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IDENTITY AND THE POLITICS OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND HISPANIC WOMEN LEADERS

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This article examines the influence of race/ethnicity and gender identity on the politics of American Indian and Hispanic women leaders. The data are drawn from personal interviews with 50 public officials and grassroots leaders active in state, local, or tribal politics in New Mexico. Borrowing from Tolleson Rinehart's model of "gender consciousness," the author creates a classification scheme for assessing the role that race/ethnicity and gender play in the political ideology and motives of the leaders. The findings reveal that racial/ethnic identity is generally more important to Native leaders and grassroots activists, while gender identity is somewhat more salient for Hispanic leaders and public officials. Her classification system for measuring racial/ethnic and gender identity is useful for analyzing qualitative data and may be helpful to other researchers.

Keywords: *identity; American Indian; Hispanic; women; politics*

This article examines the role that race/ethnicity and gender play in the politics of 50 American Indian and Hispanic women public officials and grassroots activists in New Mexico. Incorporation of both formal/electoral and informal/grassroots leaders into one study provides valuable opportunities for comparison and contrast among women in politics working in a variety of circumstances toward the generally similar goals of empowering others to participate in public life and representing marginalized groups' interests. This study of Native women and Latinas in both governmental institutions and grassroots organizations focuses on the influence of race/ethnicity and gender identity on their political ideologies and motives for activism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much of women's political involvement in the United States traditionally has been motivated by issues pertaining to race, gender, class, and economic concerns

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(Gilkes 1994; Tolleson Rinehart 1992). In addition, women of color, who bear the double burden of gender and racial discrimination, are often economically and politically marginalized. Consequently, their activism is influenced not only by their experiences of sexism but also by the effects of oppression and racism on their lives, on the lives of their families, and on their communities. As Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill (1994, 4) noted, women of color are subjugated socially, culturally, and economically because "patterns of hierarchy, domination, and oppression based on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are built into the structure of society."

A growing body of scholarship on women and politics reveals that both racial/ethnic identity and gender identity inform and influence the political participation and policy preferences of women of color (see, for example, Gilkes 1994; Jaimes 1992; Zavella 1988). This research has shown that regardless of the form of participation in which they engage, women of color generally conceptualize politics as a network of human relationships (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1994; Orleck 1997), that they value participatory democracy (Kaplan 1997; Kingsolver 1989), and that they tend to view politics as a way of helping others (Hardy-Fanta 1993; McCoy 1992). In effect, they use politics to empower members of their racial/ethnic group and to improve the quality of life in their communities (Cruz Takash 1993; Miller 1992; Pardo 1998).

Both American Indian and Hispanic women have a rich history of political activism. By political activism, I mean participating in activities such as voter registration drives in predominantly minority neighborhoods, organizing rallies to build community cohesion and support for an issue, forming coalitions to achieve a common goal, running for public office, and influencing the public policy-making process. Native women have struggled for policy reforms to attain tribal sovereignty, cultural preservation, and control over their Native lands and natural resources (Chiste 1994; Hoikkala 1995; Jaimes 1992; McCoy 1992). Latinas have long been activists in the labor movement, organizing for workers' rights, equitable pay, safe working conditions, and fair treatment (Kingsolver 1989; Marquez 1995; Segura 1994; Zavella 1988).

While Indian and Hispanic women have traditionally occupied informal positions of leadership in their communities, they are now achieving formal leadership in electoral politics. As tribal leaders, women have continually challenged federal, state, and tribal authorities to formulate and/or reform policy for the benefit of their communities. For example, McCoy (1992, 62) found that female leaders conceptualized politics as "a public service and obligation of citizenship"—much as Latina leaders do (Prindeville and Bretting 1998). Latinas have similarly sought to effect change on behalf of their communities by serving in public office. They access resources for their constituents, build and expand social networks, represent women's issues, raise concerns, and provide policy perspectives different from the male norm (Cruz Takash 1993; Hardy-Fanta 1993; Prindeville 2000). These findings reveal patterns both in the activism of the officials and in their conceptu-

alizations of politics that establish the centrality of race/ethnicity, gender, and community for Hispanic women leaders.

To extend this previous research on the role of race/ethnicity and gender identity, and its significance for American Indian and Hispanic women leaders, I have borrowed from Tolleson Rinehart's (1992) model of "gender consciousness." According to Tolleson Rinehart, women who exhibit gender consciousness identify with other women as a group, display a positive affect toward women, and/or demonstrate a sensitivity to women's sociopolitical situations and well-being. I believe that in a similar fashion, the notion of "racial/ethnic consciousness" may be created and used to describe an individual's identification with, positive affect toward, and/or sensitivity to the situation and well-being of the individual's racial/ethnic group. Elaborating on Tolleson Rinehart's work, I create a classification scheme for assessing the role that race/ethnicity and gender play in the political ideology and motives of American Indian and Hispanic women leaders in New Mexico. Specifically, I develop dichotomous measures of racial/ethnic identity and gender identity based on four categories: the individual's propensity to identify with the racial/ethnic group or with women (self-labeling), the individual's sense of racial/ethnic or gender "consciousness," the salience of race/ethnicity or gender for the individual, and whether the individual's political activism is motivated by race/ethnicity or gender. This classification scheme, which provides an organizing framework for the data, is explained in detail in my discussion of the methodology.

Finally, with few exceptions (Hardy-Fanta 1993; Prindeville 2000; Prindeville and Bretting 1998), most of the research cited above examines the politics of either Native American activists or elected officials or Hispanic grassroots leaders or public officials. I seek to fill the gap in this literature through a comparative examination of the political activism of both formal/electoral and informal/grassroots leaders in two understudied racial/ethnic groups. Application of my classification scheme will facilitate identification and measurement of the role of racial/ethnic identity on the politics of these women.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

New Mexico is an especially good location for conducting this research as American Indians and Hispanics together constitute a majority of the state's population (U.S. Census Bureau 2002). A substantial portion of the state's polity, these groups have a history of political activism and exert considerable influence in New Mexico politics (Garcia, Sierra, and Murdock 1991). In recent years, as their presence in state and tribal politics has grown, the role of American Indian women and Latinas in public policy making has gained prominence.

Using nonrandom purposive sampling, a total of 50 women active in New Mexico politics was selected for participation in this study. I obtained their names using a reputational "snowball" technique in which each woman interviewed was asked the names of other women actively involved in politics in the state. The reliability

TABLE 1: Racial/Ethnic Identities of Leaders and Positions Held

<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Grassroots Activists</i>		<i>Public Officials</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Staff</i>	<i>Volunteer</i>	<i>Appointed</i>	<i>Elected</i>	
Native ^a	6	7	7	6	26
Hispanic ^b	7	6	5	6	24
Total	13	13	12	12	50
Percentage	26	26	24	24	100

and validity of my sampling strategy were reinforced when the same women were repeatedly identified as policy leaders by different study participants in numerous organizational settings. The small universe from which to draw a sample resulted in my interviewing many, if not most, of the Native and Hispanic women leaders in New Mexico politics. As described in Table 1, these leaders included volunteers and paid staff of grassroots organizations (activists) as well as appointed and elected officials at various levels of government (public officials). Due to their relatively small number, high level of political activity, and aggressive coalition building, and because they constitute a political elite, the 50 women interviewed for this study were frequently acquainted with each other. To protect their identities, and so that no quotation is directly attributable to any individual, pseudonyms have been used throughout.

Twenty-five of the 26 Native women interviewed were American Indian, registered with 1 of 17 sovereign nations. As such, they identified as Bad River Chippewa, Blackfoot, Comanche, Diné (Navajo), Kiowa, or Western Shoshone, or as members of Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Laguna, Nambe, Pojoaque, Santa Clara, Santo Domingo, Tesuque, or Zuni pueblos. One leader was Native Hawaiian; I have grouped her with the American Indian women for purposes of this study. The 24 Hispanic women variously self-identified as Chicana, Hispanic, indigenous, Mestiza, Mexican American, and Spanish. More than half of the leaders in this study (26) worked in grassroots organizations concerned with social, economic, and environmental justice, while the other 24 held elected or appointed positions in federal, state, local, or tribal government.

I met with the leaders at various locations throughout New Mexico between April 1994 and June 1996, with the exception of three interviews conducted in November 1991 as part of a pilot project. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours, with an average length of 1 hour. My use of loosely structured interviews, administered in person and employing open-ended questions, emphasizes the life experiences of the participants, allowing them to tell their own stories, to offer their own subjective meanings, and to link these meanings to their understandings of the social world (Feldman 1995; Lofland and Lofland 1995). The use of open-ended interviews is especially fruitful in conducting research on understudied or marginalized groups. As Kelly, Ronan, and Cawley (1987) noted, this approach is particularly applicable in feminist research in which personal narratives can be

used to systematically interpret, for example, the political models that women offer (also see Anderson et al. 1990). Such interview data can reveal the complexities of human experience and emotion, providing context, authenticity, specificity, and vivid description.

Analysis of qualitative data is a continuous process. In reviewing the transcribed interviews, patterns among the data emerged, which I organized (using Tolleson Rinehart's model) under the themes of racial/ethnic identification and gender identification. Further analysis enabled me to refine each theme into four distinct categories that express the broader concepts of racial/ethnic and gender identity. This classification scheme allowed me to identify references made by the leaders to race, ethnic, and gender identity.

The four categories that compose racial/ethnic identification are (1) self-labeling by race/ethnicity, (2) racial/ethnic consciousness, (3) racial/ethnic salience, and (4) cultural motivation. Self-labeling refers to leaders who self-identified using racial or ethnic labels. New Mexico leaders who identified with other members of their racial/ethnic community as a group, displayed a positive affect toward members of their racial/ethnic group, and/or demonstrated a sensitivity to the group's sociopolitical situation and well-being exhibited racial/ethnic consciousness. Similarly, leaders who used their political activism to address racism and/or issues of race, ethnicity, and culture demonstrated racial/ethnic salience. Finally, leaders who were motivated to enter politics by a desire to preserve their culture exhibited cultural motivation. These four categories were not mutually exclusive; rather, they tended to overlap. For example, a Native leader might describe herself as an Indian activist (racial self-labeling) working to empower her people (racial/ethnic consciousness) by championing tribal sovereignty (racial/ethnic consciousness and racial/ethnic salience) to preserve their traditional language and culture (racial/ethnic consciousness and cultural motivation).

The four categories that constitute gender identification are (1) gender self-labeling, (2) gender consciousness, (3) gender salience, and (4) gender motivation. Gender self-labeling occurred when leaders self-identified by their specific sex and/or gendered roles. Gender consciousness was displayed by leaders identifying with other women as a group, displaying a positive affect toward women, and/or demonstrating a sensitivity to women's sociopolitical situations and well-being. Gender salience was exhibited by leaders who used their political activism to address women's issues by advocating for and/or empowering women. Last, leaders expressing gender motivation admitted to becoming involved in politics to advance the rights of women, to promote women's issues, and/or to improve the status of women. To illustrate, a Hispanic legislator might describe herself as a woman and grandmother (gender self-labeling) working to empower single mothers (gender consciousness and gender motivation) by sponsoring legislation to benefit women and girls (gender salience and gender consciousness) to provide them with job training and subsidized child care (gender salience, gender consciousness, and gender motivation).

I first turn to a brief examination of the leaders' demographic characteristics to address the influence of social class on their practices of politics, and I then assess the significance of race/ethnicity and gender identity.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEADERS

The leaders ranged in age from 24 to 64, with a median of 45 years for activists and 50 for officials. Some of the public officials, who started out as activists, entered electoral politics later in their careers. Others waited until their children were grown and/or out of school before they pursued public office.

The New Mexico leaders were exceptionally well educated. Their median level of education was 16 years or the equivalent of a bachelor's degree, but 40 percent had completed one or more graduate degrees, in contrast to about 6 percent of women in the New Mexico public. The leaders' generally high level of education, however, was not necessarily reflected in their household incomes. For example, the median income for New Mexico households was \$24,087, for the activists it was \$37,500, but for the public officials it was \$52,500. In this respect, the activists were more like the public than the officials whose incomes place them among New Mexico's elite.

Variations in income may be attributed to numerous factors, including the number of income earners in a household, their type of work, hours worked, and level of pay. Despite the fact that similar numbers of activists and officials held college degrees, activists had a considerably lower household income, most likely due to their poorly paid positions in nonprofit organizations. As one activist explained,

It's hard to find people with the education that I have that are willing to take a low-paying job like this. . . . I know I could find another job that pays much better but I don't want a job that has no real impact on the future of this country or this planet.
(Rose)

Determining the social class of the New Mexico leaders, and its influence on their politics, is a difficult task. Household income does not necessarily reflect educational achievement or social class. For many of the 50 leaders, social class is particularly ambiguous. For example, among the Latinas are women whose families are composed of both fourth-generation Spanish landowners and Mexican immigrants, who may be wealthy or low income. In New Mexico's Hispanic communities, other factors, which may be invisible to outsiders, are frequently more important than income or education for determining one's status within the community. These factors include one's place of birth, whether she is Native born or an immigrant; whether she is light skinned or dark; whether she identifies as "Spanish," "Chicana," or "Mexicana"; whether her family held a Spanish land grant; and whether she speaks Spanish fluently. In similar ways, income and education may be

less relevant measures of a Native woman's position in the social hierarchy of her tribe than her clan affiliations, her membership in traditional religious societies, whether she is "full blood" Indian, whether she resides on the reservation, or whether she is fluent in her Native language. For these reasons, I believe that we cannot speak with any degree of certainty about the social class of the New Mexico leaders or of how class considerations might influence their political activism. What we can assess with greater confidence is the role and impact of race/ethnicity and gender on their politics and their concern with achieving social justice and economic equity for their communities.

The following is a discussion of the findings organized into three sections that respectively focus on racial/ethnic identity, gender identity, and the intersection of race and gender identity.

POLITICS AND THE INTERSECTION OF RACE/ETHNICITY AND GENDER

Racial/Ethnic Identity

Culture and race/ethnicity were highly salient for the 50 New Mexico leaders I interviewed. Many of these women felt strongly about the use of racial/ethnic categories. How they identified themselves was a consciously political decision. For example, Latinas who acknowledged both their indigenous and Spanish heritage called themselves Chicanas or Mestizas. On the other hand, one Hispana who claimed "pure" Spanish heritage was offended when I asked whether she considered herself Chicana or Mexican American. She insisted that she was Caucasian and a descendant of the conquistadores, presumably implying that she had no Native blood despite her family's presence in the region for more than 400 years. In contrast, several of the Indian leaders and Hispanic activists considered themselves to be members of colonized groups who continue to suffer racial, social, and economic oppression at the hands of the dominant Anglo-American culture. A smaller group of women expressed militant or nationalistic views; they identified as "indigenous," "Third World," or "Chicana." The majority of American Indian women identified as members of a particular tribe and used the generic term *Indian* to refer to other Native American peoples. Women of Spanish or Mexican heritage described themselves as Mexican American or Hispanic.

Several women used racial and/or ethnic descriptors to self-identify, often in combination with their gendered roles, such as "a Chicana working mother, a grandmother, a strong woman" or "an independent Comanche woman, an Indian activist." The leaders' responses demonstrate a strong identification with their racial/ethnic groups and cultures.

As seen in Table 2, the New Mexico leaders frequently displayed two or more of these indicators of racial/ethnic identification. This is illustrated by Toni, an advocate of teaching Navajo and other Native languages in the public schools. Toni was

TABLE 2: Factors Indicating Leaders' Racial/Ethnic Identities

	<i>Grassroots Activists</i>				<i>Public Officials</i>				<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Native</i>		<i>Hispanic</i>		<i>Native</i>		<i>Hispanic</i>			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Racial self-labeling	8	62	7	54	2	15	3	27	20	40
Racial consciousness	8	62	6	46	5	38	4	36	23	46
Racial salience	13	100	11	85	12	92	4	36	40	80
Cultural motivation	13	100	12	92	12	92	7	64	44	88

motivated and became active in politics by “a sense of empowerment for self and children’s sense of pride in self, in their heritage.” Her strong sense of racial/ethnic identity was expressed through racial consciousness, racial/ethnic salience, and cultural motivation.

While equal numbers of Native and Hispanic women described themselves by their racial/ethnic groups, three times as many grassroots activists (15) as public officials (5) did. Nearly half of all the New Mexico leaders (23) expressed racial/ethnic consciousness, and a large number of leaders (40) demonstrated the salience of race/ethnicity to their practices of politics, employing their political activism to address specifically the problem of racism and other issues of race, ethnicity, and culture. Finally, cultural preservation provided an incentive for entering politics for nearly all of the Native leaders and grassroots activists (25) and for 19 of the Hispanic activists and public officials.

The frequencies in Table 2 show that identification with their racial/ethnic groups was generally more important for the Native leaders than it was for the Latinas, as well as more important for the grassroots activists than for the public officials. As one Native activist stated,

The first thing I think about myself is that I’m an Indian. . . . I’m an Indian *person*. . . . In the Mohawk culture, women are pretty strong anyway—pretty influential. . . . It’s more important for me to be a Mohawk than to be a woman. (Kari)

The salience of racial/ethnic identity is grounded in the day-to-day experiences of the women interviewed. Camila, a public official, gave a forceful assessment of New Mexico’s political and economic environment from the perspective of Indian people:

Right now Native Americans in the state are . . . just now making very small inroads to the legislature. And that’s just been in the last 10 to 15 years. That’s nothing! . . . That’s lamentable for New Mexico. You know, so long as we’re just dancing and making our pottery, that’s OK. “But you just stay over there! . . . Ya, we can come in and make money off of you but [Indian people] can’t have any part of it. Just keep in your own place!” That’s the message.

Camila’s narrative illustrates the ways in which racial oppression, as Gilkes (1994, 232) said,

combines cultural humiliation and destruction, political subordination, and economic exploitation to maintain a hierarchy that limits the life chances of a group of people. . . . [It] places the entire community in a colonial relationship, a relationship of powerlessness and dependency, within a dominant and dominating society.

The anger generated in response to racism often fueled the New Mexico leaders’ determination to enter into politics or to continue with their community work. As one Indian official noted, “Any time you have a woman of color, color comes out more than the male-female issues” (Camila). Their experiences of racism and of

sexism were often entwined, however, as is evident from Magdalena's trajectory to public office:

I knew that our city was not ready for a woman to be elected mayor, particularly . . . a grandmother, Hispanic; there was no way I would be taken seriously. But, because when you run for mayor you go to approximately 50 forums . . . I would have a perfect opportunity to . . . get my word said. So I decided I would run for mayor. . . . I had an agenda. I was very versed on all the issues in the city so I was able to come across very well. . . . After the forums women would come up to me and . . . I would say, "Would you vote for me?" . . . And some of them would say, ". . . If you would run for county clerk, if you would run for secretary of state [positions traditionally held by women], you'd win." And I said, "But I don't want to be county clerk; I don't want to be secretary of state; I want to be the mayor." (Magdalena)

Knowing that she had only a very slim chance of winning the election, Magdalena ran anyway, as a strategy for making her ideas heard and for influencing change in the community. In her study of African American women's community work, Gilkes (1994, 230) similarly noted that the prevalence of racism in social institutions motivated Black women's activism to battle racism and "empower their communities to survive, grow, and advance in a hostile society."

Like the African American women in Gilkes's study, the New Mexico leaders found positive ways to combat racism in their communities by building social networks among people and by strengthening local institutions. Both Native and Hispanic leaders were active in developing programs that celebrated heritage through language, dance, storytelling, art, and crafts to preserve their communities' cultural traditions. Leaders also participated in cultural exchange programs to better develop cooperative relationships with other racial/ethnic groups in the state. Through their actions, the women expressed their racial/ethnic identities. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that women's collective action to improve the quality of life in their communities is often built on existing networks and serves to unite people across racial and ethnic lines (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1994).

For many women of color, the roles that race/ethnicity and gender play in forming a woman's identity are inseparable and somewhat complex. The New Mexico leaders generally held a multiplicity of, sometimes conflicting, roles and responsibilities. Women frequently expressed feeling torn between cultural gender expectations and their individual needs as women, mothers, workers, and leaders. The conflict arising from these competing demands is particularly evident in the narrative of Tanya, a public official:

Because I'm an Indian woman, there are certain roles I have to play that may be seen as subservient by some. But that's . . . tradition. . . . I'm involved with women's issues. . . . I'm pro-choice. Times are changing. Yes, we're Pueblo women but [men] have to help. . . . We go to work, have a career and are expected to be subservient, cook, clean, and take care of the children. The Indian population, especially the Pueblo

population, is very traditional, matriarchal in some sense, but politics are very male dominated.

Gender Identity

As with the four categories of their racial/ethnic identification, clear expressions of the leaders' gender identities also emerged from the data—self-labeling by gendered roles and/or sex, gender consciousness, gender salience, and gender motivation. Table 3 demonstrates that these four categories overlap and are not mutually exclusive. Both Native and Hispanic leaders frequently exhibited two or more of these indicators of gender identification.

Several leaders (23) described themselves in relation to their gender as, among other things, a strong woman, single parent, working mother, wife, grandmother, and “supermom.” A majority of the leaders (44) demonstrated gender consciousness. Most of the public officials (22), grassroots activists (22), and Native leaders (20) and all of the Latinas identified with other women as a group, displaying gender consciousness. As we can see in Table 3, gender was especially salient for a slightly smaller number of leaders (21) but more so for the public officials (12) than for the grassroots activists (9). Furthermore, twice as many Latinas (14) as Native women (7) addressed women's issues specifically through their political activism by advocating for and/or empowering women. Finally, a larger number of Latina officials (15) than Native leaders or activists (9) were motivated to participate in politics to advance the rights of women and to promote women's issues. Despite their advancing women's issues and fully believing that women should have the “opportunity to participate fully in our society without discrimination,” the New Mexico leaders did not necessarily view themselves as feminists.

The Intersection of Race and Gender Identity

While the frequency of racial/ethnic identity was generally greater than gender identity for both the Native and Hispanic women, Table 2 reveals that racial/ethnic identity was more important for a larger percentage of Native than Hispanic leaders as well as more important for a larger percentage of the grassroots activists than public officials. At the same time, Table 3 shows that gender identity was more salient for a greater proportion of the Hispanas than Native women, as well as more salient for a greater proportion of the public officials than the grassroots activists. These findings are consistent with research on Native women's activism, which generally tends to advance the well-being of the community as a group rather than the needs of Indian women in particular (Hoikkala 1995; Jaimes 1992). Ford (1990, 88) explained that this perspective originates in the belief “that there is an interdependence, a complementarity, between [American Indian] men and women and that until their group has equality with other ethnic groups, they, as women, will not gain.” A critical difference between the standpoints of Hispanic and Native women lies in the unique political status of Indian nations. Gender equity is less important

TABLE 3: Factors Indicating Leaders' Gender Identities

	<i>Grassroots Activists</i>				<i>Public Officials</i>				<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Native</i>		<i>Hispanic</i>		<i>Native</i>		<i>Hispanic</i>			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender self-labeling	8	62	6	46	5	38	4	36	23	46
Gender consciousness	9	69	13	100	11	85	11	100	44	88
Gender salience	1	8	8	62	6	46	6	55	21	42
Gender motivation	2	15	7	54	7	54	8	73	24	48

an issue for Native women than tribal sovereignty, for instance, which defines their very survival as a people and incorporates the preservation of Native culture, lands, religious beliefs, and language.

For the Native leaders I interviewed, politics is overwhelmingly defined by their efforts to preserve their racial/ethnic and cultural identities in the face of tremendous pressures to assimilate into American mainstream society. While both American Indian and Hispanic people have struggled to overcome the oppressive social and economic conditions that their groups have historically faced in the United States, their experiences of colonization have been different (McClain and Stewart 1995). Furthermore, as Native Americans have a unique legal and political status (they hold dual citizenship as members of sovereign nations and as citizens of the United States) as well as their own tribal political systems, they are less likely than other minority groups to fully assimilate into American political culture.

While the New Mexico leaders, as a group, demonstrated greater racial/ethnic identity than gender identity, this is not to say that public policy relevant to women was unimportant to them (Prindeville 2000). On the contrary, as Tanya's quotation indicates, they were very much aware of the social, economic, and political constraints faced by many women simply because of their sex. For example, Maureen, a tribal leader, sought office to provide a voice for women's concerns:

I see a need for tribal membership, trying to get back enrollment for women. In our community, if a woman marries outside, her children are not enrolled [in our pueblo]. They are enrolled with the father's tribe. If the husband is non-Indian, the children are not enrolled anywhere. . . . We need to look at the woman's side, trying to enroll her children.

Not surprisingly, gender issues were sometimes more salient for Native women whose pueblos prohibited or limited severely the participation of women in the political lives of their tribes than they were for individuals such as Kari, who experienced few, if any, obstacles as women. For example, contrast Kari's statement, above, with that of Karen, a pueblo activist:

I'm a woman caught between two worlds. I'm a professional outside but traditional and, I hate to use the word, submissive at home. For example, letting the men eat first, keeping your eyes down. . . . Mom taught us to be independent, self-reliant. We come from matrilineal religious societies. It was the Spanish influence that undermined this system by introducing patriarchy.

However, as the following statements reveal, some leaders were ambivalent about introducing greater opportunities for women's political participation within their tribes. As Rachel, a public official from a very traditional pueblo, noted,

I'm not ready for a woman on the council. But I think I'm an influence. I can talk to different councilmen and let them know what I think and they can take it from there. . . . I do know how to go into council and not be aggressive. . . . If you're a woman here, it's not too smart to be really aggressive. They'll shut you down. If you work with

[the councilmen] and present ideas like they're their ideas, and it's for the whole, it'll come across better. . . . It will change. In the future, women will be more active in tribal politics.

The sense of feeling torn between tribal traditions and the desire for full and equal participation in the civic life of her community emerges from Rachel's narrative.

Despite the political and social barriers imposed on women by their tribes, Indian women found opportunities to exercise leadership in the political arena within their tribes when possible and outside of their tribes when necessary. While women were prohibited from serving on (or even voting for) their tribal councils, several of the women interviewed provided technical assistance to their tribal governments in their professional roles as administrators in public agencies. Their positions and expertise, however, did not guarantee that they were welcome in the male domain of tribal government. The irony of their situation was not lost on these women. The comments of an attorney in the Bureau of Indian Affairs illustrate the difficulty faced by women dealing with very traditional tribes:

There are some tribal councils that do not allow women in the room, and I've had to go in and make presentations. You can almost see it; they hate to listen to what I have to say. But once they listen, they realize that I know what I'm talking about. (Karen)

In their capacity as elected or appointed officials on state or local boards or commissions, Native leaders represented their constituencies and made use of opportunities to advocate for Indian women's concerns:

I had to speak before the All Indian Pueblo Council. . . . I said in my speech that women's issues are the same issues that men deal with as tribal issues. We deal with them as sisters, mothers, wives. We want to make sure that they listen to us. . . . I gave them something to think about. (Daphne)

Women from tribes that maintained more egalitarian practices (such as the Comanche, Diné, Mohawk, Nambe, Pojoaque, and Western Shoshone) were more likely to enjoy a higher status within their tribes, have had female role models, and have opportunities for real political involvement in their tribal governments. Through their activism, these women expressed support for improving the lives of women in general. As one public official stated,

Women have been involved [in our pueblo's politics] right from the start. Women have been serving on the council as long as I can remember. . . . I don't know why [other pueblos] don't involve their women because they certainly should. That's my opinion. They have a lot to contribute. . . . I think that we all need to have our input and be listened to. (Tracie)

Women's involvement in the political arena was seen as important and necessary by the New Mexico leaders. Furthermore, there was a general perception that women's policy priorities are different from men's and that women can positively transform

the way in which politics is played by making it more participatory and representative of marginalized groups' interests. This was evidenced in statements by two public officials: "Women, especially, should run for office. We bring a particular point of view and temperament to everything we do" (Estela). Also, "Women's leadership is different from men's. As a group, we don't have the need to be top dog. [Instead] we ask: How can we both come out ahead" (Sonia)? Similarly, when asked why she entered politics, one Native leader responded,

I felt there was a need for more women to be involved in their tribal government . . . to be in that decision process. There's a lot of things that affects women and children and families that women are more in tune to than men. (Maureen)

These comments reflect the gender consciousness of the leaders and their sensitivity to the needs and perspectives of women as a group.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article examines the gender and racial/ethnic identity of the electoral and grassroots politics of 50 American Indian and Hispanic women leaders in New Mexico. Researchers seldom study electoral and grassroots politics together, assuming that these arenas, and the political actors within them, are too diverse for purposes of comparison. However, incorporating both electoral and grassroots leaders into one study provides valuable opportunities for comparison and contrast among women in politics working in a variety of circumstances toward generally similar goals. The findings suggest that there may be greater similarities between public officials and grassroots activists than previously thought. Both sets of leaders, whether Native or Hispanic, sought to empower community members and generally perceived their own role to be one of advocacy. Indeed, 88 percent of those interviewed exhibited gender consciousness—an identification with other women as a group, a positive affect toward women, and a sense of connectedness to women and to their well-being. Gender consciousness significantly influenced their motives for participation in politics and their political ideologies. As a group, the New Mexico leaders valued equality, community participation in shared decision making, and consensus. Their political activism was a means for addressing women's issues by advocating for and/or empowering other women.

In contrast to these findings, the differences observed between the American Indian and Hispanic leaders, based on their racial/ethnic identity rather than gender identity, were more striking. Racial/ethnic identity was highly salient for the majority of the women interviewed. While 80 percent used their political activism to address the problem of racism and other issues relevant to race/ethnicity and culture, nearly 90 percent were motivated to enter politics by their desire to preserve their communities' cultures and traditions. Issues relative to race/ethnicity and culture appeared to be somewhat more important to the Native leaders and grassroots

activists. Gender identity seemed generally to be more salient for greater numbers of the Hispanic leaders and public officials. As Jacinta, a Latina official, said, "My mother told me as I was growing up, 'You're a woman and you're a Mexican and you just have to work harder and that's the way it's going to be.'" The variance between the Indian and Hispanic leaders may be explained, in part, by social/cultural differences. Whereas in many Native communities relationships between the sexes are traditionally characterized by complementarity (Gunn Allen 1986; Jaimes 1992), Hispanic society traditionally has been characterized as patriarchal (see especially Gutierrez 1991). Nevertheless, both the Native leaders and Latinas recounted experiences of sexism, and most were concerned with altering existing patriarchal systems to allow for greater equality and participation by women in all facets of society.

Most significant for the Native leaders was the unique political status of American Indian people who see their very survival as dependent on maintaining their Native lands, languages, religious beliefs, cultures, and tribal sovereignty. As one indigenous activist leader explained, "We began the land rights struggles to recover land and to recover resources and advocate for Native rights. Advocate language . . . cultural practices that were being forbidden, lost or destroyed" (Linda). U.S. government policies aimed at fully assimilating indigenous peoples into the dominant Anglo society have been largely unsuccessful, especially where New Mexico tribes are concerned. Their ability to adapt and endure in the face of persistent and overwhelming adversity is evidenced by the fact that the Navajo Nation is now the largest tribe in the United States and that 24 Indian tribes in the state continue to function as sovereign nations today.

Identification of the leaders' social classes, and the role they play in their politics, is particularly problematic. Factors unique to New Mexico's Hispanic and Indian communities are more important determinants of social status than traditional measures such as education and income. Instead, family connections, ties to the land, facility with one's Native language, and racial/ethnic heritage determine one's place in the social hierarchy. As a result, the question of whether social class, race/ethnicity, or gender has greater salience for Hispanic or Native women and their political activism needs further research.

From a theoretical perspective, Tolleson Rinehart's concept of gender consciousness and my racial/ethnic consciousness adaptation of it are especially suitable for measuring the influence of race/ethnicity and gender on the political ideologies and motives of the New Mexico leaders. Tolleson Rinehart's (1992, 70) framework recognizes that,

women have bonds other than their bonds to women: to their race, to the cultures of their home places, to their sociodemographic environment. . . . Thus we see that gender consciousness is a matter not only of gender identification, but of role ideology as well.

Similarly, my classification scheme for measuring racial/ethnic and gender identity is useful for organizing and analyzing qualitative data and may be helpful to scholars examining these variables.

My findings demonstrate the prevalence of racial/ethnic identity and gender identity—not only as motives for women’s political participation but as factors that both inform and shape their political ideologies. While this finding is not altogether new to the research on women of color, it is significant because it reiterates the necessity of having racially and culturally diverse representations of women in politics. Indeed, this research provides further empirical support for the importance of racial/ethnic minority women holding positions of political leadership.

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