

Athena M. King

Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Political Science
University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC
(Expected Graduation Date: May 2010)

American Politics: U.S. race and ethnic politics, African-American politics, public policy, electoral behavior, political parties, public opinion

Public Administration: Local government administration

Research Methods Training: Linear regression, maximum likelihood estimation, longitudinal data analysis (time series, panel data, event history models)

Athena M. King is a Ph.D. candidate in political science at the University of South Carolina. In 1990 she received her B.A., *cum laude*, in History from Coker College in 1990. In 2001, she began pursuing her Master's Degree in Public Administration at the University of South Carolina, graduating as a member of Pi Alpha Alpha. In the Ph.D. program, her major field is American Politics. Her minor field of emphasis is Public Administration. She has served as both a research and teaching assistant in both the Department of Political Science and the Prevention Research Center of the Arnold School of Public Health. She has presented papers at Midwest Political Science Association and the South Carolina Political Science Association Conferences. She has co-authored a book chapter with Prof. Todd Shaw and Prof. Lester Spence titled, "Hype, Hip Hop and Heartbreak: The Rise and Fall of Kwame Kilpatrick", in *Whose Black Politics? Cases in Post-Racial Black Leadership* (Routledge Press, Fall 2009). She is a 2009-2010 scholar in the African-American Professors Program, and a 2009-2010 recipient of the Research/Creative Award for Minority Graduate Students from the Institute of African-American Research. Ms. King has also provided student service to the university by serving as a Vice-President of the Graduate Student Association for academic year 2006-07 and a Graduate Student Representative for the Public Administration Faculty Candidate Recruitment Committee in Academic Year 2007-08.

Ms. King's research interests include U.S. racial and ethnic politics, Public Policy, African-American politics, and electoral behavior. She is interested in exploring past and present policies which have deliberately or unintentionally fostered racial stratification, as well as the role of policy entrepreneurs in bringing these policies to fruition. Her dissertation focuses on policies that have produced or maintained racial or ethnic stratification in the United States – in particular, racial triangulation. In an effort to move racial discussions beyond "black and white," Claire Kim proposed two notions: (1) "a field of racial positions" and (2) racial triangulation of Asians vis-à-vis blacks and whites on this field (Kim 1999). First, racial groups can be viewed in terms of their relative status on a field of racial positioning which consists of a plane defined by two axes – superior/inferior and insider/foreigner. At any given point in time, the racial group's position on these axes "profoundly shapes the opportunities, constraints and possibilities with which subordinate groups must contend, ultimately serving to reinforce White dominance and privilege" (Kim 1999: 107). Secondly, Asians are triangulated on the racial positioning grid via "relative valorization" and "civic ostracism." With "relative valorization", Asians are considered harder workers and more "valuable" than African-Americans placing them somewhat superior to African-Americans but not superior to whites. "Civic ostracism" refers to the inability of Asians to assimilate into society on cultural/racial grounds, which [historically] precluded them from civic membership and political participation. Because Kim's notion of triangulation was initially applied to whites, African-Americans, and Asians, this dissertation addresses the question of whether there have been other instances of U.S. racial triangulation over the years, and if there have been instances of ethnic triangulation as well.

In her dissertation, Ms. King argues that historically, this "triangulated" effect has been fostered by the creation of race-based policies that protect the economic advantage of the superior race/ethnic group. These policies were brought to fruition by "policy entrepreneurs" (PEs) who possessed a vested interest in obtaining or continuing the economic advantage of whites. At the same time, they were seeking innovative policy changes which encouraged or augmented economic advancement of their group (and, preferably, did not allow same for others – or allowed it, but not to the same extent). PEs have been aided in their policy pursuits by the government (local/state/national) that pass ordinances, statutes, laws, and regulations culminating in the

ultimate fulfillment of receiving governmental validation of their policy intent. At the same time, PEs have been aided in their policy pursuits by additional actors such as (a) the courts, (b) political parties and political elites (including elected officials), (c) other persons of influence within the community (such as the clergy), and (d) the media. The second research question she addresses is: who are the policy entrepreneurs responsible for initiating, promoting, or promulgating race/ethnic based policies fostering triangulation? She proposes that the actions of policy actors engaged in advocating or promulgating racial policies are identifiable as policy entrepreneurs and create (with or without intent) a form of racial triangulation among racial/ethnic groups – usually, vis-à-vis whites and two other racial/ethnic groups.

Previous empirical literature regarding racial/ethnic stratification suggested that (1) other races and minority groups did not experience relationships with any other groups beyond their own, (2) the perceptions/experiences of these other groups were insignificant as compared to that of blacks and whites, or (3) the experiences of these groups was comparable to that of blacks, and thus did not warrant separate study. Therefore, many scholars answered the call to “go beyond black and white” by addressing the relationship of other racial/ethnic groups to that of both whites and blacks, as well as with each other. With regard to policy entrepreneurs, the literature indicates discussions of policy entrepreneurs in the literature presents these actors as agenda setters who develop and sell their ideas to others who have the potential to bring policy promulgation to fruition. More importantly, a review of the literature arguably presents these actors in three different facets: (1) Entrepreneurs as “mobilizers of concern” for a particular policy, (2) Entrepreneurs as “stimulators of policy diffusion”, and (3) Entrepreneurs as “facilitators of policy punctuation”. As “mobilizers” of concern for a policy, entrepreneurs are often the first to consider an issue which would eventually become integrated into the policy process. As stimulators of policy diffusion, the entrepreneur may be one of hundreds (if not thousands or millions) of people already familiar with a policy as it relates to other states or the federal government, but has not made its way into the entrepreneur’s state. Finally, entrepreneurs and the public may both be aware of the incremental nature of policymaking and the inherent equilibrium which comes with maintaining the status quo; however, entrepreneurs utilize their position and knowledge of an issue along with an ability to move the issue up the “ladder of salience” to force parties away from placing the issue in the context of incrementalism, creating instability and controlling the agenda in the process.

Ms. King’s research methodology incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methodology. In connection with the dissertation, she conducted field work at the California State archives in Sacramento in 2009. She examined papers of leading policy entrepreneurs and researched the legislative history of race-based policies. She has also compiled statistical data into her own datasets for most class papers as well as the dissertation project. Finally, Ms. King utilizes advanced statistical methods and content analysis to analyze my datasets. In particular, her dissertation employs mixed methods - both a “Model of Racial Policy” that is largely qualitative in scope, and examinations of “coded” or “modern” triangulation using ordered logit modeling.

Ms. King’s teaching responsibilities at the University of South Carolina includes an undergraduate course in Political Parties. She is an adjunct at Midlands Technical College where she teaches American Government and Politics and Government classes. She has served as a teaching assistant on a variety of courses such as American National Government, American Political Parties, American Local Government, Introduction to Public Administration, and Congress and the Presidency. Ms. King’s teaching philosophy dictates she is committed to serving as the nexus between the students and several factors, including: (1) the students and the course itself, as many students begin the course with trepidation and fear they will not understand the material or learn anything; (2) the newly undergraduate student and his/her fears of moving from high school to the undergraduate setting, where they are, in essence, having to “start over” when it comes to learning (i.e. moving from mostly rote memorization of material to more conceptual/critical thinking and problem solving); and (3) the student and his or her preconceived notions about school in general, about instructors, the subject matter, and fellow students.

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