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African Americans in Politics: What Factors Lead to the Election of African American Representatives

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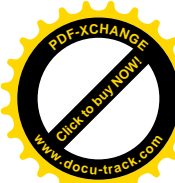
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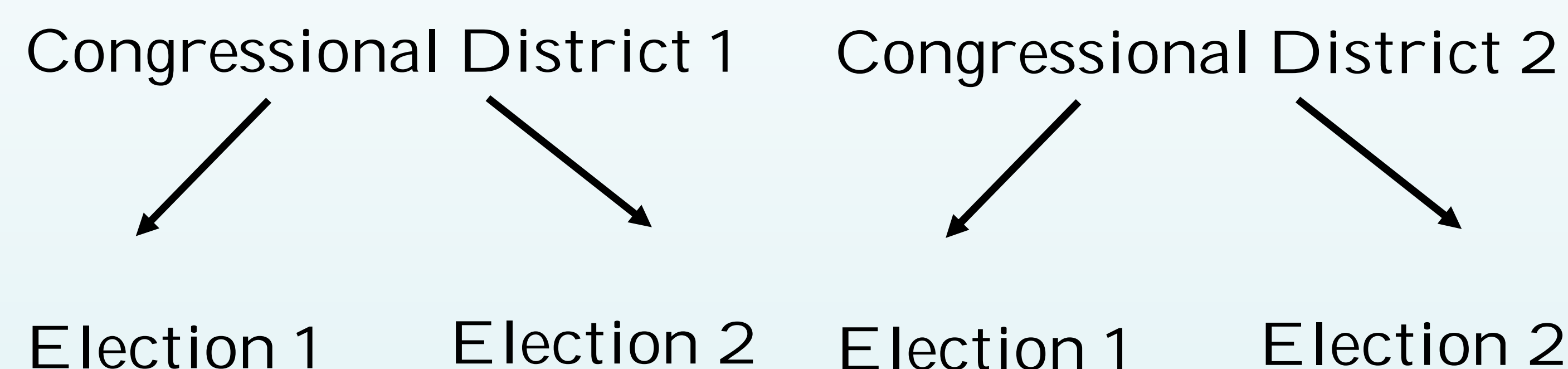
African Americans in Politics:

What Factors Lead to the Election of African American Representatives

Keith Gonzales and Dr. Sven Wilson
Masters of Public Policy

"Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons." (U.S. Constitution - Article 1 Section 1)

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." (Martin Luther King, 1963)



The data is organized in the way shown above. The data is organized by different elections within each Congressional district. The Congressional districts themselves explain ninety-two percent of the variation in the data. Which Congressional district a African American politician is running in determines much of his chances at election.

Introduction

African Americans have triumphed over a difficult history in the United States. They have had to overcome prejudices in education, the workforce, and politics. Today, we have an African American president and many African Americans hold office on every level of government. It seems to be a good time to evaluate the political environment for African Americans.

Data from Congressional districts has been gathered and evaluated. The data has shown three significant factors affecting the chances of African Americans to be elected as a representative from any district. The results hint that there may still be work to be done in race relations in the United States.

Data

The data has been gathered from the 87th-104th Congressional sessions. The data consists of various attributes of the Congressional districts within the United States. The number in the population that are Caucasian, urban, high school graduates, elderly, and more are included. Also, parties are taken into account. Many of the variables are specific to African Americans. For example, educational levels of the African American population are taken into account. The African American population over 65 and the median income for African American families are also included. The data is specific and extensive enough to inspire confidence in the results.

Marginal Effects on Election of African American Representatives

Congressional District Data	dy/dx	P > z
% of Pop. From Diff. State in last Census	-1.386656	0.65
% College Graduate	0.2775457	.0.471
% High School Graduate	0.3235649	0.382
% of African American Pop. High School Grad.	-0.249901	0.335
% African American Pop. College Grad.	-0.683076	0.271
% Pop. African American	5.686893	0.337
% Pop. Rural	0.0431688	0.954
% Pop. Urban	7.429315	0.315
% Pop. Caucasian	-24.9036	0.013
% of African American Pop. over Age 65	-2.933813	0.42
% of Pop. over Age 65	12.81508	0.192
% of Pop. over Age 18	116.5394	0.897
Median Family Income	-19.55707	0.076
% Pop. in Labor Force	12.06499	0.511
African American Median Family Income	22.24826	0.044
Political Party of Candidate	-0.371728	0.797
% Pop. Male	-80.93022	0.85
% Pop. Female	-64.88426	0.891

Method

What factors affect the election of African American politicians to the House of Representatives? Whether an African American is elected is a binary response. Either they did or didn't. Therefore, a logit model is utilized to analyze the data. Also, the data is grouped by Congressional district. The districts may be a significant factor in explaining the results of the data. The model was run with and without certain variables to assess the best fit model.

Results

Holding the African American population constant, a one percent increase in the average Caucasian population in the district decreases the chances of electing an African American representative by twenty five percent.

When the average median income of the Congressional district increases by one percent from the average, then African Americans are twenty percent less likely to be elected to office.

If the average median African American family income increases by one percent then the district is twenty four percent more likely to elect an African American representative.

Conclusion

Most of the differences in why one district elects an African American and another doesn't is due to differences between districts. When looking within districts three factors appear to be significant. The number of Caucasians in the district appear to be significant. Holding the African American population constant, the more Caucasians in a Congressional district less likely a African American will be elected. Election within a Congressional district also depends on the income within the district. The higher the holding African American income constant the higher the median family income within a district the less likely a African American District will be elected. In contrast, when the median African American family income increases this increases the chances of the election of an African American. Education was surprising not significant. Education levels might be somewhat similar within a district so they become insignificant. The results overall seem to hint at possible lingering racism in American politics.

Works Cited
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