

The Backbone of Democracy:
A Study Examining the Impact of Black Women in Politics

by

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates how the inclusion of Black women in politics impacts democratic norms in three unique ways: voter turnout, evaluations of government, and legislative policy priorities. I hypothesize that an increase in the descriptive representation of Black women results in increased voter turnout, more positive evaluations of government, and state's prioritizing policies in favor of Black women interests. I find that the impact of Black women varied across each study. I found null results when considering how Black women legislators influence voter turnout. Next, I found some support that an increase in Black women's descriptive representation results in an increase in positive evaluations of government. Lastly, descriptive representation of Black women can translate into substantive representation, but this link is conditional on other institutional factors, and the relationship is not always positive. Generally, this dissertation shows that the impact of Black women in politics is complex and should be further studied.

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"To the women who have fought and sacrificed so much for equality, and liberty, and justice, for all, including the Black women who are often, too often, overlooked but so often proved they are the backbone of our democracy." -Vice President Kamala Harris

Chapter I. Introduction

Representation in a democracy is based on two core ideas: the positions of representatives should be aligned with those they represent, and policy interests of all citizens should be considered (Dahl, 1971; Pitkin, 1967; Verba, 2003). If groups of people are not represented, then they and their ideas are excluded, and government essentially will not be based on the consent of the governed. Descriptive representation supports democratic principles and lends itself to a healthier democracy (Abramson, 1983; Arnesen & Peters, 2018). Over time, political scientists and scholars in various subfields have studied how descriptive representation impacts democracy, institutions, public perceptions, attitudes and behaviors (Mansbridge, 1999; Gay, 2002; D. E. Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Rocha et al., 2010; Arnesen & Peters, 2018). Most of the literature to date has focused on representation based on gender or race, but there is much to be studied based on the intersections of gender and race. To take that further, Black women hold an immense amount of political power and throughout history have been consistent trailblazers for social change.

The perceptions of women towards government are important, specifically the perceptions of Black women as Black women have been a significant voting bloc since the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Even before then, while Black women were not granted the same rights as their male or white counterparts, they have been at the front lines fighting for equal rights. Black activists like Ida B. Wells, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Sojourner Truth, and Nannie Helen Burroughs advocated for the 15th and 19th amendments, granting Black men and women the right to vote (Bailey, n.d.). Even though the movements that supported women's suffrage and

voting rights for Black men, largely excluded Black women from the conversation. Research has shown that there is a difference in attitudes and perceptions of government across racial lines. This dissertation focuses on the impact of collective representation, namely how the share of Black women in state legislatures, impacts political behaviors and attitudes the electorate has towards government. Seeing Black women in office challenges the notion that politics is a field only for men, while also empowering more Black women, and women of color more broadly, to voice their political views and exert their political power. In addition to this, democracies thrive when citizens feel involved and listened to by democratic institutions (Shapiro, 1983). This dissertation is designed to broadly address the following question: What is the effect of having more Black women in politics? In other words, does the addition of Black women in state legislatures have an impact on voting behavior, policy priorities, and citizen attitudes towards government? I will now provide a review of the relevant literature regarding the importance of representation in general as well as representation for Black women.

Review of Literature

Representative Bureaucracy

Representative bureaucracy is a term used to describe the symbolic and literal representation of social group interests in American government. The concept and call for a representative bureaucracy was first introduced by J. Donald Kingsley as he discussed the British Civil Service. Kingsley (1944) asserted that bureaucracies represented the powerful class of people in society which made it hard for a bureaucracy to be controlled and stunted bureaucratic reform. He went further to state,

“The degree to which all democratic institutions are representative is a matter of prime significance. No group can safely be entrusted with power who do not

themselves mirror the dominant forces in society; for they will then act in an irresponsible manner or will be liable to corruption” (Kingsley 1944, 282).

Kingsley called for a bureaucracy that was inclusive of the dominant forces in society, including women, in order to ensure that public service is democratic and liberating. While Kingsley’s work focused on the British civil service, these ideals were later discussed in the United States context. Levitan (1946) argued that accountability and effective discretion comes from a bureaucracy that is representative of those it serves. Long (1952) recognized the importance of representative bureaucracy when considering the President and Congress, stating that elected officials must reflect society in order to not alienate constituents. Van Riper (1959) expanded on Levitan’s take on representative bureaucracy in the United States. He went further by highlighting the implications of representation for people of color. A government that is representative of its constituents will be more responsive and will provide more support for people of color to advance to higher level positions (Van Riper, 1959). From here, the conversation and research regarding representation really began to grow.

Descriptive Representation

Pitkin (1967) established four main views of representation: descriptive, formalistic, substantive, and symbolic. Formalistic representation refers to the ‘formal’ power representatives inherit when they are elected. They are given the formal authority to represent those who elected them to office. Symbolic representation occurs when an elected official’s presence in office sends a signal that politics is inclusive of those like them. For example, the presence of women in elected positions signifies to other women, that politics is no longer exclusive to men (Dolan, 2006). While these four forms of representation are interconnected, this dissertation focuses specifically on descriptive and substantive representation. Descriptive representation refers to the

extent to which representatives mirror the characteristics of their constituents (Pitkin, 1967). Scholars have discussed the effectiveness of descriptive representation, and through these discussions have identified there are two types, passive and active. Passive descriptive representation refers to the symbolic inclusion of all genders, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or social class. Mosher (1968) argued that we should prioritize passive discrimination over active, stating that having a bureaucracy that mirrors those it serves would send a message that people have equal opportunity and access to services. This contrasts with Pitkin's work the year prior, who referred to passive representation as "being something rather than doing something" (209). Pitkin (1967) argued that representation should not just be about reflecting the public, but also about making decisions that are in the interests of those it represents. Mansbridge (1999) posited that there are communication barriers that exist when a constituent is being represented by an official with whom they cannot identify. There are communication barriers across gender and racial lines, and the best way to limit those barriers is through descriptive representation. Scholars have come to a general consensus that the presence of elected officials who share some commonality with a member of a disadvantaged group, does have an impact on the political behavior and perspective of government amongst members in that group. However, scholars do not necessarily agree on if this impact is a positive or negative one.

Wolak (2015) explored the impact of descriptive representation on women's engagement in politics. This study found that passive representation, the mere presence of women, does not encourage women to be engaged in political campaigns. In addition to this, men were actually less likely to be involved when the candidate for their party was a woman. Other studies have found that increased representation results in an increase in political knowledge, interest, trust, and efficacy (Uhlener & Scola, 2016). Mansbridge (1999) states that descriptive representation

increases perceptions of legitimacy amongst historically disadvantaged groups. Members of these groups feel more included, more comfortable with communicating with their representative, and assured that their interests are being handled with sensitivity. Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler (2005) supports the finding that descriptive representation increases feelings of inclusion and perceptions of legitimacy, which then increases the likelihood of political involvement from members of that group. “Descriptive representation actuates symbolic representation by sending a signal to the so called “described” that the political arena represents them and is receptive to their part” (Barnes & Burchard, 2013). Representation is important in legitimizing the power and decisions of government (Theobald & Haider-Markel 2009; Arnesen & Peters, 2018), as well as increases accountability in government actions (Ricucci & Van Ryzin, 2017). This is of utmost importance for society as a whole, but given the historically tense relationship between political institutions and marginalized communities, additional discussion must be had on how representation impacts them specifically.

Substantive Representation

Substantive representation is defined by Pitkin (1967) as representatives “acting in the interests of the represented in a manner responsive to them” (p. 209). In other words, substantive representation refers to representatives behaving and making policy decisions that align with their constituents’ interests and preferences. Since her original conception, substantive representation has generally been studied through policy outcomes and priorities in regards to race, gender, and political party. Social identity theory assumes that political behavior is shaped by in-group relations and group identification (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). Scholars have argued that substantive representation for racial and gender minorities can be achieved by political parties. Schwindt-Bayer (2011) found that an increase in women in government has not produced

novel ideas different than those presented by parties. The same can be seen at the local level, a study using mayoral elections from 1950-2005 found mayors' gender did not affect policy outcomes (Ferreira & Gyourko, 2014). Htun and Power (2006) examined Brazilian Congressmembers and the extent of their support for gender interest policies. They found that opinions on gender policy was based more on partisanship than the gender-identity of the representatives. There are studies focusing on substantive representation in regards to race that have similar findings. Preuhs (2006) identified party ID as a conditional effect of Black substantive representation. Swain (1995) posits that parties, and ideological preferences, can substantively represent the policy interests of minorities, and there is not much of a difference between liberal Black and non-Black representatives. Parties and ideology can provide substantive representation for minorities, especially in a time where politics is becoming more racialized and many party politics are divided along race and gender lines (Michener, 2019). However, assuming that partisan or ideological representation can provide the same level of substantive representation for racial and gender minorities as minority legislators, is misleading. For example, there are demonstrated differences between Black and White liberals (Poskocil, 1977). Beeman (2022) argues that liberal ideology undermines authentic anti-racist policy changes. She coins the term "liberal white supremacy", which refers to White progressives perpetuating white supremacy instead of dismantling it through liberal practices like color-blindness and classism. This supports my argument that parties are not an effective way to study the substantive representation of racial and gender minorities. Instead, representation scholars should focus specifically on the impact of minority legislators when examining substantive representation of minorities.

Representation and Black Americans

In the United States there is a history of public servants being predominantly white and male. Within this history and its contemporary context, Black Americans have continued fighting for representation throughout government, with a common phrase being “representation matters.” Race is commonly used as an explanatory variable, and we have seen that racial divides do exist. African Americans are notably less trusting of government than whites (Abramson, 1983; Gay, 2002) and are less likely to vote than whites (Hill and Leighley, 1999; Fraga, 2016). In fact, Kennedy (2014) who conducted a meta-analysis of studies that focuses on descriptive representation from year to year, found race to be the most salient variable. 75% of all studies use race as the main indicator of representation. Black representation in government institutions has been shown to impact Black Americans in various ways including participation, political efficacy, trust, and perceptions of government.

Tate (2001) looked at the relationship between the race of members of the House of Representatives and their constituents’ ratings. Tate (2001) found that Black constituents rated their representative higher when they were represented by a Black member, compared to Black ratings of white representatives. There are some serious implications to this finding. The findings suggest that Black constituents have a more favorable perception of government when Black representatives are present. Gay (2002) had more nuanced findings. She found that Black constituents were actually more motivated by policy decisions than representation and could feel just as represented by a White representative as they do with a Black representative. While Gay (2002) suggests Black constituents are less concerned about descriptive representation and more influenced by substantive representation, it does find that Blacks are more likely to contact a Black representative. This demonstrates that race has an impact on the comfortability and willingness to interact politically. The influence of race for Black Americans can be seen across

different institutions. Theobald and Haider-Markel (2008) focused on Black Americans perceptions of law enforcement. This study found that when Blacks interact with a minority police officer, the respondents are more likely to perceive the interaction as legitimate compared to an interaction with a White police officer. King and Barnes (2018) studied descriptive representation among poll workers. Specifically, they investigated the effect of interacting with a poll worker of the same race on voter confidence. Using the Survey of the Performance of American Elections (SPAEE), they found that when Black voters interact with a poll worker of the same race/ethnicity the voter was more confident in the election process (King & Barnes, 2018); further showing how descriptive representation can and does influence attitudes and perceptions of Black Americans. In addition to perceptions, representation also has tangible effects for Black Americans.

African American legislators have shared experiences with their Black constituents, and through these collective experiences representatives feel responsible to champion issues that align with the interests of the Black community at large (Dawson, 1995). Not only do Black representatives feel responsible to the community at large, representatives also have a significant impact on substantive representation for Black constituents. Bobo and Gilliam (1990) found that Blacks participate at a higher rate when descriptive representation is high. This study focused on 15 individual measures of participation including voting, campaigning, group membership, and contacting local officials. In explaining their finding, Bobo and Gilliam (1990) argue that Black constituents have a higher level of external political efficacy when there is a Black or co-racial person in office. Political efficacy is the extent to which a citizen feels that they are able to influence the political process and outcomes, both internally and externally (Balch, 1974). Internal political efficacy refers to the ability of an individual to be able to understand,

participate, and influence politics. On the other hand, external political efficacy refers to the belief that government institutions and actors care about and respond to citizens' interests (Asher, 1974) and it is this type of efficacy that facilitates political participation.

Owens (2005) studied the substantive representation of Black state legislators by examining state budgets and determining the differences in state spending priorities when there is an increase in Black descriptive representation. Owens found that having more Black representation in state legislatures results in an increase in substantive changes in policy priorities. The presence of Black representatives can lead to a legislature that is more responsive to Black policy interests and increases the influence Black representatives have within the legislative body (Preuhs, 2006). A study using data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the Cooperative Congressional Election Studies (CCES), found that states with a higher proportion of Black legislators also had higher turnout rates amongst Black voters (Rocha et al., 2010). Additionally, Philpot et al. (2009) found that while the presence of Black candidates did result in higher levels of black participation, it was amongst those voters who were already supportive. Fraga (2016) expands upon Philpot's finding by suggesting that it is not the presence of Black candidates spurring higher participation but instead it is their mobilizing efforts in Black districts. The idea that when underrepresented groups attain more power their political attitudes change, and they have higher participation rates is supported extensively by scholarship (Mansbridge, 1999; Barreto, 2007; Philpot & Walton Jr, 2007; Reingold & Harrell, 2010).

Representation and Women

While the effect of women's descriptive representation has been contested in the literature, it does not discount the fact that women have historically been underrepresented in elected office. Women are 51% of the U.S. population but yet only make up 30% of statewide

elected executives and 31% of state legislators (Center for American Women and Politics, 2022b). Despite the lack of adequate representation of women, when there is representation there is a significant impact on women constituents (Dolan, 2006; Reingold & Harrell, 2010). As demographics of state representatives and the electorate change, it is important to study how these changes impact democratic norms and values. During the decades since the 1992 “Year of the Woman”, an increase in the representation of women in Congress has resulted in an increase in adult women’s political participation (D. E. Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Desposato, 2009). In addition to this, Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006) found that an increase in women’s representation in Congress and at the state executive level, lead to increased levels of political conversations as well as an increase in young girls’ desire to participate in the future. Increasing the number of women running for and winning political offices incentivizes women to become more politically engaged (Banducci et al., 2004; Mansbridge, 1999), and results in better perceptions of government responsiveness (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005), which in turn strengthens and legitimizes democracy (Atkeson & Carrillo, 2007). Not only does the representation result in members of the non-dominant group to become more engaged in politics, it also influences their actual political behavior.

Lawless (2004) found that an increase in the collective representation of women in Congress had a significant influence on voting and political activism among women. This is a trend that can also be seen on a global scale. Countries that have a greater representation of women in cabinet positions also have higher rates of political participation amongst women (Liu & Banaszak, 2017). When looking at the impact of collective representation on women in state legislatures and in state executive offices, Atkeson and Carrillo (2007) found that a greater proportion of women in state legislatures resulted in women having more positive feelings

toward government. While many scholars support the notion of representation having a positive effect on political efficacy, there are varying views. Wolak (2015) found that the presence of women candidates did not have an impact on the political efficacy of women nor men. In fact, descriptive representation had a negative effect on men, those who were represented by a female congressional candidate became less interested in participating in the election.

Atkeson and Carrillo (2007) found that not only did an increase of women in the state legislature influence efficacy in a positive way, it also resulted in a higher likelihood of women perceiving government as more responsive and legitimate. MacDonald and O'Brien (2011) found that women's interests are more supported by female members of Congress than their male counterparts. In fact, the research suggests that women congress members not only advocate for women's policy interests, but they also provide more effective substantive representation overall. In addition, female state legislators have distinct policy priorities (S. Thomas, 1991) and perceive issues differently than their male counterparts (Crowley, 2004). Reingold (1992) found that women legislators were more likely to be committed to women's interests. There are some studies that do not find conclusive evidence that the presence of women leads to greater substantive representation. Childs and Krook (2009) find that the presence of women alone is not enough to ensure substantive representation. Instead, women must occupy a critical minority rather than just be a few token individuals. State context also plays a role in substantive representation of women. Using interview data from Arizona and California legislators, Reingold (1992) found that women legislators in California were more likely to identify women as a group they represented, than women legislators in Arizona. In addition to substantive representation and gender, there is a vast amount of literature on substantive representation and race. While

scholarship on gender and racial substantive representation is vast, the literature on the intersection of race and gender is not as developed.

Representation and Black Women

As previously mentioned, women are underrepresented in government in general and specifically at the state level. The statistics for representation for Black women are even worse. Currently 2.6% of all statewide elected executives identify as Black women (none of which are Governors), 5% of all state legislators identify as Black women, and 7% of all mayors in the top 100 most populated cities identify as Black women. Historically, 3.3% of all women statewide executives have identified as Black and there has only been 21 Black women serving as mayors in the top 100 most populated cities to date (Center for American Women and Politics, 2022b). The representation literature supports the notion that consistent underrepresentation of non-dominant groups creates a deficit in the substantive representation of said groups' interests, with the only way to overcome this deficit being to increase representation. Bobo and Gilliam (1990) use the minority empowerment theory that asserts an increase in descriptive representation results in an increase in political opportunities and inclusion, this in turn promotes democratic engagement and participation. Conversely, the lack of descriptive representation can result in feelings of political alienation and lower levels of political efficacy (Pantoja and Segura 2003).

Brown and Banks (2014) examine the agenda setting of Black women in the Maryland state legislature and found that Black women are more likely to advocate for issues that affect racial/ethnic minorities, women, and Black women. The legislative activity of Black women is unique in that Black women tend to sponsor bills that reflect their identity regardless of the racial and gender composition of the legislature (Brown and Banks 2014). This suggests that Black women are going to push legislation in favor of Black women regardless of the support, or lack

of support, from other groups of legislators. Which aligns with the findings of Haynie and Reingold (2013). They found that Black women were the most likely of any demographic of legislators, to sponsor at least one Black interest and women's interest bill (Haynie & Reingold, 2013). Black and women's interest bills were defined as proposed legislation with the purpose to improve Black citizens' or women's economic, political or social status (Bratton et al., 2006).

These findings lead to the question of whether the involvement of Black women in policymaking positions results in positive policy outcomes for Black women. Research suggests that Black women are responsive to both women's interests and Black interests, but not much research has been conducted on whether these legislators are responsive specifically to the intersectional interests of Black women. Simien (2005) argues that while race and gender identification has distinct influences, they are so closely related that when it comes to Black women, gender identification also stimulates racial identification. Orey et al. (2006) found that from 1989-1999, Black women in the Mississippi legislature introduced more progressive bills than any other demographic of legislators. This agrees with other studies that have similar findings, Black women legislators have distinct legislative behavior (Atkeson & Carrillo, 2007; Bratton et al., 2006). While there is a subset of scholars, previously discussed, that study the political behaviors of Black women specifically, much of the literature to date focuses on one type of identity, gender or race (Orey et al., 2006). Frasure-Yokley (2018) argues for an intersectional approach, stating that when studies focus solely on gender, the results are often misleading and attribute those findings to all women voters when that is not necessarily the case. She demonstrates this by analyzing the 2016 election and found that after introducing an intersectional analysis, White women were 17% more likely to vote for Trump while women of color were the opposite. This demonstrates that there is space for researchers to consider how

intersecting identities have an influence in the larger political context and influences political attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, the literature that does address intersecting identities does so from the frame of women of color and not a specific focus on Black women.

Dissertation Contribution

This dissertation contributes to the literature on descriptive representation by not only adding an intersectional approach, but also by focusing specifically on the impact of Black women on the participation of minorities. The current literature largely focuses on whether women vote for women or minorities vote for minorities, I instead study the broader implications of whether Black women mobilize underrepresented groups like Black women, women, and people of color. Recent changes in the race and gender demographics of those who occupy public office, make studying Black women in elected office now empirically feasible to investigate. This study also aligns with recent efforts to focus more explicitly on the impact of intersecting identities in participation and policy spaces. In this regard, focusing on the impact and perceptions of Black women in politics specifically, who continue to grow as a significant voter bloc and are increasingly becoming more involved in politics, is timely. This dissertation acknowledges the unique value and input that legislators from different backgrounds contribute to politics. Specifically, I recognize the value of Black women legislators beyond their roll call votes and bill sponsorship. The inclusion and growth of Black women's political engagement should be studied as their added input in legislation can shift citizen perceptions and behaviors, democratic governance, and political environments. This dissertation was written following the three-article approach, with each chapter serving as a stand-alone study examining the impact of Black women in politics. Next, I will outline the three studies I use to better understand this relationship.

Discussion of Substantive Chapter Two

Chapter Two of this dissertation focuses on the impact that descriptive representation of Black women in state legislatures has on voter turnout. Descriptive representation of minority groups in legislatures results in an increase of voter turnout amongst minority groups (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990; Cammisa & Reingold, 2004; Rocha et al., 2010). While much of the literature supports this, there are still some dissenting views on how representation influences political behavior. Atkeson (2003) found that only *competitive* women candidates can stimulate political engagement. In addition to this, Lawless (2004) found that the presence of women in politics did not affect political attitudes or behavior. In fact, she found political party to be more of an influence than representation. However, as previously discussed political parties may not be the most effective way to study representation of racial and gender minorities. Additionally, many studies focus solely on gender which can lead to results that are misleading and conclusions that are incorrectly applied to all women (Frasure-Yokley, 2018). This dissertation takes an intersectional approach to examine how the presence of Black women influence political behavior, with this chapter focusing on voting behavior.

Chapter Two addresses the following question: Does having more Black women in the state legislature increase voter turnout? I predict that higher levels of Black women's collective representation will be associated with an increase in overall voter turnout. The dependent variable of this model is voter turnout. I look at turnout overall as well as turnout disaggregated by race (Black people), gender (women), and the intersection of gender and race (Black women). I choose to focus on turnout of Black women specifically because I would like to test the impact that Black women legislators have on Black women voters. I hypothesize that the proportional effect of Black women in state legislatures on turnout will be greater for Black women voters.

The data on voter turnout statistics were gathered from the Current Population Survey (CPS) which asks whether a person voted or not and includes demographic information for each respondent. Race is measured using the five racial groups used by the U.S. Census: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian. Respondents who choose multiple races will be categorized as ‘multi-racial’. The New Identity Model states “multi-racial individuals perceive that they have distinctive racial identities outside the traditional monoracial categories” (Masuoka, 2008). The independent variable for this chapter is the percent of Black women in a state’s legislature, and this will be a 50-state analysis. Percent of Black women in a state’s legislature is measured by proprietary state legislature data that includes the demographic information of every state legislature from 2010-2020.

There are other state and individual level variables that influence turnout and will be included in the model. The individual level variables are education, income, employment, homeownership, and union membership. All of these variables are captured in the CPS and affect the voting behavior of an individual. The literature supports the notion that those who are educated, with more income, a job, owns a home and part of a union are more likely to turn out and vote (Atkeson & Carrillo, 2007; Brady et al., 1995; Uhlaner & Scola, 2016). The state variables that affect turnout are economic inequality, election rules, competitiveness of elections, legislative professionalization, level of urbanization. This data was analyzed using linear regression.

Discussion of Substantive Chapter Three

This chapter explores the relationship between Black women’s collective representation and citizen attitudes towards government. The literature supports the notion that representation is important for citizens to perceive democratic institutions as legitimate (Mansbridge, 1999;

Atkeson & Carrillo, 2007). This study focuses on the impact of collective representation, how the share of Black women in state legislatures impacts the attitudes the electorate has towards government. Seeing Black women in office challenges the idea that politics is a field only for men, while also empowering more Black women, and women of color, to voice their political views and exert their political power (Thomas 1991; Mansbridge 1999; McEvoy 2016). In addition to this, democracies thrive when citizens feel involved and listened to by democratic institutions (Shapiro, 1983). Therefore, political efficacy and trust are key democratic values and the influence of Black women on political attitudes is an interesting relationship that has been discounted in the field. Therefore, this chapter addresses the following question: Does having more Black women in the state legislature increase positive attitudes towards government like trust and efficacy? I predict that higher levels of Black women's descriptive representation will be associated with an increase in positive attitudes and perceptions toward government. Mansbridge (1999) stated "descriptive representation can forge bonds of trust between legislator and constituent enhancing the feeling of inclusion, which, in turn, makes the polity democratically more legitimate in one's eyes" (641).

The independent variable in this chapter is the percent of Black women in the state legislatures from 2010-2020. This data is from a proprietary dataset that includes the race and gender of every state legislator. There are two dependent variables: political efficacy and trust in government. Political efficacy and trust in government will be measured using survey questions from the American National Election Studies (ANES) survey. In this survey, ANES poses two questions for external efficacy: "Public officials don't care much what people like me think" and "People like me don't have any say about what the government does." ANES uses a five-point scale that ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Higher values on this scale indicates

stronger feelings of external efficacy. Trust in government is measured by the ANES trust in government index which compiled the responses to several questions about trust in government; if the government is run for the benefit of all, do people in government waste tax money, and if government officials are crooked.

There are additional individual level variables to be controlled for: education, income, church attendance, gender, race, age, voting behavior, partisanship, and internal efficacy. Demographic variables are self-reported in the ANES. For internal efficacy, ANES poses “Politics is too complicated for a person like me to understand”, which is also on a five-point scale with higher values indicating stronger feelings of internal efficacy. Lastly, I control for direct democracy as Bowler & Donovan (2002) found that citizens in states that implement direct democracy initiatives, are more likely to feel included and that government is responsive to them, meaning they have higher levels of political efficacy. This study utilizes a linear regression model to explore the relationship between Black women’s descriptive representation and attitudes toward government.

Discussion of Substantive Chapter Four

The final study explores the relationship between Black women legislators and their influence on the policy priorities of the legislature. The previous chapter has highlighted the impacts of descriptive representation while this chapter highlights substantive representation of Black women in state legislatures. Owens (2005) examined how Black representation in state legislatures impacted policy priorities by using data on state budget allocations. How a state allocates its money is a direct indicator of their policy priorities, the idea being that states will allocate more money to the policy areas that are of higher priorities. Owens argues that if the composition of the legislature changes and the budgetary priorities do not, then the new members

do not have the power to influence the legislative policy priorities. Based on this study, Chapter Four addresses the following question: Does having more Black women in the state legislature change the policy priorities of the legislature? I predict that higher levels of Black women's representation will result in an increase in spending in policy areas that are prioritized by Black women.

In order to address this question, I look at state budgets from 2010-2019 to determine if and how funding decisions changed based on the presence of Black women in the legislature. I chose to omit 2020 from this study as COVID-19 drastically influenced state budget allocation. This study uses education and welfare policy as the dependent variables that measure Black women's policy interests. The independent variable for this chapter will be the number of Black women in the state legislatures from 2010 – 2019. This data comes from a proprietary dataset that includes the race and gender of every state legislator. This study uses education and welfare policy as the dependent variables that operationalize Black women's policy interests. These variables are measured as the percent of a state's total budget allocated to education and welfare policy. The data on state budgets was obtained from the Census Annual Survey of State and Local Government Finances. There are other variables that are controlled for, as they can contribute to changes in spending decisions. First, the Democratic party has shown more support for an increase in social spending, and I would expect for a democrat led legislature to allocate more funds to the policies of interest. Therefore, a variable will be added to control for states that have a Democrat controlled legislature. Additionally, I include a need variable for both policy areas as I expect states to make budget decisions partly based on their need. Since states may respond to their citizen interests, I control for states' Black population under the assumption that states with higher Black populations will be more likely to allocate more funding to Black

interest policies. Lastly, I include a dummy variable for southern states to account for racial political context observed in southern legislatures. The method of analysis for this chapter is an OLS regression. The fifth and final chapter concludes the dissertation and brings each study together to provide insight on the influence of Black women. I discuss key conclusions from the three studies, implications of my research, as well as ideas to expand on this dissertation in the future.

“We have to build our own power. We have to win every single political office we can, where we have a majority of Black people...” -Fannie Lou Hamer

Chapter II. Descriptive Representation of Black Women in State Legislatures and Voter Turnout

Introduction

Political participation is key to a thriving democratic nation. Through voting, an integral part of the democratic process (Dahl, 2006), citizens elect representatives to act on their behalf in the political process (W. E. Miller & Stokes, 1963). Through voting decisions, citizens provide cues as to the type of representatives they want and the types of policy decisions they support.

In 2008, Barack Obama made history as the first Black person to win the Democratic presidential nomination followed by his unprecedented presidency as the first Black person elected to the highest office in the land. This historic win has been largely attributed to the mobilization of Black voters who turned out to the polls in record numbers. There was a five percent increase in Black voter turnout between the 2004 and 2008 elections, which was the largest percent change amongst any racial group during that election cycle (Lopez, 2009). Much of the spike in Black voter turnout, can be attributed to an increase in the voter participation of Black women. The turnout rate among eligible Black women in 2008, was the highest turnout among all racial, ethnic, and gender groups (Lopez & Taylor, 2008). Holman and Schneider (2018) explains this finding by arguing that Black candidates increase political interest among Black voters, which increases a sense of shared racial identity and the desire to support someone from one’s own group, which then results in an increase of voter turnout. This phenomenon was witnessed with Barack Obama, Black voters (especially Black women) turned out at higher rates during his presidential run in 2008.

There are different motivating factors for voting across gender, race and ethnicity, and other identities. One motivator that impacts voting is descriptive representation, or how well the candidates and elected officials mirror their constituents. Descriptive representation provides various benefits for citizens, especially those from previously excluded groups. Pitkin (1967) defines descriptive representation as the correspondence between the characteristics of the represented and the representatives. She refers to descriptive representation as “potential responsiveness” because it can serve as a heuristic for minority voters to assess which candidates might protect their interests in the future (Pitkin, 1967, p. 233). Group identity impacts the likelihood of a person voting, by motivating group members to vote (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990; Shaw et al., 2019; Verba & Nie, 1987). An increase in descriptive representation results in an increase of voter turnout amongst minority groups (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990; Cammisa & Reingold, 2004; Rocha et al., 2010).

Many of the current studies on descriptive representation focus on the impact of descriptive representation on gender and racial/ethnic minorities generally (Lawless, 2004; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005; B. L. Fraga, 2016; Liu & Banaszak, 2017). This chapter will focus specifically on the descriptive representation of Black women. Although scholarship suggests that Black candidates have a mobilizing effect on Black voters (Hill & Leighley, 1999; Philpot et al., 2009), however because of the scarcity of Black women candidates and officials the effect of Black women has not been thoroughly studied. In recent years we have seen states grow more ethnically diverse due to things like mass migration. The changes in population demographics has contributed to scholars paying an increased amount of attention to minority representation and how it impacts democratic norms (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990; Tate, 2001; Rocha et al., 2010; Uhlener & Scola, 2016). The changes in the racial and ethnic composition in the

U.S. has resulted in a change in the demographics of the electorate. Since 2000, over three-quarters of the electorate growth can be attributed to non-white voters (Igielnik and Budiman 2020). The Black eligible voter population grew 17 percent, the second largest increase behind Hispanic voters. The increase in the Black electorate coupled with the increase of Black women in office, provides an opportunity to study the impact of descriptive representation on Black voters with a specific focus on Black women.

Representation

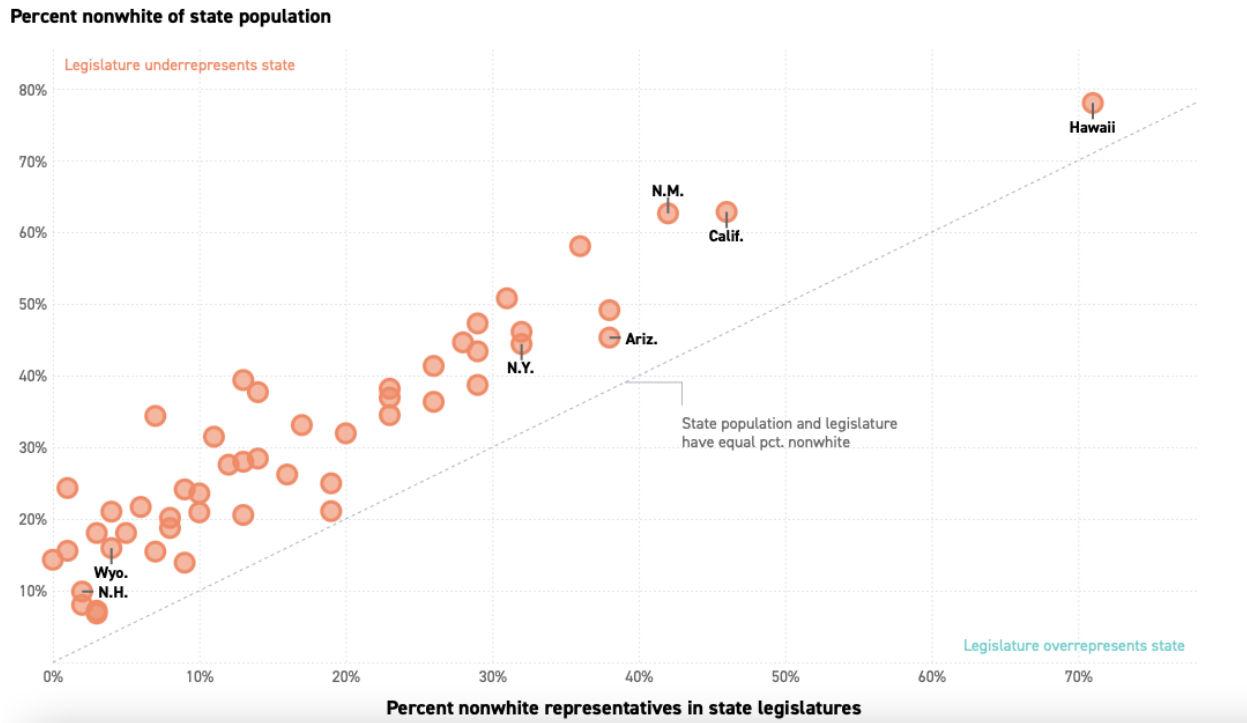
The research on representation in the American context usually focuses on how elected officials represent citizen interests through two channels: collective and dyadic. Dyadic or substantive representation occurs when a citizen shares similar identities with their direct representative (Harden & Clark, 2016). Collective descriptive representation refers to the extent to which someone is represented by elected officials as a whole, who share similar demographic characteristics (Mansbridge, 1999; Pitkin, 1967). Collective representation provides multiple benefits to constituents, including symbolic benefits and increased mobilization efforts, which in turn increase voter turnout by minorities (Clark et al., 2009). When studying representation in state-level government, dyadic representation refers to individual *legislators* while collective representation is referring to *legislatures* as a whole. Dyadic representation focuses on the individual relationship between a specific legislator and their constituent(s) (Weissberg 1978). I argue that dyadic representation while important, does not capture the full impact of descriptive representation. This type of representation is important because an individual legislator can, and is expected to, cast a vote that is reflective of their constituents' preferences. Additionally, dyadic representation provides a space for legislators to support their constituency in various ways, like responding to service requests and providing funding to their districts. While dyadic

representation is important, there are policy limitations for the impact of individual legislators. An individual representative is significantly constrained in their ability to make substantive policy changes, as their one vote alone does not carry much weight in the legislature. A single legislator can vote according to their constituents' preferences, however they are significantly constrained in their ability to make changes in policy (Harden & Clark, 2016; Hurley, 1982). This is because collective representation, or substantial representation in the legislature as a whole, is needed in order to make changes to policy. Collective representation holds significant weight in making substantive policy changes. Statewide levels of descriptive representation are a significant predictors of policy outcomes and participation rates for minorities (Rocha et al., 2010). This chapter concentrates on the influence of collective representation rather than dyadic.

Representation in State Legislatures

In the United States there is a history of statewide officials being predominantly white and male. Currently, every state legislature has fewer racial minorities than the state's population (National Conference of State Legislatures 2020). Figure 2.1 shows how the racial demographics of a state's legislature compared to the racial demographic of the state population. In 2020, there were only three states that achieved proportional descriptive representation. California, Hawaii, and New Mexico were the only states where the percent of nonwhite in the legislature equaled or exceeded the percent nonwhite in the population.

Figure 2.1. Racial Makeup of State Legislatures Compared to the Population



Source: National Conference of State Legislatures

Within this history and still currently today, Black Americans have continued fighting for representation throughout government, with the common phrase “representation matters.” Kennedy (2014) conducted a meta-analysis of studies that focus on descriptive representation from year to year and found race to be the most salient variable. 75% of all studies use race as the main indicator of representation. Black representation in government institutions has been shown to impact Black Americans in various ways including participation, political efficacy, trust, and perceptions of government. Bobo and Gilliam (1990) found that Blacks participate at a higher rate when descriptive representation is high. This study focused on 15 individual

measures of participation including voting, campaigning, group membership, and contacting local officials. In explaining their finding, Bobo and Gilliam (1990) argue that Black constituents have a higher level of external political efficacy when there is a Black or co-racial person in office. Political efficacy is the extent to which a citizen feels that they are able to influence the political process and outcomes, both internally and externally (Balch, 1974). Internal political efficacy refers to the ability of an individual to be able to understand, participate, and influence politics. On the other hand, external political efficacy refers to the belief that government institutions and actors care about and respond to citizens' interests (Asher, 1974) and it is this type of efficacy that facilitates political participation. (Preuhs, 2006).

A study using data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the Cooperative Election Studies (CES) (Formerly the Cooperative Congressional Election Studies (CCES)), found that states with a higher proportion of Black legislators also had higher turnout rates amongst Black voters (Rocha et al., 2010). Additionally, Philpot et al. (2009) found that while the presence of Black candidates did result in higher levels of black participation, it was amongst those voters who were already supportive. Fraga (2016) expands upon Philpot's finding by suggesting that it is not the presence of Black candidates spurring higher participation but instead it is their mobilizing efforts in Black districts. (Rocha et al., 2010) tested the impact of collective descriptive representation in state legislatures on voter turnout. This study argues that there is a connection between collective descriptive representation and voter mobilization. They find that between 1996 and 2008 as descriptive representation increased (percent of the state legislature that identifies as Black or Latino), so did turnout of Black and Latino voters.

Women's Representation

Women have historically be underrepresented in elected office; they are 51% of the U.S. population but yet only make up 30% of statewide elected executives and 31% of state legislators (Center for American Women and Politics, 2022b). Despite the lack of adequate representation of women, when there is representation there is a significant impact on women constituents (Dolan, 2006; Reingold & Harrell, 2010). As demographics of state representatives and the electorate change, it is important to study how these changes impact democratic norms and values. During the decades since the 1992 “Year of the Woman”, an increase in the representation of women in Congress has resulted in an increase in adult women’s political participation (D. E. Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Desposato, 2009). In addition to this, Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006) found that an increase in women’s representation in Congress and at the state executive level, lead to increased levels of political conversations as well as an increase in young girls’ desire to participate in the future. Not only does the representation result in members of the non-dominant group to become more engaged in politics, it also influences their actual political behavior.

Lawless (2004) found that an increase in the collective representation of women in Congress had a significant influence on voting and political activism among women. This is a trend that can also be seen on a global scale. Countries that have a greater representation of women in cabinet positions also have higher rates of political participation amongst women (Liu & Banaszak, 2017). While many scholars support the notion of representation having a positive effect on political efficacy, there are varying views. Wolak (2015) found that the presence of women candidates did not have an impact on the political efficacy of women nor men. In fact, descriptive representation had a negative effect on men, those who were represented by a female congressional candidate actually becoming less interested in participating in the election. The

idea that when underrepresented groups attain more power their political attitudes change, and they have higher participation rates is supported extensively by scholarship (Mansbridge, 1999; Barreto, 2007; Philpot & Walton Jr, 2007; Reingold & Harrell, 2010). This study will expand on this scholarship, there is particular interest on how voters react to the collective representation of Black women.

Voter Turnout

With the exception of the most recent federal elections (2020 and 2022), voter turnout in the United States tend to be low in comparison with other advanced democracies (Desilver, 2022). Fluctuating cultural norms and state institutional factors have changed voting behaviors for racial and ethnic minorities so that they either choose to not vote, or they participate in nontraditional forms of participation like protesting and boycotting (Lawless, 2004). There are some individual factors that influence turnout regardless of identity, these include income and education (Brady et al., 1995). There are other factors that contribute to higher voting rates, some factors affect turnout as a whole, while there are others that affect turnout specifically for women and racial, and ethnic groups. Attitudes and beliefs such as political efficacy, group consciousness, perceived discrimination, and political interests among minorities influence their turnout (Hill & Leighley, 1999; Rocha et al., 2010; Stockemer, 2017). Much of the research to date that attempts to understand minority voting behavior tends to group minorities together as a homogenous group. For example, Blacks (Griffin & Keane, 2006; B. L. Fraga, 2018), Hispanics (Barreto, 2007), women (Atkeson, 2003), and minorities (Hill & Leighley, 1999; Lucas & Mohamed, 2021). Beyond general voter turnout, descriptive representation has a significant impact on voter turnout, significantly increasing non-white voter turnout (Uhlener & Scola, 2016). Rocha et al. (2010) investigated the impact of descriptive representation, defined as the

percent of the state legislature that is Black or Latino, on the Michigan state legislature from 1996-2008. They found that an increase in descriptive representation can increase turnout for Blacks and Latinos by about 10-22 percentage points. Combining minorities into one group can be misleading and ignores the different barriers some groups face and the uneven patterns in mobilization efforts. For the purposes of this chapter, particular interest will be paid to turnout of women, Black people, and Black women.

Voter turnout rates vary across racial and ethnic minority groups. Historically, white voters turned out at higher rates than their non-white counterparts (Timpone, 1998). Turnout rates by non-white voters have increased over time partially due to popularity, saliency of elections, and expanded access to voting. Historically, Black Americans have engaged in traditional participation less than other Americans (Ellison & London, 1992). There has been both formal and cultural institutional barriers restricting Black Americans' ability and access to voting. Following the abolishment of slavery in the 1860s and the passing of the 15th Amendment in 1869, anti-black voter suppression tactics were quickly being used to disenfranchise the Black men who had just gained their right to vote (Keyssar, 2000). Barriers like Black codes, fear tactics, racial violence, poll taxes, literacy tests, and Jim Crow laws significantly stunted the ability of Black Americans to exercise their right to vote (Alexander, 2012; Acharya et al., 2015). These barriers have disproportionately impacted Black Americans regardless of income, education, and access to resources. However, since the Civil Rights Movement, we saw an increase in Black participation with the gap in turnout rates decreasing by 1990 (Uhlener & Scola, 2016). The presence of a Black candidate may also increase Black Americans sense of political efficacy, which has an additional independent and positive effect on turnout (Barreto, 2007; West, 2017). When women have the chance to vote for a woman

candidate or are represented by a woman, there are higher rates of registration, voting, and women interested in politics (Atkeson, 2003; D. E. Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Reingold & Harrell, 2010; Shapiro, 2002). However, Black women have a distinct voting behavior.

Unlike their white counterparts who respond to representation of all women (Uhlener & Scola, 2016; B. L. Fraga, 2018), Black women tend to respond more so to racial representation regardless of candidate gender. Higher levels of collective descriptive representation of women increases the likelihood of white women voting, however this actually makes Black women less likely to vote. Conversely, higher levels of collective descriptive representation of Black legislators (regardless of gender) increases the likelihood of Black women voting (Uhlener & Scola, 2016). Simien (2005) argues that while race and gender identification has distinct influences, they are so closely related that when it comes to Black women, gender identification also stimulates racial identification. Identities and their intersections impact voting behavior and turnout. This chapter will focus on how the collective representation of Black women influences the turnout rates of women, Black people, and Black women.

Minority Empowerment

The minority empowerment theory suggests that “when, and where, people in underrepresented groups achieve greater power, their political attitudes shift and their participation increases” (Uhlener & Scola, 2016, 231). Descriptive representation of minorities in state legislatures can increase minority turnout, especially for Black voters who respond strongly to representation. There is a symbolic benefit, witnessing higher levels of Black representation in elected office impacts political attitudes and behavior. Bobo and Gilliam (1990) asserts that minorities become empowered after they have reached a significant level of representation and power in politics. This serves as a macro-level cue that influences people’s perceptions of the

cost-benefit of voting as well as likelihood that representatives will make responsive policy decisions. This concept is supported in their study, they found that Black citizens living in cities with a Black mayor were significantly more likely to participate (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990). There are other studies that find similar results. Black participation and trust increases with representation (Banducci, Donovan, and Karp 2004; Griffin and Keane, 2006). Leighley (2001) found that Black people were more empowered and mobilized with increased levels of representation. “Representation matters”, witnessing higher levels of Black representation in elected office has a mobilizing and empowering effect on Black people and other minorities. Representation is an important factor influencing levels of turnout among previously excluded groups (Uhlener and Scola 2016). Given this theory and the preceding literature on representation, I hypothesize the following:

H₁: An increase in the percent of Black women in state legislatures will result in an increase in voter turnout.

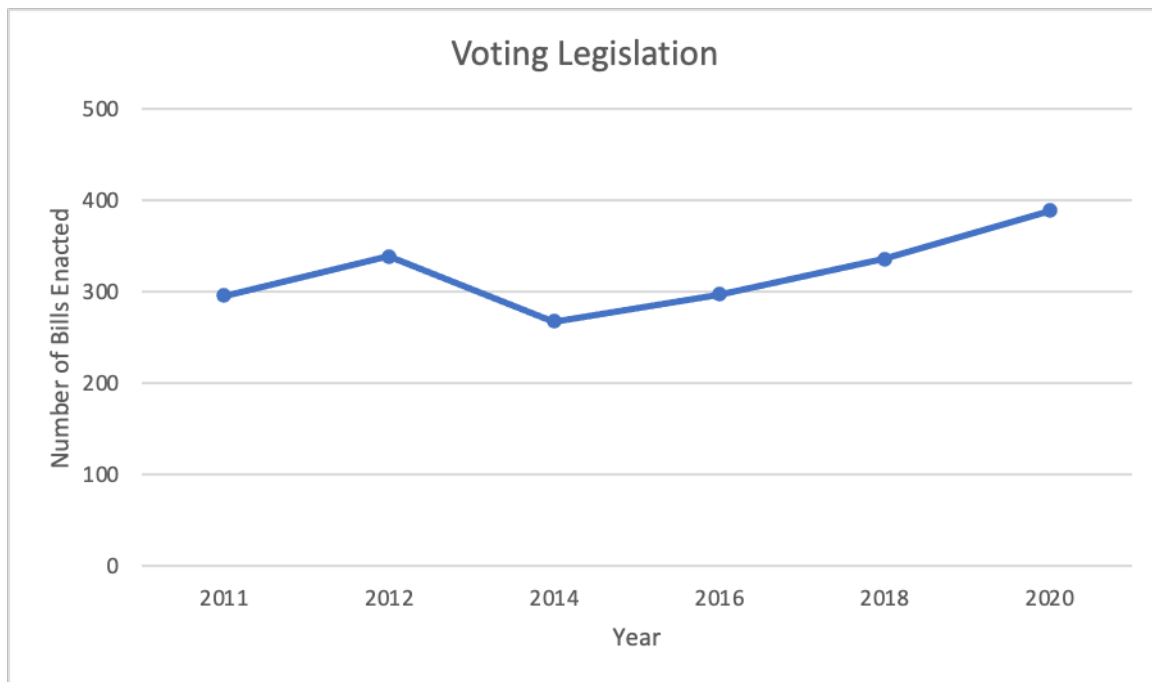
H₂: The proportional effect of Black women in state legislatures on turnout will be greater for Black women voters.

Data and Methods

Using state election data from 2010 to 2020, I examine voter turnout in state elections from 2010-2020 and focus on the impact that descriptive representation of Black women has on voter turnout. The number of women in state legislatures has quintupled since 1971, with significant spikes of women in office in 1992 and again in 2018. In recent years, we have seen an unprecedented number of women and specifically Black women gaining office. With the increase of women in office, there is now a sufficient number of Black women in state legislatures to conduct an empirical analysis on their effect. I focus on the state level voter

turnout because state legislatures are increasingly creating legislation that negatively impact the lives of marginalized communities. Since 2011, there has been over 1900 election related bills enacted at the state level (*State Elections Legislation Database, 2023*). Figure 2.2 demonstrates the increase in election related legislation enacted across the United States from 2011-2020. As shown below, state election legislation has been consistently increasing since 2014.

Figure 2.2. Voting Legislation Enacted 2010-2020



While this study focuses on 2010-2020, it is important to note that 2021 was a record-breaking year for state legislative activity around voting rights. Additionally, many of the same trends have continued into 2022, further showing the increasing importance and attention to election laws at the state level. In 2021, at least 405 restrictive voting bills were proposed in 39 state legislatures. At least seven states enacted election interference laws that were in place

for the 2022 midterms. 151 election interference bills have been introduced in 27 states and 12 states have enacted laws expanding the right to vote (Brennan Center for Justice, 2022). State legislatures are at the forefront of important election legislation that directly impacts voters and voter turnout.

To determine the collective representation of Black women in state legislatures, I use a proprietary dataset which includes the race and gender for every member of each state's legislature from 2010-2020. The independent variable is the descriptive representation of Black women which was operationalized as the percent of Black women in a given state's legislature. This percentage was determined by dividing the number of Black women legislators by the total number of members in the legislature. The dependent variable is statewide voter turnout overall as well as for population subgroups. The Current Population Survey (CPS) Voting and Registration supplement provides a large sample that provides overall turnout, as well as turnout data for population subgroups. Using the CPS makes sense for multiple reasons; first, the CPS' measure for voter turnout is more accurate than other widely assessed political surveys (B. Fraga & Holbein, 2020). Second, the CPS is state representative and includes turnout rates that are stratified by race and gender. Third, the CPS is frequently utilized to study voter turnout which allows for greater comparability across other studies (Whitby, 2007; Rocha et al., 2010; Uhlaner & Scola, 2016). There are some issues that arise when using the CPS for voter turnout, like the social desirability bias. Previous literature shows that respondents will answer a survey question based on what they perceive to be the more "desirable" or favorable response (Holbrook & Krosnick, 2010). Social desirability bias in self-reported voter turnout surveys can result in the overestimation of turnout (Hur, 2013). While social desirability bias can be present, the CPS has been shown to offer more accurate voter turnout rates, and especially for particular demographic

groups (McDonald, 2007; Hur, 2013; B. Fraga & Holbein, 2020). This chapter will focus on four measures of turnout all at the state-level: overall statewide turnout, Black voter turnout, turnout by women, and turnout by Black women. It is important to note, some states have too few Black women voters across various years, and therefore are excluded from the model since there are not enough respondents in the survey to estimate turnout rates for Black women. State and individual level factors that impact both the racial composition of a state legislature as well voter turnout are included as well.

There are individual level demographic variables that have an impact on voting included in this study, all of which are aggregated to the state level. The following demographic variables are pulled from the CPS; education, income, employment, homeownership, Black population, and union membership. Education is measured as the percent of the state with a college degree, employment is measured as the statewide unemployment rate, and income is the median state income. Black population is the percent of the state population that self-identifies as Black. All of these variables are captured in the CPS and affect the voting behavior of an individual. The literature supports the notion that those who are educated, with more income, a job, owns a home and part of a union are more likely to turn out and vote (Atkeson & Carrillo, 2007; Brady et al., 1995; Uhlaner & Scola, 2016).

The state variables are economic inequality, election rules, competitiveness of elections, legislative professionalization, and the level of urbanization. Economic inequality is measured using the GINI Index, which measures the distribution of income across the state. To take into account the variation in state election laws, I include a variable for election rules. Election regulations and laws vary by state, and the compilation of these laws have an impact on how easy or how hard it is for citizens in that state to cast their ballot. The election rules variable is

measured using the Election Law Journal's Cost of Voting Index (COVI) which looks at state election laws and calculates a single score that measures how difficult it is to vote in each state. COVI values range from -3 to +3 with states with smaller values indicating that their election laws and regulations make voting easier. States with a lower cost to vote should have higher turnout rates than those states with higher costs of voting. Additionally, turnout increases when the election is more competitive, thus I included a variable for election competitiveness (Hill & Leighley, 1993; Frank & Martínez i Coma, 2021). This is measured using the democratic share of the two-party vote in the most recent presidential election. Election results for presidential elections was gathered from University of Santa Barbara's American Presidency Project. Legislative professionalism refers to the capacity of both the legislators and legislatures to generate and digest information in the policymaking process. The Squire Index uses legislature staff size, salaries, and days in session to provide scores for how professional a state legislature is. Lastly, I have included a variable for the level of urbanization in a state which is measured by the percent of the population identified by the Census, as living in an urban area.

To explore the relationship between Black women's descriptive representation and voter turnout a linear regression model was used. There are four models, one for each of the voter turnout subgroups: statewide, women, Black, and Black women. Each of these models are structured to determine if Black women legislators had differing levels of impact for various groups.

Results

Before discussing the regression models, descriptive statistics for the independent and dependent variables are presented. As noted above, the independent variable is the collective descriptive representation of Black women in state legislatures which was derived from a

proprietary dataset. Black women historically have lower levels of representation in state legislatures, however, there has been a slow and consistent increase since the 1990s, with a spike in representation in 2018. Still, there is a significant lack of representation among women of color. The Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) gathered data on women officeholders by race and ethnicity. Figure 2.3 shows the racial and ethnic breakdown of women legislators in 2022, which shows the disproportionate levels of representation in state legislatures. Of the current 2,291 women state legislators, 1,678 identify as white and 368 identify as Black.

Figure 2.3. Women State Legislators by Race/Ethnicity

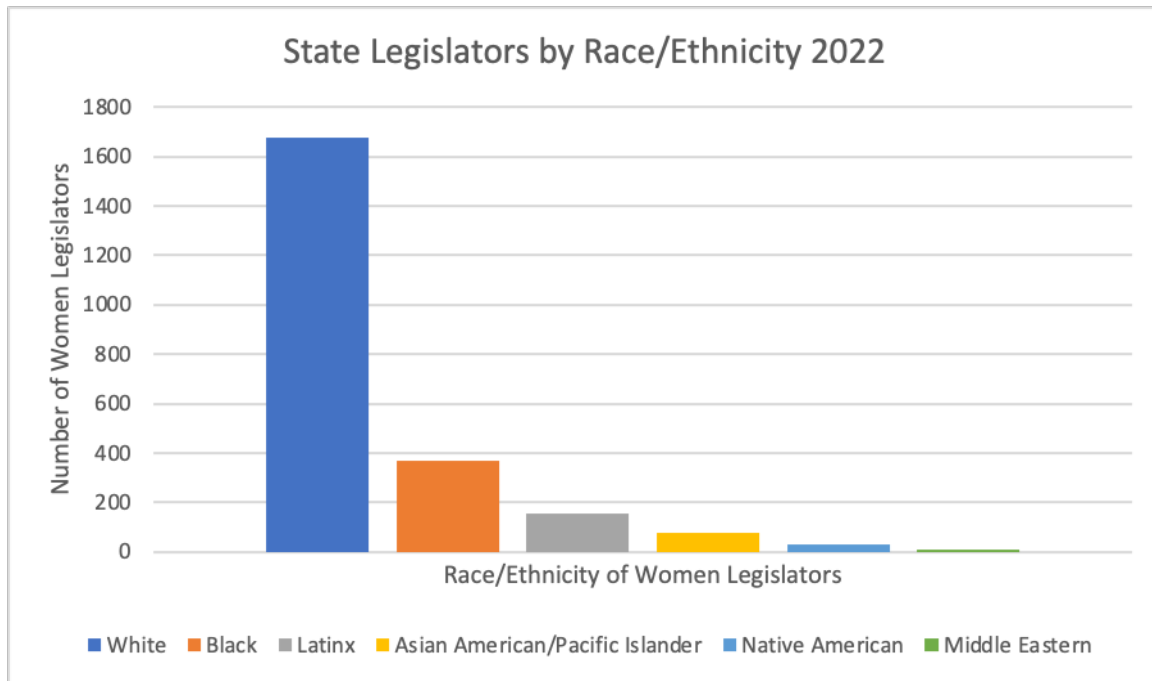
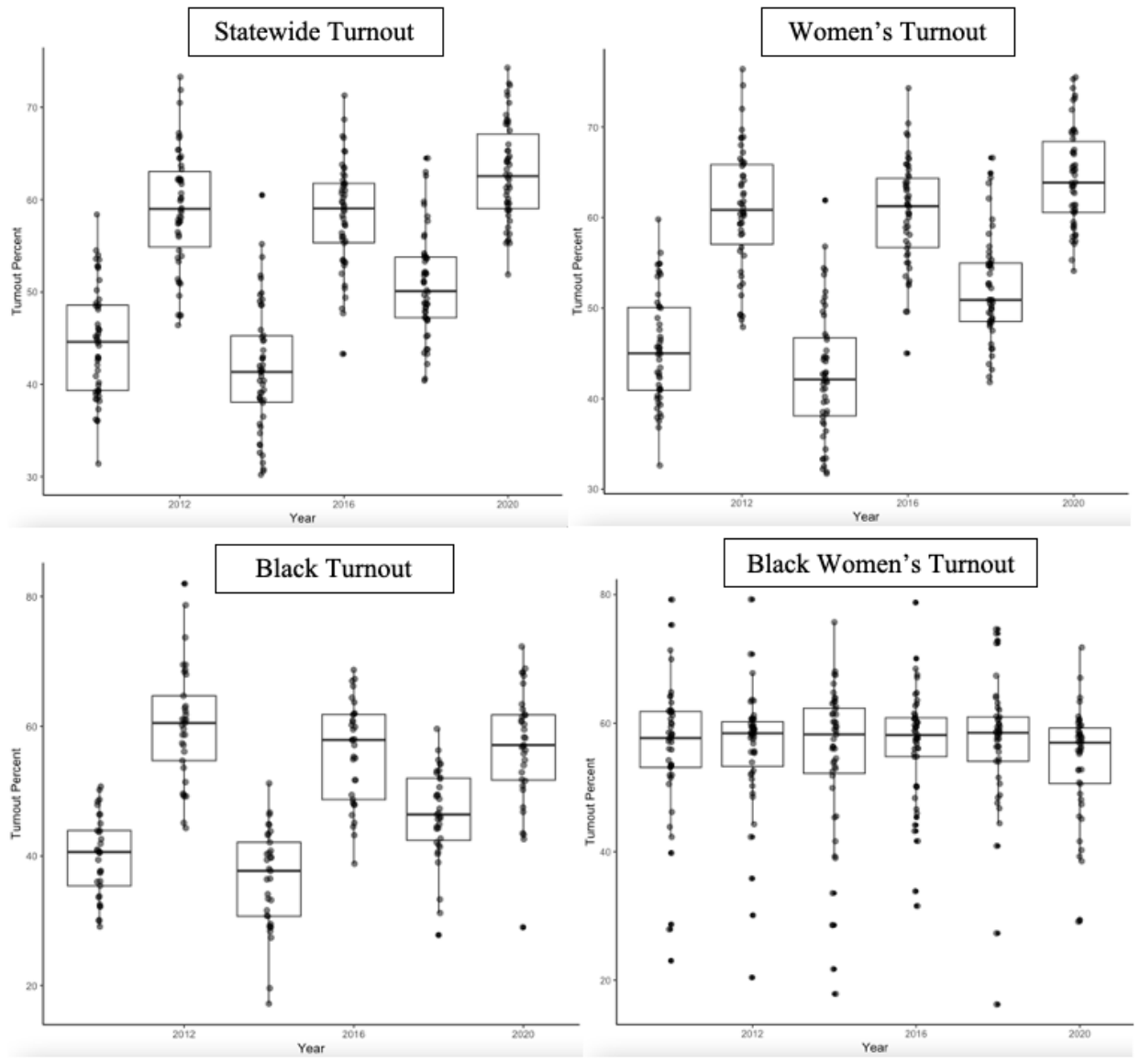


Figure 2.4 shows some notable trends in voter turnout rates from 2010-2020, across the four levels of turnout being examined in this study.

Figure 2.4. Voter Turnout Rates 2010-2020



The CPS voter turnout data shows that statewide voter turnout is consistently higher in presidential election years, although in 2018 turnout was higher than other midterm election years. Turnout in presidential elections usually is higher than others due to the visibility and popularity of the office. Additionally, women's turnout has similar trends to that of overall

turnout. Women, as a whole, participate more in the presidential elections than midterms, with turnout in 2018 being higher than other midterm years. 2018 has been dubbed the second year of the woman, with record breaking women running for and winning seats at the national, state, and local levels of government. The third dependent variable is the turnout rates for Black citizens. Figure 2.4 shows a noticeable difference in the turnout rates for Blacks, compared to the three previous models. For Black Americans, turnout in 2016 and 2020 was lower than 2012. This can be due to the presence of Barack Obama running for his second term, which served as a mobilizing effect for Black voters. Lastly, the final dependent variable is the turnout rates for Black women. Figure 2.4 also shows that Black women consistently show out to vote regardless the type of election, midterm or presidential. The CPS data shows how Black women continue to be a distinct voter bloc, with higher and more consistent turnout rates than most other groups. This model is of particular interest to me, as I argue that Black women legislators will have a significant mobilizing effect on Black women voters.

I use multivariate regression to examine turnout in five elections across a ten-year span in all fifty states, from 2010-2020. If the hypotheses are supported, I expect to observe that as the percent of Black women in the state legislatures increases (higher descriptive representation), so will overall voter turnout rates. Additionally, I expect the proportional effect of Black women in state legislatures on turnout will be greater for Black women voters. The dependent variables are statewide voter turnout of the voting age population--divided into four subgroups; overall statewide voter turnout, statewide women of women, Black voter statewide turnout, and Black women statewide voter turnout. The turnout rates considered are those from the citizen eligible population, which includes the population 18 years of age and older. All variables of interest have been aggregated to the state level. To better understand the relationship between descriptive

representation of Black women and voter turnout, I analyze four multi-variate linear regression models:

$$\text{StatewideTurnout} = \text{BlackWomenLegislators} + \beta_1(\text{Education}) + \beta_2(\text{Unemployment}) + \beta_3(\text{Income}) + \beta_4(\text{Homeowner}) + \beta_5(\text{Union}) + \beta_6(\text{BlackPopulation}) + \beta_7(\text{Urban}) + \beta_8(\text{ElectionCompetitiveness}) + \beta_9(\text{ElectionRules}) + \beta_{10}(\text{Inequality}) + \beta_{11}(\text{Region}) + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{WomenTurnout} = \text{BlackWomenLegislators} + \beta_1(\text{Education}) + \beta_2(\text{Unemployment}) + \beta_3(\text{Income}) + \beta_4(\text{Homeowner}) + \beta_5(\text{Union}) + \beta_6(\text{BlackPopulation}) + \beta_7(\text{Urban}) + \beta_8(\text{ElectionCompetitiveness}) + \beta_9(\text{ElectionRules}) + \beta_{10}(\text{Inequality}) + \beta_{11}(\text{Region}) + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{BlackTurnout} = \text{BlackWomenLegislators} + \beta_1(\text{Education}) + \beta_2(\text{Unemployment}) + \beta_3(\text{Income}) + \beta_4(\text{Homeowner}) + \beta_5(\text{Union}) + \beta_6(\text{BlackPopulation}) + \beta_7(\text{Urban}) + \beta_8(\text{ElectionCompetitiveness}) + \beta_9(\text{ElectionRules}) + \beta_{10}(\text{Inequality}) + \beta_{11}(\text{Region}) + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{BlackWomenTurnout} = \text{BlackWomenLegislators} + \beta_1(\text{Education}) + \beta_2(\text{Unemployment}) + \beta_3(\text{Income}) + \beta_4(\text{Homeowner}) + \beta_5(\text{Union}) + \beta_6(\text{BlackPopulation}) + \beta_7(\text{Urban}) + \beta_8(\text{ElectionCompetitiveness}) + \beta_9(\text{ElectionRules}) + \beta_{10}(\text{Inequality}) + \beta_{11}(\text{Region}) + \varepsilon$$

The following tables show the regression coefficients and directions of the relationship across the four models. Statistically significant variables are presented in bold. Table 2.1 shows how the collective descriptive representation of Black women in state legislatures impacts the four models of voter turnout.

Table 2.1. Regression Analysis for Impact of Descriptive Representation on Voter Turnout

Variables	State Turnout		Black Turnout		Women Turnout		Black Women Turnout	
	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z
Black Women Legislators	-2.214e-01 (1.753e-01)	0.207	2.628e-01 (2.653e-01)	0.323	-2.352e-01 (1.833e-01)	0.200	1.812e-01 (3.481e-01)	0.603
Education	5.257e-01 (1.238e-01)	2.97e-05	-1.583e-01 (2.207e-01)	0.474	5.442e-01 (1.295e-01)	3.54e-05	3.718e-01 (2.566e-01)	0.148
Unemployment	2.071e-01 (2.370e-01)	0.383	9.860e-01 (4.732e-01)	0.038	2.057e-01 (2.478e-01)	0.407	3.572e-01 (4.863e-01)	0.463
Income	-3.982e-05 (6.023e-05)	0.509	-1.039e-04 (1.222e-04)	0.396	-4.733e-05 (6.298e-05)	0.452	-4.851e-05 (1.252e-04)	0.698
Homeowner	2.327e-01 (8.503e-02)	0.006	6.061e-02 (1.480e-01)	0.682	2.444e-01 (8.892e-02)	0.006	-2.036e-02 (1.712e-01)	0.905
Union	-6.982e-02 (9.057e-02)	0.441	-1.302e-01 (1.796e-01)	0.469	-8.941e-02 (9.470e-02)	0.345	8.527e-03 (1.853e-01)	0.963
Black Population	4.265e-02 (8.027e-02)	0.595	3.881e-01 (1.372e-01)	0.005	3.559e-02 (8.393e-02)	0.671	5.216e-01 (1.614e-01)	0.001
Urban	-1.498e-01 (3.162e-02)	3.42e-06	-2.599e-02 (8.961e-02)	0.772	-1.527e-01 (3.306e-02)	5.91e-06	7.018e-02 (7.003e-02)	0.317
Competitiveness of Elections	1.586e-02 (4.707e-02)	0.736	2.062e-01 (1.419e-01)	0.147	2.335e-02 (4.922e-02)	0.635	-3.900e-01 (9.989e-02)	0.000
Election Rules	-1.483e+00 (4.471e-01)	0.001	6.305e-01 (9.315e-01)	0.499	-1.496e+00 (4.676e-01)	0.001	1.553e+00 (9.576e-01)	0.106
Inequality	-2.143e+01 (1.062e+01)	0.044	-4.815e+01 (2.508e+01)	0.056	-2.004e+01 (1.111e+01)	0.072	1.321e+01 (2.149e+01)	0.539
Deep South	1.421e+00 (1.809e+00)	0.432	-3.387e+00 (2.873e+00)	0.239	2.254e+00 (1.892e+00)	0.234	-8.958e+00 (3.604e+00)	0.014
Peripheral South	-2.878e+00 (1.230e+00)	0.019	-2.979e+00 (2.080e+00)	0.153	-2.762e+00 (1.286e+00)	0.033	-2.221e+00 (2.454e+00)	0.366
Intercept	3.835e+01 (1.045e+01)	0.000	5.251e+01 (2.052e+01)	0.011	3.757e+01 (1.093e+01)	0.001	2.420e+03 (8.046e+02)	0.002
Adjusted R ²	0.772		0.711		0.77		0.171	
F-statistic (DF)	57.24 (18, 281)	2.2e-16	28.46 (18, 183)	2.2e-16	56.61 (18, 281)	2.2e-16	4.18 (18, 260)	2.2e-16
N	300		300		300		300	

Note: models estimated with year fixed effects and regional dummies

Table 2.2 depicts a simplified summary of the regression models by showing the direction in which the variables influence each other. Statistically significant variables are presented in orange.

Table 2.2. Directional Relationship Across the Four Models

Model 1			Model 2		
Statewide Turnout			Women Turnout		
Variables	p>	z	Variables	p>	z
Black Women Legislators	-		Black Women Legislators	-	
Education	+		Education	+	
Unemployment	+		Unemployment	+	
Income	-		Income	-	
Homeowner	+		Homeowner	+	
Union	-		Union	-	
Black Population	+		Black Population	+	
Urban	-		Urban	-	
Competitiveness of Elections	+		Competitiveness of Elections	+	
Election Rules	-		Election Rules	-	
Inequality	-		Inequality	-	
Deep South	+		Deep South	+	
Peripheral South	-		Peripheral South	-	

Model 3			Model 4		
Black Turnout			Black Women Turnout		
Variables	p>	z	Variables	p>	z
Black Women Legislators	+		Black Women Legislators	+	
Education	-		Education	+	
Unemployment	+		Unemployment	+	
Income	-		Income	-	
Homeowner	+		Homeowner	-	
Union	-		Union	+	
Black Population	+		Black Population	+	
Urban	-		Urban	+	
Competitiveness of Elections	+		Competitiveness of Elections	-	
Election Rules	+		Election Rules	-	
Inequality	-		Inequality	-	
Deep South	-		Deep South	-	
Peripheral South	-		Peripheral South	-	

*Note: Models estimated with year fixed effects and regional dummies

Each of the four models were analyzed using a multivariate regression. Overall, the collective descriptive representation of Black women legislators had no statistically significant impact on any level of turnout. Model 1 shows the impact of Black women’s collective representation on statewide turnout. Black women legislators had a negative effect on overall turnout, as the proportion of Black women in the legislature increase turnout decreased. However, this impact is

statistically insignificant. The variables that were significant are consistent with voter turnout literature. People are more likely to vote if they are better educated and own a home and less likely to vote when they reside in states with more urban areas. Election rules had a significant negative effect on statewide turnout, as cost of voting increases voter turnout decreases. This result makes sense, the harder it is for Americans to vote the less they turnout in elections. Inequality also had a significant negative effect on statewide turnout, as inequality increases (measured by the GINI index) voter turnout decreases. Lastly, region also had a significant negative impact on statewide turnout. Voter turnout in those states located in the peripheral south is lower than in other regions.

Descriptive representation posits that an increase of Black women's representation should result in an increase in turnout amongst minority groups, specifically those with a shared identity. Model 2 examined the impact of Black women legislators on women's turnout. The results of this model does not support my hypotheses. Model 2 suggests that in states where there are more Black women legislators, women have lower turnout. However, this relationship was not statistically significant. Similar to the statewide turnout model, women who reside in states with a better educated and higher homeownership population are more likely to vote. Adversely, women who reside in states with a higher urban population, more restrictive election rules, and higher levels of inequality are less likely to turn out and vote. The results of Black women legislators on women's turnout mirrors the results from the statewide turnout model. The similarity in these models allude to women's voting behavior aligning with national turnout which is misleading.

The results of Model 3 which examines the impact of the collective descriptive representation of Black women on Black turnout, differs from the previous two models. Black

women legislators have a positive but insignificant effect on Black voter turnout. Black Americans are more likely to vote in states with a higher percentage of Black women in the legislature. Additionally, Black citizens are more likely to vote in states with higher unemployment rates and a larger Black population. Lastly, the only other statistically significant variable is inequality. Blacks are less likely to vote in states with higher levels of inequality. Lastly, Model 4 focused on the impact of Black women legislators on the voter turnout of Black women. This model was of notable interest as I assume that Black women legislators have a significant mobilizing impact on Black women voters. While the results of this model indicate that descriptive representation of Black women in state legislatures has a positive impact on Black women's turnout, these findings are not statistically significant. Black women are more likely to vote in states with larger Black populations. Adversely, Black women are less likely to vote in competitive elections and in deep south states. Black women's lower turnout in the deep south states could be due to the fact that Black women tend to favor more liberal policies and the deep south's conservative nature disincentivizes Black women from participating as much. This effects the external efficacy or the idea that institutions care about and respond to their interests. If efficacy is lower, then so is the likelihood of voting.

Conclusion

Previous research support that notion that collective descriptive representation has an impact on voter turnout. As the collective descriptive representation in state legislatures increase, so does voter turnout of previously excluded groups (Atkeson & Carrillo, 2007; Rocha et al., 2010; Uhlaner & Scola, 2016). This chapter focused specifically on the collective descriptive representation of Black women state legislators on voter turnout. There are no statistically significant results that support the hypotheses that higher percentages of Black women in state

legislatures results in an increase in state level voter turnout among the general public, women, Blacks, or Black women. There are a few reasons as to why there is no impact of black women legislators across the models. There is a difference in collective and dyadic representation. Dyadic representation refers to citizens responding to their specific individual representative. When women have the option to vote for a woman candidate or have a woman representative, they tend to have higher levels of voter registration, participation, and political interest (D. E. Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Harden & Clark, 2016; Liu & Banaszak, 2017). Collective descriptive representation refers to the overall composition of the state legislature, which is what I look at in this study. Since collective representation is aggregated at the state level, we lose out on how individuals can be impacted by representation. Additionally, while the representation of Black women in legislatures has increased in recent history, there are still very few Black women serving in state offices (Center for American Women and Politics). This prevents me from making assumptions in several states with that do not have adequate representation.

Additionally, there are other important factors that influence political behavior of marginalized groups that are not captured in this model. Group consciousness occurs when members within a social identity group become aware of how their group identification impacts their position in society, and therefore come together to pursue collective action to advocate for their shared interests (Banducci et al., 2004; Whitby, 2007; Gleason & Stout, 2014). Lastly, identity politics occurs when people of a particular group develops political agendas that are based upon their identities. In other words, how does one's racial identity drive their political behavior. These are phenomena that are not included in this model but have a significant impact on voting turnout and behavior. There are other potential implications for representation besides turnout, like increased attention to policy areas that are important for Black women and perhaps

increased positive perceptions of government. I explore the relationship between Black women legislators and these democratic norms more in depth in the following chapters.

“You make progress by implementing ideas.” -Shirley Chisholm

Chapter III. Descriptive Representation of Black Women in State Legislatures and Attitudes Toward Government

Introduction

Representative democracy refers to elected officials *representing* the interests of the people. Urbinati and Warren (2008) describe representation as a “principal agent relationship”, where constituents serve as the ‘principals’ who elect ‘agents’ to represent their interests and opinions. In theory, citizens vote representatives into office and are then free to go about their lives without the obligation of engaging in direct forms of policymaking. Instead, elected officials are expected to use their knowledge and skill to make decisions that align with the will of the people. However, citizens must believe that their elected officials, and government, are responsive and acting in the public’s best interests. There are many factors that influence political attitudes and perceptions, including how much those in elected office actually ‘represent’ their constituents. People are more likely to be politically involved or contact government when there are representatives present that share common identities, like race and gender (Harden & Clark, 2016). Not only does descriptive representation, or shared identity between constituents and those who represent them, influence political behaviors, but it also has an impact on attitudes and perceptions of government.

There has been a recent dramatic increase in the number of Black women running for and serving in office. With the added exposure that social media has, Black women like Stacey Abrams (ran for Governor, Georgia), Winsome Earle-Sears (Lieutenant Governor, Virginia), Kamala Harris (Vice President, USA), Lori Lightfoot (Mayor, Chicago), Michele Reynolds (State Senator, Ohio), Maxine Waters (U.S. Representative, California) and others, have shown to have a massive influence on voter mobilization and perceptions of government (Gillespie &

Brown, 2019; Teresi & Michelson, 2015). This chapter focuses on how descriptive representation influences political attitudes and perceptions of government. Specifically, I will be examining the relationship between Black women legislators and citizen's external efficacy and trust in government.

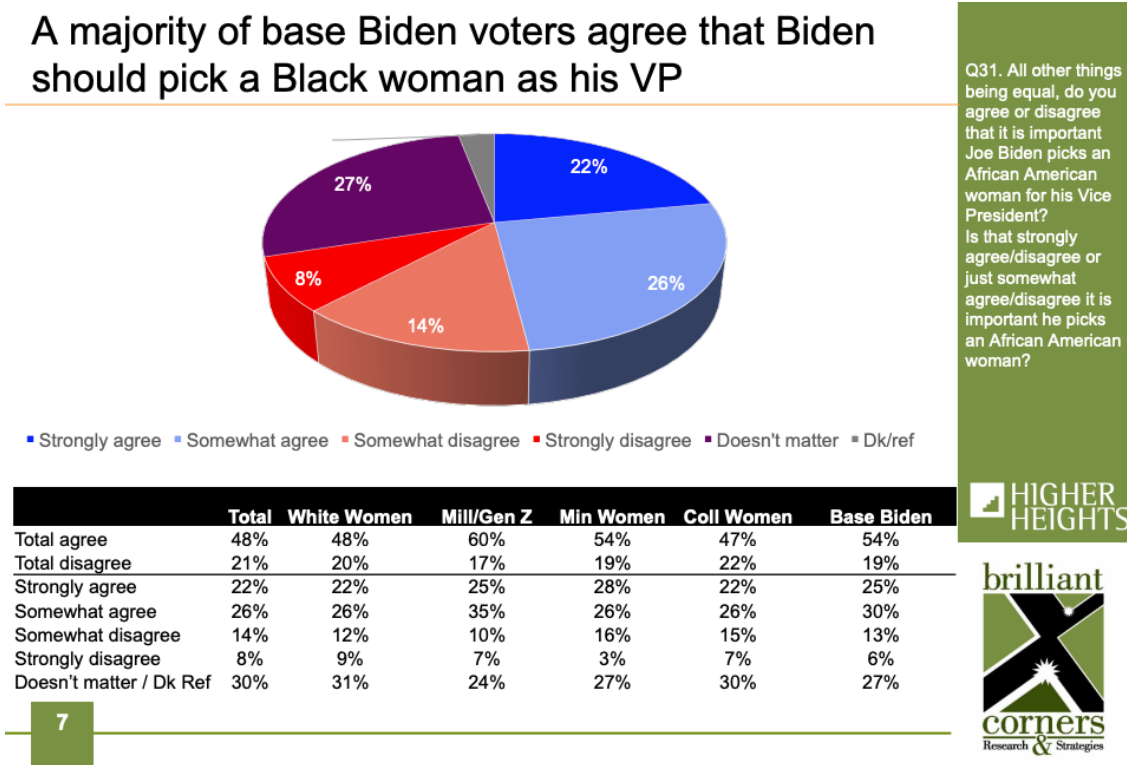
This study focuses on a lesser explored phenomenon, how an individual's larger state context influences their attitudes toward government. I argue that descriptive representation impacts citizens' attitudes toward government. Specifically, I posit that Black women's representation in state legislatures has a positive impact on how citizens perceive government.

Representation Mitigates Attitudes

Much of the work on descriptive representation focuses on the impact of dyadic representation. Dyadic representation occurs when a constituent shares an identity with their specific district representative, at the federal and state levels (Harden & Clark, 2016; Weissberg, 1978). However, focusing on dyadic representation bypasses the relationship between constituents and visible elected officials outside of one's home district. There are elected officials that may not be an individual's direct representative (dyadic), but still have an influence on their perception of government. Weissberg (1978) argued that collective representation is more reliable of a benchmark than dyadic as group interests can be supported by group members in other districts. For example, the nomination and successful election for Vice President Kamala Harris made history in 2020. VP Harris is the first woman, first Black person, and first South Asian person to serve as Vice President. This is crucial, as Black women were critical to the Biden-Harris campaign. Black women led lobbying efforts for Biden to choose a Black woman running mate, spearheaded efforts to fight against voter suppression, and led the charge in voter mobilization efforts. This resulted in Black women being the most reliable voters for Biden-

Harris with more than two-thirds of Black women turning out to vote, over 90% of which voted for the Democratic Party Presidential ticket (Nadeem, 2021). Higher Heights Leadership Fund (2020), an organization that focuses on Black women’s political power, conducted a survey of voters in battleground states to examine their preferences for a Black VP pick in 2020 (before Kamala Harris was chosen). Figure 3.1 provides survey results showing a majority (total agree) of Biden’s base agreed that he should choose a Black woman as his Vice President.

Figure 3.1. Voters Prefer Biden Choose a Black VP



Biden base voters expressed they “preferred someone who has a ‘lived experience and diverse perspective that reflects the challenges our country faces’ and someone ‘who represents a new generation of leadership and America’s changing diversity’” (Higher Heights Leadership Fund, 2020). This suggests that the social identities of elected officials influence attitudes and beliefs from the electorate. We have seen a similar phenomenon at the state level as well, highly

visible candidates influence political attitudes amongst constituents inside and outside one's own district. Stacey Abrams spoke on the importance of representation in her 2022 Georgia gubernatorial campaign video.

“Representation matters. It matters that we have a governor who embraces diversity as our strength... some of you will think that it really doesn't matter who's in charge. But that's the same narrative that they use to decide who tells stories. If it doesn't matter, then why are they trying to keep us silent? If it doesn't matter, then why aren't we given the same access and the same opportunity?”

(Abrams 2022).

Empowerment theory suggests that descriptive representation influences political attitudes among minorities. Higher levels of minority representation in politics results in higher levels of trust in government and political efficacy (Tate, 1991). Mansbridge (1999) argued that descriptive representation facilitated better relationships between constituents and government.

“Representatives and voters who share some version of a set of common experiences and the outward signs of having lived through these experiences can often read one another's signals relatively easily and engage in relatively accurate forms of shorthand communication. Representatives and voters who share membership in a subordinate group can also forge bonds of trust based specifically on the shared experience of subordination” (641).

Following this, additional scholarship focused on how representation influences attitudes toward government. Gay (2002) examined the relationship between descriptive representation in Congress and citizen attitudes towards Congress. She found that White constituents had more positive assessments of congressmembers that were also white. The study also found that Black

constituents were more likely to contact a Black representative. While the relationships between constituents and their representatives were influenced by race, Gay found that perceptions of the institution were not impacted by descriptive representation. I argue that this finding may hold true at the national level but not the state, seeing as citizens perceptions of government does change depending on the level of government (Rendleman & Rogowski, 2022). Some scholars have argued that citizen trust in state government stems from their feelings toward the federal government (Uslaner 2001). Wolak (2020) challenged this notion and found that citizen's trust in state governments is dependent on the business and politics within the specific state. This shows that state level factors, like the demographic makeup of the state legislature, has an influence on how citizens perceive government. Almond and Verba (1963) argued that people had somewhat unrealistic beliefs in their influence over government. This belief is important because people who think they have influence are more likely to use it, and the more people who attempt to influence the system, the more responsive the system will be. Citizen perceptions and attitudes toward government is critical to democracy, governance, and stability.

Political Efficacy

Political efficacy refers to one's belief that individuals have an influence on the political process and outcomes. This term was first introduced by Campbell et al., (1954, 187) as:

“the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e. that it is worthwhile to perform ones civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change”.

Campbell et al. (1954) originally used political efficacy to explain variation in voting behavior and found a positive correlation between efficacy and participation. In a democratic society, it is

important to understand how citizens perceive their influence in the political process. Citizens' belief that they can participate and have some influence in politics is essential to a healthy democracy (Abramson, 1983). Many scholars have since replicated the findings of Campbell et al (1954) (eg. Balch, 1974; Niemi et al., 1991; Dalton, 2013). Since the original conceptualization of this term in 1954, political efficacy has been operationalized in two ways: internal and external. Internal efficacy refers to "beliefs about one's own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in, politics" (Niemi et al., 1991, 407). External efficacy refers to "beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demands" (Niemi et al., 1991, 408). In other words, internal political efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to influence politics and policies. Citizens who feel confident in their ability to understand and navigate the political arena tend to be more politically involved. Conversely, external political efficacy refers to a citizen's perception of how responsive government is to their preferences (Gleason & Stout, 2014). Political efficacy facilitates higher levels of political participation; those who report higher levels of efficacy, both internal and external, are more likely to engage in voting, contacting elected officials, and volunteering for a campaign (Verba et al., 1997; Lawless, 2004; West, 2017). Scholars have identified factors that influence an individual's efficacy. People who are older, more educated, higher income, and who support the winning candidate or party, tend to have higher levels of efficacy (Abramson, 1983; Wu, 2003; Banducci et al., 2004). The significant influence that efficacy has on how individuals relate to politics as well as their political participation, has led to the study of how efficacy varies across different social identity groups (Wu, 2003; Merolla et al., 2013; West, 2017).

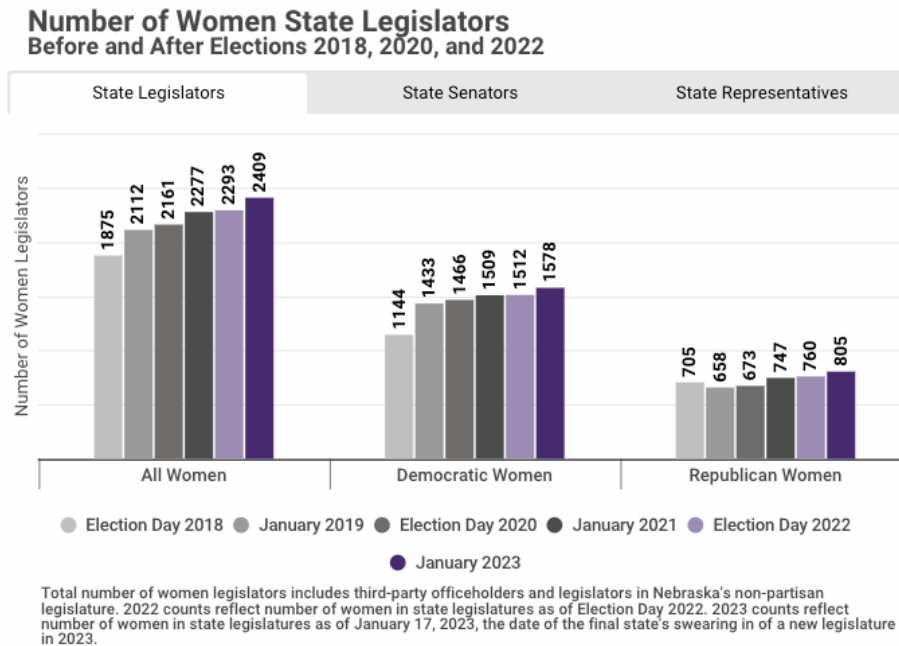
Efficacy and Women's Representation

In recent years the number of women in state legislatures across the United States has increased in many states (Figure 3.2). When looking at the impact of collective representation on women in state legislatures and in state executive offices, Atkeson and Carrillo (2007) found that a greater proportion of women in state legislatures resulted in women having more positive feelings toward government. While many scholars support the notion of representation having a positive effect on political efficacy, there are varying views, Wolak (2015) found that the presence of women candidates did not have an impact on the political efficacy of women or men. In fact, descriptive representation had a negative effect on men, those who were represented by a female congressional candidate actually become less interested in participating in the election. However, other studies have found positive effects of women's descriptive representation on the political participation of both men and women (Lawless, 2004; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). Additionally, Atkeson and Carrillo (2007) found that not only did an increase in the proportion of women in the state legislature influence efficacy in a positive way, but it also resulted in a higher likelihood of women perceiving government as more responsive and legitimate. A lack of descriptive representation can result in feelings of political alienation and lower levels of political efficacy (Pantoja and Segura 2003). These findings also hold true cross-nationally. A study of 31 nations found that women have greater confidence in government as the proportion of women in government increases (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). Women are also more likely to pay attention to politics when their elected official or candidate for office is a woman (Verba et al., 1997).

Figure 3.2 shows how the number of women serving in state legislators is continuing to increase (Center for American Women and Politics, 2022a). From 2018-2022 the representation

of women state legislators increased from 1,875 women serving to 2,409. This figure also shows the change in the number of women state legislators by party affiliation.

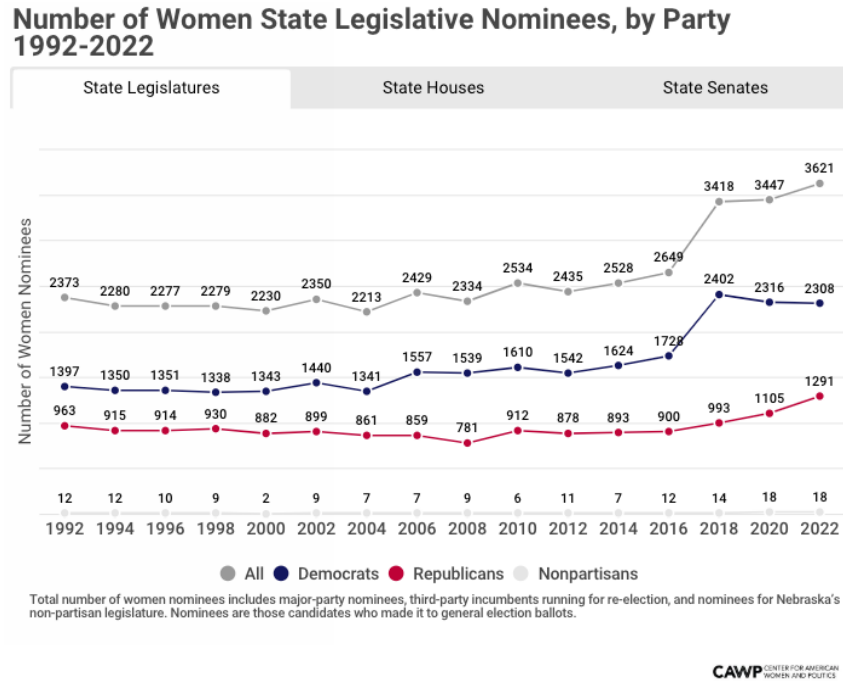
Figure 3.2. Number of Women State Legislators, 2018-2022



CAWP CENTER FOR AMERICAN WOMEN AND POLITICS

Figure 3.3 presents the number of women who have been *nominated* to serve in state legislatures (Center for American Women and Politics, 2022a). Women legislative nominees has had slight fluctuations since 1992, however we saw a sharp increase of nominations during the second “Year of the Woman” in 2018. Since then, the number of women running for state legislative office has continued to increase. This upward trend provides an opportunity to expand on our understanding of women’s representation.

Figure 3.3. Women State Legislative Nominees, 1992-2022



Efficacy and Black Americans' Representation

Additionally, scholars have found positive effects of Black descriptive representation on political efficacy among Black constituents (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990; Banducci et al., 2004; Merolla et al., 2013). West (2017) examined the impact of Democratic Party Presidential Candidates Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton on Black and female political efficacy. She found that the presence of a Black man in visible political leadership had a positive effect on Black constituents. However, this did not hold true for women as Clinton did not have an impact on women's political efficacy. Merolla et al. (2013) used the American National Election Study (ANES) pre- and post- the 2008 Presidential elections to investigate the relationship between descriptive representation and political efficacy. They found that overall, the election of Barack Obama increased political efficacy among Black participants. This study suggests that descriptive representation does have an influence on political attitudes.

Black women exist in a unique intersection of race and gender. This interplay of racial, ethnic, and gender identities and the ways in which they interact and influence attitudes, behaviors, and lived experiences, refers to intersectionality. Intersectionality literature conceptualizes sexism, racism, and other institutions of oppression, as systems that create overlapping barriers to power (Hughes, 2011). The double disadvantage argument suggests that because both Black people and Black women are disadvantaged, this makes Black women doubly disadvantaged (Darcy & Hadley, 1988). However, Fraga (2005) posits that intersectionality can provide minority women with strategic opportunities that others may not have. This is a time of historic political advancement for Black women, making this study timely and relevant. In 2020, there were a record number of Black women who ran for and won congressional offices. Additionally, Black women's state representation has seen a spike since 2018, increasing from 282 to a record high of 354 in 2021 (Center for American Women and Politics, 2022b; Higher Heights Leadership Fund, 2021). While scholarship suggest that descriptive representation has an impact on both women and Black people; this relationship may be different when considering Black women. Political efficacy of Black women is not thoroughly studied. Much of the literature focuses on efficacy of women, Black people, or even women of color as one group.

Trust in Government

Political trust refers to the evaluation of government job performance (A. H. Miller, 1974). Trust in government has real implications for political life; trust is essential for attempting to achieve the greatest good for society as well as for maintaining order (Avery, 2007). Citizens base their perceptions of how well the government is doing its job on their own expectations. A foundational piece of democratic theory is that a legitimate government is essential for a

successful democratic society (Putnam, 1993). The absence of government legitimacy will result in a citizenry that is uncooperative (Brennan & Buchanan, 1986).

“If people come to think that institutions are not working for either their or the nation’s best interest, it is not clear why they would continue to follow the laws set by these institutions. In fact, there is ample evidence to suggest that those who do not trust government are significantly less likely to obey its laws” (Scholz & Lubell, 1998).

In the 1960’s, data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) showed evidence of declining trust in the United States government. During this era, many people were protesting U.S. involvement in Vietnam, the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing, as well as parallel social movements like the Chicano Movement. The deep civil unrest occurring across the nation bolstered the importance of understanding how citizen trust in government impacted democratic norms like civic engagement. Some of the first studies on political trust have evaluated it through the lens of two schools of thought: discontent with the political system (Citrin, 1974) and dissatisfaction of an incumbent and their policies (Miller, 1974). In studying the impact of social policies on political cynicism, Miller (1974) found that increased levels of distrust in government in the 1960s could be partially attributed to changing attitudes toward racial integration and the Vietnam War. Hetherington 1998 posited that better perceptions of government would increase trust which is important because, “without public support for solutions, problems will linger and will become more acute, and if not resolved will provide the foundation for renewed discontent” (780).

The literature that discusses trust in government is largely focused on citizen trust in government at the national level (Abney & Hutcheson, 1981; Avery, 2007; Wilkes, 2015), and

much less focus has been given to citizen trust at the state level (Wolak, 2020). Over time, state governments have been perceived as less trustworthy than the national government largely due to the state's rights arguments of the South during the civil rights era. Since the 1964 Civil Rights Act, citizen trust and perception of state governments have become more positive partly due to state legislatures becoming more professionalized and representative (Squire, 1993). Currently, we see that citizens trust their state governments more than the federal government (Brenan, 2021). Higher levels of distrust in government can result in low political participation (Dalton, 2008), more people disobeying the law (Scholz & Lubell, 1998), and stifled economic growth (Blind, 2007). Therefore, studying what contributes to changing levels of citizen trust in government is important to a stable and effective democracy. I argue that descriptive representation of Black women legislators will result in an increase in positive attitudes and perceptions toward government.

Data and Methods

Using state election data from 2010 to 2020 and ANES data, I examine the impact that descriptive representation of Black women has on political attitudes. Studies focused on descriptive representation, measured as race and gender, have found increases in representation to result in positive feelings and perceptions toward government (Tate, 2001; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005; Gleason & Stout, 2014; West, 2017). Intersectionality theory urges descriptive representation scholars to consider how intersecting identities play a role in politics (Frasure-Yokley, 2018). Understanding group differences in race and ethnicity are essential, especially as America and American politics continue to become more diverse.

Much of the literature on descriptive representation focuses on Congress and the growth of representation at the federal level. However, it is important to study how descriptive

representation is changing at the state level. Many of the gains in representation that is seen in Congress began at the state level. Of the 2022 cohort of freshman Congresswomen, a third first served as an appointed or elected state officials in 2016 (Green, 2023). While representation of women and Black lawmakers has increased since 2015, they are both still underrepresented compared to the number of Black people in the population (Smith, 2021). This underrepresentation can have negative implications for racial/ethnic and gender minorities. A lack of representation can result in lower levels of efficacy and a lack of trust for underrepresented groups. Additionally, Black women have consistently been becoming more involved in politics on both sides of the political coin. Black women are running for elected office at all levels (Center for American Women and Politics, 2022a) while on the other side, Black women constituents are mobilizing and turning out at rates higher than their male and white counterparts (League of Women Voters, 2022). This highlights the importance of studying the influence and impact of a significant demographic that is often understudied.

To determine the collective representation of Black women in state legislatures, I use a proprietary dataset which includes the race and gender for every member of each state's legislature from 2010-2020. The independent variable is the descriptive representation of Black women which was operationalized as the percent of Black women serving as state legislators. This percentage was determined by dividing the number of Black women legislators by the total number of legislators. The dependent variables are external efficacy and trust in government. Political efficacy and trust in government will be measured using the scales in the American National Election Studies (ANES) survey. The ANES is administered every election cycle, so this study uses the 2012, 2016, and 2020 surveys as these are the years that aligned with the available state legislator data. The ANES is frequently used to study various relationships

between political behavior and participation (Hopkins, 2018). It is widely considered as the benchmark tool and “gold standard” used to study the American electorate (Green, 2023) Table 1 shows the questions asked in the ANES survey to determine external efficacy and trust in government.

Table 3.1. ANES Questions for the Dependent Variables

Variable	Questions and Possible Responses
External Efficacy	<p>Public officials don't care much what people like me think. People like me don't have a say about what the government does.</p> <p><i>Possible responses: agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, disagree strongly.</i></p>
Trust in Government	<p>How often can you trust the federal government in Washington to do what is right?</p> <p><i>Possible responses: Always, most of the time, about half of the time, some of the time, never.</i></p> <p>Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?</p> <p><i>Possible responses: Run by a few big interests, for the benefit of all people.</i></p> <p>Do you think that people in government [<i>waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it</i>]?</p> <p><i>Possible responses: waste a lot, waste some, don't waste very much.</i></p> <p>How many of the people running the government are corrupt?</p> <p><i>Possible responses: all, most, about half, a few, none.</i></p>

There are additional variables included in the study that generally influence individual perceptions and attitudes towards government. There are individual level demographic variables that have an impact on feelings toward government. The following demographic variables are included in the ANES: education, income, church attendance, gender, race, age, vote behavior,

and partisanship. Those with more education, higher income, and attend church more often are more likely to have higher levels of political efficacy (Atkeson & Carrillo, 2007). Income is measured as the individual's total family income for the past 12 months. Religion is determined by how often the respondent attends church services. Gender is a dummy variable coded 0 for male and 1 for female. Respondents self-identified their race according to the following racial identities: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and multiracial. Partisanship is also a strong predictor of political attitudes, stronger partisan ties results in higher levels of external efficacy (Wilkes, 2015). Strength of one's partisanship is measured by the ANES survey question which asked the respondent how close do they feel to their party. The possible responses were very close, somewhat close, and not very close. Internal efficacy is also an important predictor of external efficacy. Internal political efficacy refers to the ability of an individual to be able to understand, participate, and influence politics (Balch, 1974).

Intrinsically, individuals who better understand how to navigate politics are also more likely to feel as though the government is responding to their interests (external efficacy). For internal efficacy, ANES poses "Politics is too complicated for a person like me to understand", which is on a five-point scale with higher values indicating stronger feelings of internal efficacy. The possible responses were agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, disagree strongly. Lastly this study controls for direct democracy; Bowler and Donovan (2002) found that citizens in states that implement direct democracy initiatives are more likely to feel included and that government is responsive to them meaning they have higher levels of political efficacy. This is a dummy variable with direct democracy states coded as 1, and non-direct democracy states as 0.

This study utilizes a linear regression model to explore the relationship between Black women's descriptive representation and attitudes toward government. There are six models, two for the impact of descriptive representation on external efficacy and four for the different measures of trust in government. Each of these models are structured to determine if Black women legislators have an impact on citizen political attitudes.

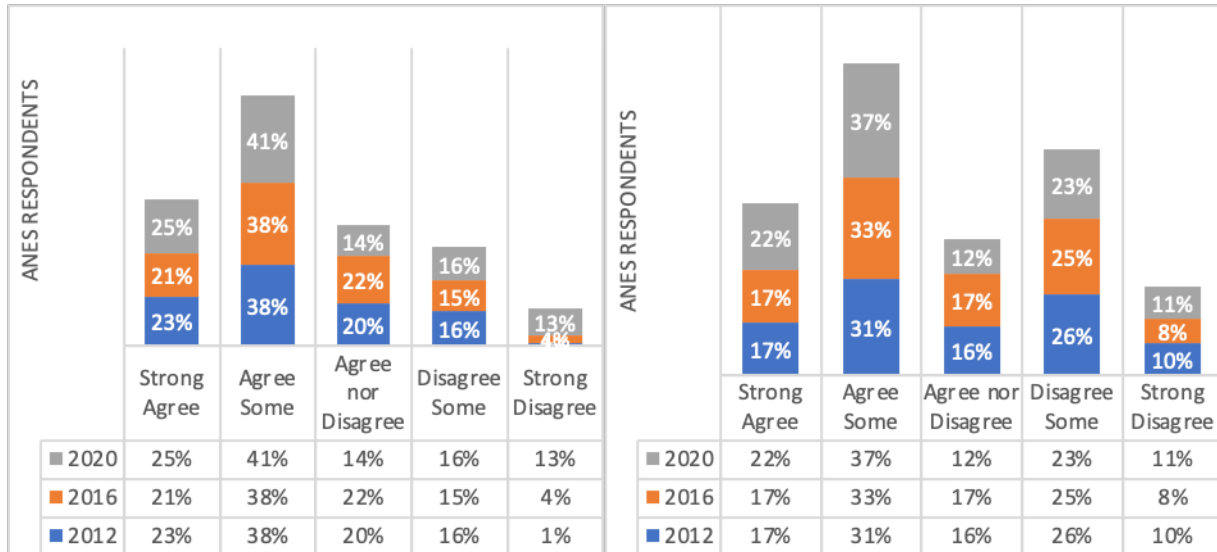
Results

First, I provide descriptive statistics for the independent and dependent variables. Black women have been increasingly serving in elected positions at the state level. Additionally, there has been an increase in the visibility of Black women in elected office. The attention and virality that is Black women makes studying their influence right now not only timely but critical as the number of Black women being involved in politics continues to rise.

The ANES includes questions that measure the dependent variables, external efficacy and trust in government. The survey posed two statements to determine external efficacy (see Table 3.1), and the respondent identified how much they agreed or disagreed. Figures 3.4 and 3.5 show how all ANES survey participants responded to the external efficacy questions across the years in our study. For all three survey years, majority of participants agreed that public officials don't care about what people like them think. About half of respondents felt that people like them do not have a say about what the government does. Citizens expressing feeling as if government does not care about them and that they do not have a voice in the process, indicates lower levels of external efficacy.

Figure 3.4. Model 1 ANES Nocare Responses
“Public Officials Don’t Care

Figure 3.5. Model 2 ANES Nosay Responses
“People Like Me Don’t Have a Say”



Figures 3.6 – 3.9 displays how ANES participants responded to questions measuring their trust of the government. Figure 3.6 shows that trust levels for most respondents are 50% and below when asked how often they can trust the government. The second measure of trust examines respondents’ feelings about how government is run. In Figure 3.7 we see that across 2012-2020, a vast majority of respondents felt that government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves rather than for the benefit of the people.

Figure 3.6. Model 3 ANES Trustgov Responses
 “How Often Can You Trust the Government”

Figure 3.7. Model 4 ANES Govrun Responses
 “Is Government Ran by Big Interests”

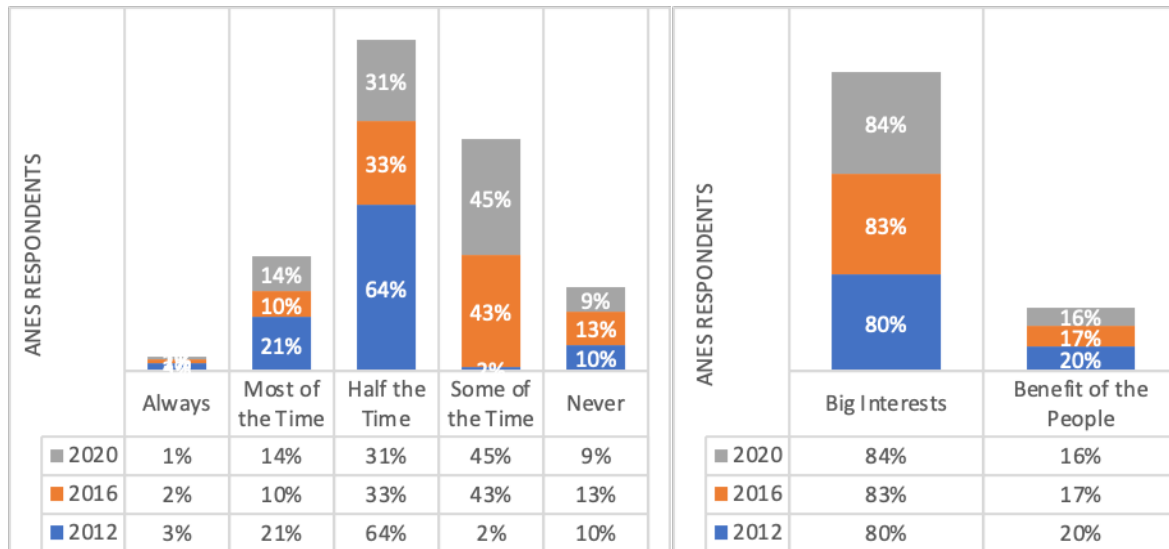


Figure 3.8 illustrates how respondents feel about government use of tax dollars. It is important to note that from 2012-2020, less than 4% of respondents felt like people in government don't waste much money. A majority of respondents expressed that they felt people in government waste a lot of money. Lastly, the final measure identifies respondent perceptions of how corrupt people in government are. The responses regarding this measure of trust follow a normal distribution.

Figure 3.8. Model 5 Govwaste Responses
 “Do People in Government Waste Money”

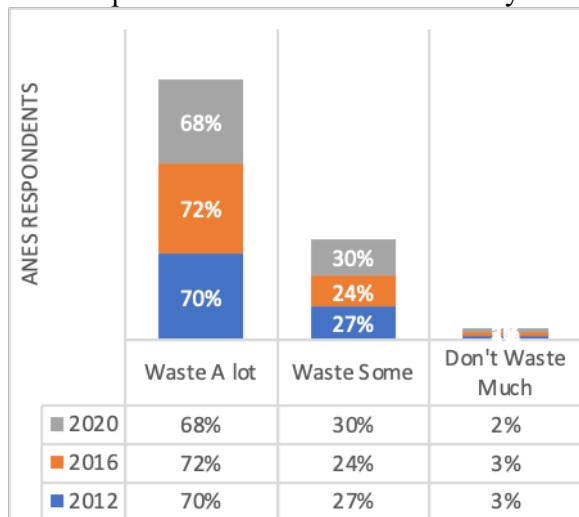
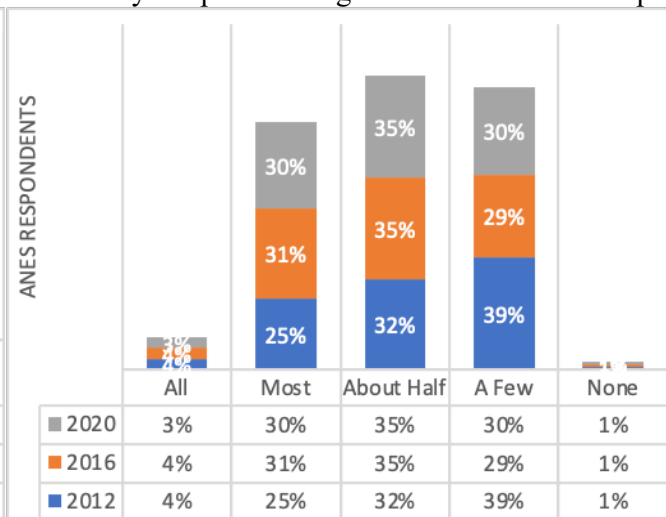


Figure 3.9. Model 6 Govcorrupt Responses
 “How Many People Running Government are Corrupt”



These models illustrate how respondents’ levels of external efficacy and levels of trust in the government are low. The purpose of a representative democracy is for citizens to delegate, or trust, their resources to representatives who then make policy decisions on their behalf (Rehfeld, 2009). This study explores how representation impacts citizen efficacy and trust by focusing on the relationship between the descriptive representation of Black women and citizen attitudes.

I use a multivariate regression to examine how changes in descriptive representation of Black women influences citizen attitudes toward government. If my hypothesis is supported, I expect to find that as the descriptive representation of Black women state legislators increases as will feelings of external efficacy. Additionally, I expect to observe that as the descriptive representation of Black women legislators increase, there will be higher levels of trust and better perceptions of government. The dependent variables are external efficacy (measured using two ANES survey questions) and trust in government (measured using four ANES survey questions). To better understand the relationship between descriptive representation of Black women and feelings toward government, I analyze six multivariate models:

$$\text{ExternalEfficacy}_1(\text{Nocare}) = \text{BlackWomenLegislators} + \beta_1(\text{Education}) + \beta_2(\text{Religion}) + \beta_3(\text{Voted}) + \beta_4(\text{Female}) + \beta_5(\text{Race}) + \beta_6(\text{InternalEfficacy}) + \beta_7(\text{Partisanship}) + \beta_8(\text{Income}) + \beta_9(\text{DirectDemocracy}) + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{ExternalEfficacy}_2(\text{Nosay}) = \text{BlackWomenLegislators} + \beta_1(\text{Education}) + \beta_2(\text{Religion}) + \beta_3(\text{Voted}) + \beta_4(\text{Female}) + \beta_5(\text{Race}) + \beta_6(\text{InternalEfficacy}) + \beta_7(\text{Partisanship}) + \beta_8(\text{Income}) + \beta_9(\text{DirectDemocracy}) + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Trust}_1(\text{Trustgov}) = \text{BlackWomenLegislators} + \beta_1(\text{Education}) + \beta_2(\text{Religion}) + \beta_3(\text{Voted}) + \beta_4(\text{Female}) + \beta_5(\text{Race}) + \beta_6(\text{InternalEfficacy}) + \beta_7(\text{Partisanship}) + \beta_8(\text{Income}) + \beta_9(\text{DirectDemocracy}) + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Trust}_2(\text{Govrun}) = \text{BlackWomenLegislators} + \beta_1(\text{Education}) + \beta_2(\text{Religion}) + \beta_3(\text{Voted}) + \beta_4(\text{Female}) + \beta_5(\text{Race}) + \beta_6(\text{InternalEfficacy}) + \beta_7(\text{Partisanship}) + \beta_8(\text{Income}) + \beta_9(\text{DirectDemocracy}) + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Trust}_3(\text{Govwaste}) = \text{BlackWomenLegislators} + \beta_1(\text{Education}) + \beta_2(\text{Religion}) + \beta_3(\text{Voted}) + \beta_4(\text{Female}) + \beta_5(\text{Race}) + \beta_6(\text{InternalEfficacy}) + \beta_7(\text{Partisanship}) + \beta_8(\text{Income}) + \beta_9(\text{DirectDemocracy}) + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Trust}_4(\text{Govcorrupt}) = \text{BlackWomenLegislators} + \beta_1(\text{Education}) + \beta_2(\text{Religion}) + \beta_3(\text{Voted}) + \beta_4(\text{Female}) + \beta_5(\text{Race}) + \beta_6(\text{InternalEfficacy}) + \beta_7(\text{Partisanship}) + \beta_8(\text{Income}) + \beta_9(\text{DirectDemocracy}) + \varepsilon$$

The above models show how descriptive representation influences feelings toward government by the general population. The models were ran three different ways to consider the effect of descriptive representation on: the population generally (all respondents), gender (women), and lastly the intersection of gender and race (Black women). I do this by running all models for the three study years with additional interacting variables for: Black women legislators * women and Black women legislators * Black women. The influence of descriptive representation is inconclusive in this study, as there are varying levels of impact in the six models across three years.

Tables 3.2 – 3.2b show how the descriptive representation of Black women legislators impacts the two models of external efficacy and four models of trust in government for the

general population, women, and Black women in 2012. Statistically significant relationships are presented in bold.

Table 3.2 2012 Effect of Black Women Legislators

Variables	Nocare		Nosay		Trustgov		Govrun		Govwaste		Govcorrupt	
	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z
Black Women Legislators	0.005 (.015)	.731	0.009 (.017)	.575	0.007 (.006)	.293	0.001 (.005)	.909	-0.004 (.007)	.556	0.001 (.011)	.888
Education	0.057 (.017)	.001	0.074 (.019)	.000	0.015 (.008)	.058	-0.001 (.006)	.812	0.018 (.008)	.034	0.042 (.013)	.001
Religion	-0.004 (.029)	.869	0.004 (.033)	.904	-0.023 (.013)	.089	0.011 (.011)	.315	0.017 (.014)	.222	0.009 (.022)	.680
Voted for President	0.503 (.375)	.180	0.073 (.426)	.863	0.016 (.172)	.925	0.177 (.142)	.215	0.146 (.182)	.422	0.299 (.303)	.323
Female	0.072 (.072)	.321	-0.058 (.082)	.483	0.036 (.033)	.271	0.015 (.027)	.568	-0.028 (.035)	.421	-0.093 (.055)	.094
Black	0.432 (.168)	.010	0.140 (.190)	.460	-0.336 (.076)	1.40e-05	0.183 (.064)	.004	0.173 (.081)	.034	0.222 (.128)	.084
White	0.317 (.150)	.034	-0.002 (.170)	.990	-0.061 (.068)	.372	-0.032 (.057)	0.574	-0.092 (.072)	.206	0.132 (.115)	.251
Asian	-0.058 (.414)	.888	-0.585 (.470)	.213	-0.644 (.189)	.001	0.061 (.157)	.696	-0.124 (.201)	.536	0.078 (.333)	.814
Hispanic	0.059 (.113)	.605	0.057 (.129)	.655	-0.225 (.052)	1.65e-05	0.071 (.043)	.100	0.043 (.055)	.435	-0.021 (.086)	.807
Internal Efficacy	2.02e-05 (.041)	.999	-0.190 (.046)	5.27e-05	-0.013 (.018)	.485	-0.005 (.015)	.743	0.032 (.020)	.103	0.001 (.031)	.968
Partisan	-0.139 (.061)	.022	-0.231 (.069)	.001	0.062 (.027)	.025	-0.068 (.023)	.003	-0.055 (.029)	.063	-0.094 (.046)	.043
Income	-5.75e-04 (.005)	.910	-0.002 (.005)	.629	0.005 (.002)	.019	-0.001 (.001)	.615	-0.004 (.002)	.107	.007 (.003)	.067
Direct Democracy	-0.090 (.005)	.224	0.100 (.084)	.233	-0.011 (.034)	.737	-0.009 (.028)	.752	-0.026 (.036)	.471	-0.059 (.056)	.295
Intercept	1.709 (.431)	7.99e-05	3.412 (.490)	6.61e-12	2.662 (.197)	2e-16	1.150 (.164)	5.34e-12	1.245 (.210)	4.32e-09	2.748 (.342)	3.29e-15
Adjusted R ²	.019		.044		.107		.066		.052		.022	
F-statistic (DF)	2.47 (942)	.002	4.45 (942)	2.20e-07	9.84 (942)	2.2e-16	6.14 (926)	3.95e-11	5.07 (937)	9.62e-09	2.64 (926)	.001
N												

Table 3.2 displays results from the six multivariate models measuring external efficacy and trust in 2012. There was no statistically significant relationship between descriptive representation of Black women and any of the models for efficacy and trust across the general population. However, the coefficients for descriptive representation and external efficacy are positive. The impact of descriptive representation on trust were mixed. There is a positive relationship regarding the perception of government trustworthiness; the other three trust models

had a negative relationship. Consistent with the representation literature, education, being Black, and partisanship all had significant influences on efficacy and trust.

Table 3.2a. 2012 Effect of Black Women Legislators on Women

Variables	NoCare		Nosay		Trustgov		Govrun		Govwaste		Govcorrupt	
	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z
Black Women Legislators	0.004 (.022)	.859	0.014 (.026)	.582	0.018 (.010)	.072	0.001 (.008)	.929	-0.015 (.011)	.153	-0.010 (.017)	.539
Black Women Leg * Women	0.002 (.029)	.944	-0.007 (.033)	.812	-0.019 (.013)	.142	-0.000 (.011)	.985	0.019 (.014)	.165	0.021 (.022)	.342
Education	0.057 (.017)	.001	0.074 (.019)	.000	0.015 (.007)	.056	-0.001 (.006)	.812	0.017 (.008)	.035	0.042 (.013)	.001
Religion	-0.004 (.029)	.871	0.003 (.033)	.913	-0.024 (.013)	.077	0.011 (.011)	.316	0.018 (.014)	.200	0.010 (.022)	.647
Voted for President	0.502 (.375)	.181	0.076 (.427)	.857	0.023 (.171)	.890	0.177 (.143)	.216	0.139 (.182)	.446	0.290 (.303)	.338
Female	0.064 (.134)	.634	-0.027 (.153)	.858	0.113 (.061)	.067	0.016 (.051)	.746	-0.105 (.065)	.109	-0.175 (.103)	.089
Black	0.432 (.168)	.010	0.138 (.191)	0.469	-0.342 (.077)	9.94e-06	-0.032 (.057)	.574	0.179 (.081)	.028	0.228 (.128)	.076
White	0.317 (.149)	.034	-0.003 (.170)	.981	-0.065 (.068)	.336	-0.032 (.057)	.574	-0.087 (.072)	.230	0.136 (.115)	.236
Asian	-0.057 (.414)	.889	-0.587 (.471)	.212	-0.648 (.189)	.001	0.061 (.157)	.697	-0.120 (.201)	.549	0.079 (.333)	.811
Hispanic	0.058 (.113)	.604	0.056 (.129)	.660	-0.227 (.051)	1.39e-05	0.071 (.043)	.101	0.045 (.055)	.414	-0.018 (.086)	.827
Internal Efficacy	0.000 (.041)	.996	-0.191 (.046)	5.16e-05	-0.014 (.018)	.437	-0.005 (.015)	.742	0.034 (.020)	.087	0.002 (.031)	.931
Partisan	-0.139 (.060)	.022	-0.230 (.069)	.001	0.063 (.027)	.022	-0.068 (.023)	.003	-0.056 (.029)	.058	-0.095 (.046)	.041
Income	-0.001 (.005)	.912	-0.002 (.005)	.626	0.005 (.002)	.021	-0.001 (.001)	.615	-0.003 (.002)	.113	0.007 (.003)	.064
Direct Democracy	-0.090 (.074)	.223	0.101 (.084)	.232	-0.010 (.034)	.754	-0.009 (.028)	.753	-0.026 (.036)	.458	-0.060 (.056)	.290
Intercept	1.713 (.436)	9.19e-05	3.395 (.496)	1.40e-11	2.619 (.199)	2e-16	1.149 (.166)	8.98e-12	1.288 (.212)	1.87e-09	2.795 (.346)	2.2e-15
Adjusted R ²	.018		.043		.108		.065		.053		.022	
F-statistic (DF)	2.29 (941)	.004	4.13 (941)	4.73e-07	9.31 (941)	2.2e-16	5.69 (925)	1.01e-10	4.85 (936)	1.01e-08	2.51 (925)	.001
N												

When considering the impact of descriptive representation on gender, there was no statistically significant relationship found. The marginal influence of Black women legislators on women was mixed across external efficacy and trust. Adding the interaction variable for Black women legislators and women did not change the direction of the relationship between women and external efficacy. However, it did change the direction of the relationship between women and trust in government. Table 3.2 shows that women were significantly more likely to believe that many of the people running government are corrupt. However, Table 3.2a shows that

descriptive representation of Black women on women results in women believing that there are less corrupt people running government. This table also shows that women are more trusting of government when considering descriptive representation of Black women. Although these relationships are not statistically significant.

Table 3.2b. 2012 Effect of Black Women Legislators on Black Women

Variables	Nocare		Nosay		Trustgov		Govrun		Govwaste		Govcorrupt	
	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z
Black Women Legislators	0.018 (.026)	.493	0.024 (.030)	.420	0.010 (.012)	.366	0.007 (.010)	.480	-0.020 (.012)	.117	.004 (.020)	.832
Black Women Leg * Black women	-0.023 (.072)	.748	0.011 (.082)	.885	-0.036 (.033)	.266	0.007 (.027)	.782	-0.006 (.035)	.853	0.029 (.055)	.591
Education	0.055 (.017)	.001	0.073 (.019)	.000	0.015 (.008)	.051	-0.001 (.006)	.780	0.018 (.008)	.031	0.041 (.013)	.001
Religion	-0.009 (.029)	.761	-0.001 (.034)	.981	-0.023 (.013)	.087	0.011 (.011)	.323	0.021 (.014)	.140	0.008 (.022)	.701
Voted for President	0.521 (.375)	.164	0.097 (.427)	.820	0.020 (.172)	.906	0.177 (.142)	.214	0.126 (.182)	488	0.303 (.303)	.316
Female	0.023 (.148)	.871	-0.016 (.168)	0.922	0.093 (.067)	.169	0.006 (.056)	.903	-0.116 (.072)	.106	-0.177 (.113)	.117
Black	0.685 (.326)	.036	0.514 (.372)	.167	-0.409 (.149)	.006	0.143 (.124)	.248	-0.067 (.160)	.673	0.307 (.249)	.217
White	0.325 (.149)	.029	0.004 (.170)	.977	-0.062 (.068)	.363	-0.035 (.057)	.533	-0.093 (.072)	.197	0.132 (.115)	.251
Asian	-0.034 (.414)	.933	-0.561 (.471)	.234	-0.641 (.189)	.001	0.053 (.157)	.735	-0.138 (.201)	.491	0.080 (.333)	.810
Hispanic	0.075 (.113)	.505	0.072 (.129)	.576	-0.227 (.052)	1.49e-05	0.070 (.043)	.106	0.035 (.055)	.524	-0.015 (.087)	.860
Internal Efficacy	0.006 (.041)	.867	-0.188 (.047)	7.15e-05	-0.015 (.018)	.402	-0.002 (.015)	.852	0.032 (.020)	.104	0.006 (.031)	.834
Partisan	-0.139 (.060)	.022	-0.229 (.069)	.000	0.064 (.027)	.020	-0.069 (.023)	.002	-0.057 (.029)	.053	-0.097 (.046)	.037
Income	0.000 (.005)	.963	-0.002 (.005)	.670	0.005 (.002)	(.028)	-0.000 (.001)	.734	-0.004 (.002)	.103	0.007 (.003)	.044
Direct Democracy	-0.078 (.074)	.297	0.102 (.085)	.228	-0.012 (.034)	.715	-0.003 (.028)	.904	-0.025 (.036)	.478	-0.050 (.057)	.373
Black Women	0.138 (.364)	.703	-0.192 (.415)	.643	0.080 (.167)	.631	0.111 (.140)	.428	0.160 (.178)	.370	0.063 (.279)	.820
Intercept	1.623 (.439)	.000	3.311 (.500)	6.30e-11	2.637 (.201)	2e-16	1.141 (.167)	1.73e-11	1.338 (.213)	5.9e-10	2.748 (.349)	9.92e-15
Adjusted R ²	.020		.043		.108		.067		.056		.022	
F-statistic (DF)	2.15 (938)	0.004	3.54 (938)	1.63e-06	7.81 (938)	2.2e-16	5.02 (922)	1.478e-10	4.35 (933)	1.07e-08	2.28 (922)	.002
N												

Table 3.2b presents the regression coefficients for the six multivariate models for the impact of descriptive representation on the intersection of gender and race in 2012. The effect of Black women legislators on Black women is not statistically significant across all six models. When looking at external efficacy, Black women still have low levels of external efficacy even

in states with more descriptive representation of Black women in legislatures. However, Black women do have higher levels of trust across three of the four trust models.

Tables 3.3 – 3.3b show how the descriptive representation of Black women legislators impacts the two models of external efficacy and four models of trust in government for the general population, women, and Black women in 2016. Statistically significant relationships are presented in bold.

Table 3.3. 2016 Effect of Black Women Legislators

Variables	Nocare		Nosay		Trustgov		Govrun		Govwaste		Govcorrupt	
	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z
Black Women Legislators	-0.011 (.012)	.348	-0.019 (.014)	.180	0.003 (.009)	.694	0.002 (.004)	.534	-0.006 (.005)	.237	-0.002 (.009)	.783
Education	0.026 (.021)	.217	0.030 (.024)	.207	-0.030 (.016)	.063	0.011 (.006)	.102	0.014 (.009)	.127	0.045 (.016)	.004
Religion	-0.051 (.030)	.087	-0.082 (.034)	.017	-0.007 (.022)	.736	0.002 (.009)	.773	-0.017 (.013)	.198	-0.011 (.022)	.613
Voted for President	-0.308 (.457)	.500	0.608 (.526)	.248	-0.655 (.349)	.061	0.139 (.145)	.337	-0.061 (.201)	.761	0.567 (.346)	.102
Female	-0.051 (.077)	.503	-0.152 (.089)	.087	-0.072 (.059)	.222	0.004 (.024)	.853	0.026 (.034)	.444	-0.093 (.058)	.111
Black	0.208 (.185)	.263	0.107 (.213)	.613	-0.061 (.141)	.663	0.087 (.058)	.136	0.042 (.082)	.611	0.236 (.142)	.096
White	0.360 (.171)	.035	-0.011 (.196)	.954	0.397 (.130)	.002	-0.028 (.054)	.601	-0.072 (.075)	.343	-0.033 (.130)	.797
Asian	-0.017 (.282)	.951	0.250 (.325)	.441	-0.246 (.215)	.254	0.221 (.089)	.013	0.116 (.124)	.352	0.152 (.214)	.478
Hispanic	0.158 (.147)	.283	0.100 (.169)	.552	-0.361 (.112)	.001	0.148 (.046)	.001	0.089 (.065)	.173	0.327 (.112)	.003
Internal Efficacy	0.078 (.042)	.064	-0.079 (.048)	.104	0.007 (.032)	.813	0.019 (.013)	.150	0.022 (.018)	.232	0.053 (.032)	.099
Partisan	-0.055 (.068)	.412	-0.113 (.078)	.147	0.055 (.051)	.282	-0.023 (.021)	.278	0.029 (.029)	.327	-0.027 (.051)	.590
Income	0.006 (.005)	.225	0.006 (.006)	.294	-0.002 (.004)	.495	-0.001 (.002)	.711	0.001 (.002)	.574	0.011 (.004)	.006
Direct Democracy	-0.067 (.074)	.362	-0.020 (.085)	.811	-0.067 (.056)	.233	0.019 (.023)	.401	0.053 (.032)	.101	0.008 (.056)	.882
Intercept	2.427 (.509)	2.18e-06	2.832 (.585)	1.53e-06	4.083 (.388)	2e-16	0.933 (.161)	9.81e-09	1.198 (.224)	1.13e-07	1.996 (.385)	2.83e-07
Adjusted R ²	.060		.011		.052		.027		.010		.031	
F-statistic (DF)	1.46 (903)	0.126	1.78 (903)	.040	4.94 (904)	1.91e-08	2.95 (896)	0.00	1.72 (902)	.051	3.25 (900)	7.55e-05
N												

Table 3.3 displays results from the seven multivariate models measuring external efficacy and trust in 2016. Black women legislators had a negative effect on external efficacy; an increase in descriptive representation resulted in stronger feelings of having ‘no say’ in government and

beliefs that the ‘government does not care’. However, this relationship is statistically insignificant. The variables that were significant are consistent with the literature on political attitudes and perceptions toward government. Those who are involved in church tend to participate more and have more positive attitudes about government. Women are more likely to have lower feelings of external efficacy, while being white results in higher levels of external efficacy.

Table 3.3a. 2016 Effect of Black Women Legislators on Women

Variables	NoCare		Nosay		Trustgov		Govrun		Govwaste		Govcorrupt	
	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z
Black Women Legislators	-0.011 (.018)	.530	-0.001 (.021)	.963	-0.002 (.014)	.836	0.002 (.006)	.739	-0.010 (.008)	.209	-0.005 (.014)	.678
Black Women Leg * Women	-0.000 (.024)	.984	-0.034 (.028)	.231	0.012 (.018)	.513	0.001 (.008)	.898	0.006 (.010)	.540	0.005 (.018)	.756
Education	0.026 (.021)	.217	0.031 (.024)	.190	-0.030 (.016)	.059	0.010 (.007)	.103	0.013 (.009)	.134	0.045 (.016)	.005
Religion	-0.051 (.030)	.087	-0.083 (.034)	.015	-0.007 (.023)	.748	0.003 (.009)	.771	-0.016 (.013)	.204	-0.011 (.022)	.618
Voted for President	-0.309 (.458)	.500	0.584 (.526)	.267	-0.647 (.350)	.064	.139 (.145)	.335	-0.056 (.201)	.779	0.571 (.347)	.100
Female	-0.049 (.135)	.715	0.001 (.156)	.993	-0.127 (.103)	.218	2.85e-05 (.043)	.999	-0.004 (.059)	.946	-0.119 (.103)	.245
Black	0.208 (.186)	.263	0.110 (.213)	.603	-0.062 (.141)	.657	0.088 (.059)	.137	0.041 (.082)	.614	0.236 (.142)	.096
White	0.360 (.171)	.035	-0.009 (.196)	.960	0.396 (.130)	.002	-0.028 (.054)	.601	-0.072 (.075)	.343	-0.033 (.130)	.797
Asian	-0.017 (.283)	.951	0.254 (.325)	.433	-0.247 (.215)	.251	0.022 (.089)	.013	0.115 (.124)	.355	0.151 (.214)	.480
Hispanic	0.158 (.148)	.284	0.115 (.169)	.497	-0.366 (.112)	.001	0.015 (.046)	.001	0.086 (.065)	.188	0.325 (.112)	.003
Internal Efficacy	0.078 (.042)	.064	-0.080 (.048)	.100	0.007 (.032)	.806	0.019 (.013)	.150	0.022 (.018)	.229	0.053 (.032)	.098
Partisan	-0.055 (.068)	.413	-0.119 (.078)	.128	0.057 (.052)	.266	-0.023 (.021)	.282	0.030 (.030)	.311	-0.026 (.051)	.604
Income	0.006 (.005)	.226	0.006 (.006)	.322	-0.002 (.004)	.516	-6.16e-04 (.002)	.716	0.001 (.002)	.554	0.011 (.004)	.006
Direct Democracy	-0.067 (.074)	.362	-0.020 (.085)	.808	-0.067 (.056)	.234	0.019 (.023)	.401	0.053 (.032)	.100	0.008 (.056)	.880
Intercept	2.426 (.510)	2.36e-06	2.782 (.586)	2.45e-06	4.101 (.389)	2e-16	0.935 (.162)	1.04e-08	1.208 (.224)	9.75e-08	2.004 (.386)	2.74e-07
Adjusted R ²	.053		.011		.052		.026		.094		.030	
F-statistic (DF)	1.35 (902)	.169	1.76 (902)	.039	4.61 (903)	3.70e-08	2.74 (895)	.001	1.62 (901)	.067	3.02 (899)	.000
N												

Table 3.3a presents the effect of Black women legislators on women in 2016. Descriptive representation had little effect on women’s external efficacy. Women in states with more Black

women legislators still have low levels of external efficacy. On the other hand, descriptive representation had some influence on women’s trust in government. Three of the four trust measures show that when there is descriptive representation of women, women are more trusting of government. This relationship is not statistically significant.

Table 3.3b. 2016 Effect of Black Women Legislators on Black Women

Variables	NoCare		Nosay		Trustgov		Govrun		Govwaste		Govcorrupt	
	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z
Black Women Legislators	-0.019 (.019)	.316	-0.017 (.022)	.441	0.002 (.014)	.862	0.002 (.006)	.723	-0.009 (.008)	.245	-0.007 (.014)	.596
Black Women Leg * Black women	-0.084 (.089)	.344	0.179 (.085)	.035	0.051 (.068)	.448	0.032 (.028)	.256	-0.007 (.039)	.857	-0.017 (.068)	.795
Education	0.030 (.021)	.158	0.037 (.024)	.130	-0.031 (.016)	.053	0.010 (.006)	.111	0.013 (.009)	.144	0.045 (.016)	.005
Religion	-0.053 (.030)	.074	-0.083 (.034)	.016	-0.008 (.023)	.701	0.003 (.009)	.695	-0.016 (.013)	.204	-0.010 (.022)	.641
Voted for President	-0.324 (.461)	.482	0.601 (.529)	.256	-0.662 (.352)	.060	0.166 (.145)	.253	-0.064 (.203)	.752	0.578 (.349)	.098
Female	-0.073 (.140)	.599	-0.030 (.161)	.849	-0.120 (.107)	.261	0.017 (.044)	.698	-0.008 (.061)	.892	-0.121 (.106)	.254
Black	0.108 (.525)	.835	-0.814 (.602)	.176	0.424 (.401)	.290	0.094 (.166)	.569	0.014 (.23)	.950	0.045 (.400)	.909
White	0.360 (.171)	.036	0.002 (.196)	.989	0.389 (.130)	.002	-0.024 (.054)	.648	-0.072 (.076)	.338	-0.030 (.131)	.818
Asian	-0.007 (.283)	.979	0.264 (.324)	.415	-0.248 (.216)	.249	0.219 (.089)	.014	0.115 (.124)	.356	0.151 (.214)	.479
Hispanic	0.161 (.148)	.277	0.115 (.169)	.495	-0.365 (.112)	.001	0.147 (.046)	.001	0.086 (.065)	.188	0.324 (.112)	.004
Internal Efficacy	0.073 (.042)	.085	-0.088 (.048)	.071	0.010 (.032)	.756	0.020 (.013)	.124	0.022 (.018)	.233	0.052 (.032)	.104
Partisan	-0.058 (.068)	.388	-0.129 (.078)	.099	0.062 (.052)	.233	-0.022 (.021)	.292	0.030 (.030)	.314	-0.028 (.052)	.579
Income	0.005 (.005)	.272	0.005 (.006)	.386	-0.002 (.004)	.542	-0.000 (.001)	.755	0.001 (.002)	.551	0.011 (.004)	.006
Direct Democracy	-0.071 (.074)	.338	-0.024 (.085)	.776	-0.067 (.056)	.236	0.019 (.023)	.402	.054 (.032)	.098	0.008 (.056)	.878
Intercept	2.469 (.515)	1.98e-06	2.830 (.591)	2.01e-06	4.093 (.393)	2e-16	0.898 (.163)	5.02e-08	1.217 (.227)	1.1e-07	2.005 (.391)	3.74e-07
Adjusted R ²	.055		.014		.051		.026		.063		.027	
F-statistic (DF)	1.29 (899)	.185	1.80 (899)	.023	3.94 (900)	1.40e-07	2.48 (892)	.001	1.34 (898)	.158	2.51 (896)	.001
N												

When considering the effect of descriptive representation on the intersection of race and gender, only one of the six models were statistically significant. Black women in state legislatures has an impact on Black women’s perception of their voice in government. Black women are more likely to believe they, and those like them, have a say in government when

there are Black women legislators present. Overall, these models show that Black women have low levels of trust in government.

Tables 3.4 – 3.4b show how the descriptive representation of Black women legislators impacts the two models of external efficacy and four models of trust in government for the general population, women, and Black women in 2020. Statistically significant relationships are presented in bold.

Table 3.4 2020 Effect of Black Women Legislators

Variables	NoCare		Nosay		Trustgov		Govrun		Govwaste		Govcorrupt	
	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z
Black Women Legislators	-0.009 (.007)	.190	-0.13 (.008)	.088	-0.006 (.005)	.289	0.005 (.002)	.031	-0.001 (.003)	.849	-0.000 (.005)	.968
Education	0.063 (.013)	8.92e-07	0.091 (.014)	1.34e-10	0.024 (.009)	.014	0.003 (.004)	.543	0.029 (.006)	6.14e-07	0.027 (.009)	.004
Religion	-0.012 (.019)	.509	-0.025 (.021)	.240	0.008 (.015)	.594	0.004 (.006)	.561	0.016 (.009)	.063	-0.020 (.014)	.154
Voted for President	-0.204 (.263)	.439	-0.301 (.291)	.301	0.171 (.204)	.401	-0.093 (.087)	.280	-0.197 (.119)	.098	-0.351 (.194)	.071
Female	0.139 (.047)	.003	0.074 (.052)	.157	-0.025 (.037)	.488	-0.021 (.016)	.173	0.049 (.021)	.021	-0.104 (.035)	.003
Black	-0.067 (.078)	.395	0.188 (.087)	.030	0.120 (.061)	.049	-0.075 (.026)	.004	0.097 (.035)	.006	-0.072 (.058)	.215
White	-0.255 (.148)	.086	-0.153 (.164)	.351	-0.011 (.115)	.924	0.018 (.062)	.770	0.006 (.067)	.931	0.010 (.138)	.942
Hispanic	0.052 (.093)	.577	0.140 (.102)	.172	-0.084 (.072)	.242	-0.025 (.030)	.404	0.048 (.042)	.250	-0.132 (.068)	.053
Asian	0.156 (.144)	.281	-0.026 (.160)	.872	-0.247 (.111)	.027	0.084 (.047)	.076	0.126 (.065)	.053	0.052 (.107)	.624
Internal Efficacy	-0.001 (.027)	.962	-0.068 (.030)	.024	-0.022 (.021)	.303	0.009 (.001)	.310	0.039 (.012)	.002	-0.016 (.020)	.430
Partisan	-0.017 (.039)	.663	-0.041 (.042)	.335	0.243 (.030)	4.51e-16	-0.059 (.013)	3.73e-06	-0.030 (.017)	.081	-0.078 (-.028)	.006
Income	0.009 (.004)	.016	0.006 (.004)	.148	0.009 (.003)	.004	0.001 (.001)	.462	-0.001 (.002)	.576	0.007 (.003)	.013
Direct Democracy	-0.017 (.047)	.721	0.030 (.051)	.555	0.017 (.036)	.631	-0.023 (.015)	.140	0.012 (.021)	.562	0.049 (.034)	.151
Intercept	2.170 (.291)	1.22e-13	2.657 (.322)	2.47e-16	2.649 (.225)	2e-16	1.306 (.096)	2e16	1.294 (.131)	2e-16	3.419 (.021)	2e-16
Adjusted R ²	.022		.028		.043	.043	.012		.022		.017	
F-statistic (DF)	4.69 (2299)	2.8e-08	5.78 (2300)	3.1e-11	8.41 (2298)	2.2e-16	3.01 (2282)	.000	4.74 (2299)	4.74 (2299)	3.82 (2292)	1.7e-06
N												

When considering the impact of descriptive representation on the general population, the relationship was statistically significant for models 2 and 4. Table 3.4 shows that in 2020, as the descriptive representation of Black women legislators increased, feelings regarding whether people have a say in government got stronger. People are more likely to feel as if they, and those

like them, do not have a voice in government proceedings. Descriptive representation also had a negative relationship in model 1 “Nocare”, although it is not statistically significant. Models 1 and 2 illustrate that as descriptive representation of Black women increases, levels of external efficacy decrease. Models 3-6 capture levels of trust in government. In 2020 descriptive representation was only statistically significant for one of the four trust models. As the number of Black women legislators increased, perceptions of who government is run for become more positive. People are more likely to perceive that government is being run for the benefit of all people rather than being run by a few big interests looking out for themselves.

Table 3.4a. 2020 Effect of Black Women Legislators on Women

Variables	Nocare		Nosay		Trustgov		Govrun		Govwaste		Govcorrupt	
	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z
Black Women Legislators	-0.003 (.010)	.769	-0.010 (.011)	.371	-0.007 (.008)	.357	0.002 (.003)	.497	-0.004 (.004)	.366	0.000 (.007)	.974
Black women leg * Women	-0.011 (.0141)	.404	-0.006 (.015)	.706	0.003 (.010)	.790	0.005 (.004)	.273	0.006 (.006)	.288	-0.001 (.010)	.935
Education	0.062 (.013)	9.58e-07	0.091 (.014)	1.42e-10	0.024 (.010)	.014	0.003 (.004)	.532	0.028 (.005)	5.66e-07	0.027 (.009)	.003
Religion	-0.013 (.019)	.508	-0.025 (.021)	.239	0.008 (.015)	.594	0.003 (.006)	.559	0.015 (.008)	.062	-0.019 (.013)	.154
Voted for President	-0.134 (.264)	.463	-0.296 (.291)	.310	0.169 (.204)	.408	-0.098 (.087)	.259	-0.201 (.118)	.088	-0.350 (.194)	.071
Female	0.133 (.086)	.021	0.104 (.095)	.274	-0.040 (.067)	.546	-0.047 (.028)	.096	0.014 (.038)	.704	-0.099 (.063)	.119
Black	-0.064 (.079)	.417	0.190 (.087)	.029	0.119 (.061)	.051	-0.076 (.026)	.003	0.095 (.035)	.007	-0.071 (.058)	.216
White	-0.254 (.148)	.086	-0.374 (.164)	.351	-0.011 (.115)	.924	-0.039 (.049)	.417	0.005 (.066)	.931	0.079 (.110)	.473
Hispanic	0.052 (.093)	.573	0.140 (.102)	.171	-0.084 (.072)	.241	-0.026 (.030)	.399	0.047 (.041)	.252	-0.132 (.068)	.052
Asian	0.155 (.144)	.284	-0.026 (.160)	.870	-0.274 (.112)	.027	0.084 (.047)	.075	0.126 (.064)	.052	0.052 (.106)	.625
Internal Efficacy	-0.001 (.027)	.966	-0.068 (.031)	.024	-0.022 (.021)	.303	0.009 (.009)	.313	0.038 (.012)	.001	-0.015 (.020)	.430
Partisan	-0.016 (.038)	.673	-0.041 (.042)	.337	0.243 (.030)	4.76e-16	-0.059 (.013)	3.48e-06	-0.030 (.017)	.078	-0.078 (.028)	.006
Income	0.009 (.004)	.016	0.006 (.004)	.147	0.009 (.003)	.004	0.001 (.001)	.466	-0.001 (.001)	.571	0.007 (.002)	.013
Direct Democracy	-0.017 (.014)	.712	0.031 (.051)	.558	0.017 (.036)	.628	-0.022 (.015)	.144	0.012 (.020)	.552	.049 (.034)	.151
Intercept	2.127 (.295)	7.94e-13	2.635 (.327)	1.16e-15	2.659 (.223)	2e-16	1.325 (.097)	2e-16	1.318 (.133)	2e-16	3.416 (.218)	2e-16
Adjusted R ²	.021		.028		.042		.012		0.022		.016	
F-statistic (DF)	4.42 (2298)	2.77e-08	5.40 (2299)	7.32e-11	7.85 (2297)	2.2e-16	2.89 (2281)	.000	4.49 (2298)	1.75e-08	3.56 (2291)	3.78e-06
N												

Table 3.4a presents the effect of descriptive representation on gender. The effect of Black women legislators on women was statistically insignificant, however it did change the direction of the relationship between women and levels of efficacy and trust. Women in states with more Black women legislators tend to have lower levels of external efficacy. Women in states with Black women legislators were also less trusting of government in two of the four measures of trust. They were more likely to perceive that government is being ran for the benefit of all people and that government is not as wasteful of money.

Table 3.4b. 2020 Effect of Black Women Legislators on Black Women

Variables	Nocare		Nosay		Trustgov		Govrun		Govwaste		Govcorrupt	
	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z	β (se)	p> z
Black Women Legislators	-0.003 (.010)	.734	-0.014 (.011)	.224	-0.004 (.008)	.659	0.003 (.004)	.348	-0.005 (.005)	.301	-0.000 (.008)	.950
Black women leg * Black Women	0.036 (.045)	.427	-0.033 (.050)	.503	0.028 (.035)	.420	0.014 (.015)	.363	-0.006 (.020)	.744	0.004 (.034)	.902
Education	0.064 (.012)	4.88e-07	0.092 (.014)	1.42e-10	0.023 (.010)	.019	0.002 (.004)	.547	0.028 (.006)	7.65e-07	0.027 (.009)	.003
Religion	-0.013 (.018)	.481	-0.025 (.230)	.239	0.008 (.015)	.577	0.004 (.006)	.558	0.016 (.009)	.061	-0.020 (.014)	.149
Voted for President	-0.208 (.263)	.430	-0.297 (.291)	.308	0.168 (.204)	.410	-0.099 (.087)	.250	-0.193 (.119)	.104	-0.354 (.195)	.069
Female	0.133 (.086)	.021	0.088 (.099)	.374	-0.028 (.069)	.691	-0.041 (.029)	.169	0.017 (.040)	.678	-0.097 (.066)	.146
Black	0.392 (.294)	.183	0.208 (.326)	.522	0.136 (.061)	.552	-0.015 (.097)	.876	-0.105 (.133)	.429	0.035 (.218)	.872
White	-0.257 (.148)	.082	-0.366 (.207)	.078	-0.010 (.115)	.930	-0.040 (.049)	.417	0.007 (.067)	.907	0.078 (.110)	.477
Hispanic	0.052 (.093)	.570	0.140 (.102)	.171	-0.084 (.072)	.241	-0.026 (.030)	.401	0.047 (.042)	.258	-0.132 (.068)	.053
Asian	0.157 (.144)	.275	-0.023 (.102)	.885	-0.249 (.111)	.025	0.084 (.047)	.077	0.126 (.065)	.052	0.053 (.107)	.619
Internal Efficacy	-0.002 (.027)	.931	-0.069 (.030)	.022	-0.021 (.021)	.313	0.009 (.009)	.312	0.039 (.012)	.002	-0.016 (.020)	.420
Partisan	-0.014 (.038)	.701	-0.041 (.043)	.338	0.243 (.030)	4.73e-16	-0.059 (.013)	3.88e-06	-0.031 (.017)	.070	-0.078 (.028)	.006
Income	0.009 (.004)	.018	0.006 (.004)	.151	0.009 (.003)	.004	0.001 (.001)	.474	-0.001 (.002)	.581	0.007 (.003)	.014
Direct Democracy	-0.015 (.046)	.741	0.030 (.052)	.558	0.018 (.036)	.624	-0.022 (.015)	.150	0.010 (.021)	.630	.050 (.034)	.150
Intercept	2.121 (.295)	8.98e-13	2.640 (.327)	1.04e-15	2.65 (.229)	2e-16	1.322 (.097)	2e-16	1.321 (.133)	2e-16	3.416 (.218)	2e-16
Adjusted R ²	.023		.028		.042		.011		0.022		.016	
F-statistic (DF)	4.02 (2295)	2.52e-08	4.67 (2296)	2.66e-10	6.75 (2294)	2.2e-16	2.46 (2278)	.001	3.99 (2295)	3.06e-08	3.03 (2288)	1.77e-06
N												

Table 3.4b shows the effect of descriptive representation on the intersection of gender and race. As the number of Black women legislators increases, more Black women disagree with the statement “public officials don’t care much what people like me think”. However, Black women still feel as they do not have a say in government. This shows that the effect of descriptive representation of Black women on Black women’s external efficacy is inconclusive. Across the four measures of trust in government, models three and five (trustgov and govwaste) show that Black women are less trusting of government. However, models four and six (govrun and govcorrupt) shows that as the descriptive representation of Black women increases, Black women are more likely to believe that government is run for the benefit of all people and that there are less corrupt people running government. However, these relationships are not statistically significant.

Conclusion

Previous research shows that descriptive representation has an impact on democratic norms (Atkeson & Carrillo, 2007; Tate, 2001). An increase in descriptive representation results in more positive attitudes and perceptions toward government. Having people who look like the population in elected offices increases feelings of inclusion, trust, and access to politics. This chapter focused specifically on the relationship between the representation of Black women legislators with citizen feelings of external efficacy and trust in government. Across six models, three years, and three demographics (general population, women, Black women) there were only four models that showed statistically significant results that support the hypothesis that an increase in Black women legislators will result in an increase in positive attitudes.

In 2012, when testing for the effect of Black women legislators on women the regression coefficient was statistically significant for one of the measures of trust. An increase in Black

women legislators resulted in stronger feelings of distrust in the government to do what is right. In 2016, descriptive representation had a positive significant impact on one measure of Black women's external efficacy. Increased descriptive representation resulted in more Black women disagreeing with the statement "People like me don't have a say in government". There were two statistically significant relationships in the 2020 models. An increase in Black women legislators resulted in the general population having stronger feelings of not having a say in government. However, there were also more people with the perception that government is being ran for the benefit of all people. There were no other statistically significant relationships between descriptive representation and attitudes toward government.

The mere presence of Black women legislators may not be enough to influence citizen's overall feelings toward government. Most Americans are unaware of the name of their state representative (Rosen, 2018). The visibility of those Black women legislators could play a role in the absence of an impact of Black women on democratic norms. Only 17 Black women have ever been elected to state executive offices and 0 Black women have been elected governor (Center for American Women and Politics, 2022b). So, while there is a lack of visibility in state legislatures, this proved to be the best measure to use when examining descriptive representation at the state level. Additionally, Black women are underrepresented in state legislatures and may not have reached a critical number yet in order to provide significant impact. There are other implications for descriptive representation. Research shows that in many ways, descriptive representation improves substantive representation. I explore the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation more in depth in the following chapter.

“If they don’t give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.” -Shirley Chisholm

Chapter IV. Does having more Black women in state legislatures increase substantive representation for Black women?

Introduction

Representation is a core pillar of modern democracy. We, as citizens, expect our representatives to make policy decisions that are aligned with their constituents’ policy preferences. Because of this important role, there has been a dearth of research examining representation in various contexts. In her seminal book, Pitkin (1967) identified four ways to consider political representation: formalistic, symbolic, descriptive, and substantive. This study will focus on descriptive and substantive representation. Generally, this study aims to examine the ways in which descriptive representation translates into substantive representation. There is no general consensus as to what this relationship looks like. Some studies find that descriptive representation results in more representation in policy (Mansbridge, 1999; Owens, 2005; N. Brown & Banks, 2014). Others argue that there is no link between the two variables, and that the evidence supporting a positive link between descriptive representation and policy outcomes is tenuous at best (Beckwith & Cowell-Meyers, 2007; Tausanovitch & Warshaw, 2014). In this chapter I will test the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. Representation literature posits that representatives who share unique experiences and backgrounds with minority constituents, act as stronger advocates for minority group interests than nonminority legislators. I test this phenomenon by focusing on Black women in state legislatures and their influence on state policy outputs.

Substantive Representation

As discussed in previous chapters of this dissertation, much of the scholarly work on representation has focused on the impact of descriptive and substantive representation.

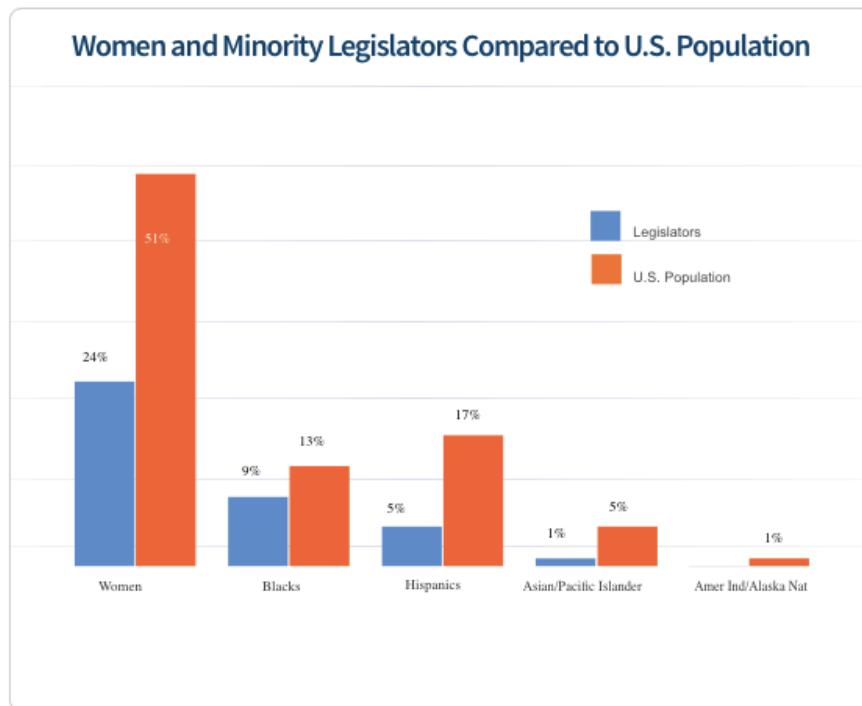
Descriptive representation refers to the extent to which political institutions mirror the constituents they represent. A descriptively representative legislature would have similar percentages of selected groups present in the legislature, as what is seen in the population. While descriptive representation is focused on the presence and inclusion of groups in political institutions, substantive representation refers to the resulting *output* of including those groups. Pitkin (1967) defines substantive representation as when a legislator engages in political actions in the best interest of a group. There is an assumption that when representatives who share demographic identities and experiences with their minority constituents are present (descriptive representation), those representatives will advocate for minority group interests (substantive representation). There are divergent findings when considering if, how, and when, descriptive representation translates into substantive representation.

Some scholars argue that there is a strong relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. Preuhs (2006) found that black descriptive representation increased substantive representation, under certain conditions. Black legislators have more of an influence on policy when the institution is not racially polarized. This finding was an expansion of the observations of Hawkesworth (2003) who examined interviews with Congresswomen of color from the 103rd and 104th U.S. Congress.

“Through tactics such as silencing, stereotyping, enforced invisibility, exclusion, marginalization... Congresswomen of color are constituted as ‘other’. In committee operations, floor debates, and interpersonal interactions, they are treated as less than equals in various ways that carry palpable consequences for their identities and their policy priorities.” (Hawkesworth, 2003, p. 546)

The mere presence of women of color (descriptive representation) did not translate into favorable policy outcomes for people of color (substantive representation). This study did not take into account how these barriers could be overcome by women of color. Descriptive representation can be translated into favorable policy output for minorities through collective representation. Collective representation refers to the total number, or proportion, of a minority group serving in the legislature. State legislatures are comprised mostly of White males which is not representative of the American populace. Figure 1 shows how the demographic makeup of state legislatures compares to the demographic composition of the U.S. population. As demonstrated in the figure, there is a disparity between both the number of women and racial minorities in state legislatures relative to their size in the U.S. population. A disproportionate number of state legislative seats are held by White men; women make up 51% of the population but only 24% of state legislators and racial/ethnic minorities are also underrepresented.

Figure 4.1: Women and Minority Legislators Compared to the U.S. Population



Source: (National Conference of State Legislators, 2020)

State legislatures have been becoming increasingly more representative with historical rates of women and people of color winning elected office (Center for American Women and Politics, 2022b). As an example, the percent of women state legislators has increased from 24.7% to 29.2% from 2010-2020. Even so, the likelihood of collective descriptive representation leading to substantive representation is conditional. Kanter (1977) introduced the critical mass framework which has been utilized to study descriptive and substantive representation. In order for women, or people of color, to see representation in policy, the number of descriptively representative officials must reach critical mass. In other words, there has to be enough of a minority group present in the legislature to affect policy outcomes. However, there have been studies since that show states which have reached a critical mass of representation, or even more, can fail in passing favorable legislation for minority groups (Crowley, 2004). Additionally, small numbers, or “token” women in a legislator, can significantly influence legislation (Bratton, 2005; Childs & Krook, 2009).

There are other scholars who argue that there is not a strong relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. Since Pitkin’s original definition, substantive representation has generally been conceptualized as having one’s policy views expressed by an elected representative (Hayes & Hibbing, 2017). Mansbridge (1999) stated that descriptive representation could actually result in less substantive representation depending on the context. Majority-minority districts were created to increase the descriptive representation of racial minority groups. However, Mansbridge posits that while majority-minority districts may increase substantive representation in those districts it is at the cost of potential influence in other districts.

“If, for example, White Democrats represent many substantive interests of Black voters much better than White Republicans, and if concentrating Black voters in Black districts produces a few more Black representatives at the cost of many more Republicans elected from other districts, then in some historical circumstances, such as when the percentages in a majority-rule legislature are almost tied between Republicans and Democrats, the substantive impact of losing those Democratic legislators will be high and the cost probably not worth paying.” (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 640)

Institutional context is an important conditioning factor when considering the likelihood of descriptive representation translating into substantive representation. When studying race in legislatures using roll call votes, studies have found that after controlling for party, region, and the Black population, race did not have much explanatory power in policy outcomes (Hawkesworth, 2003; Preuhs, 2006). However, descriptive representation of racial and gender minorities in state legislatures have been at historic levels. This increase in representation provides the opportunity for more robust empirical studies to take place. These studies have found a link between descriptive and substantive representation. Increased representation by women shifts policy in a more feminist direction (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2009; E. by S. Thomas & Wilcox, 2014). Mastracci and Adams (2021) examined the effect of gender on health and economic policy in the states and found that women’s representation is correlated with better economic policy outcomes for women and families. However, when considering health policy they found that political party had more explanatory power. This link between descriptive and substantive representation is also present when considering race (Harden & Clark, 2016; Preuhs, 2005; Rosenthal, 2019).

Preuhs (2006) tested whether racial and ethnic minority lawmakers influence policy decisions made by representative bodies. Using state level data on welfare benefit levels and a survey of black legislators, they found that black descriptive representation exerts policy influence, but this influence is conditioned by racial political context and party control. Bratton and Haynie (2001) found that race has a significant influence bill introduction, Black legislators introduce more Black interest bills than other legislators. They found that party and the percentage of Black constituents in the district were significant predictors of the introduction of Black interest bills as well. Owens (2005) tested whether increased black representation in state legislatures resulted in greater influence over policy outputs. By comparing changes in spending priorities within state budgets from 1971-1994, he found that increased descriptive representation can result in increased substantive representation.

Social Identity Theory

Using social identities to understand the preferences and behaviors of policy actors is referred to as the social identity approach (A. Campbell et al., 1960; Haslam, 2012). This theory assumes that political behavior is significantly shaped by in-group relations and group identification (Jenkins, 2014; Sabatier & Weible, 2014; Tajfel, 1974). When studying inter-group behavior, (Turner, 1982) found that individuals favored in-group members in the allocation of resources. Social Identity Theory (SIT) is rooted in psychology but has been used by political scientists to evaluate identity (party id) and voting (Kalin & Sambanis, 2018), political decisions making (Posner, 2017), and social movements (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). Huddy (2001) called for expanding studies to understand how social identities influence political phenomena. I argue that SIT is crucial when considering descriptive and substantive representation. The premise behind the link between these types of representation is that a representative is assumed to behave in a

way that results in positive policy outcomes for the groups with which they identify with. Additionally, SIT acknowledges that individuals have multiple identities due to their belonging in different social groups (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). The intersection of multiple identities forms unique identity structures that influence political behavior in complex ways. Therefore, in order to effectively understand representation, we must consider social identities and their intersections.

Much of the work on representation has taken a one-at-a-time approach by studying race, ethnicity, or gender (Crenshaw, 1991). More recent studies have considered the race-gendered approach to studying representation and policy (Reingold 2020). Even so, studying *women* of color does not take into account the nuances of women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, as women of color do not all behave the same. Specifically, Black women have shown to have a distinct policy niche and political behaviors (L. R. Fraga, 2005; N. Brown & Banks, 2014; B. L. Fraga, 2018). Bratton, Haynie and Reingold (2006) examined bill sponsorship across 10 state houses and found that Black women are more likely than their Black male and White counterparts to sponsor both Black and women's interest bills. Brown and Banks (2014) tested how bill sponsorship in Maryland legislature varied by race and/or gender. Black women had distinct policy agendas and the legislative priorities of Black congresswomen centered on assisting the intersectionally marginalized (Black women). King-Meadows & Schaller (2006) state "Black female state legislators are perhaps the most cohesive demographic group of state legislators in the country" (p. 46). Given this theory and the preceding literature on substantive representation, I hypothesize the following:

H₁: An increase in the percent of Black women in state legislatures will result in an increase of state spending on education.

H₂: An increase in the percent of Black women in state legislatures will result in an increase of state spending on welfare.

State analysis because states are more descriptively representative of the population than Congress. Women are about 25% of legislative bodies on average and about 20% in Congress.

Data and Methods

This chapter will explore the relationship between Black women legislators and their influence on policy priorities of the legislature. The previous chapter has highlighted the impacts of descriptive representation while this chapter will highlight substantive representation of Black women in state legislatures. Owens (2005) examined how black representation in state legislatures impacted policy priorities by using data on state budget allocations. Owens argues that if the composition of the legislature changes and the budgetary priorities do not then the new members do not have the power to influence the legislative policy priorities. Based on this study, chapter four will be addressing the following question: Does having more Black women in the state legislature change the policy priorities of the legislature? I predict that higher levels of Black women's representation will result in an increase in spending in policy areas that are prioritized by Black women.

In order to address this question, I use state budgets from 2010-2019 to determine if and how funding decisions changed based on the presence of Black women in the legislature. I chose to remove 2020 from this study as the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed state funding levels toward education and welfare. Focusing on state legislatures provides more variation in data; there are 50 state legislatures to examine compared to only Congress at the federal level. Additionally, states are more descriptively representative of the population than Congress. Women are about 25% of legislative bodies on average, compared to about 20% in

Congress. Crowder-Meyer (2022) argues that gender, race, and ethnicity shapes individual Americans' policy priorities. The study used survey data from the American National Election Study (ANES) and identified patterns in issue priorities by ethnicity, gender, and race and argue that these issue priorities can be translated in policy priorities. She found that Black women prioritize issues of welfare, education, and children. For this study, I will focus on two of the policy areas identified as priority for Black women, welfare and education. The literature supports using welfare as a measure of black policy influence (Owens, 2005; Preuhs, 2006). When looking at local government spending on welfare programs, Holman (2014) found that higher levels of female representation in city councils resulted in increased spending on welfare. This shows that not only is welfare a valid measure for studying black policy influence but also the policy influence of women, which should also translate over to the influence of Black women.

The independent variable for this chapter will be the number of Black women in state legislatures from 2010 – 2020. This data will come from a proprietary dataset that includes the race and gender of every state legislator. The dependent variables for this chapter are state spending on education and welfare. These variables were obtained by dividing each state's education and welfare expenditures by the total budget. By doing this I am able to compare between states regardless of the differences in budget size. State budget information was obtained from the Census Annual Survey of State and Local Government Finances. The Census provides comprehensive statistics on revenue, expenditure, debt, and assets for all 50 states. There are other variables that will need to be controlled for, as they can contribute to changes in state spending decisions. I expect states make funding allocation decisions partly based on their need in those policy areas. States with more school aged children will *need* to allocate more

funds to education, and states with higher populations of people on government assistance will *need* to allocate more funds to welfare. To control for this, I include a need variable for both policy areas. I determine welfare need as the percent of the state population enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Information on state populations receiving SNAP benefits was obtained from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service database. The USDA provides national and state level data on the persons and households receiving SNAP benefits, as well the average monthly benefit per person and household. For the welfare need variable I calculated the percent of people receiving SNAP benefits per state, by dividing the number of people receiving benefits by the total state population. I determine education need as the percent of the population enrolled in k-12 schools. Information on k-12 population was obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics which provides data on enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools. For the education need variable, I calculated the percent of the population enrolled in k-12 schools by dividing the number of students by the total state population.

Since governments may respond to citizen interests, I control for states' Black population, which is measured as the percent of Black citizens within the state. The Democratic party has shown more support for an increase in social spending, and I would expect for a democrat led legislature to allocate more funds to the policies of interest. Therefore, I have added a dummy variable for states where Democrats control both chambers of the legislature. Lastly, I include a regional analysis as to take into account the racialization of state political context. Southern states have a clear history of racialized politics, and the racialization of the legislature can have an effect on policy outputs (Key 1949; Preuhs 2006). Therefore, I include dummy variables for region.

To explore the relationship between Black women’s descriptive representation and substantive representation a linear regression model was used. There are two models, one for Black women’s influence on state priority for education and the other for state priority for welfare. Both of these models are structured to determine if Black women legislators have a substantive impact on state policy priorities.

Results

Before discussing the regression models, descriptive statistics for the independent and dependent variables are presented. The independent variable is the descriptive representation of Black women, measured as the percent of Black women in state legislatures. This percentage ranges from states with zero Black women legislators to the maximum of 14.8% of Georgia’s 2019 legislature being comprised of Black women. The dependent variable is the state spending on education and welfare, which is measured as the proportion of the state budget being allocated to those policy areas. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for education and welfare state spending. On average, states spend about 17.3% of their budget on education and about 27.8% on welfare.

Table 4.1. State Spending on Education and Welfare

	Minimum	Median	Maximum	Average
Education	7.29	16.41	58.35	17.30
Welfare	0.16	28.23	41.68	27.83

Table 2 ranks each state on their spending in education and welfare for 2010, 2015, and 2019. I show these years as they represent the beginning, middle, and end of the time span being focused on in this study. For each policy area, states are ranked from who has allocated the largest proportion of their budget to the least proportion allocated. How a state allocates its

money is a direct indicator of their policy priorities, the idea being that states will allocate more money to the policy areas that are of higher priorities.

Table 4.2. State Spending Rankings

2010		2015		2019	
Education	Welfare	Education	Welfare	Education	Welfare
Delaware	Maine	Alabama	Kentucky	West Virginia	Louisiana
Hawaii	Tennessee	Utah	Tennessee	Hawaii	Massachusetts
Utah	Rhode Island	Hawaii	Massachusetts	Utah	Arizona
Colorado	Minnesota	Colorado	Maine	Alabama	Rhode Island
Alabama	Pennsylvania	Delaware	West Virginia	Colorado	Kentucky
Kentucky	New Mexico	South Carolina	Ohio	Delaware	Tennessee
Texas	Massachusetts	Kentucky	Rhode Island	South Carolina	Maine
Oklahoma	Kentucky	Texas	Louisiana	Nebraska	Ohio
Indiana	Arizona	Nebraska	Oregon	Texas	New York
South Carolina	Florida	Virginia	Arkansas	South Dakota	Arkansas
Washington	Illinois	Alaska	New Mexico	Arizona	California
Georgia	New Hampshire	Indiana	California	Georgia	Oregon
Nebraska	South Carolina	Washington	Indiana	North Carolina	Minnesota
Virginia	Texas	Oklahoma	Florida	Kentucky	Pennsylvania
North Carolina	Maryland	North Carolina	Maryland	Michigan	Indiana
Michigan	Mississippi	Georgia	Arizona	Oklahoma	Mississippi
Ohio	Missouri	South Dakota	New York	New Jersey	Alaska
North Dakota	Oklahoma	Tennessee	Mississippi	Virginia	Missouri
South Dakota	New York	Michigan	Alabama	Washington	Maryland
New Mexico	Indiana	West Virginia	Missouri	Indiana	Montana
West Virginia	Idaho	New Hampshire	Illinois	Vermont	Idaho
Oregon	Ohio	Vermont	Idaho	Oregon	New Mexico
Minnesota	Iowa	Kansas	Pennsylvania	Wisconsin	Illinois
Iowa	Vermont	Oregon	Oklahoma	Tennessee	Florida
Arkansas	Arkansas	New Jersey	Minnesota	Arkansas	Wisconsin
Vermont	Wisconsin	Louisiana	Delaware	Louisiana	Oklahoma
New Jersey	Georgia	Wisconsin	South Carolina	Alaska	New Hampshire
Tennessee	Alabama	Arkansas	Vermont	Nevada	South Carolina
Idaho	West Virginia	Ohio	Texas	New Hampshire	Vermont
Louisiana	Nebraska	Iowa	Wisconsin	Idaho	Texas
Wisconsin	Washington	Arizona	Georgia	Wyoming	Delaware
Kansas	Oregon	Pennsylvania	Washington	Maryland	Georgia
Nevada	New Jersey	New Mexico	Colorado	Florida	Colorado
Montana	Connecticut	Nevada	South Dakota	Ohio	South Dakota
Maryland	South Dakota	Montana	Alaska	Mississippi	Michigan
New Hampshire	Kansas	Missouri	Iowa	Kansas	New Jersey

Pennsylvania	Louisiana	Connecticut	Michigan	Pennsylvania	Nebraska
Arizona	Michigan	Maryland	New Hampshire	Montana	Iowa
California	North Carolina	Mississippi	New Jersey	North Dakota	Nevada
Missouri	Virginia	North Dakota	Nebraska	Missouri	Washington
Mississippi	Montana	Minnesota	North Carolina	California	North Carolina
Connecticut	Hawaii	Idaho	Montana	Minnesota	Kansas
Illinois	Utah	Massachusetts	Kansas	Iowa	Alabama
Rhode Island	Delaware	California	Nevada	New Mexico	Virginia
Florida	Nevada	Florida	Utah	Rhode Island	Hawaii
Maine	California	Illinois	Hawaii	Connecticut	Utah
Massachusetts	Colorado	Maine	Virginia	Massachusetts	North Dakota
Alaska	Alaska	Rhode Island	North Dakota	Maine	Wyoming
Wyoming	North Dakota	Wyoming	Connecticut	Illinois	Connecticut
New York	Wyoming	New York	Wyoming	New York	West Virginia

I use multivariate regression to examine state education and welfare expenditures from 2010-2019. These models have been estimated with year fixed effects and regional dummies. If the hypotheses are supported, I expect to observe that as the percent of Black women in state legislatures increases (higher descriptive representation), so will state spending on policies important to Black women like education and welfare (substantive representation). To better understand the relationship between descriptive representation of Black women and substantive representation, I analyze two multivariate linear regression models:

$$EducationSpending = BlackWomenLegislators + \beta_1(EducationNeed) + \beta_2(DemControl) + \beta_3(BlackPopulation) + \beta_4(Region) + \varepsilon$$

$$WelfareSpending = BlackWomenLegislators + \beta_1(WelfareNeed) + \beta_2(DemControl) + \beta_3(BlackPopulation) + \beta_4(Region) + \varepsilon$$

Table 4.3 shows the regression coefficients for state education spending. Model 1 depicts the relationship between descriptive representation of Black women in state legislatures and state education spending. Black women in state legislatures have a statistically significant effect on state education spending. However, it is in the opposite direction than expected. I hypothesized that Black women would have a positive effect on education; as the percent of Black women in

the legislature increase I expected state spending on education to do the same. What I actually observe is that as the percent of Black women legislators increased, states spent less on education. This result is unexpected although not surprising. The substantive representation literature has not reached a consensus on if, when, or how descriptive representation translates into substantive representation. Model 1 shows that not only does an increase in representation not translate into substantive representation, but instead it has a negative impact on substantive representation. Instead of states placing education policy higher on their budget priority, which would reflect the interests of Black women, the increased presence of Black women legislators actually results in education policy losing priority. Therefore, I have rejected the hypothesis that an increase in the percent of Black women in state legislatures will result in an increase of state spending on education. Education need was also statistically significant as expected. As a state's need for education increases, so does state spending on education. Lastly, region had a statistically significant impact on state education spending. Southern states allocate a higher percentage of their budget to education expenditures.

Table 4.3. Model 1 Effect of Black Women Legislators on Education Spending

Education Spending		
Variables	β (se)	p> z
Percent Black Women in Legislatures	-0.456 (.125)	.000
Education Need	.681 (.149)	6.26e-06
Democratic Control	.683 (.512)	.182
Black Population	.066 (.047)	.160
South	2.303 (.797)	.004
Intercept	6.476 (2.566)	.011
Adjusted R ²	.062	
F-statistic (DF)	3.36 (484)	3.307e-05
N	500	

Preuhs (2006) posited that Black legislators' ability to have a substantive effect on state policy outcomes is conditioned by the degree of racialization in the state legislature. Due to the

current and historical environment of racialized politics in the South, I have added an interaction variable for Black women legislators in southern states. Table 4.3a shows the regression coefficients for the regional effect of Black women legislators. As the percent of Black women in legislatures increased in southern states, education spending increased.

Table 4.3a. Model 1 Regional Effect of Black Women Legislators on Education Spending

Education Spending		
Variables	β (se)	p> z
Percent Black Women in Legislatures	-.683 (.141)	1.61e-06
Education Need	.694 (.148)	3.42e-06
Democratic Control	.890 (.510)	.081
Black Population	.091 (.047)	.052
South	-1.60 (1.374)	.244
Black Women in Legislatures * South	.726 (.209)	.001
Intercept	6.514 (2.53)	.010
Adjusted R ²	.083	
F-statistic (DF)	4.01 (484)	6.627e-07
N	500	

Note: models estimated with year fixed effects and regional dummies

Table 4.4 shows how descriptive representation of Black women in state legislatures impacts welfare spending. Model 2 depicts the relationship between descriptive representation of Black women in state legislatures and state welfare spending. Black women state legislators had a negative but statistically insignificant impact on state welfare spending. As the percent of Black women in state legislatures increased, state spending on welfare decreased. Therefore I have rejected the hypothesis that an increase in the percent of Black women in state legislatures will result in an increase of state spending on welfare. In Model 2, welfare need is statistically significant and has a positive impact on state welfare spending. As the need for public welfare increases, as does state spending on welfare. Region was also statistically significant in Model 2, southern states allocate significantly less on welfare expenditures.

Table 4.4. Model 2 Effect of Black Women Legislators on Welfare Spending

Welfare Spending		
Variables	β (se)	p> z
Percent Black Women in State Legislatures	.102 (.141)	.468
Welfare Need	.892 (.074)	2e-16
Democratic Control	- .432 (.556)	.437
Black Population	- .003 (.053)	.948
South	-1.878 (.897)	.036
Intercept	14.407 (1.184)	2e-16
Adjusted R ²	.298	
F-statistic (DF)	16.14 (484)	2.2e16
N	500	

Note: models estimated with year fixed effects and regional dummies

Table 4.4a shows the regional effect of Black women legislators on welfare spending. While the percent of Black women in state legislatures did not have a statistically significant effect on welfare spending previously, adding a regional interaction changed the significance. The regional effect in Model 2 shows that as the percent of Black women in legislatures increased in southern states, allocation to welfare expenditures decreased. This finding aligns with similar studies that show a negative governmental response to larger delegations of Black legislators (Preuhs, 2006).

Table 4.4a. Model 2 Regional Effect of Black Women Legislators on Welfare Spending

Welfare Spending		
Variables	β (se)	p> z
Percent Black Women in State Legislatures	.399 (.156)	.011
Welfare Need	.904 (.073)	2e-16
Democratic Control	- .699 (.552)	.205
Black Population	-0.037 (.053)	.479
South	3.181 (1.526)	.037
Black Women in Legislatures * South	-0.947 (.232)	5.58e-05
Intercept	13.971 (1.170)	2e-16

Adjusted R ²	.319	
F-statistic (DF)	16.64 (484)	2.2e16
N	500	

Note: models estimated with year fixed effects and regional dummies

Conclusion

Scholars studying the link between descriptive and substantive representation have arrived at various conclusions. Some scholars find a clear link between descriptive and substantive representation (Haynie 2001; Cowel-Meyers 2009; Thomas and Wilcox 2014; Wilson 2017). Others find that descriptive representation can lead to substantive representation, but this relationship is conditional on the political context (Preuhs 2006). Lastly, there are studies that find a clear relationship descriptive and substantive representation. They argue that as the descriptive representation of a minority group in a state legislature increases, so does state attention to policies that benefit said group (Owens 2005; Bratton and Haynie 2001; Haider-Markel 2007; Mastracci and Adams (2021). This chapter focused on the relationship between descriptive representation of Black women and state priorities of policies important to Black women. I focused on state spending on education and welfare to determine how state priorities change with the inclusion of Black women in the legislature.

Overall, I find that there is a link between the descriptive and substantive representation, although the relationship found was not as expected. When considering education policy, an increase in Black women legislators resulted in a decrease in spending on education policy. This negative relationship was also observed when considering the regional effect of Black women in southern legislatures. As the percent of Black women legislators increased in southern states, the percent of money allocated to welfare decreased. Some scholars have found that in certain contexts, higher levels of descriptive representation results in policy backlash. When traditionally underrepresented groups begin to gain political power, they may encounter a

counteraction or backlash of policies against their interests (Hawkesworth, 2003; Haider-Markel, 2007). While testing for policy backlash is outside the scope of this study, the inverse impact of Black women legislators along with the negative impact of Black population on education spending, does support this theory. As the percent of Black women legislators *and* the percent of Black population in the state increases, state spending on education decreases. With regard to welfare spending, descriptive representation of Black women did result in increased spending on welfare policy, but this relationship was not significant. Instead, state welfare need and region had a statistically significant impact on welfare spending.

The relationship between descriptive and substantive representation was not as expected, however this study does provide support that there is a link between the two. I argue that the conditional impact of descriptive representation on substantive representation should continue to be studied by expanding the years included in the analysis as well as the policy areas examined. As Black women continue to gain political office, representation scholars should pay increased attention to how their presence influences state legislative behavior.

“That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me!” -Sojourner Truth

Chapter V. Conclusion

Abolitionist Sojourner Truth once said, “Aint I a Woman”. She delivered this famous speech, solely with Black woman present, to bring light to the treatment of Black women, that was dissimilar from their Black male counterparts, as well as from women of other racial/ethnic backgrounds. Black women exist at a unique intersection of race and gender. The lived experiences of these two identities, shape and influence political behaviors, perceptions of government, legislative outputs, and so much more. Black women have demonstrated their political impact in social movements throughout history, movements like Women’s Rights, Civil Rights, and #MeToo. This dissertation recognizes the political power that Black women hold and the importance of understanding how their behavior has an influence on political institutions and democratic norms. Scholarship on descriptive representation generally concludes that representation of previously excluded groups has an influence on democratic norms (Arnesen & Peters, 2018; Mansbridge, 1999; Pitkin, 1967). There is a school of literature that finds descriptive representation has a positive impact on democratic norms. Higher levels of descriptive representation for racial and gender minorities results in an increase in voter turnout rates among minorities (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990; Cammisa & Reingold, 2004; Rocha et al., 2010). Descriptive representation also mitigates political attitudes. Tate (2001) found that higher levels of minority representation in politics produces more trust in government and higher levels of political efficacy. The lack of descriptive representation has the opposite effect, it produces feelings of political alienation and lower levels of political efficacy (Pantoja & Segura, 2003). There is another school of thought that argues the impacts of descriptive representation are

conditional or negative. Carroll (2001) states that context matters, the impact of women public officials depends on the political environment and institution. Preuhs (2006) also argued that there are conditional effects of minority descriptive representation. The findings of this dissertation falls under the latter.

In this dissertation, I have shown how an increase in levels of descriptive representation of Black women in state legislatures has affected democratic norms. In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the relevant literature on descriptive representation and its significance for racial and gender minorities in politics. I also presented the significance of Black women as changemakers in politics and why it is important for political scientists to further study the impact this demographic has. I then provided an outline of the three studies I conducted to test the impact of Black women on democratic norms and behavior: voting, perceptions of government, and policy outcomes. In Chapter 2, I tested how an increase of Black women serving in state legislatures impacts voter turnout rates across four demographics: statewide, women, Black people, Black women. In Chapter 3, I examined how an increase of Black women legislators influenced citizen's perceptions and trust in government. In Chapter 4, I studied the impact of Black women legislators on policy priorities of state legislatures. Finally, in this chapter, I bring this study to a close. I start with a summary of the results from each study and asses which align with the hypotheses, and which do not. I then consider the implications of my research for political science and for politics in general. Finally, I discuss future research and ways in which I plan to expand on these studies.

Discussion of the results

Descriptive representation literature suggests that an increase in the descriptive representation of minorities in political institutions results in an increase in political participation

from said minorities (Carroll, 2001). This relationship has been tested in regards to race or gender, with some studies examining the effect of intersecting identities by looking at women of color. This study focused specifically on how Black women influence different demographics' turnout rates. I hypothesized that an increase of Black women in state legislatures (higher descriptive representation) will result in an increase in voter turnout. Additionally, I hypothesized that Black women legislators would have a mobilizing effect on Black women voters; I expected to find the proportional effect of Black women in state legislatures on turnout would be greater for Black women voters. Using the CPS Voting and Registration supplement I tested four models that examined how descriptive representation influenced voter turnout statewide, women's turnout, Black turnout, and Black women's turnout from 2010-2020. I found that the descriptive representation of Black women had no statistically significant impact on any of the four levels of voter turnout. Therefore, I rejected the hypothesis that descriptive representation of Black women results in an increase in voter turnout. Additionally, one of my turnout models focuses specifically on the relationship between Black women legislators and Black women turnout. I found that the descriptive representation of Black women in state legislatures had a positive impact on Black women's voter turnout rates, however this relationship was not statistically significant. Therefore, I rejected the hypothesis that Black women legislators had a mobilizing effect on Black women voters. The null results from this study do not support the relationship between descriptive representation and political participation.

The second study examined the link between Black women's descriptive representation in state legislatures and their impact on citizen perceptions and attitudes toward government. Empowerment theory suggests that descriptive representation influences political attitudes

among minorities, with higher levels of representation resulting higher levels of trust in government and political efficacy (Tate, 2001). I test this theory by using ANES survey data for 2012, 2016, and 2020, to determine the ways in which Black women legislators influence attitudes. I ran six models testing trust and efficacy among three demographics: the general population, women, and Black women. I hypothesize that an increase in the percent of Black women in state legislatures will result in an increase in positive attitudes and perceptions toward government. Across the six models, three years, and three demographics there were only four models that were statistically significant. In 2012, descriptive representation of Black women legislators had a negative and significant impact on women's trust in government. As the percent of Black women in the legislature increased, women reported stronger feelings of distrust toward the government. In 2016, Black women legislators had a positive and significant impact on Black women's external efficacy. An increase in the percent of Black women in state legislatures resulted in Black women disagreeing with the statement "People like me don't have a say in government". Lastly, there were two statistically significant models in 2020. An increase in Black women legislators resulted in the general population agreeing more with the statement "People like me don't have a say in government". However, as the percent of Black women legislators increased, the general population also reported stronger beliefs that government is being ran for the benefit of all people. This study finds some support for the hypothesis that an increase in descriptive representation of Black women results in an increase in positive attitudes.

The final study focuses on determining if and how Black women's descriptive representation translates into substantive representation for Black women constituents. I test this relationship by focusing on Black women in state legislatures and their influence on state budget allocation. This chapter is based on the assumption that minority representation in state

legislatures can influence legislative priorities in a way that benefits minorities. I hypothesize that an increase in the percent of Black women legislators will result in an increase in state spending for education and welfare policies, as these are two policy areas identified as a priority for Black women. I analyze state budgets from 2010-2019 to determine the ways in which Black women legislators influence funding decisions. To test this I ran two models for each policy, one to test the general effect of Black women in legislators on policy spending and the second to test the regional effect of Black women legislators on policy. Overall, I did find a statistically significant relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. However, the relationship observed was not the relationship I expected, therefore I rejected the hypothesis that an increase in Black women legislators would result in increased spending for policies important to Black women. What I find is that when considering state spending on education policy, an increase in Black women legislators resulted in a decrease in state funding allocation. This relationship can also be observed for welfare policy, although only when I included the regional effects. As the percent of Black women in state legislatures increased in southern states, the percent of money allocated to welfare decreased. This study does not provide support that descriptive representation of minorities translates into substantive representation. However, it does unequivocally show that there is a link between the two types of representation.

Implications and Future Research

There are some serious implications regarding the normative benefits of political representation for racial and gender minority groups, especially Black women. The logical conclusion of my findings is that the impact of Black women in politics is not static, but varies depending on citizen demographics, state levels of Black women's representation, political racialization, and other variables. This conclusion mirrors that of the field, both in terms of racial

and gender representation. However, since there is a scarcity of studies that focus on Black women specifically, this study provides a unique lens through which to study descriptive representation.

This dissertation makes an important contribution to the literature by demonstrating that Black women can influence political perceptions and attitudes as well as policy responsiveness to Black women's interests. Black women are a distinct demographic with clear policy preferences and distinctive political behavior. As the number of Black women running for and winning office increases, it is important to understand the ways in which this powerful group can shift political environments. While this significant increase in representation provides the opportunity for advanced empirical studies on Black women in politics, they are still vastly underrepresented. This underrepresentation prevents me from making assumptions as there is not adequate representation.

Moving forward I would like to expand on these studies various ways. First, to circumvent the issue of low representation I could also include Black women in local offices. Representation at the local levels would expand my unit of analysis and provide a more robust population to observe, as there are more Black women serving in local offices across the U.S. I believe that the relationship found between descriptive representation and voter turnout was a null relationship because of the low percent of Black women in many state legislatures. Focusing instead on voters who are dyadically represented by a Black woman on the local level could provide more insight on how Black women influence voter turnout.

Additionally, I am specifically interested in the relationship between descriptive representation of Black women and substantive representation for Black women. Since the 1960s, the Democratic party has been championed as the party who advocates for minority

interests and Black women have been the most consistent and loyal Democratic voting bloc in the U.S. (Gillespie & Brown, 2019). However, when it comes to Black women the Democratic party has not returned this loyalty. Brown and Lemi (2020) conducted a focus group study of Black women in politics, and participants expressed that they received little to no support from the Party and it served as more of a gatekeeper. Respondents felt that the Democratic party largely ignored Black women candidates at the local, state, and national level. This has serious implications for representation of Black women's interests. If there are not many Black women in office to represent Black women's interests, and the political parties are not providing substantive representation, what does that mean for policy outcomes for Black women. I would like to further examine how the descriptive representation of Black women influences substantive representation for Black women constituents by expanding on the policy areas I study.

I believe maternal health is a better measure for Black women's policy interest, however the data on maternal health is not as extensive as other policies due to a recent attention to the issue. According to the Center of Disease Control (CDC), Black women are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy related cause than White women. Not only are maternal death rates disproportionately impacting Black women, but the CDC also attributes this impact to disparities in healthcare, racism, and implicit bias. All of which can be addressed by intentional policy changes. The disparity in maternal healthcare is a phenomenon that has been having an increase in media attention as well as attention from activist organizations and policymakers. The recent focus on Black maternal health makes this an important and timely policy area to focus on. In 2021, the Black Maternal Health Caucus introduced the Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act which is a compilation of policies that aim for a comprehensive approach to the address the

maternal health crisis (*Black Maternal Health Momnibus*, 2020). In the future, I would like to extensively study how Black women elected officials in each level of government is influence maternal health policy in the U.S.

In conclusion, as a result of their lived experience, Black women bring a distinctive perspective to political institutions. Their intersecting identities of being Black and a woman makes Black women uniquely positioned to influence political behaviors, attitudes, perceptions, and legislative decisions. I posit that Black women have an unmatched impact in politics that should continue to be studied.

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