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***Does Money Matter? The Impact of State Political Context
on the Relationship between Race/Ethnicity and Campaign Finance****

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ABSTRACT

Despite increasing campaign-finance legislation aimed at equalizing barriers in political campaigns, a fundraising gap persists across racial/ethnic lines. In the era of modern campaigning, with the expenses of advertising and polling, among others, ample funds are necessary but not accessible to all candidates. This study addresses the relationship between candidate race/ethnicity and campaign fundraising, and the possible moderating effect of three dimensions of the state political context: state legislative professionalism, state Republican party strength, and state culture (South vs. non-South). I evaluate fundraising totals across 15 states for more than 3,000 candidates in the 2006 state legislative elections. Ultimately, the findings suggest that after controlling for other candidate characteristics, as well as for district and state context, there is a negative statistically significant relationship between candidate race/ethnicity and fundraising. In addition, the effect of race/ethnicity is moderated by two features of the state context: legislative professionalization and state culture. This study finds that nonwhite candidates continue to fundraise less than their white counterparts and that state context is important in understanding the race/ethnicity gap in campaign finance.

KEY WORDS State Legislature; Elections; Campaign Finance; Race; Professionalization

The role of money in politics has long been an issue of debate for scholars and candidates alike, and as fundraising thresholds climb with each subsequent election, money's impact continues to merit conversation. In the 2008 presidential campaign, Democratic nominee Barack Obama outraised Republican hopeful John McCain nearly twofold through cultivating small donations online. Almost two years to the day after Obama's inauguration, the Supreme Court announced a landmark decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010). The controversial decision resulted in a partial strike-down of the McCain-Feingold Act (2002), allowing corporations and labor unions

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to fund independent communications (Dionne 2012; Liptak 2010). With every election year escalating the total funds raised, the significance of money in campaigns will likely continue to grow as well (Boatright 2013).

Given the significance of fundraising, the difficulty of raising enough money to conduct a competitive campaign and be a viable candidate is not experienced in the same way by all candidates. Social groups that have historically been oppressed and continue to be economically marginalized can witness more challenges in their pursuit of elected office. This effect can be most debilitating for underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, who generally are less educated, make less money, and hold lower occupational positions (occupying service roles more than managerial posts) than the white majority.

Racial and ethnic minorities have made great strides in seeking and winning elected offices in the United States. The first African American president, Barack Obama, was elected in 2008. Sonia Sotomayor became the first Hispanic American Supreme Court justice in 2009. The membership of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators has increased from only 18 members in 1977 to more than 600 by 2008 (King-Meadows and Schaller 2007). On the whole, government is more diverse in the United States at every level than ever before.

Though these numbers represent improvement over recent decades, however, they still lag in proportion to the overall population. African Americans are most prevalent in political positions in the South, which is also where they are more highly concentrated, but the percentage of African American officials falls short in comparison to their share of the citizenry. Mississippi, for example, has an African American population of 40 percent, but only 21 percent of the seats in the state legislature are occupied by African American officials (NCSL 2013; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2010b).

Arguably the most underrepresented demographic in American politics, Hispanic Americans have recently become the largest minority group in the nation but hold few elected offices. Concentrated in the Southwest, they exhibit even larger disparities in representation, such as in California, where they hold 19 percent of seats though they are 38.2 percent of the total population (NCSL 2013; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2010b). On the whole, Hispanic Americans occupy a national average of just 3 percent of state legislative seats in spite of comprising 16.9 percent of the overall population (NCSL 2013; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2010b).

A number of barriers exist in mounting a modern campaign: visibility, mobilization, and name recognition, to name a few. Each of these necessitates substantial funds to surge into advertising and outreach, and although each component of a campaign warrants acknowledgement, without enough money to fund these endeavors, the outcome is bleak. Previous research (Abbe and Herrnson 2003; Breaux and Gierzynski 1991; Gierzynski and Breaux 1991; Overton 2004; Sorauf 1992) has determined repeatedly that most of the time, the candidate who raises the most money garners the most voters. The financial challenges of running for office are compounded by the well-known incumbency advantage. Given the fact that fewer racial and ethnic minorities currently hold elected office and therefore cannot enjoy the benefits of incumbency, their need for fundraising is all the more imperative.

As inequities that manifest socially are replicated and even magnified within the realm of campaigning, examining the role of race and ethnicity in fundraising is critical to furthering our understanding of the race/ethnic gap in elected office. In this article, I evaluate the relationship between race and campaign fundraising at the legislative level across a sample of 15 states. First, I review the current literature in the field. As I detail below, there has been very little research on the role of candidate race on fundraising, particularly at the state legislative level. I then detail the hypotheses that fuel the study, which are rooted in a large literature that suggests that black and Latino candidates may face significant obstacles to successful fundraising. Additional hypotheses consider the role of partisanship, institutional professionalization, and region in mitigating or perpetuating the gap. Next, I explain the data and methodology employed, culminating with a discussion of the results yielded in the statistical models. Finally, I summarize my overall findings about the relationship between race and campaign finance, and suggest additional approaches for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature about the influence of a candidate's race and his or her ability to fundraise is surprisingly scant. Much of what has been studied centers on the effects of voter attitudes and candidate characteristics and how those interact to effect election outcomes. Early studies focusing specifically on black or female candidates yielded no evidence of significant voter bias (Eckstrand and Eckert 1981; Leeper 1991; Sigelman and Sigelman 1984; Terkildsen 1993); however, more recent studies demonstrate that the race of a candidate plays into a voter's decision (and a donor's decision), much like daily stereotypes guide individual impressions.

Particularly in political races for which relatively little information is available, the larger demographic group to which the candidate belongs can be influential in garnering voters' support. Gender identity is often easier to assess through a candidate's name (as "Hilary" and "Nancy" are more likely female names, while "John" and "Harry" are more likely male names); however, colloquial names and surnames can conjure a candidate's race (such as "Fredrica" or "Jose"). Even black candidates who have names that are considered racially distinctive can be subject to voter biases because of racial stereotypes (Fryer and Levitt 2004). Ethnic surnames, particularly for Hispanic candidates, can provide an important cue. Matson and Fine (2006) determined that name recognition enabled voters to make educated guesses about candidates' gender and ethnicity and that these were enhanced with increased spending. Fundraising can be particularly important for Hispanic candidates in low-information elections, as it can allow candidates to distinguish themselves and make their own names more recognizable (Bullock, Gaddie, and Ferrington 2002; Lieske 1989). The challenge of correctly ascribing race and gender is evident and underscores the problematic reliance of cues, but the use of such shortcuts is nonetheless prevalent.

Easily accessible and identifiable traits of candidates can play a larger role in low-information elections, as the less- and even moderately informed seek such criteria as a basis for their decision. McDermott's (1998) foundational study on the effect of race and

gender suggested that candidate demographic cues, such as race and gender, also offer cognitive shortcuts for voters through the candidates' presumed (and rather stereotypical) association with being more liberal than white male candidates. The influence of race is not independent of partisanship, voting, and representation but is rather intersectional, conglomerating into one major informational cue (Hutchings and Valentino 2004). Donors consider far more than simply a candidate's race when deciding to give the candidate contributions; partisanship denotes an imperative indicator for support, but policy platforms, voting records (for incumbents), candidacy viability (for challengers and open-seat seekers) merit consideration as well.

Although race and gender can be utilized as cognitive shortcuts, in a race in which a particular candidate perceives his or her race or gender to be an electoral disadvantage among voters, campaign fundraising and strategic spending can help (Matson and Fine 2006). Spending campaign funds to promote one's positions and to educate voters beyond their limited information cues so they are actually familiar (and, hopefully, agree) with the candidate's platform can provide the ability to transcend potential race or gender stereotypes that could prove detrimental at the polls.

The effect of money in campaigns has been well documented through a litany of research, and its focal point within this study only further reiterates the importance of fundraising in campaigns. To be sure, seats cannot be bought, and money has a finite influence that cannot rectify unpopular or unclear platforms, or repair a tarnished reputation or poor character, yet securing enough funds to conduct a formidable campaign is critical in the modern arena of politics. Among the classic literature, Gierzynski and Breaux (1991) argued that money can have a substantial impact in state legislative races, depending particularly on whether the candidate is an incumbent or a challenger, as the former need not spend nearly as much as the challenger to gain the votes necessary for victory. The implications of incumbency advantage, challenger status, and open seats have been central in electing candidates from underrepresented groups to public office. Because incumbents can boast impressive benefits, having already served and courted constituencies, the advantage can serve as a barrier to prospective challengers; as the majority of state legislative seats are held by white men, there is a great likelihood that in most elections, that demographic will also dominate the incumbent positions.

The direct influence of race in statewide elections was originally evaluated through empirical studies more than 20 years ago through a few seminal pieces that served as foundational work in the field. Arrington and Ingalls (1984) demonstrated that on the local level, black candidates and campaign donors vary from their white counterparts. They noted that in their Charlotte, North Carolina, study, black citizens were every bit as likely to contribute to campaigns as white citizens but donated fewer dollars per capita and, further, donations were "substantially aligned by race" (582–83). Given this observation, the study concluded that no obvious financial discrepancy existed between black and white candidates, as the fewer black donors corresponded proportionately to fewer black candidates.

Applying these findings to the state level, Sonenshein (1990) analyzed support for black candidates at state offices through a normative assessment. The impermeable aspect

of race required black candidates address this identity, but the need to mount a majority of electoral support forces them to simultaneously expand their voting base. The study found that with the numerous challenges facing black candidates, the quest for more black leaders (including president, which Sonenshein singled out) would require a major shift within the political atmosphere and a less-stigmatized perspective of the nonwhite candidate. This question was later revisited on the eve of the landmark 2008 presidential election, and it was concluded that racial tensions had eased and acceptance of minorities in high political offices had increased considerably since the earliest days of black candidates (Wilson 2008).

Less research has been dedicated solely to Hispanic fundraising outcomes, but the cultural differences in terms of language and community can play an important role in Hispanic candidates' political behavior. The prominence of the Spanish language in Hispanic culture was historically attributed to diminished political participation (Calvo and Rosenstone 1989; MacManus and Cassel 1982). Revisionist studies, however, have found that more recently, being bilingual can actually increase political participation (Johnson, Stein, and Wrinkle 2003). Hispanic contributors behave differently from white donors, in both the cultural context for what it means to donate funds and in political expectations for contributions (Rivas-Vazquez 1999). They prefer in-person contact and emphasize family and community influences as motivators for contributions.

In addition to a potential language difference, members of different ethnic groups have historical experiences and cultural differences that may change their perspectives on campaigns (Leighley 2001). The way in which a candidate approaches fundraising likely varies across ethnic lines and also with regard to how long one has resided in the country. A first-generation Hispanic immigrant's understanding and perspective of the political process, including fundraising, would likely be different from that of a third-generation immigrant.

While all of these studies offer potential implications, none conducts a systematic, candidate-level analysis to determine if a disparity exists between white and nonwhite candidates. Smith (2005) argued that black candidates are hindered by their ability to pursue their own agenda (one which, presumably, would incorporate race-based politics) because they are dependent on "white money" (p. 736). His analysis focused on the substantive representation of black candidates and elected officials, however, and he failed to definitively illustrate whether the fundraising experiences and outcomes of black candidates were different, merely noting that employing an entirely black fundraising base is difficult in its execution and ineffective in its outcome. Likewise, Rivas-Vazquez (1999) charged that the cultural framework for fundraising and donating "has different meaning and expression than it does in Anglo culture" (pp. 115–116). She did not apply this concept to state elections, and so its applicability for Hispanic candidates at that level remains unclear.

Together, racial and ethnic minorities face barriers that make running for public office and fundraising more challenging. Both black and Hispanic Americans lag behind whites with regard to job opportunities, mean wages, average household income, and educational attainment (Glaser 1994; Lichter 1989). The cost to participate in politics is high, but it is not the same for everyone. This literature indicates that the experience in fundraising and the resulting outcome may be different for candidates based on their

racial/ ethnic background, and this study aims to identify if a gap exists and, if so, how political, institutional, and regional features affect it.

THEORY AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Underlying this study is the belief that voters and donors view nonwhite candidates differently from white candidates and, to an extent, make decisions about those candidates based on candidates' perceived racial/ethnic identities. Voters want a candidate who represents their interests, and though individuals from racial/ethnic minority groups are acclimated to representation by a white public official (as has historically been the norm), the opposite is not necessarily true. The "black" or "Hispanic" agenda is often seen as a distinctive way in which nonwhite candidates utilize identity politics to press issues unique to their communities (Reingold 2012).

Donors are slightly more sophisticated than voters, yet their approach in selecting a candidate could be more simplistic: they want to support a candidate whom they believe will win. Naturally, donors are also invested (literally as well as figuratively) in the candidate's agenda and want someone who will represent their interests. Campaign contributions derive from nearly every economic sector and reflect varying sums, but large corporate interests and niche interest groups dominate the donor population. As most of these are operated by a homogenous collection of elites comprised primarily of highly affluent and educated white men (and some women), their interests are not likely to align with a perceived racial minority "agenda." Coupled with the reality that nonwhite Americans suffer an economic disadvantage that would make it more difficult for them to mount effective campaigns or enjoy the expendable income to finance or contribute to another's campaign, a clear racial/ethnic divide in campaign contributions is likely to emerge.

The literature review demonstrates a clear disadvantage for minority candidates in political campaigns, and I believe the impact of fundraising may exacerbate this disparity, yet there is good reason to suspect that the magnitude of racial disparities in campaign fundraising may vary significantly across institutional and cultural settings. How do race and ethnicity (used here in a simple dichotomous white-vs.-nonwhite measure) influence campaign fundraising totals? How do certain state features, including institutional, partisan, and regional differences, affect this relationship? The hypotheses elaborated below outline the objectives upon which this analysis will concentrate.

To better understand the racial/ethnic variation in fundraising, this study will test four primary hypotheses using data about state legislative elections. First, following the trajectory of the previous literature, I believe that, on average and everything else equal, white candidates garner more in fundraising compared to nonwhite candidates. Coupled with differences in education, wage earnings, political participation, and incumbency advantage—which benefits the primarily white incumbency—it follows that nonwhite candidates will fail to fundraise as much as their white counterparts. This gap, however, is hypothesized to vary depending on the level of institutional professionalization, the strength of the Democratic party's presence, and the geographic location of the states. These additional hypotheses are explained below.

Merging the literature about race and campaign finance with the work about professionalization and candidate occupation, my second hypothesis is rooted in the assumption that candidates will be more attracted to a professionalized state legislature (compared to an amateur legislature) because of the increased accessibility of resources (Fiorina 1994). Following the imagery established by Blair (1988) and reemphasized by Fiorina (1994) that certain professions are more conducive to enabling individuals to run for office in these less-professionalized states, and adding that these positions are usually occupied by white men, it would follow that less-professionalized legislatures draw fewer racial/ethnic minority candidates to compete. A more professionalized legislature enables one to work solely as a legislator because of the (generally) higher salary and, with the power and prestige that accompany such a position, encourages competition for these desirable seats. The effect of increased competition in turn is likely to weed out less-viable (and poorly funded) candidates early in the primaries to ensure a higher-quality pair of candidates for the general elections and more overall homogeneity in the size of campaign fundraising totals statewide. I believe that candidates in states with more-professionalized legislatures will demonstrate fewer racial/ethnic candidate differences (if any) in campaign fundraising.

The presence and strength of the party is undoubtedly influential in election outcomes and can explain the propensity of certain states to prefer candidates from a particular party. Stemming from the notion that most racial and ethnic minority candidates vote for and run on the Democratic party ticket (though the Asian American and Hispanic American population diverge on this, pending the country of origin), I believe that nonwhite candidates running in Democratic-leaning states will exhibit fewer fundraising disparities compared to white candidates. Inversely, this suggests a more substantial gap between racial and ethnic minorities and whites in more Republican-leaning states. Especially with the increasing saliency of universal healthcare and immigration-reform issues in the past decade that may be a focal point for a racial/ethnic minority candidate, and given the Democratic party's positions in support of such policies, it would hold that partisanship would be influential in the relationship between the candidate's race/ethnicity and his or her fundraising totals; thus, the third hypothesis maintains that the gap will widen between white candidates and nonwhite candidates in Republican-leaning states compared to the same two groups in Democratic-leaning states.

The final hypothesis rests on the unique political culture of the South, which differs significantly from all other regions in the United States, particularly regarding race. Throughout American history, the racist history of the South has been demonstrated through the practice of slavery, participation in the Civil War, the institution of Jim Crow, and mass opposition to the Civil Rights movement. Although the South can boast the greatest numbers of black legislators respective to other areas of the country, those numbers are still far from proportionate to the population, and the conflation of racial and economic oppression can impede quality nonwhite candidates from funding and winning state-level political offices. In addition, the party politics that recently exhibited a realignment, swinging from just over 100 years of Dixiecrat dominance to full Republican control in most Southern states, reinforce the notion that distinguishes the South from the other areas in the United States. This distinctive social and political

climate signifies this separation from the other regions and seems indicative that a racial/ethnic-based gap in fundraising would be exaggerated within the South, compared to non-Southern states. Given the historical context of racism, economic equality, and partisan strength, I hypothesize that the fundraising gap between white and nonwhite candidates will be greater within the South than outside it.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

To examine the relationship between the candidate's race/ethnicity and amount of money raised for state legislative campaigns, I conducted a review of the public campaign-finance records. I chose 2006 as the year of study for a number of reasons. Most importantly, 2006 served as the off-year congressional elections between two presidential races, thus minimizing the effects of a national presidential race on state politics. Retrospective analyses noted that Democrats did slightly better (relating to President George W. Bush's declining popularity (Jacobson 2008)), but this had a marginal effect on state legislative seats. Thus, there is good reason to think that the 2006 election cycle was not affected by unique historical circumstances and the results are more likely to be generalizable to other periods.

Because of the labor-intensive nature of the data collection, it was not feasible to collect data for all 50 states. I therefore collected data for a sample of 15 states that were carefully selected to ensure variation in the level of state legislative professionalization, regional location, state partisanship, and current racial/ethnic composition. A full summary of the descriptive statistics within this sample is included in the appendix. Among the most important variables, however, are that the average dollar amount fundraised was \$129,050.50 and that nonwhite candidates comprised 16.49 percent of candidates. Table 1 provides the states used in this analysis, along with data for several relevant contextual variables.

Data were collected from the authentic ballots secured by the board of elections (at the state level) and from financial donor reports available in the databases of the Institute for Money in State Politics. Additional demographic information about individual candidates was gathered through research on independent candidates (via their campaign websites, party websites, and press releases). Every effort was made to confirm the accuracy of the data collected and the reputability of the sources from which it they originally derived. In some cases, a candidate's gender or race could not be verified and thus was not recorded. This conservative approach to ensure the accuracy of the data occasionally led to some observations (candidates) being dropped from the set for incomplete available information. The final data set consisted of a total 3,003 Republican and Democratic general election candidates running in 2,105 state legislative races and who raised at least \$1000 each. Third-party candidates were excluded because they rarely raise much money and, with rare exception, are not successful at the ballot box. Finally, the \$1,000 threshold for inclusion in the sample ensures that candidates who filed for the election but never truly conducted campaigns (and therefore were not serious or viable) were not part of this analysis; this cutoff is very conservative to ensure that no unnecessary eliminations were made (Vonnahme 2012).

Table 1. States Selected for Sample

State	Prof. of Legislature ^a	Campaign Finance Laws	Region	State Part. (%Republican) ^b	Race/ Ethnic Comp. in Leg. ^c	Race/ Ethnic Comp. in Pop. ^d
Alabama	moderate	open	South	56	23%	30%
California	high	moderate	West	47	33%	26%
Colorado	moderate	restrictive	West	49	15%	12%
Connecticut	moderate	restrictive	Northeast	46	13%	18%
Georgia	slightly low	restrictive	South	53	21%	37%
Illinois	slightly high	open	Midwest	45	24%	22%
Iowa	moderate	open	Midwest	51	3%	7%
Michigan	high	moderate	Midwest	49	17%	20%
Mississippi	slightly low	open	South	55	21%	40%
Nevada	slightly low	high	West	52	19%	23%
New York	high	restrictive	Northeast	41	26%	29%
North Dakota	low	open	Midwest	57	2%	10%
South Carolina	moderate	moderate	South	55	17%	32%
Wisconsin	slightly high	high	Midwest	51	6%	12%
Wyoming	low	moderate	West	62	3%	7%
Average	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	24%	78%

Notes: ^a as defined by the NCSL Legislatures (2013).

^b the average of state presidential votes for the three previous elections, from data available from the Federal Election Commission (1996, 2001, 2005).

^c percent of nonwhite legislators, from data available from the NCSL (2013).

^d percent of nonwhite constituents, from data available from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2010b).

Comp.=composition; Leg.=legislature; n/a=not applicable; Part.=partisanship; Pop.=population; Prof.=professionalization.

To test the hypotheses, ordinary least squares regression was used, establishing the individual candidate as the primary unit of analysis and utilizing the natural log of the total dollar amount raised as the dependent variable. The independent variables included in this analysis capture qualities at the individual candidate level, the individual election/district level, and the state level. The variables denoting difference at the individual candidate level include partisanship, incumbency, open seat, challenger, leadership position (within the assembly), and candidate quality. Partisanship can play a very substantial role in the involvement of racial/ethnic minorities, as the earlier literature review suggests (Hutchings and Valentino 2004), and can also be influential in fundraising (Smith 2001). As noted earlier, candidates identifying as independent or not running under either the Democrat or Republican parties were rare and were excluded for the purposes of the study.

Traditional variables noted for their relationship to fundraising were also incorporated. Incumbency and open-seat status were used individually as dichotomous

responses, as well as intra-assembly leadership, because of their relationship to fundraising (Biersack, Herrnson, and Wilcox 1993; Krasno, Green, and Cowden 1994). If the individual previously held a high position within that particular house, such as Speaker of the House, that was included as a control as well (Sorauf 1992). A candidate running for reelection who is the current Speaker might garner more campaign funds for his/her higher position of power, but it is possible that by attaining such status, that legislator has a long political legacy, which would diminish the need for excessive fundraising. Finally, the perceived viability of the candidate was assessed to determine if the candidate was a quality candidate (Bond, Covington, and Fleisher 1985; Jacobson and Kernell 1983).

An additional variable included the presence of opposition in the primary election, which was important to include in the data set. Whether an opponent existed (within one's own party in the primary competition or on the opposing party in the general competition) could affect the total amount of money raised (Jacobson 2004; Mutz 1995). Though this analysis looks strictly at the total amount of funds raised (disregarding the points of time in the campaign in which those funds were secured), the influence of competition on the overall total is worth consideration. Primary competition accounts for races in which the type of competition varied (again, affecting fundraising).

Data available from the 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census reports provided variables for education, poverty levels, and minorities within the districts. District educational attainment was measured as the percentage of adults over age 25 who held a high school diploma; district poverty levels encompassed all adults over age 25 who were at or below the poverty level; and the minority variable incorporated the percentage of citizens within the district who self-identified as nonwhite citizens.

The economic-affluence and educational-attainment averages captured two important district characteristics that are influential in the relationship between race/ethnicity and fundraising. The district-level economic-affluence variable concerns how much money individuals within the district have, which would be influential in the amount they choose to give (as donors) and the amount needed to win (as candidates). A race in a poor rural district would likely require a lower threshold of fundraising to conduct a competitive candidacy, whereas a race in an affluent suburban or metropolitan area might require more. Likewise, the measure of educational attainment can be indicative of participation and also relates to economic affluence (through the positive relationship between education and income).

Finally, to capture differences among the states in the analysis, variables denoting state partisanship, level of professionalization, and regional location were noted. The partisanship of the state—that is, the way in which a state tends to lean—could be influential in fundraising outcomes. For example, a state that leans heavily Democrat is likely to yield candidates who are Democrat and may garner less in fundraising totals, as the cultural preference already favors that party. Alternately, in a one-party-slanted state, the propensity of Democratic voters likely corresponds to more generous donors, so those candidates may secure more funds. This measure was calculated as the average vote share for the Republican candidate from the three most recent presidential elections prior to 2006 (1996, 2000, and 2004).

The state-professionalization variable depicted the level of institutional professionalization of the legislature, following the categorizations established by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), and included differences such as salary, staff size, and number of days in office per session. This measure was divided into three categories denoting whether the state was “more professionalized,” “moderately professionalized,” or “less professionalized.”

Finally, the geographic locations of the states were noted by the boundaries established by the U.S. Bureau of the Census and were then accompanied by the dichotomous component, separating them into South and non-South groups.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To estimate the effects of these variables on campaign funding, I utilized an ordinary least squares model, with standard errors adjusted for clustering at the state level. I first estimated an additive model, the results of which are displayed in Table 2. Because the dependent variable is measured as the log of total funds raised, the coefficients can be interpreted as the proportional change in the dependent variable given a one-unit increase in the independent variable.

The results in Table 2 reveal that the assembly of the race and the candidate’s quality both had statistically significant effects on fundraising. The assembly in which the candidacy was focused achieved a $p > 0.000$ with a coefficient of .812. Because the dependent variable is measured as the log of the fundraising total, this coefficient indicates that candidates running for the state senate raised an average of 81 percent more compared to their counterparts running for the state house. The candidate’s quality (having won a political election in the past) yielded a $p > 0.001$ with a coefficient of .546, which indicates that with more experience and better networks, quality candidates would out-raise political novices.

The measures encompassing the presence of competition in the general race, candidate’s leadership, and candidate’s challenger status achieved statistical significance as well. Candidates faced with competition in the primary election generally raised 41 percent more than those without competition ($p > 0.002$). Those already holding leadership positions within the legislature also raised 114 percent more than those who did not ($p > 0.004$). Candidates who ran for open seats not surprisingly raised 96 percent on the whole more than others ($p > 0.000$). These findings correspond with expectations as established by previous literature (Hogan, 2000; Moncrief 1992; Thompson, Cassie, and Jewell 1994) and reaffirm the value of these control variables in this analysis.

I now move to the test of Hypothesis 1, which examines the relationship between the total funds raised and the race/ethnicity of the candidate. Consistent with the hypothesis, the candidate’s race/ethnicity exhibits a statistically significant impact, with a coefficient of $-.469$ (Table 3). This suggests that nonwhite candidates raise an average of 47 percent less compared to white candidates, when all other mitigating factors are controlled. This relationship achieved statistical significance, generating a $p > 0.001$. The hypothesis that nonwhite candidates raised fewer funds than white candidates is thus supported.

Table 2. Funds and Race/Ethnicity OLS Model

Coefficients	Estimate	Std. Error	t-Value	p Value
(Intercept)	11.366	1.686	6.74	0.000***
Race	-.469	.109	-4.28	.001***
Gender	-.018	.073	-.24	.814
Assembly	.812	.092	8.80	0.000***
Quality	.546	.136	4.01	.001***
Primary competition	.413	.106	3.90	.002**
Leadership	1.135	.328	3.46	.004**
Incumbency	.268	.129	2.08	.056
Open seat	.959	.105	9.14	0.000***
Candidate party	-.040	.109	-.37	.719
District education	.045	.031	1.43	.176
District poverty	-.781	.617	-1.27	.226
District minorities	.411	.252	1.63	.125
Moderate professionalization	.695	.412	1.69	.114
High professionalization	1.562	.603	2.59	.021*
Southern states	1.410	.339	4.16	.001***
State partisanship	-.061	.029	-2.07	.057

Notes: Number of Observations: 2,611

Multiple R^2 : .3893; root MSE: 1.1977

Standard error adjusted for 15 clusters in states

MSE=mean squared error; OLS=ordinary least squares; Std.=standard.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Additionally, interactional models were conducted to assess the impact of the individual hypotheses (Tables 3–5). The interactional effects for the state's partisanship and the institutional professionalization were marginal, but those for the state's region were notable.

Hypothesis 2 concentrated on the effect of legislative professionalization on the relationship between race/ethnicity and fundraising, asserting that a larger gap in fundraising would be found in states with the least-professionalized state legislatures and the smallest difference (if any) would be seen in states with the most-professionalized state legislatures. These results are reported in Table 3. Moderately professionalized state legislatures achieved a $-.182$ coefficient with a $p > .598$, while highly professionalized state legislatures attained a $.249$ coefficient with a $p > .512$. Relative to the least-professionalized states, nonwhite candidates in moderately professionalized states raised roughly 18 percent less, but those in highly professionalized states raised 25 percent more on average. This relationship was weak and failed to achieve statistical significance.

Table 3. Funds and Race Model with Professionalization Interaction Effect

Coefficients	Estimate	Std. Error	t-Value	p Value
(Intercept)	11.867	1.575	7.53	0.000***
Race & Moderate professionalization	-.182	.337	-.54	.598
Race & High professionalization	.249	.370	.67	.512
Race	-.519	.319	-1.63	.126
Gender	-.233	.069	-.34	.742
Assembly	.809	.093	8.71	0.000***
Quality	.546	.132	4.14	.001***
Primary competition	.417	.109	3.83	.002**
Leadership	1.146	.328	3.50	.004**
Incumbency	.270	.128	2.12	.052
Open seat	.957	.104	9.24	0.000***
Candidate party	-.031	.103	-.30	.772
District education	.044	.031	1.39	.186
District poverty	-.781	.588	-1.33	.206
District minority	.385	.244	1.58	.137
Moderate professionalization	.721	.412	1.75	.102
High professionalization	1.528	.597	2.57	.022*
State partisanship	-.060	.029	-2.07	.057
Southern states	1.431	.340	4.21	.001***

Notes: Number of Observations: 2,611.

Multiple R^2 : .3911; root MSE: 1.1964.

Standard error adjusted for 15 clusters in states.

MSE=mean squared error; Std.=standard.

Hypothesis 3 stated that partisanship would be influential in a nonwhite candidate's ability to fundraise and that states that tended to lean Democrat would exhibit less disparity in race/ethnicity fundraising compared to those that tended to lean Republican. Results are shown in Table 4. Summarizing the three previous presidential elections in the state-partisanship measure, the findings noted a small negative relationship, with a coefficient of $-.185$ and a $p > .240$. States tending to align with the Republican party denoted a negative influence, but this relationship was not statistically significant.

The results of the interaction between race and the state being in the South are shown in Table 5. The coefficient of $-.638$ indicates that nonwhite candidates in the South raised, on average, nearly 64 percent less than do white candidates, which is highly statistically significant, with a $p > .003$. This finding is substantial and corresponds to the legacy of racial discrimination (in the political and economic sectors) that would influence the overall fundraising efforts of racial/ethnic minority candidates in the South.

Table 4. Funds and Race Model with Partisanship Interaction Effect

Coefficients	Estimate	Std.		
		Error	t Value	p Value
(Intercept)	11.278	1.661	6.79	0.000***
Race & Party interaction	-.185	.015	-1.23	.240
Race	.406	.695	.58	.569
Gender	-.017	.072	-.23	.820
Assembly	.809	.094	8.65	0.000***
Quality	.543	.134	4.06	.001***
Primary competition	.416	.107	3.88	.002**
Leadership	1.135	.328	3.46	.004**
Incumbency	.274	.126	2.17	.048*
Open seat	.960	.106	9.09	0.000***
Candidate party	-.028	.104	-.28	.785
District education	.043	.032	1.31	.210
District poverty	-.809	.602	-1.34	.200
District minority	.389	.247	1.58	.137
Moderate professionalization	.689	.411	1.70	.111
High professionalization	1.557	.601	2.59	.021*
State partisanship	-.059	.029	-2.04	.061
Southern states	1.438	.342	4.20	.001***

Notes: Number of Observations: 2,611.

Multiple R^2 : .3904; root MSE: 1.1969.

Standard error adjusted for 15 clusters in states.

MSE=mean squared error; Std.=standard.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Overall, the results are mixed. The candidate's race/ethnicity overall does prove to have a substantial effect on the total dollar amount fundraised. The effect of legislative professionalization suggests that there was a positive relationship between the professionalization level and the disparity between white and nonwhite candidates' fundraising totals (the higher the professionalization level, the less disparity between white and nonwhite candidates), but it failed to achieve statistical significance. State partisanship demonstrated a slightly negative relationship, indicating that nonwhite candidates raise fewer funds in Republican-leaning states. Perhaps most notably, Southern states demonstrated a negative relationship with candidate's race/ethnicity with regards to fundraising, as it was highly statistically significant that nonwhite candidates raised substantially fewer funds in Southern states. Though the state-level influences varied in magnitude, the race/ethnicity gap in campaign fundraising was consistently negative, demonstrating that the candidate's racial/ethnic background is influential in his or her fundraising.

Table 5. Funds and Race Model with Southern Interaction Effect

Coefficients	Estimate	Std. Error	t-Value	p Value
(Intercept)	11.776	1.550	7.59	0.000***
Race & South interaction	-.638	.179	-3.56	.003***
Race	-.211	.116	-1.82	.090***
Gender	-.016	.071	-.23	.820
Assembly	.808	.094	8.55	0.000***
Quality	.538	.131	4.12	.001***
Primary competition	.415	.109	3.81	.002**
Leadership	1.084	.273	3.97	.001***
Incumbency	-.284	.122	2.32	.036
Open seat	.953	.105	9.10	0.000***
Candidate party	-.015	.104	-.15	.885
District education	.038	.033	1.17	.263
District poverty	-.792	.569	-1.36	.186
District minority	.391	.252	1.55	.143
Moderate professionalization	.697	.407	1.71	.109
High professionalization	1.547	.593	2.61	.021*
State partisanship	-.059	.029	-2.07	.057
Southern state	1.511	.346	4.37	.001***

Notes: Number of Observations: 2,611.

Multiple R^2 : .3949; root MSE: 1.1925.

Standard error adjusted for 15 clusters in states.

MSE=mean squared error; Std.=standard.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

These findings demonstrate that a race/ethnicity gap in campaign finance does exist in state legislative elections, but the state-level differences varied. Overall, the first hypothesis, which maintained that nonwhite candidates would raise fewer funds than their white counterparts, was upheld, and the large coefficient of nearly 47 percent difference between the two was statistically significant. This finding illustrates not only that a race/ethnicity gap exists but also that the gap is substantial. What is undetermined in the scope of this particular study, however, is how this influences the elections. Though racial/ethnic minorities raise fewer funds, their campaigns may not necessarily need as much money. The focus of this study does not identify how the money is spent, but differences in campaigning and the districts (reliance on grassroots initiatives, co-ethnic voting, majority-minority districts, and the like) could signify that although nonwhite candidates raise less, this does not necessarily correspond to their underrepresentation. Further studies identifying the relationships between fundraising and campaigning would certainly be beneficial.

The professionalization of the institutions had no statistically significant impact on the race/ethnicity gap in fundraising, suggesting that the level of professionalization of a state legislature has no real impact on whether nonwhite candidates raise more or less than their white counterparts do. Partisanship likewise had no effect. Though the hypothesis predicted that states leaning Democrat would exhibit smaller gaps in fundraising for nonwhite candidates, primarily because most racial/ethnic minorities tend to run on and support the Democratic party ticket, this relationship was not upheld.

The regionalization theory, maintaining that nonwhite candidates running in the South would exhibit greater fundraising disparities, was both strong and sizable. Racial/ethnic minority candidates raised, on average, nearly 64 percent less than did white candidates, denoting a substantial gap that was exacerbated in the Southern state legislatures. Although this result is disheartening, it is not entirely surprising.

Rampant segregation and the historical means for excluding racial/ethnic minorities from politics in the South were legally dismantled only within the past 60 years. The largest populations of African American legislators are found in the Southern states, but this is due in part to the population density as well as the federal oversight through the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which mandated federal control over elections—a direct response to the discriminatory practices synonymous with Southern culture (Guinier 1991). These findings suggest that nonwhite candidates raise far fewer funds than White candidates in a staggering gap that emphasizes that while a racial/ethnic gap exists more generally in fundraising, it is even more prominent below the Mason-Dixon line.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the importance of race and ethnicity in campaign fundraising. As the only multistate analysis to examine this relationship, the findings show that in state legislative elections, the candidate's identity is still related to how much he or she raises in contributions. The effect is certainly not universal and varies based on differences across the states. The specific variations tested here (state partisanship, institutional professionalization, and region) yielded interesting results that reaffirm the disparities within and across states regarding race/ethnicity and campaign finance.

In spite of assumptions that a candidate's racial/ethnic background does not define his or her candidacy, the cost of fundraising and financing a campaign remains an inequitable burden. White candidates benefit from various economic and political advantages, and they are generally able to raise more funds than are their nonwhite counterparts. The findings from this study affirm that a fundraising gap still clearly exists across race/ethnic lines. Nonwhite candidates raise substantially fewer funds than white candidates, and in the era of the modern campaign, which necessitates expensive media markets and expansive campaign staffs, this can translate to a disadvantage for an already underrepresented population. Even though the racial/ethnic minority candidates tend to be higher quality, they fail to raise the same amount of money, revealing a challenge not easy to overcome.

The effect of state variation likewise proves to be substantial, as the hypotheses involving institutional professionalization and state-level partisanship were upheld. Overall, the more professionalized the legislature, the less of a gap in fundraising between racial/ ethnic minority candidates and white candidates. Democratic-leaning states also demonstrate a minimized disparity between race/ethnicity and fundraising. These results show not only that do state-level variations matter in explaining and understanding this relationship but also that professionalization and partisanship play particularly important roles.

What these results fail to suggest is a way to fully mitigate the fundraising gap. The election system in the United States is inherently unfair when it is obvious that, even with all other mitigating factors held constant, nonwhite candidates are unable to raise comparable amounts of money compared to white candidates. Fundraising is critical to paying for the advertising, staffing, and other necessities required in the modern campaign era. When the candidate with the most money wins most of the time, it is apparent that the playing field is far from level. As nonwhite candidates consistently raise less money in their campaigns, they are at a disadvantage for winning their races. Add this to the economic and education gap, and it seems dismally clear why so few racial/ethnic minorities serve in political office relative to the abundance of white officeholders.

Considering how fundraising plays a role in the election of candidates from underrepresented groups is critical to further understanding the complicated roles of money and race in politics. This study demonstrates that a race gap in campaign finance exists within state legislative elections. We should continue to identify other ways in which the race gap occurs in campaigns, and how funding can be used to exacerbate or minimize disparities. Determining inequities within the political system itself can prove to be challenging, but it is necessary for us to address why our representative democracy is not particularly representative and to decide what can be done about this.

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APPENDIX

Table A1. Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Variable Name	Variable Coding
DEPENDENT Variable	
Fund	Total Dollar Amount (e.g., \$346,560)
INDEPENDENT Variables	
Candidate gender	Male = 0, Female = 1
Candidate race	White = 0, Nonwhite = 1
Candidate party	Republican = 0, Democrat = 1

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Table A1. Summary of Descriptive Statistics, concl.

Variable Name	Variable Coding
INDEPENDENT Variables, cont.	
Won	Lost = 0, Won = 1
Candidate quality	No elected political position = 0, Previous elected political position = 1
Primary competition	None = 0, Any = 1
Candidate race	White = 0, Nonwhite = 1
Candidate leadership	No high leadership position held = 0, High leadership position held = 1
Candidate incumbency	Not incumbent = 0, Incumbent = 1
Candidate open seat	Not open seat = 0, Open seat = 1
Race assembly	House = 0, Senate = 1
State partisanship	State average for Republican candidate in the 1996, 2000, and 2004 elections
District affluence/poverty	Percentage of individuals within the district at or below the poverty level
District minority	Percentage within district of any race or ethnicity other than non-Hispanic white
District education attainment	Percentage within the district who earned a HS Diploma or the GED equivalent
Institutional professionalization	Less professionalized = 1, Moderately professionalized = 2, More professionalized = 3
Geographic location	Non-South = 0, South = 1