Black Female Politicians

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Black female politicians are elected or appointed to offices to represent diverse groups of people. Political campaigns require organizing, influencing and decision making which are characteristics of leadership. Black females who wished to enter into the political arena were aided by the presidential campaign of Shirley Chisolm. Although Chisolm broke through barriers which afforded all minorities the realistic opportunity to seek public office, the task has several challenges and obstacles which impede the opportunity to effectively lead the public.

**The Literature**

Philpot, T. S., & Walton, H. (2007). One of our own: Black female candidates and the voters who support them: *American Journal of Political Science, 51*(1), 49-62.

The study used a qualitative method of inquiry in which an experiment was conducted with the proposed hypothesis being African-Americans would support black female candidates at a higher rate if they demonstrated a sense of linked fate. Additionally, black women who supported the black feminist movement were even more likely to support a black female candidate. Lastly, it was expected that white women who were considered gender conscious would support a black female candidate. The research questions which were asked in the study were why are there so few black females elected officials? Does race and gender help or hurt the black female candidate? The overarching question presented in the study was who the supporters of black female candidates are? To collect data which would help explain why so few black females are elected to public office the study employed three methods of data retrieval. Philpot and Walton (2007) used national survey data, experimental data, and local aggregate election data to test the hypothesis.

**Support for Topic**

The literature provided data and alternate perspectives as to who support black female candidates and why. The study identified black women voters as the core supporters of black female candidates. Philpot and Walton (2007) concluded the “Year of the Woman” in 1992 saw more females run and support other females. The candidates who were strong attracted the crossover women and men during the election. The study supported the influence which black female politicians have had on mobilizing and engaging other females.

**Advance the Research Topic**

More black females are entering and winning political races. The information contained in the article could help target the core supporters and strategically plan to engage the groups who are open to conversion. Reluctance of white voters to support black candidates still is an issue to black candidates. Many black females have developed a black group consciousness. The literature reiterated women are misrepresented in holding elected positions. The subject of race and gender offered a unique perspective for black female politicians. Philpot and Walton (2007) proposed black women were marginally included in the Civil Rights movement because of the male leaders who considered women issues as secondary matters. A black female consciousness has evolved because of black women becoming united after being disregarded by both black males and white females.

Meyer, C. B., & Woodard, J. D. (2017). It’s not race, it’s politics! A natural experiment examining the influence of race in electoral politics. *Social Science Quarterly, 98*(1), 120-131.

The study is a natural experiment which examined the 2014 South Carolina Senate Race. The study was conducted to determine if race or politics influence the voting preference of white voters. The possibility of racial resentment was presented as a factor for white voters who can vote for a black candidate when there is minor difference in the ideology of the candidates. Meyer and Woodward (2017) exclaimed the study paired two candidates from the same political party with the only significant difference being race. The findings of the study concluded there was not a preference for racially resentful voters to support a white republican over an African-American republican. If racial resentfulness does not decide the selection of the candidate of choice, Meyer and Woodward (2017) concluded previous studies may have overlooked the impact of politics and political parties as a factor in voter support. The study acknowledges the limitations of one experiment and cautioned against generalizations on voter preference based on the study.

**Support for Topic**

The study concentrated on the racial and political impact of the natural experiment. The article does not identify black female’s candidates; however, it does address race and political affiliation which are components of black female politicians and their environment. The study offered a contrast to the literature reviewed and should be viewed from a perspective of balance. A scholar should be hesitant to adopt a study which does not present limitations and critical observations which may not support the position of the study.

**Advance the Research Topic**

I disagree with the findings presented by Meyer and Woodward (2017) concerning the support of racially resentful voters for candidates of similar political parties. The data presented in the study does indicate a need for further investigation into the voter preference of resentful voters. To accept the theory presented in the study would imply a black female republican should be able to receive support from white males. Ward (2017) reported Ludmya “Mia” Love was the first black female Republican elected to congress in 2015.

Ward, O. (2017). Intersectionality and press coverage of political campaigns: Representations of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic female candidates at the U.K. general election. *The International Journal of Press/Politics, 22*(1), 43-66. 10.1177/1940161216673195

In 2010 the British House of Commons experienced an influx of female, minority candidates. Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) women in British politics received scrutiny by the press on their qualifications and ability to lead. The study focused on race and gender of politicians and the sexist coverage by the media. The case study employed a quantitative content analysis of national newspaper coverage. Ward (2017) recounted the events of the 2010 U.K. general election with an intersectional framework to analyze the impact of race and gender on the content of press coverage. The aspects for examining the media coverage included tone, quantity, and the female candidates gender and race. The study concluded there was a gender gap in coverage of females during and between elections. The hypothesis presented by Ward (2017) declared: BAME candidates would receive more coverage by the press than comparable candidates. The negative tone of the coverage shows a difference in treatment of the candidates. Ward (2017) sustained in the United States African-Americans received more negative coverage than their white competitor.

**Support for Topic**

Items of note in the study are the findings that minority women received more negative press than white men, minority men, and white female. The disparaging conduct of the press indicates a bias use of the media to portray minority female candidates in a negative view. In the study the candidates were sampled from four different groups. Ward (2017) emphasized a detailed matching strategy was used and the data was collected by a quantitative content analysis. The study supports the obstacles that exist for female minority candidates in the quest to become elected officials.

**Advance the Research Topic**

The information contained in the study could help female black candidates who experience unfair media coverage from the press. The media framing of candidates can be used to introduce candidates to potential supporters; however, the negative tone would likely harm the candidate’s and image. The intersectional approach of gender and race as it applies to black females requires further study. As political parties embrace diversity as a means to entice more supporters, a thorough understanding of the media and the role it performs in shaping public perception would be advisable.

Brookman, D. E. (2013). Black politicians are more intrinsically motivated to advance blacks interests: A field experiment manipulating political incentives. *American Journal of Political Science, 57*(3), 521-536. 10.1111/ajps.12018

The field experiment collected data on elected politicians and their willingness to advance the interest of represented groups solely for intrinsic reasons. Previous studies offered evidence that politicians provided greater representation to groups which shared similar characteristics be it age, gender, or race. The field experiment examined the behavior of politicians when the incentives to represent followers was reduced. Brookman (2013) explained that black politicians represented groups who were of little political value to the politician. The theory offered contradicts the descriptive representation studies which suggest politicians support groups and causes which reflect the personal preference of the politician. Bookman (2013) presented a hypothesis which stated: “while the extrinsic motivation hypothesis that black legislators perceive greater extrinsic incentives to advance black interest” (p. 523). The political consequences associated with the actions of the politician help to explain if the motivation is purely intrinsic. The experiment was designed to observe the behavior of the politician when electoral incentives were reduced. Bookman (2013) drew inference that black politicians were not as motivated by the receipt of extrinsic rewards.

**Support for Topic**

The study provided information on the motivational aspect of blacks in politics. It can be generalized that the intrinsic incentive to serve groups is not influenced by reciprocal rewards. Females are motivated and engaged in politics for assorted reasons. The experiment would support the nurturing aspect of women and the caring for the welfare of the community would be a natural progression in my estimation.

**Advance the Research Topic**

The experiment data can be used to support the motivation of why black females may wish to enter politics. When the motivation to hold a political office is of an intrinsic nature, the motivation to commit unethical behaviors dissipates. The results of the experiment confirmed that nonblack politicians were less likely to respond to request from outside of their district. The limitations of the experiment included the geographic makeup of politician’s district. Black female politicians could incorporate the strategies of the experiment into their campaign to support their objective to serve people without incentives. The decision on who to serve and for what reasons can be a political tool to advance the popularity of the candidate which would suggest that there exists an extrinsic motivation for responding to out of district request for assistance.

Zemojtel-Piotrowska, M. A., Marganski, A., & Baran, T. (2017). Corruption and sexual scandal: The importance of politician gender. *Anales De Psicologia, 33*(1), 133-141. 10.6018/analesps.32.3.229171

Political scandals can have far reaching consequences on the political figure. The public outrage associated with unethical or immoral acts can derail a political campaign and career. Women are affected differently than men in the public arena of political scandals. The study by Zemojtel-Piotrowska, Marganski, and Baran (2017) proposed two theories as to why men and women differ on the impact of political scandals. The expectancy violation theory explains the expectations that people have about the moral behavior of others. The shifting standards theory predicts how an act could be assessed depending on the personal characteristics of the offender. Gender stereotypes of females in political offices also impact the perceived perception of the offender. Zemojtel-Piotrowska, Marganski, and Baran (2017) implied women are perceived as being honest which could lead to higher standards imposed on women. The purpose of the study was to examine whether the perception politicians involved in scandals differed depending on gender. The study began with a pilot study to assess the perception of scandalous situations as interpreted by community members. A second pre-test was conducted to be used as a manipulation check. The final study conducted by Zemojtel-Piotrowska, Marganski, and Baran (2017) contained a questionnaire which assessed the attitude about the capabilities of women in politics.

**Support for Topic**

The study provided information which connected the politicians gender to harsher judgement by the public for scandalous behavior. With women being viewed differently than men for similar behaviors, there is a possibility that women would not receive equal treatment for inappropriate behavior. Black women would encounter the stereotype of being a woman along with the stereotypes associated with being black. These obstacles would contribute to the lack of black females who hold elected positions.

**Advance the Research Topic**

The study could provide information which would allow black female candidates to survive a scandal with the same possibilities as men. Although women are viewed with a halo effect, they can experience productive careers after an unfortunate scandal. The results of the study support the theory that women are held to higher ethical standards than men which explains the publics harsh feeling of women involved in political scandals.

**Conclusions**

The amount of material addressing black females in politics was marginal. Of the women who have entered politics to serve their communities, little scholarly information is readily available. Maxine Waters and Condoleezza Rice are two politicians who have contributed to the political arena without receiving academic acknowledgement. To advance the cause of black females who wish to enter politics more scholarly research would aid the cause.

Reference

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