Efficacy and Participation: A Study of Black Political Behavior

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EFFICACY
AND PARTICIPATION
A Study of Black Political Behavior

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A **well-confirmed finding** of voter studies is that the individual who feels he can have some impact on political outcomes is in fact much more likely to engage in political activity. Thus, a sense of political efficacy is a major stimulus to political participation. Certainly much of the relationship between efficacy and participation stems from the socialization process, in which both are taught as democratic ideals (Easton and Dennis, 1967: 25-38). The black American hears much of the same rhetoric as the white; yet, because he has been culturally and legally restricted in his participation, he has had relatively little cause to feel efficacious. Restrictions on black participation have eased considerably in the past decade; in some cases, that participation has significantly influenced electoral decisions. Nevertheless, some blacks turn away from the "traditional" avenues of political participation and move into protest routes. One potential stimulus to such a move is a lack of political efficacy felt by the black citizen. Curiously, as several writers have noted, very little research probes the sense of political efficacy felt by black Americans

[201]

and their participation in the alternate channels of political behavior.[1] This paper reports the results of such an investigation conducted in a major Southern city.

CORRELATES OF POLITICAL EFFICACY

A *sense of political efficacy* is the feeling that a person can influence political outcomes through his participation. In a larger frame, it is one of the sources of citizen support for the maintenance of a political system (Easton, 1965: part III). Analyses of political efficacy center around three major topics: its behavioral consequences, its personality roots, and its social correlates.

First, examination of an individual's sense of political efficacy is important because efficacy is associated with political participation, the acquisition of political information, and the discussion of political issues (Lane, 1969: 152; Almond and Verba, 1963: 257; Dahl, 1961: 286; Campbell et al., 1960: 105). All these forces influence the relationship of a society's citizens to the operation of their political system. In organizations, a sense of efficacy contributes to the achievement of leadership positions (Rose, 1962: 836). Some studies find relationships with the direction of political behavior. Hence, black student protesters have been shown to be less alienated;[2] alienation was shown to be related to a "no" vote on a metropolitan government issue (see McDill and Ridley, 1962: 205-217); and, depending on the nature of the voter's issue positions, a sense of political efficacy influenced his choice of either Johnson or Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election (Aberbach, 1969: 97). Thus, acting through participation, a sense of political efficacy can influence the impact of a system's citizens on important political decisions. Yet, as Robert Dahl (1961: 287) notes, there is undoubtedly a reciprocal relationship: those who participate are likely to begin with a higher sense of political efficacy, but the sense of political efficacy is also bolstered by that participation.

Second, a sense of political efficacy is part of the individual's general psychological orientation to his environment and cannot be separated from other elements of that orientation. In this vein, Lane (1969: 149) states that the sense of political efficacy has "of course," two components—the image of self and the image of democratic government. Others buttress this statement by showing that feelings of efficacy are related to personal effectiveness or "ego-strength" (Milbrath, 1965: 59; see also Campbell et al., 1960: 517), psychological involvement in political affairs (Milbrath, 1965: 56), and not being an authoritarian (Lane, 1955: 178).[3] Believing one has the ability to cope with politics, then, is intertwined with feeling effective in other aspects of one's life.

Third, the social characteristics of the individual and the "social milieu" within which he operates seem to affect his sense of political efficacy. Those individuals with higher social and economic status view themselves as more effective in political matters as well (Lane, 1969: 226; Dahl, 1961: 288; Milbrath, 1965: 57; Almond and Verba, 1963: 210; Thompson and Horton, 1960: 195). Using cross-national data, one set of authors concludes that "it is clear that political efficacy does play a strong role in the relationship between social class and participation" (Nie et al., 1969: 817). Moreover, the general economic and political development of "modern" systems seems to foster a "general sense of competence to influence the government" (Inkeles, 1969: 1123; Nie et al., 1969: 373). Higher education, perhaps because it also leads to greater familiarity with the political process, also contributes to feelings of political effectiveness (Almond and Verba, 1963: 205; Milbrath, 1965: 57; Campbell et al., 1960: 105). Other factors which tend to be related to a higher sense of efficacy are participation in organization (Nie et al., 1969: 813; Dahl, 1961: 299), sex (males are more efficacious; Almond and Verba, 1963: 210), being a leader in a community organization (Rose, 1962: 838), and living in a metropolitan area (Lane, 1969: 266).

Race is one personal variable which has received scant but increasing attention as a correlate of political efficacy. One would expect black Americans to have a sense of political efficacy lower than that of whites, but the findings are mixed. Matthews and Prothro (1966: 278) found a relatively high level of efficacy among their sample of Southern blacks.[4] Marvick (1965) concludes that among young, Northern blacks the sense of political efficacy is nearly as high as among young Northern whites.[5] Moreover, Lane (1969: 150) states that Northern "metropolitan Negroes feel fully as efficacious as do white citizens in a similar status and environment." Likewise, Finifter (1970) concludes that "given similar educational achievement, Negroes apparently feel hardly any more powerless concerning the political process than do whites." Nevertheless, in a very recent study, Campbell and Schuman (1968: 61) note that "Negroes feel less satisfied than white people with the services they receive from public agencies." Supporting this statement Lyons (1970: 294-295) asserts that "Negro youth were more cynical and felt less efficacious than their white counterparts regardless of where they lived," and "unlike white, middle-class children, Negroes developed negative attitudes toward government long before adolescence."

Instead of attempting to resolve the apparent contradictions in the results reported above, this study examines political efficacy and participation within a black sample. Indeed, regardless of whether blacks feel more or less efficacious than whites, the potential behavioral consequences of those feelings are great. Therefore, we have chosen to examine briefly the following problems:

(1) we describe briefly the participation of the individuals in our sample and some of the correlates of that participation;

(2) we analyze the relationship of political efficacy to actual and suggested participation in protest and traditional acts;

(3) we explore the relationship of political efficacy to the types of political problems with which blacks are concerned in order to determine whether there is a variation in the degree to which they are "participant" or "subject"-oriented;

(4) we discuss the relationship of political efficacy to voter registration experiences of the individual black citizen.

Together, answers to these problems will map some of the relationship between the black voter and the political system in which he lives.

DEVELOPMENT OF INDICES

Our findings stem from a probability survey of 300 black residents of New Orleans. This survey was conducted in late 1969 and early 1970.[6] Blacks constitute approximately 47% of the population and 30% of the city's registered electorate. In contrast to some other urban areas, the environment for participation has been free of the influence of large-scale civil disorder. Historically, blacks have been denied access to the traditional political process. However, the black vote is now considered a significant force in the city's politics.[7]

Three of the measures employed in this study need description at this point. These three measures are a sense of political efficacy, traditional political participation,[8] and protest political participation.[9]

A four-point index of political efficacy is developed from responses to these three statements: (1) voting is the only way I can have any say about government; (2) public officials do not care about what people like me think; and (3) people like me do not have any say about government. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with each statement. Those who agreed with each statement were given the lowest ranking, while those who disagreed with each statement were given the highest ranking. The distribution of the sample on this index is presented in Table 1, in which we have labeled

TABLE 1
Distribution of Respondents on Sense of
Political Efficacy Index

Sense of Efficacy	Proportion of Sample
High	.12
Moderate	.39
Slight	.39
Low	.11
Total	1.01[a]
n	(286)[b]

a. Total does not sum to 1.00 because of rounding error.

b. Three hundred individuals comprise the original sample. However, fourteen did not respond to one or more of the efficacy questions.

the four points on the index as high, moderate, slight, and low. The distribution approaches a "normal" one, with approximately the same proportions at each extreme and the same proportions at the two middle points.

The index of traditional participation is developed from data as to whether in the past five years the respondent discussed politics, tried to influence others on political matters, tried to register to vote, voted, attended political meetings, helped in political campaigns, and contacted public officials. On the basis of the number of individuals participating in the activity, a respondent is given one point for participation in each activity except for helping in campaigns and contacting public officials; in the latter two activities, he is given two points. Consequently, the highest score on the index is nine and the lowest is zero. The index of protest participation is constructed from respondent reports of engaging in the following activities in the past five years: talking about protest, boycotting, marching, picketing, and sitting-in. The first two are weighted one point each, the second two are worth two points each, and the last is worth three points.

The weight given to each activity is determined by the assumed amount of time and psychological conviction

needed to stimulate that activity. We assume that the fewer the number of people who participate in the activity, the more extreme the commitment needed. The weightings, therefore, reflect the proportion of the respondents reporting participation in each activity. Table 2 presents the rates of participation in each of the protest and traditional activities. The percentages reflect the relative physical and psychological effort needed for each type of activity. For example, it is very easy to talk about protest, particularly with one's family and friends. Yet, marching, picketing, and sitting-in are very public acts which may result in verbal and physical abuse.

In Table 3 the percentages at each level of the index of traditional participation and index of protest participation are presented. For ease in interpreting, we have trichotomized each index into low, medium, and high levels. Half the sample is at the medium level of traditional participation with an approximately equal percentage at each extreme. On

TABLE 2
Percentage Engaging in Each Protest and Traditional Political Activity

	%
Traditional Activity	
Discussing politics	95.7
Attempting registration	72.2
Voting	65.5
Organizational membership	53.0
Attempting to influence others	51.7
Campaign work	26.6
Contacting public officials	17.0
Protest Activity	
Talking protest	86.6
Boycotting	58.3
Marching	12.3
Picketing	9.0
Sitting-in	2.7

TABLE 3

Percentage of Sample at Each Level of Traditional Participation Index and Protest Participation Index

	Participation Index	
Level[a]	Traditional	Protest
Low	25.9	84.0
Medium	49.9	10.3
High	23.9	5.6
	99.7	99.9

a. The three levels of participation stem from combining categories in the original index. For both traditional and protest participation the low level contains scores of 0, 1, and 2; the medium level contains scores of 3, 4, and 5; and the high level contains scores of 6, 7, 8, and 9.

the other hand, as one would expect, the protest index distribution is severely skewed toward the lower end.

An additional concern is the degree to which participation in traditional activities is related to participation in protest behavior. Do those who participate in protest acts also engage in traditional behavior, or do they bypass the traditional route? The data from our sample show that "protesters" do not confine their efforts to nontraditional behavior. In fact, Table 4 demonstrates that none of the high-level protesters falls below the medium level of traditional participation; moreover, half those at the high protest level are high on the

TABLE 4

Percentage at Each Level of Traditional Participation Within Protest Participation Levels

	Protest Participation		
Traditional Participation	High	Medium	Low
High	54	35	23
Medium	46	41	51
Low	0	24	26
Total	100	100	100
n	(13)	(34)	(235)

other measure, while less than one-fourth those at the low protest level have a high traditional level of activity. Therefore, while many black participants in the political system do not engage in protest acts, most of those who participate in protest behavior have either previous or parallel experience with the more regular processes.

The association of certain social and personal data with political behavior is a recurring concern of social scientists. Thus, we have computed the ordinal measure "gamma" for the relationship between protest and traditional behavior and age, education, income, occupation, and organizational membership. The results are presented in Table 5. Organizational membership, income, and education are positively related to both types of behavior, although for income and education the relationship to protest is somewhat stronger. Age is rather strongly related to protest participation in a negative direction, while only a small negative relationship of age to regular participation appears. On the other hand, occupation has a positive relationship to traditional participation but none with protest behavior.

For the most part, the relationships just described are compatible with previous findings. The most significant finding concerns age. The strong negative association of age with protest behavior means that younger blacks are more likely to protest than older blacks. Yet the protest participants are very likely to participate also in traditional

TABLE 5
Correlation of Five Social and Personal Variables
With Traditional and Protest Behavior[a]

Variable	Protest	Traditional
Age	−.42	−.05
Education	.49	.26
Income	.44	.34
Occupation	.01	.30
Organizational membership	.61	.62

a. An ordinal measure of association, the gamma coefficient, is employed here.

behavior. Although the older blacks are less likely to protest, they do engage in traditional political behavior at approximately the same rate as the younger ones. Hence, on the traditional measure, there is an insignificant relationship between age and participation.

The following section describes the relationship of political efficacy to participation and examines the association of these same personal and social variables to the level of political efficacy.

LEVELS OF EFFICACY

In this sample of black citizens, the sense of political efficacy is related to *both* traditional and protest political activity. Figure 1 presents the proportion within each level of political efficacy with a high or medium rate of participation. As the level of efficacy increases, the proportion with the high or medium levels also significantly increases. Thus, for
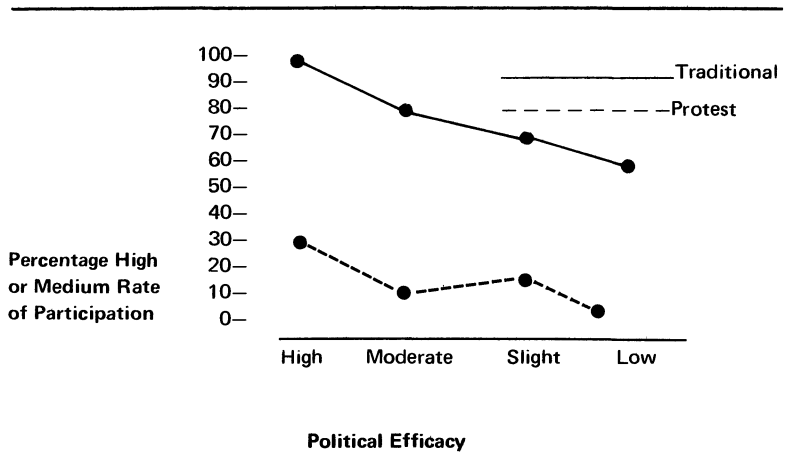

Figure 1: THE PROPORTION AT EACH LEVEL OF POLITICAL EFFICACY WHICH HAVE HIGH OR MEDIUM RATES OF TRADITIONAL AND PARTICIPATION

example, thirty percent of those with a high sense of efficacy have a medium or high level of protest participation, while only six percent of those with low efficacy reach the same level. Additionally, regardless of the level of efficacy, the rates of traditional participation are higher than the rates of protest behavior. Despite the rather large differences among levels of efficacy, it is also apparent that a great deal of the traditional participation cannot be accounted for by a high sense of efficacy.

The similarity in the relationship of political efficacy to both the protest and traditional participation routes is significant. One might expect those who turn to relatively high levels of protest to have pessimistic perceptions of the responsiveness of government to their demands. To the contrary, it seems that these black citizens are willing to move beyond traditional activities, perhaps *because* they think their behavior has some positive consequence and because more extreme acts are needed to increase that impact. Moreover, although many of the protest acts have political implications, they are less government-oriented than is traditional behavior. Hence, the protest is not necessarily against government intransigence or nonresponsiveness of the political process. Instead, because the individual feels efficacious toward government, he may be stimulated by this feeling to contest other political issues. This interpretation is reinforced by the data in Table 6; that table presents the proportion with the two highest levels of efficacy within combinations of traditional and protest participation levels. Although limited by a small number of cases in several cells, the highest proportion with upper levels of efficacy is in the high protest/high traditional combination and the lowest proportion is in the low/low combination. As one moves any direction from the high/high cell, the decrease in the proportion is almost uniform. Again, then, high efficacy is closely tied to protest behavior alone, and to the combination of traditional and protest participation.

TABLE 6
Proportion With High or Moderate Level of Political
Efficacy Within Protest and Traditional
Participation Combinations[a]

Traditional Participation	Protest		
	High	Moderate	Low
High	.72 (7)	.58 (12)	.53 (53)
Moderate	.67 (6)	.50 (14)	.55 (122)
Low	** (0)	.38 (8)	.35 (60)

a. The number in each cell is the proportion of those in that cell which are high or moderate in their sense of political efficacy. The number within brackets is the number on which the percentage is based.

We have demonstrated that efficacy and two types of political behavior are empirically linked in a sample of black citizens. Yet it is instructive to examine the attitudes of those at each level of political efficacy toward the relative desirability of voting (as an example of traditional behavior) and protest as the best way for blacks to obtain government help. The distribution of the responses is reported in Table 7. Although respondents at all levels of efficacy advocate voting

TABLE 7
Political Efficacy and Perceptions of the Best Way for
Blacks to get Government Help

Best Way	Political Efficacy			
	High	Moderate	Slight	Low
Voting	75	74	71	65
Protest	19	23	23	35
N.A., D.K., and other	6	3	6	0
Total	100	100	100	100
n	(35)	(110)	(110)	(31)
Index[a]	56	51	48	30

a. The index is the difference in the percentage who say voting is the best way and the percentage who say protest is the best way.

in preference to protest, the support for voting is lowest and the support for protest is highest among those with the lowest sense of political efficacy. The differences are not startling, but they are wide enough to require comment. These findings appear contradictory to those presented earlier, in which the higher the level of political efficacy the greater the actual protest activity. This difference may occur because, even though support for protest activity is higher, the lower level of efficacy psychologically inhibits that participation. Those who feel efficacious, while representing a smaller proportion who think protest is the best way, are more likely to transfer that support into actual behavior. While the highly efficacious may think voting is a better method, they do not necessarily reject protest. Consequently, the feeling of efficacy enables a large number of them to go beyond the traditional behavior (voting) into protest activities. Thus, while political efficacy has a positive relationship with both traditional and protest behavior, it has a slightly negative relationship with the advocacy of protest behavior over the traditional type.

Our earlier review of other studies pointed out several variables which are related to political efficacy. Many of these same relationships appear in our findings. Through the gamma measure of ordinal association, these findings are summarized in Table 8. Because the theoretical implications of these findings have been discussed in the other studies, we

TABLE 8
**Gamma Correlation of Five Social and Personal
Variables With Sense of Political Efficacy**

Variable	Correlation
Occupation	.29
Income	−.09
Age	−.17
Education	.17
Organization member	.22

shall only briefly describe the patterns. In each case, the correlation between efficacy and these variables is relatively low, which suggests that perhaps these variables make less difference in the variation in efficacy than the similarity in race which all the respondents share.[10] In general, we obtained the following results: as occupational status increases, the level of efficacy increases; as income increases, efficacy decreases slightly; as age increases, efficacy decreases; as education increases, efficacy increases; and efficacy increases with organizational membership.

ORIENTATION TO THE SYSTEM

The citizens of a political system interact with that system as subjects and participants (Greenberg, 1970: 274; for an earlier, similar conclusion, see Wilson, 1960). As a subject, the individual is oriented toward the administrative or "output" aspect of the system; he feels the impact of political decisions without attempting to influence the decision-making process. As Finifter (1970: 390) notes, "Political decisions, which determine to a great extent the conditions under which the individual lives, may appear to be *happening* to individuals . . . independent or in spite of their own judgment or wishes." As a participant, the individual is oriented toward both the administrative-output part of the system and the input-political aspect of it (Almond and Verba, 1963).

The participant refuses to let the outcomes of the system "happen" to him; he also tries to influence these outcomes. A sense of political efficacy involves the degree to which the individual feels his participation acts as an effective input. Thus, we chose to examine the relationship of political efficacy to the individual's concern with specific political problems while classifying those problems as either "input"- or "output"-oriented. We hope to determine whether the sense of efficacy has any relationship to the participant or

subject orientation of the individual to the political system. This relationship is examined in the issues or problems about which blacks talk, the issues or problems they consider most important, and the experiences encountered during voter registration.

Six political issues are classified as being concerned with inputs to the political system or outputs from it. Table 9 presents the proportion within each level of efficacy which report talking about those issues. Three patterns emerge. First, among the input issues, the higher the level of political efficacy, the greater the proportion who discuss the input issues of Negro voting, marches, demonstrations, and race riots. Second, among the output issues of police brutality, welfare, and bad government, there is no difference among the levels of efficacy. Third and most important, as the level of efficacy decreases, the relative emphasis in the discussion of political issues moves from the input aspect of the political system to the output side. The differences in the average

TABLE 9
**Proportion Within Each Level of Political Efficacy
Talking About Certain Input and Output Political Issues**

Political Issues	Sense of Political Efficacy			
	High	Moderate	Slight	Low
Input				
Voting	.74	.61	.50	.32
Marches-demonstrations	.41	.26	.24	.23
Race riots	.26	.27	.24	.06
Average	.47	.38	.33	.20
Output				
Welfare	.37	.56	.35	.42
Bad government	.47	.49	.46	.45
Police brutality	.29	.37	.40	.26
Average	.38	.47	.40	.38
n	(35)	(110)	(110)	(31)
Difference in averages	+.09	−.09	−.07	−.18

proportion which discuss these issues show that at the lowest level of efficacy the output issues predominate by almost two to one. On the other hand, at the highest level of efficacy, the input issues predominate. Thus, as the level of sense of political efficacy decreases, the focus of political discussion shifts from input or "participant" issues to output or "subject" issues.

Only about twelve percent of the sample is contained in the highest level of political efficacy, the only level which shows a predominance of participant orientation to the political system. Hence, at least in the issues discussed by the black citizen, one finds a predominance of the "subject" orientation. This interpretation is congruent with Greenberg's (1970: 274) recent study of black and white children in which he concludes that:

> Several strands of evidence seem to indicate that as the black child moves from a rather paternalistic view of government in the lower grades to an institutional view in the upper grades, he tends to acquire a nascent "subject orientation" relative to the "participant orientation" of the white child.

The role of political efficacy in the blacks' orientation to the system is reinforced by an examination of the perceptions of the most important problems facing blacks in New Orleans. These data are shown in Table 10. Two patterns are evident. Again, as the level of efficacy decreases, the relative emphasis moves from input problems to output problems. Second, as the sense of political efficacy decreases, there is also an increased emphasis on the importance of political problems as opposed to nonpolitical ones. Moreover, the output problems are the ones which result in the emphasis on the politics.

Thus, it seems clear that as the level of political efficacy of our respondents decreases, concern with political problems and issues shifts from a focus on the role of the citizen in determining public policy to a concern with the influence of

TABLE 10
Sense of Political Efficacy and Perceptions of the Most
Important Problems Facing Blacks in New Orleans
(in percentages)

	Sense of Political Efficacy			
Most Important Problem	High	Moderate	Slight	Low
Input	37	34	33	33
Negro voting	(6)	(6)	(4)	(10)
City jobs	(31)	(28)	(29)	(23)
Output	17	29	33	36
Police brutality	(6)	(9)	(13)	(23)
Welfare	(11)	(20)	(20)	(13)
Nonpolitical	41	32	29	25
None	5	5	5	6
Total	100	100	100	100
n	(35)	(110)	(110)	(31)
Input-output difference[a]	+20	+5	+0	−3
Political-nonpolitical differences[b]	+13	+31	+37	+44

a. The input-output difference is calculated by subtracting the percentage who name output issues as the most important problem from the percentage naming input issues as the most important.

b. The political-nonpolitical difference is calculated by subtracting the percentage who name nonpolitical issues as the most important problem from the percentage who name political issues, which is the sum of input and output percentages.

that policy on the individual. For the individual with a low sense of political efficacy, this is probably rational behavior. It is in the role of the participant that the citizen has at least some choice about his involvement: we have shown that the black individual with the low sense of political efficacy is less likely to participate in both traditional and protest activities. The individual citizen has much less choice about interaction with the political system when he is a "subject" who is affected by political decisions. Thus, the individual with the lower sense of political efficacy is more likely to discuss and view as important those issues and problems emanating from the system.

Also inviting explanation is the finding that those individuals with a low sense of political efficacy are more concerned with political problems than are the highly efficacious. Almost by definition, the political process is a problem for the person with a low sense of political efficacy; he is much more pessimistic about the impact his behavior can have on the system. If one assumes that this feeling of powerlessness is relatively salient, the politically pessimistic individual would quite naturally be more likely to emphasize political problems. On the other hand, the person with a high sense of personal political effectiveness has a more optimistic view of the political process with the result that political problems are relatively less salient.

The black citizen's attempt to achieve political power by voter registration is a situation in which he is both participant and subject. He attempts to become a participant; yet, the response he receives is as a subject. The decision to allow one to register is made by an administrative element of the political system. There are variations in the type of response potential registrants can expect. The relationship of a sense of political efficacy to voter registration experience is presented in Table 11. The proportion of those who attempt to register is approximately equal in each level of political efficacy. Yet, among those who have made the attempt to register, those at the lowest level of efficacy are the most likely to have experienced difficulty. Thirty-two percent of those at the lowest level of efficacy report registration difficulty, while only eleven percent of those at the highest level of efficacy experienced any problem.

Those who report registration difficulty contain two groups: individuals who actually attempted to register and were rebuffed, and those who never attempted to register because family or friends informed them of experienced discrimination in the process. That second group contains only ten percent of the individuals experiencing difficulty and only two percent of the total sample.

TABLE 11
Sense of Political Efficacy and Voter Registration
Experiences (in percentages)

Registration Experience	Sense of Political Efficacy			
	High	Moderate	Slight	Low
Registered, first try	63	47	44	35
Registration difficulty[a]	11	22	25	32
Too young or never tried	26	21	31	32
Total	100	100	100	99
n	(35)	(106)	(109)	(31)

Gamma[b] = .50

a. Includes the following responses: failed on the first try but successful on subsequent attempt; tried, failed and never succeeded; and never tried because heard of discrimination from family or friends.

b. The gamma is computed after excluding respondents who were too young or never tried.

Thus, we again find the lower sense of political efficacy related to interaction with the political system's output aspects. Just as the individuals with the lowest sense of political efficacy are more likely than the more efficacious to discuss output issues and more likely to view output issues as the most important problems faced by blacks, they are more likely to have encountered actual difficulty when interacting with the administrative element of the system which governs their traditional access to that system.

BLACKS AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Understanding the orientations of the black citizen to the American political system must be an integral aspect of attempts to account for many of the changes and many of the forces that are shaping the social system. The investigation presented in this paper discussed some of the relationships of black Americans to that system. In particular, we focused on the sense of political efficacy and the political

participation of a sample of blacks in New Orleans. We found that the black who engages in protest activity has either previous or parallel experience in traditional political behavior. We also examined the association of feelings of efficacy with political participation. We found that as the sense of efficacy increases, participation in *both* traditional and protest activities increases. The individual who protests does not seem to be one who feels he has no impact on the political system; in fact, we conclude that he takes up protest in addition to traditional behavior *because* of his feelings of efficacy. We also asked the respondents in our sample if they thought voting or protest is the "best" way for blacks to get government help. At all levels of efficacy, a large majority believe that voting is better than protest; yet, as the level of efficacy decreases, the preference for protest increases. We conclude that the low level of efficacy inhibits the individual from carrying out his advocacy of protest.

The most important conclusion of this paper concerns the relationship of an individual's sense of political efficacy to his orientation toward the political system in a "participant" or "subject" manner. The participant is concerned with both the inputs and the outputs of the political process; the subject interacts with the system at the output stage. We found that as the individual's sense of political efficacy decreases, the orientation is more toward output issues and political problems commensurate with a subject view of the world. Moreover, those individuals with a lower sense of political efficacy are more likely to have been rejected by the system when attempting to become participants through voter registration. Thus, the degree to which the black citizen feels he can influence political decisions is linked to the type of political problems with which he is concerned and to the response he receives when he attempts to gain access to the participation channels of the system.

As we noted in the beginning of the paper, the relationship between political efficacy and political participation is

reciprocal. The individual's sense of political efficacy is developed early in life. Yet there is little doubt that efficacy subsequently becomes modified through the experience of participation. The relationship between the sense of political efficacy and the participant-input or subject-output orientation of the black individual also is potentially reciprocal. One who comes to the system with feelings of high efficacy is likely to be participant-oriented and focus on input issues and problems. But if he meets difficulty in his attempt to participate, or if those issues and problems do not appear to be at least partially ameliorated, the original sense of efficacy is likely to diminish. Accompanying a diminution in feelings of efficacy is the likelihood that the individual will become concerned with output issues and acquire the passive, subject orientation to the political system.

NOTES

1. In reviewing the literature on this topic, Matthews (1969: 130) concluded "but these are mere scraps of evidence which need to be supplanted and/or supplemented." Also, in discussing factors "that could explain differences in a sense of efficacy," Lyons (1970) states that "a potentially significant explanatory factor which has received relatively little attention is race."

2. See Matthews (1969). Political alienation and political anomie may be conceptually distinct from a lack of a sense of political efficacy. Nevertheless, in many of the studies cited here, the operational measurement of the three variables is quite similar. In some cases, a lack of sense of political efficacy is employed as one component of the more encompassing concept "political alienation." For a discussion of the interrelatedness of these three concepts, see Aberbach (1969); also see Finifter (1970).

3. This relationship was found for low-educated voters, but not for the highly educated.

4. Although noting that blacks feel less "subjectively competent" than whites, Matthews and Prothro (1966: 278) also state that "given the infrequency with which southern Negroes have succeeded in influencing government policy or its administration, they are surprisingly self-confident and subjectively competent."

5. In some areas, of course, Marvick found considerable differences between blacks and whites.

6. In order to facilitate response validity, all interviews are conducted by highly trained black interviewers. Approximately ninety percent of the interviews were conducted by a black university professor.

7. Some local political analysts attribute the election of "Moon" Landrieu as New Orleans' mayor to the solid black support he received.

8. Among the studies of "traditional" black participation are: Orum (1966); Brink and Harris (1966); Phylon (1963); Glantz (1960); Matthews and Prothro (1963, 1966); Wilson (1960).

9. Among the studies of black protest activity are: Campbell and Schuman (1968); Vander Zander (1963); Searles and Williams (1962); Orbell (1967); Sindler (1965); Wilson (1961); Sears and McConahay (1969); Sears and Tomlinson (1968).

10. See the earlier discussion of the conflict about racial differences in political efficacy.

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