Black Youth Book Project
Section Memo: Political Efficacy

<u>Areas of Interest</u>

I. Political Socialization: Efficacy, Cynicism, and Alienation
II. Self-Esteem: Effects on Behavior
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I. Political Socialization

In the late 1960s and 1970s the study of political socialization enjoyed a central place in the study of political science. In the context of the political history of "the sixties" with the unusual and powerful impact of the movements of people of color, women, and youth, researchers turned to the ways that political efficacy, first as a disposition (Angus Campbell, et al. 1960) then as a psychological (Coopersmith 1967) and social process (David Easton and Jack Dennis 1967) effected buy in to the political system and potential political participation. After the 1970s, the study of political socialization fell out of fashion because causal links between the dispositions and attitudes of children and adults were never convincingly drawn.

Political Efficacy and Political Cynicism

Political efficacy throughout it's theorization in the social sciences has been thought to come from any or a combination of the following three sources: political information, belief in the trustworthiness of political institutions, and embeddedness in resource rich networks.[1] The third articulation is the one that became dominant in the 1960s for those who studied group differences (race and class) in political efficacy and is still ascendant today. Currently however, the focus of group differences in politics (particularly concerning attitudes and participation) has turned away from studies of political socialization in general and the analysis of political efficacy and political cynicism as opposite variables, and toward the exploration and operationalization of "social capital."

Still, let us trace the emergence of these arguments as they developed. In early research on political efficacy, it was consistently hypothesized that differences in political socialization between black and white adolescents lead to different kinds of political attitudes in the adult years.

The major difference between black and white youth—the one on which future political attitudes (as well as orientations toward state institutions and political participation) were thought to depend, was the level of political efficacy v. level of political cynicism commonly present among group members.[2] Political cynicism, according to Schley R. Lyons is the belief that government officials and authorities cannot be trusted. In 1970 Lyons hypothesized that since "Negro slum children" are socialized in a context of racial discrimination and poverty they would exhibit distinctly different attitudes than their white peers. He thought that poverty and the resultant environment of deprivation was the driving factor in low levels of political efficacy among black youth. Lyons found that black children generally did not exhibit the definitional efficacious expectation that "in democracies citizens will feel free to act affectively in politics" (Lyons 1970; 290). At all levels of education, black youths felt less politically efficacious and were more cynical than white youth. In fact, Lyons found that even though older children generally feel more efficacious than younger ones and younger children are less cynical than older ones, black youth felt less efficacious in high school than whites felt in junior high and that black children were more cynical in elementary school than whites are in high school.

The famous 1960s phrasing of the question that measures political cynicism is: "Do you think quite a few people in the government are a little crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are?"[3] Turns out black children think quite a few of the people in government are crooked and further more they don't think there's much they can do about it. In his 1969 survey

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[1] Resources include not only material, but informational and even, in some explanations of social capital "cultural" richness.

[2] I should note that in the early studies of group differences in political socialization and up until the 1970s race was analyzed as though it mapped nearly perfectly with class, meaning the phenomenon of black political disaffection was seen as mostly commensurate with the effects of poverty (Laswell 1948; Seeman 1966; Carmines 1978). The evolution of this study in sociology and political science was strikingly counter to the discourses around racial group differences that developed in psychology around conceptualizing and measuring self-esteem.

[3] This question wording has come under criticism in recent years. It is argued that the cultural currency of the word "crooked" has diminished quite a bit. (Hetherington 2005).

of black and white schoolchildren in Pittsburg and Philadelphia, Edward Greenberg found that not only are black children less supportive of government and officials (operationalized with questions about the President and the police) than white children, they are likely to become distinctly less supportive as they get older—that is, the gap between the attitudes of black and white adolescents diverge as they grow older.

Although some researchers have found variance in the results of tests of political efficacy and political cynicism (Kenyon and Langton 1968, Jones 1965) the general result—that black youth are less efficacious and more politically cynical at all grade and age levels than their white peers—have been remarkably constant across time and region. In 1974 Harell R. Rodgers conducted a series of interviews with 280 white and 371 black 10th-12th graders from the public schools of a North Carolina county and found that "social position," or socio-economic status does increase political efficacy among black youth. However, counter to what a class determinant hypothesis would lead one to believe, higher social position also increased levels of cynicism. Even more interestingly, in a study conducted the same year by Liebschutz and Niemi, direct education about politics in the form of civics or government classes had the same effect: increased efficacy *and* cynicism. These results indicated that political efficacy and political cynicism were not necessarily variables that ought to stand at opposite poles in analysis of political attitudes at least among black youth, and that some other variable or set of variables must be responsible for the striking differences in political orientations among black children. In general, it seemed, black children who had class experiences that were commensurate with the narrative of black advancement as well as (presumably) accurate information about civics and governance were likely to have a lower opinion of government officials and agents than their white peers (although there was variation among blacks, with black lower class boys being least efficacious and most

cynical). And not only that, but that as these youth were educated, increasing their ability to conform to narratives of personal uplift and middle class aspirations, becoming more politically efficacious in the process, black youth were likely to experience increasing levels of political cynicism.[4] This relationship is quite contrary and suggests that it might not have been black youth who were confused about their political prospects, but instead the researchers.

This is precisely the worry that motivated Paul Abramson to develop two hypotheses concerning the socialization of black children, which served as the theoretical framework of the socialization literature, at least that part concerned with the political attitudes of black children, as long as it was extant.[5] The first is the *social depravation* model, which states that the differences in racial efficacy stem from social-structural conditions. The second is the *political reality* model, which states that blacks and whites really do live in politically different environments (Abramson 1972). Abramson over a number of years and in a series of articles develops the hypothesis that it is not a deficiency in self-competence—the belief that they as individuals have an appropriate level of influence on their environment—that caused black children and adolescents to be less efficacious than their white peers, but instead an accurate reflection of political reality (Abramson 1972; 1974;1975; 1984; Abramson and Aldrich 1982; 1986). [6]

Political Alienation

In the1970s the idea of social or relative deprivation became a ubiquitous concept and a standard variable in work on political socialization (Runciman 1966; Davies 1969; Vanneman and

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[4] Usually, these results are not broken down by gender. Some researchers present non-findings regarding potential differences in the political socialization of boys and girls, but Greenberg found that lower class black boys stop idealizing police at a much earlier age than any other group, including lower class black girls.

[5] Another hypothesis that Abramson put forward, but which was not as widely taken up is that of Environmental Politicization, in it he asserts that political efficacy can have quite a bit to do with the degree of politicization within the family, peer group, and school (**Langton and Karns (Year?) 19**).

[6] Abramson initially takes these two explanations as entirely independent (with the self-competence explanation being 'merely psychological'), but by his work in the eighties, he advances the hypothesis that the decreased self-competence of black adolescents is related to the accurate perception of real political circumstances.

Pettigrew 1972). The institutionalization of this new terminology allowed scholars to abandon the idea that political cynicism and political efficacy were oppositional categories that would help pinpoint political orientations. Indeed, instead of cynicism which puts the onus of belief on the individual and specifically their negative regard for institutions, the idea of *political alienation* was introduced. The Marxist intellectual history which the term alienation invokes is not accidental. While cynicism is a personal disposition with regard to governmental officials political alienation describes a process of *learning* to regard officials and governmental officers negatively in reaction to the perception of material circumstances and the "real" structural contexts of social and political reality.[7]

However, despite the change in dominant explanatory theories, researchers found that youth perceptions of being "deprived" did not consistently co-vary with the sense of political disaffection, which researchers had termed alienation (Taylor 1982). In 1978, Sam Long found that Abramson's social deprivation model had very little predictive power. More specifically, according to Long's sample an adolescent's perception of being "deprived" predicted their feelings of political alienation less than 10% of the time. Despite these non findings on the relationship between social deprivation and political alienation, Long did note that black youth's absolute aspirations were notably depressed in contrast to their white peers.[8]

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[7] Interestingly, as political socialization as a concentration in political science has lost traction, there has been a return to the language of cynicism over alienation (Luks 2000) or the absence of the concept altogether in favor of a variable which is simply level of trust: high to low (Hetherington 2005).

[8] Long's Social Deprivation scale is derived from Cantril's Self-Anchoring Striving Scale in which students are required to place themselves on a nine-step ladder from "worst possible life" to "best possible life." The students are required to make this assessment for three separate time periods in their own lives (five years in the past, present, and five years in the future). "Aspirational Deprivation" was then calculated by subtracting the respondents score from the highest possible score. The same was done for "Anticipated Aspirational Deprivation" using future scores. In addition, a "Rising Expectations" measure was constructed by subtracting past ratings from present ratings and a "Blocked Opportunities" measure was created by subtracting future ratings from present ratings. Self-concept was also measured using the Levenson's Chance Control Scale and the Powerful Others Control scales. Political alienation was measured using Olsen's Political Incapability and Political Discontentment Scales and the Survey Research Center's Faith and Confidence in Government scale.

In addition, in a move that foreshadowed the now widely employed concept of "social capital," alienation was theorized as partially consisting in a hypothesized lack of social ties and the general perception of isolation and "powerlessness," which was thought to be the result (Seeman 1971). This aspect of alienation, which Claude Fischer termed "subjective alienation" was employed to describe the breakdown of "informal social control" experienced by people who inhabit poor, urban neighborhoods. However, this supposed lack of ties did not pan out empirically and urbanity was dismissed as the only explanatory cause for alienation (Fischer 1973; 1976)[9]

II. The Self Concept, Self-Esteem and Personal Efficacy (Self-Competence): Effects on Motivation and Behavior

As we have seen, political socialization scholars were confronted with one non-finding after another, despite the modification of dominant theoretical categories in the early 1970s, and as a result the study of political socialization and its attendant concepts, efficacy and esteem, languished in the social sciences. Political scientists like Raymond Wolfinger and Steven Rosenstone were less interested in political efficacy—the *expectation* of affective political action—than in political participation—the involvement of individuals in the formal (and to a lesser extent extra-legal) processes of citizenship (1980). Sociologists on the other hand turned inward, away from the examination of the outward-directed social dispositions of adolescents and toward the self-directed perceptions and evaluations that young people hold.

According to Rosenberg (1979) the self-concept, is "the totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object." S. Epstein's (1973) definition is more

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[9] However in the 1990's, urbanity and particularly the "disorder" (as opposed to the isolation of individuals) of poor, inner-city neighborhoods was resurrected as an explanatory variable (Seeman 1971; Geis and Ross 1998).

succinct, "the self-concept can best be viewed as a theory that a person holds about themselves as an experiencing, functioning being in interaction with the world." In 1982 social psychologist Viktor Gecas' vastly clarifies these definitions in his article "The Self Concept." He argues that the self— that substantive conglomeration of perspectives, experiences, and interaction which we are—is the continuously developing product of reflexive adjustment and evaluation. According to Gecas, this reflexive process is ongoing and proceeds as a series of dialectical advances, which are influenced by situation, the structure of society, and the subject's position in that society. Self-concept is the product of this process. Self-esteem and self-efficacy, on the other hand, are *evaluative* aspects of the self-concept.[10]

Since we know that certain aspects of political identification are likely formed in childhood, some scholars have hypothesized political attitudes, such as social and political trust and even party identification ought to be related to the self concept and its evaluative aspects (Laswell 1948; Geschwender 1964). Social psychologists have posited both negative and positive relations between self-attitudes and political participation. Harold Laswell (1948), using the structural concept of social deprivation posited that those who felt deprived would react by seeking power in the political arena. On the other hand, in the 1960s Melvin Seeman observed a Swedish sample of adults and reported that those who had low self-efficacy, which he referred to as a feeling of "powerlessness," were less likely to be interested in politics, so less likely to have political knowledge and therefore participated less in politics.

Still the idea that the perception of structural disadvantage or relative deprivation, which could led one to have negative attitudes about one's own efficacy and life chances, and act as a

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[10] Note: self concept is seen as both an assertive (that is creative process) and a *motivational* process, this matters for how you interpret the data on self-efficacy and also, what types of social/political changes are appropriate to increase self-efficacy. In addition Bandura (1974, 1977, 1978, 1981) makes a very useful distinction between efficacy

motivation for political activity persisted. American social psychologists in the 1960s took up Laswell's proposition and developed two more specified models which they believed might explain why perceptions of deprivation could actually lead to increased political activity: the rising expectations (Geschwender 1964) and J curve models (Davies 1969) of relative deprivation. Gerchwender's "rising exectations" theory argues that as objective material conditions improve, expectations will increase at an exponential rate and dissatisfaction with the ability of conditions to keep pace with expectations will result in social unrest. Davies' J curve hypothesis is more nuanced and states that "when past successes have promoted elevated expectations but actual need satisfaction drops, the *gap* between them may become intolerable" and result in increased and even revolutionary political activity.[11] There is some evidence for both claims, but in the end it is not clear in the social psychological literature what the nature of the relationship between self attitudes and political participation is.

Still, the intuition that self concept, or at least its evaluative aspects, self esteem and self efficacy, are related to political attitudes and activity, has endured. Some social psychologists like K. Dawson (1980) have emphasized that early political socialization probably has causal, systematic effects on later political socialization, but other scholars have maintained that "relationships between adult political behavior and more general self-attitudes (especially self-rejection) that may have crystallized during adolescence" give us essential insight into what might cause systematic differences in the political activity of groups and individuals.

Unlike the earliest propositions of the political socialization literature, which argue that there is a direct connection between "childrearing antecedents" and later political antecedents,

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expectations and outcome expectations where the former is a belief about one's environment and the later is a belief about one's competence.

more modern conceptions assert that the attitudes that people are socialized into in early childhood may have consequences that influence political attitudes and behaviors later in life. This approach acknowledges that there may be "discontinuities between childhood and adult political viewpoints, and takes into account a process of maturation during which individuals assume a progression of roles" (Peck and Kaplan 1995: 285). In this way modern social psychological accounts attempt to incorporate Gecas' insight that the self is an ongoing construction and that the self concept is a mutable extrapolation or snapshot of an individual's perception of themselves and their place in the world.

These insights have, however, not clarified why negative self attitudes such as low self esteem or low personal efficacy may act as either a motivation to withdraw from traditional politics (Matthews and Prothro 1966; Abramson and Aldrich 1982) or a reason to enter into the political arena (Paige 1971; Carmines 1978). B. Mitchell Peck and Howard Kaplan admit "it is not clear why some individuals with low self-attitudes [self rejection] pursue changes through the political process, while others withdraw from that same process (1995: 286). But the prospect that one's political socialization can have an impact on the self-concept and its evaluative aspects and that those effects can and do change over time with the advent of new circumstances and experiences, presents the possibility that the relationship between self attitudes and political participation could also change over time.

What social psychologists have found is that self-esteem does have significant effects with regard to behavior. Monica Longmore and her co-authors have found that self-esteem operates independently from depressive symptoms and that in older adolescents self-esteem actually acts as a "protective variable" which delays the sexual onset, particularly for older white girls. They

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[11] For an effective literature review see Marylee C Taylor. 1982. "Improved Social Conditions, Rising Expectations, and Dissatisfaction: A Test of the Past/Present Relative Depravation Hypothesis." *Social Psychology Quarterly*. Vol.

hypothesize that this is because self-esteem interacts with a whole host of other social psychological factors, chief among them the normative level of sexual activity for the relevant group (age cohort, socioeconomic peers, and racial group).[12] In addition, Longmore and her co-authors find that depressive symptoms, which they designate the "risk factor," predicts sexual onset better than self esteem for all groups of their sample.[13]

Social scientists have also found evidence that self-esteem influences behaviors, particularly sexual choices; however, they have not used the variable in contrast to depression. Instead, sociologist and to a lesser extent political scientists have been more concerned with self-esteem as it interacts with knowledge, or moderates self-control. Self-esteem is used as an explanatory variable often in scales which combine it with other aspects of the self concept like self efficacy (which is also called self-competence). These categories are difficult to disaggregate and scholars in the social sciences have often been imprecise in explaining which evaluative aspect of the self-concept they think is having an effect and even more obscure about how they believe self attitudes are conditioned by and interact with other variables.

African Americans and Self-esteem

Although keeping the evaluative aspects of the self-concept separate is generally important in investigating the relationship between mental states and behavior, it is particularly important for scholars who are interested in studying African Americans. In the study of black self-esteem and self-efficacy, it has been demonstrated that these two aspects of the self-concept are not very tightly correlated. Therefore, any attempt to use a collapsed measure of the self-concept to analyze its impact on black youth is likely to show spurious findings or non findings.

45, No. 1: 24-33.
[12] Monica Longmore, Wendy Manning, Peggy Giordano, Jennifer Rudolph. 2004. "Self-esteem, Depressive Symptoms, and Adolescent Sexual Onset." *Social Psychology Quarterly*. Vol. 67, No. 3, 279-295.

Research on African American self-esteem began early in the 20th century. Among social psychologists, beginning with Cooley in 1902 and culminating in the famous Clark doll tests in 1953, it was conventional wisdom that blacks had negative self evaluations. [14] The Clark tests found that black children were more ambivalent about their racial identities than whites and further that they identified more closely with whites (the out group) than with blacks (their own in group). This initial finding spawned a string of hypotheses that asserted that black children had internalized the negative evaluations that dominant society held of them and as such suffered from what Kardiner & Ovesey (1951) termed "the mark of oppression."

In this period self-esteem was not measured in what has, since Rosenberg, become the conventional way. Instead of asking respondents questions about whether they felt as though they handled life about as well as most other people or whether they felt they were worthy individuals, most of the psychological tests of "racial self-esteem" were measured by the level of the subject's identification with their own race (or whether they had higher identification with whites).

However, the onset of the "behavior revolution" in the social sciences and the attendant shift in methodology, which encouraged scholars to use survey based self-esteem scales, offered up a basis for alternative hypotheses. The most influential of these, the Rosenberg self-esteem scale.[15] In the 1960s, solidifying in Rosenberg's foundational work researchers began to question the assumptions in the early research noting that several erroneous assumptions had to hold for the story of low black self esteem to be true. It should also be noted that this change in findings was concurrent with a change in the method of study: psychological style observation and experiments

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[13] Longmore looked for differential effects among boys and girls; black, white, and Hispanic; older and younger adolescents.

[14] also see Stonequist 1937 and Lewin 1948

[15] Other important scales include the Piers-Harris self-concept scale and the Coopersmith self-esteem scale, however each of these scales follows from the Rosenberg scale and neither has replaced it as the foundational tool for measuring self-esteem.

gave way to sociology style surveys. The first assumption which Rosenberg reveals is that in order for older theories to be true, blacks had to hold the opinions of larger society in higher esteem than the opinions of their immediate family and friends. Second, blacks had to use whites as the standard of social comparison and finally blacks had to attribute responsibility for the low status of blacks as a group to black individuals, having no awareness of systematic discrimination. In the 1970s and 1980s several researchers found that there was no empirical basis for these assumptions (Rosenberg and Simmons 1972; Rosenberg 1981; Hoelter 1982). Further, in 1983 Krause found that interracial contact with whites in adolescence had no effect on black self-esteem. Sociologist Michael Hughes and David Demo are the authors of the most comprehensive investigations into black self esteem. They argued that "black self-esteem is insulated from systems of racial inequality, while personal efficacy is not."[16] By the late 1970s sociology was preoccupied with the question of self esteem, particularly what R.G Simmons termed "the puzzle of high self-esteem" (Simmons 1978) of racial and ethnic minorities.

More recent sociological literature on the self-esteem of racial and ethnic minorities is less interested in the link between self-attitudes and political action and more concerned with the possibly systematic differentials between the levels of self esteem reported in majority and minority groups. In their review of the sociological literature on the subject Gray-Little and Hafdahl (2000) reported "Our meta-analytic synthesis of 261 comparisons, based largely on self-esteem scales and involving more than half a million respondents, revealed higher scores for Black than for White children, adolescents and young adults." The have suggestions to explain the empirical reality of Simmon's "puzzle," build on the insights of Hughes and Demo. For example, Gray-Little and Halfdahl (2000) found that both blacks and whites tend to have higher self esteem

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[16] Michael Hughes and David Demo.1989. "Self-Perceptions of Black Americans: Self-Esteem and Personal Efficacy." *The American Journal of Sociology*. 95:1: 132-59

in "racially consonant" environments (environments where their racial group is the dominant one). And further that such environments might produce higher self-esteem effects not because the stress of discrimination is not present, but because such environments facilitate the development of in-group values that allow a favorable interpretation of the self" (Verkuyten 2005).

African Americans and Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, however, is a different matter. Studies in personal efficacy, defined as a sense of competence or personal control, have consistently found that blacks score lower than whites. Since self-esteem and personal efficacy had previously been perceived as tightly correlated aspects of the self-concept, this difference was regarded as a major puzzle for sociologists. Hughes and Demo (1989) found, (using a national probability sample of 2,107 black adults from the NSBA 1987, which was administered face to face), that self-esteem is largely a function of interpersonal relations with family and community (measured by social trust questions on strength of personal ties and religious activity) while *self* efficacy is strongly related to perceptions of institutional inequality. According to their analysis blacks accurately evaluate that institutional inequality limits their personal control over producing desired outcomes. Sometimes the former thesis is referred to as "system-blame" and researchers like McCarthy and Yancey (1971) and Porter and Washington (1979) have put forward that blacks are able to maintain high self-esteem because they blame the system for personal failures.

Hughes and Demo however found no support for this relationship between system blame and self esteem, they assert, "system blame represents a political belief concerning discrimination and individual responsibility which is not internalized in a way that is relevant for self-esteem."[17] Still, system blame or something like it might be a valid explanation for the lower rates of

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[17] Michael Hughes and David Demo.1989. "Self-Perceptions of Black Americans: Self-Esteem and Personal Efficacy." *The American Journal of Sociology*. 95:1: 150

self-efficacy and political efficacy reported by black respondents since both forms of efficacy

seem to be products of one's perception of one's place in and influence on the social order.[18]

III. Collective Efficacy & Social Capital

It was not until the late1980s that scholarly interest in the affective orientations of citizens

toward political participation and the marked group differences in positive orientations toward

political institutions and practices gained widespread legitimacy again. In 1988, sociologist Robert

Sampson took up the study of political efficacy not on the level of class or racial group, but by

pioneering a method of multi-level analysis, which attempts to bridge the gap between macro and

micro level effects of community organization. Sampson makes this shift on theoretical grounds.

He questions whether any kind of efficacy, especially political efficacy in a large, representative

democracy can be properly measured as an individual level disposition (Robert Sampson 1988;

1991; 1998; 1999; 2001; 2004).

Sampson theorizes a "systemic model" of community social organizations, which

"conceptualizes the local community as a complex system of friendship and kinship networks and

formal and informal associational ties rooted in family life and ongoing socialization processes."[19]

Sampson rejects the classical social ecology explanation that efficacy and positive affect toward

the community are functions of socio-demographic factors (Wirth 1938) and asserts, building on

the work of Kasarda and Janowitz (1974) that strong social ties and positive community affect are

instead due to length of residence. In other words, it is not how many people live in a community,

who those people are (racially, ethnically, or in terms of class), or how closely they live to one

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[18] Interestingly, social class though central to self-esteem of adult white males is not so for black adults. In addition, it is not socioeconomic status, but education that produces positive changes in black self-efficacy.
[19] Robert Sampson. 1991. "Linking Micro-and Macro Level Dimensions of Community Social Organization." *Social Forces*. 70(1): 45.

another that make a socially cohesive community, but instead the *stability* of residence patterns which leads to increases in participation in community activities, positive community affect and satisfaction with the community.

Throughout the body of Sampson's work he uses large N sample data to analyze the macro social (between community) determinants of community organization and the contextual effects of community structure on micro level (individual) behavior. Notably, in his 1999 study *Beyond Social Capital*, which he co authors with Jeffrey Morenoff and Felton Earls, the authors uses a combination of survey data of 8,782 Chicago residents from 342 neighborhoods with 1990 census data to model both macro and micro processes of social organization.

Substantively, the authors argue that the term "social capital," though widely used since its introduction into sociological discourse in the mid-eighties, has been widely misapplied in empirical research. According to Bourdieu, social capital consists in "actual or potential resources which are linked to possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu 1986; 249). Robert Putnam defines the term more expansively in his famous 1993 treatise on American civil society, *Bowling Alone*, "features of social organizations such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam 1993: 36). Sampson points out that contrary to the whole concept of social capital, which is explicitly concerned with social structure and *not* individual attributes, social scientists routinely operationalized the concept with descriptions of individual circumstances such as 'single parenthood,' instead of social relationships. Further, the authors note that social capital as an analytical category has no necessary normative valence, that is to say, "social capital" is not a *prima facie* good. Social capital is the description of the state of possessing

functional social ties, in this way it is resource and like any other resource it can be deployed for any kind of normative project.

Thomas Sugrue explains how a white working class community in post war Detroit was able to keep Blacks and other minorities from integrating through the effective usage of extant social capital (Sugrue 1996). The author's final tier of distinction is quite an important one—not only are they attempting to get beyond the empirical misapplication of social capital, Sampson et al. make a distinction between social capital as a structural state (community ties and institutionally supported relationships exist or they don't) and collective efficacy as a task-specific *process* of achieving a communally desired effect (Sampson 1999; 635).

To the end of getting beyond the muddled terminology, the authors propose a new theoretical framework which is based on the structural sources and spatially embedded nature of three mechanisms that produce collective efficacy for children: *intergenerational closure* (the potential linkages between parents/authorities and their children/the children they supervise), *reciprocal exchange* (the frequency with which parents/authorities exchange information and favors regarding their children) and *informal social control*. Each of these concepts attempts to get beyond the vague and muddled concept of social capital towards an operationalization of relationships that take place within local social structures. Very like his early research, Sampson rejects the notion that the particular make-up of the people in the community at the level of socio-demography is the decisive factor in creating social cohesion within a community. Instead, he reports that neither poverty nor race are the principle variables that prevent effective community support and control of young people, but instead residential stability, concentrated affluence and proximity to neighborhoods with the latter characteristics have the largest impact on positive social outcomes.

Sampson et al. are careful to emphasize that the kinds of effective communities which they describe already exist, they are not utopian "urban villages," but are instead "communities of limited liability" where adults are exposed to and interact with youth other than their own children, where they have some interaction and are willing to share information with other adults in the community and where adults are willing to intervene on behalf of children whom they recognize as belonging to the community.

IV. Personal and Political Trust: Social Deviance and Damage Imagery

Even in the early work on political socialization, political trust played a major role. However, the idea of political trust is so variously deployed in the literature, the meaning is difficult to pin down. Some researchers have used political trust as merely the antonym for political cynicism (Greenberg 1970; Abramson 1972), but in recent years researchers like Marc Hetherington (1998; 2005) have been investigating the relevance of political trust both generally and in relation to specific policy preferences.

Hetherington argues that trust is not properly conceived of as a dependent variable, instead, he contends it is a powerful explanatory variable. In other words, Hetherington argues, "rather than simply a reflection of dissatisfaction with political leaders, declining trust is a powerful *cause* of this dissatisfaction. Low trust helps create a political environment in which it is more difficult for leaders to succeed." A mistrustful public or population is more difficult to please regardless of who is in office conversely a trusting public is more tolerant seemingly regardless of the particular personal feelings about individual office holders.[20]

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[20] Marc Hetherington. 1998. "The Political Relevance of Political Trust." *American Political Science Review.* Vol. 92, No. 4. also see, Marc Hetherington and Suzanne Globetti. 2002. "Political Trust and Racial Policy Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science.* Vol 46, No. 2, p. 255. In addition, of course, there is a massive political theory

In *Why Trust Matters* one of the few political science works concerning political trust, Marc Hetherington asserts that the decline of political trust, not ideology, is the reason for the rightward shift in national politics since the 1960s. On a number of ideological measures of traditional conservatism (limited government interference, fiscal conservatism), Americans score as they have since the 1950s. Hetherington argues that it is not *distributive* policies that Americans are opposed to, but *redistributive* policies. Hetherington goes on to say that especially in the case of programs from which not everyone is perceived to benefit and for which some are perceived to sacrifice a high level of political trust is necessary. He argues that a part of the explanation for why New Deal programs such as Social Security and the Great Society provisions of Medicare and Medicade enjoy nearly universal support (at least according to public opinion, despite the recent administration's position) in contrast to the controversy which surrounds social welfare programs for minorities and the poor is that the first are seen to be "equally" distributive, while the latter are seen to "preferentially" redistributive. When the public mood is trusting, Hetherington argues, it is easier to purpose and implement redistributive programs because citizens believe that the government can and does produce outcomes consistent with their expectations. That is, the polity is less likely to believe that they are being tricked out of their tax dollars or that the government will waste their money.

In order to fully understand Hetherington's argument it is important to realize that he makes an analytical distinction between political trust and social trust and that his results are caused only by the former. Political trust, he argues is the degree to which people believe that the government is producing outcomes consistent with their expectations. "One might think of it," he

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literature on political trust, but I want to learn the contours and limitations of the recent empirical studies and use them as a guide to direct my immersion in the theory literature.

writes "as a pragmatic running tally of how people think the government is doing at any given point in time, whereas the later is a measure of how much one individual trust others."[21]

Hetherington notes that it is social trust, not political trust that is related to political mobilization in the form of participation in traditional politics and not the political trust. Hetherington claims that political trust is instead related to whole host of other politically relevant behaviors, mostly macro level information processing and the generation of what Stimson calls "policy moods." Using time series data from the NES Hetherington shows that when political trust is high, national policies are more liberal and when it is low public policy becomes more conservative. He also shows that it is not the case that the causal arrow can go either way, that is, while a trusting policy mood results in more liberal policy moods a conservative administration does not by its nature or rhetoric engender more political trust in the population.

In his measures of trust Hetherington does not include any measures that take seriously the concept of alienation or structural disadvantage that might create cynicism in some populations has disappeared. The evacuation of this concept leaves the findings more elegant, but especially concerning the politics of marginalized groups may leave it inaccurate. Indeed, if political trust is more than a moment, but is instead a process, it could be extremely important to include a measure of political trust which reflects not only the respondents attitudes about how the government runs in general, but how they believe the government performs in respect to their group(s) and whether the respondent perceives a difference in the government's general trustworthiness and effectiveness and the same characteristics with specific reference to *their* group.

The more usual concern which critics voice in reference to using these classic questions are that: First, there is question about the wording particularly in the case of "crooked" which is more

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[21] Hetherington 2005, p.9 He self consciously models this definition on Fiorina's (1981) explanation of how Party ID

a Nixon term than a Clinton one; second, there is traditionally quite limited variation in the

three-part ordinal responses; and third, these questions do not measure institutional legitimacy so

much as they measure a specific discontinuity between expectations and perceived institutional

output.[22]

Citrin (1974), Citrin and Green (1986), and Lipset and Schneider (1983) have argued that

the standard measures of political trust do not take into account diffuse support for American

governing institutions, a critique which is particularly relevant in light of the manifest cynicism

which with blacks view American institutions, but Hetherington discounts this argument, pointing

out that in absolute terms there is very little variation across groups and time in basic support for

American institutions. Since this is the case, he argues, diffuse political trust in institutions cannot

explain changes in the political landscape. Rather, Hetherington argues, the variation (and the

explanatory power) of political trust lies in the public perception of particular authorities and

authoritative institutions (President, Congress, Judges). This variation is, of course, even more

striking between blacks and whites than it is over time for the nation. That means that although it

may be true, as Abramson reported (1983), that disadvantaged groups (blacks and the poor) trust in

basic American institutions no less than advantaged groups, it is also true that African America

trust in specific authoritative institutions has never reached the level of white trust and yet they

have always preferred more redistributive programs. Marc Hetherington and Suzanne Globetti, in

their article, "Political Trust and Racial Policy Preferences," find, using time series data

(1990-1994) from the NES panel studies, that when talking about race targeted policies like

affirmative action, political trust *doesn't matter* for the policy preferences of blacks, but it has an

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works.
[22] The last is a specific reference to Easton's work on in the 1960s makes a distinction between specific and diffuse support for governing institutions. The first is concerned with the output and performance of political authorities while the second is concerned with regime level political objects regardless of performance evaluations.

enormous impact on the policy preferences of whites. This might suggest that African American "policy moods" cannot be explained by Hetherington's rubric at all although it does provide a useful lens through which to view the white decline in support for policies which seek to remedy racial injustice.[23]

As convincing as Hetherington is in his assertion that political trust is a causal variable and as interesting as his findings are on the effect of levels of white political trust on the liberality of national policy, one is still left wanting for the answer to the antecedent question: what then contributes to the increase or decline of political trust?

What we know about trust is primarily based on its usage as a dependant variable. Analyzed from this perspective the object of study is not political trust does, but what it is and how variations in its level can be explained. In general scholars have found that political trust depends on a number of factors, including 1) lack of policy satisfaction (King 1997) 2) negative economic evaluations (Citrin and Green 1986) 3) media negativity (Patterson 1993; Capella and Jamieson 1997) 4) major political scandals (Weatherford 1984) 5) president's personal characteristics (Citrin and Green 1986) 6) war (Parker 1995) 7) and the size and scope of the government (Mainsbridge 1997). An increase in each of these variables corresponds to a decrease in political trust.

Regarding youth and trust, according to data collected by CIRCLE in the Civic Engagement Among Minority Youth Study (2002), it is still the case that African American (and now, also Latino) youth have less trust in government than their white counterparts and just as in the earliest studies, young women are more likely to trust in government than the male members of their racial group.

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[23] Marc Hetherington and Suzanne Globetti. 2002. "Political Trust and Racial Policy Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol 46, No. 2, p. 255

Remember though that measures of political trust often include aspects of social trust (which could give us a hint on ways to interpret the persistent gender difference) and as Hetherington argues, these two variables have separate motivational and behavioral effects. The former shaping the environment in which political dialogue and policy will be evaluated and the later correlated with increased participation in traditional political activity. We do not know yet whether the independent effects of social and political trust are different for African Americans and/or Latinos than they are for Whites.

Damage, Dependency, and Deviance

Another issue of personal and political trust that is specific to the black community has to do with a history of "damage imagery"— the theory in social psychology that the particular history of blacks in the US has been psychologically damaging. The ways in which this imagery is deployed and used is different based on 1) the ideology of the researcher 2) the prevailing scholarly racial ideology of the moment. The normative valence of damage imagery has relied quite a bit on the manipulation of the perception of what black deviance means. Racial liberals tend to deploy this thesis to stimulate white pity and conservatives deploy the very same argument to stimulate white contempt. Daryl Michael Scott (1997) points out that the liberal deployment of images of the psychologically damaged (and therefore understandably deviant) black does nothing to dissolve white supremacy and so cannot possibly aid the cause of equality. Lani Guiner has recently applied the same criticism of the logic of the *Brown* decision, in which the Supreme Court ruled in favor of integration based on the evidence that black children were being psychologically damaged by segregation.

These criticisms may seem surprising, but a look at the most prevalent theories of deviance in social psychology, makes one understand both Scott's and Guinier's caution around deploying damage imagery on behalf of black political causes. Such theses set up African Americans as a

"sick" population in desperate need of the "treatment" of exposure to and the eventual internalization of dominant (white) norms of thought and behavior. Contemporary social psychology exhibits just this analytical and normative thrust.

Howard Kaplan has built what he calls a general theory of social deviance. According to it, deviance is the failure of an individual (or individuals in a group) to conform to the normative expectations shared by the group (a specific group such as family, work, voluntary association, peer group, &c.)[24] regarding how the subject will and should behave in given situations.[25] He claims the general theory of deviance rests on the reciprocal relationship between self-attitudes and behavior. Further, Kaplan posits a universal self-esteem motive, which assumes that every person seeks to maximize their experience of positive self-attitudes or evaluations of the self, and to minimize their experience of negative attitudes. Kaplan acknowledges that self-attitudes cannot be considered the only determinant of a "disposition to deviance" but that "the complex factors that influence the adoption of deviant patterns do so in interaction with or mediated by self-attitudes."[26] In order to achieve maximum positive self-attitudes some agents might adopt deviant patterns of behavior because conventional patterns seem useless/ closed to them. This "motivated" deviance usually requires the movement from one membership group, with a particular set of values and evaluations of deviance to another with a different set of values and evaluations of behavior.

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[24] One wonders whether Kaplan's definition of group is nuanced enough. Racial group is a category which may contain families, peer groups, and associations within it. This is not to say that these peer organizations in the African American community are or can be entirely unconditioned by the norms in the nation or the dominant group, but it does limit the potential explanatory power of Kaplan's model for African Americans.

[25] Note the potential relationship of these findings to those of self-esteem and "sexual onset." Here we find consistency in that self-esteem must always be put in context or we can neither see 1) what elements it requires 2) what effects its level might have on behavior.

[26] **[citation!]**

On its face Kaplan's general theory cannot explain African American "deviance" because African Americans in general have relatively good "self attitudes" or self esteem.[27] However, Kaplan does not find these results. According to a vast preponderance of the social psychological literature since the 1960s it should be the case that though blacks might report a high instance of behaviors that Kaplan classifies as "deviant" their reportage of "self-rejection" (derogation) should be quite low. Kaplan's results do not reflect this expected finding, in part, I would argue, because he mixes the scale—combining the perception of the attitudes of authority figures with self-valuations.[28] Even putting aside this grave concern, the questions which Kaplan's analysis makes essential are neither asked nor answered in his study. These are: 1) Are African Americans as a group inhibited form developing strong conventional attachments? 2) Is there a distinct behavioral evaluation within the group with its own behavioral valuations of conformity and deviance?

Although Kaplan notes that "a group that shares a normative system may evaluate the behaviors or attributes of another group and may apply negative sanctions for behaviors or attributes that are judged to deviate from the normative expectations that are believed to be incumbent even on non-group members," he does not take seriously the implications of power asymmetry between groups (Kaplan 1975; 4). It might matter quite a bit whether or not the individual displaying "deviant" behavior is involved in a group which is partially or entirely

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[27] If indeed the difference between their norms and behaviors and that of whites should be considered deviant. Extrapolating from the insights of Hughes and Demo, whites are not necessarily apart of the relevant "membership group" or "reference group" for African Americans and therefore the relationship between the norms and behaviors of these two groups cannot be evaluated in these terms.

[28] In Kaplan and Johnson 2001 Structural Relations Model of Self Attitudes asks respondents to evaluate how they are perceived in the eyes of teachers, parents, peers and friends in addition to doing some self-reflective evaluation. Asking the respondent to reflect on such a wide range of perspectives might make the measure imprecise or at least, no longer a measure of self-attitudes, but instead social positioning. As we know, these two perceptions are often very different and not tightly correlated in black adolescents.

subject to the administration and evaluation of another group which has different definitions of what counts as deviant.

V. Political Efficacy

Bandura, a political psychologist (1997) defines political efficacy as the "belief that one can produce effects through political action." This definition is directly derivative of modern psychological definitions of self-efficacy in that it preserves the distinction between efficacy and beliefs about capabilities and esteem. Bandura (1997; 2001) makes an additional distinction between internal and external political efficacy. The first being belief about one's own ability to influence political discussions and outcomes and the second beliefs about government responsiveness. This distinction is an attempt to highlight the difference between self evaluations and evaluations of one's position with a perceived political and social structure.

The above indicates that civic knowledge no matter how it's understood (as a cognitive category or more traditionally as a measure of the amount of information the respondent possesses) should not necessarily have any causal relationship with political participation. Knowledge may be power, but understanding the political situation, indeed, even being aware of its specific content does not *necessarily* generate either an actual or perceived capability to influence outcomes. In short, it should not be surprising that the relationship between civic knowledge and political participation has not reliably obtained in empirical research.

This distinction is important for our purposes because black adolescents who routinely report high self-esteem and low self-efficacy as well as high political cynicism (particularly for boys) and low political efficacy (particularly as subjects grow older) may be a completely reasonable picture of the political and social world for individuals who are structurally positioned as African American youth are. This potential explanation is extremely important because it means

that contrary to much of the psychological, political and sociologic literature, there is nothing personally deficient or cognitivey inconsistent (given political reality) about the personal and political evaluations of African American youth. It is perfectly reasonable, by the standards which emerge from a close study of the literature, that black and Latino young people feel less efficacious than their white counterparts. According to the 2002 CIRCLE study, even though most young people between the ages of 18 and 25 believe that their votes will count, young African Americans are least likely to report such a belief. The above picture indicates that this reported evaluation is not the result of perverse self-attitudes, but instead a clear-headed evaluation of the political situation as it is generally perceived by African Americans. The results of this analysis put the burden of negative evaluations of American political institutions and the efficacy of participation not on the "problematic youth," but on the structural barriers they face in influencing political discussions and outcomes.

VI. Summary

What We Know: Major Issues and Definitions of Concepts

African Americans, at first glance, seem to have a very strange profile in terms of the relationship between self-esteem and personal efficacy. However, advances in the social science literature have illuminated a coherent story about the way the self-concept of African Americans (particularly adolescents) might develop. The problem is that the literature does not seem aware of the big-picture narrative that it makes available. Here are the main components: Blacks develop high self-esteem from their immediate reference group (family, friends, and community) although they seem to be aware of the negative views that white Americans hold of African Americans, Gecas has found that those views are not internalized into an evaluative aspect of the personal

self-concept.[29] Because of the awareness of inequality, African Americans are both less politically trusting and less politically efficacious.[30]

In a related vein, African Americans, particularly African American boys are less politically trusting that their white peers and there is early evidence (Greenberg) that this difference in political trust increases as black and white adolescents get older. This effect is exacerbated by civic education and strong racial identity. In addition, we have learned that civic knowledge or other factual knowledge does not perform a simple, positive interaction function with regards to the relationship between esteem and behavior. In the case of political trust, understanding the political situation actually *decreases* the level of trust in African American youth.   The profile of African American adolescents which has been revealed is most interesting in that it points to a very different American experience for blacks. It points to the hypothesis that it is not African American viewpoints, information possessing, or even behavior that is the root of their persistent status as anomalous, but instead, it is their real lived experience.

Black adolescents who routinely report high self-esteem and low self-efficacy as well as high political cynicism (particularly for boys) and low political efficacy (particularly as subjects grow older) may have quite a reasonable picture of the political and social world. That is, unlike much early scholarship posited, from this wide angle view, such a set of relationships to the political self and the external realm of politics connotes nothing inconsistent (and certainly not personally or psychologically deficient) about the average African American adolescents cognitive structure. In fact, what a review of the findings in the literature on self-esteem, self

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[29] Whether or not such information is apart of the collective self concept is inconclusive. Even more uncertain is the effect a low evaluation of racial group self concept might have on collective efficacy, especially since the Sampson studies are based on neighborhood level analysis and not specifically racial group analysis. See racial attitudes and lived experience literature for more information.

[30] Measures of personal efficacy or self competence have yielded contradictory results and often the measures of self-esteem and self-efficacy are conflated. I suspect that these two concepts operate independently, similar to the

competence, political efficacy and political trust shows us is that the burden of securing a public

realm that includes black adolescents is not the burden of the "problematic youth," but is instead a

result of structural barriers those youth face in gaining political regard and influencing political

outcomes.

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