

**Changing Guards, Changing Views: Preliminary Findings from the
Gender and Multicultural Leadership Survey**

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Changing Guards, Changing Views: Preliminary Findings from the Gender and Multicultural Leadership Survey

The dramatic diversification and expansion of the nation's nonwhite population in the post-1965 era compels reconsideration of the power structure and electoral leadership governing America as a multicultural democracy. To be sure, as the nation's demographics have changed, so has its elected leadership, which has also become (albeit incrementally) more racially and ethnically diverse. This "changing of the guard" (Bositis 2001) in electoral politics raises important questions regarding race relations, political access, and representation for communities of color and the nation at large (Menifield 2001; Segura and Bowler 2005; Wolbrecht and Hero 2005; McClain and Stewart 2006).

Although a growing number of surveys on the nation's elected officials have been conducted to date, they tend to be narrow in focus and limited in scope, either in level of office, racial and gender representation, or geographic area of interest (e.g., Dodson 1991; Dodson and Carroll 1991; Reingold 1992; Takash 1997; Donahue 1999; Prindeville and Gomez 1999; Lind and Finley 2000; Bositis 2001; Geron and Lai 2001; Carroll 2002; Hess 2002; Fraga, Martinez-Ebers, Lopez, and Ramirez 2005; Ramakrishan and Lewis 2005). In order to provide a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the political implications of the growing presence of women and racial/ethnic minorities in the nation's governing institutions, we argue that research on minority political incorporation should focus on minority elected officials and adopt a systematic analysis of the potential for coalition and/or conflict among communities of color. Scholarship in this vein may shed light on how to assure that as the United States becomes a "majority-

minority” society, the result will be an increased sharing of power among diverse groups rather than merely an increase in the percentage of the population that is disenfranchised.

To what extent do elected leaders of color (and women of color) coalesce in their experiences of political socialization and views on representation? What is their perceived relationship to the civic institutions that cultivated them and to the constituencies that elected them? How do male and female elected leaders of color differ in backgrounds, experiences, and policy positions? And where do opportunities lie for coalition-building by gender and/or race? These are the major research questions for this research report.

This paper reports the preliminary findings from the 2006 Gender and Multicultural Leadership (GMCL) Survey. The GMCL survey is the nation’s first multiracial and multi-office survey of female and male African American, Latino, Asian American, and American Indian elected officials at state and local levels of office. Data used in the current report cover those individuals interviewed in June and July 2006 who represent the nation’s nonwhite local elected officials (NLEOs). The respondents in this survey are those officials who hold positions at the local levels of government, which include county commissioners and members of county boards of supervisors or county councils, mayors, city/town/village council members (including those on boards of aldermen/selectmen), and local school board/committee members.

These officials are on the front lines of democratic government, so to speak; they represent democracy at the grass-roots, in formal leadership positions. We use the new and unique set of elite data from the local component of the GMCL survey to provide some first-cut answers regarding who they are, how they get to where they are, for whom

they believe they speak, what they think of the opportunities for women and minorities in the U.S. system, and how much they support or oppose policy proposals affecting the welfare of the nation's minorities and women.

Survey Methodology

Telephone interviews were conducted between June and July 2006 with a sample of randomly selected individuals from a national population of nonwhite elected officials segmented by race, gender, and level of office. The sampling frame was developed from a comprehensive national database of nonwhite elected officials constructed by the author team (see Hardy-Fanta, Sierra, Lien, Pinderhughes, and Davis 2005; Lien, Pinderhughes, Hardy-Fanta, and Sierra 2006, for details). Differential quota rates were used to generate sufficient cases for analysis by race, gender, and office. As a consequence, certain subgroups were over-sampled (see below). Interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes each. The margin of error of the sample is plus or minus 3.3% at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error is larger for certain subgroups. Extensive multi-mode call attempts were made to achieve an overall response rate of 82%.

The resultant sample contains a total N of 869 respondents; 61% hold positions at the municipal level, 22% at the school board level, and 17% at the county level of governance. Over half of these elite respondents (55% or 481) are Black, 41% or 352 are Latino, and 4% or 36 are Asian. Among these Black locally elected officials (BLEOs), two-thirds are municipal officials, as are 55% of the Latino locally elected officials (LLEOs), but only 44% of the Asian local elected officials (ALEOs). The majority of the surveyed Asians are school board members, but they are only 12% among the surveyed Blacks and 31% among the surveyed Latinos. Forty percent of these

NLEOs are women; they constitute a greater proportion among Blacks (46%) than Latinos (33%) or Asians (31%). However, women respondents are a slim majority at the school board level for both Blacks (57%) and Latinos (54%) while exactly half of the Black municipal officials are women.

Compared to the national NLEO population identified by the GMCL database, which includes 53% municipal officials, 36% school board members, and 11% county officials, the survey data used in this report slightly over-sampled elected officials at municipal and county levels by 8 and 6 percentage points each while they under-sampled those at the school board level by 14 percentage points. With women constituting 32% of the nation's total NLEO population, the GMCL survey reported here over-sampled female respondents by 8 percentage points. With a racial breakdown of 59% Black, 38% Latino, and 3% Asian in the national NLEO population, the survey's racial distribution is off by four percentage points for Blacks, three percentage points for Latinos, and one percentage point for Asians. Because of the small N of Asians, caution is needed in interpreting findings regarding this group of respondents.

Given the preliminary nature of the data in this report, no weights are assigned to the current data, but we expect to assign weights in the full and final report of the GMCL survey. The NLEOs in the current data are treated as one national sample; no geographic data are available until the completion of the entire survey, which is expected in early October 2006 when an estimated total of 2,500 interviews are completed.

Who Participated in the Survey? A Profile of the Elite Respondents

Family Background. A higher proportion among female (38%) than male (30%)

NLEOs were raised in a political family.¹ A lower proportion of female (14%) than male (21%) respondents were raised in families supported by government assistance; the reported percentage among Latinos (21%) and Blacks (17%) is much higher than that among Asians (6%).

Veteran and Marital Status. About one in five NLEOs are veterans. There is little racial difference but substantial gender difference in veteran status. Every one in three male NLEOs is a veteran; only 2% of female NLEOs are. There are also substantial gender differences in marital status. Every eight in 10 male NLEOs are married, but only half of all female NLEOs are. Two in 10 female NLEOs are divorced, 15% are widowed, and 10% have never married. Among those married, a higher proportion of females (14%) than males (5%) are married to a public official and a higher percentage of Asians (27%) than Latinos (18%) or Blacks (4%) are married to non-Hispanic whites.

Education and Means of Support. Female and male NLEOs also differ in their educational attainment in that 67% of females have completed a college or higher degree but only 57% of males have done so. Female and male NLEOs do not diverge greatly in their methods of paying for their education, but some differences appear: 17% of females report having their education paid for by parents compared to 9% among males; 21% of females report having received grants compared to 14% among males; and about one in five males report having received government support through the GI bill compared to 2% of the females. For both sexes, about 40% paid for their education out of their own pockets; 23% paid through loans; 13% received scholarships; and about 1 in 5 worked to support their own education.

¹ Percentage differences reported in the paper are generally statistically significant at the $p \leq .05$ level unless otherwise noted.

Nativity, Homeland Politics, and Language Ability. Only 6% of the elected officials in our sample were born outside of the United States, with the percentage of Asians (52%) far exceeding that of Latinos (10%) and Blacks (0.5%). However, 11% report having been educated outside of the States, with the percentage of Asians (48%) again being much higher than that of Latinos (14%) and Blacks (6%). About half (49%) speak another language in addition to English, and 80% report having paid attention to politics of their homeland or country of ancestral origin—60% indicate having paid a lot of attention. Surprisingly, a higher proportion of Blacks (86%) than Asians (77%) or Latinos (73%) report having paid attention to politics of the homeland or country of origin. Not surprisingly, a much higher percentage of Latinos (95%) than Asians (74%) or Blacks (14%) speak a language other than English. Men and women do not differ in their nativity or attention paid to homeland politics, but a greater proportion of men (55%) than women (42%) speak a second language in addition to English.

Political Trajectories

Characteristics of Current Offices: Three-fourths of the offices held by the local NLEOs in the sample are nonpartisan. Over seven in 10 positions are part-time; and about seven in 10 have received annual salary compensation for the job. A greater proportion of males (75%) than females (62%) and of Blacks (78%) than Latinos (59%) or Asians (61%) report having received an annual salary for their service in their current office. In terms of district seat, over four in 10 (43%) were elected at-large, about one-third (36%) were elected from single-member districts, and one in five (21%) were elected from multimember districts. About an equal percentage of male and female NLEOs report winning office in district or at-large elections, but a slightly higher

percentage of females (24%) than males (18%) report winning office in multimember districts. Substantial differences exist across racial groups in that a significantly higher percentage of Blacks (42%) than Latinos (30%) or Asians (17%) were elected from single-member districts. To a lesser extent, a greater percentage of Blacks (25%) than Latinos (16%) or Asians (13%) were elected from multimember districts. Conversely, a much higher percentage of Asians (70%) than Latinos (54%) or Blacks (34%) were elected in at-large elections.

Career Paths. Two thirds of the NLEOs in the survey are in their first elective office (but not necessarily in their first term). About half held appointed office(s) prior to election to their first office. Over six in 10 ran as incumbents in their most recent election for their current office, one in five ran for open seats, and 17% ran as challengers. About six in 10 (59%) indicate that their margin of victory over their closest opponent was more than 10%; 14% report running unopposed in their most recent general election; and only 12% report having a very competitive election in which the margin of victory was less than 5%.

The lack of career mobility among the local officials is partly reflected in their lack of career ambition where only 17% indicate a very strong likelihood to run for a higher office and 34% indicate the opposite. A greater proportion of males (20%) than females (12%) indicate a very strong likelihood that they will run for a higher office. At the same time, about the same proportion of males (32%) and females (36%) indicate that it is extremely unlikely that they will run for a higher office. The difference among officials of the three levels of local office is also small. Three in 10 school board officials indicate no ambition to run for a higher office; the percentage is slightly higher

among municipal officials (34%) and county officials (37%). However, school board officials also register a lower percentage of those who indicate they are very likely to run for a higher office (13%) than that of municipal officials (18%) or county officials (16%).

Prior Involvement in Civic Institutions. The NLEOs report various degrees of involvement with political parties, organizations, and groups before they first ran for office (Table 1). On the low end, over half do not report any involvement in labor unions and 2 in 5 do not report involvement in women’s organizations; only 1 in 10 report extremely strong involvement in either type of organization. Conversely, less than 1 in 10 did not have any prior involvement in community based or neighborhood organizations while 1 in 3 were extremely involved. Only 14% did not have any prior involvement with political parties; a similar proportion (17%) indicates heavy involvement with parties. On average, NLEOs report a higher level of prior involvement with community/neighborhood organizations, PTA/Os, election campaigns, and parties than with special interest groups and unions. The prior involvement of female NLEOs follows the same pattern except that they generally have higher levels of prior involvement than their male counterparts, especially regarding women’s organizations, PTA/Os, and community/neighborhood or faith-based organizations.

Among Blacks, 1 in 5 indicate being extremely involved in Black sororities or fraternities before first running for office, but a higher percentage of females (60%) than males (48%) were not involved at all.²

Campaign Trails. When asked of the obstacles faced during a respondent’s first bid for his/her current office, at least one-third agree or strongly agree to the statements

² We included a question on involvement in Black sororities and fraternities specifically for Black college-educated respondents because of the traditional role of these organizations in political trajectories (Bositis 2001).

that, compared to other candidates, they received less support from political parties and other political organizations, that they faced greater scrutiny over their personal qualifications and/or electability, and that they had a harder time raising money. About three in 10 agree or strongly agree that they received less attention from the mainstream media than other candidates. And about one in six believes that they received greater scrutiny of their family's background or more comments on their personal appearances than their opponents. Significantly, a much higher percentage of male than female NLEOs feel that they received less support from political parties and other political organizations and that they faced greater scrutiny over their personal qualifications, personal appearance, and family background in their first bid for the current office. Women and men of color do not differ much in their experiences of raising money and getting media attention.

A significantly higher percentage of Asians (59%) than Latinos (38%) or Blacks (31%) mention that they faced greater scrutiny over their personal qualifications for the office sought. A significantly higher percentage of Blacks (41%) and Asians (37%) than Latinos (29%) mention that they had a harder time raising money. And a higher percentage of Latinos than Blacks or Asians mention that they faced greater scrutiny over their family background and personal appearance when seeking their current office. There are few perceived differences across the racial groups in terms of support from political parties and other organizations or in the amount of media attention received.

Constituent Relationships and Perceived Representative Roles

Political Orientations, Class Background, Nativity, and Racial Makeup. About eight in 10 NLEOs are Democrats in political party affiliation and, among the rest, there is a greater proportion of Independents (11%) than Republicans (7%). Despite the highly

Democratic skew in partisanship, about an equal share of these elected officials indicate that their views on most matters having to do with politics would fall under the liberal, conservative, and middle-of-the-road banners.

When asked to characterize the major party orientation of constituents in their own jurisdiction, two-thirds indicate Democrat, 11% indicate Republican, and 21% say that it is evenly divided between the two major parties. Blacks report the highest percentage of Democratic partisanship among constituents (72%), followed by Latinos (65%) and Asians (53%). Conversely, Asians report the highest percentage of Republican partisanship (27%), followed by Latinos (14%), and Blacks (7%).

With regard to the ideological orientation of the majority of constituents in their jurisdiction, these elected officials estimate that close to four in 10 among their constituents are middle-of-the road on most political issues, but the percentage of those who are somewhat or very conservative (35%) is perceived to be higher than those who are somewhat or very liberal (27%). Interestingly, a greater percentage of Latinos (44%) report a higher degree of perceived constituent conservatism than do Blacks (31%) or Asians (32%), while Asians report a higher degree of perceived constituent liberalism (41%) than Blacks (33%) or Latinos (18%).

Seven in 10 respondents report an annual household income for 2005 to be under \$100,000, with \$70,000 to be the median category. The mean annual household income category reported for Asians (\$120,000) is higher than that for Latinos (\$83,000) or Blacks (\$75,000). When asked to characterize the class background of the majority of their constituents, close to four in 10 among the NLEOs in the survey indicate “working class,” 23% indicate “middle class,” 15% stipulate “poor,” and 20% indicate that it is

mixed. Asians report a far smaller percentage of constituents who are in the “working class” (9%) than Blacks (36%) or Latinos (39%); Asians also report a far greater percentage of constituents who are in the “upper middle class” (35%) than the 4% reported by Blacks and Latinos.

About half of the NLEOs believe that the percentage of immigrants living in their jurisdictions is 10% or more. The average estimated percent of residents who are immigrants is 17%, but the estimated percentage for Blacks (8%) is far lower than that for Latinos (27%) and Asians (26%).

In terms of the racial or ethnic makeup of their own jurisdiction, 64% of Latinos indicate that most of their constituents are Latino, 60% of Blacks indicate most of their constituents are Black, but only 8% of Asians indicate that most of their constituents are Asian. For Asians, the most common constituent race is either non-Hispanic white (41%) or mixed (35%). About 1 in 6 of Blacks and Latinos indicate that their major constituency base is white and 20% of them indicate that their constituents are mostly mixed in racial background.

Frequency of Constituent Contacts and Reasons for Contacts. Over six in 10 NLEOs report having been contacted by their constituents up to 14 times a week. The rest report a higher volume of office contacts, but the most common frequency is 10 times a week. There is no significant racial difference in the frequency of contacts. Over half of LLEOs report Latinos as the major group contacting them; close to four in 10 of BLEOs report Blacks as the major contacting group; about one in five BLEOs mentioned whites as the major contacting group. Nevertheless, for ALEOs, more report whites as the major contacting group (44%) than Asians (19%).

About six in 10 NLEOs report voicing a community concern as the primary reason for their being contacted by constituents. About one in four mention help with a personal or family problem as the primary reason for constituent contacts. Less than one in 10 mention influencing governmental policy or seeking help in finding a job as the primary reason for constituent contacts. There are more gender than racial differences in the primary reason for contacting officials, with female NLEOs receiving a higher percentage of requests to voice community concerns and male NLEOs receiving a higher percentage of requests to help influence governmental policy and to help find a job.

Concept of Representation and Perceived Policy Impact. When asked of their concept of representation, over six in 10 NLEOs believe that, in a situation when the views of their constituents conflict with their own, it is more important that their votes reflect their own informed judgment and trust of their constituents rather than the views of their constituents. This perception does not differ much by gender or level of office, but over eight in 10 ALEOs express a “trustee” view of representation, which is significantly higher than the 60% reported among BLEOs and LLEOs.

Nearly nine in 10 NLEOs believe that the increased presence of women and minorities in public office has made some or a lot of difference in helping to pass policy initiatives benefiting women, nonwhite women, the economically disadvantaged, and racial minorities. Men and women of color do not differ in their assessment except that a higher percentage of men (95%) than women (85%) believe that the increased presence of women elected officials has made some or a lot of difference in making policies to benefit racial minorities. Importantly, Blacks are more likely than Latinos, who are more

likely than Asians, to perceive the positive policy impact of women and minorities in public office for disadvantaged groups.

Views on Identity Politics and Perceived Opportunities for Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The NLEOs in the survey generally report a strong sense of common identity or linked fate with their co-ethnics, other minority groups, or women. As shown in Table 2, at least three in four indicate that what happens to people of these minority backgrounds will affect what happens in their own life and their view on politics. There are significant gender and racial differences in terms of identity with other minority groups in the United States, with men reporting a higher level of linked fate than women (79% vs. 71%), and Blacks and Latinos reporting a higher level of linked fate with other U.S. minority groups than Asians.

In terms of identity with people who are of the same racial or ethnic background, a significantly higher proportion of men (81%) than women (74%) express a sense of linked fate with co-ethnics. Black LEOs also express a higher sense of linked fate with co-ethnics than their Latino and Asian counterparts; among those who do, Asians have a much weaker degree of linked fate with co-ethnics than Blacks or Latinos. There is little gender or racial difference in terms of identity with women in the United States; but among those who do so identify, a significantly higher proportion of women than men (58% vs. 42%)--and of Blacks and Latinos than Asians--believe that what happens to U.S. women will affect them a lot.

When asked to evaluate the chances for women and nonwhite women to get equal opportunities for employment and careers in politics, Table 3 shows that about eight in 10

females think that it is harder for women than men to get jobs suitable to their education and training, to get ahead in elective politics, and to get appointed to public office. Over seven in 10 females also believe that it is harder for women than men to be accepted as a professional. Males are much less inclined to agree that such hardships are encountered by women. Blacks generally are more likely to perceive these gender-based hardships than Latinos or Asians, except in the perceived chances of getting adequate jobs for women.

Women and men of color in the sample do not differ too much in their assessment of nonwhite women's chances to get adequate jobs and to get ahead in elective politics compared to nonwhite men. But a higher proportion of women than men perceive nonwhite women as having greater difficulties than nonwhite men in getting accepted as members of a profession and getting appointed to public office. Compared to Latinos, a lower percentage of Blacks perceive hardships for nonwhite women than nonwhite men to get adequate jobs, be accepted as equal professionals, or to win appointed or elective offices. Overall, for both women and nonwhite women, the greatest obstacle as perceived by Asians is to get a job suitable to their education and training; for Blacks and Latinos it is to get ahead in elective politics. Latinos also are more likely to agree than the other racial groups that it is more difficult for nonwhite women to get jobs suitable to their education and training.

Perceived Political Incorporation and Potential for Building Coalitions

Just over half believe that they vote about equally with a voting majority and voting minority on the body in which they serve. Nearly all the NLEOs report that they do not always vote with the minority position. Close to 2 in 5 believe that they are voting

mostly with the majority. This pattern of response does not differ much by racial group or level of office, but a greater proportion of men (11%) than women (6%) feel that they are in the voting minority, a greater proportion of Asians (47%) than Blacks (36%) or Latinos (41%) report that they are mostly in the voting majority, and a smaller proportion of Asians (44%) than Blacks (54%) or Latinos (51%) report voting about equally with the majority and the minority.

When asked to estimate the likelihood of policy support from a list of groups, Table 4 shows that, on average, colleagues who share their political partisanship, ideological stance, and racial/ethnic background are rated higher by the NLEOs than those who are not. Although less than one-third of the NLEOs believe that they are likely to receive very high policy support from each of the listed groups, virtually none believe that they are not likely to receive any support from the same list of groups. Moreover, the perceived likelihood of support from those who share their political ideology is rated higher than those who share their ethnicity or partisanship and, for women, gender. Also, a significantly higher percentage of women than men consider those who share their political ideology as well as ethnicity and/or gender as nonwhite women to be greater supporters for their policy initiatives. Significant racial differences between BLEOs and LLEOs exist in the perceived likelihood of support from co-partisans and co-ethnics, with Blacks reporting a higher level of support than Latinos. Different than their Black and Latino counterparts, the average score of ALEOs for the perceived likelihood of policy support from white women is higher than that for nonwhite women and other nonwhites.

Positions on Current Policy Issues: Affirmative Action and the VRA

Affirmative Action. The NLEOs in the current data give highly positive marks when assessing the usefulness of affirmative action programs in helping women and people who share their racial or ethnic background to achieve equity. Using a scale from zero to 10, where zero is not at all important and 10 is extremely important, the average score of the perceived importance for advancing women's opportunities and that for racial minorities is 8.6 for both questions. More than half of the respondents think that affirmative action programs are extremely important in advancing opportunities for women (54%) and racial and ethnic minorities (56%). There is little difference in response patterns by gender. However, there are substantial racial differences, with the average score on the perceived importance in achieving women's equity being 9.1 for Blacks, 8.0 for Latinos, and 7.1 for Asians, with the average score on the perceived importance in achieving racial and ethnic equity being 9.3 for Blacks, 8.0 for Latinos, and 6.2 for Asians.

Over one-third of the NLEOs believe that they had personally benefited from affirmative action programs in higher education and about one in four believe the same with regard to their own opportunities in hiring or promotion. A slightly higher percentage of women than men (40% vs. 33%)-- but a substantially higher percentage of Blacks (43%) than Latinos (28%) or Asians (17%)-- believe that they have benefited personally from the educational opportunities afforded them by affirmative action. A near equal percentage of women (28%) and men (26%) but a significantly higher percentage of Blacks (37%) than Latinos (16%) and Asians (7%) believe that they have benefited personally from the employment opportunities.

When asked to compare if it is race, gender, or socioeconomic class that has posed the most important problem facing minority communities today, a higher proportion of the nation's NLEOs mention class (50%) than race (43%) or gender (22%). Substantial racial differences are found in the responses with a higher percentage of Blacks (50%) mentioning race as the most important problem than Latinos (33%) or Asians (32%). However, a much higher percentage of Asians (77%) and Latinos (55%) than Blacks (45%) consider class as the most important problem facing minority communities.

Voting Rights When asked to assess the importance of the current Voting Rights Act in protecting equal political access for people of the same racial or ethnic background as each of the NLEOs in the survey, the average score for Blacks on a 0-to-10 scale is 9.7, as compared to the 8.6 score for Latinos and 7.7 for Asians. This finding reaffirms the continuing centrality of the voting rights issue to the nonwhite—especially Black--community.

When asked to assess the importance of specific voting rights provisions, a slightly higher percentage of Latinos (85%) and Blacks (82%) than Asians (77%) mention the desire to keep the bilingual ballot provision, a significantly higher percentage of Blacks (86%) than Latinos (79%) and Asians (71%) would like to preserve Section 5 (i.e., the pre-clearance provision), and as high as 95% of Blacks and 88% of Latinos and 77% of Asians would like to continue the practice of sending federal observers to polling places where electoral discrimination based on race or color is suspected.

In their most recent election to their current office, exactly a third offered written materials for voters in a language other than English. The percentage is highest among Latinos at 56%, followed by Asians at 38%, and by Blacks at 16%.

Attitudes Toward Other Current Policy Debates

Table 5 summarizes the respondents' opinions on other current policy debates in terms of their degree of disagreements with a list of current policy proposals.

Anti-Discrimination Laws Regarding Women: About nine in 10 NLEOs disagree with the proposals to end laws prohibiting job discrimination against women and those prohibiting sexual harassment against women. There is little gender or racial difference on these proposals.

War in Iraq: About eight in 10 respondents disagree with the decision of using military force against Iraq; and close to nine in 10 agree with the proposal to bring U.S. troops home from Iraq as soon as possible. Women show a stronger level of opposition to the Iraqi war and are more supportive of the proposal to promptly withdraw troops. BLEOs are more strongly against the Iraqi war and for bringing troops home as soon as possible than are LLEOs or ALEOs.

Abortion: About eight in 10 NLEOs also disagree with a proposal to overturn the *Roe v. Wade* decision. There are few gender or racial differences, but Asians report the highest level of disapproval with such a proposal. In a separate question soliciting respondents' views on abortion, just over half believe that, by law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a private decision to be made with her physician; close to four in 10 believe that the law should permit abortion in cases of rape, incest, or

when the life of the woman is in danger; only 6% believe that abortion should never be permitted by law.

Gay Marriage: Over half do not support the proposal to allow gay and lesbian couples to form civil unions. Blacks have a higher level of disapproval than Latinos; the level of disapproval among Asians is much lower than that expressed by the other groups.

Death Penalty: On whether to allow the death penalty as an option for punishment, just below half oppose the proposal, with women and Blacks expressing a higher level of opposition than Latinos or Asians.

Immigrant Rights: About six in 10 oppose the idea of issuing drivers' licenses to immigrants regardless of their legal status as a concern for public safety. The level of opposition is about 30 percentage points higher among Blacks than among Latinos or Asians. Just over half also oppose the idea of allowing legal non-citizen parents to vote in school board elections, with women expressing a lower level of disapproval than men and Asians expressing the highest level of disapproval. However, only one in four oppose the idea of providing bilingual services to non-English speakers; the level of opposition is lower among Latinos than Asians or Blacks.

Childcare Services: Less than two in 10 would oppose the idea of having government provide childcare services to all willing parents and based on their ability to pay. The level of opposition is much lower among Blacks than among Latinos or Asians. Even fewer NLEOs would oppose the idea of increasing subsidized childcare for poor working mothers in welfare-to-work programs, but the percentage of Latinos and Asians who oppose the idea is nearly double that of Blacks. Nevertheless, there are few gender or racial differences in the overwhelming support for allowing college education to be

counted toward the “work requirement” for women receiving welfare. The main exception is voiced by Asians; still no more than 1 in 4 oppose this policy proposal.

Views On Education Policies

Table 6 reports findings on NLEOs’ attitudes towards a series of education policies or proposals in terms of their degree of support (in descending order).

Prayer in Public School: About three in four respondents favor a constitutional amendment to permit prayer in public schools; support is especially strong among Blacks. However, only two-thirds of Latinos and one-third of Asians favor the proposal. Two-thirds of school board members also favor the idea.

Bilingual Education: About two-thirds favor passing a law mandating the provision of bilingual education in public schools. There are few gender or racial differences, but support among Asians is lower.

“No Child Left Behind” Act (NCLB): Just half of the NLEOs favor the NCLB; support is lower among women and Asians. It is also lower among school board members than other local elected officials, with only about two in five favoring the Act.

Teaching Creationism: Just over a third of NLEOs favor mandating the teaching of creationism in public schools. The opinion is nearly the same across groups except that only 7% among Asians favor the idea.

School Vouchers: Less than three in 10 favor issuing school vouchers, with a higher percentage of Latinos than Blacks or Asians in support of this policy. Less than two in 10 among school board members favor the idea.

Banning Race in Admissions: Less than one in three would favor banning affirmative consideration of racial or ethnic background in school admissions. The pattern of opposition is consistent across groups.

Discussion and Conclusion

A major purpose of this research is to assess the political implications of the increasing presence of nonwhite men and women in elected office for democratic governance. Because of the dramatic and continuing rise in the number of Black elected officials after the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the predominant image of the nation's nonwhite elected officials has been shaped by that of Blacks—a group that has been distinctive in its solidly liberal, Democratic outlook (Davidson and Grofman 1994). But with the continuing diversification and expansion of the nation's nonwhite population, elected leadership itself has undergone demographic change. This study explores empirically whether or not the nation's nonwhite local elected officials (NLEOs) can be characterized as one liberal, Democratic bloc in their political ideology, partisanship, and policy views. Indeed, do they share a strong sense of common identity as racial minorities? We now offer some answers to those questions.

We find that most of the NLEOs are Democrat by partisanship even if most of their current offices are non-partisan. Contrary to popular perceptions, the NLEOs in the survey are not predominantly liberal in political ideology but are equally distributed across liberal, conservative, and middle-of-the road identifications. Although the respondents generally share a strong sense of common identity or linked fate with members in their own ethnic group and those in other racial minority groups, there are significant gender and racial differences. In fact, in addition to concepts of cross-racial

and co-ethnic linked fate, we find that female and male NLEOs have distinct paths of family socialization, prior civic group engagement, military service, educational attainment, language ability, experiences on the campaign trail, career ambition, and perceived chances of getting ahead for women and racial/ethnic minorities.

Being women of color, however, is not always considered a disadvantage when compared to the experiences of institutional and group support for men of color. A case in point is the reported lower level of support from political parties and other political organizations as well as the perceived greater scrutiny over personal qualifications, personal appearances, and family background for male respondents. Another case in point is their higher perceived level of policy initiative support from colleagues who share their political ideology and their race and gender.

Once these women of color are elected into office, gender-based differences in concepts of representation and policy views (as compared to those held by men of color) generally fade while race-based differences persist. To be sure, we see that female NLEOs are contacted more by their constituents to speak to community concerns. We also observe a lower sense of linked fate with co-ethnics and other nonwhites among women of color. But overall, on most policy questions, it appears that convergence and commonality across gender and race predominate over difference and opposition among the groups—especially in the attitudes towards affirmative action, voting rights, abortion rights, bilingual services, and welfare programs affecting women and children. There are some differences by gender and race here and there, but overall there are huge areas of agreement or commonality. Hence, there is a sense that a politics of color overrides the

particular experiences of these groups and individuals—and that includes men and women.

The particular issue of class raises some interesting findings. When class enters as a factor, Blacks take a different stand from Latinos and Asians in their assessment of its relative significance as compared to race. Whereas Blacks perceive race as the most important problem facing minority communities today, both Asians and Latinos consider class as the most important problem. Somewhat expectedly, given the group's popular image, Asians project the most affluent profile, both in their personal economic standing and in what they perceive to be as that of their constituents. Yet they see getting a job suitable to their education and training as the greatest obstacle in getting ahead in U.S. society--an obstacle that is rated the lowest by Blacks. Latinos/as, on the other hand, share the Asian position with regard to obstacles faced by minority women. Also, in their reported difficulties in campaign experiences, a higher percentage of Asians (and Blacks) than Latinos report having difficulty raising campaign money. Asians also register the highest frequency in perceiving facing greater scrutiny over their personal qualification when running for the current office.

In the final analysis, we see an answer to the shape and implications of the “changing of the guard” as both simple and complex. If the focus is on the aggregate distribution, the changing profile and across group variations in the socialization background, identity, preferences, and issue positions of the nation's local elected officials of color are veiled by the continuing dominance of Black experiences and views among the NLEOs in the survey sample. However, when the data are disaggregated by gender and by race, we see a greater divergence in aspects of political behavior among

these minority elites. These findings point to both hopes and concerns for the ability to build electoral coalitions among communities of color and between whites and nonwhites.

Table 1. NLEOs' Degree of Group Involvement Before First Campaign for Office

	% Extremely Involved	% Not at all Involved	Avg. score on a 0-10 scale	--- among women	--- among Blacks	--- among Latinos	--- Among Asians
Community/Neighborhood Organizations	35	7	7.3	7.6*	7.8	6.7	6.5
PTA/Os	27	17	6.1	7.0*	6.7	5.4	5.2
Election Campaigns	20	17	5.6	5.5	6.0	5.1	5.1
Political Parties	17	14	5.5	5.5	6.1	4.9	4.1
Civil Rights Organizations	22	25	5.2	5.4*	6.9	3.1	2.8
Faith-based Organizations	22	26	5.1	5.5*	6.3	3.8	2.9
Business Groups	12	20	4.8	4.9	5.3	4.4	3.5
Women's Organizations	10	41	3.5	5.6*	4.2	2.6	2.3
Labor Unions	11	54	2.7	2.4*	3.0	2.5	1.7

Source: The Gender and Multicultural Leadership Survey. Data reported were collected between June 5 and July 28, 2006.

Note: *denotes significant gender difference at the .5 level of significance.

Table 2. NLEOs' Views on Identity Politics

	All	Women	Blacks	Latinos	Asians
<i>Do you think what happens generally to other minority groups in this country affects what happens in your life and how you view politics?</i>					
% Having a sense of linked fate with other minority groups	76	71*	79	74	62
% Affect a Lot	48	51*	48	47	43
<i>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?</i>					
% Having a sense of linked fate with co-ethnics	78	74*	82	73	73
% Affect a Lot	49	50	51	49	21
<i>Do you think what happens to women in this country affects what happens in your life and how you view politics?</i>					
% Having a sense of linked fate with U.S. women	77	78	79	74	70
% Affect a Lot	46	55*	48	47	17

Note: *denotes significant gender difference at the .5 level of significance.

Table 3. NLEOs' Perceived Chances of Getting Ahead for Women and Racial/ethnic Minorities

<i>Do you think it is easier or harder for women to----- than it is for men?</i>	get a job suitable to their education and training	get ahead in elective politics	be accepted as a member of a profession, such as law or medicine	get appointed to public office
Female	78	84	72	81
Male	58	67	56	63
Black	63	78	65	74
Latino	70	72	60	65
Asian	72	58	58	61
<i>Do you think it is easier or harder for minority women to----- than it is for minority men?</i>				
Female	60	68	64	67
Male	56	62	53	57
Black	48	61	55	59
Latino	70	69	61	65
Asian	69	56	67	56

Note: Entries are % perceiving it harder among each of the gender and racial groups.

Table 4. NLEOs' Perceived Likelihood of Group-Based Support for NLEOs' Policy Initiatives

Source of Support	% perceive support as extremely likely	Avg. score on a 0-10 scale	--- among women	--- among Blacks	--- among Latinos	Among Asians
Ideological Pals	30	7.9	8.2*	8.0	7.8	8.4
Co-Ethnics	28	7.9	7.9	8.2	7.5	7.3
Co-Partisans	28	7.7	7.7	7.9	7.4	7.0
Nonwhite Women	20	7.0	7.4*	7.1	6.9	6.8
Other Nonwhites	15	6.8	6.7	6.9	6.7	6.2
White Women	11	6.5	6.6	6.5	6.4	6.9

Note: *denotes significant gender difference at the .5 level of significance.

Table 5. Percentage Distribution of NLEOs' Attitudes Towards Current Policy Debates

<i>Now we're going to ask your opinion on a range of policy proposals currently being debated.</i>	% strongly disagree or disagree	--- among Women	--- among Blacks	--- among Latinos	--- among Asians
<i>Please tell me whether you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree with each of the following policy proposals.</i>					
<i>States no longer need laws prohibiting job discrimination against women.</i>	91	90	91	90	87
<i>States no longer need laws prohibiting sexual harassment against women.</i>	90	90	92	87	93
<i>The US made the right decision in using military force against Iraq.</i>	81	86*	90	74	76
<i>The United States Supreme Court should overturn the Roe versus Wade decision, which made abortion legal during the first three months of pregnancy.</i>	78	80	79	77	83
<i>Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally form civil unions, giving them some of the legal rights of married couples.</i>	59	56	67	51	28
<i>As a matter of public safety, drivers' licenses should be made available to immigrants, regardless of their legal status in the U.S.</i>	60	61	74	44	46
<i>Non-citizen legal immigrants should be allowed to vote in school board elections if they have children in the public schools.</i>	55	51	55	54	60
<i>The death penalty should be an option as a punishment for those who commit murder.</i>	46	52*	50	41	37
<i>Government agencies should provide services in a variety of languages to help non-English speaking clients.</i>	24	23	25	21	29
<i>Government should provide childcare services to all parents who desire them with fees charged according to ability to pay.</i>	18	16	13	23	26
<i>College education should be allowed to count toward the "work requirement" for women receiving welfare.</i>	16	16	15	17	25
<i>The US should bring its troops home from Iraq as soon as possible.</i>	12	7*	7	18	31
<i>Subsidized childcare should be increased for poor working mothers in welfare-to-work programs.</i>	12	11	9	16	16

Note: *denotes significant gender difference at the .5 level of significance.

Table 6. Percentage Distribution of NLEOs' Attitudes Towards Education Policies

<i>The following questions are specifically about policies concerning education. For each one, please tell me whether you would strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose each policy.</i>	% Strongly Favor or Favor	--- among Women	--- among Blacks	--- among Latinos	--- among Asians
<i>A constitutional amendment to permit prayer in public schools.</i>	72	74*	78	67	33
<i>A law mandating public schools to provide instruction in other languages for students not proficient in English.</i>	67	67	70	66	40
<i>The No Child Left Behind Act mandating public schools to meet certain testing standards for federal funding.</i>	50	46*	53	49	32
<i>A law mandating the teaching of creationism instead of evolution in public schools.</i>	37	38	39	36	7
<i>A law giving parents government-funded school vouchers to pay for tuition at the public, private, or religious school of their choice.</i>	28	28	24	34	23
<i>A law banning preferential school admission on the basis of race or ethnicity.</i>	30	29	30	31	30

Note: *denotes significant gender difference at the .5 level of significance.

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