Coffee Shop Conversations: An Exploration of How Local Elected Officials Develop and Engage Their Social Networks

by

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Dedication

To the source of my wisdom and my strength (Colossians 3:17)

Acknowledgments

I am honored and humbled to have the opportunity to thank those who have made this dissertation possible.

I would first like to thank the officials interviewed. Without their cooperation and candidness, this project would have just been an interesting idea. They deserve much more than their "compensation" of a cup of coffee and pastry during our time together.

A stellar committee also supported this effort. Vince, thanks for being my recruiter, advisor, role model, professor, mentor, sounding board, and dissertation co-chair… in roughly that order. I don't even know how many hours you have dedicated to my development as a scholar. However, I am leaving the University of Michigan as a political scientist – not an economist, sociologist, or policy analyst – thanks to you.

Rick, I'm not sure if you remember our meeting with the Detroit Renaissance Board in 2007. After only a year of graduate school, I was nervous to report our findings. However, you were confident in my ability to make the presentation and field questions. I encountered that same attitude during this project. You not only helped me believe in my work, but you also made me question why I ever had doubts! For that, I am grateful.

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Preface

As a freshly-minted college graduate with a degree in economics, I certainly did not envision conducting an exploratory study based on qualitative research for my dissertation. After all, I chose to pursue my PhD at the University of Michigan because I wanted to be challenged. I wanted to ask questions that nobody had before and answer them in ways that most people wouldn't have the ability (or guts) to do. I assumed – given my background and the university's reputation – this would be accomplished using, cutting-edge quantitative methods. This mixture of excitement and, admittedly, a bit of arrogance was affirmed by similar, heady feelings described by others in my cohort.

When the question that motivated this study – "How do local elected officials' social networks impact the policies and programs they champion in office?" – piqued my curiosity, I searched diligently for a dataset that would begin to put together the puzzle pieces I'd read in the local politics literature. Unable to find sufficient information on relationships between local elected officials and their social networks, faculty members encouraged me to explore whether this lack of literature was because other scholars had not pursued this line of research or because there was nothing interesting to report.

While this presented a unique opportunity, one that faculty seemed eager to discuss (the most excited of whom I asked to be on my committee), there was always the

caveat that the scholars advising my work "hadn't really done *exactly* this kind of research before." Therefore, I was a bit hesitant to take on a project that was so amorphous and just, plain messy. I was nervous that I would not be able to make a strong claim tying the social networks of local officials to the policies that they support.

Nonetheless, once I steered away from trying to prove a causal argument, I began to embrace the rich information that I gleaned from the interviews conducted during my pilot study. I drew confidence from the critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, and research skills that I had sharpened during coursework and collaborations with faculty. I built on this foundation by learning how to use social network analysis programs and software for qualitative research. I began to look forward to conducting interviews for my dissertation and became absorbed in the coding and systematic analysis of my results. The feedback I received during conference presentations not only further convinced me that I was doing ground-breaking work, but it gave me more ideas to consider and other proverbial threads to pull on from my growing tapestry of data. After continuing to cycle between interviews, inductive analysis, and presentations, I saw trends, then patterns, and eventually a cohesive story emerged…. Whoa…. Wow!

This resulting dissertation is a case of the motivation for a study truly guiding the methodology, and the methodology pushing me out of my comfort zone. I was challenged, I was gutsy, and I made a truly distinct contribution to a body of literature that was lacking. I am pleased with not only my empirical results, but also my growth as a researcher and a budding scholar during this process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> I was very active in the PTA when my children were younger. Seeing how you had to go to a board of people to get things done, I aspired to be on that board making decisions. So I ran for school board, and since then others have kept on encouraging me to participate in politics.
>
> ♦ Linda[1], Mayor of City A

> [T]hose who sit on the outside think the policymaking body is some nebulous machine that they don't have any control over. I was one of those people – always a back seat driver in politics. I sat on my porch telling people what *they* ought to be doing. Then I realized that *they* are actually just a big group of people – some with personal agendas and others with the community's best interest at heart – battling it out to make a case for what would be the best way forward for the community.
>
> ♦ Steven, School Board President in City C

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Politicians do not live in a vacuum. Their lives span more than their political commitments, affiliations, and even careers. The line between personal and political life is particularly thin for local elected officials. While members of the U.S. Congress are often away from their districts for the majority of the year and have time to strategically develop and refine their "home style," local politicians interact with their constituents on a daily basis (Fenno, 1978). They must work, play, and volunteer with many of the same people they serve. By having multiple roles within the same community, local officials

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[1] Names of local officials have been changed to protect anonymity. Please see Chapter 2: Data and Methods for more details.

are connected to various networks that can affect their personal lives and political careers. This research explores the intersection between the two spheres.

I conducted an exploratory study on the basic gap in the literature: What role do organizational affiliations play in a local elected official's political life? More specifically, how do local officials engage and develop their social networks? I hoped to learn more about how networks contribute to a politician's decision to run for office, the use of organizational ties during the campaign period, and how officials interact with their networks – socially and administratively – once they hold an elected position.

Social capital, a concept originating in the field of sociology, refers to the tangible and intangible value received from maintaining individual connections within organizations, as well as the informal links between friends, neighbors and co-workers. Like physical capital and human capital, social capital has also been shown to play an important role in increasing economic, community, health, psychological, and educational outcomes through building and retaining networks (Dika & Singh, 2002; Hao & Brinton, 1997; Putnam, 2000). These networks can be composed of a variety of formal and informal institutions including: churches, bowling leagues, and gardening clubs. Social capital can also be attained through participation in groups that do not have a specific focus on social or recreational activity. For example, one can build networks though relationships with people in the same labor union or professional society, as well as through parent-teacher associations in schools(Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000; Sampson, McAdam, MacIndoe, & Weffer,ÄêElizondo, 2005). However, the way in

which the social capital of individual politicians relates to their political careers has not been explicitly considered.[2]

As I will discuss in the following overview of related literature, a number of researchers have shown that social capital can aid politicians in their campaigns to get into office through financial contributions and newspaper endorsements. The literature has not, however, explored how the kinds of formal and informal ties politicians develop over their lives are associated with their careers as public officials. This dissertation considers the impact of social capital and social networks after a political candidate becomes a member of the political elite. How do the social networks, as well as the social capital that results from developing and maintaining these networks, that helped an official get elected relate to the work that he or she does while in office?

Through in-depth interviews with nearly three dozen local officials, examination of online biographical and local board documents, and participant observation at town hall meetings, I attempt to qualify how organizational memberships and social networks continue to play a role in a politician's life beyond the campaign period. My research addresses a gap in the literature by following through on a previously established line of research, and it also provides greater insight into governance at the local level. Furthermore, this study continues to advance the literature on race, gender, and policymaking at the local level by considering identity-relevant issues beyond policy outcomes, such as candidate emergence and progressive ambition.

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[2] This is not to say that social capital has been absent from literature on policymaking at the local level. The literature review includes a discussion of how the current study differs from community power structure and urban regime theory research.

Motivation: Where are the Policymakers?

My initial curiosity in this topic came from my simultaneous experiences as a doctoral student in public policy, a doctoral student in political science, and an intern in an organization that informs policy decisions. While I presumed that the three areas would be complementary, each had its own culture and thoughts about policymakers' considerations when making decisions. The predominant lessons that I learned in each role did not fit together neatly and were at times outright contradictory.

As a policy student, I learned how much time and background research is put into government programs. Policy analysts build their entire careers on speculating about the impact of a particular policy and evaluating the experience of other cities and states with similar policies in place. Making logistical decisions on budget and administration is another painstakingly arduous process that has to be completed before a policy can be put into place and/or a program can get up and running. Even at this point, there are benchmarks to achieve and metrics to monitor. These diagnostics often lead to brainstorming on how to improve or change the policy; and thus, the cycle beings again. Ironically, "policymakers" were typically an afterthought when discussing how policy is made.

As a student in political science, the focus shifted from the policy process to the power of the people in charge. However, the people in charge were oftentimes still not the actual policymakers. I read articles and books about the limitations of government at the local level, as well as the undue influence of commercial interests on local policy. I engaged in discussions about how real change in a community had to start with the residents, not the leaders. In fact, local officials were typically mentioned when

discussing the negative facets of local government: corruption, urban regimes, and political machines.

My internship gave me a third perspective on politicians. As a policy analyst, I conducted background research on a variety of issues, sent my findings in policy memos to lawmakers, and then sat down and discussed their concerns. These conversations were both enlightening and frustrating. I often listened to their struggle to balance my findings with their constituents' preferences, and then to fit their own personal biases into the picture. I was told by my superiors that at the end of the day, regardless of what the data showed, the policymaker would do whatever he or she felt like doing. We had done our part as policy analysts, and hopefully that would make a difference.

Essentially, I was receiving three different messages: 1) Policy research is critical to helping policymakers make beneficial changes; 2) Money and federalism control local politics, and any real change needs to come from the community; and 3) Politicians pursue their own agendas. Although each of these messages had some validity, they seemed a bit extreme. How can someone have too much and too little influence simultaneously? How could a person who is inherently selfish gain the respect, much less the votes, of their constituents?

More importantly, what happens in smaller cities? Atlanta is an exciting place to conduct research, Chicago's political machines are fascinating to explore, and political engagement permeates the atmosphere at all levels of government in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area. However, do these places and the aforementioned patterns truly reflect local politics in Any Town, USA?

I decided to go to the source. I sat down and engaged policymakers from two, smaller cities – one with a population of just over 100,000 people and the other with a population of about 75,000 people – in discussions about how they make their decisions. In addition to other previously mentioned factors, I specifically asked policymakers about a potential area of influence that had not been adequately addressed: the influence of social networks on their decision making. I found some support for my hypothesis that local elected officials' voluntary political action – measured by committees on which officials serve, programs and policies initiated, and programs and policies supported – while in office reflects the purpose and mission of their social networks.

I found that the organizations to which officials are most committed have the greatest association with their voluntary actions. Furthermore, officials also are generally aware of the connection between their personal and professional roles. Even those who do not exhibit awareness will still leverage the resources and expertise gained from participation in social and civic organizations in their capacity as an elected representative of their community. My next challenge was to provide support for my theory that social networks had a direct influence on policy outcomes.

Nonetheless, after my first wave of interviews, I was increasingly convinced that the relationship between local elected officials and their social networks did not fit into a neat box. There was not a direct line from social network, to local official, to policy outcome. Although I found evidence of general trends, there were variations based on race, age, gender, seniority in office, future political aspirations, current job status, household income, etc. In addition, my questions about organizational involvement,

social networking, political interest, and campaigning raised new questions and considerations that I had not learned in my classroom or applied experiences.

I decided to take a step back from my initial, causal line of research and explore the dynamic nature of these networks. Social networks may have an influence on policy outcomes at the local level, however their reach supersedes the act of voting "yes" or "no" on a particular issue. The influence of networks on a politician's career often occurs before there is even a career of which to speak. Like other forms of capital, social capital evolves with time, place, circumstances, and technology. My dissertation explores how local officials develop and engage their social networks and leverage their social capital throughout the duration of their political careers.

Social Capital and Social Networks

My study is an extension of social capital theory with regard to its relevance for elected officials in local politics. Although my research has implications for agenda setting, which will be explored later in this literature review, I will discuss social capital at length. With modern interpretations dating back just over two decades, social scientists have used a variety of definitions, dimensions, and empirical strategies to comprise the larger umbrella of "social capital." It is necessary to ground my work in this controversial body of thought before continuing with details of my research.

<u>Defining Social Capital</u>

Despite some inconsistencies in how scholars view types of social capital and the motivations for obtaining it, definitions center on the tangible and intangible benefits derived from social networks. The modern application of the phrase "social capital" is attributed to French sociologist Pierre Bordieu and American sociologist James Coleman

(Lin, 2000; Portes, 2000). Bordieu focused on distinguishing social capital from economic and cultural capital. One defining feature of social capital, in Bordieu's view, is that people actively cultivate networks in anticipation of the positive benefits that they will bring later (Bourdieu, 1980). This differs from Coleman who focuses more on the psychological foundation of the networks, such as reciprocity and trust. Coleman does not specify that people are interested in other long-term benefits that can occur as a result of belonging to these networks (Coleman, 1988).

Putnam focuses more on the organizational aspect and specifies two types of social capital: bonding and bridging (Putnam, 1995). "Bonding" social capital refers to benefits received from tightly-knit, emotionally close relationships between family and/or friends, while "bridging" social capital explores loose connections between individuals that may provide new information and perspectives. Ellison, Steinfeld, and Lampe identify a third type of social capital that has emerged with the creation and increasing popularity of online social networking websites and other online tools. According to the authors, "maintained" social capital addresses the ability to maintain valuable connections as one progresses through life changes (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007). [3]

Although Bordieu, Coleman, and Putnam address social capital from different perspectives, Nahapiet and Ghoshal synthesize their various definitions into three cross-cutting dimensions of social capital: structural, relational, and cognitive (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The structural dimension of social capital involves belonging to

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[3] There has been a debate regarding the decline of social capital over the last generation. (Macedo 2005; Putnam 1995) However, other scholars note an increase in activities combining social and political activity, as well as increased social networking online. (Sampson 2005; Ellison, Steinfeld, and Lampe 2007) Therefore, social capital is not in jeopardy if we realize that it is not only attained through participation in face-to-face leisurely activities.

networks and the impersonal ties between people who belong to the same network. The relational dimension goes beyond impersonal ties to focus on personal relationships that influence behavior – incorporating the respect, friendship, and trust aspects of social capital. Finally, the cognitive dimension addresses belief systems that provide shared perspectives and interpretations to a group, such as religion and democracy. These three dimensions are applicable to the concept of social capital, regardless of whether one is focusing on motives (e.g. Bordieu), psychological or material benefits (e.g. Coleman and Portes), or how social capital is created and maintained (e.g. Putnam).

Measuring Social Capital

Given the theoretical "messiness" of the term, creating a single measure of social capital has proved to be elusive and some argue, even impossible. In fact, Adam and Roncevic suggest that it is more accurate to think of social capital in terms of a feedback loop, meaning that it should not be studied as solely an independent variable or a dependent variable (Adam & Roncevic, 2003).[4] The struggle between maintaining the theoretical integrity of social capital and testing it empirically has led to two main strategies for measuring the concept. The first is a focus on the psychological mechanisms that provide a foundation for social capital – usually trust and adherence to societal norms of reciprocity (Fukuyama, 1995; Paxton, 1999), while the second examines network involvement and positioning (Lin, 2001). The former is more theoretically based, while the latter tries to provide a firmer empirical foundation for social capital. More frequently, scholars combine the two approaches in an attempt to

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[4] In fact, "trust" has been used as a dependent variable (Coleman), independent variable (Putnam), and measurement tool in studies of social capital. Scholars have viewed trust as a cause, consequence, and measure of prevalence of social capital. A similar concern occurs with utilizing "quality of government structure" as a variable.

gain an overall understanding of how social capital works for an individual or in an institutional setting (Knack & Keefer, 1997; Paxton, 1999; Tarrow, 1996).

Measurement strategies usually employ survey information, interviewing, and observation. Scholars often follow Putnam's example by using a survey-based index meant to capture networks through membership in voluntary associations, trust in individuals and institutions, examining "political culture" questions to measure norms of reciprocity, and successful cooperation between the people and the state (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993). Nonetheless, Portes criticized Putnam for being too vague in both his theoretical definition of the term and too broad in his empirical measurement (Portes, 1998). Furthermore, Tarrow questions Putnam's ability to take "a concept that is derived from contemporary democratic politics [and transpose it] to other periods of history and to other political systems" (Tarrow, 1996, p. 396). Although this is more a critique of Putnam's historical and comparative analysis, it relates to how Putnam not only conceptualizes social capital, but also how he employs its application.

More recent work attempts to break free of the theoretically-driven, vague measurements of social capital in favor of a straightforward empirical design. Using a variety of network sampling techniques – including name and position generators, Lin divides the social capital "process" into three parts: position within network(s), resources available, and outcome. According to Lin's conceptualization, individuals with a greater comparative position in a social network will have more access to information and support. This will manifest itself through some observable result, such as having a better job, better health, or a higher social standing (Lin, 2001). While Lin does, in fact, find support for this approach, critics of this type of analysis argue that it may swing the

pendulum too far in the other direction – even going as far as equating the process to data mining. The concern is that the recent empirical work is rooted in what a computer program reports, instead of conducting analyses based on theoretical groundings (Adam & Roncevic, 2003).

The compromise may lie in the unit of analysis. Social capital can be applied to both individuals, as well as entire societies. Most scholars have not taken into account the "level" of the subject they are analyzing before conducting research. Now that the field is two decades old, in its modern interpretation, perhaps we can glean whether a particular measurement strategy works best for individuals and another is more appropriate for studying institutions.

To situate this study in the broader definitions of social capital, I am using social networks and organizational affiliations as the primary proxy for social capital. I am specifically considering the social capital of elected individuals – not the bodies on which they serve or the quality of social capital in the community. The information that I include about the cities is to provide greater context for the study and not content for my analysis. With that said, I am interested in the consequences of social networks in the political arena and how these networks evolve for each official interviewed. The purpose of this study is not to explore the psychological factors that led to the formation of these networks.

Social Capital in Practice: The Public

Just as there are disparities in human capital and economic capital, the literature highlights that individuals and groups also have inequalities in their social capital and the benefits derived from social networks and organizational affiliations. Exploring

variations in the development of social capital by gender and race is particularly pertinent to my project.

In regard to gender differences in forming social capital, men's networks have fewer familial and neighborhood relationships than those of women. However, men tend to have larger, more heterogeneous networks overall, as their connections include more co-workers, advisors, and friends (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1982, 1986). The disparity between the size and heterogeneity of the groups to which different sexes belong is further exacerbated when women – who culturally serve the role of the caretaker in a family – have children under the age of six (Moore, 1990).

Beyond the types of relationships that serve as the foundation for each group's social capital, there also tends to be gender homogeneity within networks, as men tend to be less integrated in women's organizations and vice-versa (Brass, 1985). There is some evidence that these patterns shift as women move into the labor force, since women in professional occupations may be less likely to join single-sex groups in favor of participating in heterogeneous activities that will further their careers. However, given the continuation of sex segregation in the workplace by occupation, membership in single-sex voluntary organizations may decline but their existence is not in jeopardy (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1986).

Since political participation is a function of resources, interest, and mobilization (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993), this pattern of interactions has an impact on the ways in which men and women are involved in politics. Burns, Schlozman, and Verba find that men are more psychologically involved in politics when it comes to knowledge and interest (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001). When women participate at greater rates

and are more politically engaged, the authors attribute this to having a higher consciousness about the role of gender and being more aware of gender biases both in the private and political realm.

To examine the situation using a racial lens, blacks' networks, unlike those of whites, tend to consist less of formal, professional ties and instead include informal connections with friends, family, and neighbors. This is particularly true for blacks living in urban areas (Martineau, 1977).

Drake also finds hierarchal differences in social capital within the black community based on education and profession (Drake, 1965). The black middle class tends to form ties through membership and participation in churches and social clubs; and members of the "black elite," which consists primarily of upper-class professionals and businessman, also join exclusive fraternities and sororities. While blacks with a higher socioeconomic status are able to access the same networks as blacks with lower education and income, the reverse relationship is not true as blacks in lower classes are limited in their ability to attain access to more restricted groups. While Drake's research was conducted nearly a half-century ago, Lacy's explorations of the black middle class in Atlanta (Lacy, 2004) and Washington, DC (Lacy, 2007) demonstrate that these relationships persist in the 21st century.[5]

As far as political participation, given differences in education and income between blacks and whites, blacks often lack financial and civic resources comparable to

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[5] This relationship does not work the same for whites. While black institutions – such as neighborhoods, schools, and churches – often include a cross-section of classes; whites tend to separate themselves by socioeconomic status. (Massey and Denton 1993; Patillo 1999) Therefore, affluent blacks access exclusive and inclusive racial groups, while affluent whites have access to both but often choose to create an entirely different entity that is both racially and socioeconomically homogenous.

whites. Therefore, blacks are mobilized less by political elites on an individual basis. Nonetheless, this does not mean that blacks are not politically engaged.

An area that is often-overlooked in the literature on social capital is the strength of religious organizations and affiliations. Involvement in churches has historically been important in the development of social capital for and civic participation of blacks. Scholars have noted that the black church was at the center of the civil rights movement, providing a place for leaders and members to communicate, organize, and garner financial support across socioeconomic class. (McAdam, 1982; Morris, 1984)

Although a local election is quite different than a national movement, the black church still provides, what sociologist Mary Pattillo calls, a "cultural blueprint" for civic life in black neighborhoods (Pattillo-McCoy, 1998). The black church goes beyond serving as a base for organizing rallies and voter registration drives for prominent political figures at the local and national level. The black church encourages participation and establishes behavioral norms for participation in secular groups. Participation in church committees, helps blacks practice skills, such as written and oral communication and organizing, that increases their competence and confidence to run for public office (Brown & Brown, 2003).

Social Capital in Practice: Representation

To merge the literature on demographic differences in social capital and participation: social capital is distributed differently among people because of variation in the types of networks to which they have access, and access impacts political participation in a way that is observably different for blacks and women. Serving as a local official can be viewed as a more direct and active form of political participation.

Therefore, demographic differences will likely continue to impact a politician's career as he or she attempts to get elected and serves in office.

For example, the work of Sue Thomas presents marked differences in policy choices for both blacks and women, as compared to whites and/or men. By examining the policy priorities of state legislatures that have varying numbers of female representatives, Thomas finds that women legislators in states with a higher proportion of women representatives introduce and pass more bills related to women, children, and families than their female counterparts in low-representation legislatures.

These results also complement Thomas's findings on constituency service. Using the results of a national mail service of nearly 1,000 city council members, Thomas finds that women and blacks at the local level put a greater emphasis on serving the community (Thomas, 1992). Particularly interesting for this study is her finding that women and blacks target different sectors of the community as important than men and whites, respectively. She notes that "differential targeting of constituency sectors may indicate that previously underserved constituents will get more attention" (Thomas, 1992, p. 177).

In a more recent study, Marschall and Ruhil also explore the substantive dimensions of descriptive representation among blacks at the local level, or the tendency for black politicians to advocate for black constituents. While the literature on substantive and symbolic representation with regard to black elected officials is well developed on a variety of fronts at the local and Congressional levels (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990; Gay, 2001; Tate, 2003; Whitby, 1997), the authors add an interesting twist. They not only use a variety of sources to explore the attitudes of blacks in a variety of

municipalities, but the authors then supplement the attitudinal data with information on policy outcomes and service delivery in these areas. Marschall and Ruhil do find support for the notion that blacks express higher levels of satisfaction when represented by blacks in their local government, but they also find the greatest level of positivity in municipalities with noticeable improvements in policies and services geared toward minorities. (Marschall & Ruhil, 2007)

Although both Thomas and Marschall and Ruhill expound upon potential implications of their findings, neither investigates the sources driving this behavior. Why do women and blacks target their attention to sectors of the community that are not traditionally acknowledged by men and whites? How do black officials know the "right" policies to pass to gain greater approval by black constituents? I believe that examining the social capital of local elected officials can further shed light on this issue.

I am not positing a direct causal relationship between organizational involvement and the positions that politicians take while in office. However, given the literature on organizational involvement briefly discussed in the previous section, it is likely that social capital will be both a latent source of knowledge for constituents and an active political tool for local officials. In fact, the connection between the social capital that results from organizational involvement and officials' behavior once elected to office, may be most evident at the point where this transition occurs: candidacy, or even during the pre-candidacy phase of a politician's career.

Therefore, it is my hope that this study will provide insight into candidate emergence at the local level, another under-analyzed area of representation. Political ambition is often synonymous with progressive ambition of office-holders and

candidates. Nonetheless, under this construction, people who have never taken the initial step to run for office are not even considered. While we can explore disparities between the numbers of blacks and females in office compared to white men and/or comment on specific elections, what causes a person to decide to run for office is rarely discussed.

Fox and Lawless developed and estimated the nascent political ambition – which the authors define as "the embryonic or potential interest in office seeking that precedes the actual decision to enter a specific political contest" – of nearly 4,000 individuals in the four professions that yield the highest proportion of political candidates: law, business, education, and political/community activism (Fox & Lawless, 2005, p. 643). Among their results, they found that being a member of a group historically excluded from politics, particularly blacks and women, decreases the likelihood of a person even thinking about running for office. Perhaps exploring social capital may provide some explanation for why and how politicians who belong to traditionally under-represented groups decide to consider candidacy.

Although I only interview individuals already in office, I ask questions about the initial decision to become engaged in local politics. Ironically, the majority of officials I interviewed were initially reluctant to becoming involved in an elected capacity – preferring to keep their influence to a civic level. Even still, some officials commented on their lingering aversion to being identified by the term "politician." I will elaborate more on what caused them to eventually run for office in Chapter 3.

Social Capital and Theories of Elected Officials' Behavior

The influence of social capital on elected officials at all levels of government has not been explicitly examined in the literature. However, there is research on

Congress and research at the local level that explores concepts often discussed in social capital literature, including: civic engagement, trust, and using networks for resources and information. Although these studies may not state that they are grounded – or even interested – in the concept of social capital, the parallels between these works and my proposed research make them useful to discuss.

Hall finds that Congressional representatives participate more when they have a personal interest in the issue being debated (Hall, 1996). Other forms of participation, including co-sponsoring bills, could also be related to social capital in that they can send symbolic statements to constituents of a policymaker's beliefs and priorities. While these activities can serve to boost the social capital of the electorate overall by demonstrating that a member of Congress is "doing his/her job" and democracy is "working," my focus in this proposed study is not the social capital of society as an entity or symbolic forms of participation. I am more interested in how individual's organizational networks are associated with policy priorities, and how the resources gleaned from social capital help them to perform their jobs.

With resources as a central part of my framework, it is also appropriate to consider Hall and Deardorff's work on lobbying as a legislative subsidy (Hall & Deardorff, 2006). The authors propose a theory of lobbying that both challenges and complements the two prevailing views of lobbying as 1) a means of exchange through vote-buying or time-buying (Austen-Smith, 1996; Hall & Wayman, 1990) and 2) lobbying as a means of persuasion centered around information-transmission (Hansen, 1991). According to Hall and Deardorff, the goal of lobbyists is not to change the minds of policymakers, but to instead find allies to assist with their own groups' objectives.

Working from the construct of "Congressman as enterprise" (Salisbury & Shepsle, 1981), Hall and Deardorff purport that the legislative enterprise – just like the business enterprise – faces scarcity. It simply does not have all of the resources that it needs to perform the jobs that need to be done. Lobbyists are specialists that can provide "labor, policy information, and political intelligence to likeminded but resource-constrained legislators" (Hall & Deardorff, 2006, p. 75). While lobbyists are not the only source of information, legislators are more likely to listen to and trust those with similar views. Lobbyists benefit by having the attention of their strongest allies, and legislators receive customized, issue-specific reports – saving their enterprise both time and money, while providing information.

Social capital and resource sharing is not always framed in such an altruistic light. The primary focus on resource sharing in the urban politics literature – with the key resource being money or political power – is economic advancement. Hunter's *Community Power Structure* explores the influence of the business elite on politics in Atlanta during the mid-twentieth century (Hunter, 1953). Hunter claims most policymaking during the time of his study can be traced to the overlapping networks of a small number of corporate elites. Urban regime theory further considers the role of business elites on policymaking by examining coalitions formed between government and non-government actors. Nonetheless, the focus of Hunter's research and urban regime literature tends to be on how businesses that have a greater interest in growth exert a larger influence in politics than groups interested in policies involving social welfare. (Mossberger & Stoker, 2001; C. N. Stone, 1989)

Stone's case study of Atlanta represents a useful example (C. N. Stone, 1989).

Stone describes the governing coalition in the city, which consisted of black middle class officials and white investors. He details how the black middle class gained political power through electoral support, and white investors maintained economic power. While neither group had enough power to control the city alone, they combined their resources to enable the black middle class to have the financial ability to pass policies beneficial to their group and the white business elite to garner the political support to complete large infrastructure projects. Although this is an example of the overlap between the personal and political interests of local officials, public officials in regimes are constrained by the other members of the coalition and do not draw solely from their personal social capital to steer the political agenda. Rather, it is a careful balance between the ability to win elections, acquire personal gains, and propose policies that will benefit the coalition as a whole. This is not to suggest that officials in cities without an obvious regime are unconstrained in their behavior, however their actions may be less strategic and more individualized.

Stone has more recently tackled the role of civic capacity in urban school reform (C. Stone, 1998; C. N. Stone, 1989). He highlights the importance of "social-purpose politics," in which coalition partners are committed to beliefs and ideals instead of – or even in the face of – material gains. This effort is a closer parallel to my proposed study, as the interests of the elected official form the basis of the relationship between him or her and a pre-existing coalition of parents, business elites, and educators. Nonetheless, the policymaker maintains the role of an after-the-fact partner. The coalition strategically appeals to particular officials in government who they believe will support their agenda. Although the relationship is not characterized by monetary or political interests, the

officials are once again not the key players when it comes to initiating the programs and policies they champion.

Overall, the relationship between social capital and the behavior of officials has been described as either a valued subsidy or, conversely, as a means for personal gain. As a subsidy, social capital is part of a toolkit of sorts to help officials perform their jobs better *for* constituents in the face of time, money, and information constraints. On the other hand, using social capital for personal gain brings to mind the negative connotation of "old boys' networks," where true motives are often disguised and decisions are made *in spite of* constituents' needs. Decades of research on political machines and urban regime theory have popularized the latter use of social capital. Examining the former – social capital as a valuable aid, not a payoff – at the local level would bring some balance to local politics literature.

Social Capital in Practice: Governance

In the previous section, I highlighted some of the popular theories conceptualizing the relationship between social capital and policymaking at the local level by exploring community power structure, urban regimes, and political machines. While each of these theories has merit, Peterson purports that the critical underlying flaw in the analysis is that local officials have limits to the policies that they can enact. According to Peterson, scholars treat local areas like autonomous national governments when this is not the proper way to think of them (Peterson, 1981).

To provide a brief overview, older conceptions of how governments operated portrayed each level of government – national, state, and local with the primary focus on the former two – as having separate roles and responsibilities. Nonetheless, modern

federal theory suggests that we think of federalism in terms of power-sharing. Instead of having distinct layers of governmental control, "marble cake federalism," also called intergovernmental relations or cooperative federalism, is distinguished by its lack of distinction (Grodzins, 1966). National, state, and local governments share not only administrative responsibilities but also the ability to take a joint approach to solving policy problems (Reagan & Sanzone, 1981).

By putting cities on equal ground with larger governments, Peterson claims that scholars do not acknowledge, much less explain how the priorities and abilities of local government are different from those serving at the national level. He states that while national government can focus on the equality of citizens, local governments must primarily concern themselves with economic productivity. (Peterson, 1981, pp. 68-77)

Central to Peterson's argument is that cities – unlike nations – must deal with the mobility of capital, which is the ability of businesses to relocate to other areas. According to Peterson, it makes more sense for cities to forego redistributive policies that focus on social welfare, in favor of developmental policies that attract and retain businesses. Peterson praises developmental policies for their ability to "strengthen the local economy, enhance the local tax base, and generate the additional resources that can be used for the community's welfare" (Peterson, 1981, p. 41). Unlike urban regime theory and the literature on political machines, Peterson offers a logical reasoning for why cities are more likely to pursue local development programs instead of social welfare programs.

While Peterson certainly creates a useful typology for considering the priorities of and constraints faced by local officials, particular in modern times where the mobility of capital is a concern at the national level as well, his theory may be overstated. Passing

redistributive policies may not be as attractive or "efficient" for a city's economic

pursuits, but it does still happen. Cities do not reap redistributive benefits solely from the

government or from a trickle-down effect of developmental programs. Furthermore, some

developmental projects are controversial and face opposition from both the current

business owners and local officials. Finally, as even Peterson points out, many policies do

not neatly fit under the umbrellas of developmental or redistributive policy. Educational

spending, the creation of wildlife reserves, and even subsidized daycare do not seem like

developmental policies, but they may have a long-term impact on how attractive a city is

to a business. (Peterson, 1981; Sanders, 1987; Swanstrom, 1988)

It is my belief that examining local officials' social capital and taking a closer

look at their organizational involvement will provide some insight as to how, when, and

why local governments decide to pursue redistributive policies, even though it is

seemingly against their priorities (according to regime theory), interests (in the case of

political machines), and ability (based on Peterson's theory).

Dissertation Outline

Perhaps Adler and Kwon best sum up previous work in the field of social capital

with their observation that there "is considerable confusion in the research to date…. The

views of different authors appear to depend on their disciplinary background and on the

questions they address with the social capital concept" (Adler & Kwon, 2000, p. 95). I

agree that scholars should be explicit about the dimension of social capital they are

studying and how they are measuring it. This is the only way to add to the development

of social capital as a concept in a meaningful way.

With that noted, my study attempts to contribute to the social capital literature by

explicitly exploring how local officials view the role of organizational memberships and formal and informal networks in their political careers. As a secondary benefit, my methods – in-depth interviews and participant observation – allow me to examine the relevance of demographic characteristics on candidate emergence, committee selection, and policymaking.

Beginning with this introductory chapter as a foundation for my dissertation, I outline the theory supporting my study and detail my methodological approach in Chapter 2. I also use the second chapter to discuss demographic details of the respondents and non-respondents, as well as information about the cities in which I conducted my research. Furthermore, this chapter has a discussion on the merits and limitations of taking a qualitative approach to this topic.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the pre-candidacy portion of a politician's career. I explore how officials develop networks and gain social capital through their organizational involvement in the community. Next, I discuss how the local officials interviewed made the decision to pursue an elected position.

Chapter 4 discusses the officials' campaigns. I explore the variation in formality of the campaigns, in terms of campaign management, fundraising, and efforts made to reach out to the community. I consider the administrative, monetary, and logistical involvement of officials' networks. For officials that have been elected more than once, I examine how the use of networks has changed and how the actual networks have evolved over time.

The topic of network evolution also continues in Chapter 5, where I examine networks' role during incumbency. Along these lines, I discuss the institutional

mechanisms and community interactions that help or hinder elected officials' feelings of efficacy during their time in office. I discuss the officials I interviewed, breaking them into the official roles that they emphasized during our interview. Therefore, I discuss the officials in the following three groups: Policymakers, Administrators, and Representatives for the community.

My final chapter summarizes my analysis and presents next steps for research. Overall, I hope to provide a more comprehensive view of policymaking at the local level. While business interests may influence some decisions made, I push to explore how personal experience with organizations is related to the ways in which local officials perform and interpret their duties.

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Chapter 2: Data and Methods

I guess the first thing I'll say in closing is that it's been a very
interesting hour, so thank you for this opportunity. I've enjoyed both
talking and thinking about [the interview topics]. I probably don't do
either as often as I should.
♦ William, School Board Treasurer in City B

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This chapter will discuss my methodological approach to this dissertation and

introduce the data. After a brief discussion of the underlying assumptions of this research,

I discuss my research design, including a note on the merits and limitations of taking a

qualitative approach to this analysis. I then describe how I recruited my sample, as well

as the demographic information of the officials I interviewed compared to non-

respondents. Next, I detail my interview protocol and discuss the topics covered during

each interview. Finally, I conclude with my approach to coding and analyzing my audio

recordings, interview transcripts, and notes from participant observation.

Assumptions

Before I discuss the nuts and bolts of the variables in my study, it is important to

explicitly state my assumptions. I based my research design on the belief that the

following four assumptions hold:

A1: Local elected officials possess social capital and are involved in social networks.
Although there is still debate about whether or not social capital has been declining in the
United States overall (Putnam, 1995; Sampson, et al., 2005), those who run for a local
elected office must gain a base of supporters to secure campaign financing,
endorsements, and votes on election-day. Continued involvement in various
organizations builds a candidate's social network and aids this process.

Social capital can also be derived from past involvement. Given technological
advancements, it is relatively easy for officials to remain in contact with members of
college organizations, past neighborhoods, and those from areas other than their frequent
face-to-face circles (Ellison, et al., 2007). Although these people may not be in an elected
officials' current constituency, they may shape the politicians' knowledge, available
resources, and point of view on policy issues.

A2: Organizational involvement is not always strategic. Although officials have
an electoral incentive to stay involved in their communities once elected, the initial
decision to join organizations, as well as consideration of the types of organizational
involvement and affiliations, was probably not made with the primary goal of being
elected to public office. Given that local officials often work for little, if any, monetary
compensation, they are likely to have a vested interest in their community and a
commitment to service beyond the personal and political benefits of becoming involved.

A3: Politicians draw upon their social capital in order to get elected to office.
The focus in the literature is primarily on how local officials garner endorsements and
campaign contributions. However, I extend this to assume that people draw on the

benefits from formal and informal networks for more than political or monetary means. Given the feelings of trust and reciprocity generated by social capital (Coleman, 1988), individuals use another valuable resource to support candidates: time. Social capital encourages individuals to volunteer for other activities that aid the electoral process, including making signs, canvassing neighborhoods, and driving people to the polls on election day.

A4: Officials maintain involvement in various organizations while they are in office. In addition to leveraging involvement in social networks to get elected, current incumbents have an incentive to remain involved in organizations. Continued involvement in organizations and networks serves the dual purpose of signaling to constituents that the official remains committed to the community in a capacity beyond their official duty, and it also enables the official to stay abreast of issues that are important to their constituents.

Methodological Approach

Given the exploratory nature of this research question and the lack of available information in the literature about the specific topic, a qualitative approach was most appropriate. My research design involved in-depth interviews with nearly three dozen local officials and engaging in participant observation on three occasions. I also utilize social network analysis to visually, and concisely, depict some results and patterns in the data. Nevertheless, while there are many benefits to using a qualitative approach to explore how local officials develop and engage their social networks, these methodological approaches are not without limitations and imperfections.

The majority of my information gathered comes from in-depth, face-to-face interviews with local elected officials serving on city councils and school boards. While interviews have distinct advantages over other methods when it comes to gaining an understanding of complex events and individuals' perspectives (Weiss, 1994), the two most common deterrents to conducting interviews are the time and cost that one has to invest in the process.

There is time spent developing and testing the interview questionnaire, scheduling the interviews, and conducting them. Cost factors in when it comes to purchasing an audio recorder, providing refreshments during an interview, and investing in qualitative analysis software. Both factors need to be considered for transportation to and from the interview site, as well as transcribing and coding the data. In addition, despite the monetary and temporal investment, both the sample size and generalizability of qualitative research is more limited than that of quantitative methods.

Nonetheless, the benefits of conducting a face-to-face interview are numerous. One advantage is that there is an automatic credibility established in an in-person situation. The interviewee can see directly whom he or she is dealing with and, more importantly, gauge whether the interviewer is who he or she actually claims to be (Groves, 2004). Given politicians' public image, it is natural for them to feel guarded when entering an interview situation that will address their personal lives and thoughts. Fenno discusses a number of reasons why local officials would even agree to doing so in the first place, including that politicians may: enjoy a change in their routine, have a "conditioned reflex" to accept, be used to doing interviews with journalists, see

participating as a civic duty, be flattered by scholarly attention, and/or want to be immortalized in written form (Fenno, 1978).

However, Fenno also notes that politicians are astute in making decisions about how much they feel comfortable in disclosing in a setting with a virtual stranger, regardless of the intent. Fenno states, "My confidence in my ability to get them to talk was matched by their confidence in their ability to say nothing they did not wish to say" (Fenno, 1978, p. 261). While this may be the case and pure transparency is an idealistic goal, the face-to-face interview setting encourages a greater degree of interaction and overall disclosure than a telephone interview or a survey.

Furthermore, a higher degree of data quality is often achieved during a face-to-face interview. Strictly considering the flexibility of using the prepared questionnaire, researchers have the ability to immediately "probe for more information and clarify ambiguous responses" (Sarbaugh-Thompson, 2004, p. 10). Respondents can also ask clarifying questions to make sure that they understand the question being asked and feel confident that they are giving an appropriate response.

A face-to-face interview, particularly a conversational interview like those employed in this research, also gives both of the participants engaged in the dialogue the opportunity to go off of the predetermined script when necessary and appropriate. Interviewers can ask follow-up questions or vary the order of questions depending on the flow of the discussion. By picking up on nonverbal cues, an interviewer can also assess comfort level, as well the participant's level of engagement or lack thereof.

During my interview with Thomas, the Mayor of City B, his speech became faster and his answers shorter as the interview progressed. I initially thought that I had

somehow offended him or made him uncomfortable, but then I noticed that his gaze drifted to the clock on the wall on multiple occasions. Therefore, I decided to skip around and ask key questions about themes that I saw emerging from other interviews and rely on his biography, website, and other supplemental materials to fill in any gaps. Sure enough, as we shook hands and ended the interview, he disclosed that he had overbooked himself and was late for another engagement.

At the other end of the spectrum, respondents can volunteer their own insights regarding related issues. After going through a series of closed-end questions regarding organizational affiliations, Richard suggested that I include more questions about family events. Although I covered organizations related to children and education, Richard's large, extended family planned reunions and vacations. Given the group's size and meeting frequency, he considered them an organization. Upon asking this question in subsequent interviews, other respondents did not have similar experiences. However, this exchange certainly provided more insight into Richard's personal life and priorities.

Given the familiarity and rapport developed, an interviewer is not merely a passive observer or engaged primarily in data analysis. By taking an active role in the data collection process, the interviewer actually becomes the observed, which can cause response bias that affects the accuracy of the data (Fenno, 1978). Social desirability bias is a concern in most surveys, and this becomes even truer once a rapport is established in a conversational interview. After building trust, people are even more likely to discuss themselves in a favorable light and avoid disclosing negative aspects of themselves or their past behavior (Groves, 2004).

Even beyond the risk of calculated omissions, memory can also be a source of concern. Particularly when interviewing people who have served in an elected position for more than a decade. They simply may not be able to recall what organizations they were in, or to only highlight the most influential affiliations when they started their political careers. However, using biographies and search engines on the internet prior to the interview, I was able to help jog officials' memories of certain events and memberships.

The demographic qualities of the interviewer may also trigger certain responses. As a young, black woman, I noted several instances where my phenotypic identifiers may have affected results. For example, a number of white men interviewed noted their involvement in the NAACP or the League of Women Voters, and then broke eye contact as they explained that this membership was only in title or they simply paid dues. This was not the case when these men discussed other organizational affiliations or political advocacy groups that they belonged to and only paid membership fees.

Conversely, at the end of my interview with black officials, they were more likely to engage with me further and try to establish an ongoing relationship. They also frequently commented on their "pride" in my pursuit of an advanced degree. Black officials were also more likely to ask personal questions about my family and the people that I knew in the area in an effort to find out if we knew anyone in common.

Age provided the least concern for officials. I made an effort to dress professionally for each interview, and I believe that my status as a PhD student trumped any potential perception of youthful naïveté. One case that stands out in particular is my interview with Joseph, a Councilman from City C. During a discussion about a local high

school, I mentioned that I used to coach cheerleading there. He asked how old I was to see if I had coached his youngest daughter. It turns out that I was in fact the same age as his daughter. When I disclosed my age, his face had an odd expression as he processed this, and he said, "Okay, so you're as old as my daughter… all right. [pause] That's pretty good that you're getting your PhD…. Wow. I mean, that's actually great!"

Overall, face-to-face interviews emphasize high rates of coverage of the target population, response rates, and a greater level of data quality. (Groves, 2004, p. 162). Although they are imperfect, I did in fact place a premium on the factors that Groves lists, and my interview data was certainly invaluable to this study. Moreover, as Fenno states, "[T]here is something to be gained by occasionally unpacking our analytical categories and our measures to take a firsthand look at the real live human beings subsumed within" (Fenno, 1996, 8-9). Conducting in-depth, conversational interviews with officials certainly allowed me to get out of my "statistical comfort zone" and explore the nuances of the people behind the trends.

Merits and Limitations of Participant Observation

The main purpose of using participant observation in this research was to provide another check for the credibility of the information I received during interviews. While facts cited could typically be verified through an internet search, review of board meeting notes or video, and/or by asking similar questions to peers, I wanted to get a feel for how politicians operated outside of the interview setting and in a more natural environment. This use of triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and variation on peer debriefing (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) is also another step toward verifying the accuracy of the information obtained during the face-to-face interviews. I will discuss how I established a rapport

with officials later in this chapter; nonetheless, a social setting is inherently different than a personal interview. Multiple points of observation only added to my overall insights.

My initial goal for the participant observation portion of this study was to use the "soak and poke" technique popularized by Fenno more than three decades ago (Fenno, 1978). After building a strong rapport with officials in the majority of my interviews, it was fairly common for the interviewees to extend invitations to various public or personal events. This would give me an inside look at what happens when an official is in a private, public, and personal setting. While this seemed to be a great way to boost the credibility of my interaction with the officials and gather more data, I did not have the same success as Fenno.

Unlike Fenno, I was interviewing entire boards of people and exposed to the various dynamics and personality conflicts that occur at the local level. During our confidential interviews, it was fairly common for respondents to frankly share both positive and negative opinions of their peers. Although there are obvious divisions in Congress, it was unlikely for Fenno to run into one Congressman while accompanying another in their home district. In my research, it was common for me to see multiple respondents at one event. Since not everyone got along with each other, I did not want perceived favoritism or "disloyalty" to break down the rapport that I had built during individual interviews.

Nonetheless, I was able to attend a City Volunteer Day in City A, a church service in City B, and a town hall meeting in City C. As Fenno (Fenno, 1978, p. 267) observed, "Obviously, one key to effective participant observation is to blend into each situation as unobtrusively as possible. Oftentimes the easiest way to do this is to become

an active participant. " With five years of history in the general region in which I

interviewed and observed, I was already a natural part of the community. Moreover, I

was able to avoid any uncomfortable situations by simply planting flowers, participating

in worship, and listening attentively at the meeting.

Merits and Limitations of Social Network Analysis

While my dissertation aligns with Putnam's research in that I use organizational

involvement as a starting point for exploring social capital, I also think that Lin's

application of social network analysis to this subject is a step in the right direction (Lin,

2001). While this approach is more descriptive in nature, I believe that the contrast

between rich interviews and visual social network analysis enhances the lessons learned

from each individually.

Incorporating social network analysis also provides the benefit of mapping

individuals without sacrificing their unique characteristics. I do not have to parse out the

effects of what it means to be black, *or* female, *or* any other description. One of the more

interesting facets of my project is the multidimensionality of each candidate. The spatial

mapping allows me to assign attributes to each without sacrificing the complexity of any

individual.

Furthermore, using social network mapping is a helpful and succinct way to

explore key organizational connections. Using maps, in addition to relating anecdotes,

provides a more efficient way to explain certain links and trends. For example, in Figure

2.1 – which will be explained in greater detail in the next chapter, given the size of the

nodes, it is relatively easy to see which organizations have the greatest number of

officials as members. In addition to the size of the nodes, the shapes and colors of the

nodes also represent age and race, respectively.

Figure 2.1 A Two-Mode Sociogram of Organizational Relationships in Cities A, B,

and C

Nonetheless, a critical part of performing a traditional social network analysis is

to have data available on the entire network. After all, when conducting analysis of a

network, there has to be some potential connection involved. Since I was not able to

arrange interviews with every member of each governing body, the majority of my

networks are incomplete. Therefore, as an alternative, I explored "archetypes" of

officials' memberships in organizations, exclusively for the officials interviewed. One

could imagine that belonging to certain *types* of organizations may provide a professional

benefit to local officials. A number of officials belong to their local neighborhood

association, are active in Parent-Teacher Organizations, currently lead or previously led a

Boy or Girl Scout troop, belong to local and regional political party organizations, and sit

on boards of various types. These affiliations are helpful in explaining themes including candidate emergence and electoral support. Although this exercise is not about actual organizations in individual cities, removing spatial (and even temporal) constraints helps to highlight the importance of various types of organizations to local officials collectively.

Sample Recruitment and Sample Demographics

I examined the relevance of organizational involvement for local officials, specifically members of city councils and school boards, as opposed to US Congressional or state-level representatives. Local elected officials were most compatible with this study for a number of reasons. Local officials generally have smaller constituencies, while Congressional districts are larger and have become larger over time.[6]

In addition, most members of Congress are physically removed from their constituencies for the majority of the year. Therefore, their interactions with constituents are often in formal settings, however local officials' interactions are more frequent and extensive (Fenno, 1978). It is not out of the norm for local elected officials to interact with their constituents in a personal, professional, or civic capacity that is, at least nominally, distinct from their official capacity as elected officials. By having multiple roles within the same community, there is more overlap between the personal and professional roles in which local officials hold.

Furthermore, exploring the local level is more appropriate than the national or the state level for the demographic component of this study. Most females and blacks that are elected to office serve at the local level (Thomas, 1992). In fact, municipal office and

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[6] Granted, there are some small districts and there are some big cities, but generally local officials serve fewer people.

school board seats are the most commonly held elected positions for blacks (Marschall & Ruhil, 2007). Conversely, state and national elected bodies are more demographically homogenous and composed of white males. Oversampling elected bodies with people of color and women allowed me to ask questions about progressive ambition.

Finally, I had to consider the geographic accessibility of my respondents. Interviews are already time-intensive and have a high cost. Therefore, my goal was to sample areas that fit the aforementioned criteria but were within an hour of my home. Not only did this save on transportation expenses, but it also gave me greater flexibility in scheduling interviews at convenient places and times for the interviewee.

Given these boundaries, I engaged in purposeful sampling. As Means-Coleman (Means Coleman, 2000, p. 269) explains, "In purposeful sampling, participants are chosen who can aid in securing maximum information, rather than generalizable findings." Therefore, my primary considerations when selecting my cities in which to conduct interviews were: 1) geographical proximity and 2) diversity in leadership. In addition, City A, City B, and City C are fairly consistent in terms of population, partisanship, income, household size, college education, poverty rates, and commercial vs. residential properties. There is certainly some variation, however none of the cities are outliers in these factors.

Given my previous experience with qualitative research, I expected officials to respond at varying rates, as well as to different methods of contact. Therefore, during the month-long recruitment phase for each city, I made contact with officials up to four times by email and phone. (See "Appendix A: Subject Recruitment – Email and Telephone Script" for details on the initial email and follow-up telephone contact.)

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I sent an initial email to officials that introduced my study and myself. I also included a personal detail about each official to show that I had done some background research and actively considered the added value of his or her participation. At this phase, the responses I received were mostly positive, if I received a response at all. A few officials called me to ask more detailed questions about the study and to schedule a time to meet.

Only one official, a councilwoman from City A, declined to participate at this point. She responded, "I doubt that I can help you, inasmuch as I do not use 'social organizations' as a source for decisions. Basically, I believe that is too narrow a focus. My sources and resources are much broader." After reiterating that my research was not exclusively about decision-making but about the tenure of a politician's career, she agreed to see the questionnaire but still did not think that she fit in with the project.[7]

Two weeks after my first attempt at contact, I sent a follow-up email to the officials who had not responded. By this time, I had conducted at least three interviews in the city and typically had several others scheduled. My hope was that reminding officials who I was and updating them on the willingness of their peers to interview would encourage greater participation. Most officials who responded at this point were apologetic, often mentioning that they saw the email and had intended to reply. Others were curious about with whom I had already spoken.

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[7] Ironically, according to the councilwoman's official biography, she spent several decades rallying around various environmental issues – organizing a grassroots effort in her community to prevent the building of an expressway through a wetland area, starting other environmental awareness and protection groups, and serving on the board of a number of environmental conservation councils and coalitions. In her tenure on City A's council, she has initiated several policies and been key in enacting a number of ordinances related to protecting the wildlife and wilderness of City A.

Two school board trustees, one from City A and another from City B declined participation in the study at this stage. The trustee from City A mentioned that he had an unexpected family emergency, however he heard a few colleagues discuss the study and believed that his experiences and views would be similar to the information that I had already received. The other trustee from City B, who has since lost his seat, had his assistant respond to my email stating that he was "impossibly scheduled for the remainder of the year," despite that I requested the interview in February.

A week after sending the second email, I called officials from whom I had not heard. Although research states that calling people can often be more successful for recruiting interview subjects than sending email (Groves, 2004), this attempt proved to be the least successful in securing an interview. Finally, a week after the telephone call, I emailed non-respondents to provide final numbers of officials that I interviewed from both their board and city, respectively. I let officials know that I would be starting another wave of interviews and assured them that they will be able to contact me throughout the remaining duration of my data collection period. This last effort did elicit a few responses from people expressing their desire to participate, however these officials did not follow up with scheduling interviews.

By the end of the data collection period, I had completed interviews with 31 of the 52 (60%) of the officials that I contacted. Twenty-seven of these interviews were face to face, while four interviews were conducted over the phone due to scheduling complications. In subsequent chapters, I use a demographic lens to describe the various stages of an elected official's career. It may be useful to reference Appendix D, which includes a table detailing the demographic information of the interviewed officials.

However, to briefly summarize this information, 20 officials interviewed (65%) were male and 11 (35%) officials were female, 23 officials interviewed (74%) were white and 8 (26%) officials were black, and 17 (55%) elected officials were over the age of 55 and 14 (45%) were younger than 55 years old. Furthermore, all of the officials interviewed belonged to the same political party.

Interview Process and Format

I conducted the majority of my interviews in coffee shops or cafés within each respective city. During my initial emails to recruit subjects, I allowed my interviewees to suggest a time and place, and the first four respondents to arrange an interview chose local coffee shops. The relaxed environment, as well as the informal conversation between myself and my interviewees while ordering our drinks, helped to establish rapport and encourage a more natural flow of conversation. Therefore, when arranging subsequent interviews, I suggested local coffee shops as a meeting place.

Before beginning the interview, I gave participants an open opportunity to ask both personal and professional questions about me. Several inquired about my progress in my doctoral program, long-term career interests, and geographic background. This was also an important stage in building rapport, as I wanted my respondents to view me as an interested and engaged researcher and not a journalist. Beginning a dialogue and building trust was also critical when it came time to signing the informed consent document. (See Appendix B for details of the IRB Consent Form.)

Since I arrived early at the coffee shop, I already had a table set up with the consent document, audio recorder, and my computer for note-taking. Therefore, I incorporated the signing of the informed consent document and turning on the audio

recorder into our already ongoing conversation as seamlessly as possible. I gave the interviewee the document while verbally highlighting the more important portions, including the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and recording. Most participants signed the form without reading it, while a few briefly read over the form before signing.

In only one instance, a would-be interviewee walked away when he saw the audio-recorder. However, this participant's behavior was abnormal from our initial contact. He would only talk on the phone – refusing to communicate by email – prior to the interview date. On the actual interview day, he seemed hesitant about meeting in a public place. Even after I volunteered to turn off the recorder and my computer and take notes by hand, he simply left the coffee shop with no further discussion. He also did not respond to my follow up email thanking him for his time and apologizing for any discomfort I may have caused.

Nonetheless, in every other interaction, the introduction to the interview process paralleled the semi-structured nature of my questionnaire. The questionnaire combined closed-end questions about demographic details and organizational affiliations with more open-ended inquiries about officials' overall career trajectory. My questionnaire is provided in Appendix C.[8]

Despite the audio recorder and my note-taking on the computer, the open responses often encouraged candid conversation and resulted in discussing tangential topics. It was the norm for interviewees to simply think out loud. In one case, Karen, a city councilwoman from City B, apologized for "babbling." In another instance, after a winding discussion regarding her decision to run for office, Susan, a school board trustee

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[8] I will refer to specific questions at a number of points in this analysis. It may be helpful for readers to familiarize themselves with the questionnaire before reading discussion-based chapters or to keep it tabbed as a reference.

from City B, jokingly commented, "Now I think I spent 15 minutes just answering your one question, didn't I?"

More extreme diversions included looking up an incumbent's Facebook page that had been created by a relative and the respondent had never seen (Carol), discussing the best restaurants in the city (Richard), getting a recipe for chocolate truffles (Deborah), and discussing how to balance family life and career (Jennifer, Christopher, and Steven). While these parts of the conversation seemed unrelated to the overall topic, the conversational nature of the interview increased my confidence that I was not receiving canned answers. In addition, during these meanderings, respondents often answered questions that occurred later in the questionnaire. By respecting the semi-structured flow and keeping my mind on key questions, I was able to get the material that I needed without interrupting the dialogue of the interview.

Despite my efforts to be as conversational as possible, two of the three mayors interviewed tended to respond to my questions with answers that were more generic. They did not discuss their personal experiences as freely and seemed less thoughtful about the questions overall. They referred me to their biographies for organizational activities and were polite but a bit curt in their responses. Luckily, I had a chance to interact with one mayor again in a more informal setting that we both happened to attend – an event regarding small businesses in the community. After introducing myself in person, she was much more conversational over cheese, crackers, and wine than over the phone. Although this did not change our overall interview, I was able to observe her in a setting with constituents and follow up about some of the issues we had previously discussed.

Besides building rapport, the overall interview structure was designed to test my aforementioned assumptions and gain a greater understanding on how **social capital** plays a role in the political careers of local officials. Given that there is no general consensus – and noted controversy – on how to measure social capital, I decided to use a proxy rooted in the notion of civil society more broadly (Portes, 2000; Sampson, et al., 2005). I asked specific questions about the nature, composition, and breadth of local officials' involvement in non-elected, unpaid social, professional, and civic organizations.[9] My groupings of organizational involvement were primarily derived from the 1996 American National Election Study for comparison purposes.[10]

Although people can build social capital even through having loose ties to an organization, I felt that it was important in a local setting to consider the organizations to which people are most committed (Granovetter, 1973). Therefore, I asked officials questions about their level of **commitment** to organizations, including time that people spent working for an organization or involved in organizational activities, such as attending meetings, fundraising, and facilitating or going to events sponsored by the group. I also included a question asking officials to identify which organization best reflected their personal beliefs. Both dedicating more time to an organization and/or indicating an affinity to a particular group translates into a greater commitment to that group's goals and purpose.

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[9] Some organizations simply require paying dues to be considered an "active" member. I specifically ask about involvement that requires more than an official membership.

[10] I combined some organizational groups for the purpose of making the interview more efficient. The only groups excluded from my project included in the 1996 ANES questionnaire are those in the "self-help and support category." In a face-to-face interview this question may be too sensitive and weaken some of the rapport developed in the earlier phase of the interview.

I also explored how involved politicians are in personal and professional networking activities. Unlike commitment to an organization, social networking encompasses a range of activities that do not have to be linked to a specific organization. I focus on **active networking** – rather than passive activities – including making public appearances, writing for newsletters, blogging, and maintaining a website. Passive networking activities would include things such as receiving newsletters or being on email listservs. Although these activities may or may not actually impact the knowledge that politicians have regarding community concerns, active networking indicates making a greater effort at staying personally and politically engaged with constituents.

My interview questionnaire also enabled me to consider not only the **demographic characteristics** of the local official but also the characteristics of the groups with which he or she is involved. Social capital literature primarily focuses on the impact of gender and race in terms of the amount of social capital one has overall.[11] However, the literature also notes that the types of organizations that women and blacks belong to are often different than those of men and non-blacks, respectively. I also considered religious affiliation and age group as identifying factors.

Furthermore, in a pilot study, I found that politicians are aware of the groups to which they do not have access and will seek ways to obtain a link. In three cases, this link was exhibited in forming an alliance with another political candidate of a different race and/or gender. Since affiliations with these groups are more superficial than their personal memberships, politicians may view their relationships with these organizations differently than those with their chosen organizations. Therefore, I included questions

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[11] Admittedly, other identifying factors, such as religious affiliation and sexual orientation, could play a moderating role. However, their influence may not be as systematic as that of race and gender, and exploring these factors is beyond the scope of the current study.

about an official's **electoral support** base – the individuals and institutions that contributed time, money, or endorsements to an official's campaign.

I was satisfied overall with my level of interaction with the respondents. I had at least three contacts with each official: the initial email requesting participation, the actual phone or face-to-face interview, and a thank you email. The initial email often resulted in an email or phone exchange to schedule a time to meet. During the actual interview, I typically spent over an hour with each official. The recorded interviews were 54 minutes on average, plus the time spent in informal conversation while ordering drinks, answering questions about my background, and signing the informed consent document.

Finally, the thank you email often resulted in a final exchange with the official usually requesting that I follow up as my dissertation progresses, adding me to a constituent listserv, mailing me campaign materials, or extending invitations to connect again. I did, in fact, follow up on the invitations to attend church, a town hall meeting, and a city volunteer day. I also still receive emails and newsletters from certain officials, on a monthly or a quarterly basis, as they update their constituents on their activities.

Coding and Analysis

This research integrates findings from my in-depth interviews with complementary observations from participant observation and social network analysis. The task of analyzing roughly 26 hours of voice recording, 20 pages of hand-written notes, and an expansive spreadsheet with identifying information and organizational affiliations was a bit daunting. However, I took an inductive approach to the coding and analysis of my data.

After the first several interviews, I reviewed the information that I had gathered. I highlighted key observations and noted emerging themes. As I gathered more data, I constantly updated my thoughts and wrote memos describing changes in patterns. I presented my research at a number of conferences throughout the process to gain a fresh perspective on the data and draw from the potential insights of other scholars studying related topics or engaged in a similar methodological process.

Once I was finished data collection, I hired a professional transcription service to transcribe the interviews. I set my old memos aside and decided to view the data holistically. I began by stripping the data of anything but the aforementioned, basic demographic information, the type of board, and the city. Using the Social Security Administration's online database of popular baby names by decade, I assigned an alias to each respondent based on their sex and age.[12]

I then used open coding, based on the interview categories, to create a spreadsheet of broad themes to explore further (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Not only did my spreadsheet include codes for demographic information, but I also included codes for the number and type of organizational affiliations, engagement in networking, campaign strategies, policy expertise and support, as well as how officials defined the role of an "elected official."

I then uploaded the audio recordings and transcripts into NVivo, computer software used to manage and analyze qualitative data. I used the same iterative process of listening to interviews, reading transcripts, writing notes and observations, and repeating the process until I had distinct categories of patterns and findings. However,

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[12] Although none of the officials are identified by their real name, there is some overlap between the alias names and the actual names of participants. While I originally considered not using these duplicate names in the study, I realized that skipping over them would in fact decrease the anonymity of subjects.

through NVivo, I created three specific categories representing the phases of an interviewee's progression from citizen to official – pre-candidacy, campaigning, and incumbency. I then further divided each phase, and I ended up with a total of 53 sub-categories of codes to keep these themes organized. I also created a fourth major category in which I saved memorable quotes that captured the "feel" of a particular subject or provided a useful example.

The next step in my analysis was to use social network mapping as another point of verification. I wanted to ensure that the trends that I saw emerging in the data, particularly the demographic trends and trends regarding organizational affiliations, were also present in the social network depictions. I used the officials' demographic information and organizational memberships to create a matrix, which I uploaded into social network analysis software. I ran tests on various centrality measures of the people and organizations in the network to determine the degree (the number of direct ties that a node has), closeness (the location of a node in terms of being able to "monitor" others in the network), betweenness (the location of a node in terms of the ability to control information flow within the network), and eigenvector value (a measure of overall influence that each node has within a network) for each node in the analysis. Finally, I used social network visualization software to map the networks into sociograms. These maps will be presented and described in more detail in the next chapter.

Lastly, I compared my detailed coding with my original memos and observations to preserve the integrity of the data. As I had hoped, my overall "constructions emerge[d] and reemerge[d]" (Means Coleman, 2000, p. 272). While I expected some

variation, the fact that the overall themes were generally the same confirmed that time

and method had enhanced, not distorted, my view of the data.

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Chapter 3: Pre-Candidacy Involvement

When I decided to join Kiwanis Club, I thought, "I'm not a joiner." I'm self-employed – very busy…. Then I reflected about all the things business has drawn me into. I've always been involved in community stuff, even if it wasn't my primary focus. Then I realized, "Geez, I am a joiner. How bizarre!"
♦ Charles, City Council member in City B

I think being involved with the community on a much smaller scale is absolutely essential in learning how to be a good official. I think that you become a better trustee if you're part of the schools and have actually had leadership positions within those schools.
♦ Susan, School Board Trustee in City B

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When considering the institutional involvement of key leaders in politics, certain types of involvement and institutions come to mind. One may associate politicians with elite Ivy League universities, membership in exclusive secret societies, or executive positions in multi-million dollar businesses. Or perhaps, an image of a decorated war veteran or a descendent from an intergenerational political legacy comes to mind. My research at the local level shows a different type of institutional involvement, where being active in the local homeowners associations is more important than attending Harvard and heading up a bake sale is more important than being a billionaire.

To be fair, the local politicians interviewed are well-known leaders in their community, and they are involved in organizations where they seek to affect change – although this differs according to demographic groups. However, they may not have the

"pedigree" that one traditionally associates with politicians in the United States. The local elected officials I interviewed are not part of a machine, political family, or groomed for political leadership years before involvement. They are, for all practical purposes, regular people. Therefore, officials develop and engage their social networks at the pre-candidacy phase in patterns that largely align with the demographic patterns present in the social capital literature on the general population.

The first portion of this chapter will discuss how officials in City A, City B, and City C developed their social networks before they became political candidates. I will then discuss how officials became interested and involved in local politics, and I will conclude the chapter with why officials decided to run for political office with a particular emphasis on the influence – or lack thereof – of specific organizations. In each section, I will highlight demographic differences in experiences and behavior.

Network Development

From my interview transcripts, I created tables listing each individual interviewed and the organizations to which he or she currently belongs.[13] Then I used social network analysis software to create maps of the networks for local elected officials in City A, City B, and City C. To avoid compromising confidentiality, I will not list the specific names of the organizations but rather the type of organization. Considering organizational memberships in this way also provides the benefit of allowing us to view broader archetypes of relationships within the social network analysis.

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[13] I would have preferred to list organizations to which candidates belonged before becoming involved in politics and those that they joined after. However, interviewees' memories and inability to recall specific organizations and dates significantly decreased my ability to do so, and attempting to do so would make the data presented inaccurate. With that noted, I comment on general pre- and post-incumbency trends in organizational involvement in Chapter 5.

The social network maps provide a way to quickly and cohesively explore initial demographic trends. Unlike quantitative techniques, such as regression analysis, I do not have to "control for" demographic factors. Instead, social network mapping provides a way to visually examine these pieces cohesively. In the figures below, the colors and shapes represent the three demographic factors used throughout this study: race, gender, and generation (in terms of an official's age cohort). Stewart encourages the examination of all three factors when possible, as:

> paying close attention to all three – gender, race, and generation – when we study social or collective identities helps us to avoid false universals about women, and forces us to examine the structured particularities of women's experiences (Stewart, 2003).

Keeping this in mind, all three factors are represented graphically. Red nodes represent black officials, and blue nodes represent white officials. Similarly, squares represent men, and triangles represent women. To incorporate generation, I used slight variations of the shapes used to represent gender. For males over the age of 55, I placed a circle within the square; for older females, I placed an upside-down triangle on top of the first triangle. Additional information is gleaned from the position of each node within the overall network structure. Finally, the size of the nodes reflects the "degree" of each, meaning the number of direct connections each individual and organization has. Therefore, the larger the node, the greater number of memberships it has.[14]

I consider the social network maps of each politician to begin the exploration of demographic trends in organizational membership. Next, I combine all of the city data to

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[14] As a reminder, partisan identification does not affect this analysis because all of the officials interviewed are members of the same political party.

see if any new trends are highlighted. After I present these networks, I go into greater

anecdotal detail regarding my findings and broader trends.

In City A (Figure 3.1), race is the most obvious demographic variable to

highlight. The white officials and black officials are distinctly separated spatially. Black

officials are exclusively connected to fraternities and sororities, and they also are

generally in closer proximity to church attendance, as well as regional and state political

organizations.[15] White officials are closer in proximity to environmental and educational

advocacy groups. White men in City A also seem to be more closely tied to professional

organizations related to their career.

Figure 3.1: Social Network Map of City A[16]

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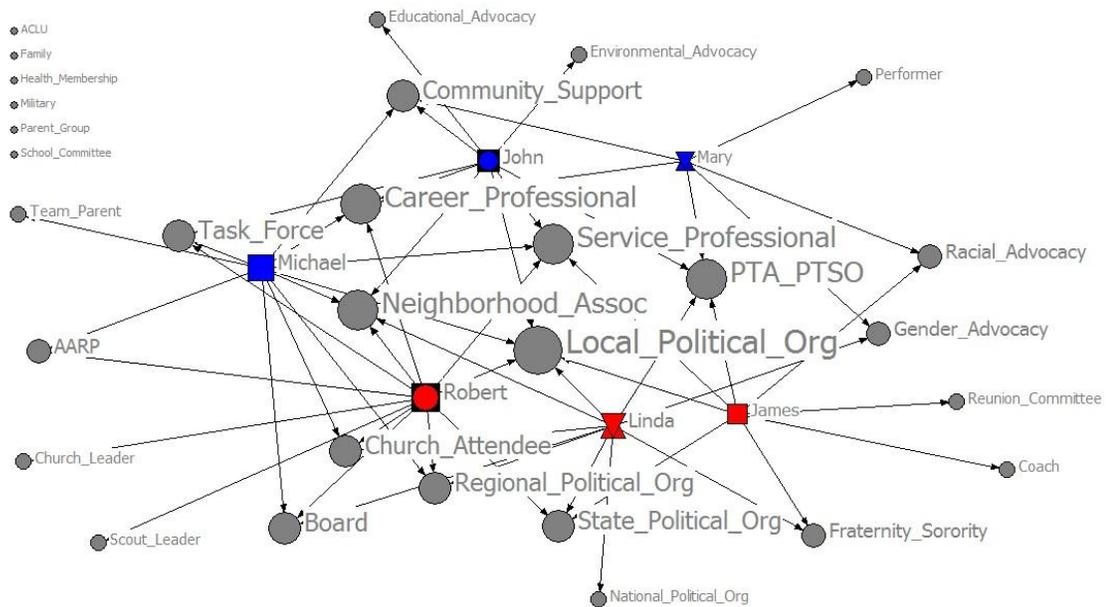
[15] Michael, who identifies as Jewish – religiously and ethnically, belongs to a synagogue; while James does not attend church regularly. However, James candidly discussed the impact of church and spirituality on various aspects of his life, which I will elaborate on later in this chapter.

[16] Full-page versions of each network are in Appendix E.

Furthermore, judging by the size of the nodes, I can see that each official seems to be involved in roughly the same number of organizations. The most commonly mentioned membership is in a local political organization, which is not surprising because most of the officials interviewed in City A mentioned membership in the city's Democratic club. Neighborhood associations, involvement in Parent-Teacher Organizations, and membership in professional organizations – related to both political service and officials' careers – are also important in terms of degree and merit a closer examination.

In City B (Figure 3.2), gender and generation seem to be the most natural places to begin a deeper analysis. Younger women, under the age of 55, are clustered on the right side of the social network map, while the majority of older women are clustered on the left side of the social network map. Membership in health clubs and organizations, as well as involvement in professional organizations related to careers, stand out more in terms of the size of the nodes in City B's social network map. This may also be a reflection of generation, as a majority of officials interviewed in City B are younger and have not retired.

Furthermore, unlike City A, not all of the officials seem to be equally involved in terms of membership commitments. In City A, the officials' nodes were all relatively the same size and all within the network. However, in City B, Jennifer, Barbara, and Christopher have significantly smaller nodes, indicating involvement in fewer organizations. They are also on the outskirts of the network, which means they may play a less integrative role in City B. Once again, the three aforementioned officials are younger, again encouraging a closer exploration of generational differences.

Figure 3.2: Social Network Map of City B

In City C (Figure 3.3), there is once again a clear racial division in terms of clustering and position within the network. Black officials are in a closer position to nodes involving church than the majority of white officials. White officials also are in closer proximity to organizations related to their careers. However, membership in professional career-related organizations is a large node overall; therefore, this result may not be as important once we explore the interview transcripts. A number of officials are also connected to community support organizations, which most likely reflects the recent financial hardships that City C has been experiencing. While I do not observe any generational differences in City C – from this analysis – it is notable that the two women interviewed are positioned next to each other and both belong to neighborhood associations, racial advocacy organizations, and professional career-related organizations.

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Figure 3: Social Network Map of City C
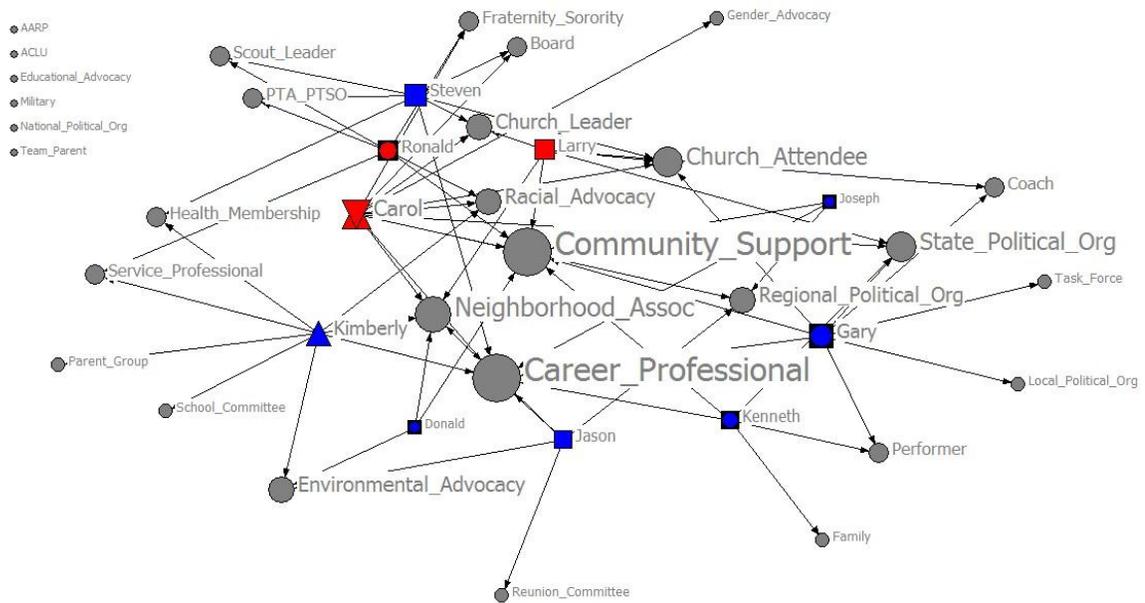
Figure 3.4 presents a combined social network map of all of the cities. It is not

particularly useful for gaining additional insight into potential trends to explore.

However, this map gives us a look at what organizations – and to a certain degree, which

people – seem to have a more influential role in this study, as more people are interacting

with them. By reviewing the outer periphery of the map, it is apparent that military

organizations, family (i.e. in terms of gathering with extended family), national political

organizations, high school and college reunion committees, non-PTO school committees,

AARP, and the ACLU do not seem to play a large role in the social milieu of the officials

interviewed. In addition, Christopher only belongs to one organization, which is certainly

an anomaly given the level of integration of most officials.

Figure 4: Combined Social Network Map
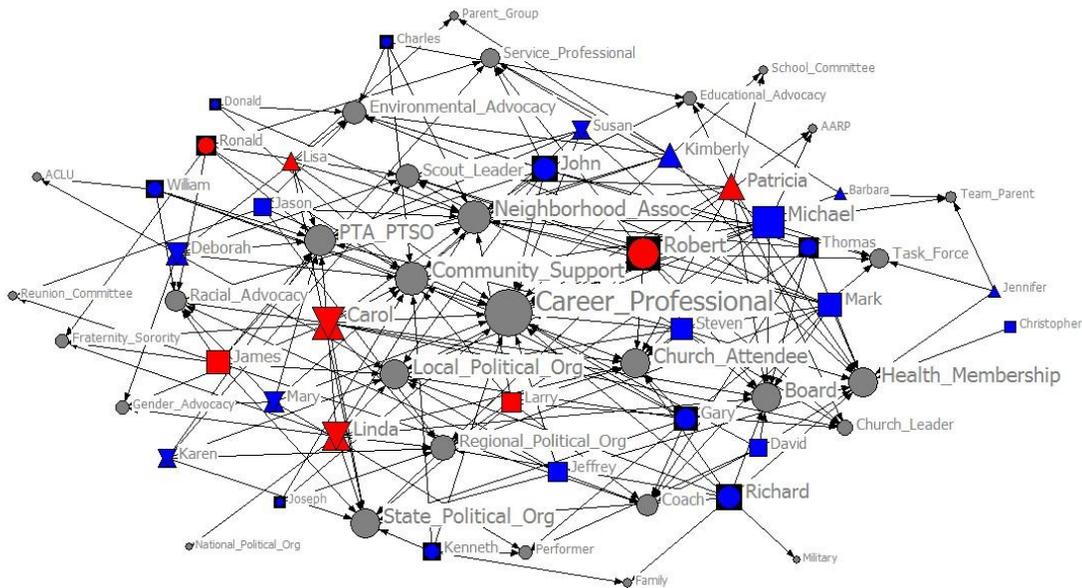
Demographic Differences in Organizational Involvement

While there are certainly organizations that appear more often than others in local

officials networks, there are key differences in the importance of these organizations in

terms of gender, race, and generational involvement. The social network analysis

mapping presented an initial examination of some of these trends, and the coded

transcripts help to clarify and bolster these points.

With that said, I provide the reminder and caution that the results presented are

derived from my in-depth interviews with local elected officials. I am describing how

individuals perceive themselves, synthesize their own personal history, and describe it to

someone else. Officials do not know how their story and experiences fit among the larger

group of interviewees and, based on this lack of information, may emphasize or

deemphasize portions of their experience that they feel are "unimportant." Therefore,

while my analysis is inherently imperfect because it does not include each official's

entire, objective story, it is not flawed by design. In fact, the value lies in what is told by whom, what memories are most vivid to which people, and what is emphasized versus what is omitted.

<u>Race</u>

The key difference between the white and black officials interviewed is religious involvement. The majority of white officials interviewed either did not mention current involvement in or affiliation with a church. However, nearly all of the black officials interviewed are members of a church. The one black official who is not currently a member of a church expressed his regret at the lack of involvement. He also mentioned the importance of his Catholic high school in the development of his political consciousness.

Beyond membership, blacks are actively involved in church activities. The local officials I interviewed were actively engaged in ministry, singing on the choir, teaching Sunday School, leading bible study, running committees for annual events, and volunteering in administrative roles in their respective churches. In fact, after more than a decade of doing mission work internationally, Carol began her own ministry group designed to teach churches how to find and grow their own missionary programs.

All of these roles are not only highly visible, but they also help black officials develop and "practice" skills related to their roles as local officials. The aforementioned activities involve public speaking, interacting with community members in both positive and challenging situations, and working with other respected leaders. Most importantly, involvement in key leadership roles in the church helps black local officials learn to make

bureaucratic decisions about how the church – arguably a community in its own right –

should run.

Furthermore, blacks were more likely to express that the church was the

organization with which they identified most closely. Linda, the Mayor of City A,

brought up another religious reference at the end of our interview when I asked if she had

any additional comments. She volunteered,

> Linda: I have two books that I reference. I read a lot of books, but these
> two are kind of like the nightstand reference books. One is *Jesus CEO*. It
> takes the life, and the stories, and activities of Jesus and turns it into a
> business scenario. It talks about how He motivated, He chastised, He held
> people accountable. He gave rewards, but He had to separate himself. He
> had to consult with others and made mistakes, yet He was a role model.
> It's a good read.

> Me: I've never heard of *Jesus CEO*, but the way you describe it, I can
> definitely see parallels between being a spiritual leader and a corporate
> leader.

> Linda: That's right, the parallels—that was deafening to me. I have a very,
> very strong spiritual base and to just look at the way Jesus assembled his
> twelve disciples. He looked past their obvious shortcomings and took on
> the task to develop their strengths. It reminds me to put that into practice
> with my council.

It is much more challenging to gauge the religious affiliations of the white elected

officials interviewed. Six mentioned being current members of a specific church.

However, only three noted regular attendance and involvement beyond general

membership. White officials commonly stated that they were "raised as" a particular

religion, usually Catholic. However, they are no longer affiliated with a particular church

or they have chosen to not make religion a particular focus in their family.

With that said, there are varying degrees of religious aversion. On one extreme, Joseph stated, "I'm not religiously affiliated. When people ask me, I say, 'I was raised Catholic.' Then I shut up, and so people don't ask any more than that!"

Susan described that her upbringing by a devout Catholic mother still influences her life. Nonetheless, she struggles to put the impact into words. Her answer to my question about religious affiliation demonstrates this struggle. She responded,

> Lots of my religious background is still with me. I actually am a member of [a Catholic Church in City B]. I'm scarcely seen there, however, it is so much a part of me. It's so much a part of me, but yet…. [trails off].

Steven, who was once a Sunday School Superintendent, church counselor, and assistant minister, also takes on a wistful tone while speaking of how his activity in his church has "fallen away." William expresses a similar sentiment regarding his former level of activity within his church, while Mark and Jeffrey struggle to answer the question. Mark made it clear that he still believes in God, even though he no longer identifies with a particular church; and Jeffrey was not sure how to even answer the question stating,

> We're members of a church, I guess. We still get the newsletter; but at this point, I'm surprised they haven't cut me off the mailing list because we haven't been in awhile. I don't know. I'd *like* to consider myself a member of [the church] because that's where my second wife and I got married, and I haven't been to any other church. Soooo I should be still affiliated with [the church where we married]. What do you think? Nevermind, I should be able to answer this myself!

Jennifer describes how she and her husband want their children to make their own decisions about religion, instead of being "forced into believing one thing." She states that while they still celebrate traditional Catholic holidays with their extended families, they also have friends of a variety of religions. It is not uncommon for Jennifer's family

to participate in Buddhist and Jewish cultural traditions. Kimberly also highlights her involvement with exploring the cultural aspects of her Jewish heritage, but making the decision to not raise her daughter to be religiously Jewish.

Mary also shares this non-committal, integrative view of religion. She states that she was part of a conservative, Jewish synagogue "when her husband was living," and raised her children in the Jewish tradition. However, her volunteer work has given her the opportunity to give sermons in Christian churches. Now, she considers herself to be Unitarian but doesn't "go to church or anything like that. Those days are over."

Black officials also noted involvement in fraternities and sororities, whereas no white officials interviewed mentioned a fraternal organization. One reason for this may be that blacks' membership and involvement with Black Greek-letter Organizations (BGOs) is lifelong, unlike the commitment to college-based fraternal organizations evidenced by other ethnicities (Freeman & Witcher, 1988). Kimbrough and Hutcheson (1998) characterize BGOs as "leadership development vehicles," given their findings that black college students who belong to BGOs tend to hold more leadership positions than black students who do not belong to these organizations.

Of greater relevance to this study is that students belonging to BGOs had a higher *perception* of their development of leadership skills, their ability to effectively lead, and placed a greater importance on involvement in student government organizations (Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998). Perhaps this belief in the significance of government involvement continues after college. As anecdotal support for this supposition, several prominent members of the black community and political figures – both historically and presently – are affiliated with BGOs, including Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rev.

Jesse Jackson, First Lady Michelle Obama, Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, former UN Ambassador and Mayor Andrew Young, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, Rosa Parks, District of Columbia Mayor Adrian Fenty, Senator Carol Mosley Braun, Newark Mayor Cory Booker, former Ohio Congressman Louis Stokes, Rev. Al Sharpton, and a host of others.

James, a school board member in City A, provides a comment that captures this relationship particularly well. After noting that he identifies strongly with the Board of Education because of the impact that he is able to have on the community, James added,

> However, I also identify with my fraternity because that's the organization that I grew up in. You know? [My fraternity brothers and I] were all college students, and we became men together. It gave me a stronger political and social identity. That's where I first realized that I could make a difference.

Finally, parents of children of color noted involvement in family-oriented activities. When discussing organizational involvement in City B, parents often used the phrase, "My child was the only black kid in…." The sentence was finished by citing membership in various organizations, sports teams, and even in the classroom. Patricia and Lisa even noted their involvement in a black parents support group – a space where they could candidly share the concerns and frustrations of parenting a black child in a predominantly white neighborhood.

Patricia shared several stories of the discrimination that her daughters, now in their 20s, experienced growing up in City B. These experiences included: one daughter being called "the n-word" by a white high school classmate after receiving a high score on an exam, another daughter being told that she could only be the maid or the cook during a game of house during recess in elementary school, and an incident where a principal actually lied to her about her daughter being in a physical altercation at school –

the lunchroom supervisor and several other students confirmed that it was a heated verbal

argument – to justify a suspension. Reflecting on these situations, Patricia said,

> I know what it's like. I went to school in Connecticut – Connecticut, not
> the south! And I encountered blatant and hidden racism. My mother was
> always at the school defending me or fighting for me. My children had to
> deal with some of the same issues 20, 30 years later. I knew I had to be
> involved… in *everything* they did.

James, despite living in a majority black city, echoed this sentiment of wanting to

be there to support his children. However, James explicitly described how supporting his

son led to advocating for the rest of the community. He said,

> I remember standing on the playground with my son and the rest of the
> first graders, and I peeled him off my leg and handed him to his teacher. I
> said, "This is my son. If you need anything, call me." He called.
>
> [Laughter]
>
> But seriously, he called. I showed up. Over the years, teachers kept
> calling. I kept showing up. It just kind of grew out of that. It was my
> commitment to make my son's educational experiences the best it could
> be, and it ended up where I could not separate his success from the success
> of the kids around him because they all influenced one another…
>
> You start to notice things. A lot of kids, especially our, [black] kids do not
> have fathers. You know? Or regardless of race, the father may not live in
> the home. A lot of boys do not see that men have a value for education. I
> just started to be there and be that voice – asking how things were going,
> what classes they liked.

This need to protect the security and fair treatment of children of color was also

evident for William, a white school board member in City B who adopted two daughters

from a Latin American country. While not a racial minority himself, he also expressed

that he became involved in certain activities to make sure that his daughters were treated

fairly,

> William: Well, after we moved here, I had zero [social capital], and I
> realized that I really missed that community network. And so when I

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thought about, "Well, what shall I do? How can I find a group of people with values like mine? How can I do something I care about?" And as I was thinking about that, I heard about [a committee that ensures equity in schools]. I felt strongly about it because of its history, but I also wanted to make sure I had a network so that my kids weren't mistreated within the school.

Me: Exactly. That's definitely important.

William: And so it was somewhat consciously that I chose to be involved in this [equity committee] because if I thought they were being discriminated against for some reason, I would know who to call. It made me conscious of how students of color were treated in the schools.

While each of these activities led to involvement with and advocacy for communities of color, it is important to note the differences between how Patricia and James became involved compared to William's involvement. Patricia and James opted for a more social, informal type of engagement – involvement with a specific group of parents and a "call me if you need me" conversation with a teacher. On the other hand, William's concern for his children was manifested by joining a formal, external group that was not directly connected to his daughters. This theme of "organic" versus strategic involvement continues to play a role in the campaigning and incumbency phases of the officials interviewed, and we will revisit this in subsequent chapters.[17]

Gender

Family-oriented activities were also of particular importance for women who serve as elected officials. For several women, participation in Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTOs) provided the initial exposure to local politics. Women,

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[17] Regarding membership in the other, aforementioned types of organizations, no black officials belonged to environmental advocacy groups. Furthermore, no blacks in this study own or have owned their own for-profit businesses.

regardless of race, were also more likely than men to mention the direct link between their family commitments and political behavior.

Susan, Patricia, and Karen describe in detail how their various involvement in Scouts, PTOs, and school committees directly led to their involvement in local politics. Susan ticked off her activities on her fingers as she recalled,

> I was a Girl Scout leader, a Brownie leader, a Cub Scout leader—a Den Mother is what they called it. I ran all the PTOs of all the schools my children attended. I did school improvement, fundraisers, [and] ice-cream socials. That's actually how I got involved with the school board.

Karen also describes how her involvement with her children ended up with her being "tapped for council." She elaborates on the parallels between serving as an elected official and serving on the board of the regional Girl Scouts' organization:

> I had been a Girl Scout leader for my daughter, actually starting in middle school, and did a lot of good work. We tried out some new ideas, and we ended up going through some really large strategic planning years during my decade on that board. I was kind of a forward thinker in looking at how does an organization serve its membership… which is kind of – well, very – similar to how you are as an elected official serving constituents.

This story of "super-mom" turned politician may ring familiar. During the 2008 Presidential Elections, Sarah Palin's political platform highlighted her maternal roles and sought to capitalize on her relatable background. She largely shaped her campaign around her role in PTOs, and as Harp, Loke, and Bachmann explain, she focused on her entry to politics as "a journey rooted in motherhood, or in her desire to ensure the well-being of her children rather than personal political aspirations" (Harp, Loke, & Bachmann, 2010). This may strike some people as extreme or a coincidence; nonetheless, Linda's trajectory, from soccer mom, to PTO member, to PTO president, to City Council member, to City

Council President, to Mayor, and eventually a candidate in a statewide race is reminiscent of Palin's journey.

Men certainly mentioned being involved with their children, usually in the form of coaching or being a leader in Scouts. In fact, Mark notes that he still treasures his Girl Scout badge. The difference between genders is that this involvement in family-oriented activities usually was not the catalyst behind their involvement in politics. In addition, men also seemed to be involved in more peripheral roles in family activities, while women took on leadership and executive roles. Much the way involvement in religious organizations seems to groom blacks for participation in politics, by providing an opportunity to thrive in leadership roles, family-oriented activities seems to ease this transition for women.

While some white officials mention involvement in religious organizations and some men mention involvement in family activities, the degree of time dedicated and output is different. To return to Mark, the proud Girl Scout leader, his only other description of his family-related activities was, "I know I was an assistant coach. I don't remember when or for what sport, but I definitely coached something."

Men and women also view the same involvement and commitment in different ways. Larry proudly stated that, in addition to coaching track, he made sure to attend "every [PTO] meeting at his children's school." On the other hand, Mary downplayed her involvement in the PTO noting that she "*just* went to meetings. The organization does so much more" (emphasis added). In another example, Richard sits on the board of a local charter school, but simply listed that along with his other activities – a total contrast to

how a number of women spoke in depth about their involvement on school committees, activities that have less of an impact than board membership.

Richard's glossing over his involvement in family activities was not uncommon. A number of other white, male officials were more likely to detail their roles in recreational activities and professional organizations and recreational activities, as opposed to those related to the family. In fact, most men spoke of the benefits of having a family after they had already been elected. Jeffrey notes that the fact that his son is well-known in school for sports helps him out with name recognition during campaign season. David also notes the importance of the "notion of having children" in his comments, "For someone in retail politics, like deeply retail politics, it's like, just seeing me pick up and drop off my kids at the elementary school is great, unless one of them is crying."

James, the aforementioned black official, takes the opposite point of view. Instead of focusing on how having children helps his political career, he instead sees his position as having an impact of his children. James thinks that it is important to "start to teach our kids at a very young age how to engage." He views his service with City A as a way for his children to see the impact that he does – and in turn, that they can – have on the community.

Women also were exclusively involved in gender advocacy groups. (Richard mentioned that he served on the board of a women's group "once upon a time but [had] no idea how that happened.") In fact, Mary actively tried to recruit me to work with a national group that prepares and supports women candidates for state and federal office. During this exchange, I remarked that I might consider becoming involved one day. To which Mary replied, "No. I'm serious. It's a really great organization, and you look like a

likely candidate for either side – supporting other women, running for an office yourself. I'll email you some literature."

It is notable that three of the four women who mentioned involvement in gender advocacy groups were racial or ethnic/religious minorities, two black women and one Jewish woman. Perhaps this minority status made them more sensitive to gendered oppression as well.

Generation

There are also generational patterns related to organizational involvement. Although generational distinctions are typically discussed in terms of age cohorts, the largest division between the "younger" and "older" officials interviewed involved lifestyle concerns, particularly whether or not there were still children living in the household. Generally, those in the younger generation were under the age of 55, but there were a few exceptions involving officials who had children later in life or who were raising grandchildren.

Overall, the younger officials interviewed were less willing to commit to more traditional organizational memberships. They preferred to be involved in groups that: 1) serve multiple purposes, 2) are easy to belong to, and 3) have a pre-determined time period or do not require an ongoing level of involvement. As each of these characteristics will be discussed in turn, this is certainly not to imply that younger local officials are less committed to their community or their positions as elected officials. However, several make it clear that they prioritize family duties and career responsibilities over organizational memberships.

The first characteristic of groups in which younger officials belonged to is that they served multiple purposes. For example, younger officials were more likely to belong to a fitness club or combine health-related activities with social interactions. Older officials mention engaging in more individual recreational activities, including: walking, bicycling, swimming, bowling (not in a league), or doing yard work. On the other hand, Jennifer describes her involvement with a running group by stating,

> Distance running itself is pretty individual… but once, [our group] had a long run – 21 miles – and the women got to talking a little bit about politics, and then what's happening with local schools. Over time, our talks took on a little life of their own. It became less about the marathons we were training for and more about, you know, real issues in our lives.

Other younger officials mention that they belong to PTOs and become involved in other activities with their children to stay up-to-date with important events in their children's lives, while still spending quality time with them. For example, parents who do not coach often take on roles as "team parents" – helping out with other events related to recreational activities. Barbara mentions that in her role as a team parent she and three other parents help to hire coaches, spearhead fundraisers, order ribbons and trophies, coordinate activities for the team, and carpool. She jokingly states, "I do a lot of driving. Lots of car time with my children and their best friends. Why isn't there a driving organization?!"

Another characteristic of memberships of younger officials is that the majority of organizations are fairly "easy" to join and stay involved. A number of younger officials belong to groups that are close in physical proximity, such as neighborhood organizations. This enables them to stay close to home, while still being engaged with others in their community. Other officials mention that they belong to groups where most

of the "activity" occurred through the internet, allowing them to spend time with their family and at home, while fulfilling a role in a larger group.

On the other hand, many of the older officials were less likely to belong to a neighborhood association. In this case, the generational difference had less to do with the interests of the officials than the fact that most of the older officials tended to live in homes where neighborhood organizations did not exist. The older officials still mentioned having block parties and other interactions with their neighbors, but it was not as formalized.

A final distinctive characteristic of activities in which younger officials engage is that the commitment is for a finite time or does not require an ongoing level of involvement. Beyond involvement in the PTO, Kimberly and Jennifer are less likely to become involved with specific organizations, they instead prefer to participate in ad hoc committees or focus their involvement on specific issues, as opposed to groups because (as Kimberly notes) they "don't necessarily always agree with everything they stand for. It's too much time to not be totally invested." Jennifer also notes that she "get[s] involved but [tries] not to take on any roles that are official." When asked about his involvement, Larry laughed and said, "I had to stop everything when I started running [for office]. It became so intense."

Karen experienced this intensity first-hand with the lack of sensitivity that her organizations had after her daughter was diagnosed with cancer. She noted that, despite knowing about the added emotional and logistical responsibilities that came with her daughter's diagnosis, members of her groups openly questioned her ability to continue her service and chided her inability to perform at the level that she did before her

daughter's illness and eventual passing. Now that Karen and her husband have custody

of their granddaughter, she "dropped off of service obligations because [she] just couldn't

make it."

For these reasons, several older officials mentioned that they purposefully decided

to join council after their children were older and they did not have the stress of other

activities. Susan noted,

> I was much more personal in my scope with my children. I don't think, for
> me personally, that I would have been happy doing Board work because I
> would have had to let go of the running the PTO, running the meetings at
> the high school, at the grade school, or at the middle school. I don't think I
> could have been the Brownie leader who took them to camp had I been on
> the Board of Education. I mean, where would I fit all those pieces in?

Others echoed that age afforded them the opportunity to be less strategic. As

Deborah states, "I don't think about volunteering and service. I just do it. In the past, I

had to make decisions, choices. Now, I just go with it."

Deciding to Run for Office

Despite a definite interest and, in most cases, prior involvement in local politics,

the majority of officials interviewed mentioned that they had no desire to run for political

office. Although they initially did not see themselves assuming a representative role,

there were three driving factors that compelled people to run for office: 1) holding a

strong view on a hot button issue, 2) motivation from organizations, and 3)

encouragement from incumbents and others already involved in the local political scene.

As was the case with organizational networks, these reasons also followed specific

demographic patterns.

Prior Interest and Involvement

The starkest differences in initial interest and involvement in politics can be attributed to generation.[18] Officials reaching their "critical period" for social and political development, which occurs between the ages of 15-25, during the 1960s and 1970s recalled being engaged at the national level (Mannheim, 1952). Deborah wistfully spoke of the early sixties as the time when, despite living in a conservative, rural town, she became "cognizant as a liberal and had to look at what was going on nationally because you just couldn't be liberal in [her] town!"

John traces his involvement to working with John F. Kennedy's campaign as a high school student, not in "any big role, but just as a kid." He draws a parallel between Kennedy's ability to inspire average citizens with the impact of Barack Obama in 2008. Still other officials over the age of 55, recall closely observing – if not participating in – large-scale movements, such as the civil rights movement (Robert)), women's rights movement (Mary), or both (Carol).

Officials who experienced their critical period later than the 1960s or 1970s mentioned interest and involvement in political activities on a smaller scale, typically within their families and local communities or during their education. James' high school principal sparked his initial interest in politics, Jason and Kenneth began learning more about politics during their college years while majoring in political science and government, and Christopher did not connect his participation in community service with a passion for public policy until graduate school. Michael joined his two interests in finance and leadership with a role as treasurer in his college student government

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[18] In this context, generational trends are reported strictly in terms of age, with 55 as the division point, as opposed to the presence of children in the household.

organization. Two decades later, these interests still play a prominent role in his life as the treasurer for City A.

Other officials from the younger generation became interested in politics from an even more intimate community: their families and local neighborhoods. Jennifer attributes her political involvement back to pre-conception when her parents "met at a protest and everything followed naturally – if you can call it that," and confesses that she does not remember a time when politics was not in her life. Larry's parents instilled the value of activism in him in the sixties. He recalled,

> I watched all the civil rights advocacy stuff on television – and it really was 'stuff' because I was a little kid – with my parents, and they explained to me how important things were. As a black child, they didn't want me taking any of our advancements for granted.

Jennifer echoes the connection between the values she learned at home and the role that she felt compelled to play in her community,

> I grew up in a tiny community… In some ways, you couldn't not be involved because everybody needed each other so intimately to have anything work. Take the church's chicken barbecue. Of course you're going to take tickets at the door, or wash cars in the parking lot, or whatever. Moving to [City B] for undergrad, it seemed like a huge community. It was difficult to know how to give back; but I was raised with a, kind of, innate sense of community, so I found ways to chip in.

David and Jeffrey also shared stories of how local community involvement as a child led to not only an interest in politics, but also a natural inclination for assuming leadership positions. This type of involvement – through educational experiences, parental involvement, and being active within the local community – are not connected to a broader, national movement or cause. Nonetheless, the younger officials interviewed

highlighted the importance of these experiences in helping them to realize their own, personal efficacy.

Thomas is a bit of an exception to these trends. Although he is 59 years old and experienced his critical period from the late-1960s through the early-1970s, he traces his interest in politics back to studying political science in college. Nonetheless, his *involvement* in politics, like that of others in his generation, stemmed from a national issue. For Thomas, the national issue was environmental preservation, as opposed to equality rights like other members of his age cohort.

Another overarching trend in the interviews relates to gender differences. Women often became involved in politics through their children. In the previous section discussing organizational involvement, I mentioned the parallels between family-oriented activities and board service in terms of comparing duties and responsibilities. In this case, I am referring to women actually having official political or politically-relevant roles that stemmed from family-oriented activities. Women often began to serve in the political realm based on these interactions. As I will detail in the final portion of this chapter, the women officials interviewed seamlessly transitioned from organizational members to leadership positions on bond and millage campaigns, school district committees, and even key members on other officials' campaigns before deciding to run for office.

Catalyst for Candidacy

While generation plays the largest role in driving initial interest and involvement in the political realm, factors tied to other demographics play a role in what pushes an individual to run for an elected position. Among the officials interviewed, the four major catalysts for candidacy were: 1) reacting to a controversial political issue, 2) taking

advantage of an open opportunity, 3) receiving a push from organizations of which they were a member, and 4) incumbents and/or other key political players in the community asking them to run for office.

Most white, male respondents over the age of 55 decided to run in **reaction to a controversial political issue or because there was an open opportunity**. Several school board members in City B related a story of how the firing of the superintendent by previous board members (all of whom have since been ousted) encouraged them to pay more attention to local politics. For William, this caused him to attempt to gain a seat on the board. He states, "I ran because, uh well, I was angry. [*pause*] I also wanted to try and change the fiscal policies of the district. That reason was part of my official platform." Charles also notes that he ran because he was "passionate about the town. There were so many issues, and everyone kept telling [him] about the community's problems. [He] had to take responsibility." While women were aware of these issues, their reactions were to become involved in organizations and activities with like-minded individuals – not to assume the position to change things themselves.

A minority emphasized that they ran because an opportunity presented itself. Richard retired from his job shortly before running for office and knew that he "would need to do something to feel worthwhile." When he found out that the councilman from his ward was not going to run for office again, he thought it would be a perfect opportunity. In a similar vein, when Kenneth found out that a council member in his district was not running again, he sought the support of other incumbents to begin organizing a campaign.

The majority of white women who are elected officials mentioned that they **received a push from organizations** to run for office. Oftentimes, they were a member of a politically related group or advocating for a cause when others in the group "elected" them to be the face of this view. In Barbara's case,

> I was a chair of the [City B] Parent Advisory Committee for Special Education. At that time, we were advocating for changes in the way the special education was delivered to students in the district. I was able to get the group recognized by the school board and arrange for a member to speak to them every week. After watching them, I thought to myself, 'Wow, wouldn't it be great if we had more representation on this board?' Of course, my group had thought the same thing and already decided – unbeknownst to me – that I should be that representative. They strongly supported my candidacy.

In a less formalized experience, Mary recalls that during a bridge club meeting, her "little gray-haired friends began talking about how there were three, very sweet but totally clueless, ladies running for school board in [City A]." They encouraged her over coffee and cards to put her classroom experience and time working with unions to use in an official capacity. After a few days and several phone calls from her bridge mates, she decided to register to run.

Most blacks, regardless of gender, as well as white males under age 55 noted that **incumbents and key players in the local political arena specifically asked them to become involved** in an elected capacity. Many blacks were resistant to run for office because they did not like the way the boards were run, which is, oddly enough, the same reason that compelled older, white men to run for office. The majority of black officials were confident that if they ran for office that they would win the seat for which they were campaigning for reasons ranging from popularity in the community, support by incumbents, the lack of other suitable candidates, or the belief that their candidacy was

divinely ordained. In fact, after being asked by multiple people to run for office, James, Carol, Larry, and Patricia all decided to seek spiritual counsel – through local pastors or personal prayers – before agreeing to run for office.

For Robert, spirituality was not involved. He was simply worn down by an incumbent asking him to run for office. He related the story of how he initially obtained his position on City A's Council.

> Robert: One of the seated council people saw me -- obviously had previously observed me, with my activities -- and said, "You know, I think you'd make a good City Council person."
>
> And I had no intentions of ever becoming a City Council person. I thought it was way over my head. And he kept trying to talk me into running for council. He'd bring it up every time I saw him, and I always said, "Nah, I'm happy volunteering on my own."
>
> About three or four months after he started this, one of the council people resigned; and he came to me and said, "There's an opening on council, and I want to get you appointed. I want you to become a City Council person."
>
> And I said, "Oh, well, okay." This was just to get him off my back. I knew I'd win in an election, but I thought an appointment would never happen... but it did.

A majority of younger white males interviewed were also approached by current officials to run for office. Mark – a prominent, well-connected businessman – was asked to run for city council in City B as a Democrat, even though he had previously run for mayor in City B as a Republican. In fact, he even ran against one of his friends (an incumbent Republican) who had previously supported his bid for mayor. Mark also requested, and received, "a core group of people who would walk the streets for [him]… some guaranteed financing, at least to get things going… [and] assurances that [he] could remain independent-minded." While this may seem like a sudden change, Mark's

rationale was that he was already involved in a "public way" and wanted to have an even greater impact as a local official. Partisanship was not as important to him as serving in an elected role.

Another, rather ironic, example of younger white men being encouraged to run for office comes from Kimberly, a female school board member in City C. In an odd twist, she decided to run for an elected position after the president and vice president of City C visited her home to convince her husband to run for office. She remembered,

> They sat in our living room trying to convince my husband; and after an hour and a half, they didn't know if they were convincing him or me! [Laughter] He was interested in political office. I was interested in education – not necessarily the political part, but it's become that.

As exceptions, three women – Jennifer, Deborah, and Susan – were asked to run for office. However, they had already "proven themselves" in other political capacities. Jennifer had played a key role in two millage campaigns. Deborah had experience running political campaigns for three decades. Finally, Susan was the president of PTO throughout her children's time in school. She remarked,

> I knew the School Board members. Many of them I would meet with regularly. I even helped on some campaigns. It was kind of in my blood, and the school board was natural next step after my kids graduated.

Karen also decided to run for office after her husband, an incumbent, decided to give up his seat. Karen recalled how she would talk to her husband's constituents if they called when he was not home, and she "was delighted when [she] could help them find solutions." With the support of her husband and family, she decided to take his place. Also reminiscent of Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign slogan, Karen remarked on how voters would be getting "two for the price of one" by electing her to office after her

husband stepped down. Blacks and younger men did not have to be extensively involved in other political activities to be tapped to run for office.

Conclusion

Before entering politics, local officials seem fairly "normal": coach, neighborhood association president, and scout leader. At least in smaller cities considered in this study, the backgrounds of would-be officials do not seem premeditated. The officials interviewed do not seem calculated in choosing their pre-elected roles, but rather genuinely invested in their respective communities. They attend church, exercise at fitness centers, and are actively involved with their children.

In fact, many confided that they never thought they would run for office, much less consider themselves prepared for the position of an elected official. As Patricia confessed, "I'm going to be honest with you: I had no idea how political the position was when I aspired to be on the school board. It was just, well I *thought* it was just, a bigger version, or a broader version of the [PTO]."

This is not meant to undermine the backgrounds and accomplishments of the officials. They are well-known in the community and have spent years honing strong leadership skills. Without question, even before assuming an elected role, the officials are engaged in improving their local schools and local cities. While the officials interviewed adapt their approach and interactions with the community to suit campaigning and incumbency in their elected roles, the subjects of the next two chapters, the passion that motivates them remains constant. Nonetheless, the demographic differences discussed, as well as patterns emerging from whether officials were recruited to run for office or decided to run on their own ambition, become more salient in later stages. To end with a

quote from William that reflects the sentiment of these results,

> You know about variables? You're getting a PhD, of course you do. So with my involvement, there's an underlying variable that pushes me to be concerned about my community and to be concerned about public policy. I don't know what to call it, but it explains why I'm on the school board, and it explains why I participate in these other activities. It's this exogenous factor. It drives me to serve others when and how I can.

Chapter 3 Bibliography

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Chapter 4: Campaign Style

Thank God for people who run for office because, Lord knows, I couldn't
do it.
♦ Pastor in City B at his church's Candidate Day service

I'm in a ward that's mostly African American, so it's virtually impossible
for me to be elected as a councilperson. My campaign team emphasized
that, if I was going to be on council, it was either mayor or nothing. I
mean, an African American population needs to have representation, so I
could understand that.
♦ Joseph, Mayor in City C

****

The previous chapter highlighted the demographic differences in local officials'

pre-candidacy social networks and organizational involvement, as well as how local

officials made the decision to run for office. One overarching theme – independent of

differences in race, gender, and generational trends – was that the officials interviewed

were not strategic in their organizational activity *before* becoming candidates, self-

selected into organizations that interested them personally or professionally. Nonetheless,

when deciding to run for office, they were divided into those who made the decision on

their own accord (predominantly white men over the age of 55) and those mobilized by

others (mostly women, blacks, and white men under the age of 55). In the latter category,

women were oftentimes mobilized by organizations in which they held membership;

while blacks and younger, white men were mobilized by people already involved in local government, oftentimes incumbents on the board the official wanted to join. Therefore, members of a political elite recruited the latter two groups into office.

Following from these differences in self-selection into campaigning for office, versus mobilization by organizational affiliation, and versus recruitment by the political elite in the community are distinctive trends in campaigning practices and procedures. This chapter will discuss how officials' motivations for and decisions to run for office relate to the organization, efficiency, and strategy behind their campaign. I will first define two types of campaign strategies (which I define as "organized" and "organic"), demographic trends in whom used which campaign strategy, how organizational affiliations and social networks evolved during the campaigning stage, and whether officials followed the same campaign style in successive campaigns.

During the campaigning phase, officials' social networks begin to either solidify or change. Officials who ran organic campaigns began to rely more on individuals from their organizational affiliations and to build a safety net of confidants that would continue to support them when they assumed their seat. For officials who were recruited into office and ran organized campaigns, their social networks began to grow professionally and to integrally include members of the political elite. The process of "grooming" these officials for political office officially began during the campaigning stage.

Definition of Organized vs. Organic Campaigns

When describing their first campaigns, it seemed as if I were interviewing people from completely different towns and serving on boards that were unalike. Some officials described their campaigns as extremely strategic and sophisticated, while others recalled

a less organized style of campaigning where they learned what to do as the season progressed.

For example, Susan described her campaign for City B's school board quite methodically. She discussed how her relationships with current incumbents led to her run on a slate with two of these officials. She elaborates on how she had an individual campaign manager, and there was also a separate campaign manager for the slate. Likewise, community members donated to both her as an individual or contributed money for the slate to use collectively. These funds were used toward campaign signs, literature, stamps to send mailings to voters, and other costs. Community volunteers also helped with these administrative tasks. Furthermore, Susan describes how, in addition to endorsements by unions and the like, members of the community also held teas and ice cream socials for them as formal opportunities for constituents to meet the candidates in a relaxed setting. Susan also noted that if she were to run for reelection – a point on which she was currently undecided – that she would develop a campaign website, as she had seen other incumbents use electronic media successfully during their campaigns.

Conversely, Deborah describes her campaign for City B's city council as less structured and more individual. Since Deborah was running at a higher level in the same city, I would have expected her campaign to be more collaborative and organized than Susan's campaign. However, this was not the case. Deborah explains that she originally intended to have a campaign manager, but after the intended person moved, she did not replace her. Instead, she mostly worked with her husband and ran ideas for strategy by him and a few other non-politically affiliated neighbors. She did not seek endorsements from incumbents and local organizations, and only sent one fundraising appeal.

Furthermore, she preferred to handle campaign signs and mailings personally, and she went door-to-door alone to advocate for her candidacy. While she does have a website, she does not use this for campaigning purposes but rather posts information about current political information relevant to the city.

Although most literature on campaigning focuses on the national level, I decided to look to this literature for guidance on how other scholars described differences in campaign strategy. As expected, much of the research on higher levels of office discusses differences in partisanship and ideology, factors which are not particularly relevant for local campaigns (DeSantis & Renner, 1991; Howell, 1980). Benefits of incumbency are also considered, however the literature on campaigning and incumbency tends to take into account incumbency in terms of responsiveness to citizens, as a cue of political competency, or overall visibility (Fenno, 1996; Gilbert & Claque, 1962; Schaffner, Streb, & Wright, 2001). In fact, in a book published more than 40 years ago, Kingdon notes that the level of office that a candidate is running for deserves to be considered more systematically. While Kingdon does observe that candidates running for lower levels of office use more of their personal money in campaigning, he does not discuss style differences at the local level (Kingdon, 1968).

Howell begins to address this gap in the literature in a study of candidates for local office in New Orleans. She interviewed 50 city candidates in New Orleans who were campaigning for a variety of local positions from city assessors, to sheriffs, to mayor. She also observes two distinct styles of campaigning, which she defines as direct or indirect depending on the level of interaction a candidate has with voters. Howell finds that level of office does matter in which type of campaign style an official uses.

Howell finds that candidates running at higher levels within the city, including the mayor and the city council, oftentimes have more direct contact with voters. This type of contact includes making speeches and canvassing the constituency. Nonetheless, those running for lower levels of government – where the school board members interviewed for this research would fall – tend to rely on indirect campaigning, including seeking help from other political officials and organizational support. Howell describes these types of behaviors as helping a candidate establish legitimacy. (Howell, 1980) Similar to Howell, I found distinctions in how candidates interacted with members of the community, however direct versus indirect communication with citizens was only one factor in distinguishing between officials who engaged in the two divergent campaign styles.

Overall, the main difference between the two campaigns was the level of strategy involved in the design and execution of the campaign. Throughout the interviewing and coding stage of this project, I began to differentiate these types of campaign strategies and refer to them as organized and organic, respectively. Organized and organic campaigns differed along the following lines: management style, interaction with local incumbents, financing, endorsements, reliance on the candidates' personal social network, and interaction with the community. First, I will discuss the similarities between the campaigning styles. However, I will spend a larger portion of this section describing each of the aforementioned differences in turn.

Similarities

Ironically, voters may not be easily able to observe the difference between organized and organic campaigns. In both types of campaigns, officials are actively involved in getting their name out in the community. When running for office,

particularly for the first time, local officials make an effort to make more public

appearances than they did before they became candidates, have signs and literature

detailing their platforms, and are passionate about wanting to obtain a seat on the board

for which they are pursuing membership.

Candidates mentioned the importance of being able to interact with future

constituents face-to-face. As William stated,

> We aren't like representatives in [the state capital], or Washington [D.C.],
> who come back and then will say, 'I'm going to such and such place for
> coffee, and anyone is welcome to come by and see me at such and such
> time.' No, we're really in the midst.

The vast majority of officials interviewed were convinced that this interaction was

key to getting to know future constituents and winning votes. John describing "knocking

on a couple thousand doors," while Christopher jokes that he "wore out at least one pair

of good shoes" the summer that he campaigned. Other officials describe their

participation at coffees, ice cream socials, debates, and various other gatherings

specifically held to provide face-time between candidates and the community.

Moreover, not only was their presence in the community similar, but also

candidates' messages to constituents were also similar. Regardless of what motivated an

official to decide to run for office, campaign platforms focused on current, oftentimes

controversial, issues or incumbents. Therefore, to the average voter not entrenched in

local politics, it would seem that candidates were showing up to the same places with

similar messages. Nonetheless, campaigning was not as simplistic as this behavior would

suggest.

<u>Differences</u>

Although local officials are engaging in comparable activities in public, there are definite differences going on behind the scenes. As previously mentioned, the differences between organized and organic campaigns primarily focus on the strategy and the level of planning that is put into the campaign. Organized campaigns are more strategic and planned than organic campaigns.

One large source for this difference is the ***campaign management style***. In the case of organized campaigns, the candidate who is running for the first time is managed by an incumbent on their board, other well-known political figures in their city, or is part of a slate and running jointly with incumbents. Oftentimes, the candidate is associated with these mentors, advisors, and managers prior to deciding to run for office; however, the relationship does not become close and personal until the election season begins. My dialogue with Mark describes how this rapport can begin to develop:

> Mark: Well, you know, since I was basically pretty naïve about campaigns, I had to rely on the people around me who knew a thing or two. So some previous council members, certainly the mayor. There was this certain group that was formed to take care of various aspects of the campaign.
>
> Me: Did you take a pretty active role in forming this group?
>
> Mark: Well, a lot of things were pulled through the existing establishment, if you will, in the city. But it wasn't me pulling them in because I really didn't have strong ties to a lot of them, so I was relying on others who did [have those relationships] to do that for me. I found myself being introduced a lot and just beginning to make relationships.

Michael also found himself in a similar situation in City A. One of the councilmen in the city, who Michael described vaguely as "a friend of a friend" knew that an elected official was retiring, and encouraged Michael to run. The incumbent

councilman not only endorsed Michael, but he also sent out a letter to constituents on his behalf. The councilman also put together a slate of people to run for office. Even though they did not know each other beforehand, Michael recounted how the slate would go door-to-door together, share walking lists, put out lawn signs, and pass out each others' literature.

On the other hand, organic campaigns usually do not have a formal manager or management team. Ideas are typically suggested and implemented by family members and close friends. While family and friends may still be involved in an organized campaign, they do not play a critical role in deciding how the campaign will take shape. In the case of an organic campaign, if there is an "official" campaign manager named, it is often the candidate's spouse, close friend, or neighbor. Mary describes how her campaign began to take shape by stating, "I have a lot of retired friends. They have a lot of time on their hands, and they said, 'Oh, goody! I'll help.' And one of them was my treasurer and another was my campaign manager."

In Deborah's case, there was no campaign manager. She had a volunteer originally, but the person lost her job and had to leave town. She describes her campaign management,

> quasi-committee. [Her] neighbor across the street helped with some of it. Another former neighbor who lives a few streets over helped with some of it. One of the people who thought about running held a house party. It was really, very low-key.

There are certainly advantages and disadvantages to each type of management style. In an organic campaign, the candidate has nearly total autonomy in making both major and minor decisions affecting the campaign. While in an organized campaign, the candidate tends to defer to those with more experience when making decisions. Although

the organized candidates may take a backseat in terms of decision-making, they are certainly not passive observers. They primarily use this campaign as a guide for how to make a successful bid for office, or as Ronald states, "You need someone to show you the ropes before you do it yourself. It's not as simple as you would think – or at least as simple as I thought."

The candidate learns that seemingly insignificant details can matter greatly. For example, as noted in the epigraph, Thomas learned from his campaign team that he would not be elected to serve on council in any position other than mayor, based on the demographic makeup of his ward. Other officials benefitted from shared walking lists and statistics of previous voting behavior that had been passed down from predecessors. While still other officials learned the importance of not underestimating the impact that absentee voters had on the election. Approximately a third of the officials interviewed mentioned either the positive impact of reaching out to absentee voters or the negative consequences of neglecting the absentee voter community. A few officials even mentioned that it was important to become close with the City Clerk in order to time the sending of their campaign literature with the mailing of the absentee ballot.

Jason describes that this learning process is an important part of the development into an effective official. He says,

> In every community you have the seven people who are on council, and the fifty people who want to be. I ran with the crowd who were the friends of council, and the wannabes, and things like that…. You get to know a lot of stuff. Then once you're in it yourself, after two years all of a sudden, I was the establishment.

There are also, even smaller, details that those with organized campaigns learn to notice. In one example, Jason discussed the thought that went into designing his yard signs. He explained,

> I have a short name, so it looks great on a sign. And the colors I picked were black and gold because you can see black and gold from a mile away. My opponent chose green and white. Put those in the grass in the summer, and it's awesome for me.

Campaign *financing* was another dimension on which the officials interviewed were stratified. Officials who ran organized campaigns emphasized ways in which they raised money for their campaigns. However, those who ran organic campaigns discussed how raising money was less important for a local election and how they did not put an emphasis on fundraising. With that said, perhaps this difference stemmed from the fact that officials who ran organized campaigns had a more strategic approach to the fundraising process and their recollections of it were more vivid.

For example, officials with organized campaigns mentioned that they held fundraisers. They also distributed "friend-to-friend" postcards, which David describes by saying, "Uh, you're my pal. I give you twenty pre-printed postcards to say vote for me. You address them, and write 'Dear person that David doesn't know. If you know me, I like David, so you should vote for David.'" Susan, who ran as part of a slate, noted that she raised money both individually and the slate also raised money collectively, "as a kind of coalition."

Patricia recalls being skeptical of the fundraising process,

When [I was first approached about running], I said "I'm telling you now, I can't give a dime to my own campaign." And [the incumbent, Cynthia[19]] said "I'll help you out. You've got a name already in the community and in the schools. People know you. You don't have to worry, the money will come." And it did!

As far as those who ran organic campaigns, they did not see money as an important factor for achieving office. While Patricia was able to raise nearly ten thousand dollars for her first campaign, mostly consisting of individual donations of less than one hundred dollars, Jeffrey prides himself on always running "low-budget campaigns." He stated,

I'm two for three, and I've never I never spent over, like, $2,000. I got beat in '08. My opponent, I mean, they knew they had to raise a lot of money, and they spent $13,000 to my $2,000. So I'll make a few calls to get the word out. I kind of raise money, spend it, raise money, spend it. I don't want to end up with a lot left over, and I'm not a glitzy kind of campaigner.

Deborah also does not see the benefit of raising much money for her campaigns. When describing her first campaign, she stated,

I sent out one fundraising appeal. I was surprised initially at how much money came in. Then as time went on, it became amusing. As we got late contributions, it was clear that people had decided I was going to win and wanted to give.

Charles shared that he would turn down money from organizations or from individual donors – including state-level officials – whose positions or ethics he did not agree with. He said that he would take endorsements when they were offered; however, he said,

I won't take the money. I don't want it. My whole staff got pissed off at me, but people gotta be into politics because they want to do it. I mean,

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[19] "Cynthia" was not interviewed for this study, however various officials on City B's Board of Education related stories about volunteering, campaigning, and serving with her. Since she will be raised multiple times, I have decided to give her a pseudonym.

it's a big time commitment… so I wanted to show from the beginning that time mattered more than money.

Another difference between organized and organic campaigns is the level of interaction that candidates have with local incumbents. Not only did ***interaction with incumbents*** occur in organized campaigns, but also candidates were actively engaged with key players currently involved in local politics. As previously mentioned, incumbents were oftentimes involved in managing the first-time campaigns of the candidates interviewed and a number of candidates mentioned joining slates with incumbents. Kimberly confessed that she did not know her running mate, an incumbent, before the campaign. She admitted,

> We were asked to run together by the board president. I think we maintain respect for each other, even though we often disagree on policy issues. But yeah, we ran together – bought some yard signs. [Laughs.]

In the case of three officials interviewed – James, Robert, and Jennifer, they were appointed to the board before they ran for office. Through their previous work with organizations and other engagement with local political activity, which I elaborated on in the previous chapter, incumbents got to know and choose these officials as peers. Therefore, before they had even run their first campaign, they had a record as an elected official on which to stand. Robert, who has been a councilman in City A for two decades, noted,

> I was on [council] for about a year, a little over a year, and I got quite a number of people saying, 'Oh, you're doing a good job.' But I had no idea how to run a campaign – nothing.… But I've been elected since then.

Those who ran organized campaigns were also keenly aware of social networks to which they did not have access. Therefore, there was an emphasis on partnering with local officials with similar goals but different organizational affiliations to gain exposure

to extended networks. In three cases, this link was exhibited in forming an alliance with another political candidate of a different race and/or gender.

In the case of City A, a white incumbent – not interviewed for this study – confided to Robert that he was nervous about losing his seat, as he'd won the last election by a narrow majority. The incumbent thought that it would be mutually beneficial for the two of them to run together and broaden their support base, particularly given Robert's admission about his lack of campaign strategy knowledge. In exchange for arranging for the incumbent to speak at his church and informally endorsing him at meetings of his predominantly black organizations, Robert got support from the white incumbent's current endorsements and professional connections.

In a more elaborate case involving the board of education in City B in the early 2000s, members of the community were upset with a conservative board that they believed to be non-responsive, not cohesive, and unfair in their treatment of school administrators – particularly a black female superintendent who was removed from office. In the next election, Cynthia – the lone black, female incumbent on the board at the time teamed up with William to run a joint campaign. William had to put some thought into deciding whether or not to accept Cynthia's offer to run together. He recalled,

> We differed on the issue of whether or not to expand the existing high schools. I was actually opposed, but for purposes of the campaign, I was neutral. And, uh, so we debated whether to run together.

However, William realized that he would benefit from her endorsements and again get access to predominantly black groups, while Cynthia would be able to gain

access to his professional organizations, social groups, and financial support for their joint campaign. They decided to run together, and both of them were elected.

In the next election, only William's term was expiring. However, Cynthia endorsed both him and Barbara, who also held similar views in terms of educational equality for underrepresented students. Although Barbara's campaign was mostly organic, she took Cynthia up on her offer to speak at her church and at meetings of her various groups. After the election, all three members of the "coalition" had seats.

However, forming alliances to broaden one's electoral support base is not limited to cross-gender and racial groups. It can also occur across class lines. In another example from City B's board of education, Patricia and Cynthia ran a successful joint campaign by relying on each other's social networks. As I noted earlier in this chapter, Patricia was particularly concerned about not having enough money to run a successful campaign. Nonetheless, Cynthia was able to help her take advantage – both monetarily and for electoral support – of networks that Patricia did not even realize that she had developed during her years of serving the community.

In total contrast, officials who ran organic campaigns oftentimes did not discuss having relationships with or even interacting with local officials during campaigning. When other local officials were mentioned, it was more in terms of the electoral competition taking place. Candidates with organic campaigns once again turned to their personal network of friends and family, instead of local officials, to develop their campaigns. In organic campaigns, family and friends participated by making signs, developing literature, doing literature drops, making phone calls, and going door-to-door.

In addition to the benefits of being managed by and interacting with incumbents, the candidates that I interviewed who ran organized campaigns relied less on personal networks and more on broader endorsements. Although officials who ran organized campaigns certainly did not downplay the importance of going door-to-door, obtaining endorsements was another pillar of support integrated into their strategy. Common endorsers included unions, newspapers, other incumbents, prominent business owners and community leaders, state legislators and senators, and the local branch of the political party to which the candidate belonged. Some candidates interviewed who ran organic campaigns mentioned that they could not gain endorsements because the groups with which they were affiliated were non-profits and not legally allowed to provide endorsements. While this is true, they did not mention going outside of their networks to gain external support.

Particularly for Christopher, the least connected official in the social network analysis maps as shown in the previous chapter, endorsements outside of his own organizational affiliations were key to his campaign strategy. When discussing his approach to his first campaign, he stated,

> First, we had to get the endorsements to make up for this lack of recognition and the fact that we're going against somebody with elected experience and recognition. I wanted to have some validation from other recognized names in the community.

Another crucial aspect of campaigning is *interaction with other members of the community*. While all of the local, elected officials interviewed discussed the importance of talking to their would-be constituents during the campaign season, those who ran organic campaigns tended to be a bit more cynical about the actual impact that it would have on the election. As Kenneth rationalized,

My family and friends hosted get-togethers to talk about the issues, but it's hard to get people to show up. The people that know you don't feel the need to come. The people that need to know you don't care, or they have other things they prefer to do.

Donald viewed the lack of attendance in a different light. He acknowledged that it is challenging to get people to show up, however he also stated,

Even if nobody shows up, the [host] sent out invitations to however many people. So now they know about me, and they know that this person that knows them is supporting me. Is it the primary thing people vote on? Probably not but can't hurt.

Susan, on the other hand, did not face this problem. By the time that she ran for office, the aforementioned coalition on the school board had grown to include Cynthia, William, Barbara, and Patricia. She ran for office on a slate with William and Cynthia, and she recalled,

We had too many people volunteering to give us teas! [Laughs.] But seriously, [William and Cynthia] are excellent. They're excellent, they're incumbents, they're good people, and they had a clear vision. They had put their blood, sweat, and tears into developing this board, and people supported us.

Overall, the officials who ran organic campaigns tended to focus more on their own organizations and personal networks. They put a greater emphasis on having like-minded people in their corner. While they showed up to debates and knocked on doors, this behavior was looked down upon as cliché. The officials felt that they had to engage in this sort of behavior because they were expected to do so, not because it added any deeper meaning to their candidacy or future incumbency. Donald admits that, even despite his relatively positive outlook on his inability to expand his network, he views some of the campaigning process as "going through the motions."

This is certainly not to negatively categorize how officials who ran organic campaigns viewed their community. Officials who ran organic campaigns were certainly interested and engaged in their respective communities. In fact, they often had genuinely strong relationships with their organizations and family. However, they focused more on building depth in relationships, often with those who they already knew rather well. Therefore, their view of community issues was generally narrower than officials who ran organized campaigns and were exposed to a variety of groups and viewpoints.

Officials who ran organized campaigns were certainly convinced of the importance and necessity of interacting with members of the community. In addition to attending debates, these officials also relied on incumbents for help in learning how to become most effective and accessible to members of the community. For example, officials with organized campaigns did not just knock on doors. They had walking lists and voting records from previous campaigns. Mark recalled that while he certainly "hustled the streets" during his campaign, he had a plan. He remembers,

> [My opponent] had a bigger budget, but he didn't have the lists that I did. So he's going everywhere whereas I was more strategic because I knew what precincts to focus in on.

In addition, officials with organized campaigns also used media to their advantage.[20] Beyond securing endorsements from newspapers, they also were more likely to take advantage of social media, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, to broaden their networks. Jason, in particular, even broadcasts for a local radio station and has maintained a political blog that he began before he was in office. On another, more

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[20] This is also tied to generational differences in how collaborating with the media and creating a "public persona" is viewed, and I will expound on this in Chapter 5. Nonetheless, since a greater number of younger officials ran organized campaigns, this trend tends to show up in the campaigning stage, as well.

hands-off, part of the media spectrum, Carol's campaign team created a Facebook profile

for her campaign. She was aware that it existed but had not seen the page until I showed

it to her during our interview.

Furthermore, officials with organized campaigns had elaborate websites.

Ironically, Christopher with the least extensive social network has the most extensive

webpage of everyone on the six boards represented in this study, including the officials I

did not interview.[21] His webpage includes his personal history within the community,

several pictures of his family, and some of his recreational activities. Christopher also

includes a list of both corporate and individual endorsements, including a handful from

local incumbents. There is also a link for visitors to donate to his next campaign.

Just as depth was important to officials who ran organic campaigns, breadth was

the priority for officials who ran organized campaigns. For some, they genuinely enjoyed

meeting people from a variety of groups and having a dialogue about community issues.

Nonetheless, other officials who ran organized campaigns were mostly focused on name

recognition.

Demographic Trends in First Campaign Style

Originally, I considered that the differences in campaign styles might be due to

the fact that I was interviewing officials who served on differing bodies: school boards

and city councils. Perhaps, the school board elections were less politicized, targeted at a

more limited demographic, or officials did not want to put forth the effort to learn how to

run an organized campaign. However, there were officials on school boards who ran

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[21] I used links from the official websites of the boards and Google to research the officials
before I contacted them. Therefore, I explored the web presence of all of the officials in
my sample.

organized campaigns and officials on city councils who ran organic campaigns. Then I

decided to look at the size of the city. City A and City B are much larger than City C.

Maybe it was the case that running a campaign in a larger city required more

sophistication. Nonetheless, this also did not prove to be the distinguishing factor

between the types of campaigns run by officials. Finally, I thought that officials may have

been more likely to run an organized campaign if they ran opposed versus if they were

unopposed in their competition for office. This also did not make a systematic difference

in whether an official ran an organized or an organic campaign.[22]

The main differentiating factor between organized and organic campaigns is that

officials who were recruited into running for office or who had prior relationships with

incumbents ran more organized campaigns, while the officials who ran for themselves or

as a representative of an organization to which they belonged ran the more grassroots-

style type of campaigns. Therefore, blacks, white men under the age of 55, and the

handful of women mentioned in the previous chapter who were mobilized by incumbents

ran organized campaigns. While the majority of older, white males and most women

interviewed ran organic campaigns. Overall, seventeen of the officials interviewed ran

organized campaigns, thirteen officials ran organic campaigns, and one official ran each

type of campaigns because he changed his campaign style for successive races. I will

elaborate on his individual story at the end of this chapter.

Network Evolution

In the previous chapter, I emphasized that officials' involvement in their social

networks was based purely on personal or familial interests without being clouded by

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[22] Appendix D: Local Officials Descriptive Information includes detailed information
about these factors for each official interviewed.

political goals. The campaigning stage is the phase in the process of becoming a local official where involvement in social networks became more strategic for some officials. It was at this point in the process that social networks – more specifically, engagement with these networks – began to change. Once again, campaigning style influences how this change occurs.

Officials who ran organic campaigns deepened their relationships with those closest to their cause. For the majority of white men over the age of 55, this typically meant a greater emphasis on campaigning alone. Others appealed to a limited group of people to help with their campaign, such as spouses, close friends, or neighbors.

Donald describes his experience running for office as he explained,

> Yes, there are rudiments of a campaign committee. Putting time into a campaign gets to be terribly cumbersome because people have their lives, their work, and their kids. So you only have basic elements on the local level.

Donald further notes that Caller ID makes it harder to effectively campaign over the phone, going door-to-door is ineffective because people will not open their doors for strangers, and newspapers have inconsistent coverage. Therefore, even though Donald states that he would have preferred more communication with a broader network of people, he only interacted with those who were easily accessible.

In Charles's case, he turned to his wife's friends to help organize the campaign. He shared,

> My wife is very, very helpful. Her friends, if you call them and ask them, they have this whole like spider web of connections. And they're all so willing to share easily with people, so she started to make individual calls asking people what skills they can offer. Then we had some kind of preparation: contact person, endorsements, parties, fundraisers, and stuff like that.

White women who ran organic campaigns also had a more limited degree of network evolution during the campaigning phase. They tended to work closely with friends, family members, and those in the organizations who encouraged them to run for office in the first place. Deborah described that how she would approach her husband and say,

> "I want to talk to you about this issue. I want to run these things by you." I'll start, and he'll interrupt me. I'll say, "Do not interrupt. Let me talk because I want to really make sure I understand what I am talking about." We're both really smart, but we have different styles. He's good to work with."

Conversely, the networks of those who ran organized campaigns expanded greatly. Although the connections were more shallow, those who ran organized campaigns began to interact with community members outside of their initial groups. Between having their campaigns run by incumbents, being mentored by other key people in local politics, joining slates, and engaging in campaigning tactics that put them in the forefront of the public's eye, officials who ran organized campaigns were being exposed to a variety of new groups in the community. Christopher joked about how surreal it was to have so many people excited to help him, even though "they didn't know who the hell [he] was" shortly before the campaign.

While this was great from a political standpoint, officials who ran organized campaigns tended to distance themselves from their previous activities. For many younger officials, this was not a large problem, as they tended to have weaker ties with organizations before running. Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous chapter, some of their involvement was issue-based or temporally limited.

For the black officials interviewed, this disengagement – even temporarily – caused a bit more anxiety. Carol and Larry were in charge of community-based organizations – a ministry group and a meeting place for those recovering from various addictions – that are no longer in existence. While they attribute the end of these organizations to things including lack of financing and volunteer support, there was still some aspect of guilt with wishing they had done more. On the other hand, like the majority of the black officials interviewed, Carol and Larry had prayed about their decision to run and were able to accept other consequences affected by this decision.

Successive Campaign Style

With one exception, the 26 officials who have run for office more than once did not change their campaign style for successive campaigns. While Fenno finds that senatorial incumbent campaigns differ greatly from challenger campaigns – relying on political character versus personal character, respectively – this is not the case for the officials who I interviewed at the local level (Fenno, 1996). While name recognition remained a critical component of electoral success and qualifications and achievements were highlighted, serving in an elected role actually made the officials more convinced that their initial campaigning style was best. The officials certainly had a bit more sophistication with the logistics of running a campaign and incumbent advantage, but people returned to the style that gave them success in the beginning. Literature was updated and the composition of a slate may have been shifted a bit; however officials remained consistent in their organized or organic campaign style.

For those who ran organic campaigns, there was an overall relaxing of the already loose campaigning style. There was a decreased focus on fundraising and community

interaction. Mary ran unopposed in a successive campaign. When I asked if she did anything to campaign, her retort was, "Not in this lifetime! [Laughs.] Well, if somebody asked me to go to a meeting or something, I'd do it. But there's no point in putting in the money or a lot of time." Barbara, who also ran unopposed in a successive campaign, noted that she did not campaign "at all – not even a tiny bit."

As Karen reasoned,

I've been doing this job for 10 years. If people don't know what I'm about at this point in time, they're not going to know. Some people didn't take that very well. And I'm like, if people haven't decided two weeks before an election date pretty much who they're going to vote for, they're not that engaged anyway.

On the contrary, Jennifer and her running mate had begun to plan for their next campaign before knowing that they would not have an opponent. She notes that they had "set up a website, produced some materials, gotten some talking points together, and [she] actually gave one speech at a community session" before finding out that they were unopposed. Afterwards, she noted that they did not develop their campaign further, in terms of purchasing signs and having coffees, because of the current economic situation. She explains, "People are struggling so much. I didn't want to ask anybody for money for something that we really didn't need to do."

Susan also shared that Patricia "ran her entire reelection campaign via email. The whole thing!" Although Patricia ended up running unopposed, she shared with Susan that the campaigning time was a good opportunity to remind people what she had done in office and to encourage them to vote.

Furthermore, despite the fact that the officials were now incumbents and regularly interacted with other incumbents, they did not attempt to form relationships with their

board mates for any campaigning advantage. Those who initially ran, and continued to run, organic campaigns still relied on friends and family for support during this point. In fact, Charles – content in his position on council – volunteers to help others running for office, regardless of their background or policy views. While most incumbents are looking for some personal benefit to helping others, Charles seems to be genuinely altruistic. He stated,

> That's why I wanted to meet you because I think it's important that someone in your position – young, smart, etcetera – has access. I'm a big supporter of supporting other people. You know if anybody ran for office they come to me because I will support them. I support young people running for office.

> In contrast, officials who initially ran organized campaigns were more committed

to making successive campaigns more extensive: more door knocking, a greater web presence, and getting to know more people in the community. As Thomas, the mayor of City B, explained,

> I still, to this day, when I run a campaign, I go out and talk to the residents. Knock on their door and talk for hours and hours and hours, doing that over a period of weeks. I think it is the most honest way to campaign because you're getting feedback from people.

> Linda, the mayor of City A, passionately echoes this belief by stating,

> I think – No, I *know* that to be an effective politician and maintain support, you have to work very hard to stay connected. You have to be visible: speaking face to face, going to neighborhood organization meetings, using the media to highlight your platform. I continuously do that. I ask for feedback on a regular basis, and I adjust based on the feedback that I am getting. I learned a long time ago that you cannot think because you were elected four years ago that people are still supportive of you.

> Beyond knocking on doors, officials looked for other ways to bolster their

continued credibility. Another tactic that Thomas uses is to endorse other candidates because this is another way to help with name recognition and his own campaign. Patricia

opted to become a certified school board member because she wanted to "get a leg up on [her] opponent – whoever it was going to be." Christopher also noted that when people offered to help, he found a way to use them. That way his email list "wouldn't just grow in numbers, but also by people who had a memory of contributing" to the accomplishments he made as an official.

With that said, management by other incumbents and political figures varied during successive campaigns. This was typically tied to the progressive ambition of the official. Officials who were content in their current position did not see a reason to continue having their campaigns managed by other officials. As Gary reasons,

> They're still there, but I don't have to rely on them as much. One of the things they advised me about was how to do the campaign right and follow the rules because you have to make sure that you get your paperwork in on time, you do your reports on time, and that all of the things that are necessary to have a legal election campaign are met. And they advised me of every time there was a deadline coming up. Like, "You've got to have your contribution forms in to the reports office by such and such, and you have to report this, and you have to report that. If somebody tries to give you a check from a business you have to say, 'Sorry, I can't take that. I can only take a personal check.'" So, those kind of things. Now that I've done it, I won't need that advice as much. So I'll rely on them a little bit less.

Other officials who ran organized campaigns had their sights set on higher office at the county or state level, and these officials continued to closely interact with more experienced political leaders.[23] As the content of the interview focused primarily on past and present behavior, the next stop on a local official's political trajectory was not discussed in detail. However, given that officials who ran organized campaigns looked to others for advising, perhaps this maintained level of engagement was either: a.) in

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[23] I will elaborate on this more in Chapter 5.

preparation for the next level of campaigning or b.) to gain greater name recognition outside of their local districts.

I previously noted that there was one exception to the trend that officials who had run for office multiple times maintained their campaign style. Jeffrey, originally courted by other incumbents in City B, ran an organized campaign his first time in office and easily won. During his first term in office, Jeffrey lost favor with the administration. According to Jeffrey, those who formerly supported his first campaign actively worked against him in his second bid for office. He states,

> They turned on me in my second race. I pissed off a lot of the political elite because a.) I wasn't following them and b.) as I said, I became more independent. I'm a very forthright person, but when they ran somebody against me, they didn't file until like the week before. They kept everybody guessing, and blah, blah, blah. What the hell? You gotta play games? It was all very secretive and stuff. Turns out these people were working against from the year prior. They were very organized. They way outspent me – two to one outspent me.

After losing his seat, Jeffrey ran a third time. This time he combined the strategy learned from his organized campaigning, including appealing to absentee voters and developing a sophisticated website, with the organic campaign techniques previously described. During the campaign season, he did not seek the aid of local incumbents or previous endorsers. Instead, he relied heavily on his organizational affiliations, friends, and family – particularly his son and daughters, well-known high school athletes. However, Jeffrey still harbors resentment to those who ousted him. He explained,

> I really love my tag line on my last campaign. It was: "A strong voice, a bold vision, an honest ethic, a new direction." Because I was going against everything the mayor represented or the council cabal represented. That is what makes me a much more dangerous politician today than ever before. Because I am polling to no one, I have told the mayor "I will not follow you." And that rings true today. That's how I operate. I am holding true to what I said I was when I got elected. I am a strong voice. I am

independent. I do have a different vision, and I call these things out. Again, paybacks are a bitch.

Conclusion

This chapter described two distinct campaigning styles present in my interviews with local elected officials: organized and organic. Officials who ran organized campaigns were more strategic and used the advice and support of local incumbents to run a politically-sophisticated campaign. Officials who ran organic campaigns relied on support from friends, family, and organizations to run campaigns that may not have been as carefully executed but were still effective.

Of equal importance as distinguishing between the types of campaigns is *who* was more likely to use which strategy. Following from the results of last chapter, I found that officials who were encouraged to run for office by someone already in the local political scene were more likely to run organized campaigns. At this stage, given that the number of officials who ran each type of campaigns are relatively similar, the differences in strategy do not seem to matter much for getting elected.

Nonetheless, these differences in campaign style certainly matter during incumbency. The same demographic trends that have followed from organizational affiliations, to making the decision to run for office, to the campaigning stage become even more critical in shaping an elected official's tenure in office. In my last example, Jeffrey's anger toward the current council was obvious. However, how does one operate on a "team" and still maintain his or her individuality? This will be tackled in the following chapter as I discuss local elected officials' efficacy style as incumbents.

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Chapter 5: Efficacy and Power During Incumbency

I know now that I do have a voice in this community. People listen and value what I say. Having that voice is significant. Now your input is valued. You know? People ask you to be involved in different initiatives…. I never envisioned myself ever even being in a position like this.

♦ James, School Board President in City A

I was doing my volunteer stint, and one of the people said to me, "I just found out you were on city council. I didn't know I was working with a celebrity."

I said, "I am not a celebrity. Celebrities have somebody who does their makeup."

♦ Deborah, Councilwoman in City B

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Previous chapters have explored demographic trends related to pre-candidacy organizational involvement, making the decision to run for office, and differences between officials' campaigning styles. This chapter will continue the story and provide an overview of what happens after a candidate assumes his or her elected seat. By analyzing officials' descriptions of their efficacy and leadership style on their respective boards, I have grouped them into three categories: 1) the Policymakers, 2) the Administrators, and 3) the Representatives in the community. While all of the elected officials interviewed described performing duties that involved policymaking, administration, and representation, I am basing these categories on the type of activity

that each set of officials emphasized most during the interview, as well as patterns I noticed while coding the interview transcripts.[24]

Building upon trends in other chapters, officials who were recruited into office and ran strategic campaigns, focused their elected behavior on making policy. They were groomed for office by current incumbents and other members of the political elite and broadened their professional social network as they leveraged these alliances and relationships politically. Therefore, blacks, white men under the age of 55, and a handful of women are the Policymakers in this study.

Officials who ran organic campaigns fell into two categories – the remaining white women interviewed and white men over the age of 55. The Administrators, the majority of white women interviewed, focused largely on ensuring their boards were administratively and institutionally sound. They were guided by a strong, normative sense of what is right for the community, an opinion developed through interaction and discussion with family, friends, and other members of their social networks. While this deepened their previously-established relationships, the social networks of the white women interviewed expanded the least of all of the demographic groups considered.

Representatives, white men over the age of 55, who typically ran for office based on their own ambition and had fewer systematic organizational ties, focused on intensively engaging with constituents.[25] Their social networks became synonymous with their constituency as a whole, as they tried to meet and interact with as many residents as they could in both formal and informal settings. However, despite this community

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[24] I use capitalization to denote my categorization of officials from the more traditional, descriptive uses of the terms.
Appendix D. "Local Officials' Descriptive Information" includes a chart with each official's classification.
[25] See Ch. 4 and Appendix D. "Local Officials' Descriptive Information" for a description of how I classified campaign style and which officials fit into each category.

presence, and the recognition that accompanied it, these officials did not describe developing sustained relationships with the constituents they met. While this meant that their social networks had less depth, there is certainly value in the breadth of interacting with a number of constituents. Representatives were oftentimes the most accessible members of the respective boards in this study.

To relate these relationships in another way, if one chose a black official interviewed at random, that official was recruited into office, ran an organized campaign, and was most likely a Policymaker. If one randomly chose a white woman interviewed, she most likely was urged to run by those in her organizational affiliations, ran an organic campaign, and was an Administrator. If one chose a white man, those under age 55 were more likely to be recruited into office, run organized campaigns, and serve as Policymakers. However, a white man over age 55 would more than likely have run for office based on intrinsic ambition, ran an organic campaign, and act as a Representative during his time in office. While these categories are not perfect, demographic characteristics, campaign style, and efficacy style during incumbency generally align in the aforementioned patterns.

I will begin this chapter with a description of the common characteristics of officials who fit into each group, comparing and contrasting this behavior with that of other interviewees. Then I will elaborate on how officials adapted their behavior to maximize the dominant leadership style within each category. This chapter ends with a discussion of how the elected officials interviewed described the evolution of their social networks, including interactions with constituents and organizational affiliations, after assuming office.

The Policymakers

The officials I interviewed who ran organized campaigns – blacks, white men under the age of 55, and a handful of women – tended to describe themselves as, what I have designated, as the Policymakers in my study. They expressed greater comfort with *navigating the committee appointment process* and *leveraging alliances* formed during the campaign period to promote policies and programs in which they were personally interested. Black Policymakers also exhibited a more prominent role on their respective boards by *holding executive positions* and *serving in representative roles at higher levels of government*, which included interaction with county, regional, state, and even national officials.[26]

Committee Appointments & Policy Promotion

The Policymakers interviewed described the committee appointment process rather favorably. They did not express difficulty in being matched with committees in which they were interested. While they made note of some boundaries and expectations of committee service, they clearly played an active role in choosing their committee assignments. For example, City B Policymakers Mark and David acknowledge that seniority certainly factors into the committee appointment process, but Mark states that the "alignment of interests and expertise" are also prime considerations. When I asked how Mark's personal experience had been with appointments, he noted that he had not experienced difficulty being appointed to committees where he was able to "serve the

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[26] With this said, I do not want to overemphasize the influence of blacks and younger officials. Although policymaking was what interviewees who ran organized campaigns emphasized, if officials upset the political elite in the community – those who recruited them to run for office – then they face the risk of alienating their prime supporters and losing their seats. This was the case with Jeffrey (see Ch. 4 for a more detailed description). Therefore, more research should be done about those who recruit officials into running for office, including the recruiters': motivations, socioeconomic status, demographic makeup, and other relevant factors.

council and community from [his] own strengths." David, who serves on the same council as Mark, goes a step further to even describe the appointment process as "collaborative." He discusses that although he does serve on a some committees that he would prefer not to, it was a trade off in order to get appointed to the committees of his choice.

Christopher similarly states that the process was a "negotiation, but [he] got about 90% of the committees [he] wanted the first term in office." He goes on to describe the process as similar to lobbying because he had to convince the mayor to appoint him to the committees of his choice and then convince other council members that he would be a good fit for the position. After receiving spots on the two committees about which he was most passionate, Christopher said that he was "willing to take whatever was left." Like David, Christopher understood that committee appointments were part choice and part obligation. Nonetheless, Policymakers generally felt comfortable advocating for their appointments.

While Policymakers describe negotiating committee appointments with the mayor or discussing committee assignments with other members of the their boards, non-Policymakers took a more passive role overall in their committee appointments. It is not that they did not care about specific issues, but rather that they do not push for these appointments. Officials gave a variety of reasons for this lack of ability to be matched with their interests. For example, although Policymakers described seniority as only one factor in the committee appointment process, Representative Kenneth stated, "Being the new guy on the block, there wasn't much that was not already spoken for; so I didn't push. But that's fine." Jeffrey, another Representative, also noted that seniority on the

board played a role in his lack of choice in appointments. Despite having served a previous term on the city council before being ousted and reelected, Jeffrey still considered himself one of the newer members on council and emphasized that he was "given" his committee appointments.

Charles, another Representative, noted that he does put in requests to be on certain committees during the annual appointment process, however they are not always met with favorable results. Contrary to the collaborative process Policymakers described, Charles stated, "I request, but it's ultimately up to the mayor to appoint, so I'm really not on all of the committees I want to be on. Sometimes he knows that you have a motive in mind that is opposite his, so he'll appoint someone that will go his way on certain issues." When I asked Charles what was the outcome of committee appointment requests for issues that he *did* agree with the mayor on, he repeated that the mayor decides who to appoint and "it could go either way."

Deborah, an Administrator who has served on City B's council for nearly five years, attributes committee assignments to "popularity" on the council. She stated,

> Actually the stuff I really came to council to deal with, I don't have anything to do with on committees…. I'm not on anything to do with the environment, yet I clearly care about the environment. I suspect that things to do with environment and development are sexy. Other, more popular, people on council get the sexy appointments. [Laughter.]

For some non-Policymakers, like Charles, it is a matter of not actively advocating for their role. For others, like Deborah, they do not know that they even have a say in their committee appointments. In fact, after asking Deborah a follow-up question about her lack of say in committee appointments, she explained to me in a somewhat

condescending manner that "[j]ust because [she] belong[s] to a group or believe[s] in a cause personally does not mean that [she] can support it as a representative in a much larger body."

Nonetheless, the Policymakers interviewed certainly described supporting their personal causes in an official capacity. Serving on, if not leading, committees where officials had a personal interest allowed Policymakers to stay engaged, and some Policymakers specifically mentioned using these positions to pursue their own personal interests. In one example, David noted that he serves as a liaison to City B's schools because "having two elementary school kids, [he wants] to know what's going on with school-related issues and have a say in some of them – especially putting a stop to the ones [he doesn't] agree with before they get too big." Although not an official committee position, David uses his position as a backstop to prevent certain issues from becoming formal proposals.

A number of black Policymakers interviewed discussed using committees to help ensure racial equity more broadly. In a particularly vivid example, Lisa described that one of the reasons she agreed to run for the school board was to help prevent school redistricting that would directly affect her neighborhood, which had "some of the poorest, darkest children in [City B]." Once on the board, she describes her appointment to the committee handling the school redistricting issue as something that she "just volunteered, no objections" to do. She described her pride in preventing the redistricting from happening and keeping her kids in the newer school located in their neighborhood, as opposed to being bussed across town. She noted, "If I hadn't been on the school board,

who else was going to fight for my kids?" Contrary to Deborah's claim, Lisa illustrates

how a Policymaker can turn a personal interest into a policy opportunity.

To combine the topics of committee appointments and policy advocacy,

Policymaker James, president of the school board in City A, stated that he changed the

structure of the school board to remove committees because he believed they led boards

to "operate in secret." According to James, this lack of transparency causes dissention in

the school board, which does a disservice to children's education. While other school

board members in City A expressed that there should be distinct committees – including

Mary, an Administrator who voiced this opinion during my interview with her – James

describes how he sees the damage that committees can do when he looks at neighboring

cities. He goes on to passionately describe how his main goal on the school board is to be

unified and to ensure that there is no reason for black parents to send their children to

private schools or transfer them to majority white districts. He states,

> [City A] is a very wealthy African American district, period. You look around, and there are not a lot of black communities that look like us. We have high standards in terms of what we want this community to be. I believe we can make a historical statement about what a majority African American community is, and I work toward trying to change the perceptions that exist.

> That's why I'm fighting the way I am [about parents sending their children to other school districts]. It's like just because our district is majority black now, people think it's got to be less than. How long are we going to buy that? How long are we going to continue to say that the white man's ice is colder? I'm not saying that because I'm racist. I am saying it because I truly believe in where we have come as people….

> Who is the most endangered species in society? Our [black] young men. I have had two young men receive [a prestigious, national scholarship] in the past three years. I've got nay-sayers that say we cannot educate black children. I'm sorry. I beg to differ with you. If we don't start believing in ourselves, how do we expect anybody else to ever take us seriously?

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Characteristic in both of the examples from Lisa and James is a clear passion driven by a personal desire to better the lives of their own children, as well as a belief that what happens to their children and the children in their communities is reflective of what happens to blacks more broadly. This is consistent with Fenno's claim that black elected officials serve an extended constituency "of black citizens who live beyond the borders of any one member's district, but with whom all black members share a set of race-related concerns" (Fenno, 2003). Although not all of the findings on Congressional campaigning and service are applicable at the local level, this assertion appears to remain true in this case.

Policymaker Robert mentioned several times during our interview that he sees nothing wrong with this behavior. According to Robert, he "wouldn't be volunteering with organizations if [he] didn't think they had value, and [he wants] to use what influence [he] has to make them successful." He goes on to joke that serving on city council does not give him as much influence as members of his volunteer organizations would like to believe; however, he does make it a point to represent their interests on committees and in front of the board. The Administrators and Representatives interviewed do not express the same belief in neither their ability, nor their responsibility, to influence the political agenda through their activities on council.

<u>Alliances</u>

It is also important to consider how effective Policymakers have been in getting their proposals passed into policy and the programs that they conceived enacted. In Chapter 4, I noted how current incumbents oftentimes supported officials who ran

organized campaigns and how another common characteristic of organized campaigning included running with slates. These alliances transitioned from support during an election to support during incumbency. While the aforementioned examples of Lisa and David focus more on an individual's perceived ability to influence policy, other Policymakers described how engaging their allies on the board gives them a stronger position against board members who may not agree with them. In fact, this is another area where the benefits from running an organized campaign can come into play.

One coalition mentioned in Chapter 4 involved William, Cynthia, Barbara, Patricia, and Susan. I discussed how Susan noted their strong presence as a team and how their group had revamped the board from a body with a conservative bent to a school board that took a more liberal view towards education policy. Nonetheless, William recalls how this alliance was not always so powerful in City B.[27] William describes himself and Cynthia as "voices in the wilderness" during his first term. He said, "On any important issue, we'd end up voting 'no,' and the majority of the board would vote 'yes.' And, uh, so we were just, the opposition, right; but given how angry the community was, we went from being outcasts to being in charge my second term. Cynthia was president, I was chairing the finance committee, and we'd gotten Barbara [elected to the board] with us."

Policymaker Jason describes a similar transition that occurred on City C's council,

> When I was first elected it was me, and Carol, and [a former
> official who has since retired from the council]. We sort of formed
> this alliance. They were the Ward One council representatives, and

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[27] William is the only "hybrid" official who I interviewed. His influence on policy and executive membership align with Policymakers, while his interaction with the community is more akin to that of the Representatives interviewed.

they were African American. There were still kind of weird racial tensions in town that we were aligned on, so I became part of the minority vote on council – literally and figuratively. So votes went from being seven to two to being four and three. And then we got Donald on, and then Gary. Now all of a sudden we're getting some five to two votes.

Jason goes on to describe a shift not only in agenda and policies passed, but also how the process occurred and became more dynamic. Therefore, in this case, it was not only a simple matter of gaining a majority vote on council that was important to Jason, but also in having a dialogue about issues that were not previously discussed.

Representation at Higher Levels of Government

During my interviews with black officials, they oftentimes brought up participation in regional, state, and national organizations as part of their official duties. While white officials also mentioned service at higher levels, the organizations that the black officials participated in had a different purpose. Oftentimes, based on the names and descriptions of the organizations mentioned, these organizations provided a space to encourage interaction with other black officials or officials of color. Some of these organizations also focused on developing professional development skills.

These organizations were presumable developed because blacks are a minority and traditionally under-represented in politics. Ironically, based on what my interviewees emphasized, these organizations actually created more opportunities for black officials to see the changes that they could make in their current role, as opposed to simply helping them to overcome any barriers that they felt. One area that this occurs involves the personal interaction that black officials have in these oftentimes-smaller spaces. James emphasized that he "would have never really have been able to talk to some of these

people without belonging to [a state-wide political organization]." He describes the intimacy and collegiality that the group encouraged, and how that served to break down the more "invisible barriers" that hierarchy often creates.

Linda also described how her confidence has increased from her involvement with groups. She describes how much her view has expanded since she began to become involved with policy through her children's PTO. She reflected on how she transitioned from school policy, to education policy, to city policy, and now she spends a significant amount of time exploring federal policies directed toward cities. She discusses the groups that have supported her along the way, particularly from the conferences that she has attended as a member. In one example, she says,

> There is also another example with [a national group that supports minority women in leadership]. These are professional women in fields – presidents of various things – and to sit in the room with women supporting women and talking about issues…. And what is so good about it is that I may have one view with the way I see things, but when you have active groups like this, it becomes continuous education. You hear how other women of color approach their jobs, and that makes me think of how my own decisions in the city impacts the ability for people to do their jobs. I love the dynamics of this group, so I always go in with, my ears open and eyes open. I'm always able to walk away with a broader perspective. It's not about my platform, or me being a mayor, but I really get to listen and continue to listen and learn.

Perhaps it is due to this exposure to higher levels of government or the broadened audience with which officials interact in these groups that blacks express having greater progressive ambition than the white officials interviewed, even white Policymakers. Of the 22 white officials that I interviewed, only three (14%) had experience running for offices higher than city council. Donald and Mark ran for mayor of City C and City B, respectively. While Donald was successful in his bid for mayor in the 1980s, his attempt

to assume that role again two decades later failed. A third white official, Richard's, first elected position was as a state representative in the 1970s, and he enjoyed that experience "for a few terms." However, all three men seemed content in their current positions as regular council members.

Of the nine black officials interviewed, three (37%) ran for offices higher than their current position – oftentimes skipping intermediate steps. Linda ran for one of the highest positions in the state government without serving on the state legislature, Carol ran for mayor of City C after her first term in office, and James ran for the mayor of a different city after serving on the school board (and with no experience on city council). James also confided to me after our interview that he would like to keep in touch because he has state-level aspirations and would like to reach out to me "when that time comes."

Unfortunately, all of the black officials failed in their attempts to secure higher positions. Nonetheless, given that the black officials interviewed discussed that they were initially hesitant to run for office in the first place, their excitement to pursue higher aspirations was an unexpected, yet intriguing trend. Larry, a freshman on City C's City Council, elucidated a potential reason for this by stating, "I go to a lot of things around the state… I've noticed how the elevation is much easier once you've been around for awhile. You have to do the work [in order to get elected], but once you've proven yourself, the sky's the limit." It seems that this exposure to higher levels of government may play a role in how black Policymakers view their role as an incumbent, as well as their future career trajectory.

Executive Membership & Policymakers' Leadership Power

    While the black officials interviewed may have been unsuccessful in securing higher elected positions, they were more likely than not to hold an executive position on their current board. (See Figure 1: Demographic Representation in Overall Sample vs. Executive Sample.) In hindsight, I would have included more questions about how an official goes about obtaining an executive position and what this means in terms of his or her perceived and actual influence on the boards' activities. Nonetheless, based on other information from the interviews, I can speculate *why* black Policymakers may have assumed these positions compared to other groups using French and Raven's Bases of Power Taxonomy (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1988).

Table 5.1: Demographic Representation in Overall Sample vs. Executive Sample

Demographic Category	% of Interviewees	% of Executive Interviewees	% of Overall Population[28]	% of Executives in Population
Blacks	29%	40%	35%	50%
White Women	23%	20%	25%	11%
Women Total	35%	40%	42%	39%
White Men <55	23%	10%	17%	11%
White Men >55	29%	30%	23%	28%

    As I will refer back to leadership power in my discussion of the efficacy of Policymakers, Administrators, and Representatives, it may be useful to provide a brief explanation of the power taxonomy. Leadership power was originally developed by two

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[28] The "population" referenced in this table includes all of the elected officials in City A, City B, and City C, including those who were not interviewed. This does not denote the population of the city.

social psychologists, John French and Bertram Raven, as a way to explain the ways in which a supervisor can influence workers in a professional setting (French & Raven, 1959). They distinguished five bases of power, which supervisors "can utilize in changing the beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors of a target" (Raven, 1990). These bases of power include: reward power (the promise to reward people with something they desire, such as money, higher status, or other incentives), coercive power (the threat of punishing someone for non-compliance and the opposite of reward power), legitimate power (based on respect for an influencing agent's title, not personal attributes or behavior), expert power (based on the knowledge and skills that one brings to their position), and referent power (based on likeability and dependability, which can be garnered through hard work, charm, or general admiration).[29] Since its inception, French and Raven's Bases of Power Taxonomy has been expanded and developed to describe social power in interpersonal relationships more broadly. In this work, leadership power is used to describe the type of influence that the local elected officials interviewed described exerting over other members of the board or members of the community more broadly.

As board executives and representatives in higher-level government organizations, black Policymakers' leadership power is a reflection of legitimate power. Given that blacks generally do not have as much political power in society compared to whites, having an executive title and serving at levels beyond their elected position may make their role as political leaders more legitimate in the eyes of their fellow board mates and their constituents more broadly. With that noted, it would have certainly been

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[29] In their 1959 piece, French and Raven also describe informational power, a sixth base of power that focuses on an influencing agent's ability to persuade workers to perform certain activities. However, subsequent work has either not acknowledged this base of power or has included its characteristics with referent power. (Raven, 1988)

interesting to know why blacks *say* that they decide to assume these positions and how they gain support. Since blacks were generally recruited into running for office, it does not deductively follow that they would be eager to assume an executive position. It may be the case that the members of the political elite that encourage them to run for office also emphasize the importance of holding an executive position. Nonetheless, black Policymakers may just generally enjoy, what they describe as, a new found way to influence the community. Holding an executive position may simply be an extension of serving as an elected official overall. However, I do not have the data to speculate about how blacks come to hold executive positions, only the benefits of legitimate leadership power that an executive position brings.

Conversely, the other Policymakers – white, mostly male, and predominantly under age 55 – were more likely to describe holding expert power, meaning that their leadership power tends to be based on the technical knowledge and specific skills that they contribute. Earlier in this chapter, I described how younger, white males who ran organized campaigns emphasized how committee assignments were based on interests and expertise. In another portion of the interview, I asked all respondents specifically about transferable skills from either employment or social organizations that they utilized in an elected capacity.

Policymaker Jennifer, a health care consultant and school board member, describes how health and education are similar in that both: rely on community resources, deal with complex funding sources, challenge her to work on inherently personal, sensitive issues, and require analysis of large, complicated datasets. David, a lawyer and a Policymaker, emphasizes how his ability to read contracts and examine details has

served him well in quickly adapting to the board and "just being useful" across a variety of topics.

Policymakers Christopher (an economic consultant), Steven (a teacher), and Mark (a corporate executive) also provide concrete examples of how technical skills learned on the job have helped them to not only transition quickly into their requirements on council, but to also be flexible in terms of taking on different assignments. Extending beyond race, Patricia (a purchasing specialist) and Larry (a minister), black Policymakers who do not hold executive positions, described exhibiting expert power through using their vocational training and education to adapt to their council positions. Overall, Policymakers were more likely to describe the parallels between their professional and elected roles in specific detail.

On the other hand, Administrators and Representatives typically discussed soft skills that enhanced their effectiveness. Instead of reading contracts, analyzing data, or interpreting budgets, these groups discussed less technical qualities, such as being organized and having good time management skills. Administrator Barbara flipped the question by answering how the board has benefited her professionally, as opposed to how her professional career benefited her role as an elected official. Furthermore, Representatives John and Richard described their ideological beliefs (in both cases, commitment to diversity) as opposed to concrete skills. Overall, it seemed that Administrators and Representatives had a more difficult time answering the question about transferable skills. Several asked clarifying questions or paused to think about their answers before proceeding. As I used the same language for all of my interviews, this leads me to believe that the difference in patterns between Policymakers' answers and the

other groups relates to differences in experience and backgrounds of the groups, not bias or vagueness in the question.

The Administrators

Instead of focusing on the policymaking component of their duties on their respective boards during incumbency, the majority of white women interviewed – more than any other demographic group – described their role as board Administrators. They emphasized the ***number of hours they committed*** to their boards. They also described how much effort it took to make sure that they knew what tasks were required to ***ensure their boards were running smoothly***, including mentoring other officials on their respective boards. Finally, Administrators also emphasized that they felt they served as an example and ***role model for the community*** through their behavior within their position.

Time Commitment

When I discussed incumbency with the Administrators interviewed, they did not discuss feeling efficacious in choosing committee positions or policy "wins." Nonetheless, they did emphasize the amount of time they spent on council activities. Administrators often described the amount of actual hours worked as full-time or would qualify their responses of "part-time" by emphasizing that the hours were oftentimes quite extensive. Administrator Susan noted that she refers to the school board as her other full-time job, even though she notes, "it absolutely should be part-time. It should be." Mary also states that while her board position is technically part-time she describes herself as a "full-time volunteer."

Instead of providing a coy answer, Administrator Karen – who has a full-time job and is raising her granddaughter – went on at length about how she is upset by constituents who think that her position as a councilwoman is easy or not time consuming before transitioning to her opinion of her fellow council members who held similar views. She stated,

> People always go, "Well, how hard can this position be? You attend two meetings a month." And anybody who comes into this and thinks that's what they're going to do has not prepared themselves in any way. Any council member worth their salt is putting in 40 hours a week. I actually tracked it for about three or four years, and there are times I'm averaging from 40 to 60 hours a week on just council stuff…. And sometimes – I mean, there are nights that I have work. I have council, and I usually have a meeting before council, so I'm starting at 5:30 until whenever we get done. And I have meetings on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights.
>
> Usually by the first meeting of council I've already had my two meetings of the month. So I don't think people have any clue about the amount of time that you really devote if you're a council member that's pulling your weight and doing the work that you need to do. There are definitely some workhorses on council, and there are some people that kind of skim through.

While Karen uses phrases regarding council members "pulling their weight" and being "worth their salt" to indicate the amount of time that she believes council members should be spending on council work, non-Administrators, including those serving in executive positions, do not hold this philosophy. Policymaker Steven, the president of the school board in City C, notes that he "typically spend[s] about five to ten hours per week on school board issues." He goes on to state, "So even as president, that's the time I have to 'spare' (*uses finger quotes*)."

Policymaker Thomas, the mayor of City B, also notes that his commitment is episodic. Depending on the time of the year, Thomas states that his time committed to council activities can range between 20 and 50 hours each week. Ironically, even though Thomas is the head of City B, and Karen does not even have an executive position on City B's council, she describes consistently spending more time working on council-related issues than Thomas. Besides Steven and Thomas, other non-Administrators described their positions as part-time with no other elaboration or commentary.

<u>Administrative Tasks</u>

One area where Administrators mentioned *dedicating* much of their extensive time commitment was to administrative tasks on council. Administrators took ownership of not only traditional administrative tasks, such as keeping records and notes, but they were also dedicated to institutional administration and focused on the behind-the-scenes work to keep their boards running smoothly. This primarily took two forms: 1) learning board protocol and expectations, and 2) mentoring junior members.

Susan states that in her six years on City B's school board, she has served as Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. She regards all of her roles as learning opportunities, however she described that she learned the most when she served as Secretary because she "had to answer everything that came through specifically asking the Board a question." Susan goes on to say that she would never run for President because it would take too much time, and she does not think it would add to her enjoyment of her work as an official. She disclosed,

> I think sometimes the amount of time that I put in doing this; I could be promoting my business. That would make life easier for my husband and

me. We are only getting older every minute of the day. I think about that. However, it's essential that I'm devoted to my beloved [City B] Public Schools. This town has supported me and my business for thirty-four years. It has educated my children.

Susan expresses a common view of Administrators: devotion to community interests. She elaborated that her job as a trustee is to hire the right Superintendent. Contrary to the views expressed by Policymakers, Susan does not think she should be making policy decisions. She describes her purpose as ensuring "the Board and the superintendent hold the same vision and support each other. [Her] job is to put the money behind what *we* hold dear in *our* vision, and to advocate for the public schools and children."

Administrator Deborah also commented on being devoted to making the best decisions possible for the greater good of the community, despite logistical impracticalities. She lamented that she does not have enough time to dedicate to her position on council because there is so much information to learn and retain. Deborah relates that there are times when the council is not aware of an issue until Sunday but has to vote that same week, and she spends time researching these issues, something that she indicates is not common among her board mates.

Administrators were also the only group that included mentorship of other board members when asked to provide their own definition of their role as a councilperson.[30] Karen describes a common sentiment expressed by Administrators in that she usually

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[30] In addition to "mentor," other common self-definitions of officials' roles included the following terms: "advocate," "servant," and "representative." While I considered these responses in developing my own groupings, I took a more holistic approach to this chapter – analyzing how officials answered a variety of interview questions about their activities and impressions during incumbency.

"wind[s] up being a mentor [to more junior members of her board]. [She] thinks that's a very unique position that [she] hold[s] in council."

Overall, Administrators describe their role on their boards as serving as the institutional memory for their group of officials. They know how to answer questions asked, or will take the time to learn the answers to what they do not know. Furthermore, they pass this information on to junior members in an effort to take some of the pressure of being the proverbial backbone of the council off of themselves. Moreover, a constant theme of my interviews with Administrators is that they were "tired," not optimistic like the black Policymakers, stressed like the white Policymakers, or motivated like Representatives. Administrators seemed to enjoy their positions and certainly see the value that they contributed to their boards, but they were acutely aware of being what Karen so aptly described as "the workhorses."

Community Role Model

Although Administrators were more active with other board members than with their constituents, the majority of Administrators said that they saw themselves as role model for the community. When asked how she defines her role as an elected official, Barbara explains without hesitation, "I am a role model for public behavior. I am expected to be a good steward of every part of the district: financial, educational, operational. So I think it's a stewardship role representing the community in a nonpartisan way." Karen, Susan, and Mary also echo this view that their job is to set an example for how the community should be.

However, this seems ironic given that most Administrators discussed focusing their activities on the internal workings of the board. After hearing this response multiple

times during previous interviews, I asked Mary, an Administrator on City C's school

board, what she meant when she said that she "set an example for the community." She

elaborated,

> I'm very political. I always have political signs on my lawn for elections, and I know there are people in my neighborhood who come by in order to see who I'm voting for. So I know I'm going to have an influence on the community. I don't know how big it is or how small, but it's there. I have a presence. I have a real presence in the community.

Therefore, while Policymakers and Representatives exhibit active forms of

community representation through taking leadership roles in advocating for policy and

spending time with constituents, Mary's answer was indicative that Administrators

engage in passive behavior to demonstrates their commitment to service. I looked back at

other Administrators' interviews to see if there was evidence to support this claim or if

Mary was expressing an individual view.

Sure enough, I had noted that Karen and Deborah made explicit references to

doing what is best for the community on a holistic sense when they were voting. Both

women describe how popularity with others is not important to them, but it is important

to uphold what is "right" in a normative sense. In one example, Karen discussed how she

considers the overall community because she feels strongly that her purpose on council is

to have a "broader overview because it's better for the city sometimes, how we look at

things and what are the ramifications." Karen may not be broadcasting this view or

actively seeking advice from the community, but her overall goal is to act in their best

interest. Like Mary, she expresses a subtle, less direct impact on the community – one

that her constituents may or may not respect, or even acknowledge.

To put the content of my interviews with Administrators into French and Raven's power taxonomy terminology, the type of leadership power that Administrators expressed would be described as "referent power." This type of power encourages loyalty and respect from other board members. While charisma is oftentimes associated with this type of leadership power, this is not the case with the Administrators interviewed for this work. Administrators emphasized collaboration and their belief that approval from others is gained through hard work.

The Representatives

Unlike the Policymaker and the Administrator, white men over the age of 55 – who also ran organic campaigns – *focused their attention outside of the board* once they were incumbents and served as Representatives in the community. This may seem ironic, given that in Chapter 3, I described that this demographic group expressed joining council because they were upset about a particular issue or were taking advantage of an open position – reasons that were personally-based and not community-focused. Nonetheless, given that many Representatives were retired or had otherwise flexible schedule, they wanted to find useful ways to fill their time. Therefore, the Representatives interviewed chose to go out into the community and talk to people.

Interaction with Community and Communication Style

Communicating with constituents was extremely important to the Representatives in my study, particularly face-to-face interactions with members of the community. This style distinctly differed from Policymakers, who generally preferred email and virtual

communication with community members. It was also in direct contrast to Administrators, who did not put forth a large effort to interact with community members.

Initially, I considered that this difference may exclusively be a reflection of lifestyle. As I stated, Representatives tended to be retirees or small business owners, which gave them greater flexibility in their schedules; while Policymakers and Administrators typically worked full-time, had children in the home, or both. Nonetheless, the differences between community interaction and communication ran deeper than availability, Representatives held different perceptions of effective types of communication than non-Representatives interviewed. In other words, even if Representatives had less time on their hands, they would still prefer in depth, face-to-face or phone interactions over virtual communication.

Representatives discuss how they enjoy being physically present in the community because this allows them to have unexpected encounters with their constituents. They described looking forward to unplanned extensions to their daily routine. A number describe having conversations with people while running errands. William shared a story of talking to someone in the grocery store as his ice cream melted. However, he was not upset by this diversion. He said, "If I'm in the hardware store and someone sees me and comes up and starts talking, then I smile and talk with them. I don't act like I'm busy. But I talk, and I actually enjoy it."

Donald and Richard mention that they enjoy sitting in coffee shops and striking up conversations with people as they come in for their morning or afternoon cup of coffee. Charles also stated that he simply likes to take walks around the neighborhood and downtown. He says, "It's partly because I need the exercise, but I also enjoy just

running into people. People know me and feel comfortable talking to me. I like that I never know who I will see or what we'll discuss." In fact, Charles suggested that we take a walk while doing the interview. I was tempted to forego recording our interview to see where this walk would take us; however, his wife brought us coffee, and he seemed content to stay inside and talk.

Richard described that having these spontaneous interactions with people is his "secret" to being a successful official. He says,

> The truth is simple. It's listening. It's not talking. It's listening. And that is an incredibly simple but profound thing to do. You hear things. You're sensitive to it. You hear pain. You hear frustration. You hear worries. People will call, and they might be complaining but sometimes it's just that the person has no one to talk to. It's connecting on a very, very human level, a personal level.

Conversely, Policymakers discussed being present in settings with a lot of community members, but they did not necessarily focus on interacting with their constituents. Similar to campaigning, Policymakers focused on strategically attending high-visibility events. A number of Policymakers discuss going to ribbon cuttings (Michael), major festivals (Patricia), and PTO meetings (Kimberly), as well as responding affirmatively to invitations for neighborhood events (David), holiday parties of large organizations (Carol), and graduations (Joseph). Policymaker Jason said, "[T]he biggest thing is going to all of these events and being seen." He goes on to describe that people will approach you, however the emphasis is more about them knowing that the Policymaker is there and accessible, not to engage in extensive conversations.

This is not the view that Representatives take. William states that he attends events to "see people, talk with them, and find out what they're concerned about."

According to William, he does promote policies on which he is currently working, however he sees public events as an opportunity to engage in both self-promotion and to learn more about his constituents' needs. He also states that he does not even associate his attendance with work because he enjoys these events as a citizen, as well as an elected official.

In direct contrast to both groups, Administrators take a passive approach to interaction with the community. Barbara describes her interactions with constituents from an indirect perspective, not separating her own contact from that of the larger group of officials. Barbara states, "Certainly, we receive e-mails from the community, we do community forums, we send administration out to collect data, surveys in the district, we get phone calls. I mean, I think it's the usual political and administrative routes."

Susan also tends to think of her contact with constituents in terms of how the interaction is a reflection of the board. She described,

> There will be people who will call us…. Sometimes we meet with them. Sometimes I have coffee with them, and they explain why their program needs to be preserved. Sometimes they come to the Board in public commentary. We get a lot of emails, but a lot of people will not want to meet. They want to just fire us and call us jerks.

Through this exchange, Susan plays down her own, personal role in interacting with constituents. She used "I" only once in her above response, instead favoring collective terms, including: "we," "us," and "the Board." Deborah also describes responding to constituents with questions or concerns by bringing these to the council during meetings or by giving them direct information on how they can fix the issue for themselves. Again, the focus for Administrators is more about keeping things running

smoothly – not promoting themselves or going into the community to find out what others are thinking. In fact, Deborah explicitly stated,

> I don't do Christmas parties, anniversaries, etc. Things that just make me look important are not interesting to me, and I do not imagine that I would be interesting to the people who might be there…. The job here is about serving you, not serving me.

In an even more extreme example of passive constituent contact, when I asked Mary how she stays in touch with the community, she simply stated, "I go to board meetings. The ones who care come to board meetings."

Representatives certainly take the initiative to engage with the community, not just as members of an elected board but also as a citizen of their neighborhoods. They want to know what constituents are thinking about and what is important to them. They do not only view this as their elected duty, but as something that they enjoy. They see getting the feel for the community's pulse as their main contribution to their boards. They do not push their own personal interests, engage in detailed research about issues or technical responsibilities of their positions, or think of themselves as role models. As John summarizes, "I try to be an advocate for the people and certainly for the city. And I'm trying to advance what is in the best interest of our city long-term but also in the residents of today."

Representatives' Leadership Power

Representatives expressed multiple types of leadership power. Given their oftentimes-professional career backgrounds, expert power certainly would seem to play a role in their position. Nonetheless, for retired Representatives,[31] having the legitimate power of an executive role may provide a current status that they otherwise would not

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[31] This group is also disproportionately represented in executive positions in this study, according to Figure 1.

have in the community. Therefore, instead of saying, "I used to work as" or "I used to be employed at," they have an updated title with an executive position.

While these are all plausible types of leadership style, referent power – in the form of charisma, loyalty, trust, and respect – was most vividly expressed during my interviews. However, unlike Administrators whose referent power was most likely to be recognized by others on the board who benefited from the fruits of their labor, Representatives displayed referent power in the community. Richard certainly represented referent power and charisma at its finest. During our two hours together, we spent several minutes talking before the interview, over an hour officially discussing my questionnaire topics, and then another half an hour after the interview at a restaurant, where we talked to the owner. In fact, Richard not only knew the owner of the restaurant, but he also convinced him to give me a discount on my next visit.

Network Evolution

Policymakers

Black Policymakers and younger, white Policymakers differed in how their networks evolved during their time in office. The black officials interviewed tended to balance their pre-candidate social networks with the new connections that they were making in their elected positions. They described how their networks broadened as they met new people through their highly-visible elected roles. On the other hand, white Policymakers were more likely to emphasize the added stress of the responsibilities of their elected positions. Instead of expanding, white Policymakers described a change in the overall composition of their networks as they substituted their previous affiliations for new commitments.

The ability to balance new and old relationships was evident during my participant observation activities in the community, particularly at the town hall meeting in City C and City A's Volunteer Day. Carol and Larry, the only two black officials on City C's council, moderated the town hall meeting. Since the meeting location was in their ward, it did not strike me as odd that they were in charge. However, I did find it strange that only three other elected officials in City C were present – Donald and Gary, white Representatives on the council, and Ronald, a black Representative[32] on the school board. The City Manager and School Board Superintendent were both there, and a State Representative and a State Senator gave remarks.

Since the issue was about a new and controversial topic, there were also members of the press and leaders of other citizen groups in attendance. The general audience included nearly 60 members of the community of a variety of races, ages, and who represented multiple wards. I congratulated Larry and Carol on the success of the event after the meeting and asked about the presence of other elected officials. Carol rolled her eyes and said, "It wasn't required, so I guess they didn't feel like they had to waste their time here." Then she smiled and added, "Their loss – we had a great turnout, huh?"

At City A's Volunteer Day, I noticed a similar pattern. All of the black officials in City A were present in the morning, including those whom I was not able to interview. They introduced the event, thanked people for attending, and divvyed up the tasks among the volunteers. James brought his sons and wife, and Linda had her grandchildren in tow. Similar to the town hall meeting in City C, other prominent members of the community were in attendance but the only other elected official that I saw was Representative John.

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[32] Ronald was the only black official interviewed who was not a Policymaker. Nonetheless, he still held an executive position on City C's school board.

Even during my attendance at the church service in City B, I noticed Patricia was still very much involved in leadership. The reverend, who presumably did not know I was present, thanked her for helping to organize a recent community service event. He joked about how he was not surprised that she volunteered to run the event after the previous leader had suddenly stepped down because "y'all know Ms. Patricia has to be involved in everything"! Several members of the congregation warmly nodded and laughed. After the service, she welcomed me with a hug. While we were discussing the sermon, three people approached her separately asking for updates on projects and confirming meeting times for events later in the week.[33]

The experiences described are demonstrative of two trends that emerged during my interviews with black Policymakers. The first is that black officials did not sacrifice their previous relationships for the new opportunities that they had on council. The second is that black officials did not seem to think of their elected service as separate from their other community involvement. As James mentions in the epigraph, service as an elected official gives him a platform for his views to be heard and to matter to a larger group of people. Robert also comments on his ability to blend both roles. He states, "I believe any time that you have an opportunity to communicate with other people, it improves your skills. So what I learn doing volunteer work, I can use to communicate with my council people. It's not either/or."

However, white Policymakers emphasized the difficulty of balancing their political affiliation with other aspects of their lives. They noted the stress of trying to maintain their career, family, civic participation, and their elected position. As described

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[33] To qualify, I cannot compare this to experiences at other officials' churches or places where they volunteer. This was a service at a predominantly black church, and Patricia invited me personally. Unlike the aforementioned events, there was no expectation for other officials to be present.

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in Chapter 3, these younger officials generally tended to emphasize how they look for efficient ways to use their time and preferred commitments with finite time limits. Therefore, white Policymakers had an easier time logistically adjusting time commitments, but substituting certain commitments for council responsibilities has added pressure to their lives.

For example, David has been active in a community performance organization for several years. He has had three lead roles in recent productions, however he recently decided to take a smaller part in one play because of his council obligations. He also mentioned, with a furrowed brow, that he thinks that he may have to forego participating altogether during campaign season. This organization is clearly something that he is passionate about, however David does not see a way to effectively commit to it in addition to his elected responsibilities.

Policymakers Kimberly and Joseph also note the stress that serving as an elected official has put on their marriages, and both joke about choosing between running for re-election and getting a divorce. Kimberly elaborates,

> It's a big, big commitment for a family. It's a lot of stress. Three or four
> events per week in the evening and a few on the weekend. That gets old
> after awhile. I have a little girl at home, and I'm afraid my husband is
> going to call and say, "She graduated from high school. You missed it."

Jennifer, while also torn about how her elected position influences her family, has decided to put a positive spin on the position. She rationalizes her time commitment by describing how her elected role is teaching her children leadership, stating,

> You can't tell your children, "You need to get involved in your
> community, and you need to be in leadership. Run for student council! Be
> a leader!" Then you just don't do it yourself. You have to show them what
> that looks like.

The timing is unfortunate. Like, I'd love to just have more time with my kids and not be gone for board meetings and things like that. But this is the formative time that they need to see what [leadership] looks like, and they need to see you doing it to figure out what it means for themselves.

Overall, black Policymakers embraced the opportunities that being an elected official provided by expanding their current networks and were more likely to discuss how they take advantage of opportunities to have a greater impact in the community. White Policymakers were more likely to discuss the activities that they had to cut out of their lives after assuming an elected position. Therefore, while both groups described their ability to advocate for their own personal interests and use their expertise in an official capacity, white Policymakers were less likely to expand their networks. Instead of an opportunity, elected service was described as more of a sacrifice.

<u>Administrators</u>

Despite their descriptions of themselves as role models for both the community and their elected peers, Administrators did not have much interaction with the community more broadly. Administrators oftentimes looked to family members, neighbors, and friends – those who encouraged them to run for office and who supported them in their campaign – for affirmation of their competency in their positions. Instead of sharing their activities with other board members or broader community groups, they turned to those in their more intimate circles to share the things that they were learning in their positions, discuss programs and policies on which their boards would be voting, and validate their frustrations.

Administrator Karen describes sharing her concerns with her husband, while Barbara vents her frustrations to other team parents – parents of the children who play

sports with her daughters. Susan, one of the few Administrators who ran an organized campaign and is comfortable with other incumbents, feels most comfortable discussing her concerns about council with Cynthia, a *former* board member. Susan related a number of recent issues that she has sought out Cynthia, instead of other current incumbents, to discuss. Susan describes a conversation between them shortly after Cynthia resigned from her position:

> I asked Cynthia, "How can you do this to me?" She goes, "I would not ever leave the Board if I did not think it would be a good, stable Board. Now you go work like a dog because you do not want someone to come in with an agenda and screw everything up."…. But it's bizarre in some ways that people are afraid of the work. I worry about that. I worry that you can have a School Board that is not good and someone won't care enough to step up and make it better.

This seems like a topic that Susan, who worked on the campaigns of other incumbents – some of whom she currently served with – before her own election, would feel comfortable discussing with her allies on City B's school board. Nonetheless, Cynthia in the strict role of "friend" is seen as someone more attractive for Susan to confide in. Deborah described this type of support system as a "Kitchen Cabinet." As I was unfamiliar with the term, Deborah elaborated that her Kitchen Cabinet literally consists of people whom she feels comfortable talking to around her kitchen table. She specifically adds that these people do not have official appointments with the city and help to keep her grounded.

Representatives

As discussed above, Representatives broadened their networks by going out into the community and learning the needs and desires of various groups. The predominant difference between Representatives and Policymakers is the type of connection platform

with constituents, while the major divergence between Representatives and Administrators is the depth of the relationships developed and maintained during incumbency.

Interactions with the media are particularly illustrative of the difference between how Representatives and Policymakers approach the public. Representatives do not shy away from meeting with the press, describing speaking at community events, doing interviews on radio stations and with reporters, and appearing on local television. However, Policymakers tend to be more strategic in their interactions. Jennifer and Patricia describe how they have developed relationships with reporters and use these relationships to encourage the press to highlight certain issues important to the board. Michael goes a step further to draft articles and press releases to make sure the community is updated about what City A's council is accomplishing.

Jason even notes that he told someone on the staff of the daily paper in City B, "I'm really tight with [the man who writes the political column]. If there is an article that you don't understand how that got in the paper, it was probably because of me." He goes on to elaborate how he has to use the press to his advantage. He specifically notes that Donald, a Representative, can "hang out at the coffee shops all day long, and people come and talk to him," however because of his professional career he does not have this advantage.

I initially assumed that Jason's comment about Donald was an exaggeration until I set up my interview with him. Instead of scheduling a time, he told me to just come to a local coffee shop in Downtown City C any time on Friday afternoon, and I would find

him there. Kenneth also notes that he likes to go to local events and "just hang out, meet people, whatever fits [his] schedule."

In addition, Policymakers often mention how they rely on email lists and websites to communicate with their constituents. Mark describes how he used to send out a quarterly newsletter and regular email updates, but lost five years of information when his city computer crashed. He has spent the last year gathering that information again to begin his mass mailings. During our interview, David asked if I wanted to be on his email list to receive updates. Sure enough, I have received five emails in the months since our interview describing David's role in the community and what he is doing on council.

However, Representatives and Administrators do not generally see this in a positive light. According to Deborah, "Other people send out the stuff that says, 'I am representing you because I'm on these committees.' Bland stuff. As a constituent, I wouldn't want to read that." Although Representatives and Administrators agree that self-promotion should not be the goal of elected service, they certainly view the importance of networks during incumbency in different ways. Administrators prefer having in depth conversations about feelings and issues with those whom they already have established relationships. On the other hand, Representatives seemed to enjoy talking about anything to anyone. This may be a brief catching up in a coffee shop or an intense discussion in a grocery store.

Representatives certainly provide constituents with greater accessibility and engagement during incumbency than either of the other groups of officials. This may not result in policy changes, however Representatives were more concerned about giving people an opportunity to have their say. Richard described this as the importance of

"connectivity." For Representatives interviewed, connecting with people and having conversations, truly listening to their concerns, and making them feel that they had a voice was more important than changing policies or running an efficient board.

Conclusion

The officials interviewed describe distinct differences in perceived efficacy to accomplish their goals while on council, as well as the ability to make a difference in the community more broadly. Committee appointments, executive membership, and representation at higher levels of government served as institutional mechanisms for Policymakers to do the work to which they felt personally, professionally, or socially committed. Nonetheless, ensuring administrative tasks were handled properly and communicating with constituents enabled Administrators and Representatives to leverage other types of leadership power. Therefore, all of the officials viewed their work during incumbency as productive, useful, and valuable.

These differences in activities had consequences for elected officials' ability to further develop, engage, and leverage their political networks. Black Policymakers had exposure to new networks of officials at higher levels of government but described a balance between their pre-candidate social networks and the new connections that they made. Nonetheless, Policymakers under the age of 55 noted the stress of trying to maintain their career, family, civic participation, and elected position. They often substituted new professional tasks and networks for their previous social or recreational activities.

Administrators described deepening the relationship between themselves and their social networks. Nonetheless, they sacrificed the opportunity to create new relationships

and expand their networks. This conscious choice to strengthen personal relationships, instead of building professional ties, may be part of the reason that Administrators spent a greater share of their time on council-related tasks that could be completed individually.

Taking the opposite approach, Representatives broadened their networks by embracing their pubic role. They still interacted with family and friends, but not politically as they did in the campaigning stage. In the public sphere, Representatives were excited to gain first-hand knowledge about issues concerning constituents. While this was effective at expanding Representatives' social networks in terms of accessibility and recognition, this did not give Representatives more leverage on council activities. Nonetheless, the former advantage seemed more important to the Representatives interviewed than the latter consequence.

Furthermore, officials generally did not distinguish a difference in privilege. The Policymakers did not discuss that they received preferential treatment in terms of committee assignments or representation at higher levels of government. Administrators did not indicate that they felt marginalized or relegated to tasks with less of a direct connection to constituents. Finally, Representatives did not express feeling shut out of council decisions because of their interactions with community members. Local officials in all groups thought that their experience on the board reflected the norm and that their activities represented what a *good* board member *should* be doing. Therefore, in addition to this chapter describing efficacy, it is also a story of officials adapting their expectations for maximum personal effectiveness on their respective boards, substituting or supplementing campaign platforms with hands-on productivity, and developing a clear [mis]perception of what it means to serve a community in an elected position.

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Chapter 6: Conclusion

> There are a group of people who made me the mayor of Atlanta, and it can fit on a purple post-it note. I know that because I carried this note with me for my first six months in office…. I won because I had people behind me. Authentic relationships – not just fluff. That support is what really gets you in office.
>
> ♦ Kasim Reed, Mayor of Atlanta

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When people think of politics in the Midwest, their minds may go to the recent corruption in cities like Detroit and the state of Illinois. They may toss out the phrase "Chicago politics" as a synonym for the variety of ethical and representative concerns that have been widely publicized. However, this particular study of local officials in the Midwest found different trends than what the media portrays or what urban scholars who study large cities have previously found. There were no political machines or urban regimes discussed in the rich, earnest, and rather candid conversational interviews that I had with local, elected officials.

In this case, organizational involvement was based on personal interest, not political savvy. Campaigning was not sleazy, but strategic (and only for some of the officials interviewed). Furthermore, the local officials interviewed emphasized that incumbency is about community, not corruption. From recognizing and analyzing the patterns present in the representatives' own words, this is what defines the local politics of the cities that were the subject of this qualitative study.

The original purpose of this research was to explicitly explore the way in which the social capital of individual politicians relates to their political careers and to ultimately provide a foundation for thinking about how this may impact the ways in which policies are created. As a student of both political science and public policy, I felt that this explicit connection was lacking from my formal doctoral training. My coursework covered the policy implementation and evaluation processes, as well as the lack of influence of actual political officials. My internships focused on the research behind policy decisions and how to support federal policymakers in making informed decisions. However, I wanted to explore the policy formation process from a view that I found to be lacking: the perspective of the actual policymaker.

As I turned to the literature to explore this topic, I felt slighted by the absence of smaller cities in the literature on local politics. Learning about political machines, misconduct by elected officials, the undue influence of commercial interests on local policy, and the case for the community to take action to serve their own needs was certainly interesting. The theories were thought-provoking, and the case studies provided vivid examples and support. However, I felt that exclusively researching larger cities or mayoral campaigns did not capture the majority of the local political landscape in the United States.

The more I read, the more gaps I noticed. The more calls for "further research" about the same topics at the local level were echoed. Scholars needed – and wanted – to learn more about candidate emergence, campaign support, committee appointments, and the influence of politicians' backgrounds and careers on their service. Although one of

the first scholars to comment on the absence of this type of data at lower levels of office was Kingdon over forty years ago, I did not find many examples of researchers who had taken this charge.

This dissertation has been my initial step to address these questions. As a qualitative study, the significance of this work is not about causality or generalizability. Its value lies in critically examining local policymakers' perceptions – and misperceptions – of their career trajectories and roles on their respective governing bodies. Since neither those interviewed nor this social scientist are omniscient, this work is inherently skewed by knowledge, experience, memory, social adeptness, and a host of other factors. Nonetheless, that is the risk of engaging people about a position that plays a key role in their past and present lives, and a role that scholars of local politics view as important though under-examined. Therefore, the inherently subjective, human flaws in this study – of asking imperfect officials to help an imperfect scholar supplement an imperfect body of literature – are not simply the risks of this type of work, but also the reward.

Quite simply, I could not have gleaned the richness of this data through surveys, archival research, analyzing role call votes, or solely observing behavior. The only way to begin to understand what officials are thinking and how their personal and professional relationships have influenced the way their political trajectories have developed is to ask them. Traditional approaches may have been safer, but I am convinced that is – at least partially – why the questions in which I was interested had not been answered. It is a gamble to engage in conversational, semi-structured, in-depth interviews that inherently involve unexpected twists, tangents, a lack of control, uncertainty, vulnerability in being

an object of observation as well as an interviewer, time, and a one shot opportunity that may yield nothing but more unknowns.

However, I was able to not only find, but to also share a story of the intricate relationships between demographic characteristics, organizational involvement, recruitment into office, campaign strategies, and efficacy during incumbency experienced by officials from six governing bodies. The way these issues overlap and build on each other would have been difficult to learn in any other way. By taking that risk, this dissertation begins to fill a gap that generations of researchers have noticed.

Overview of Results

I do not purport that this study contains the silver bullet to all, or any, of the unanswered questions about local politics. However, this research does present a snapshot of a group of local, elected officials in a particular space and time. It provides a starting point for approaching other questions that should be answered and a way to examine and filter subsequent information obtained in future research.

Chapter 3 describes how during the pre-candidacy phase of an elected official's career, their social organizations and activities tend to reflect their individual interests. These affiliations not only aligned with the demographic characteristics of the officials, but also their likelihood of being recruited into office. Blacks focused much of their attention on religious and fraternal affiliations, while the women interviewed often participated in family and parental activities. For both of these groups, this is often where they honed the soft skills required for success during campaigning and incumbency – including public speaking, organizing groups to solve problems, communicating with people from a variety of backgrounds, and standing up for issues about which they are

passionate. Conversely, most of the white men who I interviewed obtained and practiced these skills in a professional setting. The officials under the age of 55 who I interviewed found creative ways to balance careers, family life, and their civic commitments. They participated in activities that: 1) served multiple purposes, 2) were easy to fit into their schedules, and 3) had a pre-determined time period of involvement.

I also found demographic patterns among officials who were recruited into office versus those who ran by their own accord. Most blacks, regardless of gender, as well as white males under age 55 noted that incumbents and key players in the local political arena specifically asked them to become involved in an elected capacity. White men over the age of 55 were stratified in their decision to run for office. There were: 1) those who ran in reaction to controversial issue, or 2) those who ran because they knew that a position was opening up. Finally, although a handful of women were recruited by current political elites, most women received a push from their organizations to run for office.

These demographic trends in making the decision to run for office continued into the campaigning period, which I discussed in Chapter 4. I found that there were two specific types of campaigns styles described during my interviews. I referred to these styles as organized and organic, based on the level of strategy involved in campaign planning. Building on my findings from Chapter 3, those officials who were recruited into office by current political players ran organized campaigns, and those who ran on their own accord relied on organic campaigns.

While all of the officials were out in the community meeting constituents and promoting their platforms for office, activities were different behind the scenes. In organized campaigns predominantly run by blacks and white men under the age of 55,

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there were distinct management teams, close interaction with incumbents and other

members of the political elite, and a focus on acquiring financing and endorsements from

members of the public and corporations. Officials who ran organized campaigns did not

rely on their friends and family for strategic support, and their interactions with the

community tended to be more formalized. Whether they were holding a fundraiser,

attending a tea, updating a campaign website, or knocking on a door of an address from

their walking list, officials who ran organized campaigns generally knew what to expect

in public interactions with members of the community.

Officials who ran organic campaigns, predominantly women and white men over

the age of 55, not only had different approaches to campaigning, but also a different view

on what was important. Organization was seen as important theoretically, but having a

formal management team was not critical. Officials relied on family members, friends,

and members of their social organizations to piece together campaigns that adapted and

changed as necessary over the course of the campaign period. Obtaining financing and

endorsements from the public, as well as forming relationships with current incumbents

was not viewed as important. This may be because, oftentimes, officials who ran organic

campaigns relied more on deepening relationships with their core supporters – people

who they already knew through familial and organizational ties.

These distinctions continue to Chapter 5, which discusses how the officials

interviewed embraced their respective roles of Policymakers, Administrators, or

Representatives. Officials who ran organized campaigns – blacks, white men under the

age of 55, and a handful of women – described themselves as Policymakers. They felt

efficacious in their ability to contribute to policy through flexibility in committee

memberships and representation at higher levels of government. The majority of white women and white men over the age of 55 ran organic campaigns and described their administrative duties on council and their representative role in the community, respectively. White women – more than any other demographic group – described their role as board Administrators. They emphasized the number of hours spent on administrative duties, took ownership of keeping their boards running smoothly, and acknowledged mentorship of junior board members as a duty filled in an elected role. Conversely, the other group who ran organic campaigns, white men over the age of 55, focused their attention outside of the board once they were incumbents. They served as Representatives for the community and chose to take advantage of engaging with constituents at every possible opportunity.

Furthermore, Chapter 5 describes how officials adapted their behavior – including interactions with constituents and their social networks – based on the ways in which they felt that they were making a contribution to the community. Policymakers tended to balance their pre-candidate social networks with the new connections that they were making in their elected positions; however, younger officials noted the stress of trying to maintain their career, family, civic participation, and their elected position. Administrators' social networks broadened the least, as they preferred to share their joys and vent their concerns to friends and family members. Finally, Representatives broadened their networks more than Administrators, but not as strategically as Policymakers, as they spent time with a variety of groups and sought opportunities to interact with as many constituents as possible.

Considering the entirety of my results, demographic trends – specifically race,

gender, and generation – play an overarching role in how officials begin, shape, and foster their political careers and interactions with the community. Demographic characteristics shape the activities that an official is likely to be involved in before deciding to run for office, as well as why they make the decision to run and their likelihood of being recruited to run for an elected position. These patterns shift from strictly demographic characteristics to campaign style when officials attempt to gain or maintain an elected seat. Finally, those officials interviewed describe three different ways in which they make a difference through their service in an elected position. The patterns that they describe align with both their campaigning style and demographic characteristics.

Additional "Support" for Research Findings

While generalizability is certainly a limitation of this study and not the focus of this type of qualitative, participant-observatory work, conducting this research has made me more aware of my interactions with local officials. The epigraph of this chapter came from a dinner that I attended, at which Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed gave the keynote speech. He discussed his political trajectory, beginning with serving as a student representative on the Board of Trustees at Howard University. He recalled how Andrew Young – Congressman, Ambassador, and Mayor – mentored him and encouraged him to run for office. He also briefly described his service on the Georgia State Legislature and how he managed his predecessor's campaign for Mayor.

However, the focus of Mayor Reed's speech was on how other members of the political elite believed in him and supported his bids for office. It was about the lessons he learned as a member of various politically-related organizations, the mistakes that he

was able to avoid during campaigning because of the direction given by those with more political sophistication, and how he remained grateful to the people – the handful on the post-it note – who he believes were the backbone to how he won his seat. Mayor Reed, although a representative for a large city, would have been a great fit for the trends on recruitment into office and the importance of mentorship for black officials that I found in this study.

A few months later, while having breakfast at a diner in South Carolina, I noticed a man wearing a shirt that I recognized from my collegiate affiliations. I asked about the shirt, and it led to a conversation about our backgrounds and his presence at this particular restaurant. Not only did I discover that we completed our undergraduate degrees in the same city a year apart, but I also found out that he was a lawyer and a city councilman who liked to do his weekend work at the diner because it gave him an opportunity to interact with constituents in his district. This reminded me of my finding that younger officials preferred to participate in activities that had multiple purposes. Although this official was unmarried and had no children, he did share that his career demands forced him to multitask whenever possible. For him, part of this multitasking took the form of working over breakfast and coffee at the diner every Saturday.

In a final example, I recently attended a service at a predominantly black church. A County Commissioner gave a testimony—a voluntary, public sharing of an example from her life regarding how she felt that God showed His presence—about how she had been nervous about losing her seat because the district lines were being redrawn. She shared that she prayed to God for a favorable outcome during this period of redistricting and the impact that it would have on her future elections. When the lines for her district

were drawn in a way that included more of her support base, she praised God that He continued to show her favor and confirm that she was continuing in the right path as an elected official. This aligns with my findings about how black officials were more likely to turn to religion to support their choices for running for office, as well as the consequences that decision entailed.

I want to reiterate that these experiences that occurred outside of the population of my study do not provide validity or generalizability for my findings. Nonetheless, these casual, unsolicited interactions suggest that it may be useful to conduct systematic studies of different size cities, of cities in other geographical locations, and of different types of elected positions. Perhaps the trends that I found with my limited sample are, in fact, represented in other populations.

Moreover, removed from the context of in depth, one-on-one interviews, these observations provide some insight into the independent effects of social networks on political life and behavior. Mayor Reed traces his current political success directly to the connection he made through his service on Howard University's Board of Trustees. The city councilman in South Carolina places himself in an area to meet and interact with constituents, thusly expanding his social networks, community reach, and accessibility. Finally, the County Commissioner not only felt that God was responsible for the favorable redistricting, but she shared this publicly in church – presumably a place where she felt closer to God and others who serve Him.

When juxtaposing these more isolated instances with the results of my study, it gives me an opportunity to (cautiously) speculate about some of the independent effects of social networks that I observed. Noting the difficulty between distinguishing whether

properties of social networks themselves affect outcomes or whether it is self-selection into the network that matters, it is fitting to explore some consequences of social network involvement that is *not* a consequence of self-selection. For example, in Chapter 5, I noted that black Policymakers were involved in minority groups at higher levels of government. They did not choose to be involved in these groups, but were expected and encouraged to do so based on their demographic background and current elected position. As discussed, out of this group involvement came exposure to higher levels of office, a broader support network of other minority officials, and ultimately a greater level of progressive ambition not present among the other respondents in this study.

Also in Chapter 5, I discuss how Representatives broadened their networks with community interactions. As discussed, most Representatives are white men over the age of 55, the same demographic group who decided to run for office based on a contentious issue or an available opportunity. Representatives were active in the community prior to running for office, but they were not as deeply entrenched into the personal lives of other constituents or as easily recognizable. In this case, as with the black Policymakers, service on an elected body pushed Representatives into an area where they had not originally imagined being and into which they did not self-select. Their broadened social networks, and the repercussions of these networks, resulted from responsibilities and duties – real or perceived – that came with their service to the community as a local elected official.

Areas for Future Research

One of the most fruitful outcomes of this research is that it has led to more questions and future areas of analysis, as well as additional theoretical and empirical exploration. I will discuss potential possibilities for each in turn.

Regarding future analysis, I mentioned in an earlier section that I set out to do a quantitative project exploring local officials' interactions with their social networks using an established dataset. Although this dataset does not currently exist, it could certainly be developed. Upon comparing the information provided in the interviews with the online biographies of my respondents, I realized that most of the information given about organizational involvement, committee membership, and policies and programs initiated was the same. Since the biographies of most local officials are readily available online, the sample size for examining elected officials' organizational affiliations could rather easily be expanded by doing a content analysis of biographical information. As a drawback, this information would not reveal how officials prioritize their commitments and affinities. Nonetheless, this larger sample size would enable a researcher to do statistical analyses of officials' public social networks without the real and temporal costs of conducting interviews.

In terms of future theoretical exploration, one could take the broader, well-established data on social capital and higher-level politics to tease out where my findings fit into, and how they impact, the established literature. Naturally, I grounded this research in literature and provided comparisons to previous work throughout this dissertation. Nonetheless, my primary purpose in this study was to give a voice to the elected officials who I interviewed – to tell their stories about their experiences with their

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social networks in their own words, as well as to capture, filter, and analyze the patterns and trends present in my collective sample. There is certainly an opportunity for more theoretical work to be done regarding the ramifications for these findings.

For example, what does it mean that, in this study, blacks, white males under the age of 55, and some women were the "Policymakers"? That runs counter to the views of elected officials as solely the pawns of economic developers or beneficiaries of the "old boys' network." In fact, my findings turn the concept of the influence of the privileged, older, white elite members of the community on its head. Is this a fluke of this particular sample? Or are there deeper theoretical explanations that may explain why this seemingly counterintuitive pattern emerged? There is certainly more exploration that could be done about how these officials adapt to their roles in office and embrace their opportunity to serve their communities, even though it runs counterintuitive to societal norms.

Furthermore, I found that some local officials rely on their social networks – both individuals and organizations – for information, advising, and campaign support in a manner that is similar to how national officials use lobbyists as a source of information, political intelligence, and labor. There are distinct differences in the salaries, institutional support, motives, and the overall professionalism of these two groups. Nonetheless, their actual activities are fairly parallel. How similar or different are large lobbying groups from the local bridge club? Although this may initially seem like a nonsensical question or one that is easily dismissed, both types of groups have access to people who vote on policy changes that affect the daily lives of a large body of citizens.

In a similar vein, this research also found that there is a group of political elite who influence how a subset of local elected officials make the decision to run for office

and strategize campaigning, which I found is in turn related to how these officials describe their effectiveness in passing policy about which they are concerned. In hindsight, I should have used these interviews to ask more in depth questions about whom this political elite consists of and how much of an impact do they have in what officials choose to do as incumbents. As we saw with the case of Jeffrey – someone who the political elite supported and then turned against, this group of people has some level of interest in the activities that the incumbents who they support are doing on their respective boards. Future research could look deeper into how implicit or explicit these expectations for behavior are, as well as whether there are any conditions to this support. Furthermore, who exactly are these political elite who do the recruiting, grooming, and advising? Are the members of the political elite a cycle of past officials and incumbents? Are they officials at higher levels of office? Or, as previous literature has found, is there a corporate twist to the professionalization process?

This research could also expand from exploring social networks to social networking websites. Despite the popularity of social networking websites as a communication platform, the officials interviewed – regardless of demographic characteristics – did not spend much time utilizing sites such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn. Some officials had Facebook pages for campaigning, but they did not choose to continue using the website during incumbency.

Nonetheless, there was a generational difference in how the websites are perceived and valued. Officials under age 55 acknowledged that social networking websites could be powerful tools, however they did not view them as an efficient use of their limited time. Conversely, officials over age 55 recognized the popularity of these

websites, but felt that they lacked the important, human connection. They were more likely to describe the presence of social networking sites negatively, such as Robert's response that he hasn't "stooped that low yet." As these social networking websites are becoming nearly synonymous with social networking overall, it would be interesting to further explore if and how officials' receptiveness towards using them changes. Furthermore, it would also be pertinent to examine how younger officials, who already more readily embrace this type of communication platform, use this as a tool to add to their effectiveness on council.

Another area for additional, qualitative exploration would be to dig deeper into officials' perceptions on how they make voting decisions. The officials who I interviewed described making their decision for how to vote as an individual process. I thought this was ironic, given the patterns I have presented on the impact of social networks on pre-candidacy involvement, campaigning style, relationships with incumbents and constituents, and perceived efficacy on the board. Nonetheless, nearly all of the officials interviewed provided the same general process for making decisions: research, think about the facts, consider how it would affect constituents more broadly, and move forward with a position. A number of officials noted that they "don't care" whether their opinion is popular with others on council or even members of the community, but that what matters is that their decision is rooted in facts.

The frequency of this individual response surprised me. Given the rapport developed and conversational flow of the interview, I believed that officials truly were blinded to their own bias in decision-making. After a bit more probing, I found that the key to the answer went back to the fluidity of "facts." When officials gave examples of

how they conducted their research, it turns out that the experts who they consulted were often people in their own social networks. Therefore, after spending nearly an hour or more discussing social networks and relationships, officials saw their behavior in voting as objective.

Nonetheless, the officials interviewed show responsiveness to their constituents in other ways besides voting. In fact, each type of official – Policymakers, Administrators, and Representatives – has a distinct way that their community interactions shapes their service. I will discuss each in turn.

For Policymakers, their responsiveness to the community stems from their personal interactions with community members. As discussed in Chapter 5, black Policymakers tend to act in ways that they believe will benefit the black community overall. While their decisions are based on their own personal experiences, they believe that the problems that they face are representative of the problems that black Americans face more broadly.

It is a bit trickier to speculate on the responsiveness of white Policymakers to their constituents because, as discussed in Chapter 3, their connections to organizations before becoming candidates are not as concrete as other demographic groups. It may be more accurate to state that white Policymakers are responsive to a particular segment of their constituents: the political elite that has groomed them for office. This group is most responsible for driving their political career from the nascent stages. If white Policymakers act in ways that do not seem to align with their personal and professional history, they may be demonstrating a form of responsiveness to the elite members of the community.

Likewise, Administrators also seem to interact with and listen to the concerns of a small slice of their constituents: their own family and friends. Nonetheless, the Administrators interviewed tend to be guided by a strong moral compass. They emphasize being community role models, and they seem the least likely to pander to any particular group or person's agenda – including their own. In fact, Administrators even mention voting against their personal opinions if there is greater evidence that an opposing position is better for the community. Thus, Administrators' responsiveness may, ironically, take the form of voting in a way that is unpopular with some community groups, depending on the issue at hand.

Finally, the Representatives interviewed demonstrate responsiveness by listening to community concerns in ways that may or may not be on the political agenda. Their emphasis on learning about their constituents and being exposed to a variety of constituency groups often put them in a place to hear a wide variety of community and individual concerns. Responsiveness to Representatives may not take the form of voting, but their accessibility is how they demonstrate their care of constituents.

While voting was not the focus of this study, given the importance that it has on which policies are passed and which programs are implemented, it would be an important next step to more explicitly consider how officials vote. Along those lines, considering the importance of executive membership on boards would also be interesting in terms of making policy. Are executive roles more about holding a title, or do they have real influence on the outcomes of council decisions? If it is the latter, how do people assume executive positions on council?

Finally, another area for future qualitative researchers to consider is how to generate stronger inferences about the independent influence of social networks on various kinds of political behavior. The purpose of this study was to explore how officials develop, engage, and leverage social networks; however, I found that social networks are weaved into a tapestry of individual personality types, continued and evolving relationships, and different views of opportunities and efficacy during political service. To begin to pull the metaphorical thread of social networks independently, future researchers could either: a) spend more of the interview asking questions about and following up on the impact of descriptions of individual organizational affiliations; or b) begin the research process by speculating about officials' known organizational affiliations and policy decisions before the interview, and then asking specific questions about these potential links during the interview. The interviews I conducted in this study spanned an official's entire political trajectory, however future research about the independent impact of social networks would better be suited to specifically tackling an official's time spent serving in their elected role, or even in their current term.

My caution in taking either approach would be to not disrupt the rapport established with the official. Although serving in the role of interviewer, it is important that the interviewee not feel interrogated or attacked. Particularly with elected officials, maintaining a genuine sense of interest and curiosity is important in obtaining candid answers. Therefore, this type of questioning would best suit a researcher who already has established a rapport with the officials being interviewed, perhaps in either a previous interview or another professional capacity.

A Beginning

As oxymoronic as it may be to end a conclusion with a section entitled "A Beginning," that is what this research ultimately represents. In my process of contributing to the literature on local politics, I found that the cases I examined did not always align with accepted "knowns" in the literature, and even in society more broadly. I found that details that I initially thought would be supplemental or superficial – such as the roles of religious affiliations and familial involvement during campaigning – became entire sections of chapters. This line of research, as well as this type of research method, provides a unique and valuable snapshot into the mindsets and views of the officials interviewed in City A, City B, and City C and their interactions with their social networks. The opportunities to further explore the trends found at the local level are not only plentiful, but they are also quite promising.

Appendices

Appendix A: Subject Recruitment—Email and Telephone Script

Initial Email

Dear X:

I am a PhD candidate in the University of Michigan's Joint Program in Public Policy and Political Science. I am researching how local officials maintain contact with constituents and the development of officials' social networks during their political career.

Given your [insert background fact], I would like to interview you about your experiences. Previous interviews have averaged about 45 minutes, and I will not use information that can specifically identify you in my future work.

Please contact me if you would be willing to participate or have any questions. I can be reached by email at AshleyLR@umich.edu or by phone at (443) 624-0716.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you,

Ashley Reid Brown

PhD Candidate, University of Michigan
Department of Political Science & Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy

Follow-up Telephone Script

Hello X,

My name is Ashley Reid Brown. I emailed you a few weeks ago regarding your participation in a study about the trajectory of city council members' political careers.

So far, I have heard from [# of officials] on [insert specific council's name]. I'd really like to get as close to full participation as possible, and I'd truly value your insight.

If you are interested in participating or would like more details, please call me back at (443) 624-0716 or email me at ashleylr@umich.edu. I hope to hear from you soon. Have a good day.

Appendix B: Institutional Review Board Consent Form

<u>Title of Research</u>: The Political Relevance of Social Capital

<u>Investigator</u>: Ashley Reid Brown, PhD Candidate, University of Michigan

Before agreeing to participate, it is important that you read the following explanation. This statement describes the purpose, procedures, benefits, and discomforts associated with this research study. Also described is your right to withdraw at any time. No guarantees can be made as to the results of the study.

<u>Explanation of Procedures</u>

You are being asked to participate in a research project to investigate how organizations that local elected officials belong to impact their official role, including how officials structure electoral campaigns, develop political platforms, decide which programs and policies to support, and maintain relationships with constituents in general.

I will conduct a [face-to-face/phone] interview with you about the aforementioned topics. This interview should last approximately 45 minutes. I will only interview you once, however, I may need to follow up for clarification purposes.

<u>Risks and Discomforts</u>

You will not be at physical or psychological risk and should experience no discomfort resulting from participating in this interview.

<u>Benefits</u>

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this project. However, this research is expected to yield knowledge about the considerations of local public officials throughout their career trajectory.

<u>Confidentiality</u>

Your identity as a participant will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to any unauthorized persons. Only myself, my research assistants, my dissertation committee, and the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board (the committee that approved this project) will have access to the research materials. These materials will be in encrypted files on my personal computer and saved in a secure backup file online.

You will be audio recorded for purposes of accuracy. Only myself, as well as a professional transcription service, will have access to this recording. All others will refer to a transcribed record of our interview. Any references to your identity that would compromise your anonymity will be removed or disguised prior to the preparation of the research reports and publications.

<u>Withdrawal Without Prejudice</u>

Participation in this study is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty.

You are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time.

<u>Payments to Subject for Participation in Research</u>

There will be no costs for participating in the research. You will also not be paid to participate in this research project. However, refreshments will be available during face-to-face interviews.

<u>Questions</u>

If you have any concerns regarding this research project, please call me at 443-624-0716. Questions regarding rights as a person in this research project should be directed to the Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board at 734-936-0933.

<u>Agreement</u>

This agreement states that you have received a copy of this informed consent. Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this study.

Signature of Subject   Date

Subject name (printed)

Signature of Researcher   Date

Appendix C: Interview Questionnaire

I. Current Political Information
  ❖ What is the specific title of the political office you hold?
  ❖ How long have you been in this position?
  ❖ Is this a part-time or full-time career for you?
      i. [If part-time:] Where else are you currently employed?
      ii. [If full-time:] What was your most recent employment experience?
  ❖ Do you currently have any staff supporting you?
  ❖ Please list any former elected positions and past political service.

II. Demographic Information
  ❖ Age:
  ❖ Race:
  ❖ Sex:
  ❖ Marital Status:
  ❖ Children (how many and ages):
  ❖ Highest Education Level Completed:
  ❖ Household Income:
      i. _____ Under $50,000
      ii. _____ $50,000 - $100,000
      iii. _____ Over $100,000

III. Organizational Affiliations & Length of Involvement
The following is a list of categories of organizations and examples of each. For each category, please note the name of any organization to which you currently belong or have belonged in the past, length of time as a member, and whether you currently or have held an executive position.

  ❖ Community Service Activities and Volunteer Organizations (i.e. Lions Club, Rotary Club, fraternal organizations, Red Cross):
  ❖ Educational Organizations (i.e. alumni chapters, reunion committees):
  ❖ Family-Oriented Activities (i.e. PTO, Boy/Girl Scouts, Jack and Jill, coaching):
  ❖ Military/Veteran Organizations (i.e. American Legion):
  ❖ Neighborhood Organizations (i.e. neighborhood or homeowners association, neighborhood watch):
  ❖ Political Advocacy Groups (i.e. groups that advocate policy related to a specific demographic or issue – NAACP, League of Women Voters, Audubon Society):
  ❖ Professional Organizations:
  ❖ Recreational Activities (i.e. athletic teams/leagues, country club membership):
  ❖ Religiously Affiliated Groups (i.e. churches, mosques, synagogues, choirs, bible study, specialty committees, Salvation Army):
  ❖ Other:

IV. Additional Questions About Organizational Involvement
  ❖ To which organization do you commit the most time?

❖ Which organization best reflects your personal views and beliefs (or with which do you most strongly identify)?
❖ Which organizations, if any, did you join after attaining political office? Why?

V. Networking Activities
Do you participate in the following activities in a personal or professional capacity:

❖ Community/Media Appearances
❖ Writing for Newsletters
❖ Maintaining a Website
❖ Blogging
❖ Other

VI. Political Career
❖ Briefly describe when and how you became involved in politics.
❖ Please answer the next set of questions for your *first* campaign:
    i. What methods did you use to campaign (including media ads, campaign signs, phone calls, fliers, or word-of-mouth)?
    ii. Did members of the organizations that you belong to support you through activities, such as donating money, providing an available venue, giving a time or campaigning commitment?
        1. If so, please describe.
    iii. Did any of the organizations that you belong to formally endorse you?
        1. If so, which ones?
    iv. Did other organizations that you do not belong to formally endorse you?
        1. If so, which ones?
    v. Please summarize the political platform on which you ran and which issues you highlighted while campaigning.
❖ [If applicable] Please answer the same set of questions for your *most recent* campaign:
    i. What methods did you use to campaign (including media ads, campaign signs, phone calls, fliers, or word-of-mouth)?
    ii. Did members of the organizations that you belong to support you through activities, such as donating money, providing an available venue, giving a time or campaigning commitment?
        1. If so, please describe.
    iii. Did any of the organizations that you belong to formally endorse you?
        1. If so, which ones?
    iv. Did other organizations that you do not belong to formally endorse you?
        1. If so, which ones?
    v. Please summarize the political platform on which you ran and which issues you highlighted while campaigning.
❖ Will you run for re-election?
    i. If so, do you think the organizations that helped in the past will give you more, less, or about the same level of support?

- ❖ [If applicable] Which committees do you belong to?
    - i. Do you feel that your membership in any of the above organizations is related to this position?
        - 1. If so, how?
- ❖ Which programs and policies do you currently support?
    - i. Do you feel that your membership in any of the above organizations influenced your views?
        - 1. If so, how?
    - ii. Do you feel that your membership in any of the above organizations gave you the expertise or resources to better perform your job duties?
        - 1. If so, how?
- ❖ Do you think any organizations would like you to advance or support their mission through your official position?
    - i. If so, which ones?
- ❖ How do you maintain relationships with your constituents and stay aware of the issues that they feel are important?

VII. Conclusion

- ❖ How would you define your overall role as [insert position title] and as an elected official overall?

VII. Additional Comments

Please use this opportunity to add any information that you think I would find helpful or to clarify any of your responses.

Appendix D: Local Officials' Descriptive Information

| Alias	Board Type	Exec?	City	Sex	Race	Age	Career	# of Times Contacted	Response Time (from final contact)	Interview Length (in min.)	Interview Type	Campaign Style	Efficacy Style
Barbara	School	N	B	F	White	52	University Program Coordinator	1	0	40	F2F	Organic	Administrator
Carol	City	Y	C	F	Black	68	English Teacher	3	0	71	F2F	Organized	Policymaker
Charles	City	N	B	M	White	66	Business Owner	2	2	64	F2F	Organic	Representative
Christopher	City	N	B	M	White	41	Economic Consultant	2	6	39	F2F	Organized	Policymaker
Cynthia*	School	Y	B	F	Black	51	Educational Consultant	2	99	0	N/A	Organized	Unknown
David	City	N	B	M	White	44	Lawyer	1	0	47	F2F	Organized	Policymaker
Deborah	City	N	B	F	White	60	Unemployed	1	0	100	F2F	Organic	Administrator
Donald	City	N	C	M	White	67	Retired	2	3	39	F2F	Organic	Representative
Gary	City	N	C	M	White	61	Buyer at University	1	0	48	F2F	Organic	Representative
James	School	Y	A	M	Black	55	Unemployed	1	1	71	F2F	Organized	Policymaker
Jason	City	N	C	M	White	39	Engineer	2	0	50	F2F	Organized	Policymaker
Jeffrey	City	N	B	M	White	47	Plant Ops Manager	2	4	71	F2F	Both	Representative
Jennifer	School	N	B	F	White	39	Health Care Consultant	1	1	68	F2F	Organized	Policymaker

John	City	N	A	M	White	65	School Superintendent	1	0	49	Phone	Organic	Representative
Joseph	City	Y	C	M	White	57	Engineer	1	4	63	F2F	Organized	Policymaker
Karen	City	N	B	F	White	60	Admin. Asst.	2	1	45	F2F	Organic	Administrator
Kenneth	City	N	C	M	White	56	Lawyer	2	12	41	F2F	Organic	Representative
Kimberly	School	N	C	F	White	42	Museum Director of Education	2	0	35	F2F	Organized	Policymaker
Larry	City	N	C	M	Black	52	Retired	2	5	39	F2F	Organized	Policymaker
Linda	City	Y	A	F	Black	56	Retired	1	9	42	Phone	Organized	Policymaker
Lisa	School	N	B	F	Black	50	Unemployed	2	3	60	F2F	Organic	Policymaker
Mark	City	N	B	M	White	52	Executive	1	3	69	F2F	Organized	Policymaker
Mary	School	Y	A	F	White	83	Retired	3	0	36	F2F	Organic	Administrator
Michael	City	N	A	M	White	40	Accountant	2	0	58	Phone	Organized	Policymaker
Patricia	School	N	B	F	Black	54	Purchasing Specialist at hospital	2	1	39	F2F	Organized	Policymaker
Richard	City	N	B	M	White	68	Lecturer at University (part-time)	1	3	78	F2F	Organic	Representative
Robert	City	N	A	M	Black	72	Retired	1	1	57	Phone	Organized	Policymaker
Ronald	School	Y	C	M	Black	71	Retired	1	2	49	F2F	Organic	Representative
Steven	School	Y	C	M	White	49	Science Teacher	1	3	51	F2F	Organic	Policymaker
Susan	School	Y	B	F	White	60	Business Owner	3	2	76	F2F	Organized	Administrator

|													
Thomas	City	Y	B	M	White	59	Mayor	2	0	23	F2F	Organized	Policymaker
William	School	Y	B	M	White	66	Economic Consultant	1	0	68	F2F	Organized	Policymaker/ Representative

*Cynthia was not interviewed; however a number of officials shared corroborating information about her during their interviews, and she is mentioned within the text.

Appendix E: Social Network Maps

Social Network Map of City A
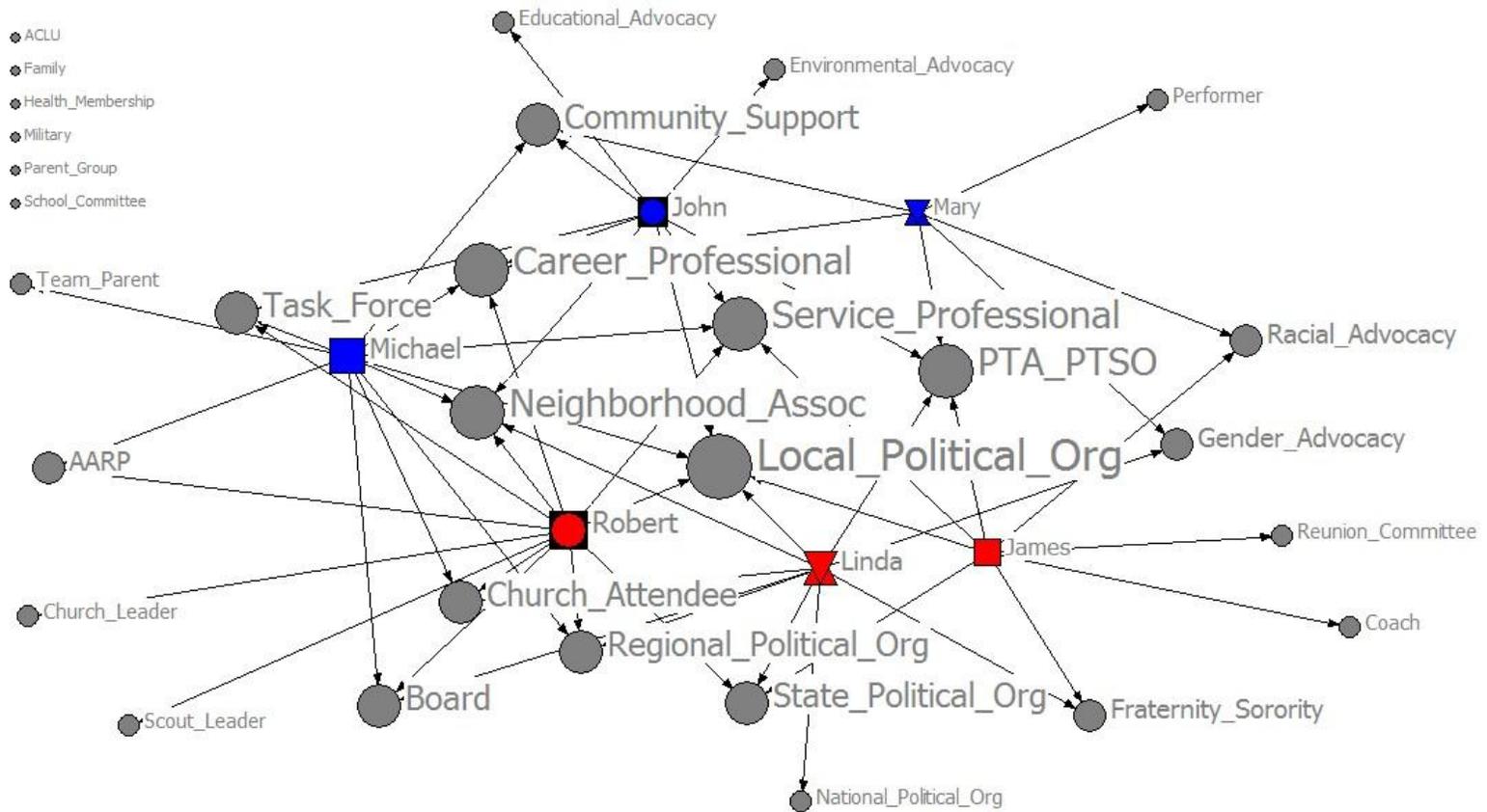
Social Network Map of City B
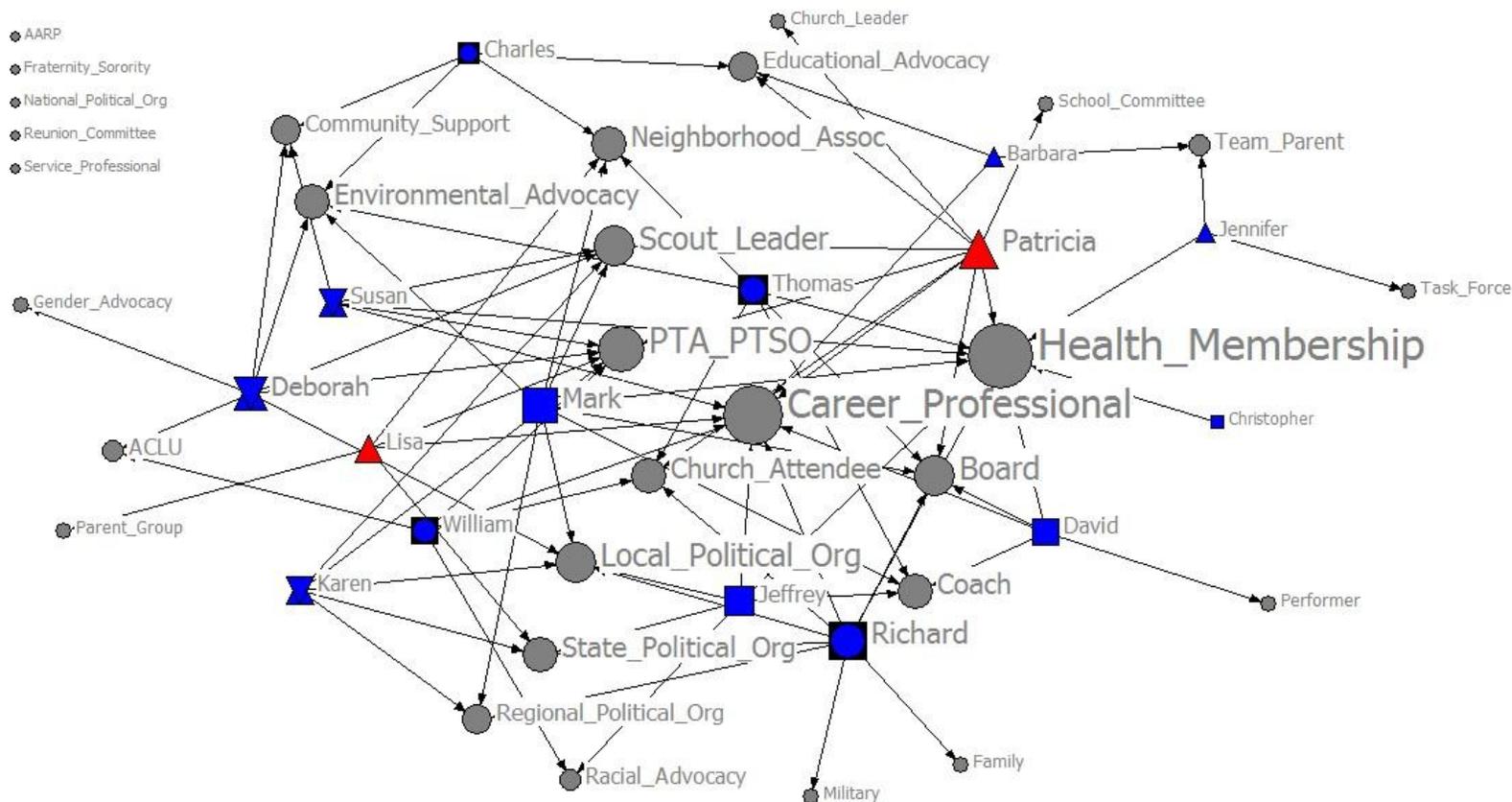
Social Network Map of City C
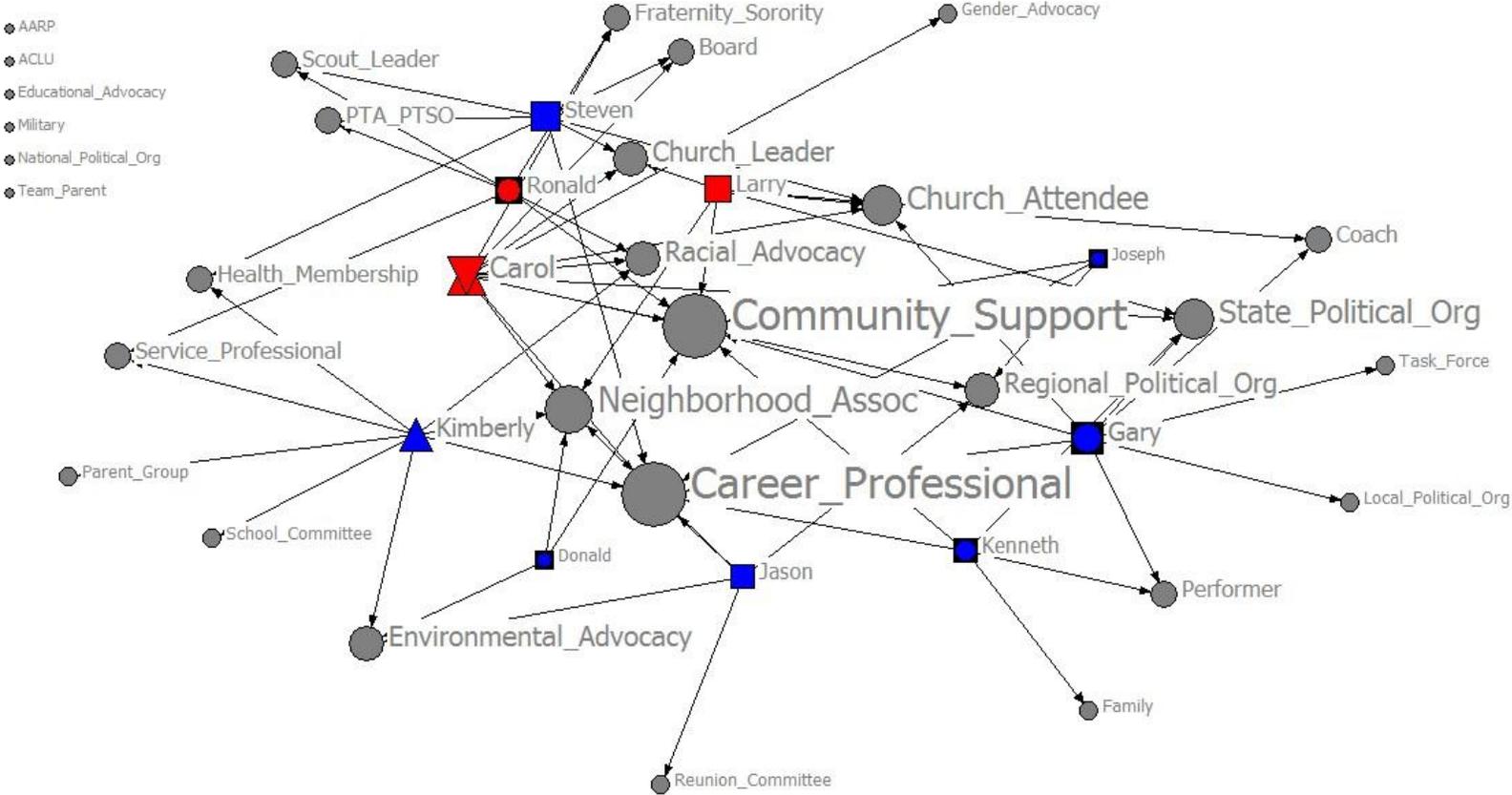
Social Network Map of All Cities