

“Doubly Bound” Revisited: The Participatory  
Effects of Racial and Gender Descriptive  
Representation on the Politics of Black Women \*

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### Abstract

Our paper will build on the existing research and break new ground by identifying the conditions under which descriptive representation of race and gender might stimulate greater political interest, efficacy, and participation among constituents. We will explore the possible effects in these domains of individuals being descriptively represented by race, gender, and both race and gender together, through multiple methods and in the context of the run-up to the 2008 presidential race. Few works compare the effects on individuals of seeing descriptive representatives of their groups across the domains of race and gender, and fewer explicitly take into account the connections between these domains. Following the lead of feminist theorists and empiricists, we do not simply treat race and gender as separate, but as intersectional. We hypothesize that descriptive representation of both race and gender matters to individuals, and expect to find that people are most participatory, feel most efficacious, and exhibit the most interest and trust in government and politics when they are descriptively represented along both race and gender lines. Our findings, however, are much more complex, revealing few of the effects we expected and several that we did not expect.

The 2008 Democratic Presidential primary pitting Senator Barack Obama against Senator Hillary Clinton challenges scholars to ask whether the representation of black and/or female candidates has political implications for individuals with overlapping identities. Does being descriptively represented by black or women leaders have disparate effects on the participation of black women in American politics? What are the effects, if any, for white women, black men, and white men? Under what conditions does being descriptively represented by blacks and/or women leaders mobilize individuals with overlapping and intersecting identities to participate in politics, to engage more with politics and government, or to ascribe greater legitimacy to the government or efficacy to oneself?

In this article, we attempt to answer these two important questions by examining the ways in which descriptive representation stimulates political participation among different groups, particularly among those with intersecting identities of race and gender. In particular, we seek to examine what Hawkesworth (2003) calls “race-gender” effects and whether they matter for political participation, broadly defined. In total, we hope to further explore the possible participatory effects on individuals, particularly those with overlapping identities, of having or seeing descriptive repre-

sentatives in the context of the 2008 presidential race.

Current U.S. democracy is based on a liberal premise that posits the individual as the unit of analysis for representation, with the franchise extended almost-universally to adult citizens (excepting felons and the mentally-incompetent). This mode of democracy, which Americans vigorously defend and actively promote abroad, is a relatively recent, historically anomalous phenomenon. At the time of the writing of the Constitution, and for a long while after, it was generally assumed that husbands would represent the interests of wives, slave-owners would represent the interests of slaves, and only property-owners deserved the privilege (not right) to vote.

American history is rife with examples of political arrangements built to discriminate against certain groups (particularly based on race, ethnicity, gender, and class), thereby perpetuating unequal political power arrangements. Examples include poll taxes, literacy tests, grandfather clauses, political bosses and machine politics, and property, race, or sex qualifications for voting. In due course, these discriminatory laws and policies surrounding voting have been mostly legislated out of our state and national constitutions; Jacksonian-era reforms removed property qualifications, the 15th and 19th Amendments eliminated race- and sex-based qualifications, and the 1965 Voting Rights Act outlawed poll taxes, literacy tests, and other discriminatory policies and practices. This is not to say equality swiftly ensued once the laws changed. In particular, as Alexander Keyssar describes, the right to vote conferred upon freed slaves by the 15th Amendment in 1870 and the legal protections necessary to ensure access to the vote for blacks were separated by nearly a century of racism, intimidation, and violence (Keyssar, 2000; McDonagh, forthcoming). It is only within the last century that American public opinion has considered non-whites and women suitable as full political participants (and as the current Democratic presidential primaries have made clear, prejudices still linger on both counts).

With such a legacy of discrimination and exclusion, is there perhaps something

different about how representation works for whites than for blacks? For women than for men? And for women of color, in particular? Michael Dawson strongly suggests that the historical and long-lasting effects of slavery, discrimination, and segregation have created an African American politics that is different from that of whites, a politics that derives from a history and shared experience of being “behind the mule” (Dawson, 1994). The extraordinarily unified political behavior we observe among blacks, he contends, comes from a belief that “the primary imperative in black politics is to advance the political interests of African Americans as a racial group” (Ibid, 7), a premise he calls the “black utility heuristic” (Ibid, 10). He also suggests the principle could apply to other groups that have suffered from widespread discrimination (Ibid, footnote 3). Drawing from theory (Mansbridge, 1999; Phillips, 1995; Young, 1990) and recent empirical studies (Atkeson and Carrillo, 2007; Gay, 2001; Gay and Tate, 1998), we suggest that such a black utility heuristic may also operate in addition to or even in conjunction with something akin to a “female utility heuristic,” deriving from women’s shared historical experience of oppression and exclusion from politics. While such a female utility heuristic is clearly not as strong as Dawsons black utility heuristic (women do not vote together as a bloc in the same way blacks do), there is a consistent gender gap in American politics, and research has suggested that women show more interest in and knowledge of political campaigns and issues that involve women (Burns, 2001).

Within political science, we tend to assume that elected representatives represent the interests of constituents, and not necessarily their race or gender (unless the race and/or gender gives rise to different interests from the majority group). Indeed, much of the literature on descriptive representation focuses on its impact on substantive representation, particularly the representation of interests. Recently, however, scholars have begun to raise another set of questions about descriptive representation, looking to its impact on people rather than on policy. Several recent works ask, in effect, if descriptive representation promotes greater citizen participa-

tion, interest, knowledge, efficacy, or other forms of engagement with government and politics. The question is potentially radical: a positive finding may suggest that democratic legitimacy could be enhanced by paying attention to citizens and representatives race and gender a group-based focus rather than simply relying on the individualist assumptions underlying liberalism.

As this is still a new area of study, there is little agreement about how to operationalize the concepts involved. Previous studies have framed their inquiries in a variety of ways, alternatively investigating constituent contacting of elected officials (Gay, 2001, 2002), citizen civic participation in and around elections (Lawless, 2004; Burns, 2001), and voters feelings of external efficacy based on who holds office (Atkeson and Carrillo, 2007). Also, in this literature, studies consider race and gender separately.

In this paper, we will draw together these previous works across both race and gender, and attempt to make a contribution that synthesizes both sets of concerns. The central questions guiding this study are: do members of a historically-underrepresented group (in this country, that is, people who are not white males) respond differently to women or people of color as leaders? If so, is the result limited to race for non-whites and to gender for women, or does the experience of being part of a historically underrepresented group make white women more attentive to race and men of color more attentive to gender? What happens for women of color, whose historical legacy includes discrimination based on both race and gender? And do white men also seek, appreciate, and/or benefit from their descriptive representation (which is usually not visible as they are statistically and culturally the leadership “norm in the U.S.)? The broad impulse motivating this research is thus to find a way to more precisely specify the effects of descriptive representation on both in-group and out-group members, and to compare these effects across the domains of race, gender, and ethnicity.

We conceive of this paper as only one step in a larger project investigating the

questions raised and explored here. In this paper, we use data from the cumulative data file of the NES between years 1992 and 2002 to explore possible effects of descriptive representation on citizen participation, interest in and engagement with politics, and feelings of efficacy, trust in government and officials, and governmental legitimacy. As a second phase, we plan to expand the project to study this years Democratic presidential primaries, and to look in particular at black womens behavior, where most must decide whether to support a black man (Obama) or a white woman (Clinton). This years presidential race provides a perfect natural experiment to help us further examine questions of race, gender, intersectionality, and descriptive representation. After making the most of the NES data presented here, we will turn briefly to this question in the Discussion section, and pursue it further in a later phase of the project.

## **Intersectionality and Descriptive Representation**

Jane Mansbridge, in formulating a theoretical argument for descriptive representation (where “blacks represent blacks and women represent women,” Mansbridge (1999), with the assumption applying to other under-represented groups), wrote there are many reasons why “disadvantaged groups may want to be represented by... individuals who in their own backgrounds mirror some of the more frequent experiences and outward manifestations of belonging to the disadvantaged group” (Ibid, 2). She describes these positive functions of descriptive representation as “adequate communication in contexts of mistrust,... innovative thinking in contexts of uncrystalized, not fully articulated, interests [wherein] descriptive representation enhances the substantive representation of interests creating a social meaning of ability to rule for members of a group in historical contexts where that ability has been seriously questioned, and ... increasing the polity’s de facto legitimacy in contexts of past discrimination” (Ibid). Mansbridge’s contentions raise the question of whether members of disadvantaged groups respond differently to representatives

who are versus those who are not part their own gender, racial, or ethnic groups.

Both before and after Mansbridges framing of some possible differences, other scholars have posed and attempted to answer this same basic question for effects from race, ethnicity, and gender. Their forays into the effects of what Dolan (2006) termed “symbolic mobilization” - the effects of seeing descriptive representatives in or running for office set the stage for our investigation. Here we briefly summarize some of the most relevant works for gender and race/ethnicity, briefly followed by some notes on intersectionality (because of course gender and race/ethnicity are overlapping and intersectional categories).

Decades of data make it look as if women care less about and participate in politics less than men. While women vote at rates equal to or even exceeding mens rates (Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Jamieson, 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993), voting is an anomalous form of participation (Verba, 1995; Skocpol and Fiorina, 1999). It is relatively low-cost, carries few tangible benefits, and is not a good predictor of other forms of participation. In most of these other forms, men predominate. Men give money to campaigns more often, and in higher amounts (Burns, 2001; Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Brown and Wilcox, 1995; Francia, 2003). Despite logging more paid hours in the labor force, men are more likely than women to serve on a local governing board (Burns, 2001). Men are significantly more likely to contact their elected representative to express a policy opinion or ask for service, and are more likely to join organizations that take stands in politics (Ibid). And men are much more likely to run for office themselves. Men continue to dominate electoral politics as candidates and incumbents (Lawless and Fox, 2005; Moncrief and Jewell, 2001). Although women constitute 51% of the U.S. population, they make up only 16% of Congress, 24% of state legislatures, 13% of big city mayors, 18% of state governors, and 11% of the Supreme Court (CAWP, 2007). Men still hold, on average, over three-quarters of all legislative seats nationally, and have been 100% of our presidents. Although the gender differences in political participation for ordinary citizens

are not huge, they are meaningful and persistent (Burns, 2001).

Until recently, women have tended to receive less education - an inequality that has actually reversed in the past few decades, with more women than men now graduating from college (Bureau, 2006). Despite women's educational gains, however, the gender difference in political activity endures, leading some to speculate on the psychological factors involved. In contrast to men, women are socialized from infancy to believe they should prefer the private to the public sphere (Williams, 2000; Valian, 1999; Phillips, 1991; Bem, 1988; Sapiro, 1983; Duverger, 1955).

Women see few women in office and therefore may believe, consciously or not, that politics is not for them (Atkeson and Carrillo, 2007; Burns, 2001; Kahn, 1996; Phillips, 1991; Sapiro, 1983). At the same time, women tend to have lower incomes than men due to a persistent wage gap and greater family care responsibilities, and therefore have fewer of the resources that stimulate political interest and participation (Williams, 2000; Burns, 2001; Waldfogel, 1994; Blau and Kahn, 2000).

Interestingly, the participation and political knowledge gaps appear to shrink or even disappear where women see other women participating in politics (Burns, 2001, chap 13). In states with no female Senator (or Senate candidate), for instance, 65% of men and only 51% of women can name one Senator. However, in states with a female Senator or female candidate for Senator, 75% of men and 79% of women can name a Senator (Ibid, 343). In terms of efficacy, Atkeson and Carrillo (2007) find significant effects on women's sense of external efficacy of having female officials represent their Congressional districts, but this does not tell us much about these women's citizen political activity. Haynes (1998) finds significant effects on women's participation of having a female Member of Congress (MC). Moreover, having a female candidate for high political office makes women (but not men) significantly more likely to: express political interest and interest in the campaign, follow the campaign in the media, express likes and dislikes about the major-party candidates for the House (whether or not these are women), and say they are "very interested" in

a campaign (Burns, 2001, 347-8). Women also seem to gain more politically-relevant skills in all-female organizations, whether political, social, or religious (Ibid, Chapter 9).

Recent research thus suggests that perhaps politics looks like a “mans game” because it previously has been a mans game: a vicious cycle. Media representations of women in positions of power, such as female Senators or Senate candidates, seem to have the power to disrupt the cycle and increase womens interest in and engagement with politics. The data suggest that as more women enter politics as candidates and elected office-holders, they may raise the level of womens political participation as citizens.

Yet not all studies agree that descriptive representation of gender has these effects. In the most comprehensive test of this hypothesis thus far for women, Dolan (2006) uses ANES survey data from 1990 to 2004, and finds no effects on female citizens mobilizing attitudes or behaviors of seeing more female candidates. Likewise, using pooled ANES data from 1980 to 1998, Lawless (2004) finds little evidence of symbolic effects from womens presence in Congress. In reconciling these null findings with the positive findings, one possibility is that descriptive representation increases citizen efficacy, but perhaps not participation or mobilization. Another possibility is that the ANES instruments, which are of course not specifically tailored to address these questions, do not contain the proper measures to test for the effects of interest (although Haynes 1998 did find that descriptive representation of gender led to greater participation of female citizens, using pooled ANES data).

Unfortunately, many studies have also investigated the impact of race/ethnicity on political participation separately (e.g. (Griffin and Keane, 2006; Verba, 1995; Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Uhlaner and Kiewiet, 1989; Leighley and Vedlitz, 1999; Leighley, 1995) for overviews of these and other works). These studies have often found effects similar to those described above for gender, suggesting that the underlying factor is not demographics, but relative powerlessness. For instance, using GSS

survey data, Bobo and Gilliam (1990) find large effects of “black empowerment” (as measured by the presence of a black mayor) on blacks political participation, but their operationalization of the measures was admittedly crude. Similarly, Barreto, Segura, and Woods (2004) found that residing in a majority-Latino district “ultimately has a positive effect on the propensity of Latino voters to turnout” (65). Other studies of Latinos and Asian-Americans (and across subgroups of each) find effects of group consciousness on political participation (Uhlener and Kiewiet, 1989; Stokes, 2003), suggesting (indirectly) that descriptive representation may be important to these groups as well. In a study not drawn from U.S. politics, Bahry et al (2005) investigated the role of ethnicity in creating trust among strangers in Russia.

Kaufmann (2003) summarizes the “empowerment” literature as concluding “that enhanced sociopolitical engagement of black voters results when blacks wield significant power in the city” (108). She explains: “The empowerment thesis is a social-psychological theory of group behavior and maintains that group cohesiveness and a heightened degree of group consciousness makes blacks, in particular, likely to experience a psychological response from their in-group empowerment” (Ibid).

This idea of empowerment is somewhat different than, but still compatible with, Dawsons theory of a “black utility heuristic,” as described earlier. Dawsons starting point is that “In African Americans historical experience, life chances have been linked to the ascriptive feature of race in all spheres of life” (Dawson, 1994, 56). Dawson draws on Morris description of the “tripartite system of domination” (Ibid, 49) to describe briefly but powerfully how “social segregation, economic subjugation, and political disenfranchisement” (Ibid) combined to form both the high degree of political unity noted among blacks and the close connections between class and racial group membership. The powerful weight of the past in continuing to shape the lives of black individuals, and the “transmission of history” (Ibid, 67) through families, communities, and other black institutions, particularly the black church, creates a strong connection between individual and collective interests. Thus, as Dawson puts

it, “as long as African Americans continue to believe that their lives are to a large degree determined by what happens to the group as a whole, I would expect African Americans perceptions of racial group interests to be an important component of the way individual blacks go about evaluating policies, parties, and candidates” (Ibid, 57). The idea here is not that blacks are somehow different from whites in the way self-interest functions in how they think about politics its just that blacks have this additional heuristic for individuals to draw upon, as a proxy for their own interests (which has historically been and still continues to be the case). Dawsons focus is on individual political behavior; the point is that, as he demonstrates in Chapter 4, “throughout the 1980s, individual beliefs and perceptions constituted a firm basis for relatively unified group political behavior” (Ibid, 88).

However, not all studies find such strong effects based on in-group identification. In some cases, it seems that there are more significant effects for the out-group; Gay (2001) finds that “the election of blacks to Congress negatively affects white political involvement and only rarely increases political engagement among African Americans (Gay, 2001, 589). Or perhaps certain racial, ethnic, or gender groups place differing values on descriptive representation, as suggested by Gay (2002). In analyzing NES data from 1980 to 1998, Gay (2002) found that whites placed a greater value on descriptive representation than did African Americans, but African Americans were much more likely to contact a black than a white representative. Griffin and Keane (2006) challenges us to look at ideological subgroups of blacks, finding descriptive representation effects only for ideologically-aligned subgroups (that is, the effects only appear for liberal black Democrats if they are represented by liberal black Democratic representatives).

In general, then, there seems to be a body of evidence suggesting that there are some descriptive representation effects worth investigating further - although the nature and extent of such effects are still not clear. In addition to specifying whether there are such effects, and what they are, one of the most interesting (and

least addressed) questions remains: from where might such effects come?

Implicit and explicit racial cues relating to descriptive representation are frequently used by politicians, both white and black. Jesse Helms (R-South Carolina) and George H.W. Bush, among other white political leaders, have successfully used negative images of blacks to invoke white racial resentment (Mendelberg, 2001). And, lest it is not clear that whites too have a sense of racial identity despite being the “norm” group, a 2006 study found that 74% of white Americans interviewed said that their racial identity was important (Press, N.d.). Black politicians, on the other hand, often spread messages designed to create positive in-group identification among blacks. Shirley Chisholm, in her 1972 presidential run, constantly drew attention to the fact that she was a descriptive representation for both blacks and women (Lynch, 2005). And more recently, while campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination in New Hampshire the other day, Barack Obama noted, “There are not too many people who look like me in New Hampshire,” to vast applause from the crowd. Obama, interestingly, cites in his book another prominent black politician whose descriptive representation provided hope and inspiration for the black community of Chicagos South Side in the mid-1980s: Harold Washington. Observing the feelings evoked in blacks by Washingtons election as mayor, Obama concluded that Washington “held out an offer of collective redemption” (MacFarquhar, 2007) - a phrase that strongly suggests important effects of descriptive representation.

Although we have mostly discussed race and gender separately (following the trend of the literatures), there are of course overlapping categories, and the trends we have thus far documented and questioned may be complicated by intersectionality effects. White women, for instance, derive racial privilege in our society from belonging to the dominant racial/ethnic group, but are disadvantaged economically, socially, and perhaps politically by their gender. Likewise, black men are disadvantaged by their race, but in some ways (such as in income), advantaged relative to women generally. What happens with black women and other women of color?

Contemporary feminist writings, particularly from women of color, speak to the power of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Harris, 1990; Harris-Lacewell, 2005; Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1981). Inequalities, when layered, are not additive but multiplicative. Therefore, studying such inequalities individually misses a large part of the story. As Mary Hawkesworth demonstrated (Hawkesworth, 2003), U.S. Congresswomen of color undergo distinctive marginalization based on a process of “racing-gendering” that is about neither race nor gender alone. Previous studies of women in legislatures missed this process, she explains, because the literature has not considered that political institutions themselves produce and reproduce raced/gendered experiences. Only by focusing her lens on the interaction between racing and gendering in the 1996 welfare reform debates was Hawkesworth able to illuminate the particular forces operating to render invisible the Congresswomen of color, along with their work and policy priorities.

Such intersectionality is often prohibitively difficult to study. Each time we add in an axis of inequality (race, class, education, gender, religion, etc.), we divide our sample, reducing the amount of data available to draw conclusions. Employing interaction terms requires collecting yet more data; analyzing the intersection of all these types of inequalities would necessitate intensive data collection on groups notoriously difficult and expensive to study (the homeless, say, or small populations like disabled Latinas). Even after overcoming these hurdles, analysis of survey or roll-call vote data - and statistical methods more generally - can take us only so far. Dealing seriously with the complexities of intersecting identities necessarily triggers data difficulties like endogeneity, collinearity, and multiple causation. Ideally, projects that study intersectionality should pair survey data with in-depth interviews, if possible. For this project, we plan to add in interviews in a later phase of research.

Overall, then, the literature suggests that there may be effects from descriptive representation, but we are still not sure what these effects might be, and they may differ across race, ethnicity and gender. Such effects could be in the area of

participation (as in, citizens who are descriptively represented along race and/or gender lines may be more active in elections or politics more generally), they may be in the area of interest in and knowledge about politics (citizens who are descriptively represented along race and/or gender lines may be more interested in and/or knowledgeable about politics and elections), or they could show up in the area of efficacy, legitimacy, and trust in government (citizens who are descriptively represented along race and/or gender lines may feel more efficacious, may trust the government or Congress more, or may ascribe greater legitimacy to the government). This study examines these three areas as an attempt to fill in some of the holes in the literature.

## Data and Measures

To test the significance of race and gender representation in Congress on constituents trust in governmental institutions, participation, and interest in politics, we use data from the cumulative data file of the American National Election Studies (ANES) between 1992 and 2002. The cumulative data file merges into a single data file cases and variables from each of the biennial ANES conducted since 1948. Relying on multiple surveys within the cumulative data file not only increases the number of black women respondents, but it also increases the number of respondents represented by African American House members.

We incorporate group-specific as well as cross-group analysis to explore the effects of descriptive representation on different subgroups of constituents, particularly black women, in the electoral jurisdictions members of Congress (MCs) represent by gender and race. Our central empirical question is to examine the extent to which racial and gender descriptive representation matters for constituents with overlapping racial and gender identities. Given the consistency of questions and the increasing number of respondents sampled each election year, the ANES cumulative data file provides an opportunity to estimate the effects of racial and gender descriptive representation on constituent attitudes within and across groups, particularly indi-

viduals with intersecting identities.

More specifically, we compare black women constituents to black men, white men, and white women under different forms of racial and/or gender descriptive representation. Between 1992 and 2002, twelve hundred fifty two (1252) respondents self-identified as black in the ANES. Of these black respondents, 766 were black women. Moreover, 8,033 respondents self-identified as white, of which 4,311 are white women. Using information available from political almanacs (Martin 2001), we identify the number of respondents, by race and gender, represented by black, women, and black women members of Congress at the time of the ANES interview.

Table 1 illustrates the number and percentage of respondents represented by black, women, and black women MCs. Approximately 30 percent of black men and 37 percent of black women are represented by black members of Congress. About 3 percent of white men and women are represented by blacks. In terms of women representatives, 8 percent of black men and 11 percent of black women are represented by women. Ten percent of white men and 8 percent of white women are represented by women. Finally, 3 percent of black men and 6 percent of black women are represented by black women MCs. Less than 1 percent of white men and women are represented by black women MCs.

Table 1: Respondents Represented by Black, Women, and White MCs

	Black MCs	Women MCs	Black Women MCs	White MCs
Black Men	147 (30.24%)	41 (8.43%)	15 (3.08%)	283 (38.23%)
Black Women	282 (36.81%)	88 (11.49%)	49 (6.40%)	347 (45.30%)
White Men	156 (3.68%)	429 (10.18%)	40 (0.94%)	3615 (85.26%)
White Women	181 (3.66%)	433 (8.75%)	30 (0.61%)	4303 (86.98%)

Numbers in parenthesis represent the percentage within each demographic group represented by black, women, black women, and white MCs

The ANES provides a number of items to assess respondents trust and efficacy

in governmental institutions, participation, and interest in politics. Of particular interest in this research project is the degree to which racial and gender descriptive representation increases political efficacy, participation, and interest among constituents with similar overlapping racial and gender identities. Two survey items assess levels of trust and political efficacy: (1) “How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?” (2) “People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.” Responses to *Gov’t Trust* were summarized on a four point scale ranging from “none of the time” to “just about always.” In addition *PeopleSay* is scored as a binary measure.

Secondly, we consider the effects of racial and gender descriptive representation on political engagement and participation. The ANES does not provide the best engagement items in the years 1992 and 2002. However, we use two ANES items to measure political engagement and participation: (1) “Did respondent display candidate button/sticker during the campaign.” (2) “Does the respondent discuss politics with family and friends.” Both measures of political engagement and participation are scaled as binary. In terms of political interest, one ANES item measures interest in politics: “Would you say you follow what’s going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?”

The ANES also includes data on respondents’ demographic characteristics, which include age, educational attainment, family income, southern residence, party affiliation, and ideology. Prior research on political participation and political trust has shown the influence of these factors on measures of trust and congressional approval (Verba, 1995; Gay, 2001, 2002; Griffin and Keane, 2006).

## **Methodological Issues and Multiple Imputation**

Public opinion surveys are often hampered by incomplete data due to item non-response. This research project is no exception to this general trend. Although per-item rates of missingness are low among whites, many black respondents within

the ANES failed to provide answers to important questions of interest. For example, many African American respondents did not provide their ideological orientation. Of particular note is the 49 percent of black women and 40 percent of black men who did offer an ideological orientation compared to 22.7 percent of white men and 30 percent of white women. Political scientists have typically relied on listwise deletion, which results in discarding observations with missing data on both explanatory and dependent variables. The loss of such valuable information leads to selection bias.

However, several statisticians and methodologists have shown repeatedly that multiple imputation corrects for the inefficiency and bias that results from listwise deletion (King et al. 2001). According to King et al. (2001), “multiple imputation involves imputing  $m$  values for each missing item and creating  $m$  completed datasets” (King 2001, 53). Across these completed data sets, the method uses the observed data to predict missing data values and assumes that the missing data is a function of the measured variables.

We use *amelia* (King et al. 2001) to impute missing data. We imputed five datasets based on an array of variables, which included all the variables used in the subsequent statistical analysis, to predict the pattern of missingness. Each dataset was then analyzed using various statistical models to understand the effects of racial and gender descriptive representation on political trust and efficacy, participation, and political interest. The statistical results discussed in the proceeding tables are the combined results across all five datasets.

## **Intersectionality and the MC-Constituent Relationship**

Figures 1-5 present separately the different means of several of our dependent variables for respondents of both races, both genders, and variously descriptively represented by MCs. Although looking at means of the different dependent variables are not an ideal test, as we are not able to hold constant other variables such as party, income, education, and geographical region, we still believe that the differences

reported here are of use in our analysis. The sometimes-large differences within subgroups can give us indications of movement, even when low-n problems render our regression results insignificant. While we do not take these means as proof of anything, they are an important and intriguing first step in the analysis.

Figure 1, displaying the means for an index of efficacy (scaled 0-100), shows an intriguing increase in efficacy for white men represented by women MCs (49.66 as opposed to a score of 43.73 for white men represented by male MCs). The same increase can be seen on a somewhat smaller scale for white women and black men, although interestingly not for black women. Black women, whose efficacy scores are the lowest of all our subgroups, for every representational situation, exhibit decreased efficacy when represented by female MCs and black female MCs.

Figure 1: Political Efficacy

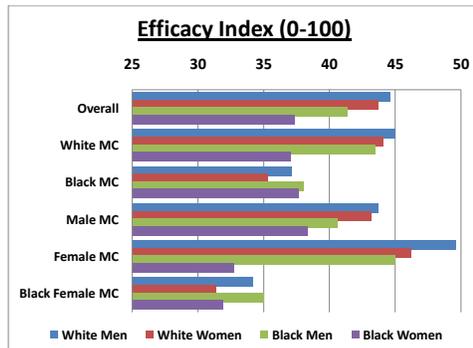


Figure 2: Discuss Politics

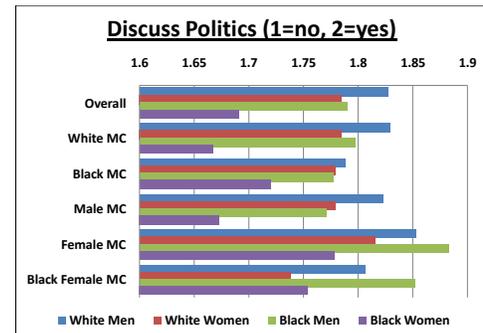


Figure 3: Political Information

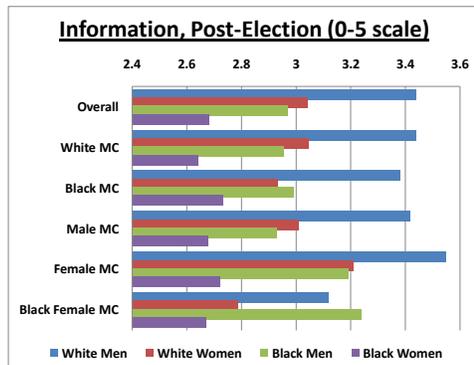


Figure 4: Political Interest

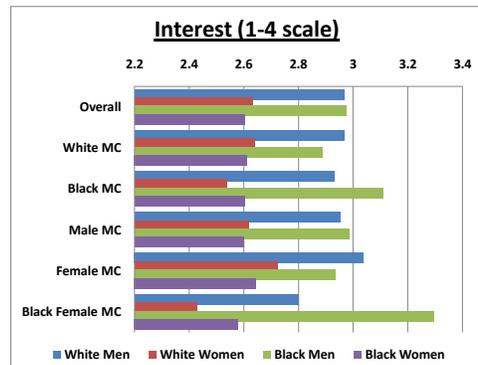


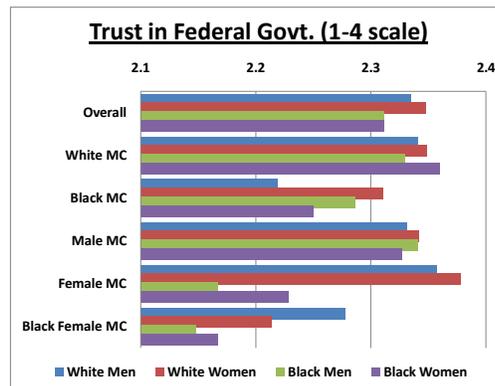
Figure 2 displays means across the various subgroups for whether the respondent discussed politics with friends, family, or acquaintances in the lead-up to the election. The means are mostly stagnant for white men and white women, with a slight increase for those represented by female MCs. This jump is even larger for black men and women, who also seem to discuss politics somewhat more if represented by black female MCs than white MCs or male MCs.

The results become more pronounced when we turn to Figure 3, displaying means for a variable coding for interest in politics/elections (measured as a four-point scale). Both white men and white women exhibit more interest when they are represented by female MCs, and somewhat less interest when represented by black MCs. For race, the opposite is true for black men, who exhibit greater interest in politics when their MC is black, and especially when their representative is a black woman. The trend does not hold true for black women, whose generally-low levels of interest (similar to the low levels for white women) do not vary much depending on the race

and gender of their representative.

We see even more dramatic differences based on race and gender in figure 4, which looks at the respondents' level of political information (as estimated by the NES interviewer, and measured on a 0-5 scale). On this measure, for both races, men's scores are generally half a point higher than women's of the same race, with the gap only starting to close somewhat for white women when they are represented by a female MC and for black women when they are represented by a black MC.

Figure 5: Trust in Federal Government



The final set of means, displayed in Figure 5, measure trust in the federal government (on a scale of 1-4). Generally, all respondents pronounce lower trust when they are represented by a black MC and a black female MC. Black men and women both exhibit lower rates of trust under female MCs than male MCs, a pattern that is

interestingly reversed for whites (both men and women). White women in particular seem to exhibit higher trust when represented by female MCs than male MCs, with a similar but smaller increase seen among white men.

Tables 2 and 3 present results of several probit regressions, modeling trust in government (Govt Trust) and a measure of efficacy (PeopleSay) as a function of a standard battery of independent variables (age, level of education, family income, party, and geographic region, coded as South versus non-South) plus the race and gender of the respondent's member of Congress (MC). For both of the dependent variables, we model the regression separately for white men, white women, black men, and black women, and present these results accordingly. For trust in government, which is measured as a scale ranging from 1 (low trust) to 4 (high trust), we use an ordered probit model. For the efficacy measure (measured as a binary, with 0 meaning the respondent agreed with the statement "officials don't much care what people like me think," and a 1 meaning the respondent disagreed), we use a regular probit model.

Looking first at Table 2, the models for trust in government for black women and black men, we see that none of the race or gender effects that we had hypothesized materialized. In part, this may be due to a small-n problem; as shown in Table 1, although we pooled NES datasets over several years, we still only ended up with 15 black men and 49 black women represented by black women MCs, for example.

[Table 2 Here]

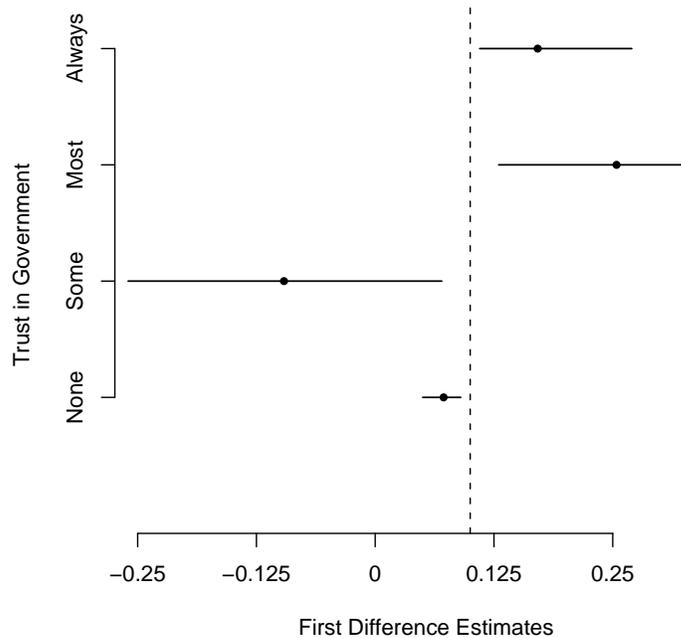
Turning to Table 3, we do see some significant effects, although interestingly only for the white men. It appears that white men who are represented by black MCs are less likely to trust the government (by about half a point in a four point scale, so a significant decrease), a finding significant at the  $p < .01$  level. It also appears that white men who are represented by black female MCs are significantly more likely

to trust the federal government (at the  $p < .05$  level ), although again, this may be due to the very small number of white men represented by black women MCs (so this sample may not be representative of all white men thus represented). It also appears that white men represented by black MCs are less likely to think that public officials care what they think (a difference of about a quarter of a point on 0-1 scale, and significant at the  $p < .05$  level). Other than these effects, which mostly pertain to white men, the largest effects shown in Tables 2 and 3 are for the effects of education, income, ideology, and party. As suggested by many before us (see in particular Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), SES and one's political affiliations trump other concerns in predicting interest, engagement, and involvement in politics.

[Table 3 Here]

To assess the magnitude of the effects found in table 3 and model 3, we plot in figure 6 the first difference means for white men trust in government when they are represented by black women representatives compared to other forms of congressional representation, holding all other variables at their observed values. For white men who trust the federal government “none of the time,” the model predicts that men represented by black women representatives are 2.8 percent less likely to trust the federal government. In sharp contrast, white men with the highest level of governmental trust are 7.1 percent more likely to trust the government when represented by black women MCs versus those represented under other forms of congressional representation. Moreover, for white men who mentioned they trust the government “some of the time, this same model shows that white men represented by black women MCs are 15 percentage points more likely to trust the federal government. The consequence of these patterns is that representation by a black woman is associated with a higher chance of white men saying they trust the government.

Figure 6: Simulated First Differences of White Men' Trust in Government



Note: Figure 6 produced after multiple imputation and using simulated differences from table 2 in model 3. Simulations set control variables to their observed values. Figure 1 plots first difference means of white men' trust in government who are represented by black women MCs compared to whites who are not represented by black women MCs. Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals for each first difference mean are included. Trust in government is scaled as the following: None of the time, some of the time, most of the time, and just about always.

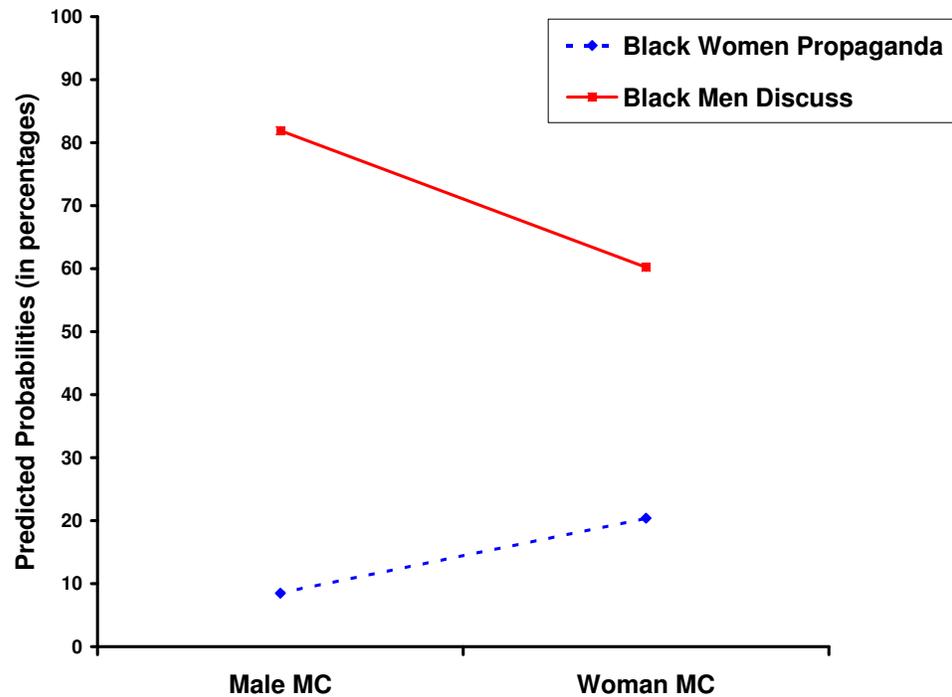
Tables 4 and 5 present probit coefficients for two measures of political participation and engagement: individuals' willingness to display a button or sticker during a campaign and to discuss politics with family and friends. Although we preferred to measure whether individuals contacted a representative, the ANES cumulative data file between 1992 and 2002 does not offer the question for analysis. For both measures of participation and engagement, the wearing of "propaganda" and the discussion of politics with family and friends, we use a probit model. Table 4 shows the results of these two models for black women and black men, separately. We found no significant effects for black women represented by black women representatives. However, we do find some interesting results for both black women and

men represented by black and women MCs. Black women represented by women MCs are more likely to display a button or sticker during a campaign. We also find significant effects for black men. Whereas black women are more likely to wear “propaganda” under conditions of gender representation, black men are less likely to discuss politics with family and friends when theyre represented by black and women congressional representatives. Moreover, age, education, and party significantly predict whether black women discuss politics with family and friends. Older, highly educated, and conservative black women are less likely to discuss politics.

[Table 4 Here]

Figure 7 estimates the magnitude of these effects for black women and men represented by women MCs, separately. Figure 7 illustrates the predicted probabilities for black women represented by women MCs and their propensities to wear stickers or buttons during a campaign. These predicted probabilities indicate that black women are about 12 percentage points more likely to wear stickers or buttons during a campaign when they are represented by women MCs. In contrast, black men who are represented by women are 22 percentage points less likely to discuss politics with family and friends compared to black men represented by male MCs.

Figure 7: Predicted Probabilities for Participation and Engagement among Blacks



In contrast, table 5 does not show any significant effects for white men and women under racial and gender congressional representation. White men and women are not political engaged when represented by black, women, and black women MCs. However, education and income are the most significant predictors of an individual displaying a button or sticker during a campaign or discussing politics with family and friends. Whites with more education and income are more likely to be politically engaged.

[Table 5 Here]

Table 6 reports ordered probit coefficients for political interest among all subgroups. Black men represented by women MCs are less likely to be interested in public affairs. In contrast, they are more likely to be interested in public affairs when they are represented by black women. We also observe several significant effects for age and education for all groups. Older and highly educated individuals, regardless of race or gender, are significantly more likely to follow public affairs. Family income is most significant among whites. Whites with more financial resources are more politically interested than those with fewer resources.

[Table 6 Here]

## Discussion

We can start to see some patterns emerging from the multiple methods and measures employed in this project. Looking at the means charts, the regression models, and the first differences, we can start to piece together some results to report that we and others can further test in future research. The strongest findings of this paper are for white men and women (for whom we have the most data), and particularly for white men, whose effects seem stronger than those for white women. It appears that white men have strong positive reactions to being represented by female MCs, expressing greater political trust, efficacy, and interest if their member of Congress is a woman (contrary to our hypothesis that these increases would be tied to gender descriptive representation, where men represent men and women represent women). White women show some but not all of these effects of having a woman MC; white women represented by nonblack female MCs express greater trust in the federal government, more political interest, and higher levels of post-campaign knowledge. Both white men and white women represented by black MCs show decreased efficacy and engagement (a fact probably more attributable to class than to race or gender).

Turning to black women and men (where the data is more sparse so the conclusions even less certain), we see some similar and some opposite patterns. Both black men and black women express greater engagement with politics in some way if they are represented by a black MC although the measures of engagement are different. Black women represented by black MCs have higher levels of post-campaign knowledge than black women represented by non-black MCs. Black men represented by black MCs express greater interest in electoral campaigns than black men represented by nonblack MCs. Black women represented by black female MCs also are much more likely to exhibit election signs, buttons, and bumper stickers than their counterparts represented by MCs who are not black women, in line with our hypothesis about the effects of race and gender descriptive representation. However, also in line with our expectations, black men represented by black female MCs seem less engaged and interested in politics than black men represented by black male MCs. Black men seem to exhibit greater efficacy when represented by female MCs generally, but perhaps less trust in the federal government when their MC is both black and female. Again, this may have more to do with class than race or gender, as blacks represented by black MCs are almost always in majority-minority districts and socioeconomic status has much greater effects on all our dependent variables than does race or gender alone. And this might help explain several findings that appear to contradict our descriptive representation effects hypothesis, such as the lowered efficacy and trust expressed by black women when they are represented by black female MCs.

## **Conclusion and Future Research**

Overall, this project has many (perhaps too many) moving parts. Some of the findings must be taken with a grain of salt, as our sample contains low numbers of certain categories (such as black women represented by black female MCs). Unfortunately, African American women in Congress are still the vast majority of that body,

leaving us with not enough data to fully test some of our hypotheses, even though we pooled data over a period of eight years to maximize the number of black women respondents and black women MCs. Additionally, we recognize that majority-minority districts (from which most black MCs are elected) are often different in significant ways from mostly-white districts, particularly in terms of socioeconomic status of constituents a fact that may mean that it is simply not possible to compare across districts to find meaningful results about the effects of descriptive representation. We realize that attempting this kind of research is still a stretch, but we forged ahead in the hope that we could at least add something to the ongoing debate about descriptive representation and its effects. In the future, we hope to use matching and other methods to reduce such large systematic differences between white and majority-minority districts.

Future research is necessary to continue and expand this discussion. In the future, we hope to look at more measures of participation, and in particular look at contacting ones MC (as did Gay 2002 and Gay 2001). If we had higher  $n$  (perhaps by pooling across more years of NES samples), we would also like to look further at the role played by respondent ideology in creating, mitigating, or perhaps exacerbating the effects of race and gender descriptive representation. We would also test for whether duration of descriptive representation matters as in, are the effects immediate and contemporaneous, or does it take some time for greater interest, efficacy, and trust to build once one has a descriptive representative? Lastly, as we hypothesized that descriptive representation could occur across multiple axes, we would also like to know more about the effects of descriptive representation for members of other races and ethnicities, particularly Asian American and Latinos. And what is the role played by gender within this, as well? Do some of the patterns that we report for whites and blacks here hold true for Asian Americans and Latino/as? We would like to investigate some of these questions in future research of our own, and also hope that other researchers will find these questions intriguing as well.

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Table 2: Black Women and Black Men' Trust in Government and Political Efficacy

Variables	Gov't Trust (Women)	People Say (Women)	Gov't Trust (Men)	People Say (Men)
Black MC	- 0.030 (0.096)	0.017 (0.104)	- 0.130 (0.120)	- 0.240* (0.135)
Woman MC	- 0.215 (0.201)	- 0.032 (0.216)	- 0.032 (0.245)	- 0.118 (0.274)
Black Woman MC	0.027 (0.275)	- 0.198 (0.296)	- 0.176 (0.398)	0.273 (0.447)
Age	0.003 (0.003)	- 0.002 (0.003)	0.006* (0.004)	0.004 (0.004)
Education	- 0.121 ** (0.060)	0.263 *** (0.066)	- 0.121* (0.069)	0.300 *** (0.078)
Income	- 0.020 (0.042)	0.051 (0.046)	0.087* (0.050)	0.103* (0.056)
Party	- 0.011 (0.032)	- 0.061* (0.035)	- 0.006 (0.036)	0.005 (0.041)
Ideology	- 0.014 (0.031)	0.021 (0.034)	0.035 (0.040)	0.017 (0.045)
South	0.173* (0.091)	- 0.068 (0.099)	0.280 *** (0.112)	0.044 (0.125)
Threshold 1	- 1.957 *** (0.272)		- 1.191 *** (0.334)	
Threshold 2	0.360 (0.263)		0.913 (0.330)	** *
Threshold 3	1.490 *** (0.268)		2.077 *** (0.342)	
Constant		- 0.718 *** (0.288)		- 1.205 *** (0.370)
N	761	761	485	485
Log-Likelihood	-666.3	-503.3	-458.6	-320

Note: Standard errors are in parenthesis. Entries related to government trust are ordered probit coefficients and entires for people say are probit coefficients. \* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$

Table 3: White Women and White Men' Political Trust and Efficacy

Variable	Gov't Trust (Women)	People Say (Women)	Gov't Trust (Men)	People Say (Men)
Black MC	-0.087 (0.111)	-0.129 (0.122)	-0.445 *** (0.119)	-0.263 *** (0.130)
Woman MC	0.073 (0.065)	-0.088 (0.072)	-0.040 (0.066)	-0.039 (0.074)
Black Woman MC	-0.257 (0.298)	-0.537 (0.346)	0.585 *** (0.244)	0.018 (0.272)
Age	0.002* (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.005 *** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Education	0.030 (0.022)	0.287 *** (0.024)	0.049 *** (0.023)	0.322 *** (0.025)
Income	-0.001 (0.016)	0.055 *** (0.0179)	-0.009 (0.018)	0.046 *** (0.020)
Party	-0.017 (0.010)	0.020* (0.011)	-0.029 *** (0.011)	-0.011 (0.013)
Ideology	0.004 (0.015)	-0.047 *** (0.017)	0.004 (0.016)	0.028 (0.018)
South	-0.032 *** (0.040)	-0.021 (0.043)	0.105 *** (0.042)	0.053 (0.048)
Threshold 1	-1.638 *** (0.110)		-1.501 *** (0.113)	
Threshold 2	0.516 *** (0.107)		0.646 *** (0.110)	
Threshold 3	2.038 *** (0.112)		2.145 *** (0.116)	
Constant		-0.709 *** (0.118)		-0.983 *** (0.122)
N	4911	4911	4213	4213
Log-Likelihood	-3820	-2828	-3310	-2424
Log-Likelihood				

Note: Standard errors are in parenthesis. Entries related to government trust are ordered probit coefficients and entires for people say are probit coefficients. \* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$

Table 4: Black Women and Black Men' Political Participation and Engagement

Variable	Propaganda (Women)	Discuss (Women)	Propaganda (Men)	Discuss (Men)
Black MC	- 0.047 (0.146)	- 0.081 (0.113)	0.068 (0.174)	- 0.281* (0.151)
Woman MC	0.517 ** (0.250)	0.189 (0.260)	- 0.109 (0.351)	- 0.641* (0.322)
Black Woman MC	- 0.280 (0.360)	0.364 (0.361)	- 0.217 (0.634)	0.793 (0.505)
Age	0.003 (0.004)	- 0.007 ** (0.003)	0.006 (0.005)	0.003 (0.005)
Education	0.062 (0.088)	0.468 *** (0.077)	0.023 (0.099)	0.524 (0.100)
Income	0.045 (0.062)	0.055 (0.051)	0.067 (0.074)	0.093 (0.064)
Party	0.002 (0.048)	- 0.159 *** (0.038)	0.015 (0.053)	- 0.107 (0.046)
Ideology	- 0.051 (0.047)	- 0.046 (0.038)	0.023 (0.059)	- 0.012 (0.050)
South	0.235* (0.139)	- 0.134 (0.111)	- 0.226 (0.163)	- 0.214 (0.146)
Constant	- 1.658* (0.395)	0.179 (0.319)	- 1.759 *** (0.486)	- 0.296 (0.432)
N	761	761	485	485
Log-Likelihood	-240.1	-401.6	-164.5	-229.7

Note: Standard errors are in parenthesis. Entries related to government trust are ordered probit coefficients and entires for people say are probit coefficients. \* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$

Table 5: White Women and White Men' Political Participation and Engagement

Variable	Propaganda (Women)	Discuss (Women)	Propaganda (Men)	Discuss (Men)
Black MC	0.036 (0.166)	0.122 (0.143)	0.046 (0.167)	-0.044 (0.161)
Woman MC	-0.102 (0.102)	0.003 (0.085)	-0.117 (0.101)	-0.058 (0.091)
Black Woman MC	0.422 (0.399)	0.152 (0.397)	0.327 (0.334)	-0.164 (0.321)
Age	0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.001)	0.002 (0.002)	-0.003* (0.001)
Education	0.109*** (0.033)	0.316*** (0.029)	0.056*** (0.033)	0.371*** (0.031)
Income	0.060*** (0.025)	0.142*** (0.021)	0.083** (0.027)	0.122*** (0.025)
Party	0.015 (0.016)	0.010 (0.013)	0.003 (0.017)	0.001 (0.015)
Ideology	-0.032 (0.024)	-0.037* (0.019)	-0.003 (0.024)	0.024 (0.022)
South	0.006 (0.061)	0.030 (0.050)	0.030 (0.062)	0.076 (0.059)
Constant	-1.848*** (0.164)	-0.189 (0.136)	-1.752*** (0.162)	-0.410*** (0.148)
N	4911	4911	4213	4213
Log-Likelihood	-1300	-2005	-1250	-1518

Note: Standard errors are in parenthesis. Entries related to government trust are ordered probit coefficients and entires for people say are probit coefficients. \* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$

Table 6: Constituents' Political Interest Across Subgroups

Variable	Black Women	Black Men	White Women	White Men
Black MC	0.019 (0.087)	0.062 (0.116)	0.073 (0.104)	0.167 (0.115)
Woman MC	0.285 (0.184)	-0.638** (0.229)	0.088 (0.061)	0.060 (0.064)
Black Woman MC	-0.248 (0.249)	0.838** (0.383)	0.207 (0.274)	-0.199 (0.241)
Age	0.011*** (0.002)	0.019*** (0.003)	0.0164*** (0.001)	0.016*** (0.001)
Education	0.236*** (0.056)	0.276*** (0.067)	0.268*** (0.021)	0.371*** (0.022)
Income	0.069* (0.038)	0.009 (0.048)	0.075*** (0.015)	0.061*** (0.018)
Party	-0.047 (0.030)	-0.036 (0.035)	0.006 (0.010)	0.003 (0.011)
Ideology	0.016 (0.029)	0.009 (0.038)	-0.004 (0.014)	0.006 (0.016)
South	-0.045 (0.084)	-0.144 (0.107)	0.038 (0.037)	0.068* (0.041)
Threshold 1	0.139 (0.244)	0.024 (0.315)	0.650*** (0.100)	0.574*** (0.106)
Threshold 2	0.997*** (0.246)	0.901*** (0.315)	1.514*** (0.101)	1.376*** (0.107)
Threshold 3	2.086*** (0.251)	1.897*** (0.321)	2.620*** (0.104)	2.494*** (0.110)
N	761	485	4911	4213
Log-Likelihood				

Standard errors are in parenthesis. Coefficients for political interest are from ordered probit models. Note: \* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$