
*THE CONTOURS AND CONTEXT
OF DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION*

Gender, Race, and Descriptive Representation
in the United States:
Findings from the Gender
and Multicultural Leadership Project

Carol Hardy-Fanta, University of Massachusetts Boston
Pei-te Lien, University of Utah
Dianne M. Pinderhughes, University of Notre Dame
Christine Marie Sierra, University of New Mexico

SUMMARY. This research draws on the nation's first comprehensive database of elected leadership of color to provide a multi-cultural, multi-office, and multi-state look at the contours and context of descriptive representation by race and gender and with women of color at the center of analysis. We find that key to the persistent trend of growth in elective office holding of the nation's Black, Latino, and Asian American communities in recent decades is the expanding size of women of color

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elected officials. Compared to whites, gender gaps in descriptive representation are smaller among nonwhite groups. Although the proportion of nonwhite population may impact the degree of electoral success, we find parity ratios to vary by race, gender, level of office, and state. For example, states that have the highest share of the black population did not produce the highest level of representation of Black women. Finally, we find that gender differences within each race are generally significant, but far greater racial differences are found among men and women of color elected officials—especially at the municipal and school board levels of offices. We conclude that women of color have played a significant role in advancing descriptive political representation of people of color and of women in the United States as a whole. doi:10.1300/J501v28n03_02 [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2006 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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INTRODUCTION

As the twenty-first century unfolds, two dominant narratives regarding the incorporation of marginalized groups into America's governing institutions emerge. On the one hand, since the liberalization of American democratic institutions in the 1960s, especially the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and the second wave of the women's movement in the 1970s, there have been dramatic increases in the number of women and people of color—men and women—who serve as elected officials. On the other hand, patterns of underrepresentation at the local, state, and federal levels persist for women and men of color, and for women in general.

This article addresses this dual narrative through an analysis of women of color elected officials in the United States today. This article has four major objectives. First, it presents a brief discussion of descriptive representation and the goal of gender and racial parity in office holding. Second, it reviews trends associated with women of color office holding in the United States. Third, we profile the current status of descriptive representation for elected officials of color by gender and race. In doing

so, we examine the extent to which the nation's nonwhite women and men have achieved parity in Congress and state legislatures as a whole as well as in top-ranked states with their respective proportions of Black, Latino, and Asian populations. Finally, we explore the context of descriptive representation by providing comparisons on key demographic characteristics of the constituents in the electoral jurisdictions these elected officials represent by gender, race, and type of office.

The research reported here is unique in that it draws on the first comprehensive database of the nation's elected leadership of color to provide a multi-cultural, multi-office, and multi-state look at the contours and context of descriptive representation with women of color at the center of the analysis. We incorporate group-specific as well as cross-group analysis to capture contemporary features of America's gendered multi-cultural leadership. We argue that, in order to interrogate the workings of the political system with regards to racial minorities of both sexes, we need a systematic examination of those who constitute the formal political leadership of color. As their numbers promise to increase in the foreseeable future, a reasonable starting point then is an assessment of descriptive gender and racial representation.

GENDER AND RACE IN THE STUDY OF DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION

Ever since Pitkin (1967) concluded that descriptive representation without substantive impact was merely symbolic, there has been considerable debate over the consequences, impact, and implications of descriptive representation for racial minority groups and women in general. Tate and Harsh's (2005) review of the literature suggests that descriptive representation is important because it was an ideal of the Founding Fathers; it leads to substantive policy changes for women and people of color; it provides symbolic power that increases voter turnout among marginalized groups; and it is valued highly by the constituents of elected officials of color.¹ They also conclude that, at least in relation to members of the U.S. House of Representatives, "the empirical literature has firmly established . . . [the importance of descriptive representation] to racial minorities and women, finding that African American members and women do bring . . . different agendas and styles" (Tate and Harsh 2005, 218-19).

While descriptive representation may not be sufficient for the achievement of political equality and policy responsiveness for marginalized

groups, scholars have increasingly pointed to its symbolic or material importance as a necessary condition or positive factor towards group empowerment (Button, Richards, and Bethne 1998; Mansbridge 1999; Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004). Moreover, an increasing research focus on women of color in the political system has generated scholarship that places questions of intersectionality into the framework of descriptive representation (see, for example, Takash 1993; Cohen, Jones and Tronto 1997; Gay and Tate 1998; Manuel 2004; García Bedolla and Scola 2006). How race and gender intersect in the representational roles and policy priorities of women (and men) of color has become an important empirical research question.

Trends in Office Holding by Gender and Race

Another dimension of studying descriptive representation is tracking it over time for previously marginalized groups by examining the trends in office holding by gender and race. Unfortunately, for decades, scholars of American politics studied gender politics as without race—and racial and ethnic politics as without gender. As one study put it, “all the women are White and all the Blacks are men,” succinctly noting the racialized and gendered invisibility of women of color through much of the social science inquiry in American politics (Hull, Bell, and Smith 1982). Certainly much of the literature on the political representation of women has been guilty, until recently, of ignoring race—even while pointing to considerable strides in the numbers of female elected officials. These strides include, for example, a rise in the number of women holding statewide office from just 7 percent in 1971 to 25.4 percent in 2004; the latter represents a dip, however, from the all-time-high of 28.5 percent in 2000 (Carroll 2004, 3). Women’s representation at the level of state legislator rose continuously from 4.5 percent in 1971 to 22.4 percent in 1999—and remains at that level today (Carroll 2004, 4).

The scholarship on women of color involves mostly group-specific inquiry (Hardy-Fanta 1993; Sierra and Sosa-Riddell 1994; Barrett 1995; Montoya, Hardy-Fanta, and Garcia 2000; Lien 2001; Ong 2001; and, in this volume, Bratton, Haynie and Reingold, Bedolla et al., Fraga et al., Orey and Smooth); other studies address more than one ethno-racial group or treat women of color as a broad category (Ortiz 1994; Lien 1998; Hawkesworth 2003; Scola 2005). Many of these scholars show a similar interest in documenting the growth in descriptive representation among women of color, showing that women of color appear to be contributing significantly to the rate of growth among elected officials of color in

recent years. This pattern is especially evident with regard to Black elected officials. Bositis (2003), Hardy-Fanta et al. (2005), and Smooth (2006) note that the election of Black female officeholders accounts for all the gains in the number of African American elected officials over the past ten years. Overall, since 1970, the number of female African American elected officials increased twenty-fold, while the number of their male counterparts increased only four-fold. In 1970, African American women numbered 160, accounting for 10.9 percent of the total number of African American elected officials. In 2001, they numbered 3,220, 35.4 percent of the total (Bositis 2002). Data on trends for Latina women elected officials are not available for each year but they also show consistent growth: in 1984, they made up just 12 percent of Latino elected officials; the percentage rose to 19.7 percent in 1988. By 2002, Latinas made up 28.3 percent of Latino elected officials and 30.3 percent today (NALEO 2006). Systematic long-term data and analysis of the office-holding patterns of Asian American women are also missing from the literature. However, like other women of color, Asian American women appear to share a similar trend of dramatic growth over time and by the 1990s they made up around 25 percent of Asian American elected officials (Lien 2001; Ong 2001).

At a time of increasing attention to the experiences of African American, Latina, and Asian American women elected officials, this study investigates empirically the nature and contours of political representation at the crossroads of gender and race for the nation's major racial and ethnic minority groups.

DATA AND METHOD

Data used in this research are from a national database of nonwhite elected officials at federal, state, and local levels of office. The authors built this database using the 2004 directories assembled by NALEO (National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials), the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, and the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. We used data from the National Conference of State Legislatures and McClain and Stewart (2002)² to identify American Indian state legislators and one congressperson. The directory information was verified for accuracy and re-coded for consistency across groups.³ The database of 11,463 elected officials of color includes elected officials who fall into the following categories: elected officials in congressional, statewide, state legislative, county, municipal, and school board offices.

Congressional elected officials include only voting members. Statewide elected officials are limited to governors and lieutenant governors, state treasurers, secretaries of state, attorneys general, auditors and controllers. County office refers to members of county legislative bodies, such as commissions and boards of supervisors. Municipal office includes mayors and members of city governing bodies, such as city/town councils and boards of aldermen/ selectmen. Our database does not include judicial or law enforcement positions, party officials, or miscellaneous officials elected to boards and commissions such as water, utility, and so on. Neither does it include those elected from Puerto Rico or territories such as Guam or American Samoa. While included in the database, we did not include American Indians in the analysis presented here because data are only available at congressional and state legislative levels. The database was constructed in late 2003/early 2004 and includes, for the most part, officials from the 50 states plus the District of Columbia who were in office in 2003.

Once the database of elected officials was constructed, we expanded the data by linking contextual data from the U.S. Census by district, county or Census place to each elected official. Congressional district information on the racial makeup of each district comes from the Census 2000 “Profiles of General Demographic Characteristics: U.S., Regions, Divisions, Metropolitan Areas, American Indian Areas/Alaska Native Areas/Hawaiian Home Lands, States, Congressional Districts.”⁴

We included the racial breakdown for each state legislative district using demographic information for all ages (not just voting age and older) from the Census 2000 Redistricting Dataset.⁵ As Lien et al. (2007) note, it is the total population, not just the voting age population, that determines reapportionment.

To link county-level demographic data to each official, we first determined the county in which his/her primary address was located (generally his/her office). From 2000 Census population data we were able to construct the percent African American, Latino/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Native Alaskan, as well as percent non-Hispanic White. We also included the median household and per capita income; and percents below poverty, foreign born, and those speaking a language other than English.⁶

We were also interested in gathering contextual information at the municipal level to determine who lives in the places these elected officials represent, i.e., their constituents. Gathering and analyzing jurisdictional data at the municipal level represented a challenge because it was not possible to determine with reliable consistency whether the municipal

officials were elected at-large or by district and, even when known, district-level demographic data are not routinely available for those elected at the district level. Therefore, we used the demographic data by “Census Place”⁷ as a proxy for municipal jurisdictions for census places with populations of 5000 or more. The data gathered included: percent Hispanic/Latino; percent Non-Hispanic White, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan Native; percent non-White; median household income; and percents below the poverty level, speaking a language other than English, foreign born, high school graduates, and college graduates.

The primary data source for the jurisdictions of school board members was the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); we downloaded school district data for all 50 states from the State Education Data Profiles.⁸ These data include: racial makeup of the school district, percent of students receiving high school diplomas; drop out rates by race and gender; per capita income; total population below the poverty level; and, in a smaller number of cases, the per student expenditure.

PROFILE OF NON-WHITE ELECTED OFFICIALS BY GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY

We begin with a discussion of the broad contours of the state of non-white elected leadership at the dawn of the 21st century. In our database, Black elected officials, at 7,434, comprise 64.9 percent of the total number of elected officials of color. Latino/a elected officials are the second largest group with 3,697 or one-third of the total, and Asian Americans number 332 or 2.9 percent of the total.⁹ The distribution of non-white elected officials by level of office reveals the importance of local-level politics in the overall profile of this elected leadership. As shown in Table 1, clear majorities of Blacks (80.1 percent), Latinos (96.4 percent), and Asian Americans (66.2 percent) occupy local-level positions in municipal government or on school boards. A greater proportion of Asian Americans (22.9 percent) can be found in state legislative positions when compared to the proportion of Black (8 percent) and Latino (6.1 percent) officials at the same level of office. (Most likely the larger proportion of Asians at the state legislative level reflects their strong presence in Hawaii’s state legislature, a point to be discussed later.)

Two-thirds of the nonwhite elected officials in our dataset are male and one-third are female. Asian American women make up 25.3 percent

TABLE 1. Elected Officials of Color, by Race/Ethnicity and Level of Office, 2004

Level	Black (N = 7,434)	Latino (N = 3,697)	Asian (N = 332)
Congress	37 (0.5%)	24 (0.6%)	5 (1.5%)
Statewide	7 (0.1%)	8 (0.2%)	2 (0.6%)
Legislature	597 (8.0%)	227 (6.1%)	76 (22.9%)
County	836 (11.2%)	243 (6.6%)	29 (8.7%)
Municipal	4,089 (55.0%)	1,512 (40.9%)	104 (31.3%)
School Board	1,868 (25.1%)	1,683 (45.5%)	116 (34.9%)

Source: Gender and Multicultural Leadership Project.

of the total number of Asian American elected officials. Latina women comprise a slightly higher percentage at 28.5 percent of the total number of Latino elected officials. Of all the Black officials in the database, Black women comprise 34.2 percent thus giving them the greatest level of gender representation within their racial group. Table 2 shows the breakdown of representation by level of office, race, and gender. It provides the numbers for each group (by race and gender); the percentages indicate their respective share by race and gender at each level of office.

The most salient features in Table 2 are as follows: First, for African Americans and Latinos/as, the percent of these at the level of Congress (and in Statewide office) is very small, less than one percent but quite similar by gender within each racial group. Second, the 8.6 percent of African American women elected officials who serve in the state legislatures is somewhat larger than the percent of African American male elected officials; about 6 percent of both Latino male and Latina female elected officials serve as state legislators. For Asians, the percentage of women elected officials who serve in the state legislatures is somewhat higher than that of Asian men. Fourth, in contrast, the percentages of African American, Latino, and Asian male elected officials at the county and municipal levels are higher than their female counterparts in each of those groups. Finally, larger percentages of women serve at the school board level than men for each of the three racial groups.

In the next section of this article, we will specifically examine the extent to which women of color achieve levels of political representation commensurate with their population. It is worth taking a moment, however, to note that scholars have found that, within each of the racial

groups, women of color hold office at rates higher than women in general and White women in particular (Pachon and DeSipio 1992; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Montoya, Hardy-Fanta, and Garcia 2000; Scola 2005). A case in point is state legislative office holding. In 2004, for example, women in general made up just 22.4 percent of state legislators (of all races)¹⁰ and, as Table 3 shows, (non-Hispanic) White women make up just 20.9 percent of state legislators who are White. In contrast, our data indicate that 36.7 percent of Black state legislators are female; 28.2 percent of Latino state legislators are female, and women make up 28.9 percent of Asian state legislators.¹¹ We should point out here that, because of the racial privilege of white men and racial subordination of nonwhite

TABLE 2. Elected Officials of Color by Gender, Race/Ethnicity and Level of Office, 2004

Level	Black Female	Black Male	Latina Female	Latino Male	Asian Female	Asian Male	Total
Congress	11 0.4%	26 0.5%	7 0.7%	17 0.6%	0 0.0%	5 2.0%	66 0.6%
Statewide	2 0.1%	5 0.1%	2 0.2%	6 0.2%	0 0.0%	2 0.8%	17 0.1%
State Legislature	219 8.6%	378 7.7%	64 6.1%	163 6.2%	22 26.2%	54 21.8%	900 7.9%
County	137 5.4%	699 14.3%	36 3.4%	207 7.8%	5 6.0%	24 9.7%	1,108 9.7%
Municipal	1,347 53.0%	2,742 56.1%	354 33.6%	1,158 43.8%	21 25.0%	83 33.5%	5,705 49.8%
School Board	826 32.5%	1,042 21.3%	590 56.0%	1,093 41.4%	36 42.9%	80 32.3%	3,667 32.0%
Total	2,542	4,892	1,053	2,643	84	248	11,463

Source: Gender and Multicultural Leadership Project.

TABLE 3. State Legislators by Race and Gender, 2004

Race/Ethnicity	Female	Male
Black	219 (36.7%)	378 (63.3%)
Latino	64 (28.2%)	163 (71.8%)
Asian	22 (28.9%)	54 (71.1%)
Non-Hispanic White	1,347 (20.9%)	5,093 (79.1%)

Source: For nonwhite legislators, GMCL Project database; for white legislators, National Conference of State Legislators, 2004.

men, women of color may look better than white women in their proportion of political representation within each race. However, as the parity ratios in our next section show, women of color as a whole do not have a better chance of winning political offices compared to non-Hispanic white women as a whole.

RACE AND GENDER PARITY IN DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION

The principal difficulty lies, and the greatest care should be employed, in constituting this representative assembly. It should be in miniature an exact portrait of the people at large. It should think, feel, reason, and act like them . . . equal interests among the people should have equal interests in it.¹² (John Adams, 1776)

As indicated earlier, one of the goals of this article is to present the extent to which women of color elected officials achieve levels of political representation commensurate with their population share (i.e., parity). The method by which parity is best calculated is a subject of some debate and previous studies have created various mechanisms to calculate parity.¹³ Our formula measures the extent to which women of color elected officials have reached a share of a given level of office proportionate to their share in the population. Our parity ratio is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Parity} = \frac{[N \text{ of Women of Color in level of office} / \text{Total } N \text{ of Men and Women in level of office}]}{[N \text{ of Women of Color in population} / \text{Total } N \text{ of Men and Women in population}]}$$

Parity Ratios by Race and Gender at the Congressional Level

Table 4 provides an assessment of descriptive political representation by race and gender for congresspersons and state legislators in 2004.¹⁴ At both levels, women of any race have parity ratios substantially lower than the 1.0 that would indicate representation that matched their share of the population. At the congressional level, Black women's parity ratio is the highest among all groups (0.33); White women's is 0.30 and Latinas' 0.21. Asian women had no representation in the 108th Congress.¹⁵ At the state legislative level, the parity ratios increase somewhat for all

TABLE 4. Parity Ratios by Race/Ethnicity and Gender at the Congressional and State Legislative Levels, 2004

	Black Women	Black Men	Latina Women	Latino Men	Asian Women	Asian Men	Non-Hisp. White Women	Non-Hisp. White Men
Congress								
% Among Congress	2.1	4.86	1.3	3.18	0	0.93	10.5	77.01
% Among U.S. Population	6.41	5.81	6.10	6.46	2.02	1.76	35.36	33.85
Congressional Parity Ratio	0.33	0.84	0.21	0.49	0	0.53	0.30	2.28
State Legislature								
% Among All State Legislators	2.98	5.17	0.85	2.18	0.30	0.73	18.25	68.98
% Among U.S. Population	6.41	5.81	6.10	6.46	2.02	1.76	35.36	33.85
State Legislative Parity Ratio	0.46	0.89	0.49	0.34	0.15	0.41	0.52	2.04

Source: Gender and Multicultural Leadership Project.

groups: non-Hispanic White women have the highest ratio (0.52) followed by Latina women (0.49) and Black women (0.46). Asian women do slightly better at the state legislative compared to congressional level with a parity ratio of 0.15, but this is still extremely low.

It is no surprise to see non-Hispanic White men extremely over-represented, with a parity ratio among congressmen of 2.28 and among state legislators of 2.04. For both Blacks and Asians, the parity ratios of men are also much higher than those for women. Black men reach levels of representation at the congressional and legislative levels that approach parity: 0.84 in Congress and 0.89 in state legislatures. Although Latino men also enjoy a level of representation at the congressional level that is more than twice the size of that of Latina women, Latina women actually enjoy a higher level of representation than Latino men at the state legislative level—a pattern that applies only to Latinas but not other groups of women.

Although these parity ratios are important to assess the descriptive representation of women of color nationally, it is equally important to acknowledge that political influence gained through increased representation in state legislatures must also be assessed at the state level. To investigate this phenomenon, we provide an analysis of parity scores by race and gender for state legislatures for each of the U.S. states and report figures for states that had at least 10 percent of the Black, Latino, and 5 percent of the Asian population, respectively, in Tables 5-7.

Parity Ratios by Race and Gender at the State Level

Interesting trends emerge, as we turn our attention to the most densely populated states in terms of the Black, Latino, and Asian populations and the racial and gender composition of the respective state legislatures. First, in states with at least 10 percent Black population (see Table 5), we find that Black women state legislators have the highest parity ratios in Ohio (1.13), Missouri (1.10) and Illinois (0.91), *not* in states with the largest percentages of Black population (e.g., Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, Georgia, Maryland, Alabama, and North Carolina).

Mississippi and Louisiana had Black populations over 30 percent in 2000 and yet had Black female parity scores of just .30 and .44, respectively, in 2003-2004. There are some states with high parity Black female ratios that equaled or surpassed those of Ohio, Missouri and Illinois. Most of these can be dismissed because, as in the cases of Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, New Mexico, and, especially, Oregon, the

TABLE 5. Parity Ratios for Black and Non-Hispanic White Women, States with Black Population 10 Percent or More, 2004

State	Population	Legislature			Parity Ratios	
	Black (%)	Legislature (N)	Women (N)	Black Women (N)	Black Women	Non-Hisp. White Women
MS	36.3	174	22	10	0.30	0.14
LA	32.5	144	24	11	0.44	0.18
SC	29.5	170	15	8	0.30	0.08
GA	28.7	236	44	19	0.53	0.21
MD	27.9	188	64	18	0.64	0.46
AL	26.0	140	14	10	0.51	0.06
NC	21.6	170	39	7	0.36	0.37
VA	19.6	140	21	6	0.42	0.21
DE	19.2	62	21	2	0.32	0.60
TN	16.4	132	23	8	0.70	0.22
NY	15.9	212	49	11	0.61	0.33
AR	15.7	135	22	4	0.36	0.26
IL	15.1	177	49	13	0.91	0.34
FL	14.6	160	38	9	0.74	0.34
MI	14.2	148	30	7	0.63	0.31
NJ	13.6	120	19	4	0.46	0.19
TX	11.5	181	36	6	0.56	0.23
OH	11.5	132	26	9	1.13	0.25
MO	11.2	197	42	13	1.10	0.29
PA	10.0	253	32	4	0.30	0.21

Sources: Population data are from “U.S. Census 2000 Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) Summary File, PL 2: Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino by Race,” downloaded from http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTGeoSearchByListServlet?ds_name=DEC_2000_PL_U&lang=en&_ts=183061316125 on 12/18/06. Data on gender in state legislatures is from the National Conference of State Legislatures, 2004.

ratios are artificially inflated by the very small numbers of Black women legislators and size of the Black population.¹⁶

Finally, the data in Table 5 also reveal that, in virtually all the states with the highest concentration of the Black population (i.e., at or over 10 percent), Black women’s parity ratios exceed those of (non-Hispanic) White women, typically by sizeable margins. In North Carolina, they are very close, 0.36, 0.37); the only exception is Delaware where White Women

TABLE 6. Parity Ratios for Latina and Non-Hispanic White Women, States with Latino Population 10 Percent or More, 2004

State	Population	Legislature			Parity Ratios	
	Latino (%)	Legislature (N)	Women (N)	Latina Women (N)	Latina Women	Non-Hisp. White Women
NM	42.1	112	35	12	0.50	0.35
CA	32.4	120	37	12	0.63	0.36
TX	32.0	181	36	8	0.28	0.23
AZ	25.3	90	30	4	0.36	0.50
NV	19.7	63	21	1	0.17	0.61
CO	17.1	100	33	4	0.49	0.52
FL	16.8	160	38	1	0.07	0.34
NY	15.1	212	49	2	0.12	0.33
NJ	13.3	120	19	3	0.38	0.19
IL	12.3	177	49	5	0.49	0.34

Sources: See Table 5.

TABLE 7. Parity Ratios for Asian and Non-Hispanic White Women, States with Asian Population 5 Percent or More, 2004

State	Population	Legislature			Parity Ratios	
	Asian (%)	Legislature (N)	Women (N)	Asian Women (N)	Asian Women	Non-Hisp. White Women
HI	51.0	76	22	13	0.55	0.23
CA	11.3	120	37	3	0.42	0.36
WA	5.9	147	49	2	0.41	0.57
NJ	5.7	120	19	0	0.00	0.19
NY	5.6	212	49	0	0.00	0.33

Sources: See Table 5.

have a parity ratio of 0.60 compared to 0.32 for Black women. These results suggest that these same states—especially those in the South—exhibit a less than friendly environment for the election of women in general, but Black women, in general, fare better than White women—especially in liberal or strong labor states.

Latina and Asian women state legislators, in contrast to Black women, have not achieved parity in any state. However, unlike Blacks, five of the highest Latina parity ratios (see Table 6) are in states with higher Latino populations (over 10 percent). For example, in New Mexico, Latinos were 42 percent of the population in 2000 and Latinas were at .50 of parity; in California, Latinos were 32 percent of the population and Latinas were at 0.63 of parity. Three other states exerting similar patterns are Colorado, New Jersey, and Illinois.

A larger Latino population, however, clearly does not guarantee Latina parity in state legislatures. Texas, Nevada, and New York all have Latino populations higher than that of Illinois but their Latino parity ratios are low. And, with just one Latina in the legislature, Florida, despite a Latino population of 16.8 percent, has a Latina parity ratio of just 0.07. Nevertheless, Table 6 also shows that Latinas achieve parity ratios higher than (Non-Hispanic) White women in five of the ten most densely populated states for Latinos: California, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Texas.

Asian Pacific American women, like Latinas, are underrepresented with no state showing a parity ratio that is close to 1 (see Table 7). However, in Hawaii (where the race-alone API population was 51 percent in 2000), 13 (59.1 percent) of the 22 women state legislators are Asian or Pacific Islander and they achieve a parity ratio of 0.55. They make up half of the six API state legislators in California (with a population of 11.3 percent) and achieve a parity ratio of 0.42. And, in both Hawaii and California, the parity ratios for API women exceed those for White women.¹⁷ Finally, while the population is low, two of three Asian legislators in the state of Washington are women.

Parity ratios for racial representation (apart from gender) were also calculated for those states with significant population densities of Blacks, Latinos, or Asians. We ranked the top five states by legislative parity (tables not shown). The states of the Deep South have the highest percentage of Blacks but have only moderate parity scores ranging from .78 to .64 for Blacks (including both men and women). The exception was Alabama with a parity score of 0.96. In three states, Ohio, Illinois, and Florida, the percentage of Blacks in the state legislature surpasses the percentage of the Black population in each of those states.

With regard to Latino representation, New Mexico ranks first as the state with the largest proportion of Hispanics in its population and with the highest level of parity achieved in the state legislature. Three additional states of the Southwest—California, Texas, and Arizona—rank second, third, and fourth, respectively, in the percentage of Hispanics in their

state populations, with parity ratios well behind New Mexico's but greater than those among the remaining states. Florida follows closely behind with close to 17 percent of its population Latino and a parity ratio of 0.63.

The data on Asian Pacific Americans reveal a racial population well represented in one unique case and some distance to go to achieve parity in the other states where their population resides. Asians are actually "overrepresented" in the Hawaiian state legislature, in part a function of their sizable proportion within the state population.¹⁸ Although they accounted for 11.3 percent of California's population in 2000, Asians had yet to approximate parity within the state legislature in 2003-4. Their small percentage of the populations of other states no doubt accounts in part for their lack of representation. But, as their numbers grow, so does the likelihood they will increase in electoral clout and descriptive representation.

One might imagine that states with large percentages of a particular racial minority would demonstrate the highest degrees of parity (representation). The data demonstrate that this is clearly not the case for Blacks. Recalling the earliest elections of Blacks to the position of Mayor, for example, large numbers or even proportions did not necessarily produce black mayors. Tom Bradley in Los Angeles won despite the fact that the city was neither majority nor even substantially Black. Harold Washington won office because of a combination of unified electoral support from Blacks combined with the Latino vote. Similar patterns were evident in the election of the first black mayor of New Orleans. Congressional elections show similar patterns: Ron Dellums was elected from a Northern California district which was not majority Black (although, it is certainly majority-minority now and is represented by Barbara Lee) (Pinderhughes 1987; Browning, Marshall and Tabb 1984). It is clear, therefore, that population numbers alone do not produce descriptive representation. Structural features of state electoral systems, a group's political history, population density, political cohesion and mobilization, among other factors, also weigh into this complex story.¹⁹ This article provides, however, a first look into the possible linkage between certain jurisdictional data and a fairly comprehensive set of multicultural elected officials—one that includes not only the limited number of congressional officials and the larger number of state legislators, but also elected officials by race and sex at the county, municipal and school board levels, and from three nonwhite groups.

**THE CONTEXT OF DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION:
CONSTITUENT CHARACTERISTICS**

Scholars studying the structural or political characteristics of jurisdictions have discerned that states with more liberal ideologies, for example, have had more success in electing women to state legislative offices (Norrande and Wilcox 1998). Others have pointed to the overall environment for the recruitment of candidates as well as institutional context such as the electoral system. Several studies have identified, for example, the detrimental impact of at-large elections on the election of women and minorities to office (Rule 1990, 1999; Welch and Herrick 1992; Moncrief and Thompson 1993; Guinier 1994; Norrande and Wilcox 1998; Arceneaux 2001). Further, they have demonstrated how term-limits had an initial positive effect on the introduction of women into legislative office but a generally negative impact over time because of the poor recruitment of women to office (Moncrief and Thompson 1993; Carroll 2001; Carroll and Jenkins 2001a, 2001b). Finally, demographic characteristics of a jurisdiction such as the percentage of racial minorities in the electoral district/jurisdiction are found to influence the election of racial and ethnic minorities—even if the exact threshold point of electing minority candidates and the net effect of minority population share has been a point of contention (Parker 1990; Barrett 1995; Grofman and Handley 1998a, 1998b; Grofman, Handley, and Lublin 2001; Grofman 2005). Nearly all of the literature examines only the Black situation and at the congressional level. Rare in the literature are examples where constituent characteristics are analyzed nationally by race and gender at multiple levels of office. In the rest of the analysis, we focus on the racial make up of the electoral jurisdictions represented by the minority elected officials found in our database. Where available, we also pay attention to other aggregate demographic characteristics within each of the jurisdictions such as income, educational levels, nativity and language spoken, and size of place. We conducted One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), testing the mean gender differences within each race of selected contextual variables available at each level of office. All findings are significant at $p < .0001$ unless otherwise stated.

Constituent Characteristics of Congressional Districts

We analyzed the following constituent characteristics of the congressional districts of members of the 109th U.S. House of Representatives: percent Black, Latino, Asian, and non-White; median household income;

median per capita income; percent at or below poverty; percent foreign born; percent speaking a language other than English; and percent with a college diploma. As can be seen in Table 8, there were large and significant differences in the make up of the U.S. Representatives' congressional districts by gender and race. The share of the nonwhite population in districts represented by members is highest among Latinos and lowest among Asian members of Congress.

Some of this may have to do with the geographic asymmetries among the groups in which Asians are densely concentrated in only a few states, especially those in the West, where there are also only a few African Americans, both numerically and proportionally.²⁰

The variation in the constituent characteristics by gender within race are also shaped by geography since a significant proportion of Black Females are from California where the population is significantly more heterogeneous than is the case in the rest of the country. Gender categories

TABLE 8. Congressional Officials: Constituent Characteristics by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2004

Constituent Characteristics (Mean)	Congressional Officials (Percent)				
	Black Female (N = 11)	Black Male (N = 26)	Latina Female (N = 7)	Latino Male (N = 17)	Asian Male (N = 5)
% Black in District	41.92	55.68	5.99	11.22	5.01
% Latino in District	22.19	9.86	63.97	59.31	12.38
% Asian in District ⁺	6.47	3.23	11.91	3.77	31.92
% Non-White in District	70.47	68.36	81.27	74.59	56.53
Median Household Income	\$35,513	\$34,846	\$37,446	\$33,326	\$51,954
Median Per Capita Income	\$18,025	\$17,836	\$15,047	\$14,322	\$23,641
% Poverty [*]	20.12	20.52	20.39	22.75	11.28
% Foreign Born	19.09	13.67	44.11	27.86	20.20
% Other Language	28.58	18.91	69.40	57.29	28.74
% College Grad. [‡]	20.98	20.33	12.99	14.84	32.10

Note: All differences noted here are significant at the $p < .0001$ level except where noted as follows:

* $p < .005$; ⁺ $p < .05$; [‡] $p < .01$.

Sources: "Profiles of General Demographic Characteristics: U.S., Regions, Divisions, Metropolitan Areas, American Indian Areas/Alaska Native Areas/Hawaiian Home Lands, States, Congressional Districts." Downloaded from <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2001/2khus.pdf> (December 20, 2006).

especially among members show some differences. These differences of racial and ethnic characteristics by gender within race follows the geographic patterns we found among the race of the representatives.²¹

The mean percent Black in the districts of Black female members of Congress was 41.9 compared to 55.7 for their Black male counterparts. The percent Black may also be more important for Latino male than Latina female congresspersons: the mean percent Black in the district for Latino males was 11.2 compared to just 6.0 for Latina women. The district percent Latino was higher for Latinos/as in Congress than the district percent Black for Blacks—and higher still for Latina members of Congress: 64.0 for Latina congresswomen and 59.3 for Latino congressmen. The mean percent nonwhite in districts was higher for female than male representatives among Latinos and Blacks. The mean percent Asian for the three Asian congressmen was just 31.9 and the mean percent nonwhite was much lower as well: 56.3. (There were no Asian women in the U.S. Congress in our data period.)

We were also able to examine the socioeconomic characteristics in each of the congressional districts represented by nonwhites. On average, the median household income for congressional districts represented by nonwhites clustered in the mid-\$30,000s except for Asian males with a high of \$51,954. The mean per capita income showed a similar pattern. The differences among districts represented by Latinos and Blacks for mean percent poverty (both about 21 percent) were very small but they differed sharply from the districts represented by Asian men, which had a mean poverty rate of just 11.3 percent.

College graduate rates showed the most consistent variation across race among the constituencies. Blacks (males and females) represented districts with higher mean percentages of residents with college degrees (20.5) than Latinos/as (14.3); and the gender differences were very small. Asian male members of Congress, however, represented districts with the highest mean percentage of college-educated residents (32.1).

Among the measures of foreign born, there was greater variation across racial and gender lines. Female members represented districts with higher proportions of the foreign born, among both Blacks and Latinos. The mean percent foreign born was much higher in districts represented by Latina women (44.1 percent) than Latino men (27.9 percent) which, in turn, was higher than that for Black females (19.1 percent) and Black males (13.7 percent) or Asians (20.2 percent). A similar pattern by race and gender is observed for the percent speaking a language other than English in congressional districts. The measures of the proportion of the population speaking a language other than English also shows higher

levels among Black women and Latina representatives than males of the same racial group. Latino representatives, however, had much higher representation than Black and Asian members.

Parity Ratios by Race and Gender in State Legislatures

When we examined the contextual data available for state legislators (i.e., race/ethnicity),²² we found less variation by gender within each racial group. The state legislative districts are geographically smaller than congressional districts and the demographics within the districts reveal greater similarity than differences for each group. Analysis of the state legislators and the legislative districts²³ they represent reveals the following significant differences by race/ethnicity and gender (see Table 9): The mean percent Latino population in the districts of Latino male state legislators is 50.4 percent compared to the 44.9 percent for Latinafemale state legislators. There is virtually no difference by gender between the mean percent Black among Black state legislators, which is 52 percent, or between the mean percent Asian among Asian state legislators.²⁴

Of note is the fact that all the state legislators represent (and are elected from) districts that are majority-minority but at a scale generally much smaller than the percent nonwhite in congressional districts represented by nonwhite men and women except for the Asian males.

TABLE 9. State Legislators: Constituent Characteristics by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2004

Constituent Characteristics (Mean)	State Legislators (Percent)					
	Black Female (N = 193)	Black Male (N = 330)	Latina Female (N = 61)	Latino Male (N = 152)	Asian Female (N = 20)	Asian Male (N = 50)
% Black	52.87	52.18	8.28	9.99	5.75	3.47
% Latino	7.61	8.83	44.92	50.37	11.16	7.84
% Asian	2.96	2.43	5.26	3.19	38.11	40.46
% Non-White*	63.97	63.54	57.20	62.27	57.15	52.70

Note: All results are significant at $p < .0001$ except * which is at $p < .05$.

Sources: "U.S. Census 2000 Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) Summary File, PL 2: Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino by Race," from http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTGeoSearchByListServlet?ds_name=DEC_2000_PL_U&_lang=en&_ts=183061316125 (December 18, 2006).

Parity Ratios by Race and Gender at the County Level

As indicated earlier, the county officials in our dataset are at the level of county commissioners/members of county boards of supervisors. They do not include non-elected county officials or officials such as county treasurer, coroner, and so on.²⁵ It is important to note there was no data available below county level for the sub-county level districts. Hence the analyses discussed here are based on data using the entire county as the jurisdiction—regardless of whether the county official represents a smaller district or other sub-units of county government.

Table 10 shows the breakdown of constituent characteristics for county officials by sex as well as race. For all three nonwhite groups, male officials represent counties that are somewhat more diverse than their female counterparts. The mean percent Black population is lower for Black female county officials (30.8 percent) than Black males (38.2 percent) and the percent Latino is likewise lower for Latina females (45.6 percent) than Latino males (60.2 percent). The pattern is the same for Asians, although the difference is much smaller. Furthermore, Black, Latina and Asian female county officials represent counties that overall are less nonwhite than the ones represented by their male counterparts. For

TABLE 10. County Officials: Constituent Characteristics, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2004

Constituent Characteristics (Mean)	County Officials (Percent)					
	Black Female (N = 138)	Black Male (N = 699)	Latina Female (N = 36)	Latino Male (N = 207)	Asian Female (N = 5)	Asian Male (N = 24)
% Black	30.76	38.23	5.21	3.54	7.21	0.71
% Latino	5.92	3.34	45.55	60.20	15.82	10.56
% Asian	1.70	0.96	2.94	1.25	22.07	24.78
% Non-White	39.67	43.66	56.56	67.50	53.46	59.35
Median Household Income	\$38,003	\$32,811	\$35,564	\$29,413	\$59,827	\$42,962
Median Per Capita Income	\$19,360	\$16,575	\$17,516	\$14,805	\$27,554	\$19,721
% Poverty	15.78	19.85	19.85	24.05	8.74	12.93
% Foreign Born	6.30	3.25	16.93	14.06	23.36	12.29
% Other Language	9.99	6.71	44.84	55.43	31.86	20.36

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Downloaded from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/25000.html> (December 5, 2005).

example, whereas the mean nonwhite population for Black males is 43.7 percent, it is just 39.7 percent for Black females at this level of office. For Latinas, it is 56.7 percent, compared to 67.5 percent for Latino males. The mean for Asians is 53.5 percent for females and 59.4 percent for males.

We also note significant racial differences, *irrespective of gender*, in the mean percent of the county population that is non-White. For instance, Black county officials represent counties that have a mean percent nonwhite that is just 43.0 percent compared to Asians with a mean nonwhite population of 58.3 percent and Latinos/as with 65.9 percent, Latino county officials also represent counties with the larger percentages of Latino residents: the mean Latino share of the county population for Latino county officials is 58.0 percent. In comparison, the mean Black share of the county population for Black county officials is 37 percent, and for Asian county officials the mean share of Asian is 24.3 percent.²⁶ The fewer Asian county officials are drawn from the states and counties in which they constitute a much higher proportion of the population. They are also in states and counties where there are also some proportions of Latino/as. Latina/os are also elected in heavily Latino counties, but in areas with lower proportions of Asians and Blacks. Blacks are elected more frequently than either of the other two groups in counties in which there are very low percentages of other nonwhite groups.

We were able to examine the socioeconomic characteristics of the constituents of county officials in terms of two measures of income—median household income and per capita income by county. Here we note the complexity of the findings across both the race and the gender of the county representatives. On racial measures, Asian county officials came from jurisdictions on average that have both higher median county household income (\$45,870) and per capita income (\$21,072) than those of their Black and Latino counterparts. The median county household income for Black county officials was \$33,667 and Latino/a county officials \$30,324 in 1999; the median county per capita income was \$17,034 for Black and \$15,206 for Latino/a county officials. On some level, the Asian differences may be a function of the geographical concentration of Asians in California and Hawaii, which have higher costs of living. Another plausible factor is the middle- to upper-class background of the majority of Asian immigrants upon their arrival.

Last but not least, we note that the mean percent of county population that is foreign born is significantly higher for Asian (14.2 percent) and Latino/a (14.5 percent) than for Black county officials (3.8 percent). The same is true for the mean percent of county population speaking a language other than English. However, there are large differences

between Asian and Latino/a county officials: the mean for Black county officials is 7.3 percent compared to 22.3 percent for Asian and 53.9 percent for Latino/a county officials.

When we compare these data by gender, but within race, Asian officials show the greatest differences. The largest gender differences are between Asian female and male county officials in terms of median county per capita income with Asian females representing counties with significantly higher income: \$27,554 compared to \$19,721 for the males. The median county household income is also much higher for Asian female (\$59,827) than male (\$42,962) county officials. Table 10 also shows that Black, Latina and, especially, Asian female county officials represent counties with higher percentages of residents who are foreign born than their male counterparts. The findings are more mixed on the percent in the county who speak a language other than English: Latino men represent counties where 55.4 percent speak another language in contrast to 44.8 percent represented by Latina women. In districts represented by Asian females, 31.9 percent speak another language, and 20.4 for Asian male county officials. Among Blacks, the gender difference in the mean county population that speaks another language is small, with 10.0 percent for Black female compared to 6.7 for Black male county officials.

Parity Ratios by Race and Gender at the Municipal Level

The municipal officials²⁷ in our dataset include those who sit on governing bodies such as city/town councils and boards of selectmen/aldermen as well as mayors.²⁸ About half (51.2 percent) of the 5,706 municipal officials in our dataset, come from census places (i.e., municipalities) with populations of 5,000 or more—the rest from smaller cities, towns, villages and unincorporated places. We found Asians and Latinos more likely to come from municipalities with populations 5,000 or more: 70 percent of Asian and 65 percent of Latino municipal officials compared to 54 percent of Black officials at this level. The gender differences are small but significant with Asian and Latina elected officials slightly more likely to have been elected from places 5,000 or larger than their male counterparts. The reverse is true for Blacks.

Fifty-eight percent of municipal officials come from places that are majority-minority but there were significant differences by race/ethnicity and gender. The mean nonwhite population for Latinos (70.4 percent) is substantially larger than that for Blacks (54 percent), which, in turn is larger than for Asian municipal officials (30.2 percent) by the same 20-point

TABLE 11. Municipal Officials: Constituent Characteristics, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2004

Constituent Characteristics (Mean)	Municipal Officials (Percent)					
	Black Female (N = 572)	Black Male (N = 1,311)	Latina Female (N = 202)	Latino Male (N = 741)	Asian Female (N = 19)	Asian Male (N = 75)
% Black	43.6	42.9	5.5	6.0	4.7	7.6
% Latino	9.0	7.9	59.8	61.8	18.2	16.8
% Asian	2.0	1.6	3.7	3.0	27.4	24.8
% Non-White	55.3	53.4	69.0	70.8	29.3	30.4
Median Household Income	\$33,215	\$32,667	\$34,805	\$32,384	\$67,193	\$53,386
% Poverty	20.8	21.1	21.8	23.4	9.7	11.3
% Foreign Born	8.7	7.4	25.3	26.2	29.4	27.5
% Other Language	14.1	12.3	56.8	58.5	40.1	37.6
% HS Graduates	28.7	29.0	23.8	24.0	17.4	20.8
% College Graduates	12.5	12.1	9.2	9.0	23.0	21.5

Source: U.S. Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1) and Summary File 3 (SF 3).

differential. Table 11 shows that gender differences are not large (although statistically significant) but there are large differences by race: Latino municipal officials come from places that are well over 50 percent Latino; Black municipal officials (both male and female) come from places that are a bit over 40 percent Black. Asian municipal officials, in contrast, come from places that are just about one-quarter Asian in population.

The average median household income for municipal elected officials of color is \$33,607 with little variation for Blacks and Latinos/as. However, for reasons speculated earlier (in our discussion of Asian county officials in the previous section), Asian municipal officials were elected from areas with much higher median incomes, \$56,177. The gender differences for Blacks and Latinos/as were significant but small, with Black women and Latina municipal elected officials representing places having slightly higher mean median incomes. However, Asian female municipal officials come from places with significantly higher income levels: \$67,193 compared to \$53,386 for their male counterparts. The mean percent of the population at or below the poverty level was less than half of that in districts represented by Asian municipal officials than Blacks or Latinos; the gender differences were significant but very small.

Educational levels also varied by race for municipal officials: the mean percent of the population that had completed college was 11.5 percent overall, with Asian American municipal officials coming from places where 21.8 percent of the population had completed college compared to about half that in districts for Black officials and Latino/a officials. Gender differences were again significant but small.

Finally, not unexpectedly, the mean percent of the municipal population that is foreign-born is significantly higher for Asian municipal officials (27.9 percent) and Latinos (26.0 percent) represent districts with significantly higher foreign-born populations compared to Blacks (7.8 percent). The same is true for the mean percent that speak languages other than English: 38.1 percent for Asians, 58.2 percent for Latinos, compared to 12.8 percent for Blacks. Gender differences again were small.

The most striking finding for municipal officials is that, for the most part, differences by race/ethnicity overshadowed any based on gender; this finding is quite different from those discussed earlier for congressional, state legislative, and county officials. Why this might be is unclear but it is possible that, by analyzing only those from somewhat larger places, differences that may exist in smaller municipalities (i.e., smaller than 5,000) are obscured. Breaking down the existing data into places that differentiate between size (5,000 to 29,000, 30,000-99,000, 100,000 and higher, for example) may be warranted.

Parity Ratios by Race and Gender at the School Board Level

We were able to gather constituent data for 3,231 elected officials (88 percent) of the total 3,667 school board members in the dataset. The major findings (see Table 12) are that the populations of school board districts for the elected officials of all three racial groups are even more heavily majority-minority than at the municipal or county level: 81.4 percent of students in the districts of Latino school board members are nonwhite compared to 73 percent in Black districts and 76.6 percent in Asian districts.

Again, we see a pattern in which Latino elected officials at the school board level come from districts that are most heavily Latino in population: Latino students make up 72.9 percent in the districts of Latino school board members whereas 62 percent of the students in Black school districts are Black. However, just 22 percent of students in the districts of Asian school board members are Asian.

Gender differences among the percent of students represented by officials of each of the racial groups are statistically significant but not

TABLE 12. School Board Officials: Constituent Characteristics, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2004

Constituent Characteristics (Mean)	School Board Officials (Percent)					
	Black Female (N = 747)	Black Male (N = 962)	Latina Female (N = 524)	Latino Male (N = 966)	Asian Female (N = 10)	Asian Male (N = 22)
% Black Students in District**	62.5	61.7	5.1	3.8	8.4	12.4
% Latino Students in District**	10.0	7.7	70.3	74.3	33.2	45.8
% Asian Students in District**	1.8	1.5	3.3	2.3	24.1	21.1
% Non-White Students in District**	74.9	71.6	80.4	81.9	68.3	80.3
Per Capita Income**	\$16,840	\$16,023	\$13,721	\$13,144	\$25,649	\$20,580
Per Pupil Expenditure	\$8,534	\$8,161	\$8,199	\$8,129	\$7,636	\$7,238

Source: U.S. Census 2000 School District Tabulation (STP2) prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau's Population Division and sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics. Downloaded from <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/stateprofiles> (July 20, 2006).

large except in the case of Asians. Latino students in the districts of Asian female school board members make up 33.2 percent compared to the 45.8 percent in the districts of Asian male school board members. Also, 80.3 percent of students in Asian male districts are nonwhite compared to 68.3 percent of students in the districts of Asian female members.

Socioeconomic data ranked per capita income with districts represented by Asians highest, Latinas/os lowest and Black districts falling in between. Black and Latina/o per pupil expenditures (PPES) were very close, while Asian district PPES were noticeably lower than the other two. This is puzzling, as all the other Asian economic measures have shown them with relatively high household or per capita income. The Asian officials are elected from districts that are majority minority, but with a minority of Asian students. This is a question we will have to explore in future research.

In summary, our analysis of contextual data showed that constituent characteristics, and the patterns of race and gender representation, varied by level of office: congressional, state, county, municipal and school board. In our analysis of the congressional data, for example, we found that women members were more likely to represent districts with higher proportions of nonwhites. Higher proportions of the population in districts represented by Asians were likely to have attended college, followed by smaller percentages in Black and then Latino districts. Our data also show that the foreign born and the population speaking a

language other than English were likely higher among districts in which there were female, specifically Black and Latina, U.S. representatives.

At the state level there was less variation by gender within race. At the county level, constituencies are slightly less diverse in districts represented by female than male representatives, among Blacks, Asians and Latinos; on the other hand across gender, the highest nonwhite populations are in districts led by Latinos, followed by Asians, and the lowest by Blacks. On socioeconomic measures, median household income and per capita income were highest in districts led by Asians, with districts led by Blacks and Latinos trailing. Similarly we found the foreign born and those speaking a language other than English are significantly higher in districts represented by Asians and Latinos than by Blacks. And we also found significant gender differences on these variables, except for Blacks, on language.

The data for municipal constituencies and elected municipal officials varied in several ways. Latinos and Asians were more likely to come from areas with populations of 5,000 or more, while Blacks were more evenly distributed across those above and below 5,000. The election of women officials also follows that pattern. For the most part, the race variable was more important than the gender variable for municipal constituency data. Districts represented by Latinos have the highest nonwhite and Latino populations, followed by Blacks, with districts represented by Asians the lowest. On socioeconomic measures, the highest median incomes and poverty rates were reported in districts represented by Asians. Districts represented by Asian women showed much higher levels of income and education. Asians and Latinos again represented districts with higher foreign-born populations, and with large non-English speaking population, in contrast to Blacks.

School Board districts proved more heavily minority than county or municipal jurisdictions, with Latino and Black student populations well above 50 percent, and Asians much lower. Only districts represented by Asian female school board members proved racially and ethnically distinct from male members. With the exception of per pupil expenditures noted in our detailed discussion of school boards, per capita income for Asian districts was highest.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research represents the first stage of a multi-year study of gender and multicultural leadership in the United States. The goal is to offer a preliminary review and analysis of some broad features of the American

elected leadership today with gender and race at its center. As stated in the Introduction, our main objective is to advance empirical understanding of the nature and context of descriptive representation by race and gender of the nation's increasingly diverse population and elected leadership. We approach this by focusing on a particular group of elected officials—women of color. We argue that their unique social position at the intersection of race and gender may provide the most revealing and useful data to help us understand the changes and challenges in governing that this nation faces in the 21st century. Our study is unique in that our database contains an unusually comprehensive list of the nation's nonwhite elected officials who are at the congressional, statewide, state legislative, county, municipal, and school board levels of office. It is also unprecedented in the variety of contextual data we were able to assemble and link to each of the jurisdictions.

Upon examining historical trends and the current status of women of color elected officials, five key findings emerge. First, overall trends in minority office holding show significant increases in the number and share of elective positions held by women of all of the nonwhite groups in the study. Second, although each group is significantly underrepresented, there are differences among them in the level of descriptive representation each has achieved. Compared to whites, gender gaps in descriptive representation are smaller among nonwhite groups. In this regard, women of color have played a significant role in improving the chances of political representation for nonwhite groups. Third, the proportion of nonwhite population may impact the degree of electoral success of female and male candidates of Black, Latino, and Asian American descent, but large percentages do not necessarily translate into equitable parity with regard to office holding. In fact, we find parity ratios to vary by race, gender, level of office, and state. Fourth, in states with higher percentages of each of the nonwhite populations, women of color often have parity values that exceed those of (non-Hispanic) White women. Nevertheless, this observation is truer for Latina and Asian (including Pacific Islander) Americans than for Black women; states that have the highest share of the black population did not produce the highest level of representation for Black women. Last but not least, in terms of constituent context, although gender differences within each race are generally significant, far greater racial differences are found among men and women of color elected officials—especially at the municipal and school board levels of office.

In the end, by disaggregating the population of nonwhite elected officials into racial and gender groups, this study is able to provide empirical

evidence of the unique role women of color have played in advancing descriptive political representation for people of color and for women in the United States as a whole. Nevertheless, being one of the first of its kind, our study generates as many questions as answers concerning the origin, contours, and impacts of the past and current multicultural leadership and the future status of American democracy. Especially challenging is the presence of significant racial gaps of various widths in sociodemographic characteristics of the jurisdictions represented by nonwhite elected officials in our database. This may suggest structural constraints in multicultural governing and the building of cross-racial coalitions. Moreover, while descriptive representation is important to describe and achieve, of perhaps greater interest is the extent to which elected officials of color offer substantive representation—and whether there are gender differences. The data and findings described here are efforts to lay the groundwork for future investigations. As part of our next stage of research, we wish to link the contextual data used in this study to attitudinal data being collected in another component of this project—a national telephone survey of elected officials in our database. Armed with these two types of data, we wish to further understanding of the relationship among race, gender, and political representation, both descriptively and substantively.

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NOTES

1. They found, however, that the value to constituents of descriptive representation did not extend to gender (see Tate and Harsh 2005, 226, for further discussion of this point).

2. The McClain-Stewart total of 43 includes 42 state legislative officeholders and one member of the U.S. Congress.

3. Our verification process determined that the extent to which the directories captured the officials in office at that time was more accurate for different racial groups

than others and for different levels of office, with the Latino and Asian accuracy rate at a higher level than that of African Americans.

4. We use the “race alone” and “Hispanic or Latinos and Race” categories to compile the racial makeup of each district from “Profiles of General Demographic Characteristics.” *2000 Census of Population and Housing*. Issued May 2001. <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2001/2khus.pdf> (December 20, 2006).

5. Source: “U.S. Census 2000 Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) Summary File, PL 2: Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino by Race.” American Fact Finder, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTGeoSearchByListServlet?ds_name=DEC_2000_PL_U&_lang=en&_ts=183061316125 (December 18, 2006).

6. County data were downloaded from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/25000.html> (December 5, 2005).

7. In this article a “place” is “a concentration of population either legally bounded as an incorporated place, or identified as a Census Designated Place (CDP). . . . Incorporated places have legal descriptions of borough (except in Alaska and New York), city, town (except in New England, New York, and Wisconsin), or village” (“Glossary,” U.S. Census 2000, downloaded from <http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html> on 7/15/06). Data are from U.S. Census 2000, Summary File 1 (SF1) and Summary File 3 (SF3); we would like to thank Anthony Roman of the Center for Survey Research at the University of Massachusetts Boston for his assistance.

8. Source: Census 2000 School District Tabulation (STP2) prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau’s Population Division and sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics. Downloaded from <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/stateprofiles> on 7/20/06.

9. These numbers do not reflect the total number of elected officials of color: there are more than 9,000 Black and 5,000 Latino elected officials, according to the most recent rosters of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (JCPES) and National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials. The discrepancy is due to the fact that the GMCL database does not include judicial or law enforcement positions, party officials, and some types state, county, municipal and school board officials. For a full description of what is excluded, refer to the Data and Methods section of this article.

10. “Women in Elective Office 2005,” Center for American Women in Politics, Rutgers University, <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/Facts/Officeholders/elective.pdf> (July 20, 2005).

11. While this paper does not include analysis of American Indian elected officials, we did find that 28.6 percent of American Indian state legislators are female.

12. *Thoughts on Government, John Adams, Apr. 1776 Papers 4:86-93.*

13. Scola (2005), for example, calculates percentage differences based on the ratio of office holding between women of color in state legislative office as a proportion of all legislators of color and compares it to White women legislators as a percentage of White legislators. Fraga et al. (2003) use a different calculus. They derive what they describe as the Ethnic Gender Representation Parity Ratio (EGPR). This is calculated similarly to the Scola approach but instead of subtracting the difference between the two proportions they divide them to determine a parity ratio. These approaches are useful in comparing the relative success of women of color as compared to White women. We believe, however, that this can be improved upon by adding elements that weight the elected officials’ success *relative to their percentages of the population*.

14. We calculate parity ratios only at these two levels because of the difficulty determining the total number of county, municipal and school board officials in a way that is consistent across jurisdictions.

15. It should be noted that the Congressional parity values include all members of Congress, House and Senate. Also, there are no women of color in the U.S. Senate; White women, during the period under study, fall short of parity at 14 percent of the U.S. Senate but certainly outpace women of color.

16. The case of Wisconsin with 5.7 percent Black population, 5 Black women in the state legislature, and a Black female parity ratio of 1.29 deserves further study.

17. An important caveat needs to be added here. Because of the high mixed-race rate of Asian and the Pacific Islander population in Hawaii, using race-alone population data may exaggerate the parity ratios of API women. When mixed-race persons are included in the population base of Hawaii, up to eight out of 10 state residents were of API descent in 2000.

18. Again, note the caveat mentioned in note 17 about the biased definition and calculation of the base population by using race-alone measures in Hawaii.

19. See Lien et al. (2007) for a discussion of relationships between structural/electoral system characteristics concerning voting rights and the distribution of minority elected officials nationwide.

20. See Hardy-Fanta et al. (2005), for a discussion of the geographic differences in the distributions of the racial/ethnic populations of elected officials.

21. For example, among the recently elected members of the Congressional Black Caucus (see CBCF Web site <http://www.cbfcinc.org/About/CBC/members.html>), 4 of the 12 Black female Congressional representatives are from California.

22. Unfortunately, the redistricting data files of the U.S. Census only contain race/ethnicity at the state legislative level. Because of these limitations, we are unable to provide the same level of detailed legislative district information as for congressional officials (above) or local officials.

23. Data from redistricting files are not available for certain states (i.e., Arkansas, Kentucky, Maryland, New Hampshire) and a limited number of districts within other states. Therefore, the N for this analysis overall was 806.

24. The statistical significance of the small difference that appears for Asians in Table 8 may be an artifact of the large N of the sample overall.

25. While we did not include judicial or law enforcement officials, officials called “county judges” in Texas hold offices that are equivalent to county commissioners/supervisors; these were included because, despite the title, they fit within our criteria and are not judicial officials.

26. Here, as elsewhere, the results are significant at $p < .0001$ unless otherwise noted.

27. Please note again that these data are based on the municipality as a whole. We have the number of elected officials for city councils, but we do not have matching demographic data according to council districts. Instead our comparison is based on the entire municipality.

28. Those with titles of deputy/vice mayor or mayor pro-tem were included. Also, in some states the titles varied considerably; in Louisiana, for example, those with titles of “police juror” are elected officials with positions and roles equivalent to city/town councilors in other states. The challenges of collecting data that is consistent across states at the county and municipal levels will be discussed in a forthcoming paper on methodology.

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