“Grandma is the Mayor”: Women’s Participation in Local Politics in Alberta

*« Le maire, c’est Grand-Mère » : la participation des femmes dans la politique
locale en Alberta*

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“Grandma is the Mayor”: Women’s Participation in Local Politics in Alberta

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Based on a survey of 198 women serving in local government in the Canadian province of Alberta, our study investigates the motivations of women to serve in local government. This paper explores the relationship between community, Alberta’s conservative political culture, family roles, and the idea of giving back. In doing so, we argue that although family remains an important consideration for women considering local office, this is balanced by the strong desire of the women to serve and better their communities.

D’après un sondage mené auprès de 198 femmes qui travaillent actuellement au sein d’un gouvernement municipal en Alberta, nous nous penchons sur leurs motivations à s’engager dans la politique municipale. Notre article explore la relation entre la communauté, la culture politique conservatrice de l’Alberta et l’idée de rendre à la collectivité. Nous soutenons que même si l’aspect familial reste une considération très importante lorsque ces femmes décident de s’engager dans la politique locale, leur désir de servir et d’améliorer leur communauté joue un rôle tout aussi grand.

“I didn’t realize the impact I had until after the election when women in my community came up to me in the street and said that I inspired their daughters and granddaughters as a role model for them — that is so very inspiring to me. I strongly encourage any woman or man to get involved in their local government.” – Woman municipal politician

When Justin Trudeau won the 2015 federal election, he was the first Canadian prime minister to have a gender-balanced cabinet (RACCO 2017). Efforts to achieve gender equality in governments are increasing around the world. UN Women provides training for women candidates, conducts civic education on gender equality, and supports calls for political parties and governments to actively encourage women’s political participation (UN WOMEN 2018). The push for more women in government is based on evidence that an increase in women’s representation has an impact on party positions in areas such as family policy, gender equality, and social policy (ZING 2015). Governments that reflect the diversity of their population are also seen as essential for a healthy democracy (TRIMBLE, ARSCOTT, and TREMBLAY 2013).

Despite the international push to encourage more women to run for elected office, less attention has been paid to local government and the representation of women within it. Although local politics are often assumed to be more appealing and accessible to women (LAWLESS AND FOX 2010; TRIMBLE, 1995), the number of women elected in municipal governments in Canada is comparable to other levels of government. In 2018, women constituted 29.3% of elected officials

in local politics in Alberta and 26% overall in Canada, which is comparable to their participation in provincial (27.9%) and federal (27.1%) politics (EQUAL VOICE 2014; HOUSE OF COMMONS 2018). While scholars have recently turned their attention to Canadian municipal politics (MCGREGOR et al. 2017; BREUX, COUTURE, and KOOP 2019), many studies examine election results in larger urban centres but rarely address gender and local politics. This study explores which women are serving in local government in Alberta, why they chose to run, and the challenges and benefits they experienced. In doing so, this study advances our understanding of why women get involved in local politics and the important and complex political roles of women in smaller communities. This research contributes to the existing work on women and local government by expanding our knowledge of the ambitions and motivations for women to serve locally, and the challenges of doing so in a largely conservative political environment. Based on a survey of 198 women currently serving in local government – specifically municipal councils in cities, towns, villages and counties in Alberta – we argue that although women are drawn to local politics for personal reasons such as family responsibilities, a more significant factor was their connection to local community and their belief that a debt to their communities could be repaid through service.

The Scholarly Context

Over the past few decades, a growing body of scholarly work examines the challenges that women face in politics in Canada (e.g. ARSCOTT and TRIMBLE 1997; BASHEVKIN 1998, 2009a and 2009b; CARBERT 2013; EVERITT and GIDENGIL 2013; TREMBLAY and TRIMBLE 2003; VICKERS 1997; YOUNG 2000) and elsewhere (e.g. HOLMAN 2017; LAWLESS and FOX 2010; PINI and MACDONALD 2011; SUNDSTROM 2013). Research typically focuses on women in national and subnational politics and revolves around several common themes: the barriers women experience, including family responsibilities, their perceived qualifications, and access to political resources; the importance of political culture; the role of political parties; and the urban/rural divide. While the literature identifies many challenges that women face upon entering national and provincial/state politics, research is limited on women's participation in local government, especially in Canada.

While it is assumed that local government is more accessible for women because it is “closer to home,” easier to reconcile with family life (less travel and fewer hours), and deals more with issues related to women's historical or traditional concerns (LAWLESS and FOX 2010; TRIMBLE 1995), these assumptions may not be accurate. Early Canadian studies, such as Gidengil and Vengroff's study of women in municipal politics in Quebec questions the assumption that there

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were few barriers to women’s participation in local politics and points to systemic barriers, similar to those at other levels of government, arguing that “where women are, power is not” (1997, 536). Arif’s report for the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (2014) challenges the myth that municipal campaigns are less expensive or competitive than those for federal office. Tolley (2011) also questions the belief that women are more successful in securing municipal seats. Examining federal, provincial, and municipal election results between 1975 and 2009, Tolley finds that Canadian women generally have greater success at higher levels of government. She also discovered women were less likely to hold the more prestigious and well-paying positions, such as mayor or premier (TOLLEY 2011). Her conclusions were supported by Breux, Couture and Koop (2018), who found women comprised only 16% of mayoral candidates in Canada’s largest 100 cities. Women were more likely to run for mayor when there was a female incumbent, but men were more likely to run for the more prestigious mayoral positions (BREUX, COUTURE and KOOP 2018).

These findings support research emerging from the United States. Van Assendelft’s literature review of the scholarly work on women’s local political participation (2014) found that although the barriers to women’s participation are often thought to be lower at the local level because of the increased number of available positions, the nonpartisan nature of local elections, and the ability to better balance work and family, women remain vastly underrepresented. Women appear to have an ‘ambition gap’, in which they are less likely to consider running for election and need more encouragement (LAWLESS and FOX 2010). When women do choose to run, they do so to represent and create change in their communities; however, serving in local government is “not a fertile breeding ground for higher office” (van ASSENDELFT 2014, 208). Similar to Breux, Couture and Koop’s 2018 study in Canada, van Assendelft demonstrates that the bigger the city and more prestigious or powerful the position, the less likely women are to be elected (2014, 202-4).

Contradictions also exist within the research on the impact of the urban/rural divide on women’s political success. The “cosmopolitanism hypothesis” suggests women should have an easier time running for local office in cities because of their diverse populations, more progressive politics, women with higher levels of education, and higher female labour force participation. Yet Gavan-Koop and Smith’s 2008 study of the Vancouver region found women made up 50% or more of municipal councils in small and medium-sized municipalities (2008, 159), while Carbert (2010) found women typically held 30% or more of the seats in urban metropolitan districts in Canada. These findings suggest women are every bit, if not more, electorally successful in smaller centres. A large body of

historical research exists on women's role in smaller urban and rural communities (AMBROSE 2005 and 2015; REED 2003; WILTON, 2000), but we know little about their impact in Canada in contemporary times.

In the American context, Kjaer, Dittmar and Carroll's 2019 study of women's municipal representation in New Jersey challenges the notion that women do better at the local level, pointing to a large number of councils with no female representation. They provide evidence for council size (rather than size of the municipality) as a significant predictor of women's presence or absence, with larger councils appearing to have 'more room' for female candidates. Their research also suggests that municipalities in which there are more female headed households and/or higher income and education levels are more likely to elect women (KJAER, DITTMAR and CARROLL 2019).

A key issue in the study of women in municipal politics is the motivation for women to run for office. Specifically, why do women choose to run and why do they focus their attention on local politics as opposed to provincial/state or federal politics? Furthermore, when women choose to run, what specific gendered challenges do they face? As mentioned above, the notion that municipal politics is as a stepping stone to other levels of government does not accurately represent the motivations of most women in local government. In fact, our research supports American studies suggesting that women are deliberately choosing a local focus for their political ambitions because they are strongly committed to local communities and local issues and feel that they can have a greater impact on their local communities (ASSENDELFT 2014; KJAER, DITTMAR and CARROLL 2018; CARROLL and SANBONMATSU 2013). Carroll and Sanbonmatsu's research (2013) shows that almost half of women elected were 'pure recruits', only running because they were encouraged to do so by someone else, while almost a quarter were interested and received encouragement. This data points to the importance of recruitment efforts for increasing women's participation. They also found that women, similar to men, rated the approval of their spouse very highly, while women were also more likely to rate not having young children as an important factor.

Pruysers and Blais' Canadian study of both who is likely to run for office and who should encourage them (2019) also provides valuable insight into these questions. They found that "Although encouragement does not close the gender gap in general, it does have the ability to close the gap among a particular group of respondents: those individuals with no pre-existing political ambition" (PRUYERS and BLAIS 2019, 238). Furthermore, the encouragement need not come from parties or those in government, but is as effective coming from family, friends and community organizations. In fact, they found that women were less

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likely to respond positively to male recruiters, creating space for organizations and other women to encourage and recruit.

Methodology

To explore women’s experiences in and perspectives on local government, we conducted a case study analysis of women in local government in Alberta. A survey was distributed in January and February of 2018 to women holding local office in a city, town, village, summer village, county, or specialized municipality in Alberta. The survey was sent via email to 678 women, with 198 women (29%) completing it. The use of a case study approach limits our ability to make generalizations from the data, but is useful for the detailed examination and understanding of a single case (GOMM, HAMMERSLY and FOSTER 2000). The decision to focus on Alberta was based on the experience of talking to women in local politics in Alberta and realizing the wealth of experience and knowledge they had about what works and does not work for women in this province. The dominance of Conservative political parties and ideology in Alberta, as discussed below, makes the study of the participation of women particularly important. Although limited to the experiences of women who won a seat on council, this study serves as an entry point for further research on the experiences of all women in Canada, including the ones who ran for office, but were not elected.

The survey was composed of seven sections, each of which included a combination of multiple choice, Likert scale rating, and open-ended questions covering topics ranging from demographics, family background, experience, motivation and challenges. Open-ended questions were included to allow women to speak with their own voices and encourage them to not feel restricted to the questions or topics provided by us. This grounded approach to research was fruitful, with between 30 and 90 percent of women choosing to answer the open-ended questions in each of the sections. The qualitative responses provide a rich body of data that enables the voices of these women to come to the forefront of our research and add depth to the quantitative findings. This paper focuses primarily on these open-ended answers. They were coded according to their content using a grounded theory approach that developed the coding scheme from the data itself and then grouped them thematically (URQUHART 2017, 35-55). In particular, dominant discourses and themes were identified, and contradictions within the responses were explored.

The respondents to the survey reflected a narrow demographic picture of Alberta, suggesting women elected to local office are quite similar in background and do not address the diversity of the province. The majority of respondents were white

(90%) and over the age of 45 (68%). More than half (61%) of the participants had completed some form of education beyond high school: 30% had a university degree and 31% had a college diploma or certificate. Almost three-quarters (70%) of participants are employed in addition to serving on a municipal council, with 23% working full-time (35+ hours per week), 29% self-employed, and 4% seasonally employed. The most common occupational sectors were agriculture and forestry (13%), and health care (9%).

With regards to family life, three-quarters of participants are married (76%) with partners who are either employed full-time (56%) or retired (12%). Most had children (only 11% reported not having children), but 49% reported that their children no longer lived at home with them. Most respondents first ran for office when their youngest child was 18 or older (40%), supporting the scholarly literature that suggests that women are more likely to run for office as their children become more independent (e.g. CARROLL and SANBONMATSU 2013). About half of the women grew up in a home where politics was sometimes (31%) or frequently (22%) discussed, but only 27% had a family member who had previously run for office. Of the women who responded, 76% had been elected for the first time in the past 5 years (see Figure 1) and 60% had served one term or less (see Figure 2).

Figures 1 & 2: Year First Elected and Number of Terms Served

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When we look at the women elected to local government across Alberta, the numbers are fairly consistent with the proportion of women elected federally and provincially. In Canada, 28% of people elected to local government in 2015 were women, with the highest proportion of women elected in British Columbia (36%), Newfoundland and Labrador (37%), and Yukon (40%) (STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN 2019). The lowest proportion of women were in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (18% each). Alberta went from below average in 2012 to meeting the national average in 2015 at 28%. The proportion of women increased slightly in the 2017 municipal elections.

In order to distinguish between types of municipalities, we used Statistics Canada’s definition for urban and rural communities. An urban municipality is a community with more than 10,000 inhabitants while communities with less than 10,000 inhabitants are considered rural.

Figure 3 shows where the respondents had been elected. Figures 4 and 5 show the urban/rural divide in Alberta. Women were slightly more likely to get elected as both mayors and councillors in rural settings than in urban ones.

Figure 3: Respondents’ Type of Municipality

Figures 4 and 5: Female and Male Mayors and Councillors in Rural and Urban Areas

This finding builds on previous literature suggesting that a rural/urban divide affects women's representation and seeks to provide insight into how rurality impacts women's politics prospects (e.g. CARBERT 2009). While our research is not able to determine whether this applies across Canada, it appears that in Alberta the historical role of women combined with the conservative political culture creates unique opportunities for specific types of women to succeed politically.

Conservative Alberta

Alberta provides an interesting case study in which to explore the role of women in local politics. It is one of the most fiscally and socially conservative provinces in Canada (ADAMS 2013), the birthplace of the Reform and then the Canadian Alliance parties, and a province within which the men in particular are able to access the wealth of working in the oil and gas industry, often leading to more traditional family structures with men working away from home much of the time (HILL, ALOOK and HUSSEY 2017). Although Albertans poll similarly to most Canadians on most issues, on some issues — capitol punishment, immigration, gay rights — the opinions of a significant number of Albertans is much more conservative than the rest of the country (GERSON 2020). The conservatism of Alberta is also demonstrated through the election of overwhelmingly conservative candidates in provincial and federal elections; for example, in the 2019 federal election 69% of Albertans voted Conservative, winning 33 of 34 seats (ELECTIONS CANADA 2019). In the provincial election of the same year, the Conservative party won 64 of 87 seats (ALBERTA ELECTIONS 2020).

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Even though Alberta was governed by the left-wing New Democratic Party of Alberta (NDP) at the time of the survey, it was a distinct break from the province’s history of Conservative and populist governments. Until the 2015 provincial election, the Progressive Conservative party governed in Alberta for 41 years. After one NDP term, the new United Conservative Party won the Alberta election, returning the province to a majority right-wing government, characterized by pro-oil and gas and anti-Ottawa sentiments. Having a conservative party in power for such a long period created a regional culture more accepting of traditional views. This traditionalism tended to erect barriers to women’s participation in politics and enforced the belief that women should prioritize domestic responsibilities. While these views can work against politically interested women who still have children at home, it can help those whose children are grown and want to bring their extensive experience in the local community and their place within it as mothers and wives to politics (STALSBURG and KLEINBERG 2016). Alberta has a long tradition of maternal feminism, in which the traditional roles as wives and mothers informed their politics and provided a basis for their political claims (WILTON 2000). For example, the first two female magistrates in the British Empire were appointed in Alberta in 1915 and 1916 on the basis of their maternal feminism (METHOT 2016).

Several scholars argue that left-wing political parties are more likely to support and actively promote female representation in politics (BASHEVKIN 2010; O’NEILL, 2013; PRAUD 2013; CHENG and TAVITS 2011). However, political parties do not operate at the local level in Alberta. The lack of political parties can potentially benefit women who might have been negatively affected by the party candidate selection process; alternatively, it can hinder women due to the absence of encouragement and resources provided by women-friendly political parties (e.g. GAVAN-KOOP and SMITH 2008; CHENG and TAVITS 2011). Our survey results indicate that the non-partisan nature of local politics was a strong motivating factor for women to run for these elected offices.

Many women noted that the Conservative dominance of provincial and federal ridings in Alberta played a role in their decision to participate in local government. “I’m not partisan though I do lean left,” said one respondent. “And in Alberta, that’s a death sentence for federal politics. It’s also putting yourself into the crosshairs of some very dangerous people.” Incredibly, another woman stated that “I would be concerned for my safety and happiness by announcing myself as a left-leaning political party candidate in my deeply Conservative area. I have been met with threats of physical and sexual violence on social media because of my views.” The non-partisan nature of local government gives these women an opportunity to get involved in politics without allying themselves with

unpopular parties, despite holding less conservative views than many voters. A preference for municipal politics aside, respondents indicated that the most significant deterrents to seeking office at other levels of government are party politics (21%), the time commitment required (13%), feeling under-qualified (12%), being away from family (11%), and a distaste for provincial politics (11%).

A small group of female respondents rejected the idea that gender matters in politics, arguing that elected representatives should be selected based on merit rather than on personal characteristics such as gender. This view became apparent in responses to the survey's final open-ended question asking for any general comments. Some women (7%) argued that gender should not matter in politics and that it should not be studied. One woman even suggested "Avoid[ing] spending money on this topic. Ratepayers in the democratic process decide who represents their area." Another woman argued that "It is time that gender is not considered. If women are the most qualified candidates there is no reason why an all-woman council would not be common. Anything that gives them special consideration or advantage demeans their position." These comments reflect the conservative and populist rhetoric of Alberta, which suggests that to focus on gender is to treat men and women unequally and to disregard the importance of merit. Similarly, another respondent commented that:

I didn't run because I'm a woman who wanted to prove to men that women can do as good a job as men. I think most of society will change as the generations change. There is an old boys club in Alberta but it's phasing out. It's about what you can contribute and the desire to make a change. That is gender neutral. I do not support anyone being voted in to make statistics look better, I support the best person for the job...

Responses such as these mask the inequalities that are present in all levels of government while also reflecting their inherent contradictions. This respondent, for example, both recognizes the presence of an "old boy's club" as a barrier to women's participation and says that gender does not matter.

The Family and Community Connection

In this study, survey respondents repeatedly emphasized the relationship between the community and women's participation in local politics. Women referenced strong connections to their communities when explaining who encouraged them to run, what qualifications they perceived as necessary, the qualifications they believed they possessed, what motivated them to run for local office, and why they were reluctant to transition from municipal politics to provincial or federal

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politics. The section below focuses on how the survey respondents conceptualize and articulate the relationship between community, their families, and their desire to give back.

The ability to balance politics and family is an important factor in women’s decision to run for political office. Many women choose to run for office when they are older and their children are grown, so family responsibilities have a minimal impact on their political careers (BOHN 2017; CAMPBELL and CHILDS 2017; CROSSLEY 2013). Being a mother can be seen as both an asset to and a challenge in a female candidate’s political life. Mothers can garner votes for their knowledge and activism on family, education, and women’s health issues, and for their ability to bring values like pacifism, tolerance, and compassion to a negative political environment (BOHN 2017, 18). Yet mother candidates may face criticism from voters and opponents for sacrificing their family for politics or for appearing “too motherly,” which is often viewed as a weakness (BOHN 2017, 17; CAMPBELL and CHILDS 2017, 27). Father candidates do not seem to be as negatively affected by parenthood as mother candidates (CAMPBELL and CHILDS 2017; THOMAS and LAMBERT 2017). While municipal politics is often viewed as more family-friendly, largely due to the fact that town hall is closer to home (e.g. ARIF 2014), findings from this study suggest that community connections fostered by being a parent form a central part of many women’s motivation and qualifications to run for local government. One respondent’s comment captures this sentiment:

I think having a family provides great insight into your local community. However, although I considered running for town council in earlier years, I am glad that I waited until my children were adults, as it is important to maintain work/life balance. Being a councillor is a very public position, and you have to be available for community concerns. I think that it would be difficult to do this job while having young children at home, as there are a lot of commitments in the evenings and weekends, combined with having heavy decisions on your mind.

In addition to relaying how family does (not) impact their political life, almost one in five women (18%) described how having a family had positively affected their work in government and vice versa. These women used their family experiences to make decisions for the betterment of other families in the community while using their council work to set a positive example for their children. The research by Stalsburg and Kleinberg on the self-presentation of family in Congressional races found that being a mother can be an asset under certain circumstances; for example, Sarah Palin and her “Mama Grizzlies” (2016,

286). The stereotypes associated with motherhood, such as the ability to make personal sacrifices for the good of others, are used by some women as evidence of their qualifications for elected government. This discourse is reminiscent of Gilligan's ethics of care (1982) or Ruddick's maternal thinking (1995). One woman wrote that "My work takes some time away from family but I also feel it sets an example of the importance of service for my children," while another similarly stated that "my oldest grandchildren are girls and they're pretty impressed that Grandma is the mayor." Others also argued that municipal councils need the perspectives of younger women with children. "Our community needs a young mother to represent that demographic within our community," said one woman. "It is about breaking down barriers for families and being a voice for women in our community."

The sentiments expressed by female respondents reinforce the tradition of female political activism in Canada. Historically, women have used their social position as mothers and wives in order to enter the public sphere and advocate for social and political change (WILTON 2000). Briggs' study of women in local government points to the networking women do at schools and in grocery stores (2000, 79). Similarly, van Assendelft points to women councillors and mayors as "joiners" who were already deeply engaged in their communities through civic, religious and children's organizations (2014, 205). Our findings demonstrate that maternal and familial roles continue to provide a way for women to enter public life as well as shape their participation. The finding reflects the complexity of women's roles in political life and the contradictions that emerge from their personal and public roles. While many women value their family roles and see these roles as providing them access to the political sphere, it is still limiting for women to have their political participation interpreted through their status as mothers.

The second motivation for women to enter local politics was community relations. The female respondents framed their candidacies as a service to the community or a way of giving back. When the respondents were asked to rank their motivations to run for office, women listed community-based answers the highest, with an interest in their community and the desire to serve the community ranked as either a 4 or 5 (out of 5) among 93% and 96%, respectively. One woman discussed the obligation she felt toward community members after they supported her family through a difficult time:

In 2005, my husband was diagnosed with terminal cancer. This community rallied around us and helped us complete our harvest and someone was always calling [and] asking what they could do to help. The following year many people from the community came to help my children and I get ready

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for a Farm Auction Sale. I had a huge debt to this community so I felt this was one was I could ‘give back’!

The survey results also challenge the assumption that municipal office acts as a stepping stone to provincial/state or federal office. One woman claimed that “I have no political aspirations, I ran for council for the betterment of my village. I do not have any interest in politics or government.” Another woman professed not to be interested in provincial or federal affairs: “I never really followed government too closely. Really only interested in assisting at the grassroots level where I can see the differences made.” As van Assendelft notes, both city councillors and mayors in her study say that “the position of city council member is not a fertile breeding ground for higher office” (2014, 208), but rather that a common motivating factor was the desire to effect change in the community and solve problems (209). Similar to the women in this study, the women she interviewed liked to feel that they were making a difference and felt that they could do so at the level of local government. Briggs’ research further supports these findings. She determines that although local government has few formal powers, “as the only political forum [the councils] provide the only means of articulating an agenda” (2000, 76).

Considering our respondents’ repeated emphasis on community, it is not surprising that a majority said they would not run for higher office: 52% said they would not run for the provincial legislature while 78% would not seek a seat in the federal House of Commons. Many participants cited community as a major factor missing at other levels of government. One of them reflected:

I love the work done at the municipal level and the amazing involvement this level of government has with the lives of my fellow citizens. So many of the big issues that face our residents and our world will actually be dealt with at this level of government and this is where I see myself being the most effective and most enjoying what I do.”

These sentiments were echoed by another woman’s comment that “municipal government enables you to have an impact on community. I feel that perhaps in the provincial/federal arenas, your impact becomes less and more clouded by bureaucracy.”

When the participants were asked if they would consider running for local government again, half definitely would and 40% would consider it, for a combined total of 90%. Of the remaining 10% who would not run again, 56% claimed it was because they planned to retire from politics altogether. These

statistics suggest that once women enter local politics, most do not leave council because of negative work challenges nor do they do so to pursue higher office. They feel that they can best impact their communities through local politics.

The survey results reflect a conception of federal and provincial politics and government as undesirable and distinct from local politics. Women municipal politicians frame their political participation as grassroots and effective and, as such, different from provincial or federal politics. The responses also suggest that the local level of government is not the bridge into higher levels of government, but rather the position that reflects the political motivations of the individual, perhaps explaining why the percentage of women at each level of politics in Canada is so similar.

Conclusion

The survey of 198 women serving in local government in Alberta provides insights into why women choose to participate in local politics and the importance of place for their decisions, both in terms of the political climate in Alberta and their community connections. Although the existing research points to the central role that family considerations have on women's decision to run for office, our findings suggest that the reality for women in local government is more complex. The family responsibilities of the respondents can be beneficial and represent a way into local politics, while also being a barrier to their participation at different points in their lives. The centrality of maternal identity and family to community reflects the history of female activism in Alberta and Canada. More research would be valuable to determine if these experiences occur in large urban centres and other parts of the country to the same extent. The most significant theme emerging from our research is the central importance of their communities to the decisions of these women to run for office. Their connection and commitment to their local communities not only encouraged them to consider public service, but also, more than any other factor, influenced their decision to serve at the local level.

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