than ideal. The lack of data on public opinion among the Asian American population has been well documented in previous studies on Asian American politics. Only limited numbers of public opinion surveys that have sampled Asian American respondents have provided statistically significant results (Wong et al. 2011). In addition, the few accessible public opinion surveys with sufficient numbers of Asian American respondents that exist are either outdated or unable to be used for a racial comparison because of their Asian-exclusive samples (Junn et al. 2010; Lien et al. 2004).

Given this limitation, the best way to investigate Asian American interests among the public and to compare them to those of interest groups is to use multiple data sources. The main data used here were drawn from the General Social Survey (GSS) of 2010 and 2012. The GSS has several merits because it is the most up-to-date survey with various social and political questions. The GSS has large samples of respondents from various racial groups, including a considerable number of Asian Americans. However, the structure of this dataset is not so simple; the surveys often did not ask the full sample of Asian Americans certain social and political questions in which I am interested. For instance, Table 3.4 shows that there were 4,882 and 1,971 respondents in the 2010 GSS and 2012 GSS, respectively. By merging these two surveys, I can obtain information from about only 201 Asian American respondents (138 in the 2010 GSS and 63 in the 2012 GSS). Some variables of interest to me are not available in the 2012 GSS (Table 3.5). In addition, the total sample of 6,853 participants is divided into several subgroups of randomly selected respondents (ballots), and some questions were not asked of all subsets of survey participants. For these reasons, the number of Asian American respondents for some questions is smaller than others in my analysis. Nonetheless, the aforementioned advantages of using these merged data outweigh their shortcomings.

I supplemented the merged GSS data with the 2008 and 2012 National Asian American Surveys (NAAS). The principle investigators of the NAAS claim it is the most recent survey to exclusively sample Asian Americans for a variety of social and political questions (Wong et al. 2011). Specifically, this survey is useful to identify Asian American issues among the public because the NAAS investigates the most important problem not only for American society but also for Asian Americans themselves. The beauty of this particular variable is that it was asked in an open-ended format, so the answers for this question clearly show how Asian Americans

prioritize their concerns. While the 2008 NAAS is publicly available through the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research,[48] the 2012 NAAS is not yet accessible. However, several reports from the 2012 version, including detailed analysis on questions related to voting choices, partisanship, ideology, and policy positions, are posted on the NAAS website. My analysis makes references to these publications.[49]

3.3 Findings

3.3.1 Issue Priorities

My descriptive analysis on the merged GSS and the 2008 and 2012 NAAS revealed differences in issues emphasized by Asian American interest groups and the Asian American public. Table 3.1 displays similarities and differences in issue priorities. The left column presents the ten issues found in the content analysis on Asian American organizations, while the right column provides the NAAS results.[50]

The first finding was that four issues are commonly stressed by interest groups and the public: immigration, discrimination, healthcare, and education. Although these issues were ranked differently by interest groups and also by the public, it is safe to say that the Asian American population truly cares about immigration policies, discrimination and racism, and the nation's healthcare and educational systems. Three of these four issues (all except

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[48] These data were released in 2011 (ICPSR 31481).
[49] These reports are available at http://www.naasurvey.com/.
[50] For detailed information about the ten issues prioritized by Asian American interest groups, see Table 2.4 in Chapter 2.

discrimination) have consistently been Asian American issues. The 2010 GSS shows that Asian Americans view immigration, healthcare, and education to be the most important problems they face (Table 3.2).

Although there is commonality in issue priorities for Asian Americans between interest groups and the public, careful interpretation of this table reveals a striking disconnection in issue priorities between organizations and ordinary Asian Americans. First, Asian American respondents see "the economy in general" as the most important problem not only for society but also for themselves. This issue was ranked first in the 2010 GSS and the 2008 NAAS (Table 3.2 and Table 3.3). In contrast, Asian American interest groups do not all address issues related to "the economy in general." I found that some organizations have addressed about job training or education as well as elimination of discrimination in hiring and in the workplace. Although we could say that these interest groups work for economic issues, it is important to stress that little of what Asian American organizations emphasize is related to the economy in a very direct way. It is surprising to see that the number one issue for interest groups and the public is not the same in the Asian American community.

Second, immigration is one of the top issues for interest groups; however, when Asian Americans are asked about their priorities, this topic is rarely mentioned. Only 1% of the Asian American public specified immigration as the most important problem. This finding is consistent over time based on my analysis on the 2008 NAAS.[51] Considering the fact that Asian Americans are mostly immigrants,[52] it is easy to assume that immigration should be their top interest. My content analysis in Chapter 2 and in-depth interviews from Chapter 4 have

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[51] Asian American respondents in the 2008 NAAS did not even consider immigration issues as their most important problem (Table 3.3).
[52] Sixty percent of the Asian American population is foreign-born (Figure 1.2 in Chapter 1).

confirmed that the nature of Asian Americans as a largely foreign-born dominant population is

the rationale for Asian American interest groups to advocate for immigrant issues. Surprisingly,

however, the Asian American public does not emphasize immigration issues. On this issue of

immigration, I discovered the biggest disparity between interest groups and the public among

Asian Americans in terms of ranking and preferences.

Third, some issues important to the Asian American public are not at all a concern of

interest groups serving Asian Americans. For instance, "budget deficit" was the most important

problem for some Asian American respondents in the 2012 NAAS.[53] In addition, issues such as

environment, terrorism, and poverty emphasized by the Asian American public in the 2010 GSS

were absent from the list of ten issues obtained from the content analysis on Asian American

interest groups (Table 3.2). Although I found that Asian American interest groups over-

represent some issues for recent low-income immigrants with limited English proficiency,[54]

these organizations do not particularly present what they are advocating for as "poverty issues"

because they stress "disparity" in various areas of health, education, and representation rather

than overall "income poverty."[55] Likewise, some issues salient to interest groups such as

"community," "youth," "women," and "seniors" were not addressed by the public. However, it

is understandable why the Asian American public is silent on these issues because they are not

related to a specific policy. What interest groups mostly advocate for is empowerment and

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[53] Two percent of respondents said that a budget deficit is the most important problem for society and themselves (Table 3.1).

[54] Chapter 4 provides a detailed explanation regarding this finding.

[55] [Source] *OMB Statistical Policy Directive* No. 14, May 1978. The Office of Management and Budget provided the official definition of poverty. It used income thresholds that vary by family size and composition, excluding capital gains or noncash benefits. The U.S. Census Bureau also uses this definition to determine who is considered to be living in poverty. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/hhes/povmeas/methodology/ombdir14.html.

leadership development for "women," "youth," and "seniors," so these issues would not be usually perceived as the immediate concerns to the public.[56]

It is striking to see the great deal of disconnection in issue priorities between interest groups and the public among Asian Americans. Are issue preferences also different between these interest groups and the public? The next subsection provides evidence that interest groups do not advocate for what the public prefers.

3.3.2 Issue Preferences

In the previous chapter, my analysis discovered that Asian American interest groups were liberal in terms of their ideological orientation. For example, they supported comprehensive immigration reform and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (or Obamacare) as well as work on improving the quality of public education. In addition, they also advocated for nondiscriminatory policies in employment, policing, and educational opportunities. The next chapter also confirmed the liberal issue positions of Asian American organizations. The public, however, is unsettled in its issue preferences. Therefore, it is hard to affirm that the Asian American population in general holds a liberal stance in policy issues or *vice versa*.

Figure 3.1 illustrates issue preferences of Asian Americans on immigration issues is unclear. The merged GSS contains four different questions related to immigration. About half of Asian American respondents want to keep the same level of immigration, while 28% of them would like to increase immigration. Based upon these findings, it would be more accurate to say

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[56] Note that the issues related to "women" contain examples of "problems" that include domestic violence and human trafficking.

that Asian Americans are neutral in immigration issue preferences. For questions about how to deal with illegal immigrants, Asian Americans are equivocal. They hold a conservative position by not wanting to allow work permits for illegal immigrants (63%) and by opposing public university education at the same cost for citizens as for undocumented students (73%). However, Asian American respondents possess a liberal stance to support the entitlement of citizenship for children of illegal immigrants.

Second, the general issue preference of Asian Americans is also undecided for issues related to discrimination. For instance, over half of them (56%) think that special consideration of race, such as preferential hiring and promotion, is unfair, while Asian American organizations examined in my research strongly supported it in addition to affirmative action. It is surprising to see that interest groups and the public are situated at the end of the ideological spectrum. However, the Asian American public holds a similar preference with interest groups on open housing law. Chapter 2 reported that interest groups are working to provide affordable housing to Asian Americans. These groups are addressing the various forms of discrimination that Asian Americans face; real estate agents tend not to show them houses in mostly white residence areas, some sellers refuse to show their houses at all, and banks deny them mortgages.[57] Likewise, Asian Americans also hold a liberal stance on discriminatory actions by homeowners and banks. Seventy-seven percent of Asian American respondents in the merged GSS believed that homeowners cannot discriminate to whom they may sell a home.

Third, opinion among Asian Americans on national spending issues is more resolved than for other issues of immigration and discrimination. For example, the majority of Asian

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[57] Nonetheless, the extent to which Asian Americans are facing is less severe than what African Americans are confronting with respect to discrimination in housing (Casey et al. 2011; Dymski, 1999; Flippen, 2001).

Americans agree that more should be spent on improving national health (56%), education (75%), and Social Security (53%). Therefore, Asian Americans generally take a liberal view on the increasing role of the national government. However, opinions among this population on welfare spending is divided. Thirty-six percent of Asian Americans support increasing welfare spending, but another 36 percent of this population believe that the current level of welfare spending is about right. In addition, about one fourth of Asian Americans think that the government spends too much on welfare. Therefore, it is too soon to state that there is a clear central tendency on government spending, although it is much more oriented in a liberal direction than the public opinion on other issues.

Lastly, Asian Americans' evaluation on political institutions is split as well. Because the previous chapter discovered that representation in the American political system and business is one of the important issues emphasized by interest groups, we might assume that the Asian American public would show a low level of political trust in a government and a society that under-represent Asian Americans. Again, the analysis on the merged GSS showed mixed results. Asian Americans are divided in their evaluation the Supreme Court; about half of this population had a great deal of confidence in the Court (43%), whereas roughly the other half showed only some trust (45%). When we compared their confidence in the Supreme Court with that for Congress, however, the level of trust was higher. Only 12% of Asian Americans had a great deal of confidence in Congress, while the majority of them showed only some trust in the legislative branch (55%). Asian Americans' higher confidence in the Court than in Congress is consistent with previous studies. Scholars have reported a somewhat sustained public confidence in the Supreme Court due to its authority and morality, possessing "neither the purse nor the sword" (Caldeira 1986, 1119), but people are more likely to view Congress negatively, sometimes as a

"public enemy" (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995). Nonetheless, it is noticeable that the Asian American public's confidence in the Supreme Court is somewhat mismatched with the opinion of interest groups that negatively perceive the entire judicial system as unrepresentative and actively ask for nominations of Asian Americans for judicial offices.

3.4. Racial Comparison: Issue Priorities and Preferences for the American Public

To fully understand the ideological orientations of Asian Americans, I will present public opinion among Asian Americans on various issues while comparing these stances to other racial groups. Generally speaking, this racial comparison analysis shows that the disconnection in issue priorities and preferences between the Asian American public and interest groups that represent them was unique among predominant racial categories in the United States.

First of all, the list of issues stressed by African Americans and Hispanics is matched with what interest groups, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), emphasize. Figure 2.4 in the previous chapter displays the issues addressed by these two representative racial interest groups, and most of these issues appear in the list of most important problems to the African American and Hispanic public as well (Table 3.2). Although I cannot compare how these issues are prioritized differently between interest groups and the public among African

Americans and Hispanics,[58] it is clear to see that interests are connected and have some overlap between the two.

Next, African Americans and Hispanics are systematically consistent in their preferences where they own the issues, and the public opinion of these racial groups is connected to the issue preferences by interest groups serving African Americans and Hispanics. For example, it is well documented that welfare, crime, civil rights, healthcare, discrimination, and poverty are issues important to African Americans (Bobo 1997, 2004; Canon 1999; Griffin and Newman 2008; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Kinder and Winter 2001; Schuman et al. 1997; Tate 1994, 2003; Tuch and Weitzer 1997). Figure 3.2 confirms this finding. African Americans are particularly supportive of special considerations of race (62%), open housing laws (77%), and more government spending in areas to mitigate the problem of poverty, such as welfare (58%), health (76%), education (82%), and Social Security (73%). In the previous chapter, I showed that the NAACP advocates for these aforementioned issues. Therefore, congruence in issue preferences exists between interest groups and the public among African Americans.

Similarly, Hispanics possess consistent positions in issues of immigration, welfare, and healthcare that are perceived to be important to this population (Griffin and Newman 2008; Leal 2004; 2005). Except for the question regarding "increasing immigration,"[59] Hispanics are very supportive of immigrant-friendly policies, such as allowing work permits for illegal immigrants (70%), citizenship for undocumented students (86%), and in-state tuition for public university

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[58] As explained in the previous chapter, I did not fully replicate the content analysis on African American and Hispanic interest groups. Instead, I examined the two most representative organizations for these racial groups. Therefore, the ranking order of issues emphasized by the two racial interest groups is not available.

[59] Presumably, the social and economic interests of Hispanics are more likely to be affected by the influence of new immigrant workers on labor market competition. This trend can explain the relatively low level of support for increasing immigration among Hispanics themselves.

education to children of illegal immigrants (74%). They are also favorable of more government spending on welfare (47%) and healthcare (60%) than Asian Americans. As the previous chapter presented, the public opinion of Hispanics is connected to the issue positions of interest groups that claim to represent them like the NHLA.

At the end of the previous section, I showed that the Asian American public's evaluation of political institutions was different from the general view by Asian American interest groups. The analysis on the NAACP and the NHLA showed that both African American and Hispanic interest groups advocate for representation in the political system (Figure 2.4 in Chapter 2). Their negative evaluation of political institutions where minority representation is deficient is supported by public opinion. African American and Hispanic respondents in the merged GSS showed higher distrust in the Supreme Court and Congress than the Asian American public (Figure 3.2).[60] In other words, Asian Americans were less likely to have a lack of confidence in political institutions than African Americans and Hispanics. In addition, their evaluation of the political system was less likely to be matched with the issues for which interest groups advocate.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter examined commonality and dissimilarity in issue priorities and preferences between interest groups and the public among Asian Americans. This comparative analysis of the results from the content analysis on interest groups and public opinion surveys revealed the

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[60] Seventeen percent of African American and 13% of Hispanic respondents had little confidence in the Supreme Court, which was greater than the percentage of Asian Americans (5%). Likewise, these racial groups possessed a higher distrust of Congress (34% of African Americans and 26% of Hispanics) than Asian Americans.

disconnection between them. What interest groups and the public emphasize and what they

prefer regarding social and political issues do not match. This disconnect likely exists because

the Asian American public opinion is unsettled across various policies, whereas Asian American

interests groups are consistently liberal in their ideological orientation. A racial comparison

analysis also confirmed that the mismatch in issue priorities and preferences between interest

groups and the public among Asian Americans was a unique finding that is not present among

African Americans and Hispanics.

The striking finding of this mismatch in issue priorities and preferences between interest

groups and the public raises several questions. Do Asian American interest groups recognize the

difference in the issue priorities and positions of their groups from those of the public? How do

these organizations make sense of their jobs, given the fact that their emphasis and advocacy

points are not connected with the public? How are Asian American interest groups trying to

reconcile these differences with the Asian American public? I will answer these questions in the

next chapter based on in-depth interviews with representatives of Asian American interest groups.

Table 3.1 Disconnections in Issue Priorities between Interest Groups and the Public among Asian Americans[61]

Interest Groups			The Public		
				Most Important Problem in the United States	Most Important Problem for Asian Americans
1	Community	81%	Economy in general	52%	36%
2	Immigration	57%	Unemployment	19%	17%
3	Election	51%	Health care	5%	10%
4	Youth	47%	Education	4%	6%
5	Discrimination	45%	Budget Deficit	2%	2%
6	Representation	43%	Discrimination/Racism	1%	1%
7	Health care	43%	Immigration	1%	1%
8	Women	37%			
9	Education	21%			
10	Senior	14%			

---

[61] [Source] The 2012 National Asian American Survey (N=3,034). Note that Table 2.4 in Chapter 2 provides the detailed information about ten issue dimensions and sub-categorical issues emphasized by interest groups. Colored texts in the table indicate issues commonly stressed by both interest groups and the public among Asian Americans.

Table 3.2 Most Important Problems for the American Public by Race, 2010[62]

	White	%	African American	%	Hispanic	%	Asian American	%
1	Economy	40%	Health care	40%	Economy	24%	Economy	34%
2	Health care	18%	Economy	19%	Health care	24%	Education	32%
3	Education	17%	Education	18%	Education	18%	Health care	18%
4	Terrorism	8%	Poverty	5%	Immigration	13%	Environment	5%
5	Environment	5%	Terrorism	5%	Terrorism	10%	Immigration	2%
6	Immigration	3%	Crime	3%	Poverty	2%	Terrorism	2%
7	Poverty	2%	Environment	2%	Environment	2%	Poverty	2%
8	Crime	1%	Immigration	2%	Crime	1%		
	N	980		216		169		44

---

[62] [Source] The 2010 General Social Survey. Missing data (responses such as "don't know," "can't choose," and "no response") is not reported in the table. Note that colored texts in the table indicate the shared issues in priorities by interest groups (result from Chapter 2) and the public (respondents in the 2010 GSS).

Table 3.3 Issue Priority of the Asian American Public, 2008[63]

Rank	Most Important Problem	Frequency
1	Economy in general	61%
2	Iraq War	9%
3	Fuel/Gas/Oil prices	5%
4	Unemployment/Jobs	3%
5	Health care	3%
6	Terrorism	2%
7	Education	1%
8	Decline of Ethnics/Morality/Family Values	1%

---

[63] [Source] The 2008 National Asian American Survey (N=5,159).

Table 3.4 Data Description of the Merged General Social Survey by Race

Race	Merged		2010 GSS		2012 GSS	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Non-Hispanic White	4,765	69.53	3,456	70.52	1,309	66.31
African American	980	14.3	688	14.04	292	14.79
Hispanic	799	11.66	530	10.81	269	13.63
Asian American	201	2.93	138	2.82	63	3.19
Native Indian	62	0.9	35	0.71	27	1.37
Pacific Islanders	16	0.23	13	0.27	3	0.15
Other	30	0.44	22	0.45	8	0.41
Total	6,853	100	4,882	100	1,971	100

Table 3.5 Variables Available in the Merged General Social Survey

Both in the 2010 and 2012 GSS	Only in the 2010 GSS
Increase immigration	Most important problems
Open housing law	Work permits for illegal immigrant
Spending for welfare	Citizenship for undocumented students
Spending for national health	Public university for undocumented students
Spending for national education	Preferential treatment is unfair
Spending for social security	
Confidence in Supreme Court	
Confidence in Congress	

Figure 3.1 Issue Preferences of the Asian American Public[64]

Increase Immigration
(n=128)

46%

28%

22%

■ Increase ■ Same ■ Decrease

Q. Do you think the number of immigrants to America
nowadays should be…

Work Permit for Illegal Immigrant
(n=41)

63%

29%

■ Yes ■ No

Q. Should illegal immigrants be entitled to work
permits, or not?

Citizenship for Undocumtned Students
(n=41)

63%

29%

■ Yes ■ No

Q. Should illegal immigrants be entitled to have their
children to quality as America citizens if born in the
U.S., or not?

Public Univ. for Undocumented Students
(n=41)

73%

27%

■ Yes ■ No

Q. Should illegal immigrants be entitled to attend public
universities at the same costs as other students, or not?

Special Consideration is Unfair
(n=41)

56%

37%

■ Agree ■ Disagree

Q. Should the government not make every possible
effort to improve the social and eonomic position of
minority groups, if it means giving them prefernetial
treatment?

Open Housing Law (n=137)

77%

20%

4%

■ Owner decides ■ Can't discriminate ■ Neither

Q. Can homeowner decide himself whom to sell his
house to, even if he prefers not to sell to blacks?

---

[64] [Source] The Merged General Social Survey of 2010 and 2012. Note that the number of Asian respondents in
each question is different because some questions are not asked to the cases in the 2012 GSS.

Figure 3.1 Issue Preferences of the Asian American Public, continued

Spending for Welfare
(n=201)

36% 36%
24%

■ too little ■ about right ■ too much

Q. Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on welfare?

Spending for Health
(n=201)

56%
26%
14%

■ too little ■ about right ■ too much

Q. Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on improving and protecting the nation's health?

Spending for Education
(n=201)

75%
20%
4%

■ too little ■ about right ■ too much

Q. Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on improving the nation's education system?

Spending for Social Security
(n=201)

53%
36%
11%

■ too little ■ about right ■ too much

Q. Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on improving the nation's social security?

Confidence in Supreme Court
(n=137)

43% 45%
5%

■ a great deal ■ only some ■ hardly

Q. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

Confidence in Congress
(n=137)

55%
25%
12%

■ a great deal ■ only some ■ hardly

Q. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

Figure 3.2 Liberal Issue Preferences by Race[65]

Increase Immigration

28%
21%
17%
10%
(3,209) (667) (519) (128)

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian

Q. Do you think the number of immigrants to America nowadays should be…

Workd Permit for Illegal Immigrants

70%
36%
29% 29%
(1,116) (221) (168) (41)

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian

Q. Should illegal immigrants be entitled to work permits, or not?

Citizenships for Undocumented Students

86%
63% 29% 63%
(1,116) (221) (168) (41)

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian

Q. Should illegal immigrants be entitled to have their children to quality as America citizens if born in the U.S., or not?

Public Univ. for Undocumented Students

74%
42%
27% 27%
(1,116) (221) (168) (41)

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian

Q. Should illegal immigrants be entitled to attend public universities at the same costs as other students, or not?

Favor Preferential Treatment

62%
38% 36% 37%
(1,116) (221) (168) (41)

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian

Q. Should the government make every possible effort to improve the social and eonomic position of minority groups, even if it means giving them prefernetial treatment?

Against Open Housing Law

77% 79% 77%
20%
(3,144) (632) (533) (137)

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian

Q. Can homeowner decide himself whom to sell his house to, even if he prefers not to sell to blacks?

---

[65] [Source] The Merged General Social Survey of 2010 and 2012. Note that numbers in parentheses indicate the sample size of each racial group.

Figure 3.2 Liberal Issue Preferences by Race, continued[66]

Favor GOVT Spending for Welfare

58%

47%

37%

36%

(4,765) (980) (799) (201)

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian

Q. Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on welfare?

Favor GOVT Spending for Health

76%

60%

54%

56%

(4,765) (980) (799) (201)

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian

Q. Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on improving and protecting the nation's health?

Favor GOVT Spending for Education

82%

73%

69%

75%

(4,765) (980) (799) (201)

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian

Q. Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on improving the nation's education system?

Favor GOVT Spending for Social Security

73%

55%

54%

53%

(4.765) (980) (799) (201)

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian

Q. Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on improving the nation's social security?

Hardly Any Confidence in Supreme Court*

18%

17%

13%

5%

(3,177) (661) (546) (137)

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian

Q. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

Hardly Any Confidence in Congress*

52%

34%

26%

25%

(3,177) (661) (546) (137)

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian

Q. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

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[66] Note that responses in the figures with asterisk do not necessarily indicate the liberal position. Nonetheless, I report them to compare the public opinion of Asian American with those of other racial groups.

Chapter 4

Political Representation of Asian Americans:
How Do Asian American Interest Groups Understand Representation?

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I demonstrated the disconnection in issue priorities and preferences

between interest groups and Asian Americans in the public. The biggest disparity in terms of

both priorities and preferences was found in immigration, which is one of the top advocacy

issues for interest groups that claim to represent Asian Americans. In contrast, immigration

rarely emerges among Asian Americans in the public as an important issue, and this segment of

the public is generally not in favor of more immigrant-friendly policies. Another noticeable

difference between the public and interest groups arises with respect to the issue of the economy.

While this is the most important problem for the Asian American public, interest groups do not

treat it as a priority for the Asian American community.[67]

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[67] When I refer to interest groups and the public, they mean organizations serving Asian Americans and the Asian American public respectively unless specify otherwise.

When considering the role of interest groups as quasi-representatives who provide an institutionalized voice for the concerns of people that are ill-served by political parties (Strolovitch 2006), it is striking to see that the priorities of interest groups are not matched with the interests of the public. Therefore, several fundamental questions arise: Why do Asian American interest groups represent disadvantaged subgroups? How do these organizations make sense of their jobs?[68] Do they recognize the difference in the issue priorities and positions of their groups from the public? If so, how are Asian American interest groups trying to reconcile these differences with the Asian American public?

This chapter examines these questions and finds that Asian American interest groups perceive their role as representatives for disadvantaged subgroups of Asian Americans and provide substantive representation beyond policy responsiveness. This chapter proceeds as follows. Section 4.1 introduces the data and method used in this chapter. Section 4.2 presents results, and Section 4.3 concludes by discussing the implication of my findings.

4.2 Data and Method

To study how Asian Americans are substantively represented by interest groups, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with executive officers of Asian American interests groups during the summer of 2012. I began the process of identifying Asian American interest groups with the list of 161 Asian American interest groups used for the content analysis in Chapter 2.[69]

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[68] As discussed in Chapter 1, throughout the dissertation, I use Asian American interest groups and Asian American organizations interchangeably.

[69] Recall, I refined the 2008 Asian American Yearbook and the 2012-13 National Political Almanac of Asian Americans based on a three-step screening procedure. After filtering out non-Asian American organizations and

From the list, I randomly selected thirty organizations working for Asian Americans across the nation. I sent a letter of invitation for participation in the study by mail and by e-mail to these organizations in April 2012, and I re-contacted the interest groups in May 2012 if I had not received a response from them by that time.

Through this process, I obtained a geographically varied sample of twelve Asian American interest groups located in California, Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio, and New York. For instance, the Asian American Children & Families Coalition and Policy Advocacy Council for Asian Americans are located in the East and the West respectively. In addition, the "Association of Cambodians in Illinois" is in the Midwest.[70] The list of Asian American interest groups that I interviewed also reflects a diversity of organizational priorities. Seven out of twelve organizations work for the general concerns of the Asian American community, while five of them claim that they are more concerned about specific ethnic Asian American communities. Table 4.1 displays the descriptions of Asian American interest groups in my field work.

Between June and August of 2012, I conducted twelve of the interviews in interviewees' office buildings, and each interview lasted at least 60 minutes.[71] Before starting the interview, I asked for each interviewee's permission to record our conversation for transcription purposes and obtained written consent from all of my interviewees. After each interview, I gave a box of chocolates to each interviewee as a token of my gratitude and also mailed a thank-you card afterward.

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organizations without social and political concerns, I obtained a representative sample of 161 interest groups working for Asian Americans' social and political issues.

[70] I use pseudonyms for the interest groups that I interviewed in order to protect the confidentiality of the organizations in my field work.

[71] The longest interview was with Asian American Services of Wisconsin, which lasted for two hours.

I designed my interview protocol to generate talk about the organization's constituencies, issue priorities, programs, policy activities, tactics, and coalitions, building on the strategy used in Strolovitch's study (2007).[72] The data analyzed in this chapter includes not only transcripts of these interviews but also supplemental documents provided by the interviewees as well as reports downloaded from organizations' websites. To analyze these data, I used data displays as suggested in Miles and Huberman (1994) and Walsh (2012). While I read through the content of the data, I noted patterns across Asian American interest groups regarding the perspectives on the representative role imposed on them and the organizational tactics they used to carry out their jobs. I displayed my data in a matrix in which the rows represented interest groups, and the columns represented different characteristics to elucidate conceptual themes (see Table 4.2).

As I started to reach conclusions about patterns in the data, I employed a few tactics to verify my results. First, I involved another doctoral student majoring in social science in the process of looking for patterns and doing counts so that I could check the coherence of my preliminary analyses. Second, I sent a short summary of findings to interviewees to receive their comments on my major findings because informants who are knowledgeable about the reality of their work can act as judges to evaluate the accuracy of the conclusions (Miles and Huberman 1994, 275-77; Walsh 2012, 522).[73]

4.3 Empirical Analysis

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[72] The interview protocol is included in the appendix. Note that interviewees were not given an opportunity to know the interview questions beforehand.

[73] Five interviews out of twelve representatives of Asian American interest groups responded me to provide the feedback on the summary report.

As I discovered in Chapter 2, interest groups are liberal in terms of ideological orientation. For instance, they are advocating for comprehensive immigration reform, linguistically accessible social services, an affordable health care system, public education, and an end to racial profiling. It is noticeable that the representatives of the Asian American organizations that I interviewed generally recognize that there preferences diverge somewhat from the public on these issues. They confirm that they are more likely to work on issues that benefit certain segments of the Asian American population: low-income, sub-ethnic South Asians, and recent immigrants with limited English proficiency. Interest groups are aware that because of their focus on these specific subgroups their issue stances may be different from that of most Asian Americans. Organizations deliberately choose to stand for marginalized subgroups within the Asian American community.

In the following sections, I explain interest groups' ideas about the scope and content of their representational obligations, and then illustrate how the dynamics of Asian American interest groups are unique from the general understanding about non-Asian American organizations.

4.3.1 Representatives of Marginalized Subgroups within Asian Americans

Why do Asian American organizations purposely to focus on disadvantaged subgroups despite the fact that this leaves some members of the Asian American community unrepresented?[74] This phenomenon occurs because Asian American interest groups hold an unconventional perception

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[74] In Chapter 1, I introduce a variety of data to show the internal difference among ethnic Asian American communities in terms of socioeconomic variables and immigration status.

about their roles as a representative, as opposed to other interest groups. My in-depth interviews

discover that these organizations are committed to representing *Asians in need* such as low-

income families and recent immigrants as well as *Asians in danger* like South Asians facing

racial discrimination.

It is generally known that "organizations cannot represent every member at all times" so

they tend to focus on majorities (Strolovitch 2006, 898) or follow the donors who provide them

with resources (Walker 1983). Therefore, we should not expect to see interest groups that "focus

exclusively on disadvantaged subgroups to the exclusion of majorities" (Strolovitch 2006, 898).

Surprisingly, the opposite is true for Asian American organizations. I find that representatives of

these organizations convey that the high-level of advocacy on behalf of disadvantaged subgroups

is perceived not as a matter of altruism but of responsibility. Asian American organizations

stress that marginalized subgroups are actually an important part of the constituents for which

interest groups are responsible. The comment from the civic participation coordinator of the

Civil Liberties Center in New York exemplifies this view:

> SYP: On whose behalf does this organization generally consider itself to be active? Who is your constituency?
>
> CLC: I think that the best way to describe it is the concentric circle. Our core and root is the Korean American community. Some of our work involve the Asian American community and then, we work for the larger immigrant community. At the end, we even include all minority groups who are affected by the issues of social justice. But, again, our focus is people [Asian Americans] in need. That's our focus.

Although not all organizations define their constituencies in as clear a framework as illustrated in

the quotation above, all interest groups definitely distinguish the constituents on which they

focus from the broader Asian American community. Throughout the interviews, organizations make it clear that their advocacy work is concentrated on people "who suffer the most" and "who are neglected by the existing system."[75] Keeping this principle in mind, some organizations limit their constituency to the ethnic Asian American community while others broaden the boundary of the constituency to the Asian American population in general. Figure 4.1 displays the general views on the constituency defined by twelve Asian American organizations. The essence of this conceptualization of constituency is that disadvantaged subgroups are at the center of advocacy work.

Moreover, Asian American organizations are unusually inclusive in carrying out their roles as representatives. Ostensibly, their constituency is the Asian American population, but the majority of organizations does not limit the usage of their services to members of other racial groups and, furthermore, engage in advocacy work with broad beneficiaries beyond Asian Americans. For instance, many organizations provide translation and interpretation for Asian immigrants who wish to use health care services and apply for welfare benefits, regardless of their U.S. citizenship. In addition, they offer legal consultation to Asian immigrants who are at risk of deportation or are in the middle of wage disputes. Although they conduct these programs to assist mainly Asian Americans, most interest groups open their programs toward anyone in need regardless of race. The executive director of the Center for Asian Americans in Ohio responds that it does not discriminate against people based on race or nationality in terms of providing services, and it welcomes literally "whoever needs services." This inclusiveness seems to stem from a belief among people running Asian American organizations that restricting

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[75] These words are quoted from the interviews with the Association of Cambodians in Illinois and the Voices for Asian American Children and Families in New York, respectively.

eligibility for services and benefits would contradict their core mission to represent people *in need*. The following response from the executive director of the Association of Cambodians in Illinois depicts this view well:

> SYP: When I read through your Website, I notice that some of your programs are very open to any racial community members….
>
> ACL: Yes, that's right. If you go downstairs now, you can see a room filled full of Black and Latino kids. Currently, we are operating the summer youth programs. Most of the students using these [programs] are not Asians. Well, another example is that…. We provide cash assistance for the gas and electric bills during the winter. You know [how cold] the winter in Chicago [can be]. I guess that it was usually non-Cambodians or non-Asians [to receive this assistance]. They were mostly Eastern European low-income families.[76]
>
> SYP: That is interesting. Is there a particular reason for this open policy in using your services and programs?
>
> Mien: Our organization is working for human rights, not only for Cambodian Americans but also Asian Americans in general. Broadly, we are working on human rights for all. How can we talk about it [human rights] while we continue to label people? We want to bring justice and fairness to our [Asian American] community. If we continue to classify people based on race, I think, it is oppression. We shouldn't do discrimination in the services we offer.

Likewise, the executive director of the Dispute Resolution Center for Asian Americans in California serves other racial groups by providing solutions for wage disputes to Hispanic day laborers and school mediation programs to African American students.

Some Asian American organizations realize that the influence of their advocacy reaches other racial communities although they do not necessarily target such communities. They think that disadvantaged-subgroup issues such as linguistically convenient health and social services,

---

[76] According to the organization's records provided by the executive director, 80% of people benefitting from this program were non-Cambodians. Beneficiaries have been mostly Eastern European immigrants and Hispanic Americans.

immigrant-protective policies, generous welfare benefits, and civil liberties of ethnically Asian

communities naturally cover others with similar needs across racial groups. According to the

national director of the Asian Americans Fighting Against Substance Abuse in California, the

benefits of these policies will impact everyone once Asian American organizations achieve these

goals.

> SYP: Can you define the constituency of your organization? To whom, are you active in advocacy work?
>
> AAFASA: We are working for Asian Americans. They are our focus for sure. What we are addressing is for our community in this area. In reality, however, our works impact a lot of other people. When we get involved in working for the poor, we also naturally serve African Americans in this neighborhood because they are also disproportionately represented in the low-income community. While we address the language access to social services, our works also cover the Spanish-speaking groups…. Let me put it this way. We don't necessarily see them [other racial groups] as our constituents, but we touch on them through our work.

4.3.2 Justifying Over-Representation of Disadvantaged Subgroups

The content analysis of interest group websites in Chapter 2 and face-to-face interviews in this

chapter reveal that Asian American interest groups heavily represent disadvantaged subgroups.

In Chapter 3, however, I also show that the Asian American public does not share interest groups'

high level of emphasis on marginalized-subgroup issues such as immigration, health care, and

electoral representation. There is a great internal disparity across Asian American ethnic

communities in terms of their income, education attainment, immigration status, and English

language proficiency. There are large numbers of relatively advantaged members of the

Japanese and Indian American community whose preferences are not represented in the work of

Asian American interest group. Consequently, the question emerges in our mind: Do these organizations representing disadvantaged subgroups recognize the disconnection with the general Asian American public as a whole?

My interviews reveal that organizations notice the difference in their stance and priorities from the Asian American public. They see the disconnection as an inevitable result of the diverse nature of the Asian American population, which is a combination of at least ten different nationalities. To the national director of the Asian Americans Fighting Against Substance Abuse in California, for example, it is normal to observe that some Asian Americans do not care about the issues they are working on:

> SYP: Your organization is addressing a somewhat narrow issue of mental and behavioral health. It might not be an important issue at all to a certain Asian American ethnic community, right?
>
> AAFASA: Absolutely. I agree that ours may not be an interest of the general Asian Americans. But, it is the case of any issues…. People like me in this field…. all recognize the internal diversity among Asian Americans. One of my colleagues who is working for the South Asian community must deal with the concerns of people from Bhutan, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and wherever. We are just talking about only South Asians here…. We are also facing even more peculiar difference within one ethnicity. For instance, Indian Americans are different in caste, last name, language, region, religion, and so on. This is the nature of Asian Americans. Given this characteristic, it would be hard to unite all Asians for one particular issue.

In other words, Asian American interest groups are aware of the fact that the intrinsic variation across ethnic communities makes it hard to devise an overarching issue that satisfies the interests of every Asian American ethnic community. For this reason, they naturally accept the disconnection in issue priorities and preferences from the public.

Instead, they try to justify a high level of attention on disadvantaged subgroups in three ways. First, Asian American organizations believe that advantaged-subgroup issues within the Asian American population could be met in the existing system, whereas their main constituents of the low-income, immigrant, and South Asian Americans are invisible in terms of political representation. The policy director of the Policy Advocacy Council for Asian Americans in California discusses this in the explanation of why this organization is not accountable for advantaged subgroups like business people:

> PACAA: We don't make any emphasis on the business groups even though they are part of our members, and many Asian Americans are small business owners and entrepreneurs. Indeed, we don't claim to represent the business community.
>
> SYP: Why?
>
> PACAA: Because they are not our focus. They are not poor, not [recent] immigrants with linguistic isolation, or not [political] refugees. I mean, they are not vulnerable populations. We speak on behalf of Asian Americans who are in danger and lack of representation.

Indeed, advantaged subgroups within the Asian American community are deemed as having a form of representation that speaks to their interests. Throughout my interviews, Asian American organizations directly and indirectly reveal their views that either the mainstream interest groups or the current political system can serve the needs of advantaged subgroups of Asian Americans. In the discussion of internal differences in the community, the health policy director of the Voices for Asian American Children and Families in New York implies that current politicians tend to represent advantaged subgroups of Asians whereas disadvantaged subgroups of Asians are ignored in the political system:

VAACF: I think that there is the misperception about the larger Asian American community that all Asian Americans are healthy, affluent, and educated so that they don't need services. That is not always necessarily the case. The Chinese community, for example, is probably the oldest Asian American group settled in the United States. We can now see the 5th generation of Chinese Americans in New York. Yes, many of them are doctors, lawyers, and entrepreneurs. We are not saying that that is not true. But, there are also the segments of community with very particular challenges. We have many newcomers from China who are undocumented and unable to speak English so that they are not accessible to social services…. *When we go to the policy makers, we always enlighten them about this…. they are a part of your constituents who are struggling and needs help*. [Emphasis added]

Second, interest groups working for issues affecting disadvantaged subgroups of Asians frame the issues as having immediate and broad impacts in order to validate their high level of advocacy. Asian American organizations claim that representation for marginalized sub-groups is critical for these disadvantaged members of the population. In the interview, the policy consultant of the Coalition for the Chinese American Community in Illinois explains that it cares about the urgency of issues. To this organization, residents in Chinatown face various "day-to-day survival issues." Some Chinese Americans severely suffer from being "blocked from using health and social services" due to a lack of language availability as well as "threatened to be laid off because of their undocumented status." Conversely, interest groups in my interviews tend to downplay consequences of advantaged-subgroup issues, assuming that these issues are not "a matter of life or death."

In addition, Asian American organizations frame disadvantaged-subgroups issues in a manner that the impact of issues is widely influential not only to the Asian American community but also to society. When asked about the issue of printing a Chinese ballot, the policy director of the Institute for Asian Americans in Illinois framed this issue as one that affects all Asian American voters, not just the relatively disadvantaged subset of Chinese Americans:

IAA: Let's think about a Chinese grandma who was turned away from the poll because she got intimidated by the complicating voting procedure in English. Or people told her that she should speak and read English in order to vote. Our advocacy for printing non-English ballot and election materials in Chinese is not just for this Chinese grandma. It may be Chinese this time, but it could be a Korean *halmuni* or Japanese *obaasan* next time.[77] It could be any of our grandmas, right? This is an issue of voting rights…. I mean voter suppression.

Indeed, Asian American interest groups believe that disadvantaged-subgroup issues are majority issues that affect many more members even though the issue only resonates with a narrow subset of their constituency. For instance, the Civil Liberties Center in New York vigorously works to end racial profiling against South Asian Americans. Although "stop and frisk" in New York usually happens to be targeting this specific ethnic community within the Asian American population, this organization promotes awareness of its potential risk to violate the civil liberties of any Asian American. Similarly, the Center for Asian Americans in Ohio claims that the disadvantaged-subgroup issues they are addressing influence all Americans because those issues ultimately "promote justice, fairness, and inclusiveness for everybody," which in turn "bring benefits to American society."

Finally, Asian American organizations explain that disadvantaged-subgroup issues are actually in great demand by the Asian American community. To most interest groups in my face-to-face interviews, the high level of advocacy for marginalized subgroups of Asians is not only a result of their sense of responsibility in representing these groups, but also a reflection of community needs. Asian American organizations argue that they are working on these issues because they were asked to do so by community members. For instance, the civic participation

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[77] Both *halmuni* and *obaasan* refer to grandmother in Korean and Japanese respectively.

coordinator of the Civil Liberties Center in New York explained how this organization started to run the renters' protection program. Because many Asian Americans constantly visited their free legal clinic for housing issues, this organization believes that it is a systematic issue for the Asian American community.[78] The representative of CLC implies in the interview that working on a housing issue will benefit both Asian American renters and owners; thus, he justifies this center's advocacy for disadvantaged Asian American renters because it will eventually benefit the community.

It was intriguing to discover how interest groups determine the interests of the community. They hardly use a systematic way to measure to what degree Asian Americans care about a given issue. Instead, organizations rely on subjective methods such as *word of mouth*, *hands-on experienc*e, and *expert advice*. The executive director of the Center for Asian Americans in Ohio describes how issues and programs are decided based on direct requests by community members:

> CAA: We recognize that people come to us with a whole host of various issues and challenges that need to be addressed, not just one problem. That is how our programs are structured. For instance, an Asian American worker comes to us for help when he was laid off. He also brings an issue of welfare benefits because he could not find child care when he is unemployed. He is also struggling with psychological damage from unemployment so that he needs services for mental health. It goes on and on. *People are telling us what to do and where to work*. [Emphasis added]

Likewise, the executive director of the Asian American Services of Wisconsin decided to be more active on advocating for immigrants and refugees when this organization began noticing "lots of phone calls and visits" about those issues from community members. The Voices for

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[78] While I was waiting for Mr. Hong, I actually observed that one guy visited the center and asked legal consultation for his problem with a landlord.

Asian American Children and Families in New York is more proactive in identifying community

needs. Instead of waiting for community members to visit and communicate their issues, this

interest group sometimes asks program participants about their present concerns.[79] Or, the

Institute for Asian Americans in Illinois depends on referrals from community-based

organizations (CBOs, hereafter), which are more likely to "directly communicate with the

community" and "see everyday problems more closely."[80]

Interestingly, some organizations in my interviews claim that they do not need to read

people's lips or hear from CBOs to know the community needs. These interest groups believe

that "they just know what Asian Americans are concerned about," without any verbal evidence

or information from the people. My interviews reveal that one third of interest groups such as

the Chinese-American Planning Council (interviewed the executive director) and the Civil

Liberties Center take this "we-just-know" approach:

SYP: How do you know what Asian Americans are concerned about?

CAPC: If you are in the field, you know [the Asian American issues]. We are part of the community. We've been here for 45 years, 45 years! We just know what my people want us to do for them.

**

CLC: We've been around here since 1984. We are in touch with the needs of the community. Although we don't have a set membership, we are definitely in touch with the community and their needs. This is how we get a sense of Asian American interests and needs. I believe that these are reflected in our issue priority and programs.

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[79] Two interest groups in New York, the Voices for Asian American Children and Families and the Civil Liberties Center, occasionally used a form of survey to identify Asian American issues.

[80] Three organizations in my interviews classified themselves as a coalition, consisting of various organizations working for Asian American issues. These interest groups tend to depend more on community-based organizations or other partner groups to identify community concerns.

The subjective understandings about Asian American issues are rooted in organizations'

confidence in their long history and prominent presence in the Asian American community.

They admit that this we-just-know approach is not "scientific," but interest groups strongly

believe that their "first-hand experiences" effectively identify community needs among Asian

Americans.[81]

Another subjective way of identifying demands from the Asian American community is

to get advice from experts. Two organizations in my interviews mention their board of directors

as a major source of identifying local concerns. For instance, the Coalition for the Chinese

American Community in Illinois works on the issues identified by the steering committee

because those "leaders are knowledgeable about community needs." The Institute for Asian

American Self Empowerment in California also respects decisions by the board members who

"are always attentive to the local communities" and possess "expertise in Asian American

politics." Figure 4.2 summarizes three components of subjective understandings by interest

groups on the Asian American community concerns.

4.3.3 Reconciling the Disconnection: Ambivalence in Organizational Operations

In the preceding sections, I showed that Asian American interest groups realize the difference

between the issues that they are addressing and what the public might emphasize. Nonetheless,

organizations believe that over-representation of marginalized subgroups is their responsibility

so they justify a high-level of attention to these subgroups. Another important discovery from

my in-depth interviews is that Asian American interest groups do not just ignore the

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[81] Quoted from a conversation with the Asian Americans Fighting Against Substance Abuse in California.

disconnection from the public in their advocacy works. They try to reconcile the opinion

mismatch between interest groups and the public, and these efforts are transferred to their

contradictory behavior in operating organizations.

My face-to-face interviews discover that Asian American organizations engage in two

contradictory tasks: working for Asian Americans' special interests while cooperating with other

racial groups for common interests. When considering that interest groups, by definition,

provide an organized voice for people who have been marginalized in the political system, the

fact that they work for special interests is not exceptionally surprising. However, this kind of

organizational operation is distinctive to Asian American interest groups insofar as it contradicts

another organizational behavior: continuing efforts to harmonize with other racial pressure

groups. In the following section, I will show how Asian American organizations resolve their

dissimilarity from the public in terms of issue priorities through operating unique organizational

tactics.

I discovered that Asian American organizations spent a considerable amount of effort

trying to bring benefits exclusively to the Asian American community. The previous section

showed that interest groups tended to frame the impact of issues as affecting a broad community.

Interestingly, some of these ostensibly broad-based issues addressed by the organizations in my

interviews are intrinsically special interests despite the efforts of Asian American interest groups

to avoid this loaded term in their advocacy work.[82] One apparent example is the issue of

redistricting. Organizations in states such as California, Illinois, and New York, where the Asian

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[82] This view is well illustrated in the interview conducted in New York with the Voices for Asian American Children and Families. This organization prefers not to use "special interests" because this term has almost become a derogatory term:

> "I don't think that our issues are special interests. I really don't think that we are asking for special treatment. We are saying that Asian Americans have a different set of needs and these are not yet met. I think that it is legitimate to ask for what we have been contributing to the city."

American population is sizeable, are intensely involved in the redistricting process in order to

either keep or create electoral power for Asian Americans.[83] For instance, the Policy Advocacy

Council for Asian Americans in California tried hard to prevent a redistricting plan that would

reduce the political impact of Asian American voters[84]:

> PACAA: We ended up doing a lot on redistricting. Los Angeles County had a major battle, and we were in the middle of that. One of districts that have a lot of Asian Americans in it was going to be broken up…. to create the second Latino district. So, it would really dilute our political influence. It was difficult [for us] because you make an enemy very quickly in this redistricting battle. However, we thought that it is necessary for us to involve with it.

As depicted in this response, interest groups working on a great deal of redistricting recognize

that racial groups are in a conflict of interests over this issue. Although most organizations in the

interviews work together with interest groups serving other racial groups and recognize the

importance of this type of coalition work, Asian American organizations choose to engage in the

redistricting battle to secure the political power of the Asian American community. The

Coalition for the Chinese American Community in Illinois was working on a redistricting plan

that would bring special benefits to an even narrower Chinese community:

> CCAC: After the 2000 Census, we worked on and were heavily involved in the redistricting. The Census showed that the percentage of Chinese population in this area has grown… at 50%. That is high enough numbers to create the Chinatown district…. I think that our advocacy [for the Chinatown district] is legitimate in terms of the growing Chinese population in this area…. We can say to our legislators, "If 80% of your district is Chinese [Americans], you'd better care [about us].

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[83] Four interest groups (one in California, one in New York, and two in Illinois) identified redistricting as the top priority by the time when the interviews were conducted. Other organizations in these states (two in California as well as two in New York) confirmed that they are somehow engaged in the redistricting issue through the coalition.
[84] This redistricting plan in the Los Angeles County has not passed yet.

In tandem with their work on redistricting, many Asian American organizations operate various programs to mobilize Asian Americans. This effort is also intended to increase political visibility and reinforce the political influence of Asian Americans as a voting bloc. [85] In our conversation, the policy director at the Institute for Asian Americans in Illinois discussed why "being visible" in elections is important:

> IAA: We do voter education and voter mobilization to create one Asian voting bloc…. And get them out to vote. We must be disciplined in our vote choice to maximize our impact…. Think about how politicians perceive the Asian community: "they never show up to vote and never protest anyway even if we cut benefits to them." We need to be more visible and proactive *to make elected officials listen to us*. [Emphasis added]

Likewise, the Coalition for the Chinese American Community worked hard to activate many latent Chinese American voters to increase the electoral power of this group. This endeavor aims at bringing exclusive benefits to the Chinatown by making politicians attentive to community needs:

> CCA: For the last ten years, our community has been divided and represented by two different state districts, four city wards, and three city commissioners. We didn't have any political power and representation. So, we worked on redistricting while continuing to mobilize people to vote. This time, we have much better results with the state districts…. We were able to meet with the key legislators because we performed really well in the primary. One of the incumbents who represented Chinatown but didn't do anything for the community was challenged by a new candidate. By mobilizing a lot of new voters, we were able to help this challenger win in three precincts of Chinatown. Because of that, *we've got the party leaders' attention*. [Emphasis added]

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[85] For a similar reason, Asian American interest groups emphasized Asian American representation in the U.S. Census. In chapter 2, my content analysis on the websites of 158 Asian American organizations showed that half of these organizations worked on gaining Asian American representation. Specifically, one-third of these organizations advocating for Asian American representation actively engaged in mobilizing people to fill out the Census form. They believe that heightened visibility in the Census data is critical for Asian Americans to receive adequate attention and resources from the government because the Census is the basis for policies and programs.

Besides redistricting, some organizations try to carry out programs with tangible benefits to the Asian American community. They champion improvements in the quality of life of Asian Americans by utilizing state and federal funding to build a new community center, fields and parks for recreation, libraries, and post offices.

Throughout the interviews, Asian American organizations explain that they use a specific tactic to achieve their goals for creating Asian American majority districts and delivering more resources to the community. They believe that the most effective way to "increase leverage in advocacy" is to unite all ethnic Asian American communities and form an alliance with other Asian American organizations (Diani 1995; Gray 1989). According to the Voice for Asian American Children and Families in New York, "oneness in the Asian American population" and "partnership with other Asian American pressure groups" are critical to pursuing its goals for Asian American interests because of the political recognition these tactics will bring:

> VAACF: Together, we can do more, get things done, and we are more powerful. Because we are population-wise really, really small, we should be united. Because we did this [working under a large network of Asian American coalitions], we have been able to access the decision makers and major funders. Not only that, we were able to facilitate to get awareness from the larger mainstream advocacy community.

Organizations admit that they get much more attention not only from legislators but also from the media when issues are addressed under the name of large Asian American coalitions. In addition, the size not only brings power but money. For instance, "collaboration with other Asian American organizations provides much more leverage for funding," according to the executive director at the Center for Asian Americans in Ohio. The Asian American Services of Wisconsin also regularly receives funding from private foundations by writing a grant proposal

together with other Asian American advocacy groups. These organizations strategically align

with fellow interest groups in the Asian American community because of material gains that they

would not otherwise be able to obtain on their own. These responses echo the findings of

previous studies that networking and relations with other like-minded interest groups are the key

to organizational operation (Fowler and Shaiko 1987; Rothenberg 1992; Schlozman and Tierney

1986) because partnership provides access to a number of presumably otherwise unavailable

assets including funding and new knowledge (Berry 1977; Hojnacki 1997).

Contrary to its advocacy for special interests of Asian Americans, organizations in my

interviews equally accentuate harmonious partnerships with other racial pressure groups. Nine

out of twelve interest groups are frequently engaged in multiracial coalitions for a variety of

issues.[86] This is noteworthy because it is inconsistent with organizations' nature of focusing on

Asian American interests. However, this active partnership with other racial advocacy groups is

not a mere diplomatic gesture but a substantive action. Put differently, some Asian American

interest groups like the Institute for Asian American Self Empowerment in California

(interviewed the executive director) believe that racial boundaries do not matter for their ultimate

goal – "improving the social and political status of the powerless":

> SYP: In your opinion, what are the similarities and differences between Asian Americans
> and other racial groups?
>
> IAASE: There are more overlaps than differences than people think. When we get
> together to speak about what can be improved and how we can help each other, we often
> realize that we are all Americans. We all live here. We all need representation in the
> society. We are in the same situation.

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[86] See Figure 4.3 that displays the extent to which organizations collaborated with other interest groups across racial
communities.

On the one hand Asian American organizations strive to maximize benefits for the Asian American community, but on the other, they truly believe that there are shared interests of gaining better representation across racial communities. This notion leads Asian American organizations to put their advocacy work in a larger framework of equality, fairness, and justice as discussed in the previous section.[87] For example, the Association of Cambodians in Illinois runs several youth programs such as summer schools, afterschool classes, and leadership development workshops for "all" young students from low-income and immigrant families "regardless of race" because they are "the ones who suffer the most" from a lack of educational opportunity. Since "education is important for all racial minority communities to achieve social mobility," this organization not only assists multiracial kids through their youth programs but also collaborates with interracial advocacy groups working on education. Another example revolves around language access in social services. Seven organizations actively advocate for expanding translation and interpretation services in the existing health and welfare systems.[88] They believe that this advocacy is for an immigrant's basic right to have "an equal opportunity to use the existing services" so that it will benefit not only Asian but also Latino immigrants.[89]

In addition to the common interests of promoting justice, fairness, and equality among racial minority groups, a few organizations mention the importance of solidarity as an explanation for its active partnership with multiracial advocacy groups. For example, the civic participation coordinator at the Civil Liberties Center in New York feels indebted to African

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[87] See section 4.2.1.

[88] Language accessibility in health and social services is one of the most important problems addressed by Asian American interest groups (see Chapter 2). In my face-to-face interviews, this issue was also mentioned as the target area where interest groups put a lot of effort in advocacy. Seven organizations in California (n=1), Ohio (n=1), Wisconsin (n=1), Illinois (n=1), and New York (n=3) prioritized this issue when the interview was conducted.

[89] This quote is from a conversation with the Asian American Fighting Against Substance Abuse in California.

American or Latino interest groups who were pioneers in the areas of civil rights and civil

liberties:

> CLC: In everything we do, we really stand on the shoulders of civil right leaders and activists who come before us, mainly African American and then Latino community leaders. If they were not there for it [civil liberties and civil rights] or if they did not sacrifice, we would not be able to demand these rights. We must be the ones who are beaten, lynched, and segregated. [Therefore] For solidarity, we support their works.

It is interesting to notice that the organizations advocating for creating Asian American-majority

districts, which is the issue that always conflicts with other racial communities, possess the same

get-along attitude outside of the Asian American community. Illustrated in the quote above,

some organizations truly think that they should express appreciation to Black and Hispanic

advocacy groups that laid the groundwork for civil rights.

While normative reasons such as shared interests and solidarity explain the harmonious

partnership with multiracial organizations, the moderate level of collaboration with mainstream

pressure groups is mainly strategic for Asian American interest groups. Throughout my

interviews, I became aware that Asian American organizations actually operate in cooperation

with the mainstream advocacy groups as a way to reconcile the disconnection from advantaged

subgroups of Asian Americans. Although not explicitly addressed in our conversation, the

executive director at the Association of Cambodians in Illinois imply that collaboration with

White interest groups would touch on advantaged-subgroup issues that are not a main focus for

its advocacy:

SYP: So, you work with the mainstream advocacy groups. When does that seem to work best for you? I mean, are there particular issues that you find you can be more cooperative with them?

ACI: Well, it works like…. they usually ask us to be a part of coalition first. We are happy to partner with them because they find us and ask for help! …. We sent our [Asian American] residents to the economic development program that was operated by one of the unions in Chicago. The program was created to help people to apply for a job, complete the interview, as well as obtain and maintain employment. I thought that it is a good training opportunity for us [Asian Americans], so we enjoyed sending them to this program.

The aforementioned response illustrates that this organization was unintentionally able to cover

one of the advantaged-subgroup issues like economic development through their alliance with

the mainstream pressure groups.[90] Similarly, the national director of the Asian Americans

Fighting Against Substance Abuse in California indirectly expresses that part of Asian American

communities, advantaged-subgroups, would have similar concerns regarding general health

issues addressed by White pressure groups:

AAFASA: The best way to win in our advocacy is always somewhat to get the mainstream White community to be a part of our conversation. They [the mainstream community] do not care so much about our issues such as substance use disorder and language access, but there is room for us to get their attention. For example, the growing area right now for them is an issue like prescription drug and medication abuse. And more general health issues. So, we're trying to link to their concerns by saying, "Yes, those issues are critical. We agree that our community has that issue, too." So, we show that we can support what they care about. And then, we add "By the way, if language accessibility is expanded to use health services, my community members will have a better life."

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[90] In Chapter 3, I discovered that economy and employment are the top two issues prioritized by the Asian American public. On the other hand, neither the 158 Asian American interest groups in my content analysis nor the 12 organizations with whom I conducted interviews address the economy or employment as an important issue for Asian Americans. Based on my face-to-face communication with interest groups, it is not one of disadvantaged-subgroups' immediate needs that organizations usually define.

Throughout the interviews, Asian American interest groups reveal that they are satisfied with piggybacking on the mainstream advocacy organizations because it would meet the needs of advantaged subgroups of Asians, which are less likely to be covered in their advocacy works. Another example is related to education. Some organizations join in the mainstream education advocacy coalition. As discussed in the previous chapters, education is an issue commonly emphasized by both Asian American interest groups and the public. For instance, the Dispute Resolution Center for Asian Americans in California partners with White pressure groups advocating for securing more funding for public schools and preventing school bullying. This organization was driven by a hope to bring "more resources to schools in Asian American residence areas" and prevents "racial bullying targeting South Asian American kids." However, they also realize that the quality of public schools and school bullying are critical issues for many Asian American parents, especially among advantaged subgroups.

Alliance with mainstream advocacy groups unintentionally brings a way to resolve the disconnection from the public on some issues. However, most Asian American interest groups decide to continue the harmonious partnership with White pressure groups for a strategic reason. According to the executive director at the Chinese-American Planning Council in New York, it is "the most efficient way" to "get things done" and "secure resources":

> CAPC: We always have to work with majority White communities through networks and coalitions. We cannot just work on problems on our own. Globalize problems and get people's attention [from the mainstream] to our issues. Once we do, we will be able to get help and funds to solve our problems.

Indeed, Asian American interest groups think about "who else can be linked to" their advocacy works because they can pursue their works more fruitfully through coalition work. The

executive director of Center for Asian Americans in Ohio specifically demonstrates the

advantages of gaining legitimacy in its advocacy:

> CAA: We strategically align and partner with the mainstream [White] organizations in various areas. They have the prominent presence and recognition in the broader society and political systems. If we are connected with them, it will give us some level of *authority*. We will feel more *approval*. [Emphasis added]

In light of responses such as this, Asian American organizations' decision to cordially

collaborate with mainstream advocacy groups is propelled by a strategic calculation.

4.3.4 Defining Substantive Representation beyond Policy Responsiveness

In the previous sections, I showed that Asian American organizations over-represent

disadvantaged subgroups and strategically manage their programs to respond to differences in

opinion from the Asian American community. These findings make sense given the context that

Asian American interest groups define substantive representation by mainly focusing on the local

level.

All representatives of interest groups in my interviews believe that providing substantive

representation must be done first at the local level. For example, the executive director at the

Institute for Asian American Self-Empowerment in California emphasized the importance of

understanding local contexts when representing the Asian American community:

"[Our work] starts with… most importantly locally. I think that a lot of people think president when they were asked about politics. A lot of them do not know the state assembly members and local government agencies that can really impact our community… When we get involved in representing our community concerns, we don't do internationally. We always think what we can do locally and what is going on locally."

Indeed, the Asian American organizations that I have interviewed seem not to be the typical interest groups that are usually located in Washington D.C. with a heavy focus on lobbying. Interest groups working for the Asian American population are less likely to emphasize institutional change such as changing policies or implementing programs. When I asked them to define "success" when it comes to their organizations and work, only four interest groups mentioned policy change.

On the other hand, all 12 Asian American organizations narrowly conceptualize what they can accomplish for the community. Instead of policy responsiveness at the national level, they believe that bringing small change in the local community is what they can do to represent Asian Americans in a substantive way. First, interest groups are "feeling good and successful" when they are helping Asian Americans "get engaged" in elections and "get empowered" in the American society.[91]

Coalition for the Chinese American Community: "Getting community engagement is an important marker for success. Getting people to attend [town-hall] meetings, mobilizing voters, and getting petition signatures are other examples of success we define."

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Institute for Asian American Self Empowerment: "Increase in voting turnout among Asian Americans is a first step for success."

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[91] Most organizations addressed increase in turnout and civic engagement among Asian Americans as success. Quotes are from my conversations with these organizations.

Second, half of my interviewees shared their views that providing tangible gains to the community is substantive representation.

> Institute for Asian Americans: "There are various measures for defining success. … Actually, getting resources for the community such as bilingual education at schools and a new library as well as maintaining funding for the community programs are improving people's lives."

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

> Policy Advocacy Council for Asian Americans: "If we have a specific gain, it is usually how we define success. We usually don't have a discussion about "are we successful or not?" We are all kind of knowing about if we got the substantial things or we absolutely did not [for the community]."

Third, a few interest groups in my interview narrowly defined "success." For instance, the executive director of the Asian American Services of Wisconsin told me that he feels "successful when an organization's goal is to meet and have a good report to the funders." The civic participation coordinator at the Civil Liberties Center in New York responded that they defined success based on "strong interests in membership and participation for programs".

4.4 Conclusion

Contrary to the common belief that organizations represent the majority opinion or substantially powerful group, Asian American organizations over-represent disadvantaged subgroups within the Asian American population. This unconventional nature of Asian American representation is a result of the unique behavioral characteristics of Asian American interest groups.

First, Asian American interest groups perceive that their job is to represent marginalized subgroups, not the majority in its constituency. They are clear about whom to represent: Asian Americans who recently immigrated to the United States, cannot speak English fluently, possess limited income and assets, and are subject to racial discrimination. It is true that there are some interest groups representing poor women and children such as the Children's Defense Fund and the YMCA. However, these organizations are the absolute minority within the broad interest group community whereas the community of Asian American interest groups in general represent the poor and people in need more. Thinking about organizations as strategic actors who usually follow the majority opinion, it is surprising that Asian American advocacy organizations deliberately choose to represent marginalized subgroups within the community.

Second, Asian American interest groups legitimize the over-representation of disadvantaged subgroups. Because advantaged subgroups of Asians are perceived to have a means to get their voices heard in the political system, interest groups deliberately decide to work for Asian Americans who need representation most. Organizations in my interviews further justify a high level of advocacy on disadvantaged-subgroup issues by framing them as having broader impacts on society. In addition, they argue that those issues are growing needs of the community, measured by their intuitive and subjective understanding.

Third, Asian American pressure groups are aware of the mismatch in their issue priorities and preferences from the public. Even though they focus on disadvantaged subgroups, they try to reconcile the disconnection from the public. This effort leads these pressure groups to have contradictory principles in managing their programs and advocacy works. To faithfully perform their role as a representative of disadvantaged subgroups, Asian American pressure groups actively work on issues that bring exclusive benefits to the community. At the same time,

they engage in harmonizing with other racial groups and working for overlapping interests across racial communities. Specifically, Asian American pressure groups align with the mainstream interest group community not only to gain more leverage in advocacy, but also to satisfy the unmet needs of advantaged subgroups of Asians.

This chapter contributes to an accurate understanding of the state of political inclusion and equality for a marginalized group like Asian Americans. Whether or not historically marginalized groups are represented in American politics is a critical question to scholars as we evaluate the well-being of American representative democracy. Scholars stress the existence of political equality (Dahl 1961) or the equal consideration of the preferences and interests of all citizens (Verba 2003) as a fundamental premise of democracy. By discovering the over-representation of disadvantaged subgroups within the Asian American population through interest groups, this study confirms a positive evaluation of the healthy representative democracy in the United States.
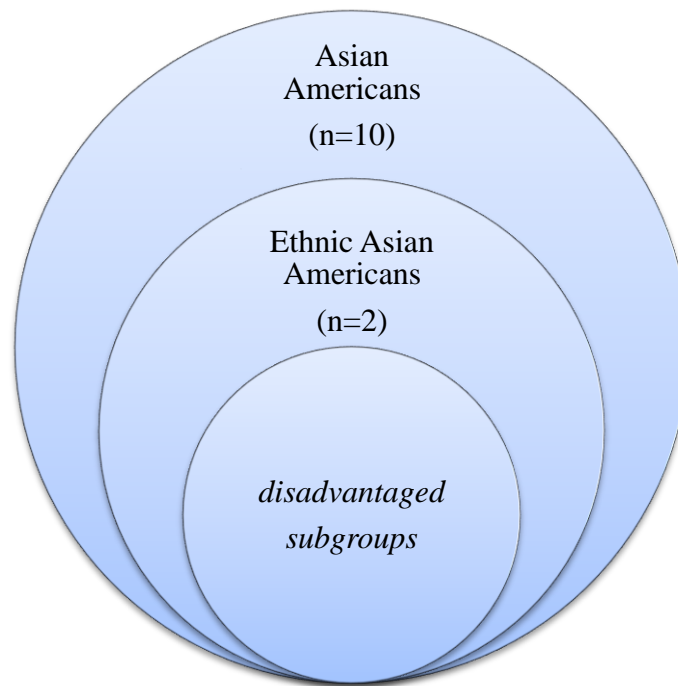
In addition, this chapter has broader implications for our understanding of interest groups behavior. In lieu of formal representation in Congress, interest groups can be an alternative channel for Asian Americans to achieve representation.

Table 4.1 Descriptions of Interview Sample

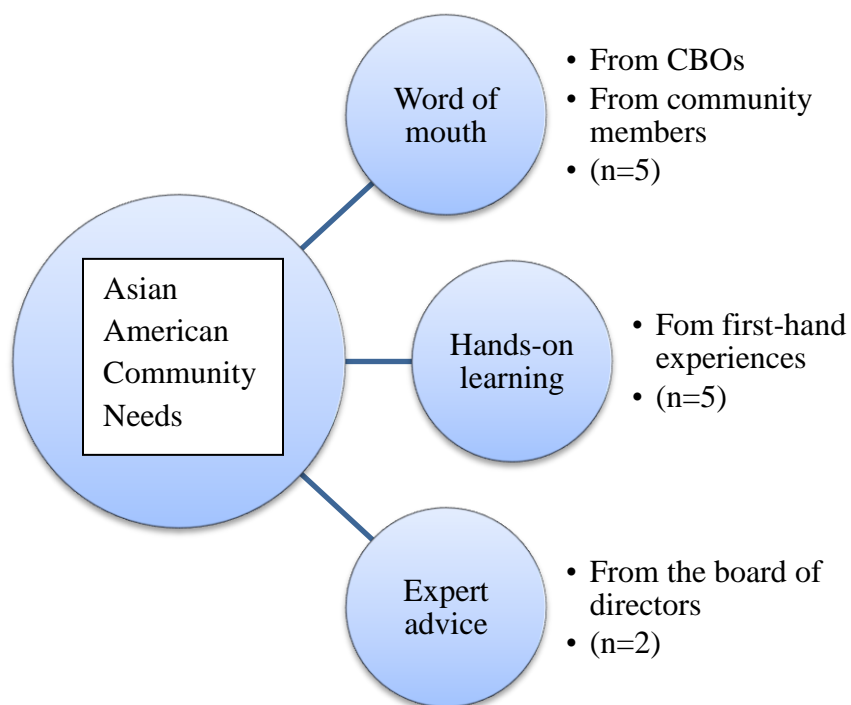| State	Organization Name	Focus	Classification	Interviewee	Founded in
WI	Asian American Services of Wisconsin	Ethnic specific (Hmong)	Non-profit service provider	Executive Director	1984
NY	Voices for Asian American Children and Families	Pan-Asian American	Advocacy group	Health Policy Director	1986
	Chinese-American Planning Council	Ethnic specific (Chinese)	CBO[92]	Executive Director	1965
	Civil Liberties Center	Ethnic specific (Korean)	Advocacy group	Civic Participation Coordinator	1984
IL	Institute for Asian Americans	Pan-Asian American	Advocacy group	Policy Director	1992
	Coalition for the Chinese American Community	Ethnic specific (Chinese)	Advocacy group	Policy Consultant	2001
	Association of Cambodians in Illinois	Ethnic specific (Cambodian)	Non-profit Service provider	Executive Director	1976
CA	Asian Americans Fighting Against Substance Abuse	Pan-Asian American	CBO	National Director	1988
	Dispute Resolution Center for Asian Americans	Pan-Asian American	Non-profit Service provider	Executive Director	1989
	Institute for Asian American Self Empowerment	Pan-Asian American	CBO	Executive Director	1993
	Policy Advocacy Council for Asian Americans	Pan-Asian American	Advocacy group	Policy Director	1976
OH	Center for Asian Americans in Ohio	Pan-Asian American	CBO	Executive Director	1995

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[92] [Source] Author. CBO refers to the community-based organizations. Organizations classified as CBO describe itself with a variety of characteristics such as grassroots, non-profit, or membership-oriented.

Figure 4.1 The Concentric Circle of Constituency[93]

Asian
Americans
(n=10)

Ethnic Asian
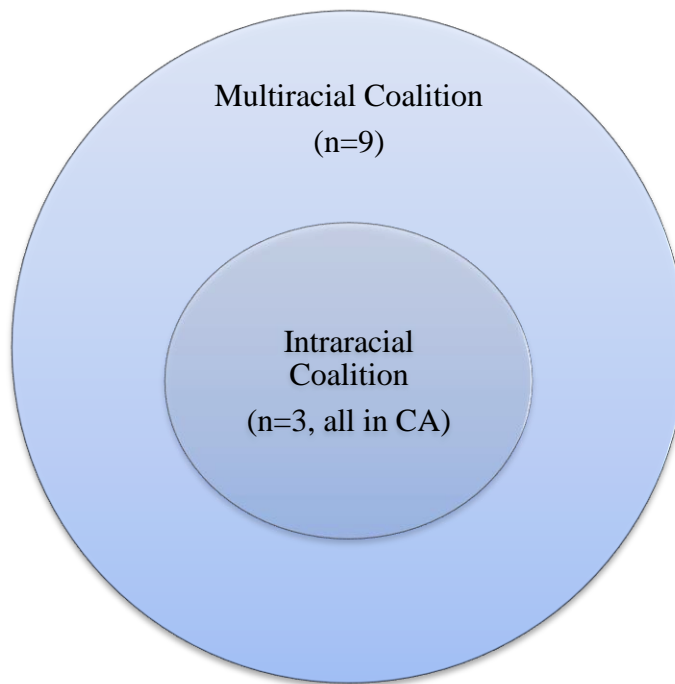Americans

(n=2)

disadvantaged

subgroups

---

[93] [Source] Author. The number in parenthesis shows the numbers of Asian American interests groups conceptualize its constituency in a given area. Only two organizations (one in Illinois and the other in New York) claim to focus on a certain ethnic Asian American community, in particular for the Chinese American community. The core center refers to the focused constituents that all Asian American interest groups care about in principle.

Figure 4.2 Flow Chart: Subjective Evaluation on the Community Needs[94]

Word of mouth
- From CBOs
- From community members
- (n=5)

Asian American Community Needs

Hands-on learning
- Fom first-hand experiences
- (n=5)

Expert advice
- From the board of directors
- (n=2)

---

[94] [Source] Author. The numbers in parenthesis shows how many interest groups use the given subjective method. Note that three Asian American organizations use both "word of mouth" and "we-just-know" approaches.

Figure 4.3 The Extent of Coalition Work[95]

Multiracial Coalition
(n=9)

Intraracial
Coalition
(n=3, all in CA)

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[95] [Source] Author. Asian American organizations were asked about how much they involved in coalition and with what types of organizations. All three interests groups in California responded that they only do partner with other Asian American organizations. The majority of Asian American organizations are actively engaged in multiracial coalition, however.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This project began with an interest in learning more about Asian American political representation. What we know about this community is that Asian Americans are not formally represented in government (Lien et al. 2007; Aoki and Takeda 2008). Does a lack of descriptive representation in political institutions also limit the substantive representation of Asian Americans? In other words, are Asian American interests not reflected in policy outcomes because there are too few Asian faces in elected offices to represent them? Is there a different channel through which Asian Americans can achieve political representation? If so, to what degree are Asian American interests substantively represented in contemporary U.S. politics? These questions motivated this research.

Examining the current state of Asian American representation requires identifying issues salient to Asian Americans. However, the stereotypical image of Asian Americans as a model minority who are affluent, educated, assimilated, and politically inactive (Aoki and Takeda 2008; Kwon and Au 2010; McGowan and Lindgren 2006), limits the attention paid to these issues,

including scholarly efforts to accurately understand Asian American interests. It is well documented that the model minority image is mythical; Asian Americans are internally varied in terms of socioeconomic and demographic variables, such as income, educational attainment, occupation, nationality, language, citizenship status, and so on (see Chapter 1 for a variety of U.S. Census data; see Wong et all. 2011; Lien et al. 2004; Tam 1995 for the argument debunking the model minority myth). Are there issues that encompass the inner diversity of the Asian American population? How are these issues prioritized among Asian Americans? In which areas do Asian Americans express distinctive issue preferences as compared to other racial groups?

In seeking answers to these questions, this study has provided an examination of Asian American political interests and representation by investigating interest groups serving Asian Americans and by analyzing public opinion surveys. The traditional approach used in political representation research is to study the behavior of elected officials, such as roll-call votes, policy proposals, and constituency services (Canon 1999; Griffin and Newman 2007, 2008; Hero and Tolbert 1995; Preuhs 2007; Swain 1995; Tate 2003). I have moved beyond an analysis oriented almost exclusively around legislators and instead turned to interest groups. Scholarship on interest groups acknowledges that they play a substantial role as representatives for marginalized groups who are continually underserved by the political party system (Dahl [1967] 2005; Truman [1951] 1971; Strolovitch 2007). When considering the context of the American policy-making process, in which interest group advocacy considerably influences the formulation of policy (Hojnacki et al. 2012), my approach to examining Asian American interest groups offered an accurate picture of Asian American political representation, given the lack of descriptive representation for this population.

In the preceding chapters, I put forward several arguments. First, I formed a list of ten issues that are of importance to the Asian American community. My analysis of an original dataset of web contents from the websites of 161 Asian American interest groups provided evidence that issues related to "community," "immigration," "election," "youth," "discrimination," "representation," "health," "women," "education," and "seniors" frequently appear in interest groups' advocacy work. Asian American interest groups, regardless of their varying foci on political advocacy activities, subgroups, or ethnicity, emphasize these ten issues, although to different degrees. I also found that some non-policy issues, such as "community" and "youth," are ranked high in the interest group agenda. Without any intention to change existing laws or influence policy-making processes, interest groups are purely interested in empowering the Asian American community and young Asian American leaders.

Another argument, which I made based on content analysis (Chapter 2) and in-depth interviews with interest group representatives (Chapter 4), is that organizations serving Asian Americans take a liberal stance in their positions on policy issues such as "immigration," "discrimination," "health," and "education." They advocate for immigrant-friendly policies such as increasing immigration, protecting illegal immigrants, and allowing citizenship and education for undocumented students. In addition, interest groups support anti-discriminatory laws in employment, policing, and access to social services and education. Moreover, ensuring that linguistically appropriate and culturally competent healthcare services are provided to the community is a critical mission for most Asian American interest groups.

Surprisingly, I discovered that these ten issues are not well matched with Asian American interests found in the analysis of public opinion surveys. In other words, the most important problems answered by Asian American respondents in the merged GSS and NAAS are not the

same as the ten issues listed in Chapter 2. While the Asian American public prioritizes "the

economy" and "unemployment" as their immediate concerns, these issues are not addressed by

interest groups at all. Likewise, the two most important issues to interest groups, "community"

and "immigration," are seldom mentioned by the Asian American public in response to the most

important problem question. Divergence between interest groups and the public among Asian

Americans is found not only in issue priorities, but also in issue preferences. Chapter 3

investigated the opinions of the Asian American public with regard to various policies, and

discovered that it is divided, especially in issues related to immigration. Asian Americans are

split over whether to support immigrant-friendly policies, despite the fact that immigration is the

top policy issue for interest groups. I highlighted this disconnection in issue priorities and

preferences between interest groups and the public with a racial comparison analysis. I showed

that organizations serving African Americans and Hispanics generally manifest the preferences

of the public in their issue advocacy work.

In an attempt to understand the divergence between interest groups and the public among

Asian Americans, I provided in-depth explanations with help from an analysis of face-to-face

interviews with interest group representatives. I argued that Asian American interest groups are

generally aware of the mismatch in issue priorities and preferences with the Asian American

public, and that they deliberately choose to represent a certain segment of the Asian American

population: disadvantaged subgroups. I observed that these organizations perceive their role to

be that of a representative for immigrants who are subject to discrimination, such as those with a

lack of English proficiency, low-income families, and South Asian Americans. The over-

representation of disadvantaged subgroups among Asian Americans is a counterintuitive finding,

because interest groups are usually expected to represent the opinions of the majority or of

powerful interests. I claimed that the greater representation of underprivileged groups by these organizations is not a result of interest groups' neglect of other Asian Americans within the community. Organizations believe that the interests of advantaged subgroups among Asian Americans are relatively well-represented in political outcomes, whereas disadvantaged interests of Asian Americans do not have such representation. Nonetheless, Asian American organizations put some effort into representing advantaged subgroups as well, through a coalition with mainstream interest groups.

This project ultimately found that Asian Americans broadly achieve substantial representation through interest groups, while descriptive representation for this population is virtually nonexistent via elected representatives. In addition, this research discovered that interest groups are substantially more active when it comes to issues affecting disadvantaged subgroups of Asians than those affecting more advantaged subgroups of Asians. The overrepresentation of marginalized groups among Asian Americans is an important finding that will contribute to the study of American pluralism. The existence of plural interests in a political society is the essence of democracy; therefore, knowing whether Asian American interests are being equally considered in the American political system is important in helping us to evaluate the well-being of American representative democracy. Although Asian Americans have been marginalized in American politics, they have, in interest groups, a channel through which to express their concerns. In addition, the finding that even disadvantaged subgroups of Asian Americans achieve substantive representation supports a positive view in the evaluation of American pluralism.

My dissertation offers a contribution to real-world politics. The explosive growth of the Asian American population gives them a prominent place in a democratic system in which

numbers matter. In addition, this community is becoming a powerful electoral influence in national and state politics. However, due to a lack of data and studies, political pundits and party activists do not have an accurate understanding of this population. By identifying the important issues and opinions of Asian Americans, this research provides concrete information for politicians and journalists to use in predicting the political landscape and future electoral and policy outcomes.

I have demonstrated in this project that the study of Asian Americans within the context of American politics is important. While studies about this population are emerging, we must continue to explore Asian American politics beyond this group's political participation and partisanship. The next logical step for future research is to continue to investigate Asian American political representation. The immediate task will be to replicate the content analyses of interest groups serving African Americans and Hispanics, as used in Chapter 2. The main goal of this project will be to find the systematic disconnection between interest groups and the public among African Americans and Hispanics. Although I provided the preliminary results of the analysis of two representative interest groups, the NAACP and the NHLA, increasing the sample size of such an analysis will boost its explanatory power. Another project will be to conduct in-depth interviews with representatives of African American and Hispanic interest groups. Conversations with interest group representatives will offer rich information with which to investigate the level of substantive representation of African Americans and Hispanics beyond the context of formal, descriptive representation.

Interview Protocol[96]

Reference Number _____ Time _____to_____

Respondent _____

Job Title _____

Organization _____

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me. I know that you're very busy, and I am very grateful for your time. As I mentioned in my invitation letter, the interview takes about sixty minutes and covers six main areas. I will start with a few general questions about the organizations, followed by some questions about your constituencies, some questions about your policy advocacy, coalition work, and background information surrounding your work.

Before I begin, I want to make sure it's all right with you if I tape this interview. Anything you say will, of course, still be kept completely confidential, and the information that I am collecting will be used only for transcription purpose. Do you have any questions before I start?

GENERAL QUESTION

1. Can you briefly describe the origins and general goals of your organization?

CONSTITUENCIES

2. On whose behalf does this organization generally consider itself to be active?

3. How does the organization determine this?

4. Are there any particular subgroups of this broader constituency that you focus on?

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[96] [Source] Appendix C (Strolovitch 2007). I edited the original interview protocol from Appendix C in *Affirmative Advocacy* to adjust to the goal of my interview.

GENERAL POLICY ACTIVITY

Now I'd like to talk a bit about your policy advocacy. I am most interested in the general procedure of determining your organization's policy activism.

5. How do you decide on which specific policy issues your organization will be active and which of these issues to prioritize?

6. How do you determine which issues are important to or affect your constituents? For example, do you ever do surveys of your constituency to find out what issues they're interested in and what issues they feel affect them?

7. Can you give me a few examples of policy issues your organization has been involved in over the past few years?

NATIONAL POLICY ACTIVISM

8. Do you ever get involved in policy issues at the national and state levels, and if so, under what circumstances?

SPECIFIC POLICIES

[Welfare] [Discrimination] [Education][Health care [Immigration]

9. In the past few years, has this organization been active around [policy]?

10. [If active] How active?

GENERAL TARGETS OF ACTIVISM

11. In general, do your organization involve in any political institutions in pursuing goals?

12. In general, which political institutions, if any, do you consider more receptive to your advocacy efforts?

13. How about targets other than governmental ones like media?

GENERAL TACTICS

14. In general, how do you decide what tactics to use to pursue policy goals?

15. In general, what tactics, if any, do you consider most effective? Which, if any, do you consider least effective?

COALITIONS – GENERAL

16. To what extent do you work in coalition with other organizations?
17. What are some of the trade-offs, if there are any, of working in coalitions?

POLITICAL CLIMATE

18. Thinking back a few years, did the 2008 election of Barack Obama have an effect on your organization's choice of strategy or have any other substantial effects on your work? In what ways?

19. What issues have you been most active on this year? Has the change in administration brought about changes in your policy focus?

ASSESSMENT AND WRAP-UP

20. How do you define "success" when it comes to policy/issue advocacy?

21. Those are all the questions that I have for you right now, but I wonder if I could ask you two favors. Do you know of anyone else at any other organizations who might be willing to speak with me about the issues we just covered?

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