Deracialized Leadership and Promotion of African American Political Engagement: Cory Booker's Use of Twitter

Marisol McNair
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

DERACIALIZED LEADERSHIP AND PROMOTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT: CORY BOOKER'S USE OF TWITTER

By Marisol McNair
Political Science

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Pearl K. Ford Dowe
Political Science

Abstract

Cory Booker was elected mayor of Newark, New Jersey in 2006, after two rancorous and racially charged campaign cycles; he used a deracialized political style that challenged traditional thinking about Black leadership for many in Newark. Booker uses the social networking tool, Twitter, to establish a cohesive group identity and to legitimize his leadership with African Americans in Newark. We use a social media "engagement infrastructure" framework developed by Leighninger and Mann (2011) to review Booker's postings on Twitter over a 31-day period. The goal of this review was to analyze the ways in which Booker utilizes social media to promote African American political engagement, and himself, in Newark. Findings suggest that, although Booker successfully uses Twitter to map networks, build coalitions, connect with and attract constituents, a more politically engaged population has not materialized. Booker's ability to create an improved infrastructure that promotes his political agenda and that solidifies Black group support may be essential for his long-term success as a deracialized Black leader.

Introduction

Cory Booker is an unlikely political leader for Newark. He is a young Ivy League educated African American, raised in an affluent suburban New Jersey town, who has studied both Judaism and the non-violent philosophy of Gandhi (Boyer, 2008). Newark is the largest city in New Jersey, with African Americans comprising more than half of the population; Newark has a median income nearly half that of New Jersey state and a slowly rebounding crime rate that has historically crippled the city (U.S. Census, 2011). In the wake of deeply stratifying race riots in 1967, Newark became the first major northeastern city to elect a Black mayor (Gibson, 1974). The hopes that ushering in Black leadership would alleviate the immense urban problems the city faced did not materialize; instead, Newark entered 40 years of a racialized, political regime whereby political insiders were promoted, all to the detriment of the city at large (Sullivan, 1986).

Despite this history, Booker forged a relationship with Newark using a deracialized leadership style characterized by McCormick and Jones (1993, p. 76) as an approach that "defuses the polarizing effects of race by avoiding explicit reference to race-specific issues, while at the same time emphasizing those issues that are perceived as racially transcendent, thus mobilizing a broad segment of the electorate for purposes of capturing or maintaining public office". Booker attempted to engage Newark in the political and social struggle to overcome the fate of the once named "worst city in America" (Dolan, n.d.). He believed that Social Networking Sites (SNS) could promote a growing and more vibrant economy that could both benefit all of its citizens while addressing the deep and painful social issues focused around race

that were key to Newark's future success and past disappointments. Through SNS, in particular Twitter, Booker engaged in an ongoing conversation with his constituents in an effort to notify them of his intent and his actions to change the fate of a city besieged by racism, violence, lack of economic opportunity, and a legacy of bad press.

Literature Review

Newark – A Study in Black Leadership Style

Racialized Leadership in Newark – Kenneth Gibson and Sharpe James

The riots in the summer of 1967 fueled by racism and a "pervasive feeling of corruption," ushered in a new era for Newark (Barbanel, 1981). For African Americans living in Newark, a wave of hope that a new foundation of Black leadership could be forged in this post-industrial city led to the election of the nation's first Black mayor of a major northeastern city in 1970 (Gibson 1974). Mayor Kenneth Gibson was seen as a calming influence in the wake of the riots and a contrast to the corrupt regime of former Mayor Hugh J. Addonzio (Gibson, 1974; Barbanel, 1981). Gibson, raised in Newark, legitimized his political leadership through his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and via his endorsement by Black organizations (Gibson, 1974; Gillespie, 2010). Although he was described as "square" and "bland" when elected, he took on a national presence bolstered by his status as the northeast's first Black mayor (Gibson, 1974). However, two unsuccessful campaigns for New Jersey Governor in 1981 and 1985 (Perlez, 1985) led many Newark citizens to resent his political ambitions and to believe the attention and campaigns "removed" him from Newark's local problems (Narvaez, 1987). Gibson served four terms before being unseated by Sharpe James in 1986. Nineteen years after the 1967 riots, James promised to alleviate high unemployment, crime, a failing school system, and a lack of recreational facilities that continued to plague Newark despite Gibson's failed efforts (Sullivan, 1986).

Sharpe James, a peer of Gibson's who was also active in the Civil Rights Movement and had legitimized his political leadership after serving several terms on the Newark City Council, came into office as a second-generation Black mayor. Marschall and Ruhill (2007) suggest that second-generation Black leaders must produce tangible success beyond symbolic efforts to maintain the support of a majority-minority electorate. Thus, in order to maintain a politically engaged constituency that viewed his leadership as effective and trustworthy, James had to shift the agenda in Newark from political inclusion to an expansion of economic and political resources to Newark's citizens (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990). The end of his first term, however, only brought symbolic changes such as inspirational banners along the city's main thoroughfare, an increase in mounted police, newly planted trees, and a city ordinance requiring that businesses only hang mesh security gates to dispel Newark's image as a city mired in crime (DePalma, 1990).

By his second term, James moved away from his local "established presence" that helped him defeat Gibson in 1986 (Narvaez, 1987). James had positioned himself as a national leader and speaker on urban issues, similar to Gibson previously, was elected president of the National League of Cities and was named advisor of urban problems by President Clinton (Gray, 1994). This national spotlight, however, did not overshadow his failed agenda and corruption in his administration. The indictment of three city council members, education policy failures culminating in the state takeover of the Newark school system in 1994, and consistent high crime rates became defining characteristics of James' second term (Gray, 1994).

Serious patterns of corruption and mismanagement were also revealed in the Newark Police Department. In 1993, 26 officers were accused of raping, robbing, and beating prostitutes,

however the department did not investigate the allegations or pursue disciplinary action. In 1995 four officers were arrested for selling recovered stolen cars to friends. And 1996 brought the realization that the Police Director, citing department tradition endorsed by James, had used the investigation account for personal funds, impeding the department's ability to conduct drug and other investigations (Kocieniewski & Sullivan, 1995; Sullivan, 1996). During this period, Newark experienced a seven percent increase in crime at the same time that similar cities experienced a one percent decline; in addition, the FBI ranked Newark as the most violent city in the United States in 1995 (Kocieniewski & Sullivan, 1995; Stout, 1995). Moving beyond mere access to Black leadership, African American mayors are judged by their constituents based on performance above race (Howell & Perry, 2004). The efficacy and conduct of a city's police department is a significant factor in how Black citizens in majority-minority cities view Black mayoral leadership (Howell & Perry, 2004). According to Bobo and Gilliam (1990), a reduction in Black constituency participation and engagement resulted when the police department was perceived as irresponsive and ineffective by Black voters in Newark. Indeed, by the time of the 1998 election, overall voter turnout dropped by 8 percent to 34 percent of registered voters; this was decreased from 42 percent in 1994 (Table 1).

Table 1. Election Turnout Data for Newark, New Jersey Mayoral Elections (1986-2010)

Election Year	Registered Voters	Total Votes	Kenneth Gibson	Sharpe James	Cory Booker	Ronald Rice	Clifford A. Minor
1986	116,250	56,980	22,682	30,739	---	---	---
1990	101,260	34,929	---	24,798	---	---	---
1994	93,842	39,314	---	23,248	---	---	---
1998	129,467	44,004	---	23,698	---	---	---
2002	125,164	54,996	---	29,447	25,881	---	---
2006	120,810	46,724	---	---	33,850	10,777	---
2010	135,380	38,480	---	---	22,745	---	13,570

Source: Election data from the Office of the City Clerk, Newark, New Jersey (2012)

In addition to implications of corruption and mismanagement, James was unable to increase municipal services or create an environment where low-income residents of Newark could find employment and affordable housing. For example, unemployment remained approximately twice the state average throughout James' administration (Jacobs, 2002), while James' policy to revitalize Newark centered on large downtown development such as the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and the New Jersey Devil's hockey stadium; these initiatives did not benefit the majority of Newark's citizens (Ogasio, 2001). In addition, James' development plan did not provide new contributions to an affordable housing fund; further he allowed high-rise public housing to be demolished without developing contingent plans to meet the housing needs for most of the displaced within Newark (DePalma, 1988). Consequently, by 1999, the Newark Housing Department had over 9,000 people on a waiting list for public housing, prompting a federal court to order Newark to advance new construction and renovations (Smothers, 1999).

The housing problems also had a negative effect on voter satisfaction. Marschall and Ruhill (2007) found that African Americans living in neighborhoods with older housing and in central city areas showed higher dissatisfaction with local government. For James, this

dissatisfaction materialized in lower political engagement and a continuing decrease in Newark's population. A lower turnout of registered voters could also characterize James' inability to engage Newark (Table 1). Despite a spike in turnout for the heated contest between James and his eventual successor, Cory Booker, turnout decreased throughout James' tenure, bottoming out in 1998 with only 34 percent of registered voters coming to the polls, a decrease from the 49 percent turnout when James won the office over Kenneth Gibson, a four-term incumbent, in 1986 (Table 1).

Persons (1993) describes the evolution of Black leadership styles from insurgency, to new Black politics, and finally to Black crossover politics. Newark's mayoral history since 1970 demonstrates Persons' characterizations of Black political styles. The insurgency style of first generation Black mayors, characterized by challenging and criticizing the established political order, leadership, and institutions to promote Black mobilization through a social reform agenda, often resulting in racial polarization is clearly represented by Gibson's tenure. Gibson began as an insurgent and throughout his 20-year administration institutionalized his leadership, resulting in "machine-style politics" supported through patronage in employment and city contracts and control over other municipal political posts. Gibson's defeat by James in 1986 signaled the transition from insurgency politics to new Black politics based on racial appeals to a majority Black population and substantive agenda promises that went beyond the descriptive representation that characterized Gibson's tenure (Persons, 1993).

According to Gillespie (2010), James' inability to produce the institutional changes that would lead to substantive increases in the quality of life for the majority-minority population with predominantly low socioeconomic characteristics, coupled with his continuation of machine-style political leadership, alienated voters and opened the door for a new Ivy league upstart who would significantly alter the nature of political engagement and leadership in Newark. Cory Booker's election in 2006 marked the transition from Persons' new Black politics to Black crossover politics in Newark. In other words, Booker de-emphasized traditional Black issues and focused instead on an agenda of partisan, non-racial themes that are characteristic of crossover, deracialized Black leadership (Persons, 1993).

Cory Booker and Newark

Cory Booker was raised in affluent Harrington Park, New Jersey by Cary and Carolyn Booker, two IBM executives who were raised in the South, participated in the Civil Rights Movement, and attended traditionally Black colleges. Guided by his parents' high standards for their sons, Booker went on to study at Stanford, became a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, and later attended Yale Law School, developing a universalized approach to philosophy and politics. In 1995, while still attending Yale Law, Booker moved to Newark and took residence in Brick Towers, a massive public housing complex, remaining a tenant until the building was condemned in 2006 (Boyer, 2008).

Brick Towers became Booker's Newark political center. This location allowed him to learn the political atmosphere of the city through his work on the tenant's board and by giving legal assistance to his neighbors; it also helped to legitimize him as a political force in Newark and to establish a supportive base (Boyer, 2008). Booker's "professors" – his neighbors and other Newark residents with whom he cultivated relationships and who educated him on the issues in Newark also served to spread the word of his political efforts throughout the city (Boyer, 2008). These constituent supports would help elect him to the city council in 1998 and, later, to mayor in 2006 (Cave, 2006).

INQUIRY, Volume 14

Booker's public reference to this group, however, occasionally highlighted his problematic deracialized political stance. In a speech in predominantly White Summit, New Jersey, shortly after his election as mayor in 2006, Booker described Judith Diggs, one of his "professors", as a "huge, sort of portly woman without many teeth in her mouth" (Boyer, 2008). This speech instigated a recall effort by previous mayor Sharpe James loyalists and projected a feeling to some in Newark that Booker's deracialized leadership style may be masking an agenda that is not focused on the needs of African American and low-income non-African American constituents, revealing him to be the "wolf in sheep's clothing" Jesse Jackson had warned against his 2006 campaign. With this warning, Jackson described the generational difference in leadership style and favored conciliation over confrontation (Boyer, 2008).

Newark Comes to Cory Booker

Cory Booker fought his way to the mayor's office after two difficult election cycles. The first cycle took place in 2002 when Booker ran against 16-year incumbent Sharpe James; many viewed this race as one distinctly based on African American racial identity that pitted a well-known Civil Rights era leader against a young Ivy League upstart (Gillespie, 2010). James ran a powerful and entrenched political regime in Newark, seated in a communal racial identity that placed Cory Booker as a decided outsider. During the often vicious 2002 mayoral campaign, James solidified Booker's outsider status and questioned his Black identity by publically claiming he was from a mixed race Jewish and Republican family (Boyer, 2008). James' political "machine" was able to assert considerable power to mobilize city workers to defeat Booker. According to Jacobs (2002), municipal staff were paid to remove Booker's campaign signs, block Booker's canvassers from entering public housing projects, offer residents payment for removing Booker campaign posters in public housing, and allegedly attacked a Booker supporter wearing campaign regalia. Jacobs further asserts that absolute loyalty was required by James, who would freely wield his powerful position in New Jersey politics against opponents and non-supporters.

Booker lost the 2002 campaign but continued working to legitimize his political presence and ambitions in Newark. He utilized his network of Brick Towers supporters and pursued the "local wisdom" of Carl Sharif to increase his legitimacy in Newark (Boyer, 2008; Gillespie, 2010). Sharif was a local political figure who had remained separate from the racially charged machine politics of Sharpe James. His advice to Booker – knock on every door in the poorest and Blackest Central Ward in Newark – would help bolster Booker's racial authenticity (Gillespie, 2010). His political authenticity was still questioned, however, by traditional Black leaders like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, highlighting the increasingly apparent "generational cleft" between Civil Rights Era leadership and Booker's deracialized and cooperative crossover style (Boyer, 2008; Gillespie, 2010).

According to Gillespie (2010), the evolution of Black leadership styles since the Civil Rights Era reflects the evolution of policy from political institutional access to substantive policy change. For example, many younger Black leaders, who are not directly connected to the Civil Rights Movement, adopt a deracialized campaign and leadership style that may or may not lead to successful electoral and policy outcomes. Gillespie presents a model of leadership focused around three key characteristics: crossover appeal, perceived career trajectory, and connections to the Black establishment. Black leaders with high crossover appeal may frame issues in a way that minimizes or removes racial elements of a problem to maintain a wider audience. The second key characteristic, perceived career trajectory, reflects whether a young Black leader wants to pursue higher office, gauges how much positive media attention they receive, and

examines the structural and political implications created by the probability that a young Black leader of a majority-minority city may have to confront campaigning for higher offices in majority White districts and states. The final criteria, connections to Black leadership, can benefit or detract from a young Black leader. Connections to Civil Rights Era leadership can increase support for a young Black politician, but her political socialization and close ties to the old style leadership may result in a leadership style that does not lead to innovation or advancement for Black constituents because of her perceived need to respect elders and pursue their goals (Gillespie, 2010, 25).

Booker overcame the divide between old and new Black leadership with his winning bid in 2006 (Boyer, 2008) after James backed out of the election due to accusations of fraud and his defeat of Ronald Rice (Martin, 2008). Booker had rallied forces within and outside of Newark in the intervening four years and had won the hope of Newarkers, winning by the widest margin of victory ever in Newark's history (Cave, 2006). Booker's leadership style, with high crossover appeal, extreme ambition, and weak ties to the Civil Rights Movement, created a significant amount of media attention around his campaigns in Newark and has characterized his leadership style since taking office in 2006 (Gillespie, 2010).

Mired in racial, political and social upheaval since the 1960's, Newark had become a city needing new political leadership; Booker's promise of change was welcomed by many residents. Fifty-four percent of Newark's residents are African American and 24 percent live below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011); these demographics have been evolving since the riots that drove middle class Whites and Blacks to the surrounding New Jersey suburbs, and with them tax revenue, business growth, and support for neighborhood community resources that helped sustain a Black group identity (Gay, 2004). The low socioeconomic status of many Newark citizens created an atmosphere where Booker had more opportunity to attract low-income constituents ready for a change in leadership after decades of marginalization by two Black political regimes that were unable create the structural and institutional changes Black Newarkers needed to thrive (Gillespie, 2010). However, he would also have to assert his Black identity to maintain the trust of higher-income Black residents and local leaders (Gay, 2004).

The dearth of cohesive Black community networks due to extensive urban poverty conditions created an obstacle for Booker's mobilization efforts in Newark and challenged his ability to develop a message that enhanced the Black group consciousness in order to effectively lead and mobilize Newark while simultaneously maintaining a universalized, deracialized leadership style (Gay, 2004). During a 2002 campaign stop, Booker was confronted by a voter leery of his deracialized style and "outsider" status who asked, "What I don't understand is where you are from? Where do you live? And what are you doing here?" Further commenting, the voter echoed many of James' charges against Booker with the statement, "I just don't see how someone who's not from around here could understand what's going on in Newark" (Tepperman, 2002). This widespread attitude contributed to Booker's defeat in 2002 and highlighted his need to meaningfully engage Newark residents. In response, Booker tapped into emerging technological engagement platforms, like SNS and Twitter, to create communal mobilization and trust. Some suggest that increased technological engagement methods contributed to his election in 2006, and reelection in 2010, while allowing him to maintain a deracialized leadership style (Gillespie, 2010).

Cory Booker's Deracialized Leadership

Booker's deracialized leadership style is unique in the recent history of Newark itself, but his methods of marketing Newark to a wider regional audience while promoting economic

INQUIRY, Volume 14

POLITICAL SCIENCE: Marisol McNair

growth support a deracialized style that universalizes Newark's issues to a larger stage. This approach creates a more racially competitive jurisdiction that encourages Booker's de-emphasis on Black issues and promotes more universalized issues (Orey & Ricks, 2007). Newark, however, demands leadership that can confront the important urban issues of crime, poverty, and a history of government corruption requiring a close examination of the effects of race in Newark. Therefore, Booker had to occupy the political middle ground and espouse a leadership style that embraced a deracialized message to engage a wider racial audience while confronting the distinctly racial issues prevalent in Newark (Canon, Schousen, & Sellers, 1996).

Realizing this, Booker placed crime at the top of his agenda during his campaigns; a focus on crime has remained throughout his tenure (Boyer, 2008; Gillespie, 2012). However, his appointment of Garry McCarthy as the Newark Chief of Police, a White non-Newark resident, was widely criticized by African American leaders in Newark. Poet, activist, and Newark resident, Amiri Baraka, criticized Booker's decision in his book *How to Recover from the Addiction to White Supremacy* (Boyer, 2008). Councilman Charles Bell echoed the poet's criticism and referred to hiring the White, non-Newarker McCarthy as a "major misstep" (Gillespie, 2012). Booker's decision to go outside Newark for police leadership was essential to his goal of regime reform and culture change in the Newark Police Department, which was entrenched with James supporters who had used the force to harass Booker during his earlier campaigns (Boyer, 2008).

McCarthy introduced several changes that put more police on the streets at crucial times of day, instituted the COMPSTAT system that statistically tracks crimes as they occur, and utilized a much criticized strategy of quality of life arrests that focus on minor infractions with the hopes of discovering more serious violations (Boyer, 2008). The success of Booker and McCarthy's policies to reduce crime in Newark was essential to the overall success and approval of Booker's leadership. Marschall and Ruhill (2007) found that substantive, responsive police policy that placed more African American police on the force directly affected Black residents' evaluation of a police force. Further, the effectiveness of Booker's leadership is related to his ability to reduce crime in Newark (Marschall & Ruhill, 2007). Uniform Crime Statistics, however, do not indicate marked success for Booker and McCarthy's strategies (Dow, Fuentes, Bice, & Nally, 2011), showing only modest changes between 2006 and 2010. For example, while the total number of murders fell from 107 in 2006 to 91 in 2010, the violent crime rate per 1,000 people remained consistent (Dow et al., 2011).

Ending government corruption, another prevalent issue in Newark politics, has been central to Booker's drive to build trust with his constituents following the fraud indictments of both Sharpe James and Kenneth Gibson (Malanga, 2007). Booker inherited a city ingrained for the last 40 years in a political culture based on patronage; he was confronted immediately with the byproducts of James' corrupt system. For example, upon taking office, Booker's team realized the city budget created by James had an over $44 million deficit (Boyer, 2008; Malanga, 2007). Realizing that many of the staff held over from James' administration still worked throughout the municipal structure, Booker hired an outside firm to audit the budget (Boyer, 2008). According to Malanga (2007), Booker also responded by slashing many of the municipal jobs that had been occupied by James sympathizers – primarily African American Newarkers. The inevitable criticism faced by the new deracialized mayor was difficult for the young administration, however Booker dismissed the backlash by stating, "[I'm] tired of racial politics" (Malanga, 2007).

Despite efforts to end corruption, Booker's administration has not been free of corruption itself. In October 2011, Ronald Salahuddin, Booker's former deputy Mayor, was convicted of conspiring to commit extortion by diverting city demolition contracts to his business partner (Giambusso, 2011). His defense centered on city policy to ensure that minorities participate in city contracts and included testimony from Booker denying knowledge of Salahuddin's involvement (DeMarco, 2011). Booker's inability to achieve lower crime rates or to end government corruption is echoed by his critics' evaluation of him as "Giuliani without the bite", alluding to the Rudolph Giuliani's forceful and successful reduction of crime in New York City (Boyer, 2008).

Indeed, Booker has seen only moderate success in bringing Newark voters to the polls. In addition, enthusiasm for him seems to follow a pattern similar to previous mayor James. For example, both mayors peeked with approximately 70 percent of registered voters during their second campaigns, followed by a more than 10 percent decrease in vote shares by their third campaigns. More disturbing for Booker is the overall voter turnout. In 2010, only 28 percent of registered constituency members turned out to vote, the lowest rates from 1986 to 2010 (Table 1). The corresponding reduction in support for Booker may be signaling a trend that could make him vulnerable in future elections and does not support the efficacy of his political engagement tactics.

Building Trust in Newark

Booker must address both the obstacles his deracialized leadership style and the history of corruption in Newark created to promote the racial community identity required to produce the necessary changes for Newark and to legitimize his leadership in a majority-minority city. Marschall and Ruhill (2007) examined the effect of Black leadership on constituents' satisfaction and level of incorporation, and the official's ability to improve local services in majority-minority cities. They found that racial group identification is significant in all three of these areas and that Black representation must move beyond symbolic influence to improve local services like police in a very real and substantive way.

In the context of a city like Newark, with a 54 percent African American population, the number of Black voters positively affects political participation, making an individual more likely to become involved in local city politics, essential to the "Black politics" approach to political action that incorporates competition for resources in majority-minority cities as a motivation for action (Spence, McClerking, & Brown, 2009). However, the tradition of corruption inherited from the James and Gibson administrations and the mounting issues of crime pose a challenge for Booker to overcome longstanding political disengagement and mistrust in Newark. Gay (2004) found that racial group identity is weaker in higher income neighborhoods because access to resources and economic opportunities remove the social markers that would otherwise reinforce the feeling that anti-Black discrimination was a significant, controlling factor in life. In keeping with this paradigm, Newark's high African American population and 24 percent poverty rate (Dow et al.,, 2011) should contribute to a rich environment for Black group identity and political engagement. Thus, Booker's deracialized approach must also incorporate methods to enhance and encourage Black group identity to mobilize Newark's population, and to gain continued support and participation for Booker's economic and social agenda.

Traditional Black leadership models growing out of the Civil Rights Era includes a focus on Black empowerment, mobilization, and immediate social change (Walters, 2007). However, because Booker did not come into politics through experience in or connection to the Civil

Rights Movement, his commitment to Black issues and legitimization as a Black leader have not been approved by Black community leaders in the traditional way; instead, Booker was often criticized by traditional Black leaders like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton (Boyer, 2008; Walters, 2007). Booker attempts to overcome the deficits his non-traditional and deracialized leadership style creates in a majority-minority city through government transparency using several forms of communication, including an ongoing conversation with his constituents, and the world, using Twitter.

Promoting African American Civic Engagement with Twitter
The Government's Use of the Internet to Encourage Civic Engagement

Kang and Gearhart (2010) define civic engagement as "membership in collective activities for establishment and nourishment of the community through active citizenry" (p 444). They examine the promotion of civic engagement by government websites through the lens of representative, pluralist, and direct democracy and conclude that websites promote civic engagement by providing access to services, monitoring representatives, and providing direct democracy functions (Kang & Gearhart, 2010). They suggest that government websites can also increase the likelihood of civic engagement by helping citizens easily and inexpensively evaluate and communicate with city government without the constraints of time and space. Further, they promote support for policies and programs through debate and comment, connecting constituents with officials and instilling trust and a sense of ownership of the policies.

The Pew Internet and American Life Project reviewed the effects that the Internet has on political engagement in many contexts. Their 2011 report concluded that constituents' perceptions that local government provide information increased the likelihood they would be satisfied with other civic services (Rainie, Purcell, Siesfeld, & Patel). Further, they found the degree of public transparency in government positively affects constituent views of their ability to impact government.

A report from the National League of Cities echoed the Pew Institute's research and also identified ways to build stronger community engagement and local democracy (Leighninger & Mann, 2011). Findings from the report identified the following three categories of government interactions that promote civic engagement: creating spaces for citizens, building leadership skills and capacity, and improving public decision-making and problem solving. The authors also examined the following types of political engagement that can be achieved through online government interaction: circulating information, discussing and connecting, gathering initial input, deliberating and recommending, and deciding and acting (Leighninger & Mann, 2011).

The Problem of Individuation on Social Networking Sites

Social Networking Sites (SNS) can inflate the value of the individual participant by creating an open avenue of communication between a group and the individual member networks, producing a self-centered version of political participation that does not promote group identity and participation (Fenton & Barassi, 2011). Instead, political participation through SNS can create a platform for the individual to promote their own message over that of the group. If online organizational participation through social networking sites promotes individual self-realization, then use by government groups hoping to engage and mobilize constituents may actually impede collective political action, and instead, create a series of disjointed, fragmented acts that can further isolate individuals from public action and political incorporation.

Additionally, individual use of social media for political participation can give the often incorrect impression that participants achieve a "mediated center," however collective political action and group supported values do not result and the group becomes stratified (Fenton &

Barassi, 2011). Yet this view does not take into account the role of traditionally strong group identity in African American communities, like Newark, and the transformative possibilities a deinstitutionalized and egalitarian form of political participation through social networking may have on this group that has traditionally been marginalized in broader political movements (Johnson, 2002). The success of group political participation and mobilization through SNS relies on the policymaker's ability to integrate and respond to the demands of the online group in the offline world (Kes-Erkul & Erkul, 2009). These factors indicate a government entity must be able to quickly respond and integrate individual as well as group comments and views into offline policy formulation and action. Thus Twitter's instant communication and response format could serve as a powerful platform for a well organized political entity to promote both their policies and offline actions while mitigating the effects of individuation.

Creating a Political Empowerment Infrastructure through Social Networking Sites

The problem of individuation and fragmented political engagement can be counteracted if governments create an "engagement infrastructure" that reinforces social media relationships with offline, face-to-face relationships. This infrastructure can be a potent tool to empower and mobilize groups, solidify an individual's commitment to the group, and encourage political engagement; it is also more easily sustainable than traditional mobilizing efforts (Leighninger, 2011). The Pew Internet and American Life Project recognized three dimensions of a successful engagement infrastructure system: a robust, diverse supply of information, a sophisticated communications infrastructure for delivering information, and a cache of residents with the skills needed to access that information and to use it in effective ways to address community needs (Rainie et al., 2011). Further, governments and officials using online tools to promote political engagement must include democratic practices, value participatory decision making, and create government structures to allow engagement to flow (Leighninger, 2011).

While online interaction with government agencies and officials is becoming increasingly common and accepted, offline interactions are still valued and necessary, especially in the context of group mobilization. A recent Pew report noted that more than half of online users also contacted government using offline means as a supplement to online information gathering (Smith, 2010). The conjunction of online and offline communication strategies can also help to mitigate possible digital inequality factors; it also requires different sets of skills and resources to use online sources effectively.

One advantage to online government communication is the reduced amount of time a constituent must commit to effectively interact with an agency or official (Best & Krueger, 2005). The Internet also may serve as a gateway for disengaged constituents to access political information and to learn the civic skills needed to participate politically. Best and Krueger (2005) found that 30.4 percent of constituents without strong civic skills did have at least two Internet skills, thereby creating access for low-income constituents and developing the opportunity to learn new civic skills as a way to circumvent a pattern of unequal participation.

Online constituents are also more likely to contact public officials. Since online mobilization efforts have been shown to reach non-Whites at the same rate as Whites, online participation may be an effective arena to mobilize Black groups (Best & Krueger, 2005). However, 20 percent of African American and Latino households cite cost as a barrier to home broadband subscriptions (Mossberger, 2009), "digital inequality" is a barrier that leaders need to address.

Looking closely at Internet access and use, however, provides a more positive outlook for the use of online government and access to officials to engage Black groups in urban areas.

African Americans tend to have a positive view of the Internet as a vehicle for economic opportunity and as a source of new skills; in fact, when controlling for socioeconomic factors, there is no statistical difference between Black and White Internet usage (Best & Krueger, 2005). This finding suggests that increased municipal access and training could quickly close the digital inequality gap in low-income, high African American populated urban areas, such as Newark. The Pew Internet and American Life Project reviewed three cities to gauge the impact of government communication on citizen level of engagement and satisfaction; findings suggest that home Internet access had a significant civic effect and made it much more likely that individuals would email or use social media to interact with municipal agencies and leaders (Rainie et al., 2011).

The Pew study also found that social media is being used by residents to learn about their community, share information, and stay in touch on community matters. Indeed, cell phones are being used with greater frequency and many more people report using Twitter to access their news and to post related material (Rainie et al., 2011). Zickuhr and Smith (2012) found that Blacks are as likely as Whites to own a smart phone and are more likely to use them for a range of online activities. In addition, while gaps in home broadband access still exist, when controlling for primary language, education, and income, the gaps disappear between minority and White populations. The increased use of cell phones is a promising engagement tool for cities like Newark that are struggling with low socioeconomic status populations. Thus, an investment in municipal Internet infrastructure could also positively affect access and use for residents in Newark.

Engagement and Mobilization Using Twitter

The use of Twitter to access news and to communicate with public officials has grown significantly across all groups, especially among African Americans. Studies on the emerging use of Twitter found that nine percent of heavy online government users are African American (Smith, 2010), 25 percent of African American Internet users use Twitter, 54 percent of cell phone owning Twitter users access the site using their phones (Smith, 2011), and two percent of Internet users (or 7 % of Twitter users) follow a government agency or official on Twitter (Smith, 2010).

A closer examination of Twitter, the Internet, and the political engagement of African American groups show a promising trend for Black civic incorporation and an effect on public policy. The Pew Center reports that Twitter and other social networking sites (SNS) are becoming a key part of political interaction with 34 percent of Black SNS users accessing sites for political purposes (Smith, 2011; Zickuhr & Smith, 2012). Thirty-six percent of Twitter users who followed individual public officials did so primarily because it helps them feel more personally connected to the candidates or groups; an additional 35 percent cited this as a "minor" reason for following officials (Smith, 2011). When African American attitudes about online access to government were examined, Smith (2010) found that 41 percent of African Americans agreed that engagement using online tools makes government more accessible, while 53 percent agreed that online engagement helps people be more informed about what the government is doing. Blacks are also much more likely than Whites to report that it is "very important" for government agencies to use sites such as Twitter (Smith, 2010). Importantly, two-thirds of people who follow public officials online report that they pay attention to most (26%) or some (40%) of the material posted (Smith, 2011). Smith (2010) opined that these attitudes and the availability of online tools may offer government agencies and officials the ability to communicate with and mobilize underserved populations in a way that is not currently occurring

with other online offerings. Byrne (2008), however, found that political action and engagement was not the predictable outcome for African American SNS users, however the presence of an accepted community leader may facilitate offline action through online networking.

Methods

Research Question

Cory Booker uses Social Networking Sites (SNS) as a powerful engagement tool to support and promote a deracialized leadership style in Newark; this approach may be highlighted as an important technological engagement model for majority-minority cities in the United States. SNS, particularly Twitter, allows Booker to (a) engage constituents who have been detached from Newark civic and political life, despite a history of Black leadership, (b) overcome the challenges a deracialized Black leader faces in a community where the majority of residents is comprised of minorities and in a majority-minority city deeply damaged by a legacy of racism and political regime politics, (c) battle the long-term and demoralizing problems such as violent crime and poverty, and (d) promote the city to a larger national audience.

Using a civic engagement framework created by Leighninger and Mann (2011), the primary purpose of this project was to explore the primary themes of Booker's Twitter messages over a 31-day period. A secondary goal of this project was to conduct a cursory exploration of whether Booker's Twitter communications and policies increased voter turnout and decreased crime over time.

An examination of election return data from 1986 through 2010 was conducted to discover whether Booker's leadership style has contributed to a more participatory electorate when compared to his predecessor, Sharp James. Additionally, data from the New Jersey state Uniform Crime Statistics were used to determine whether changes in Booker's crime policy have impacted the historically dominant problem in Newark.

Twitter Analyses

Twitter and Engagement Infrastructure Framework

In the context of a high-density urban area, like Newark, evolving attitudes towards online engagement and communication through Twitter, coupled with lower cost cell phone access, may serve to mitigate digital inequality and to create a substantive means of mobilizing and engaging lower socioeconomic African American group support for Booker's administration, policies, and future candidacies. Rainie and colleagues (2011) found that constituents who believed they received good information from their government and who believed that their engagement impacted their community are more likely to be satisfied with their government and to engage in civic activities.

A review of Booker's Twitter communications over a 31-day sample period demonstrates his use of diverse political engagement methods including mapping networks, coalition building, and connecting with and attracting constituents in an effort to create a cohesive online and offline engagement network (Leighninger, 2011). Booker's Twitter communications were categorized using Leighninger & Mann's (2011) four designations:

1. *Mapping Networks*: These communications include circulating information, educating citizens, discussing issues, and connecting with constituents. Some examples of Booker's use of mapping networks with citizens on Twitter include posting information about non-political events in Newark and transmitting almost daily inspirational messages.

2. *Coalition Building*: These communications focus on dispensing information to build a stronger sense of community. Booker's Twitter communications accomplish this through

INQUIRY, Volume 14

recognition of his or an agency's performance. He also frequently notes his support of his "Let's Move" challenge, which encourages Newarkers to exercise in support of First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" initiative (General Mills, 2011).

3. *Reaching Out to Constituents*: Deliberating and recommending information to develop smarter, more widely supported policies and to create an environment for marginalized voices to be heard. Booker responds to direct service requests, and shares information about public engagement, involvement opportunities, and political events.

4. *Attracting Constituents*: Deciding and acting on issues with constituent support for specific programs and policies. Examples of Booker's ability to attract constituents by using Twitter are signified by his support for political and social programs and civic movements.

As illustrated in Table 2, findings from this review indicate that Booker most often engaged in two identified designations, Mapping Networks and Reaching Out, in the 31-day period under examination, with 111 and 120 postings respectively. He also posted 90 Coalition Building messages and 77 Attracting Constituent messages. This is consistent with Marschall and Ruhill's (2007) suggestion that Black leadership in majority-minority cities must move beyond symbolic influence to improve local services, like police, in substantive ways. Booker often sent Twitter messages that support police initiatives and responded to constituent criticism and support. An example of Booker's goal of "attracting constituents" and defending quality of life initiatives, while also promoting government transparency, occurred on November 4, 2011 with this exchange:

> @tweet2zone: Police raised the amount of guns found along with the amount of innocent people harassed in their game of "let's get lucky"!
> @CoryBooker: If u know that 2 b true PLEASE file a complaint. If u don't trust us PLEASE go 2 the Dept of Justice who is investigating dept (Booker, 2011)

Twitter is a valuable tool for Booker to promote the feeling among African American and non-African American lower socioeconomic groups that he responds to constituent needs for services and resources, counteracting the belief that resources are less available to them in a competitive socio-political atmosphere (Spence et al., 2009). A common theme in many of Booker's "reaching out" Twitter interactions is the call from citizens for action for a specific service followed by Booker's individualized response. During a surprise snow storm and power outage on October 29, 2011 Booker fielded many requests for service needs, exemplified by this exchange:

> @CoryBooker: I've got police heading out there RT @ossycocotasso: No lights r working on McCarter highway from 3rd ave to bridge st. It's really dangerous (Booker, 2011)

Booker also uses Twitter to mobilize constituents to offline political engagement as a way to neutralize the threat of individuation and fragmented political action that Fenton and Barassi (2011) cite as a possible outcome of online political participation. In these exchanges from November 8, 2011 Booker exhibits traditional "get out the vote" mobilization techniques and "coalition building":

INQUIRY, Volume 14

56

@CoryBooker: I just voted . . . please don't forget to vote. Democracy is not a spectator sport.

@CoryBooker: Less than one hour left to vote . . . This election will shape many of the critical issues facing our community. Step up and have your say.

@CoryBooker: 2 lose faith in democracy is 2 pave the way for extremism RT @kathykattenburg I don't have ur faith in power of elections to change anything (Booker, 2011)

Another common use of Twitter communications are Booker's almost daily inspirational messages. He uses these as a "network mapping" technique to connect with and inform constituents, promote hope and trust in his leadership, and address wider constituent groups (Canon et al., 1996). A sample of Booker's inspirational messages includes the following:

@CoryBooker: "History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again." Maya Angelou
Tweeted November 5, 2011
@CoryBooker: "Once you choose hope, anything's possible." Christopher Reeve
Tweeted on November 4, 2011
@CoryBooker: "It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare, it is because we do not dare that things are difficult." Seneca
Tweeted on November 1, 2011
@CoryBooker: "On the other side of frustration, exhaustion & discouragement is breakthrough, accomplishment & triumph. Don't give up!"
Tweeted on October 27, 2011

Table 2. Analysis of Twitter Messages Posted by Mayor Cory Booker (10/25/11 – 11/25/11)
[N= 398]

Date of Posted Message	Mapping Networks	Coalition Building	Reaching Out	Attracting
10/25/11	1	0	0	0
10/26/11	1	0	0	0
10/27/11	3	1	0	0
10/28/11	1	8	1	1
10/29/11	4	4	5	11
10/30/11	3	0	0	1
10/31/11	4	3	1	4
11/1/11	3	2	6	3
11/2/11	4	5	3	4
11/3/11	2	0	1	2
11/4/11	2	6	8	3
11/5/11	1	2	4	2
11/6/11	1	2	0	0
11/8/11	2	2	1	4
11/9/11	7	4	3	2
11/10/11	5	3	4	3
11/12/11	1	0	1	1
11/13/11	5	5	7	6
11/14/11	0	0	3	0
11/15/11	3	2	1	2
11/16/11	3	1	3	3
11/17/11	5	13	3	8
11/18/11	3	2	2	3
11/19/11	3	6	5	5
11/20/11	7	0	2	1
11/21/11	5	0	11	1
11/22/11	2	5	14	3
11/23/11	10	9	27	1
11/24/11	7	1	1	0
11/25/11	5	1	3	3
Totals	111	90	120	77

Conclusion

Cory Booker arrived in Newark in 1995 as a young outsider with a universalized view of the world and of political leadership. Utilizing a deracialized campaign and leadership style, he challenged Sharpe James' long-term Black political machine and was eventually successful in becoming mayor of Newark. During his tenure as mayor, Booker has confronted the same racial tensions, neglect, corruption and excessive crime rates that have kept Newark in an economic and social vacuum; this outcome is despite the otherwise significant advantages of being in close

proximity to New York City, which has a strong transportation infrastructure that could attract many opportunities for Newark.

Realizing the need to reach all of Newark's citizens to help reclaim Newark as a relevant municipal force, Booker uses Twitter as a tool to spread his political message, provide needed information and services, and promote group identity within Newark. In doing so, he practices a deracialized leadership style that markets Newark, while maintaining a focus on issues relevant to the majority African American community, and Newark at large.

Within Newark, however, his success is less apparent. While Booker is able to utilize Twitter to successfully communicate with his constituents in a way that addresses many of the historically difficult issues within Newark, he has not been able to translate this form of communication into the direct citizen engagement that is required to bring significant change to Newark. This suggests that while Twitter and other SNS outlets may have the power to reach constituents in majority-minority cities, they cannot be the only avenues that a deracialized Black leader utilizes to promote trust and engagement.

References

Barbanel, J. (1981, February 3). Hugh J. Addonzio, 67, Convicted of Extortion as Newark's Mayor. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Best, S. J., & Krueger, B. S. (2005). Analyzing the representativeness of Internet political participation. *Political Behavior*, *27*(2), 183-216.

Bobo, L., & Gilliam, F. D. (1990). Race, sociopolitical participation, and Black empowerment. *American Political Science Review*, *84*(2), 377-393.

Booker, C. (n.d.). *Cory Booker mayor of Newark, New Jersey*. Retrieved November 28, 2011, from Twitter website: https://twitter.com/#!/CoryBooker

Byrne, D. N. (2008). Public discourse, community concerns, and civic engagement: Exploring Black social networking traditions on Blackplanet.com. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *13*, 319-340.

Boyer, P. J. (2008, February 4). The color of politics. *New Yorker*, *83*(46), 38-51.

Canon, D. T., Schousen, M. M., & Sellers, P. J. (1996). The supply side of congressional redistricting: Race and strategic politicians, 1972-1992. *The Journal of Politics*, *58*(3), 846-862.

Cave, D. (2006, May 10). On 2nd try, Booker glides in as Newark mayor. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

DeMarco, M. (2011, September 20). Newark corruption trial: Cory Booker testifies in trial of ex-deputy mayor [Web log post]. Retrieved from NJ.com/The Star Ledger: http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2011/09/newark_corruption_trial_cory_b.html

DePalma, A. (1988, August 21). The region: Even Newark is afraid of go-go development. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

DePalma. A. (1990, May 4). Newark's image buoy's mayor on eve of election. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Dolan, T. (n.d.). *Newark and its gateway complex*. Retrieved from http://www.newarkmetro.rutgers.edu/reports/display.php?id=17

Dow, P. T., Fuentes, J. R., Bice, L. R., & Nally, W. (2011). *Uniform crime report state of New Jersey 2010*. Retrieved from http://www.state.nj.us/lps/njsp/info/ucr2010/index.html

Fenton, N., & Barassi, V. (2011). Alternative media and social networking sites: The politics of individuation and political participation. *The Communication Review*, *14*(3), 179-196.

Gay, C. (2004). Putting race in context: Identifying the environmental determinants of Black racial attitudes. *The American Political Science Review*, *98*(4), 547-562.

General Mills. (2011). *Let's Move! And Let's Move! Networks*. Retrieved November 28, 2011, from http://letsmovenewark.com/about/

Giambusso, D. (2011, October 11). Newark corruption trial: Attorney for city contractor says race is key issue [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2011/10/newark_corruption_trial_attorn.html

Gibson, K. A. (1974, May 13). *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Gillespie, A. (2012). *The new Black politician: Cory Booker, Newark, and post-racial America*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Gillespie, A. (2010). *Whose Black politics?* New York, NY: Routledge.

Gray, J. (1994, May 11). Sharpe James wins a third term as mayor of Newark. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Howell, S. E., & Perry, H. L. (2004). Black mayors/White mayors: Explaining their approval. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *68*(1), 32-56.

Jacobs, A. (2002, January 9). Rising star in Newark starts mayoral run against James. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Jacobs, A. (2002, April 9). Newark relives day of machine in mayor's race. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Johnson, O. (2002). *Black political organization in the post-civil rights era*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Kang, S., & Gearhart, S. (2010). E-government and civic engagement: How is a citizens' use of city web sites related with civic involvement and political behaviors? *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *54*(3), 443-462.

Kes-Erkul, A., & Erkul, R. E. (2009). *Web 2.0 in the process of e-participation: The case of organizing for America and the Obama administration*. National Center for Digital Government, University of Massachusetts.

Kocieniewski, D., & Sullivan, J. (1995, December 23). Tainted force: A special report; Newark police troubles, out of control at the top. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Leighninger, M. (2011). Citizenship and governance in a wild, wired world: How should citizens and public managers use online tools to improve democracy? *National Civic Review*, 20-29.

Leighninger, M., & Mann, B. C. (2011, November 8). Planning for stronger local democracy: A field guide for local officials. *National League of Cities.* Retrieved from http://www.nlc.org

Malanga, S. (2007, Spring). Cory Booker's battle for Newark. *City Journal.* Retrieved from http://www.city-journal.org/html/17_2_cory_booker.html

Marschall, M. J., & Ruhil, A. V. (2007). Substantive symbols: The attitudinal dimensions of Black political incorporation in local government. *American Journal of Political Science*, *51*(1), 17-33.

Martin, J. (2008, July 29). Ex-Newark Mayor Sharpe James sentenced to 27 months [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://blog.nj.com/ledgerupdates_impact/print.html?entry=/2008/07/former_newark_mayor_sharpe_jam_4.html

McCormick, J. P., & Jones, C. E. (1993). The conceptualization of deracialization. In G. A. Persons (Ed.), *Dilemmas in Black politics* (pp. 66-84). New York, NY: Harper Collins College Publishers.

Mossberger, K. (2009). *Routledge handbook of Internet politics.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Narvaez, A. (1987, July 4). Newark's Mayor draws praise and questions. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Ogasio, L. (2001, May 13). The underbelly of a city in transition. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Orey, B. D., & Ricks, B. E. (2007). A systematic analysis of the deracialization concept. *Faculty Publications: Political Science; University of Nebraska - Lincoln*, 325-333.

Perlez, J. (1985, May). Gibson waging 2nd bid for Governor. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Persons, G. A. (1993). Black mayoralties and the new Black politics. In G. A. Persons (Ed.), *Dilemmas in Black politics* (pp. 38-65). New York, NY: Harper Collins College Publishers.

Rainie, L., Purcell, K., Siesfeld, T., & Patel, M. (2011, March 1). *How the public perceives community information systems*. Retrieved from http://www.pewInternet.org/~/media//Files/Reports/2011/Pew_Monitor_Communityinfo. pdf

Smith, A. (2010, April 27). *Government online*. Retrieved from http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Government-Online.aspx

Smith, A. (2011, January 27). *22% of Americans online used social networking or Twitter for politics in 2010 campaign*. Retrieved from http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Politics-and-social-media.aspx

Smith, A. (2011, June 1). *Twitter update 2011: 13% of online adult users use Twitter*. Retrieved from http://pewinternet.org/ Reports/2011/Twitter-Update-2011.aspx

Smothers, R. (1999, September 2). A step to end Newark's chapter in high-rise public housing projects. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Spence, L. K., McClerking, H. K., & Brown, R. (2009). Revisiting Black incorporation and local political participation. *Urban Affairs Review*, *45*, 274-285.

Stout, D. (1995, May 29). New Jersey daily briefing; Mayor calls ranking unfair. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Sullivan, J. (1996, August 13). Former Newark police chief ties his $30,000 theft to department tradition. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Sullivan, J. F. (1986, April 26). In Newark mayor race, clashing visions of city. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

Tepperman, J. D. (2002, April 28). Complicating the race. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://nytimes.com

U.S. Census Bureau. (2011, October 8). *State and county quick facts* Retrieved from http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/34/3451000.html

Walters, R. (2007). Barack Obama and the politics of Blackness. *Journal of Black Studies*, *38*(1), 7-29.

Zickuhr, K., & Smith, A. (2012, April 13). *Digital differences*. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Digital-differences.aspx