

Many children attribute white male monopoly on White House to discrimination

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A new study in the journal *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* explored elementary-school-age children's views about the role of race and gender in the U.S. presidency. Results indicated that most children are aware that women and people of color have been excluded from the presidency. Further, many children attributed the lack of female, African American, and Latino presidents to gender and racial discrimination.

In the year prior to Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama's bids to become the Democratic nominee, researchers interviewed children between five and ten years of age from various ethnic and racial backgrounds to assess their knowledge of and attributions for the lack of female, African American, and Latino presidents.

The study found that most children endorsed the belief that the presidency should be filled by people of both genders and diverse races and ethnicities. At the same time, most children reported that women and people of color have been excluded from the role

Surprisingly, when asked about potential legal barriers, one in four children stated that it was currently against the law for women, African Americans, or Latinos to be President. Many children also blamed those who have been excluded, arguing that they lack the necessary attributes to hold the position, including the fact women aren't as smart as men.

Girls who attributed the lack of female presidents to discrimination were more likely to report that they could not really become president, even if they were interested in doing so. In contrast, among African American children, attributions to discrimination were associated with an increased interest in becoming president, perhaps, Bigler said, as a result of the long and well-known history of African-Americans' struggle to achieve equality in the United States,"

"Our research suggests that the U.S. presidency is a high-profile instance of gender and racial exclusion that is well known by young children and may shape their expectations concerning gender and race relations and discrimination," the authors note. "If Obama loses his bid for the presidency, there may be little change in children's attitudes, but it could fuel their perception that American voters are racially prejudiced," Bigler said. "In contrast, if Obama wins children may believe that exclusionary laws and racial prejudice no longer shape the outcomes of the presidential elections."

Source: Wiley

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