

# **A New Look at Paths to Political Office: Moving Women of Color from the Margins to the Center**

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Paper Prepared for Presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association  
Chicago, Illinois, 30 August – 2 September 2007

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**This is a work in progress. Do not quote without written permission from the authors. We would like to thank the Ford Foundation for their generous support, and Paige Ransford and Jennifer Lambert for their invaluable research assistance.**

# **A New Look at Paths to Political Office: Moving Women of Color from the Margins to the Center**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on women of color and their paths to elected office. A central question we pose in this paper is whether there may be distinctive paths to political office for black, Latina and Asian women in comparison to their male counterparts. We explore the paths to political office for women of color elected officials using new data from the Gender and Multicultural Leadership (GMCL) Survey of elected officials of color. The GMCL Survey is a national telephone survey of black, Latino, Asian American female and male officials who serve as state legislators, county commissioners/ supervisors, mayors, members of local governing councils (i.e., city/town councils, boards of selectmen/aldermen), and local school boards.

Drawing from the literature, we identify four dimensions for analysis of trajectories to public office: political socialization, political capital, social capital, and political structure/opportunity. Under each of our analytical dimensions, we find evidence of commonality among women of color, most especially with black and Latina women. Still, we have identified areas where men of color may differ significantly from women of color, such as on political ambition. Nevertheless, racial differences appeared more pronounced on a number of factors, suggesting that there is more evidence that race trumps gender than the other way around. Finally, there is also evidence that race and gender interact in important ways for these groups.

We conclude that the dominant paradigms in political science for understanding path to political office are male-centered, white-centered, and individually centered, and, hence, do not adequately capture the experience of people of color—women or men.

## **A New Look at Paths to Political Office: Moving Women of Color from the Margins to the Center**

### **Introduction**

Exploring the paths to elected office has occupied generations of scholars in the discipline of political science (see for example, Schlesinger 1966). In many ways the received wisdom is that becoming an elected official is a linear process in which parents play a key role in socializing an individual to be politically informed; they (especially the father), the media and schools (public and private) contribute to an individual's political ambition, even at a relatively young age. This ambition leads to well-thought out preparation to develop human capital: undertaking studies and a career in law or business; establishing business and/or family connections to position oneself for a run for office. Developing political capital by serving in appointed or other civic positions that provide name recognition and votes, and working within and being recruited by a political party are also markers along this traditional path to elected office. Finally, there is monetary capital: having enough money to finance a competitive election campaign.

Of course, by leaving out any analysis by gender or race, virtually all of the early literature on political trajectories has been based on the (white) male experience. When scholars began examining paths to political office with a gender lens, they focused on barriers to gaining election such as family responsibilities, occupational disadvantages and a lower degree of political ambition (Bledsoe and Herring 1990; also, see summary in Burt-Way and Kelly 1992, 12). Another salient barrier in much of the literature is the perception that women are less likely to be recruited or supported by political parties. One thread in the literature on women's political trajectories is tied to the "pipeline theory" whereby "women will run for higher office only after they have achieved success lower down the food chain and have built up the confidence that comes with serving in elected office" (Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2007, 148). This theory suggests that more women will run and be elected once they gain confidence and preparation from being in occupations such as the law and business (Palmer and Simon 2006).

There are several limitations to the women in politics literature. First, in a number of key ways, the suggestion that women need to move into the "pipeline" or that women's organizations need to build a political "farm team" retains women in a subordinated position within a male model: If only more women would run for lower level offices, get the confidence and qualifications they need, be more ambitious [i.e. be more like men], more women would be in office. In essence, the school board becomes a stepping-stone for higher office. Second, the women in politics literature on paths to political office has generally been static, rather than dynamic, basically describing differences between men and women's social and political

backgrounds. Finally, and most important for this paper, most scholars in this area have paid scant attention to the political trajectories of women of color—and if they do, it is to one racial/ethnic group alone or they compare nonwhite women not to their male counterparts, but to white women.

The scholarship on the political trajectories of blacks (Stone 1980; Moncrief and Thompson 1991; Barrett 1995; Hedge, Button and Spear 1996; Arceneaux 2001; and Sanbonmatsu 2002) explores the broader political, institutional and social context within which women of color are elected to office. Rather than assume there is a single path, or even multiple paths to office, they use multivariate analysis to examine the factors that advantage or disadvantage women, taking into account for example, political culture, states, political parties, political opportunity structure, social opportunity structure, and education. The literature on women of color elected officials has tended to focus on one locale and/or racial/ethnic group (e.g., Takash 1993; Hardy-Fanta 1993; Philpot and Walton 2007); been limited to qualitative methods that are exploratory in nature; or has focused exclusively on one level of office, typically state legislators. Research on Latina women does suggest that they bring stronger community roots and a desire to bring about positive changes for their communities to the political process. While this fits within the constituency-building (connect with your voters) component of the “traditional” path to office described above, there may be qualitative differences by race, gender, or race in interaction with gender.

Finally, we must raise the possibility that the “paths to office” orientation grows out of the literature on whites, including white women. The political theory in this area is so bound to an individualistic orientation that its applicability to women of color, whose arrival in elected office can be traced in various ways to social movements, is problematic. This orientation limits the theoretical approaches to understanding women of color. Until we come to terms with this, or at least begin to disaggregate the extent to which individual factors shape success, versus structural factors, such as political culture, political institutions as manifested in political parties, differing political patterns in distinctive states, we are not going to be able to make innovative use of this data or to explain the behavior the data represent.

A central question we pose in this paper is whether there may be distinctive paths to political office for black, Latina and Asian women in comparison to their male counterparts. We explore the paths to political office for women of color elected officials using new data from the Gender and Multicultural Leadership (GMCL) Survey of elected officials of color. The GMCL Survey is a national telephone survey of black, Latino, Asian American female and male officials who serve as state legislators, county commissioners/ supervisors, mayors, members of local governing councils (i.e., city/town councils, boards of selectmen/aldermen), and local school boards.<sup>1</sup>

As a point of departure, our paper seeks to assess commonality and difference both within and across the various racial and gender groups in our study. We will attempt to assess the extent to which African American, Latina, and Asian American women in fact comprise a category called “women of color,” underscoring commonality among women across race. On the other hand, will racial distinctions define the women in our study more so than their gender? Or, will we find that gender and race interact to define the political trajectories of women and men in our study? This is a question posed by Ong (2003, 334) in her essay on how to empower Asian American women in politics: “Will the trajectory for women of color be gender first and race/ethnicity second? Or race/ethnicity first and gender second? Or a simultaneous trajectory of race and gender?” In the end, given the diversity of the racial and gender groups included in our study, it is possible and perhaps probable that we will find multiple ways in which the women and men in our study reach elective office. To our knowledge, there has been no study that provides comparisons by race/ethnicity and gender for a national sample of more than one racial/ethnic group together with multiple levels of office.

### **Prior Research and Theoretical Considerations**

While a number of studies have documented the rise of women of color in the ranks of elected officials (Darcy and Hadley 1988; Pachon and DeSipio 1992; Sierra and Sosa-Riddell 1994; Montoya, Hardy-Fanta, and Garcia 2000; Lien 2001; Tate 2003; Hardy-Fanta et al. 2005, 2006; Scola 2006) and on their impact when in office (Bratton, Haynie and Reingold 2006; Orey and Smooth 2006; Fraga et al. 2006), women of color are virtually invisible in scholarly inquiry into how they get into elected office. Our challenge in this paper has been to construct an analytic framework that takes both race and gender into account as we address paths to power—defined here as holding elective office.

In general, research aimed at explaining how men and women attain elected office tends to cluster around four broad themes: political socialization; political capital, social capital; and the political opportunity structure. We draw heavily from the theoretical constructs fashioned from the general political science literature and the women in politics literature on political trajectories to frame our discussion of the impact of race and gender on the groups in our study. For the most part, however, this literature does not speak to issues of marginalization and disenfranchisement to the extent warranted in understanding the political trajectories of people of color in the United States. Although our empirical data is on individuals as officeholders, we are keenly aware of the importance of group histories and experiences as laying the context for understanding their paths to political office.

#### ***Political Socialization***

For several decades, the study of political socialization focused on how children learned political behaviors, beliefs and attitudes (Hyman 1959; Dawson and Prewitt 1969; Kelly 1986, 5;

Jennings 1986, 1). The role of the family, especially fathers, takes center stage in much of the early research. According to this literature, public and private schools similarly serve to socialize children towards allegiance and positive attachments to the government and the nation, fostering a sense of patriotism, loyalty, and civic mindedness.

Political socialization studies of Black and Mexican American children found differences with white children. With regard to affection for the United States polity, Greenberg (1969) found sharp divergence from the dominant culture among black children. Similarly, F. Chris Garcia (1973) found differences between the orientations of Mexican American and Anglo children, though the differences were not large. Garcia did not address gender in his study. A study that did explore gender differences among Mexican American children found that boys and girls engaged in gender role stereotyping of social and political activities, but girls stereotyped less (Howell-Martinez 1982). In short, some of the early studies that focused on minority children's socialization suggested that race and gender matter across diverse groups in American society. In assessing this literature in light of our study of paths to power, political socialization certainly remains relevant to understanding the political backgrounds and trajectories of racial minorities into the U.S. political community. But as these studies suggest, the linear path to political power does not necessarily apply to all—one size does not fit all. It is important to plot the differences across race and gender.

Feminist scholars began to examine what they called countersocialization when, during the 1970s, women were socialized as adults into nontraditional roles and behaviors (see, for example, Kelly 1986). And the Civil Rights Movement and mobilization that followed the enactment of the Voting Rights Act were watershed moments for the idea of adult resocialization for blacks in America (Jennings 1986; Walton 1985). The Chicano Movement of the 1960s and early 1970s similarly influenced a generation of Mexican Americans. In particular, the youth of this era challenged the attitudes and beliefs of their elders as they engaged in the politics of protest against what they perceived to be American inequalities and injustices (Garcia, I. 1997; Muñoz 1989). To be sure, the events, leaders, and organizations that generated a generational shift in attitudes and behavior can be regarded as agents of adult resocialization, but they have not been studied as such by political scientists. Some attention has been paid to the childhood and adult socialization of immigrants (Hoskins 1989) and Latinos (Hardy-Fanta 1993). Hardy-Fanta (1993, 142–152) adds depth to this topic; she discusses the differences by gender among Latinos about how making a connection between personal problems and public issues, especially in relation to their children, made it possible for poor Latina women to rise above their “triple oppression” of race/ethnicity, class and gender—an example of resocialization among this group.

More recent research on the political socialization of African Americans includes a much broader examination of a variety of social institutions including Black churches, social and fraternal organizations. There is considerable work on the role of the Black Church (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990 for example) both on the historical development and social impact of the church,

as well as on more recent work exploring the Black Church's impact on black political participation (Brown and Brown 2003, McClerking and McDaniel 2005). There is also literature exploring the history and development of Black fraternities and sororities (see, for example, Little 2002; Giddings, 1988; Brown, Parks and Phillips 2005). Fox, Hodge and Ward's comparison of Black and White fraternal and non-fraternal college students, showed marked differences. Black students were found to be more liberal than white, regardless of their membership in a fraternity; white non-fraternity students were more likely to be liberal than fraternity students. In contrast Black students were comparably and positively liberal whether or not they were members of fraternities (Fox, Hodge, and Ward 1987, 529).

Studies of African American women while not always directly focused on political socialization, nonetheless include important findings about the development of the political behavior of Black women. Jewel Prestage(1994), as well as Prestage and Githens (1977), and Pauline Terrelonge Stone (1980), have explored significant work on the political lives of Black women and Black women elected officials.

Given that political events also constitute agents of socialization, affecting the beliefs and attitudes of children and adults, we note work that is not cast as socialization studies, but speaks to the topic. For example, the literature on Jesse Jackson's 1984 and 1988 campaigns for the Democratic Presidential nomination explores the impact of his political mobilization on Black voters and on their political attitudes. Michael Dawson (1995), using data collected from the same elections, addressed class, race, gender and nationalism among African Americans. Katherine Tate studied (1994) African American voters in these two elections, and the impact of Jackson's campaigns on their attitudes and voting behavior.

Darcy, Welch, and Clark (1994) identify belonging to a political family as a facilitating factor in attaining public office. Studies of Mexican American political mobilization also point to the importance of family in the political activism of this community. Tirado maintained that the involvement of families contributed to the longevity and vitality of Mexican American political organizations over time. Baca Zinn (1975) suggested that strong family ties assisted Mexican Americans to survive "in the face of oppression." Strong family ties also produced "political familism," the involvement of families in political activity. In particular, Baca Zinn noted that women's involvement in the Chicano movement challenged both female and male traditional roles: "The dynamics of political familism are such that while it enables Chicano groups to maintain familial ties, it also provides conditions for the transformation of traditional sex roles" (Baca Zinn 1975: 19).

Accounts of political activism among Chicanas and Latinas often point to family members as supporters and even co-participants in their political endeavors. For example, studies of Chicana working class women show how these women engage in politics by involving their spouses and especially their children in their various activities (Coyle, Hershatter, and

Honig 1979). Extending the theme of political familism to the contemporary period, new scholarship based on biographies of Mexican American political women show the importance of family to their political socialization experiences and their pursuit of political power (Gutiérrez, Meléndez, and Noyola 2007). Perhaps counter to these studies is Takash's (1993) finding that only 14.4 percent of the California Latina elected officials in her study indicated they came from political families.

We employ the rubric of political socialization to explore the family backgrounds, parental attributes, such as levels of educational attainment, and other features of one's personal upbringing and experiences to get a sense of "where these folks come from." It is our attempt to understand some of the personal advantages and disadvantages that accompanied them on their paths to power.

### ***Political Capital: Demographic Characteristics as Qualification Enhancers***

A significant feature of the women in politics literature on candidates and elected officials is the extent to which it focuses on individual demographic characteristics and attributes. Many of these characteristics, such as education, occupation, marital status, and age are usually considered to be "human capital" rather than "political capital." However, since higher levels of educational and occupational attainment contribute to one's qualifications—whether merely perceived or real—we consider them within the category of political capital. Other dimensions of political capital include prior office holding, party identification (and support), political ambition, and motivations to run. Age, marital status and attributes of spouses have received a great deal of attention in the literature but their meaning theoretically is complicated, and will be discussed later.

The literature on the relationship of demographic characteristics to the political trajectories of women and men is limited by the fact that only a few studies address the racial dimensions of these factors. Furthermore, the theoretical underpinnings of how these demographic differences (which are essentially static characteristics) are linked to different "paths" (which are inherently dynamic) are weak. Candidate studies by Fox and Lawless (2005), Lawless and Fox (2005) and Sanbonmatsu (2002) suggest a set of occupational and educational political attitudes as leading to the attainment of elective office. Those with the requisite set of characteristics and attitudinal predispositions are considered to comprise a "social eligibility pool" (Fox and Lawless 2005; Lawless and Fox 2005; Sanbonmatsu 2002) from which candidates are drawn to elective office.

Darcy, Welch, and Clark (1994, 96) also employ the "eligibility pool" thesis of successful candidate characteristics. Besides the socialization effects of coming from "political families,"



they pinpoint higher education and upper class backgrounds as key features for selection into the political arena. They state, “a very substantial proportion of the difference between actual female membership and that predicted by female proportions in the population can be explained by this eligible pool proposition.” While women of color may meet the criterion of higher educational achievement, black and Latina women (and men) are less likely to enjoy upper class backgrounds.

Research specifically on elected officials indicate that women officials are generally more highly educated than men, but they also tend to hold occupations traditionally held by women, such as in education and social services (Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2007). Studies have pointed to similar educational backgrounds among people of color. Barrett (1995) found black women to be more likely to be better educated (with master’s degrees) than black men, although fewer had legal or medical degrees. Takash (1993) surveyed only Latina elected officials in California (not men) and found they constituted a fairly well educated group, with 22 percent having “some college” and 21 percent holding Master’s degrees. Similarly, these Latina officials held occupations in non-executive professions, especially in teaching (K-12), real estate, and social work. Indeed, 45 percent worked in educational settings. Again, the gender-roles theory appears to apply to women and women of color vis-à-vis their male counterparts, and this may be linked to level of office since business and law are the occupations that dominate in legislative bodies. Although women have made advancements into these professions, they still remain mostly male-dominated professions. Scholarly inquiry has not addressed the extent that men of color as elected officials are also represented in these professions.

Regarding age, in general, studies have found that women elected officials are older than men, largely because women tend to delay their entrance into politics (Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2007). There are exceptions apparently, as one study by the Center for the American Woman and Politics (CAWP) found no significant difference in median age by gender at any level of office (Carroll and Strimling 1983, 14). It seems, however, that age varies with race/ethnicity. The same study found, for example, that black women were somewhat younger than women candidates in general (Carroll and Strimling 1983, 145). Hardy-Fanta’s (1997, 16) study of Latino/a candidates in Massachusetts, which included mostly local officials, found that Latinas were about ten years older than men when they first ran for office.

One overarching theory as to why age differences occur between women and men is that gender roles still matter in American society. Women are still regarded (and consider themselves) as primarily responsible for the care of family, household, and children, they delay their entrance into politics, until their children are grown and/or they can juggle politics with their family commitments. It appears there is a consensus in the literature, that gender roles pertain to women of color as well, suggesting that they will be older than their male counterparts. Men are much more likely to run at a significantly younger age: A recent study by the Center for American Women in Politics finds, for example, that 82 percent of candidates under the age of

35 are men. Women are less likely to be married than men; just 69 percent of women state legislators compared to 87 percent of their male colleagues are married, and this difference that not changed since 1988 (Center for American Women in Politics 2001).

An avenue of inquiry that has emerged in the study of women of color and not in studies of white men and women is the issue of race of spouse or partner. Fraga et al. (2006) suggest that race of spouse is another demographic distinction for women of color elected officials, with a significantly larger percentage of Latina women state legislators being married to non-Latino whites than Latino men. They tentatively posited that Latina women married to white men might draw certain advantages, such as coming from more affluent households or having spouses better connected professionally.

### ***Political Capital: Prior Political Experience, Motivation, and Ambition***

Moving from the demographic to the more traditional aspects of political capital, we now examine the literature on prior office holding, political ambition, and motivation to run. Since Carroll and Strimling's (1983) study, a consensus has emerged that women are more likely to be "newcomers," i.e., being in their first term of their first elected position as state legislators, county commissioners, or local officials. Takash (1993) found that 64 percent of Latina elected officials in California never held prior elected or appointed office. Among elected officials who are *not* newcomers, what is known about their previous office holding? Whitaker (1999, 215) found that, in 1992, 36 percent of women state legislators have held two or more previous offices. More of them came to the legislature having previously held elected office rather than appointed office. Fifty-six percent earned their political experience in local politics, and 17 percent have served as appointed members of various state boards and commissions.

An emerging theme in the field of women in politics is that women approach politics from a perspective of "connectedness" (see, for example, Flammang 1984). Scholars have been exploring another theme: whether women's paths to political office reflect a deeper rootedness in, and focus, on community. In examining the politics of women of color, a number of scholars have suggested that black and Latina women, in particular, come to their candidacies and elected office with extensive ties to their communities and having honed their political skills in community organizations. Jennings (1991), for example, suggests that Black women mayors hone their skills in the church, civil rights movement and as classroom teachers or community volunteers. Research by Hardy-Fanta (1993, 1995, 1997), and Montoya, Hardy-Fanta and Garcia (2000) indicate that the politics of Latina women—including those in elected office—stem from concerns about specific issues affecting their communities. Takash's (1993) research on Latina elected officials in California found that 61 percent claimed community activism as contributing to their election and 70 percent had served as board members of a local organization. Takash makes an additional point: Latina political activism does not avoid conventional, electoral activity. In fact, she finds that more Latina officials (68 percent) claimed to have participated in

campaign work than they did in community activism. A study of black mayors describes some of their political backgrounds: Black women differ from white men and women in the experiences of racial discrimination, socialization, and economic status. They are thus less confined to traditional gender roles than white women. Black women are often mayors of smaller, poorer towns in southern states; they generally believe they have a greater commitment than whites to solving problems of the economically disadvantaged (Jennings 1991). Hardy-Fanta (1993) suggests that despite the fact that religion is seen as suppressing political activity for Latinas, church involvement provides a training ground for many campaign activities (Jacobs 2002).

Researchers have documented a wide range of reasons individuals give for wanting to run for elected office. The analysis by Fox and Lawless (2005) focuses on strategic considerations (self perceived qualifications); “issue passion”; political interest; political upbringing; competitive traits such as career or material ambition; stage in life (married, children, age); and the likelihood of winning and/or political opportunity.

Another motivation for political participation and seeking elected office that has been put forth is the desire to “serve the community” and “make a difference.” Svara (2003<sup>2</sup>), one of the few scholars who has surveyed municipal elected officials in a way that includes attention to gender and race,<sup>3</sup> found that 81 percent of those surveyed in 2001 cited a desire to “serve the city as a whole.” Hardy-Fanta (1993, 1995) studied Latinas in Boston and asserted that Latina women defined politics as “promoting change... That’s political, that’s what I mean by politics, that’s what politics means to me” (1993, 30). Their male counterparts focused more on gaining positions in government, what Fox and Lawless refer to as “competitive traits” (2005, see below). Finally, Garcia and Marquez’s (2002) study of participants at a Latina Candidate Development Conference as well as national delegates to the 1992 Democratic National Convention states:

Most revealing about these findings is the combination of traditionally relevant political motivations with specific community-oriented motivations. That is, participants exhibited a commitment to getting particular candidates elected and certain policies addressed, as well as a commitment to both their own communities and the Chicano/Latino community at large. Participants bridged both traditional and community-oriented motivations for their political involvement. In effect, Latinas are entering traditional mainstream politics and bringing with them their experiences from grassroots politics and from their cultural networks and resources. . . . The open-ended responses also lend support for the premise that Latinas bring with them a unique vision of politics—a bridging of both traditional and community-oriented motivations. This bridging suggests that Latinas and Chicanas bring their community with them, rather than ‘leave it behind’ or ‘forget where they come from.’ One

theme that emerged ... was 'the need for change'. (Garcia and Marquez 2002, n.p.)

The literature on minority politics also suggests that blacks and Latinos generally are open about their desire to gain political representation for their respective group, launch their candidacies based on perceived closeness to community, and campaign on what are the most important needs/issues facing geographic and ethnic communities. Pinderhughes argued that Black women are more likely to focus on horizontal, community wide political mobilization, while men, based in the hierarchical institution of the African American church, narrow their goals toward achievement for a smaller sector of the population (Pinderhughes 1991). Research on women indicates that women elected officials are more likely than men to advance legislation benefiting not only women but racial/ethnic minorities as well. African American and Latino elected officials, and women in general, are more likely to be more sensitive to representing women and racial minorities than whites or men in general (Svara 2003, 17; Center for American Women in Politics 2001).

The reason Asian American women elected officials are mentioned so rarely in the above discussion is their absence in almost all research to date. One of the few exceptions is Chu (1989) who observes that, among Asian American elected officials, most of the local elected female officials do not have career plans to enter politics nor extraordinary backgrounds, but they have supportive families and an extensive experience of involvement in community affairs. Like other women, many do not run for office until after their children are out of high school and they have difficulty receiving endorsements from political parties or other major organizations and community groups. Unlike other nonwhite women, they often cannot count on the support of a large ethnic constituency. Their electoral success is often attributed to their individual tenacity, personal contacts, uniqueness in physical appearance, and the positive stereotype of being a competent, capable, honest, and non-threatening Asian woman. Other research on Asians finds the group's candidates confront racial resistance, that men still far outnumber women in office-holding, and that both genders often need to appeal to and address broader concerns other than their own racial/ethnic community (Geron and Lai 2001; Lai, Cho, Kim, and Tekeda 2001; Takeda 2001; Lien 2002a, 2002b).

We conclude this section on political capital with the perennial issue of political ambition. The literature has often bemoaned the fact women do not run for elected office because they lack the same levels of political ambition as men, with ambition defined as wanting to "get ahead" or "move to the next level of office." Having ambition in this sense appears to rule out any connection to community advancement—just individual advancement. The lack of "ambition" appears, therefore, to be largely regarded as a negative trait. But perhaps individual goals and aspirations are associated with specific levels of public office. Carroll (1985) found, in fact, that political ambition varies by level of office. Dolan (2007, 249) cites a study by Carey, Niemi, and Powell (1998) that found the political ambitions of female legislators in all 50 states

“had outpaced men’s, as female legislators were even more likely than men to think of politics as a career, to run for reelection, and to plan to seek higher office.” Dolan, Deckman, and Swers (2007) state that research points to women in local level office, especially school boards, show less political ambition than women who occupy higher levels of office. But local level officeholders should not be regarded as less important. In fact, holding office in local government may more directly impact one’s “community” and, hence, provide more of an incentive for those committed to change and community service to hold such positions.

Furthermore, Fox and Lawless (2005, 652) suggest that, for women in the “eligibility pool” for being candidates, “strategic considerations” may be a “precursor to expressive ambition.” And findings are mixed when race is considered in interaction with gender. Moore (2005, 585), for example, states that “[m]inorities are far more likely to fall into the ambitious category than the unambitious for both sexes,” and his data show that 29 percent of nonwhite women, compared to 25 percent of nonwhite men were counted as having political ambitions. Fox and Lawless (2005, 653) suggest otherwise: results from their Citizen Political Ambition Study indicates that “‘average’ black male and female respondents are 15 percentage points less likely than their similarly situated white counterparts to have considered running for office”—this in addition to their finding that the “average” woman had a likelihood of 0.49 compared to 0.62 for the “average” male (653). However, their study is not of elected officials but an “eligibility pool” of citizens from law, business, education, and activism. Smooth (2006, 105) cites Darcy and Hadley (1988) that black women are more ambitious than white women.

### **Political Opportunity Structure**

The literature on women in politics identifies a number of structural features of the electoral system that tend to produce a gendered effect on the likelihood of women and men holding elective office. One major dimension under this rubric involves the extent to which mediating institutions recruit men and women for elective office. A substantial body of research has indicated that the major political parties have played a lesser role for women than men in recruitment to or support in attaining political office. Sanbonmatsu (2003, 2004) suggests that differences between the two major parties may also show gendered differences in outreach to women. She finds that when Democrats are the majority party in a legislature, they have recruited fewer women candidates.

Political recruitment, or the lack thereof, is of particular importance for women, as a number of studies have shown that women are much more likely to be reluctant to run for office. They are less likely than men to be “self-starters” – i.e., they “need to be asked (Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell 2001; Carroll 2005) and/or they lack confidence and need encouragement and support to pursue political officeholding (Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2007). On the other hand, there is evidence that depending on such things as political climate, parties do actively recruit women to run for office, such as in 1992 (Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2007).

The literature on racial groups is perhaps most replete with work that addresses the structural features of the electoral system and their relationship to the representation—or underrepresentation of people of color in public office. A core assumption in the black politics literature (see, for example, Sawyer 2006) is that blacks have to constantly rebuild their access to the political environment; in essence, there can be no individually generated pathway because racism and racial discrimination make it too difficult to get there. This is where black political groups and individual politicians “make it or break it” – it depends on the political environment whether someone gets elected or not, combined with the approach to power. The black politics literature (male or female) hasn’t been organized around this concept of paths to political office – it’s been what kind of strategy – protest or politics (electoral) but there’s no assumption of a pathway existing – that’s just not the way it works. Blacks for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century didn’t seek election as individuals; they certainly had to run as individual candidates, but they usually ran in context, in a communal, community mobilizing context.

Only a few works directly address the extent to which political parties recruit and support minority groups’ entrance into politics (Leighley 2001). Studies by Wong (2006), Jones-Correa (1998), and Frymer (2005) offer critical and negative assessments of the behavior of the major political parties toward minority populations. They either find only tenuous ties between parties and minority populations, or the tendency of party elites to take their support for granted (as in the case of the Democratic Party with blacks) and essentially neglect or ignore their interests. Wong (2006) maintains that other mediating institutions, such as grass-roots organizations, have filled the void left by parties. The extent to which women of color are involved in party activities or have seen their party as relatively unsupportive of their election may reflect either their experience as women or as members of a minority population, or both—that is, as a result of their race and gender.

Additional structural features addressed in the racial group literature are types of electoral systems, where the general argument advanced is that single-member district elections favor the election of minority candidates more so than at-large electoral systems. The specific case of women on color and their relative success in either type of system to our knowledge has not been researched.

## **Data and Measures**

Data used in this paper come from the Gender and Multicultural Leadership (GMCL) survey which is a systematic telephone survey of the nation’s nonwhite elected officials holding state and local offices across the 50 states of America. The survey was conducted by the Institute for Public Policy (IPP) at the University of New Mexico whose callers telephone interviewed a sample of randomly selected individuals from a population of 10,078 nonwhite elected officials grouped by race, gender, and level of office. Overall, 1,378 interviews were

completed between June 5, 2006 and March 21, 2007 and the response rate was 72 percent. The sample includes 94 Asians or 27 percent of the universe of 345 AEOs, 18 American Indian or Alaskan Native (AIAN) elected officials or 38 percent of the universe of 47 AIAN state legislators, 739 Blacks or 12 percent of the universe of 5973 BEOs, and 527 Latinos or 14 percent of the universe of 3,717 LEOs. (See Appendix A for details of the survey methodology.)

Because differential probability of selection or uneven quota rate was assigned to each of the population groups to generate enough number of respondents for analysis by race, gender, and office level, we enhance the representativeness of the data used in this paper by assigning a group weight to each of the race-gender-office quota cells in the survey. The weighted N is 2,242. It includes 10 (.5 percent) AIAN, 76 (3.4 percent) Asian, 1,331 (59.4 percent) Black, and 824 (36.8 percent) Latino respondents. The respective racial proportions in the survey are reflective of what found in the population. Statistics reported in this paper are generated using the weighted data.

To empirically answer the research question of whether female and male elected officials of color differ in their trajectories to elective office, we hypothesize that their electoral experiences are affected by the four sets of factors reviewed in the previous section. To measure the possible influence of political socialization experiences, we identified six sets of factors: upbringing in political family, immigration status (personal, parents, grandparents), parental educational attainment (mother and father, respectively), upbringing by public assistance, means of education (paid by government program/GI bill, scholarships, or parents/family member), and (for Blacks only) whether one was involved with Black sororities/fraternities. To measure the possible influence of political capital, we used ten sets of indicators: age when first elected into office, whether or not this is the first time in office, personal educational attainment, household income, veteran status, religious affiliation, political party affiliation, prior experiences as an appointed official or serving on the staff of an elected public official, and ambition for a higher office. To measure the possible influence of social capital, we adopted four sets of indicators: one's level of prior engagement with civic organizations or groups, length of residence in the community one represents, sense of linked fate with other minorities, co-ethnics, and women, and one's marital status and whether the spouse has held public or elective office or is racially White. To test the possible influence of political opportunity structure, we examined eight sets of factors: the status of one's most recent campaign to the current office, whether one holds a partisan office, the margin of victory in the most recent campaign, the perceived campaign disadvantages in the first bid for the current office, the perceived racial/ethnic makeup of the jurisdiction, the perceived percent immigrant in one's jurisdiction, the perceived opportunities for women and minority women to get ahead in elective office and to get appointed to public office. (The exact question wording and coding scheme for each of the measures is reported in Appendix B.)

To gauge each respondent's motivation to run for public office, we asked each official, "What was the most important reason influencing your decision to run for public office the very first time?" and included two follow-up questions: "What was the next most important reason?" While, ultimately we plan to use qualitative methods to analyze the open-ended responses in order to capture the richness of what these elected officials reported, our first task was to develop a coding scheme to be able to present the quantitative results for comparisons with and among the racial/ethnic and gender groups. The method used was as follows: Researchers read through all the answers to all three questions and began to group them according to themes. We initially used the SPSS Text Analysis software program, but, because it focuses so heavily on specific words, we determined the most accurate way to develop codes and code the data was to design mutually exclusive definitions based on the qualitative text followed by consideration of the literature on why people run for office. Two researchers then used these definitions and coded the text in each question independently, yielding preliminary inter-coder reliability of 81% of the responses for the first answer; 75% of the responses in the second; and 63% of the responses for the third. Upon review and refinement of the definitions, plus the addition of a third coder, the final inter-coder reliability reached 98 percent. Because the respondents frequently gave open-ended answers that included multiple clauses (see below for examples), their answers could be coded into more than one category. The final categories (see Appendix B for the definitions) included: ISSUE, COMMUNITY (with subcodes of Community TIES, Community/Public SERVICE); REPRESENTATION; STRATEGIC Considerations; Make a DIFFERENCE/CHANGE; ENCOURAGED (or Recruited to Run) Political INTEREST; and PERSONAL reasons (which included a subcode for Political AMBITION). It is important to keep in mind that a response frequently fit into more than one category, in part because the officials did not limit themselves to a discrete statement but rather gave long responses with multiple clauses; furthermore, because they had three opportunities to say what their reasons were, an individual could actually provide a large number of distinctive responses leading to the percentages for each coded reason to add up to more than 100.

We use both cross-tabulation and analysis of variance procedures generated by the SPSS for Windows v. 15 to test gender differences among Black, Latino, and Asian American elected officials in the survey. Table 1 reports the general distribution by gender, race, and level of office among survey respondents. Findings for political socialization are reported in Table 2, those for social capital are reported in Table 3, those for political capital are reported in Table 4, and those for political opportunity structures are reported in Table 5.

## Findings

Among the total N (weighted) of 2,242 respondents, 1,331 or 59 percent are black, 824 or 37 percent are Latino, 76 or 3 percent are Asian, and 10 or .5 percent are American Indian/Alaskan Native elected officials. About half (48 percent) hold positions at the municipal level, 32 percent at the school board level, 11 percent at the county level, and 9 percent hold



positions at the state legislative level of governance. Table 1 shows the breakdown for level of office by race/ethnicity and gender. The top rows show that females only occupy one-third of all the positions examined in this study; Black women report the highest percentage share at 35%, while Asians report the lowest percentage share of 26%. When we analyze the gender ratios within each race by level of office, we see that while a higher percentage of male (50%) than female (45%) officials of color hold positions at the municipal level, and the percentage of male county officials (13%) is about twice that of their female counterparts, a much higher percentage of female (40%) than male (29%) officials of color are at the school board level. There is little gender difference in the percentage of state legislators within each race and Asians appear to have a much greater share of the elected officials occupying the state legislative office (because of their large concentration in the state of Hawaii). Among municipal officials, while the percentage is greater among Black males than Black females, the reverse is the case for both Latinos and Asians. Among county officials, the share of males is unanimously higher than that of females across all races; the reverse is true among school board officials. Also worth noting is that although the largest share of the black elected officials serve at the municipal level, for both Latinos and Asians their largest share of elected officials is at the school board level.

<b>Table 1. GMCL Survey Respondents by Race, Gender, and Office</b>								
	All (2,242)		Black (1,331)		Latino (825)		Asian (76)	
Gender	F (726)	M (1,514)	F (463)	M (868)	F (241)	M (584)	F (20)	M (56)
% F/M in All/Race	32	68	35	65	29	71	26	74
Level of Office								
State Legislature	9	9	10	8	7	6	25	25
Municipal	45	50	50	54	36	45	30	36
County	6	13	7	16	5	9	0	7
School Board	40	29	34	22	52	40	45	32
Source: Gender & Multicultural Project Survey, 2006-07.								
*Note: The differences by race/ethnicity and gender are significant at $p < .0001$ . Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Also, while we included American Indians state legislators in the survey, they are not shown here or below because their numbers are too small for meaningful comparative analysis.								

In the rest of this paper, the findings from our survey are organized by the major themes identified earlier: political socialization, political capital, social capital, and political opportunity structure. Given our interest in the interaction of race/ethnicity and gender, the tables present the within group differences by gender. However, in the narrative we point to differences by race alone and gender alone when large and significant.

### **Political Socialization**

The GMCL Survey included a range of questions related to various aspects of one's personal and family background and upbringing. Table 2 shows the percentages by race/ethnicity and sex for each of the variables included in this section. Given the importance of family in political socialization, respondents were asked whether they would describe themselves as "having been raised in a political family." As can be seen in the table, women from all three racial/ethnic groups were more likely to answer "yes" to this question. About four in ten of Black and Latina women compared to three in ten of their male counterparts answered "yes." Asian men and women were less likely overall and the gender difference was smaller and not statistically significant. These data confirm the importance of family involvement in fostering political activism among women of color, at least for Black and Latina women. In the words of Baca Zinn (1975), "political familism" does appear to support Latina women in becoming engaged in politics.

Childhood socialization studies delved into the process by which individuals developed political attachments and affect towards the United States. A few studies addressed how place of birth and immigrant generation mattered in this process (F. C. Garcia 1973). But in this era of high immigration, such questions rise in salience. Since immigrant backgrounds contribute to political socialization (both childhood and adult), we asked the elected officials whether they were born in the U.S. and whether either of their parents or grandparents were born outside of the United States. It is clear from Table 2 that the racial differences overwhelm any gender differences in the percent of elected officials who were born outside the U.S.: more than four in ten of Asian American, compared to one in ten Latino (and almost no black) officials were themselves immigrants. We also found that Asian Americans born outside of the country were older (mean age 20 years) than Latinos (mean age 11 years). Latinos and Asians were more similar—and very different from blacks—in the extent to which they had immigrant parents or grandparents. The gender differences within those two groups were significant only for Latinos/as with 32 percent of Latino (male) compared to 24 percent of Latina (female) officials having a parent who was born outside of the United States. In contrast, almost three in ten Latinas, compared to two in ten Latino men, had at least one immigrant grandparent.

<b>Table 2. Political Socialization Factors, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender</b>						
	Black		Latino		Asian	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Came from Political Family (%)	40**	31	42**	28	21	16
Immigrant (%)	1	<1	10	9	40	46
Immigrant Parents (%)	<1	1	24	32*	29	26
Immigrant grandparents (%)	2	2	28**	19	29	22
Father's Education (<HS) (%)	50	63**	56	64*	28	26
Mother's Education (<HS) (%)	46	48+	57	64*	29	23
Raised by Gov't Assistance (%)	12	21**	15	25***	11	8
Educ. Paid by Gov't/GI Bill (%)	1	18***	3	15***	0	12
Educ. Paid by Parents (%)	21***	12	9	6	47*	22
Educ. Funded from Scholarships	15	22*	12	11	21*	4
Prior Involvement in Black Sororities/Fraternities (mean)	3.5	3.8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
+p<.05; *p<.01; **p<.005; ***p<.0001						

A number of indicators explored the social advantages or disadvantages associated with one's childhood family situation and upbringing. The educational background of one's parents provides an indication of family socioeconomic status. We asked each elected official the highest level of education attained by his/her father and mother. Significant gender differences exist for blacks and Latinos in terms of the educational attainment of their parents; no such difference exists for Asians—and the overall education levels of their parents are much higher. Of note is the fact that fewer black elected officials have mothers without a high school diploma, whereas more than six in ten Latino men have mothers with less than a high school education. Moreover, both black and Latino men are more likely than their female counterparts to report fathers with no diploma.

Striking are the substantial overall percentages of Black and Latino elected officials (women and men) who come from families with disadvantaged educational backgrounds -- and this pattern applies even more so to men than to women. Given the longstanding educational challenges faced by Black and Latino families, such a parental educational profile may not be surprising. However, given that children's educational levels often correlate to those of their parents, the success of these elected officials of color to overcome educational disadvantages in their family backgrounds is impressive. (A later section discusses their own relatively high levels of educational attainment.)

Another measure linked to family economic status is the need to accept government assistance. Table 2 shows that significantly higher proportions of black and Latino male officials compared to their female counterparts answered "yes" when asked, "Growing up, did your family receive any type of U.S. government assistance, including food stamps, public housing, welfare, WIC, unemployment insurance, SSI, or Medicaid? The gender gap for both groups was ten percentage points. Asian American women were more like black and Latina women (with about one in ten answering "yes"). The Asian gender gap does not appear because, in contrast to black and Latino men, a low percentage of Asian American male officials reported that they had received government assistance while growing up.

Table 2 shows striking gender differences in the percentage of how elected officials of color who attended college financed their education. About twice as many black women (21 percent) as men (12 percent) had their education paid for by their parents. About the same ratio is true for Asians, but the racial difference between Asians and the other groups is more striking: almost half of the Asian women and a quarter of the Asian men having parent-financed educations. Men from all three groups were much more likely to have had their educations paid for by the "government/G.I.Bill," and the differences were statistically significant for blacks and Latinos. (The fact that our question combined the G.I. Bill with other forms of government assistance is likely the cause of this gender difference since 98 percent of the veterans in our sample were male.) A significantly larger proportion of Asian women funded their educations through scholarships, whereas black men were more likely than their female counterparts to have received scholarships. There was no significant gender difference for Latinos/as; what is of note with this group are the relatively low percentages of both Latinos and Latina women who received parental support for their education.

Given the literature's suggestion that college-educated black women's activism is stimulated, in part, by their participation in black sororities, we asked black respondents who had attended college, "How involved were you in black sororities or fraternities before you ran for elected office the very first time?" As can be seen in Table 2, the mean score on a scale from zero to ten, where zero means not at all involved and ten means extremely involved, there was no significant gender difference. Nor did the mean scores appear particularly high for this sample of black elected officials (3.5 for women; 3.8 for men).

In general, these data suggest important racial and gendered features of political socialization, with regard to family background and socioeconomic status. Family socialization into the world of politics appears, as the literature suggests, of importance for women of color—especially black and Latina women. Issues of nativity and immigrant status bear much more directly (and most likely saliently) on racial groups--Latinos and, especially, Asians. The data on family socioeconomic status point to both racial and gendered patterns. The educational attainment of parents is distinguishable by race and gender and when dependence on government assistance is considered, Black and Latino men report more disadvantaged family backgrounds. Black women and especially Asian women benefit more than any other group, including their male counterparts, from parental (financial) support for their education. One socialization agent predicted in the literature to be important to the black experience, and especially to women-- membership in sororities and fraternities-- showed no gendered significance nor high levels of involvement.

### **Political Capital**

Among the more “human capital” aspects of political capital, we included age; whether the official was a “newcomer”; educational attainment; veteran status; and religion. Variables more directly associated with political capital included party affiliation; whether the elected official held appointed office or served as staff prior to running for the first time; a measure of political ambition; and the reasons for running for office “the very first time.” Table 3 shows the breakdown on these variables by race/ethnicity and gender.

Clearly black and Latina women elected officials were older by a few years than their male counterparts, and, at 47 years of age, black women were the oldest of all when they first ran; in contrast, there was no significant gender difference on this variable for Asian American officials. All were over 40 years old when they ran for office the first time, a remarkable fact given that three quarters of the respondents were either municipal or school board officials.

The elected officials surveyed bring considerable education to their positions, with between 50 and 96 percent holding at least a college degree. As Table 3 shows, however, there is considerable variation by race/ethnicity, with more than nine in ten Asians, compared to five in ten Latinos/as, having this level of education; blacks are in between. The only significant difference by gender within the racial/ethnic groups is for black elected officials: 78 percent of black females compared to 67 percent of black males, a finding that reflects the larger pattern in the society as a whole.

**Table 3. Political Capital Factors, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender**

	Black		Latino		Asian	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Age First Elected into Office (mean yrs.)	47***	43	44**	41	42	43
Newcomer (%)	68	66	76**	65	75	62
Education (% college degree or more)	78***	67	54	50	90	96
Household Income in 2005						
Less than \$50k (%)	36***	25	30*	22	12	6
\$150k or more (%)	5	8	10	9	24	31
Veteran Status (%)	1	32***	1	31***	0	20*
Religion						
Protestant (%)	89	90	16	13	33	43*
Roman Catholic (%)	8+	5	78	83+	20	29
None/Atheist/Agnostic (%)	2	1	4	3	40**	12
Political Party Affiliation						
Democrat (%)	88*	81	74	73	65	57
Republican (%)	1	2	14	13	20	26
Independent (%)	8	14	11	10	15	15
Held Appointed Office (%)	46	56*	53	51	42	51
Served as Staff (%)	13	15	10	8	14	9
Likelihood of Running for Higher Office	3.7	4.3*	3.9	4.9**	3.4	5.4*
Reasons for Running the First Time						
Issue (%)	54**	46	59	60	45	42
Community (%)	45	51*	50	51	45	59
Community ties (%)	6	6	12**	6	10	9
Community/public service (%)	28	38***	36	40	30	49
Make a Difference/Change (%)	19	22	23	21	10	17
Strategic Considerations (%)	18	19	10	11	10	22
Personal (%)	24*	18	24+	19	30	20
Self ambition (%)	1	3*	0	2*	5	0
Encouraged (%)	21	19	13	12	25*	7
Political interest (%)	10	12	13*	9	5	7
Representation (%)	26	28	30	27	37	39

+p<.05; \*p<.01; \*\*p<.005; \*\*\*p<.0001

Women of color are more likely to have household incomes below \$50,000, and the gender gap is statistically significant for blacks and Latinos/as: almost four in 10 black female officials reported household income in 2005 to be less than \$50,000 compared to 25 percent of their male counterparts. This is intriguing given the higher rates of higher education among black women as compared to black men. A similar gap occurs for Latinos, although, on the whole, they are somewhat less likely to be in this category: 30 percent for Latinas and 22 percent for Latino men. There was no significant difference by gender for Asian American officials. On the other end of the income scale, there were dramatic racial differences with Asian women and men between two and three times more likely to have household incomes in the \$150,000 or more range; the gender gaps seen in Table 3 were not significant, although our analysis by race/ethnicity (not shown) was statistically significant at  $p < .0001$ .

In a post-September 11<sup>th</sup> era—as in many times in history—veteran status is a plus when running for office. About one in five of the elected officials in our study are veterans, and there is no significant difference by race. Table 3 makes it clear, however, that, not unexpectedly, there are huge gender differences with men much more likely to have served in the military. Religion has also become a stronger factor in the political qualification equation. We find that differences across race are much larger than within race by gender, with nine in 10 blacks indicating that they are Protestants; about eight in ten Latinos are Roman Catholic; and Asian American elected officials are more evenly spread between these two religions and “none/atheist/agnostic.” Small gender differences do exist, however, with slightly more black women than men adhering to the Catholic religion whereas more Latino men (83 percent) than Latinas (78 percent) are Catholic. Almost four in ten Asian American women compared to one in ten men say they have no religious affiliation, and a large percentage of Asian men compared to women are Protestants.

Moving on to more traditional aspects of political capital: i.e., party identification, previous office holding, political ambition and motivations to run for office, we find significant differences by race for party identification, with 87 percent of blacks, 76 percent of Latinos and 56 percent of Asian Americans claiming Democratic Party identification. While there was no statistically significant difference by gender alone, Table 3 shows that black women are statistically more likely than black men to be Democrats (88 to 81 percent); 14 percent of black men are in the Independent column.

There were racial as well as gender differences within race on the percentages that came to office having served in appointed positions and/or as staff of an elected official prior to their first bid for office. About six in ten Asian American officials compared to about five in ten of blacks and Latinos ( $p < .05$ ) held appointed office; 15 percent of blacks compared to 10 percent of Asians and 9 percent of Latinos served as staff at the local, state or congressional levels ( $p < .005$ ). The only significant gender difference with race/ethnicity was that over half of black men had held appointed office compared to less than half of black women. We also found that, among elected officials who were not “newcomers” and who held office above the school board

level, 20 percent of women compared to 13 percent of men had served on a local school board prior to running for their current office the first time ( $p < .0001$ ). However, while there was no gender difference overall among those who had served in a lower-level office prior to their current office—about four in ten had this kind of experience. There was a very large and significant gender difference with 67 percent of Latinos compared to 42 percent of black officials who were not newcomers having held a lower level office ( $p < .0001$ ).

Before discussing the analysis of why these elected officials first ran for elected office, we want to address the issue of political ambition. In the survey, we asked, “How likely is it that you will run for a higher level of office when you leave your current position?” We find that there are large statistically significant differences by gender with the mean score on a scale of 0 to 10 being 4.56 for men and 3.78 for women ( $p < .0001$ ); Asians and Latinos were the most ambitious at 4.91 and 4.65, respectively, and blacks the least at 4.08. Table 3 shows the within group gender differences: the almost 2-full-point gender gap for Asian American men is the largest followed by one point for Latino men and less than one point for blacks. In this case it is Asian and Latino men driving the racial and gender gaps—and showing the most ambition with respect to their female counterparts.

One of the most intriguing parts of our analysis is that of motivations to run for office the first time. As indicated in the methodology section of this paper, we gave each official the opportunity to say, in their own words, “What was the most important reason influencing your decision to run for public office the very first time?” In this paper, we will report the quantitative analysis based on our coding of the responses, providing a limited number of quotes as illustrations; future work will provide a more nuanced analysis of the qualitative responses themselves. The most common reasons given for running the first time were a “specific issue/concern” and “community”; 52 percent of the responses among all officials were coded as ISSUE and 50 percent as COMMUNITY. An example of a response coded as ISSUE is from an Asian American male state senator from Hawaii, “To help small businesses,” and a Latina school board member from California said, “Getting more AP classes, classes so that students could go further.” And, at the most concrete level, were reasons such as “There was no toilet in the park” or “My main reason to run was street improvement.”

An example of a response coded as COMMUNITY is from a black female county board member in Louisiana: “My community has done a lot for me, I felt the need the give back to the community.” As a subcode of COMMUNITY, 37 percent spoke specifically of “serving the community” and/or “public service,” a category illustrated by a Latino male state representative from New Mexico said, “To serve my state, my community and my people.” Twenty-eight percent were coded as REPRESENTATION; a black female member of the board of alderman in a city in Florida responded, “The need for women, especially African American women.” Another example is from a black male city councilor from South Carolina, who said, simply, “Lack of representation within the community.” About two in ten gave reasons coded as



STRATEGIC, which include those stressing opportunities to be elected and/or the individual's qualifications; PERSONAL reasons; or wanting to make a CHANGE/DIFFERENCE. Seventeen percent said they were ENCOURAGED or recruited to run and 11 percent gave reasons suggesting they were interested in politics (INTEREST). Examples of STRATEGIC considerations include a Latina county board official from Oregon who responded to the question with "At the time, none of the candidates who were running I believed would do as good of a job as I would. I also thought I could win," and a black male mayor from Michigan responded, "Because there was a lack of direction in the township and I felt that I could make a contribution."

Smaller percentages said they were encouraged or recruited to run but examples of those who were include a number who tended to say "family" or "friends and neighbors." An example of a response that fit into multiple categories but which included being encouraged to run was voiced by a 53-year-old Latina city councilor from Texas, who said, "I felt that there were not enough Hispanic leaders. A group of people came to me and asked me if I would run. I ran for the school board first, and missed the run-off by one vote."

There were some racial/ethnic differences on motivations to run, with six in ten Latinos compared to five in ten blacks and four in ten Asians giving an ISSUE reason. Asians (20 percent) and blacks (19 percent) were more likely than Latinos (10 percent) to give a STRATEGIC reason. Blacks, however, were more likely to be coded for answers that reflected being ENCOURAGED or recruited to run (20 percent) compared to Latinos (13 percent) and Asian Americans (11 percent); these differences were all statistically significant at  $p < .0001$ . Very few officials (2 percent) gave answers that were coded as AMBITION and the racial differences were not significant. There were significant gender differences with 3 percent of men compared to less than 1 percent of women giving such an answer.

Table 3 shows that there are few significant differences when the data are broken down by race/ethnicity and gender. Black women, at 54 percent, were more likely than black men (46 percent) to say they ran because of a specific issue or concern. Interestingly, while the literature (albeit mostly qualitative) suggested that women of color might come to politics from a commitment to community or to serve the community, in general, men were more likely to give such a reason—a finding in the opposite direction than expected; it was, however, significant only for blacks—both in the general category of COMMUNITY or in the more specific community/public SERVICE. A significantly higher percentage of black women (24 percent) than black men (18 percent) said they ran for reasons we coded as PERSONAL. These reasons included a Latina city councilor from Colorado who responded, "I actually was a victim of crime, and that led me to really become involved with neighborhood organizations, and then when there was a vacancy, the neighbors encouraged me to run." Obviously, this answer was coded into multiple categories, including ENCOURAGED, but having been a victim of a crime

was mentioned first among several reasons and is clearly a personal reason. Other personal reasons included “It was spiritual,” or “My children” or “I’m a people person.”

Analysis of political capital variables brings both expected and unexpected findings. As the literature would predict, women in our study, with the exception of Asian women, were older than their male counterparts when they first ran for office. However, both men and women are mostly in their middle ages now, notwithstanding the fact that most are in local level offices. Their age profile suggests that they depart from the pipeline theory for politicians, who launch political careers at the bottom of the ladder (i.e. local office) at an earlier age. Predictably, educational attainment differs most by race, with Asian men and women surpassing all other groups with rather astonishing percentages holding college degrees or higher. The one gender difference that proved significant pertained to black women’s higher educational attainment relative to black men, a demographic characteristic that Bositis (2003) credits with enhancing black women’s rates of success in winning elected office. Also in an expected direction, perhaps, more Black and Latina women are found at the lower income scale in comparison to their male counterparts; and Asians hold higher household incomes than the other groups.

The display of political ambition in our study tended to be a male thing; within every racial group men were statistically more likely to report higher levels of political ambition than the women. However, the levels of political ambition were quite low for all groups—across the board. The literature on women claims that low levels of political ambition may be associated with level of office; that is, those in local level office show less ambition than those in state legislatures. Given that most of our sample, women and men, hold local level office, the relatively low percentages of politically ambitious people—as defined very traditionally as having intentions to run for higher office --may be a reflection of level of office.

As stated above, the most unexpected finding involves motivations to run for office. Our findings suggest that it is men of color more than women who base their reasons for seeking elected office out of community concerns. Women, on the other hand, perhaps act on the old slogan from the women’s movement, “the personal is political.” Women across all racial groups were more likely to identify personal reasons for running as opposed to their male counterparts; this pattern was statistically significant for black and Latina women. In the end, it is important to point out that the overall profile of the women and men in this study is community-oriented in their approach to attaining office. Only a tiny proportion of them based their reasons for running on personal ambition. Perhaps politicians shy away from being perceived as too self-centered and answer survey questions accordingly. Yet these responses suggest that a collective orientation to politics more than an individualistic orientation to politics may more accurately describe people of color who hold elected office. Given the individualistic orientation we noted in the literature on paths to elected office, our study suggests that new theoretical understandings may very well need to be pursued in order to uncover and understand multiple paths to power.

## Social Capital

A number of factors have been associated with the social capital an individual accumulates that can be useful in running for elected office: community/family/business connections and experiences; a long-standing tie to the district from which the campaign is launched (despite the success of a number of out-of-district successes currently in the news); and, it is hypothesized, a sense of common purpose with other groups. Finally, there are some personal characteristics such as marriage (especially to influential partners) that may bring opportunities otherwise not available.

Our data indicate that there are significant racial differences on all of these variables, some gender differences irrespective of race, and, as can be seen in Table 4, a number of within-group differences by race/ethnicity and gender when taken together. First, by race/ethnicity, we find that blacks had significantly higher mean scores in terms of their reported level of activities in every category of civic organization than Latinos or Asians. They were almost twice as likely as the other groups to be involved in faith-based and civil rights organizations (mean on a scale of 0 to 10: 6.16 compared to 3.89 and 3.2 for faith-based, and 6.84 compared to 3.22 and 3.04 for civil rights organizations, respectively); these findings are all significant at  $p < .0001$ .

However, Table 4 shows that the idea that women of color are more likely than their male counterparts to have stronger roots in their communities/neighborhoods is not borne out by our data: there are no significant gender differences for any of the racial/ethnic groups. In fact, the only organizations where women show greater levels of involvement than their male counterparts are in the traditionally “female” types of PTAs/PTOs and women’s organizations. At the same time, women are not less involved in business groups than men, nor with the exception of a small difference among blacks, with political parties. The mean scores on involvement in labor unions for Latino men, in particular, were significantly higher than for Latinas; the same was true on involvement in election campaigns for black men in comparison to black women.

Elected officials of color, across the board, reported long-standing ties to their communities: on average, they had lived twenty years or more in their communities prior to running for office and, while Asian Americans lived there about ten years less on average than their black and Latino counterparts, there were no significant differences by gender. Another measure of community ties is in the ways the respondents reported having a sense of linked fate with those of their same racial/ethnic group, other minorities, and women. Table 4 shows some surprising results: while a significantly higher percentage of black women than men answered that “yes” when asked, “Do you think what happens to women in this country affects what happens in your life and how you view politics?” this pattern did not hold true for Latinas and Asian American women. And larger percentages of black men than black women showed a sense of linked fate with other minorities and their co-ethnics; for Latinos, this was true only for their co-ethnics.

Table 4. Social Capital Factors, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender						
	Black		Latino		Asian	
Prior Engagement with Civic Organizations & Groups (mean)	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Community/Neighborhood Organizations	7.9	7.8	6.9	6.5	6.8	7.0
PTA/Os	7.3***	6.3	6.4***	5.0	4.0*	3.1
Election Campaigns	5.6	6.4***	5.4	5.0	3.5	3.6
Political Parties	6.1	6.4+	5.1	5.0	3.9	4.2
Civil Rights Organizations	6.6	6.9	3.4	3.1	2.7	3.1
Faith-based Organizations	6.4	6.0	3.9	3.9	3.6	3.1
Business Groups	5.3	5.3	4.2	4.6	3.6	3.0
Women's Organizations	6.3***	2.6	4.5***	1.6	4.5**	2.2
Labor Unions	3.0	3.4+	2.0	2.9***	1.7	2.2
Years of Community Residence (Mean)	32	34	32	31	25	23
Sense of Linked Fate						
With other minorities (%)	72	85***	73	72	61	69
With other co-ethnics (%)	80	87**	69	74+	74	73
With women (%)	84**	77	74	73	75	72
Marital Status						
Married (%)	47	76***	64	84***	70	88+
Married to Public Official (%)	13*	8	16***	3	11	10
Race of Spouse: White (%)	4	3	22	17	31+	20
+p<.05; *p<.01; **p<.005; ***p<.0001						

Finally, the data on marital status presents some interesting findings by race alone, gender alone, and race in interaction with gender. Asian American officials were significantly more likely to be married (84 percent) than Latinos (77 percent) and blacks (66 percent); women of color were much less likely to be married than men: just half were married at the time of the survey compared to eight in ten of the men ( $p < .0001$ ). Table 4 shows the differences by race and gender were consistent with these findings. Of more interest is the fact that black women and Latina women were significantly more likely to be married to a public official—presumably a source of social, and perhaps, political capital. Finally, while there was a statistically significant difference by gender for Asians for the percentage of officials who were married to a white spouse, the more important finding is by race alone: compared to just 3 percent of black officials, 22 percent of Asian Americans and 18 percent of Latinos/as reported being married to someone who was white. The question whether “marrying white” is, as Fraga et al (2006) suggest, a form of social or political capital cannot be answered by our findings, but the data are intriguing—especially since, as we pointed out in the discussion of Table 1, it is black women who are the closest to reaching parity in descriptive representation than either Latinas or Asian American women.

### **Political Structure and Opportunity Factors**

Table 5 shows that there are significant variations by race/ethnicity and gender on a number of factors that are structural or linked to political opportunity, such as disadvantages or barriers to election. A significantly larger percentage of Latino men than women ran as incumbents; Latina women were more likely to run in open seats than any other group. In terms of margin of victory, men were more likely across all groups to have a margin of victory of more than 10 percent but it was statistically significant only for black men ( $p < .0001$ ). Of particular interest in this set of factors is the fact that black men more than women consistently indicate that they received less support from parties and other political organizations; greater scrutiny on their qualifications, family and personal appearance. A larger percentage also said they had a harder time raising money during their campaign. Given that prior research had suggested that women would be more likely to perceive themselves as disadvantaged in these areas, it was surprising to see how consistently black men saw themselves as facing barriers in these areas. It was particularly surprising since, as Table 4 also shows, black women and Latinas were consistently more likely to say that it was harder for women than men to get ahead in elective office and to get appointed to public office; and these findings were even greater (and more highly significant) when asked specifically about minority women. A question arises: If the women felt it was harder, why did they not respond in greater percentages that they received less support from parties and political organizations, etc.? Our data suggest that other factors may be at work for women of color that lead them to feel it’s harder to make political progress—and/or that racial discrimination is an even larger problem for black men than gender discrimination for nonwhite women. Further analysis of our data will hopefully shed light on these issues.

<b>Table 5. Political Structure/Opportunity Factors, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender</b>						
	Black		Latino		Asian	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Campaign Status						
As incumbent (%)	60	64	55	67***	78	74
As challenger (%)	16	14	15	16	17	6
In open seat	23	22	30***	17	6	20
Partisan Office (%)	28	35*	11	14	20*	3
Margin of Victory						
Less than 5% (%)	11	7	11	14	21	17
More than 10% (%)	52	64***	58	61	37	58
Perceived Campaign Disadvantages						
Less support from parties	38	45**	33	36	29	40
Less support from other	33	41**	26	32+	13	39
Greater scrutiny on	28	35*	36	42	37	50
Harder times raising \$	37	43*	31	27	29	29
Less media attention	26	31	29	30	12	21
More on personal appearances	11	19***	14	16	11	13
Greater scrutiny on family	12	21***	14	24**	17	19+
Perceived Racial/Ethnic Make-up of						
% Non-Hispanic White	15	21*	15	18	40	46
% Co-ethnic	57	59	58	63*	15	15
% Mixed	27**	18	23*	18	40*	26
Perceived % of Immigrants in	9	8	27	25	23	30
Perceived chance of women than men						
get ahead in elective office	64*	61	73***	65	58	52
get appointed to public office	65**	55	75***	61	45	50
Perceived chance of minority women						
get ahead in elective office	84***	74	86***	66	65	52
get appointed to public office	78**	69	81***	59	57	50

+p<.05; \*p<.01; \*\*p<.005; \*\*\*p<.0001

## Conclusion

In examining paths to political office, we pursued Ong's questions raised in the Introduction to this paper: "Will the trajectory for women of color be gender first and race/ethnicity second? Or is it race/ethnicity first and gender second? Or a simultaneous trajectory of race and gender?" As we examined factors associated with political socialization, political and social capital, and political structures and opportunity, we find no easy answers. Or, perhaps, the answer is "all of the above." Under each of our analytical dimensions, we found evidence of commonality among women of color, most especially with black and Latina women. Statistically significant gendered differences for all three racial groups of women were found on involvement in parent-teacher and women's organizations. More commonality was found among Black and Latina women, on a number of dimensions. At the same time, men shared important gender differences vis-à-vis women, such as on political ambition. As with the case of women, more commonality appeared among Black and Latino men overall. Hence, there is justification for claiming that gender may take priority under certain conditions in shaping paths to power. And, to answer one of our initial questions in this paper, there is evidence that commonality implied by the term "women of color" has empirical support.

Nevertheless, racial differences appeared more pronounced on a number of factors in this study. No doubt the collective experience of racialized politics carries tremendous implications and consequences for the women and men in the populations in this study. It appears that overall, there is more evidence that race trumps gender than the other way around. Finally, there is also evidence that race and gender interact in important ways for these groups.

We also found evidence that the path to political office has some twists and turns for these race and gender groups. For example, political socialization variables suggested that minority men—Black and Latino—came from more socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds than their female counterparts. Yet, when comparing socioeconomic data for the elected officials themselves, black and Latina women are much more disadvantaged, finding themselves with lower household incomes. In addition, we found evidence that prominent themes in the literature on women of color, such as their connection to community surpasses that of their male counterparts, could not be substantiated in our survey data.

In sum, the very complex findings in this paper carry three major messages. First, the linear path to political office, male-centered, white-centered, and individually-centered, does not adequately capture the experience of people of color—women or men. Secondly, more theoretical mileage can be attained employing a nuanced view of how gender and race – alone or together—set the guideposts or conditions for minorities' path to political office. And, third, moving women of color from the margins to the center also appears to extend to men of color, as a better understanding of one informs a better understanding of the other.

## **Appendix A: GMCL Survey Methodology**

This telephone survey of 1,378 nonwhite elected officials was conducted between June 5, 2006 and March 21, 2007 by the Institute for Public Policy (IPP) at the University of New Mexico. The population consists of a comprehensive list of nonwhite elected officials of African American, Latino, Asian Pacific American, and American Indian origins holding positions at the state and local levels of government including state legislators, county commissioners, board of supervisors, or county council members, mayors, city/town/village council members, local school board members, and elected judges (in Texas only). The GMCL project team prepared the population database by enlisting support from national organizations and research centers that had published rosters of popularly elected officials of their respective racial/ethnic community. (For American Indian elected officials, we obtained the roster of state legislators from the National Council of State Legislators.) Multiple lists of elected officials in the population grouped by their office levels and complete with their first and last names, official titles, phone numbers, and their reported race and gender identification were prepared and handed to IPP for field work.

The IPP Survey Research Center, equipped with computer assisted telephone interviewing system and a nineteen-station survey laboratory, trained interviewers to conduct the survey under full-time supervision, using a protocol that includes at least ten attempts per number, respondent appointment tracking and follow-up, and reluctant respondent persuasion where necessary. In the event the eligible respondent from the list-based component was not at a particular number, interviewers tried to acquire a valid number for the designated point of contact. The protocol utilized to track calls and respondents is designed to maximize both the survey response rate and the consistency with which the survey is applied to assure maximum data validity and reliability. Upon request, the IPP survey research staff faxed and/or emailed a general study description to potential participants in an attempt to validate the study and the IPP as the survey implementers for this important project.

The data collection process consisted of two phases: a list-based first-round implementation phase and a non-response follow-up phase. To enhance the participation of American Indian and Asian American elected officials, staff persons associated with the Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy (CWPPP) and trained by the IPP conducted additional interviews targeting these populations between December 15 and January 31, 2007.

Overall, 1,347 interviews were completed between June 5, 2006 and March 21, 2007. An additional 31 interviews were completed by the CWPPP. The survey response rate as a percentage of the total successful contacts was 72%, the cooperation rate was 77%, and the refusal rate was 22%. It is worth noting that, overall, the refusal rates for this study were quite low for most groups and the completion rates are very respectable considering the difficulty of identifying valid telephone numbers where elected officials in state, municipal, and county



offices, as well as serving on school boards can be easily contacted. Also affecting the ability to complete interviews was the degree to which elected officials—or staff members—were willing to comply with requests via *cold-call* from an unknown entity to participate in research, especially during an active campaign season such as was true during the implementation phase of this endeavor. The average length of interviews is 44 minutes. There are no statistically significant differences in the interview length by race, gender, level of office, or implementation stage.

The final N of 1378 interviews represent 14% of the nation's total number of 10,078 nonwhite elected officials serving at the sub-national levels in 2006-07. Participants in this telephone survey include 94 Asians or 27% of the universe of 345 AEOs, 18 American Indian or Alaskan Native (AIAN) elected officials or 38% of the universe of 47 AIAN state legislators, 739 Blacks or 12% of the universe of 5973 BEOs, and 527 Latinos or 14% of the universe of 3,717 LEOs. Among the universe of 3,260 Women of color elected officials, 16% or 517 of them participated in the survey; among men of color, 13% or 861 of the 6,822 elected officials participated. Among the nation's nonwhite state legislators, 15% or 91 of the 593 males and 19% or 59 of the 306 females participated in the survey. After removing those respondents who self-identified as "non-Hispanic white" or "Caucasian" or "Anglo" alone in the racial self-id and ancestry question as well as those holding ineligible offices, the survey has a valid N of 1,354.

Because of the idiosyncratic nature of the surveyed population, we assign differential probability of selection or uneven quota rates to each of the population groups to generate enough number of respondents for analysis by race, gender, and office. For example, the quota rate for Asian male municipal officials is .5, but that for their female counterparts is 1.0; the quota rate for Black female state legislators is .5, but that for their male counterparts is .33; and the quota rate for Latino male county officials is .33, but that for their female counterparts is 1.0. The overall quota rate is .24. In the end, only three of the 22 quota cells (i.e., Black male county officials, Latino male municipal officials, and Black male municipal officials) either reach or exceed the targeted quotas; all the rest fall short of the target.

Although the survey is designed to be a probability study of the population, our ability to generalize the findings is limited by the scarcity of the population in some offices and for some racial and gender groups as well as the idiosyncratic nature of the elite population that facilitates the participation of those who have more time in hand (fewer responsibilities, less campaign need) and are more accessible for the survey interviewers (have valid contact information on records, have no or friendly gatekeepers). To the extent that the survey approximates a probability sample of the nation's nonwhite elected officials at sub-national levels of office, we estimate the margin of error or the measure of the variation one would see in reported percentages if the same survey were taken multiple times for the total N at the 95% level of confidence to be  $\pm 3\%$ . That is, the "true" percentage for the entire population would be within the margin of error around the survey's reported percentage 95% of the time. Note that the margin of error only takes into account random sampling error. It does not take into account other potential sources of error such as bias in the questions, bias due to excluding groups who could not be contacted, people refusing to respond or lying, or miscounts and miscalculations, as well as other limitations mentioned above.

## **Appendix B: Question Wording and Coding Scheme**

### Political Socialization

Came from Political Family. Q180. Would you describe yourself as having been raised in a political family? 1=yes, 0=otherwise

Immigration Generation. Q166. Were you born in the United States? Q168. Were either of your parents born outside of the United States? Q169. Were either of your grandparents born outside of the United States?

Mother's Education. Q172. What is the highest level of education attained by your mother? 1=less than high school, 2=high school graduate/GED, 3=business, technical, vocational school, 4=some college, 5= college graduate, 6= some graduate school, 7= master's degree, 8=law degree, 9= medical degree, 10=doctorate, 11=other

Father's Education. Q173. What is the highest level of education attained by your father? (same as above)

Raised by Govt Assistance. Q195. Growing up, did your family receive any type of U.S. government assistance, including food stamps, public housing, welfare, WIC, unemployment insurance, SSI, or Medicaid? 1=yes, 0=otherwise

Paying Own Education. Q171. How did you pay for your education?

1=self/out of pocket, 2=parent/family, 3=grants, 4=scholarships, 5=loans, 6=government/GI bill, 7=work study, 8=other

Prior Involvement in Black Sororities/Fraternities. Q174. On a scale from zero to ten, where zero means not at all involved and ten means extremely involved, how involved were you in black sororities/ fraternities before you ran for elected office the very first time?

### Political Capital

Age First Elected into Office. Q159. How old are you? Q6. What year were you first elected to public office? Age when first elected into office=Q159-(2007-Q6).

Newcomer. Q5. Is this your first elective position? 1=yes, 0=otherwise.

Education. Q170. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1=less than high school, 2=high school graduate/GED, 3=business, technical, vocational school,

4=some college, 5= college graduate, 6= some graduate school, 7= master's degree, 8=law degree, 9= medical degree, 10=doctorate, 11=other

Household Income. Qs191-194. I'm going to read you some broad income categories. Please STOP me when I get to the one that includes the estimated annual income for your household in 2005. Was it: 1=Less than 10k, 2=10k to less than 20k, 3=20k to less than 30k,.....20=200k or more

Veteran Status. Q165. Are you a veteran of the U.S. military? 1=yes, 0=otherwise

Religion. Q182. What is your religious preference? 1= Protestant, 2= Roman Catholic, 3= Jewish, 4= LDS, 5=Orthodox, 6=Islam/Muslim, 7=Nation of Islam, 8=Buddhist, 9=Hindu, 10=Agnostic/Atheist/No religion, 11=other

Political Party Affiliation. Q79. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as Republican, Democrat, Independent, or of another political affiliation? 1=None, 2=Republican 3=Democrat, 4=Independent, 5=Other

Held Appointed Office. Q13. How many appointed positions did you hold prior to your current elected position? 1=one or more, 0=otherwise

Served as Staff. Q29. Did you ever serve on the staff of an elected public official prior to your first bid for office? 1=yes, 0=otherwise

Likelihood of Running for Higher Office. Q34. Using a scale from zero to ten, where zero means not at all likely and ten means extremely likely, how likely is it that you will run for a higher level of office when you leave your current position?

Reason for Running the First Time. Q33. Elected officials have a variety of reasons for why they first decided to run for a political office. We are interested in the most important factor that influenced your decision to run for public office the very first time. Briefly, what was the most important reason influencing your decision to run for public office the very first time?

Issue: Have a passion or interest regarding a particular issue and/or problem.

Community. (Also includes all answers coded in community ties). Focus is on the community, not on an issue, what they can do, comments about representation, etc. They want to improve the community, give back to the community, etc. In general, responses that mentioned community were coded here.

Community Ties (A subcategory of Community: Answers were also coded in community). Mentions previous connection to community.

Community/Public Service. Anything dealing with contributing or serving the public or community good or interest. Includes wanting to serve people in general, their district, city, community, and neighborhood.

Make a Change/Difference. References to wanting to influence change or to make a difference externally, as in the community, in government, or in the city.

Strategic Considerations. Run when prospect is most favorable to winning (i.e. qualified, could win, no one else ran) Demonstrates “response outcome expectations” by running for office. Includes political efficacy, meaning that they believe that they are competent or qualified to participate.

Personal. (Also includes all answers coded under ambition). A reference to self and/or family. Includes mentions of emotion or personality trait as driving force.

Ambition (A subcategory of Personal: All answers were also coded under Personal). Represents a quest for power, to get ahead.

Encouraged/ Recruited/Appointed. Includes anyone who was appointed to the position or encouraged by anybody to run.

Political Interest. Show interest in politics. Interested in being a part of politics, a part of the decision-making process.

Representation. Includes anyone who is dissatisfied with current representation, wants to increase the number of minorities in the political office, or finds a need for more/better representation for a particular group of people.

### Social Capital

Prior Engagement with Civic Organizations & Groups. Qs20-28. On a scale from zero to ten, where zero means not at all involved and ten means extremely involved, how involved were you in activities with each of the following groups before you first ran for elected office? (Response list includes: political parties, labor unions, business groups, parent teacher’s organizations or associations, election campaigns, civil rights organizations, faith-based organizations, community or neighborhood organizations, women’s organizations)

Years of Community Residence. Q18. How long had you lived in the district or area you represent before you were elected to your present office?

Sense of Linked Fate...

With other Minorities. Q56. Do you think what happens generally to other minority groups in this country affects what happens in your life and how you view politics?

With Co-Ethnics. Q58. Do you think what happens to people of your own racial or ethnic background in this country affects what happens in your life and how you view politics?  
With Women. Q60. Do you think what happens to women in this country affects what happens in your life and how you view politics? 1=yes, 0=otherwise

Marital Status—

Married. Q178. What is your marital status? 1=Single, never married, 2= married, 3= widowed, 4= separated, 5=divorced, 6= have a domestic partner

Married to Public Official. Q181. Are you currently or have you ever been married to someone who has held public or elective office? 1=yes, 0=otherwise

Race of Spouse: White. Q179. How would you describe the racial or ethnic background of your spouse or partner? 1=American Indian, 2=Asian, 3=Black, 4=Latino, 5=Non-Hispanic White, 6=other

### Political Structure/Opportunity

Campaign Status. Q35. In your most recent election for your current office, did you run as an— incumbent, challenger, or in an open seat?

Partisan Office. Q39. Was the race for your current office partisan or nonpartisan?

Margin of Victory. Q40. To the best of your recollection, was the approximate margin of victory over your closest opponent in your most recent general election: more than 10%, between 5% and 10%, less than 5%, or did you run unopposed?

Perceived Campaign Disadvantages. Some people believe that minority candidates have to overcome special obstacles when they run for elected office. For the next several questions, please tell me whether you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree that you faced any of the following obstacles during your first bid for your current office. How would you rate your level of agreement with the following statement?

Q42. I received less support from political parties than other candidates.

Q44. I received less support from other political organizations than other candidates.

Q46. I faced more questions about my qualifications and/or electability than other candidates.

Q48. I had a harder time raising money than other candidates.

Q50. I received less attention from the mainstream media than other candidates.

Q52. More comments were made about my personal appearance than about my opponents'.

Q54. My family's background received greater scrutiny than that of other candidates.

1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree, 4= strongly agree

Perceived Racial/Ethnic Make-up of Jurisdiction. Q86. Would you say that the racial or ethnic makeup of your jurisdiction is mostly: White, non-Hispanic, Black, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, American Indian, Other, Mixed.

Perceived % of Immigrants in Jurisdiction. Q87. To the best of your knowledge, about what percentage of the people who live in your jurisdiction are immigrants?

Perceived chance of women than men. Q76. Do you think it is easier or harder for women to get ahead in elective politics than it is for men? Q78. Do you think it is easier or harder for women to get appointed to public office than it is for men? 1=easier, 2=about the same, 3=harder

Perceived chance of minority women than minority men. Q72. Do you think it is easier or harder for minority women to get ahead in elective politics than it is for minority men? Q74. Do you think it is easier or harder for minority women to get appointed to public office than it is for minority men? 1=easier, 2=about the same, 3=harder

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Note: We also surveyed American Indian elected officials, but the number is too small (N=27) for purposes of comparison so we have not included them in our analysis here.

<sup>2</sup> Downloaded on 7/27/07 from [www.nlc.org/ASSETS/68D82A808E4B4F15BE1CA2A7714E710D/rmpbrieffacescc0903.pdf](http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/68D82A808E4B4F15BE1CA2A7714E710D/rmpbrieffacescc0903.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately for the purposes of this paper, he did not provide analysis of motivations for running by race or gender.