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by

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## THE DISTRICT BOARD ELECTIONS IN HONG KONG

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The two District Board Elections held in Hong Kong in 1982 were unprecedented events in the colony's political history. For the first time, elections at the local level and on a universal adult franchise were introduced and conducted by the colonial bureaucratic government with the explicit purpose of voting into office a group of grassroots leaders who were expected to bring the government closer to the people.

While the long-term prospect of the District Board as a political/administrative institution is still couched in mystery, particularly in view of the possible reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, its functions in the short run are unambiguous. The District Boards, eighteen in number, will step into the intermediate leadership vacuum which has for the past two decades plagued government-people relationship, and created the increasingly intolerable communication gap between the two parties.<sup>1</sup> This mediating role scheduled for the District Boards will be complemented by its consultative role as the administrative adjunct of the bureaucratic government, which, in expanding its service delivery activities, finds it imperative to resort to administrative deconcentration in order to relieve it of demand overload at the centre and upgrade the overall efficiency of the bureaucratic machinery. Furthermore, the District Boards are also designed to be a vehicle to channel the rising demand for political participation into local, and hence manageable, arenas.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Lau Siu-kai, "The Government, Intermediate Organizations, and Grassroots Politics in Hong Kong," *Asian Survey*, 21:8 (August 1981), pp. 865-884.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of the constitution and functions of the District Board, see Lau Siu-kai, "Local Administrative Reform in Hong Kong: Promise and Limitations," *Asian Survey*, 22:9 (September 1982), pp. 858-873.

The two elections are launched by the government with pompous fanfare and publicity. It can even be surmised that the elections are taken by the government as a litmus test of its popularity and legitimacy. In its ardent efforts to mobilized the people to register as voters and to go to the voting booth, the government makes extensive use of mass media coverage. To boot, a large number of temporary workers are employed to canvass eligible voters in the streets and at home. To a certain degree this has been deliberately overdone to create an exaggerated atmosphere of popular interest in the electoral process. Community and residential organizations, e.g., the Rural Committee, the Kaifongs (neighbourhood associations) and the Mutual Aid Committees (in residential buildings) (MACs), particularly those under the auspices of the government, are actively approached to augment the mobilization exercise. As social organizations in Hong Kong are amorphous and weak, voter mobilization is basically conducted via impersonal mass channels.

The District Board elections in Hong Kong are distinctive in that they are broad-based elections held in an atomistic setting largely devoid of the participation of strong, well-established and mass-based political and social groups. While Hong Kong can boast of innumerable organizations of various sorts, it singularly lacks party-like organizations or powerful civic groups which can organize voters on a large scale, unite them behind a platform of aggregated interests, command loyalty to the group, vote in accordance to group labels, and inspire confidence in group leadership. As the universal adult franchise and the District Boards are granted to the people out of the blue, the absence of organizational preparedness and a sense of subjective involvement which are necessary for zealous and active electoral participation is sorely felt. In this unique situation, it will be theoretically most interesting

to see the ways the electoral process unfolds itself and the factors that are conducive to the success of the candidates. To restate the problem in a simplified and exaggerated form: what can we expect to see from a mass election in a weak organizational setting?

#### Electoral Results

For electoral purpose, Hong Kong is divided into 2 regions, 18 districts, and 122 constituencies. With a few exceptions, the number of constituencies corresponds to the number of seats available. The exceptions are the four constituencies in Shatin, the four constituencies in Tuen Mun and two of the constituencies in Tai Po. In all, a total of 132 openings are up for grasp. The distribution of candidates, constituencies and seats is displayed in Table 1.

According to Census, the population of Hong Kong in 1981 was registered to be 4,986,560. The average population size of the constituencies is thus in the region of 40,000, much too large for the people in each constituency to develop a sufficient sense of togetherness. The impersonal ambiance of urban living in fact militates against it. Utilitarian familism among the Hong Kong Chinese is pervasive and impoverishes social participation. In such a setting, gargantuan organizational efforts are needed to mobilize the eligible adults to register as voters and to go out to vote on election day.

Before dealing with the issue of voter participation, let us first examine the phenomenon of electoral competition. As shown in Table 1, the number of candidates contesting for the District Board openings looks impressive, as a total of 404 candidates are in the electoral fray. Except for

4 constituencies (two in the urban area and two in the New Territories) which are uncontested, the number of contestants per seat ranges from two to seven. Nevertheless, these figures, which provide prima facie evidence of intense office contesting, are somewhat misleading. Behind the high candidate turnout lies the government's strenuous efforts at candidate mobilization. Locally

Table 1. Candidates, Constituencies and Seats in the 18 Districts

	Candidates	Constituencies	Seats
<u>Urban Districts</u>			
Central/Western	12	5	5
Wanchai	14	5	5
Eastern	34	10	10
Southern	21	6	6
Yau Ma Tei	9	4	4
Mongkok	17	5	5
Shamshuipo	22	9	9
Kowloon City	30	8	8
Wong Tai Sin	29	12	12
Kwun Tong	41	12	12
<u>Sub-total</u>	229	76	76
<u>New Territories</u>			
Shatin	15	4	8
Sai Kung	15	5	5
Tsuen Wan	36	10	10
Tuen Mun	20	4	8
Yuen Long	27	6	6
North	22	6	6
Tai Po	22	5	7
Islands	18	6	6
<u>Sub-total</u>	175	46	56

assigned officials took the initiative to persuade individuals with some standing in their communities to come out and register as candidates. In the urban areas, potential candidates come mainly from community organizations which are either initiated by the government (like the MACs in residential buildings) or have working relationship with it (such as the Kaifong associations). Members in the appointed community advisory bodies are also selectively approached and persuaded to stand for election. In the New Territories - Hong Kong's rapidly urbanizing hinterland - a prominent number of candidates are affiliated with the rural consultative institutions. These were the New Territories Heung Yee Kuk (Rural Consultative Council), the Rural Committees in the districts and the Village Representatives in the villages. Needless to say, in both the urban areas and the New Territories, substantial numbers of candidates from a variegated plethora of organizations (educational, professional, community, business) also registered, and their presence, whether out of individual conviction or persuasion by external agents, greatly swells the body of candidates in the elections. As many of the candidates enter the competition without dogged determination to win, their overall electoral posture can be only described as lukewarm. Consequently, efforts to win votes on the part of the candidates are far from active, and in some cases might even be perfunctory. More important, the overwhelming majority of candidates are unknown personalities in Hong Kong. Their low status visibility to the voters in no small measure detracts from the prestige of the District Board as an institution.

Since Hong Kong lacks party-like political organizations nor strong social organizations which can be turned to electoral purposes, most of the candidates have to campaign on an individual basis. The relative insignificance

of the District Board as a decision-making institution precludes the formulation of credible platforms of substance. The impossibility of running under appealing organizational labels further impels the determined candidates to resort to campaign tactics which would distinguish themselves as accomplished individuals. On the whole, the platforms of the candidates fall into three categories: those that emphasize the personality traits and work styles of the candidates, those that promise to procure specific projects or services for the constituency and those that are tantamount to turn the District Board upside down into an exclusively expressive mechanism addressing to global issues. While the numbers of candidates adopting platforms belonging to the third category is minimal, a cursory examination of the platforms of the candidates leaves no doubt in our mind that many of them do not understand thoroughly the functions of the District Board, its place in the political system of Hong Kong and their possible role as a District Board member. Against this background, and taking into account their lack of extensive organizational support, appealing to grandiose promises on the part of many candidates as the ploy to win votes becomes more comprehensible.

But there are significant differences between the candidates in the urban areas and the New Territories, and they reflect the diverse political experience of the two areas in the past. Before the District Board, the populace of the urban areas were not granted any elected representation by the government, and government-people relationship was mediated largely by an assortment of community notables whose relationship with the authorities was in essence a dependent one.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, the indigenous people - also

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<sup>3</sup>The changing composition of intermediate leaders in Hong Kong is treated in Lau Siu-kai, *Society and Politics in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982), pp. 121-155.

known as the original inhabitants - in the New Territories were for many decades better represented in the colonial government through the District Officers and rural leaders. The original inhabitants are a special group in the New Territories, and its appearance and continual existence owe substantially to the administrative definition adopted by the government. In a strict sense, the original inhabitants are those inhabitants and their descendants in the villages recognized by the government in 1898 when the New Territories were leased to Britain by Manchu China. As the New Territories were acquired originally as a buffer zone in the military sense, the policy of the government then was to leave the status quo undisturbed. For the sake of pacifying the initially hostile indigenous populace, and out of the colonizers' desire to preserve the exotic customs and institutions of the natives, they were granted a number of privileges which would serve to undergird the integrity of the village and lineage organizations. Some of these privileges, such as the entitlement of each male descendant once in his life to build a small village house at a drastically discounted price, have by now become precious assets in a society suffering from housing shortage and soaring land values. Since the vast majority of the people in Hong Kong are denied such privileges, the consciousness of themselves as a special interest group with a defensive posture is strong among the original inhabitants, and is becoming stronger. As a group, the original inhabitants are the beneficiary in the existing administrative arrangements, and they thus have a strong incentive to protect their interests in a period of administrative/political transformation.

In the political realm, the original inhabitants are similarly advantaged as a result of the good graces of the government. Since the Second World War, a hierarchical consultative system, comprising the Village Representatives,

the Rural Committees and the Heung Yee Kuk at the apex, was instituted in the New Territories to provide channels of representation for the indigenous populace. What is most distinctive of the system is its elective nature. Thus, compared to the urban areas, the New Territories is politically more advanced. On top of it, despite the onslaught of the forces of modernization, many of the village and lineage organizations in the remoter parts of the area still remain viable units of social and political action, and they furnish the organizational basis for the rural leaders which reinforces their bargaining power vis-a-vis the government. Over the years, the leaders of the original inhabitants have been fairly capable of defending and advancing the interests of their constituents. They have been vociferous in demand making and tactful in steering a course of political action which enables them to acquire a certain measure of "independence" in arbitrating between the government and the indigenous people.

The out-migration of urban people to and the building of new urban settlements (Tsuen Wan and the new towns of Shatin and Tuen Mun) in the New Territories in the post-War era have dwarfed the importance of the original inhabitants as a population segment in the area. In 1981, the population of the original inhabitants was estimated to be merely 250,000, whereas the total population of the New Territories skyrocketed to 1,651,064 and would be increasing inexorably. The change in the demographic balance in the area would inevitably entail transformation of its political configuration. The inauguration of the District Board in the New Territories is purported to redistribute political power in the area at the expense of the rural leaders. To the rural leaders, the challenge lies in preserving their political influence, or if possible even to increase it, in a new political setting. Their real

interests are at stake, and that explains their strong incentive to select candidates and fervent efforts to mobilize their constituents in the election. In contrast to their competitors who are outsiders, candidates coming from the ranks of the original inhabitants are triply advantaged: firstly, they are more politically experienced; secondly, they can depend on the support of seasoned rural politicians and organizations; and lastly, they can draw on the involvement of their fellow original inhabitants who are susceptible to kinship and localistic appeals.<sup>4</sup> It follows that in fighting the election battles, the original inhabitants manage to make up their numerical inferiority with experience, organization and mass involvement. Outside of the New Towns and more urbanized areas, the headstart enjoyed by the original inhabitants pays off handsomely. In the new town of Tuen Mun, which is in the incipient stage of development, the strong indigenous leadership there even manages to capture the District Board almost totally.

In view of the foregoing, the District Board elections in the urban areas and the New Territories can be set apart by their crucial meanings. In the urban areas, the District Board election acts as the means to partially fill the intermediate gap between the government and the public and to groom a layer of local leaders for the atomistic mass. The process is to develop new

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<sup>4</sup>For description of the political development in the New Territories, see Kuan Hsin-chi and Lau Siu-kai, "Development and the Resuscitation of Rural Leadership in the New Territories," *Hong Kong Journal of Public Administration*, 3:1 (June 1981), pp. 72-89; Kuan Hsin-chi and Lau Siu-kai, "Planned Development and Political Adaptability in Rural Areas," in Ambrose Y.C. King and Rance P.L. Lee (eds.), *Social Life and Development in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1981), pp. 169-193; and Chau Lam-yan and Lau Siu-kai, "Development, Colonial Rule, and Inter-group Conflict in a Chinese Village in Hong Kong," *Human Organization*, 41:2 (Summer 1982), pp. 139-146.



interests rather than to demolish old ones. Contrariwise, the election in the New Territories, in addition to sharing the same concern with the urban areas, must also be understood as the forum wherein a traditional and self-conscious interest asserts and defends itself. The different meanings attributed to the elections in the two areas are vividly revealed in the rate of voter registration and voter turnout as shown in Table 2.

While the urban areas have a slightly higher proportion of registered voters (34 per cent) than the New Territories (28 per cent), the latter have a much higher voter turnout. Among registered voters, only 35 per cent actually voted in the urban areas, whereas 51 per cent of them did so in the New Territories. For Hong Kong as a whole, however, both the rate of voter registration (32 per cent) and the voter turnout (38 per cent) can at most be considered barely satisfactory.

The less-than-enthusiastic voter turnout bespeaks tellingly of the dearth of extensive public interest in the District Board and its elections. It also has to do with the low degree of organizational participation of the Hong Kong people. As the utilization of organizations to mobilize and canvass voters on a large scale is impossible, a battery of campaign tactics which generally are unable to penetrate into the electorate have to be deployed. The profusion of campaign techniques features home visits, loud-speakers, hand-shaking, banners, handbills, mailed leaflets and pamphlets, posters, and a limited mass media exposure. Rumours about the use of illicit means by a few candidates (feasting, vote buying, blackmail) are also circulated, but overall the elections are "clean" and honest. These campaign tactics are primarily impersonal means to introduce the candidates to the voters, and they are ineffective in cultivating affective rapport between the two parties. In the less urbanized areas of the

Table 2. Qualified Adults, Registered Voters and Actual Voters in the 18 Districts

	<u>A</u> Qualified Adults (Est.)	<u>B</u> Registered Voters (% of A)	<u>C</u> Actual Voters (% of A)	Voter Turnout C/B%
<u>Urban Districts</u>				
Central/Western	175,000	49,968 (29)	16,402 (9)	33
Wanchai	158,000	46,952 (30)	12,824 (8)	27
Eastern	255,000	101,527 (40)	32,561 (13)	32
Southern	120,000	48,680 (41)	21,809 (18)	45
Yau Ma Tei	91,000	31,398 (35)	7,755 (9)	25
Mongkok	163,000	42,329 (26)	10,585 (7)	25
Shamshuipo	277,000	87,063 (31)	30,787 (11)	35
Kowloon City	272,000	80,540 (30)	27,934 (10)	35
Wong Tai Sin	264,000	98,830 (37)	33,627 (13)	34
Kwun Tong	316,000	119,546 (38)	49,578 (16)	42
<u>Sub-total</u>	2,091,000	706,833 (34)	243,862 (12)	35
<u>New Territories</u>				
Shatin	65,000	15,673 (24)	7,105 (11)	45
Sai Kung	25,000	5,912 (24)	3,539 (10)	60
Tsuen Wan	320,000	70,675 (22)	26,307 (8)	37
Tuen Mun	64,000	25,551 (40)	13,819 (22)	54
Yuen Long	93,000	28,337 (31)	17,377 (19)	61
North	60,000	19,311 (32)	12,265 (20)	64
Tai Po	36,000	12,564 (35)	8,099 (22)	64
Islands	26,000	14,703 (57)	8,825 (34)	60
<u>Sub-total</u>	689,000	192,726 (28)	97,336 (14)	51
<u>Total</u>	2,780,000	899,559 (32)	341,198 (12)	38

New Territories, the campaign styles take on a more personal tone, and they are made possible by the lingering lineage and village attachments. The patron-client networks centering upon the more influential rural leaders are also put to maximal use to boost up the voter turnout. And it is for these reasons that the remoter areas in the New Territories - Yuen Long, North, Tai Po and Islands have voter turnouts of at least 60 per cent. The same is not true of the New Towns of Shatin, Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan.

That the two District Board elections are largely a contest of individual attributes and not of organizational power can be summarized in an extraordinary finding. In normal circumstances, the number of candidates per opening is positively correlated with voter turnout, the rationale being that more candidates will generate more voter mobilization. In contradistinction, the relationship between the two variables is pretty weak in the two District Board elections. The correlation coefficients for the urban areas and the New Territories are .20 and .25 respectively. These statistics testify to the small mobilizing effects of the candidates. Alternatively put, those who voted apparently did so not directly in response to the appeals of individual candidates.

Another piece of finding falls more in with normal expectation. As more candidates enter into the race, the vote spread between winners and losers will be reduced. The correlation coefficients between number of candidates and the elected candidate's vote as a percentage of the votes cast are -.59 and -.69 for the urban areas and the New Territories respectively. This shows that prominent candidates who can dominate the elections are relatively rare in Hong Kong.

Given the low voter turnout, it does not take too many votes for a

candidate to win an election. In the urban areas, the votes cast for individual candidates range from 548 to 3,802, the respective figures for the New Territories are 189 and 2,201. This state of affairs particularly favors candidates whose constituents are geographically concentrated, as in lineages and villages.

#### Factors of Electoral Success

In the District Board elections, where the organizational factor plays only a subsidiary role, electoral success is more contingent upon individual attributes, among which the socio-economic status of the candidates figures most prominently. Table 3 lists the major organizational affiliations of the elected candidates. It can be seen there that the major community organizations which are expected to perform well in the elections (the MACs and Kaifongs) fare only poorly. The same cannot be said of the rural organizations (Heung Yee Kuk, Rural Committees and Village Representatives), whose candidates win a substantial number of seats. While all elected candidates are members or officers of voluntary organizations of various kinds, most of these organizations play only a negligible role in the elections. By and large, they perform status-conferring rather than mobilizing functions.

Even in the case of rural organizations, we are not perfectly sure that the organizational factor overrides individual attributes in importance with respect to accounting for electoral success. As seen in Table 4, it is true that the indigenous people win a number of seats in disproportion to their size in the population of the New Territories. And this attests to the greater organizational capacity of the original inhabitants. But in the same table we can also observe that the contest among indigenous candidates themselves is keen and, when the organizational factor is thereby neutralized, the

determinants of success must be again individual attributes. And thus it is to these factors that we will turn.

Table 3. Major Organizational Affiliations of Elected Candidates\*

	MAC	Kaifong	Heung Yee Kuk/ Rural Committee/ Village Representative	Others	Total
<u>Urban District</u>					
Central/Western	-	1	-	4	5
Wanchai	-	2	-	3	5
Eastern	3	1	-	6	10
Southern	-	-	-	6	6
Yau Ma Tei	-	1	-	3	4
Mongkok	1	2	-	2	5
Shamshuipo	2	2	-	5	9
Kowloon City	2	-	-	6	8
Wong Tai Sin	6	1	-	5	12
Kwun Tong	4	1	-	7	12
<u>Sub-total</u>	18	11	-	47	76
<u>New Territories</u>					
Shatin	5	-	1	2	8
Sai Kung	-	-	3	2	5
Tsuen Wan	3	-	1	6	10
Tuen Mun	-	-	2	6	8
Yuen Long	-	-	-	6	6
North	-	-	2	4	6
Tai Po	-	-	3	4	7
Islands	-	-	2	4	6
<u>Sub-total</u>	8	-	14	34	56

\*As each elected candidate has multiple organizational affiliations, only the major one is recorded here. Since the information on the candidates is incomplete and it is impossible for us to supplement it by contacting them individually, the figures in the table can at best be suggestive and should be treated with utmost caution. The representation of Heung Yee Kuk/Rural Committee/Village Representative must have been underestimated as many of the affiliated candidates are not distinguished members of the group and hence this affiliation is less significant than others.

Table 4. Breakdown of Candidates and Elected Candidates by Background in the New Territories District Board Election

	Candidates				Elected Candidates			
	N	I.B.* (%)	N.I.B.# (%)		N	I.B.* (%)	N.I.B.# (%)	
Shatin	15	6 (40)	9 (60)		8	3 (38)	5 (63)	
Sai Kung	15	9 (60)	6 (40)		5	3 (60)	2 (40)	
Tsuen Wan	36	6 (17)	30 (83)		10	1 (10)	9 (90)	
Tuen Mun	20	16 (80)	4 (20)		8	7 (88)	1 (12)	
Yuen Long	27	18 (67)	9 (33)		6	3 (50)	3 (50)	
North	22	11 (50)	11 (50)		6	4 (67)	2 (33)	
Tai Po	22	20 (91)	2 (9)		7	5 (71)	2 (29)	
Islands	17	9 (53)	8 (47)		6	6 (100)	0 (0)	
<u>Total</u>	174	95 (55)	79 (45)		56	32 (57)	24 (43)	

\* Indigenous background.

# Non-indigenous background.

As compared to the New Territories, the urban areas have a larger proportion of candidates who are elderly, females, appointed District Board members<sup>5</sup> and in professional and white-collar occupations. In the New Territories, on the other hand, there are more middle-aged and male candidates. And there are also more candidates who are businessmen, restaurateurs, industrialists and constructionists. Incidentally, practically no appointed District Board members run for the election. Tables 5 and 6 give the age and occupational distributions of the candidates and elected candidates in both the urban areas and the New Territories.

<sup>5</sup>Prior to the 1982 District Board elections, District Boards with only appointed members had been in existence for about half to two years in various parts of Hong Kong.

Table 5. Age of Candidates and Elected Candidates

Age	Urban Districts				New Territories			
	Candidates		Elected Candidates		Candidates		Elected Candidates	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
30 or below	18	8	9	12	17	10	2	4
31-40	49	21	22	29	34	20	13	23
41-50	50	22	15	20	51	29	18	32
51-60	72	31	22	29	45	26	13	23
60 or above	40	18	8	11	27	16	10	18
<u>Total</u>	229	100	76	101	174	101	56	100

Table 6. Occupation of Candidates and Elected Candidates

Occupation	Urban Districts				New Territories			
	Candidates		Elected Candidates		Candidates		Elected Candidates	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Businessmen	93	41	27	35	78	45	22	39
Restaurateurs	4	2	2	3	15	9	6	11
Industrialists & Constructors	16	7	7	9	26	15	11	19
Educators	24	10	18	23	13	7	5	9
Public-oriented Professionals	14	6	4	5	9	5	7	12
Other Professionals	23	10	6	8	7	4	2	4
White-collar Employees	17	7	5	7	4	2	2	4
Farmers & Workers	6	3	2	3	2	1	0	0
Others	32	14	5	7	20	12	1	2
<u>Total</u>	229	100	76	100	174	100	56	100

After carefully scrutinizing the data at hand, three variables can be singled out for analysis: age, appointed District Board membership and occupation. The variable of sex can be summarily dismissed, as only a total of 19 females (15 in the urban areas and 4 in the New Territories) stood for election and only 5 of them were elected (4 in the urban areas and 1 in the New Territories). Tables 7 and 8 present data on the predictive power of the three variables in the urban areas and the New Territories.

(1) Age In general, the correlation between age and electoral success fails to be statistically significant. This shows that in the Chinese society of Hong Kong, age no longer commands unquestioned respect and status. Nevertheless, when we compare the age of elected candidates in the urban areas and the New Territories, a slight contrast can be detected. Even though the candidates in the urban areas are on average older, it is the New Territories which eventually obtain an older body of elected candidates. The more traditionalistic setting of the New Territories must be adduced to explain the difference between the two areas.

(2) Appointed District Board membership Overall, appointed District Board members as candidates enjoy a competitive edge over non-members. This is primarily due to the status-enhancing function of appointed membership and has little to do with the organizational impact of the District Board. In Tables 7 and 8, there is clear evidence that both in the urban areas and the New Territories, incumbent appointed District Board members stand a very good chance of electoral victory. 60 per cent (29 out of 48) of them were returned in the urban election, and 71 per cent (5 out of 7) in the New Territories one.

(3) Occupation In our assessment, the most useful predictor of

electoral success happens to be the candidate's occupation, which serves as the most valid indicator of his/her socio-economic status.

Table 7. Predictors of Electoral Success in Urban Districts

Predictors	Total N=229	Successful Candidates N=76	Unsuccessful Candidates N=153	% Successful
<u>A. Age</u>				
30 or below	18	9	9	50
31-40	49	22	27	45
41-50	50	15	35	30
51-60	72	22	50	31
60 or above	40	8	32	20
Chi square = 8.92      d.f. = 4      p > 0.05				
<u>B. Incumbent District Board Membership</u>				
Member	48	29	19	60
Non-member	181	47	134	26
Chi square = 20.31      d.f. = 1      p < 0.05				
<u>C. Occupation</u>				
Businessmen	93	27	66	29
Restaurateurs	4	2	2	50
Industrialists & Constructors	16	7	9	44
Educators	24	18	6	75
Public-oriented Professionals	14	4	10	29
Other Professionals	23	6	17	26
White-collar Employees	17	5	12	29
Farmers & Workers	6	2	4	33
Others	32	5	27	16
Chi square = 22.10      d.f. = 8      p < 0.05				

Table 8. Predictors of Electoral Success in the New Territories

Predictors	Total N=174	Successful Candidates N=56	Unsuccessful Candidates N=118	% Successful
<u>A. Age</u>				
30 or below	17	2	15	12
31-40	34	13	21	38
41-50	51	18	33	35
51-60	45	13	32	29
60 or above	27	10	17	37
Chi square = 4.56      d.f. = 4      p > 0.05				
<u>B. Incumbent District Board Membership</u>				
Member	7	5	2	71
Non-member	167	51	116	31
Chi square = 5.15      d.f. = 1      p < 0.05				
<u>C. Occupation</u>				
Businessmen	78	22	56	28
Restaurateurs	15	6	9	40
Industrialists & Constructors	26	11	15	42
Educators	13	5	8	38
Public-oriented Professionals	9	7	2	78
Other Professionals	7	2	5	29
White-collar Employees	4	2	2	50
Farmers & Workers	2	0	2	0
Others	20	1	19	5
Chi square = 19.4      d.f. = 8      p < 0.05				

Referring again to Tables 7 and 8, it can be seen that in an absolute sense, businessmen represent the largest group of elected candidates in both the urban areas and the New Territories. However, their success rate (ratio of candidates elected) is not outstanding, being only 29 per cent in the former and 28 per cent in the latter areas. In both the urban and New Territories elections, the professionals, broadly defined, have a significant advantage over other candidates in terms of electoral success. If we combine "educators," "public-oriented professionals," and "other professionals"<sup>6</sup> into a single category of candidates, 46 per cent of them get elected in the urban areas and nearly half of them (48 per cent) succeed in the New Territories. In the urban areas, restaurateurs share with professionals an approximately equal chance of electoral success (50 per cent). The former group of candidates, like the professionals, can draw on extensive public contacts by virtue of their occupation.

In the New Territories, the chance of electoral success for the professionals is second to that for white-collar employees. On the surface, the result is baffling. Upon closer analysis, it is found that one of the elected candidates in the white-collar category is the manager of an indigenous people's organization. It is not occupation as such but group affiliation that gives him the electoral advantage.

Breaking down the professionals into sub-groups, we found that educators in the urban setting and public-oriented professionals in the New

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<sup>6</sup>"Educators" refer primarily to teachers and headmasters. "Public-oriented professionals" are composed of dentists, doctors, lawyers, social workers, salesmen and public relations managers. Under the category of "other professionals" are subsumed such occupations as accountants, engineers, publishers, technicians and others.

Territories have an excellent chance to be elected, being 75 per cent (18 out of 24) and 78 per cent (7 out of 9) respectively of their own kinds. We are puzzled why educators do not fare as well in the New Territories and public-oriented professionals likewise in the urban areas. With regard to the educators in the New Territories, our hunch is that schools in the New Territories are relatively small and therefore do not furnish a following as large as that in the urban areas. As to the public-oriented professionals in the urban areas, their clients are likely to spread over several constituencies and hence cannot render full electoral support. Contrariwise, the clients in the New Territories are geographically concentrated. In this connection, Tsuen Wan is an illustrious case in point. It is much more urbanized than other constituencies in the New Territories, and the chance for educators to be elected there is the same as that for their counterparts in the urban areas.

We can make additional comments on the educators, though they are based on a limited number of cases and the observations are thus far from conclusive. We have conducted several controls on the educators in the urban election. It is found that younger educators have a better chance for election than the older ones. The feminine gender has practically no adverse effect on the chance of election of the educator candidates. The status of being appointed members of the District Board at the time of election confers no special advantage to the educators as candidates. The effects of the number of competitors in the constituencies on the chance of educators do not reveal a consistent pattern. Finally and most interestingly, those educators who fail to be elected are defeated by professionals and white-collar employees, not by candidates in other occupational categories.

### Conclusion

All in all, the two District Board elections which were held for the first time in Hong Kong can be characterized as a contest of individual attributes where the organizational factor has to be relegated to secondary consideration. It follows that candidates elected into the District Boards would most likely act as individuals exercising professional and independent judgments. We can also expect them to perceive their role in the District Boards as that of the trustee, paying attention to but not necessarily complying with the wishes of the people, if they are ever expressed.

The District Board elections have not brought about in its wake a significant alteration of the intermediate leadership in Hong Kong. Admittedly many new faces emerge from the elections which would fortify the future local administration in Hong Kong with their education and expertise. As a group, however, the elected District Board members, if their platforms provide any hints, do not seem to embrace a policy outlook appreciably different from that of existing local leaders. The few candidates sponsored by activist "pressure groups" do not fare well in the elections. For the several who succeed, it is doubtful whether they can make an impressive showing amid nonsympathizers.

As the overwhelming majority of the elected District Board members are status-quo oriented and have an eye to ad hoc issues or facilities, they fail to articulate comprehensive conceptions of the District Board as a part of the political system of Hong Kong. Nor are they able to select and aggregate demands based on contextual understanding of the nature and needs of society in general and their own constituencies in particular. As such they cannot be a worthy counter-weight to the solid segment of officials in the District

Board, who have virtual monopoly over information, administrative proficiency and knowledge of policy implementation and impact. In other words, when most of the District Board members suspend the choice of public values on a broad scale, or are compelled to do so as a result of the very constitution of the District Board and its narrow jurisdiction, they are left largely with struggling with concrete problems and policies of minor importance. And in this quasi-administrative game they are no match for their official "mentors."

The lack of organization among District Board members and the absence of institutionalized linkage with their constituents would ultimately render their mediating role impossible. As individuals, they can easily be manipulated by officials or will readily succumb to official pressure. Without organizational linkage with the people, they would be unable to muster popular support behind them. The constitution and operation of the District Board as it is precludes individual accountability to specific public decisions. In fact, the relationship between Board members and decisional outcomes is seriously blurred. This definitely does not provide a strong incentive for elected members to exert themselves in the Board as a means to appeal to the voters. Instead, it would be wiser for them to concentrate on activities unrelated to the mission of the Board but with the potential of appeasing supporters.

If the District Board is to succeed as an institutionalized mediating structure and to serve as a nurturing ground for intermediate leaders in Hong Kong, the composition and internal organization of the first batch of elected members are not adequate. To redress the situation, aside from broadening the functions and power of the Board, we need in the future candidates more entrenched in effective political organizations, with more explicit political outlook and ambition, and armed with a shared general policy agenda.

Meanwhile it is hard to predict the alternative futures of the District Board as an administrative/political institution in Hong Kong, and the expiry of the lease of the New Territories in 1997 injects a great measure of uncertainty and unpredictability to its development.