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ABSTRACT

By examining the attitudes and perceptions of 1625 fifth grade students in North Carolina, this study tested the hypothesis that the way teachers treat their students can have an effect on their political attitudes. It was found that when teachers treat students fairly and show interest in their ideas and problems, students are less politically cynical. This effect is stronger for white children than for black children, although it exists for the latter. It was also found that black children are more cynical than white children and perceive themselves as being treated less fairly than white children do. While white childrens' parents' education and support for their schooling is negatively and linearly related to political cynicism, black children show a curvilinear relationship between parents' education and support for schoolwork and their political cynicism. This cynicism occurs because high levels of parental education and support for schoolwork are associated with high levels of political knowledge regarding the low general status of blacks in this society. (Author/APM)

The Relationship Between Teacher Behavior Toward Students and Student Political Attitudes: the Development of Political Cynicism

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER BEHAVIOR TOWARD STUDENTS AND STUDENT POLITICAL ATTITUDES: THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL CYNICISM

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ABSTRACT

This study tests the hypothesis that the way in which teachers treat their students can have an effect on their political attitudes. The sample consists of 1,625 students in 79 North Carolina fifth grade classrooms. The methodology consists of student questionnaires tapping their attitudes and perception of their teacher's behavior, teacher questionnaires, and classroom observation. The findings of the study are that when teachers treat students fairly, and are interested in their ideas and problems, the students are less politically cynical. This effect is much stronger for white children than for black children, although it still exists for the latter. We also find that black children are more cynical than white children. They also perceive themselves as being treated less fairly and "democratically" than white children do. In addition, while white children's parents' education and support for their schoolwork is negatively and linearly related to political cynicism; black children have a curvilinear relationship between parents' education and support for schoolwork and their political cynicism. This is because high levels of parental education and support for schoolwork will be associated with high levels of political knowledge regarding the low general status of blacks in our society, and this produces political cynicism. Nevertheless, this can still be moderated by teacher behavior.

The Relationship Between Teacher Behavior Toward Students and Student Political Attitudes: the Development of Political Cynicism*

by

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Every society seeks to indoctrinate its young to believe in and be subject to its political system and the values which sustain that system. In most societies, schools are seen as the main social instrument through which this objective is to be achieved. Thus, industrialized societies like the United States expend enormous energies and money in efforts at political socialization.

In the United States, the professed goals of political socialization include imparting "facts" about political institutions; insuring loyalty to and affection for national, state, and local governments; creating interests in various types of political participation; and insuring certain minimal levels of commitment to due process, fair play, equality before the law, and such civil liberties as free speech and religious freedom. Of course, the substantive meaning given to these general goals and the emphasis given the specific objectives varies in relation to the characteristics of the subjects and the local school system.

This paper proceeds from the assumption that a large part of whatever impact schools have on political learning is attributable to an "implicit civics curriculum" that is, the behavior of teachers and the nature of the classroom environment they help to create and maintain. The notion that teacher behavior and the classroom

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rules and norms are "lessons" which students learn is, of course, not new. Indeed, this notion has been given considerable life in recent years by such radical educational reformers as Illich (1971) and Kozol (1967) and anthropologists studying sex roles (Saario, Jacklin, and Tittle,1973; Servin and O'Leary, 1975). Unfortunately, most of the literature on "the hidden curriculum" (Jackson, 1968) -- a misnomer since it is not hidden from students -- is based almost entirely on personal experiences or impressions of the authors or authors cited. There is a need to examine the impact of teacher behavior and classroom structure more systematically and objectively.

The Process of Political Learning: Some Theoretical Assumptions

There are some scholars who argue, as does Greenstein (1965:166), that much of an individual's orientations toward politics already has become fixed by late adolescence. This belief that early socialization constrains and structures later political learning, called "imprinting" by Easton and Dennis (1967), is found in a number of studies and syntheses (Cf. Hess, 1963; and Dawson and Prewitt, 1969).

Recent research by Knutson (1974:39) using in-depth interviews comes to similar conclusions:

> "Thus it appears that while the child's knowledge of matters political is inexact and imcomplete, the vessel into which this knowledge is being poured is largely formed by the time the child begins the process of formal socialization."

Because the early researchers on political socialization focused on the formative and limiting character of childhood experiences on political learning, they concluded, not surprisingly, that the strongest influence on a child's political attitudes and preferences was the family. Indeed some went so far as to contend that most of pre-adult political learning took place in the family (e.g. Davies, 1965).

Although parents are important in shaping the dispositions of their children, more recent research suggests that the degree of parental influence is substantially less than was earlier assumed. For example, Jennings and Niemi (1974) have found that, overall, the

party affiliations of parents accounts for about one-third to one-fourth of the variation in the partisanship of their high school age children. (Yet, partisan affliation and presidential candidate choice show the greatest relationship between the political dispositions of parents and children. (Niemi, 1974: 126-128). Connell (1972), after reviewing studies conducted from 1930 to 1965 also concludes that parental influence on political attitudes -- even with respect to such things as Communism, prejudice and political participation -- is weak or contradictory. Children's experiences, he therefore argues, are the dominant shapers of political dispositions.

Thus, there is increasing evidence of the influence of factors other than the family on the political socialization of children. These include school related experiences, peers, and, most recently, the cultural context of the neighborhood or subcommunity in which the child lives (Jaros and Kolson, 1974; Gustafsson, 1974; Rossell, 1978:176). Of all these factors, the one that is most possible to alter is schools.

Two continuing problems associated with improving or purposively manipulating educational environments, however, are that there is no comprehensive theory of human learning, and there is little systematic research that has been conducted in social settings (e.g. the classroom) which would yield theories of learning. Most efforts to specify the process by which political learning occurs turn out to be definitions of different types of processes or statements about simple correlations, rather than explanatory or predictive propositions.

The socialization research that has dealt with the impact of schools, has usually focused on the formal curricula. This research which seeks to determine whether exposure to social studies courses affects political learning, generally indicates that such explicit lessons, in themselves, have little consequence (see, for example, Ehman, 1969; Langton and Jennings, 1968; Price, 1951; Farmer and German, 1972; and Horton, 1963).

Grossman (1974), however, found that high school students' report of the number of courses they took dealing with controversial issues

had a small relationship to greater toleration of dissent. It is not clear, however, whether the causal variable is the formal curricula or the way in which the teacher taught the course and handled the discussion.

While there is little evidence that conventional curricula significantly affects the acquisition of political knowledge, skills, or attitudes, this does not mean that instruction cannot, if properly conceived and delivered, have impact. Several studies of experimental efforts to influence political learning in particular directions suggest that the formal curriculum can be an effective, if not powerful, socialization mechanism. (Tapp and Kohlberg, 1971; Patrick, 1972; Litt, 1963; Zellman and Sears, 1971; Cox and Cousins, 1965; Mainer 1963; and Button, 1974)

Almost all studies of the impact of curricula ignore an obvious intervening variable: the nature and quality of instruction. As Dawson and Prewitt (1969) note, "The teacher's role as conveyer of consensus values is so widely assumed that few studies of political socialization have investigated it." Because teachers are products of the same political socialization for which they are agents, it is usually presumed that they would have no effect on attitudes independent of the curriculum.

This assumption is incorrect. The literature on the role of teachers and effective learning indicates that teachers play a considerable role in determining the effectiveness of curriculum (Jones, 1968). Instructors modify the curriculum they teach by undermining, omitting or adding elements and by giving emphasis consciously or not, to particular issues or topics. Harvey (1970) and Flanders (1970) have shown how the structure of a teacher's belief system influences the disposition of students to be cooperative with and supportive of others, more participative in class, and more capable of abstract thinking. Langton and Karns, (1969) and Button (1974) find that greater opportunity to discuss controversial issues results in a greater sense of political efficacy and a greater tolerance of dissent. Ehman finds not only this

relationship, but a positive impact on attitudes toward participation and citizen responsibilities. On the other hand, Jennings, Ehman, and Niemi (1974) found no significant relationship between teacher attitudes toward in-class expressivity, or the handling of controversial issues and a range of student orientations. However, they did not measure actual teacher behavior or student perception of teacher behavior. Jennings, Ehman, and Niemi (1974) and Jennings (1974) found that students perceptions that they are treated fairly in school enhance feelings of personal and political trust and have a small positive impact on a sense of political efficacy.

The Development of Political Cynicism

Most of the socialization research by political scientists has focused on the development of attitudes toward authority, especially the respect and legitimacy granted to leaders and public institutions. The political attitude we examine in this paper is political cynicism (often called in the socialization research by its converse: political trust.)

The feeling that leaders are not to be trusted involves the belief they will often be dishonest and will not act in the interests of the people. The scale we use in this paper to measure political cynicism includes the following propositions to which students responded on a 5 point Likert type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree:

1. The government cares a lot about what we all think of any new laws.
2. The government is doing its best to find out what ordinary people want.
3. The government does not try to understand us.
4. Most politicians are too selfish to care about ordinary people.

5. Once the government passes a law, there is no point in trying to get it changed. 1

Erik H. Erikson (1963) and M. Brewster Smith (1968) have argued that basic trust is essential for developing feelings of personal adequacy. Lane (1959) also argues that personal trust, self-competence, and trust in political leaders are all related. Trust in elected officials is only a more specific example of trust in mankind. In the long run, this is probably a projection of self-esteem. Several empirical studies have found a relationship between self-esteem and political trust among adolescents (Bachman, 1970; Kenyon, 1969; Rodgers, 1972; Siegel, 1971).

The Nature of this Research

We propose to take this research in another direction. We intend to test the hypothesis that the way in which teachers treat their students can have an effect on their political cynicism. The teacher behavior variables which we hypothesize might reduce a student's political cynicism are (in order of importance): teacher's fairness toward a student, teacher's interest in a student's ideas; teacher's openness to a student, and of less importance whether a teacher gives a student the opportunity for self-directed work, and the opportunity to work with others. (These variables are described in Appendix 1.) The effect of these variables on student attitudes can be direct in the sense that the teacher's behavior can serve as an example of positive behavior by an authority and thus influence the degree to which students trust other political authorities. The effect can also be indirect in the sense that how the teacher treats a student can affect his or her feelings of self-esteem which in turn affects their political cynicism.

The research reported in this paper differs from previous research in several important ways. First, we attempt to relate a

specific teacher's behavior to her students' attitudes. One serious shortcoming of the existing research is that most scholars conceptualize the environment in terms of some schoolwide practice or the "average" beliefs or behavior of all teachers in a school or, at best, all teachers with whom the student has had courses (e.g., Ehman, 1969; Garcia, 1972; Langton and Karns, 1969; Hess and Torney, 1967; Grossman, 1974; and Jennings and Niemi, 1974). While Jennings, Ehman, and Niemi (1974) do identify high school social studies teachers with their students, they ignore other teachers with whom the student has contact. Since teachers in most public schools are likely to be noticeably different in attitudes and style, aggregating their beliefs or behavior distorts the student's experience.

Second, we have chosen elementary school students (fifth graders) as our subjects. Virtually all of the studies of the impact of school on political learning have analyzed high school students. Yet, there is some evidence that a considerable amount of political attitude formation occurs before high school (Patrick, 1972; Torney and Mossir, 1972; Hess and Torney, 1967). The research reported here focuses on children at an age when the impact of schools on political learning should be at its height.

Finally, this study includes blacks as well as whites. Until recently, political socialization research was conducted almost exclusively with urban whites. As it turns out, race is an important variable explaining variations in political learning and the influence of various socialization agents (e.g., see Abramson, 1972; Jennings and Niemi, 1974: 195), and thus generalizations made from the earlier, all white analyses are limited in their application.

DATA AND METHODS

The Sample

The sample consists of children in 79 North Carolina fifth

grade classrooms. A random sampling procedure was untilized to stratify schools by race, median family income, and degree of urbanization. Although resource constraints necessitated limiting the sample to North Carolina schools, we attempted to maximize the generalizability of the findings by excluding the coastal and mountain regions of the state--both of which have distintive cultural traditions and somewhat unique socioeconomic characteristics. Two cities--Chapel Hill and Raleigh--were excluded because of their rather unique populations--university and/or government employees. Only one school denied us access. There are 2,142 students and 79 teachers in the sample (all female).

This sample was then reduced to 1,625 cases because 517 students did not know their parent's educational background. This reduced sample has roughly the same proportion of males and females and blacks and whites as the total sample. (One might expect, however, that those who do not report their parent's education are disproportionately from families with lower educational backgrounds).

The fifth grade was selected because, as other research suggests, children aged 10-12 are experiencing an important period in the development of their political attitudes and because most students have relatively intensive contact with only one teacher until the ninth grade. Once children enter junior high school, they may have seven to twelve different teachers in a given school year and tracing the linkages between teacher behavior and student attitudes becomes very difficult indeed. Although our sample included "open classrooms", multi-age grouping, and other variations on the self-contained classroom, in every case students spent the bulk of their day with one professional teacher.

All of the school systems studied professed to be desegregated. There are no all black classrooms, although there are two all white classrooms in this sample. We were told that children were not socioeconomically or ability grouped by classrooms. Many classrooms, however, were internally organized by ability in some subjects,

but this was not analyzed as an explanatory variable because it proved too difficult to measure.

Methodology

The central methodological shortcomings of existing research on the role of teachers in shaping political values and attitudes have to do with the neglect or inadequate treatment of key independent variables, particularly teacher behavior and classroom environments. The methodology used here was developed as part of a larger study of how children acquire attitudes and values that might have political consequence.

We call this methodology, the Assessment of Classroom Political Environments. The system has six components which serve to reinforce each other and aid in the disentanglement of causality: (1) a procedure for observation of student-teacher interaction, (similar to Flander's, 1970); (2) a sociogram-type map of the classroom and student-teacher relationships; (3) a check list assessment by observers of various aspects of classroom structure or climate; (4) an extensive student questionnaire read to students in the absence of teachers or other school personnel; (5) a teacher questionnaire, and (6) content analysis of relevent learning materials (texts, etc.). This paper draws primarily on the student questionnaires.

The student questionnaires tap student perceptions of teacher behavior and classroom structure, as well as their own attitudes on politically relevant issues. It seems clear to us that the most important factor influencing student learning is what a student perceives and internalizes rather than objective reality. At the same time, it is possible that student perceptions of such teacher traits as openness, responsiveness and fairness are likely to be influenced by student's prior levels of cynicism, trust of authority, and similar predispositions. The observers' characterizations of student-teacher interaction and the classroom environment provide

us with additional evidence to establish the direction of influence.

Each of the texts and supplementary publications used regularly in the classroom were examined to determine if they treated various political and racial issues differently. Since North Carolina has state approved textbooks and curriculum guidelines, there was little variation in the materials utlized, and hence the way materials treated issues and values did not vary significantly from classroom to classroom. Curriculum, then, is a constant.

HYPOTHESES

The literature discussed above yields several hypotheses that can be tested with our data. The primary issue we are concerned with is the effect of a teacher's behavior toward a student on his or her trust of political authority. On the basis of the research we have discussed, we hypothesize that:

> (1) a teacher who treats a student in a fair and "democratic"[2] manner will reduce the cynicism with which that student perceives other authorities, specifically political authorities.

The literature also suggests that race and clsss may be important background variables influencing political attitudes. Race and class can be indirect measures of the type of political socialization being carried out by the family. Futhermore, there is reason to believe that the political socialization which is carried out by the regime is class and race specific (see Bowles and Gintes, 1976; Squibb, 1973).

Most studies of children's political attitudes have found children of lower class to be less politically affective, less participative, and more politically cynical than those of higher class. In general terms, however, the theoretical basis for considering parental education as an important independent variable influencing attitudes is not well established. The linkage between political attitudes and values of parents and their children is more tenuous than earlier investigators thought and the

correlation of particular political beliefs with formal education is, on many issues, weak(see Stephens and Long, 1970). We believe, however, that since political cynicism is related to self-esteem, and that children and adults of lower classes are treated with less esteem by their peers and superiors than children and adults of higher class, that

> (2) children with parents of higher educational attainment will be less cynical than children with parents of lower educational attainment.

Race has been found to be one of the most important background variables influencing the degree of political cynicism of students. Virtually all of the research finds that black children are more cynical than white children (Abramson, 1972, 1977; Laurence, 1970; Lyons, 1970; Orum and Cohen, 1973; Rodgers, 1972; Long, 1976; Ehman, 1972; Langton and Jennings, 1968; Bachman, 1968, 1969, 1970b; Kenyon, 1969, 1970; Dennis, 1969; Laurence, 1970; Greenberg, 1969; Rodgers and Taylor, 1971). Only Bachman, 1970a, using research from a 1966 survey found blacks to be less politically cynical than whites. In his three subsequent surveys (the last in 1969), however, both blacks and whites became more cynical, and blacks were now more cynical than whites. Thus, we hypothesize that

> (3) black students are more politically cynical than white students.

Abramson (1977) offers four hypotheses as to why blacks are more cynical than whites. These are 1) the political-education thesis: black children are taught differently in school than are white children;

2) the social deprivation thesis: Black children's greater cynicism is a result of socioeconomic influences; 3) the intelligence thesis: black children are less intelligent than white children; and 4) the political reality thesis: black and white children grow up in very different political environments. Their different attitudes regarding how much one can trust political authorities are simply a rational response to their very different positions in society, both past and present. Abramson believes the fourth thesis is the most persuasive, the third thesis to be of no value at all, and the first thesis to be the weakest of the three plausible theses. We do not discount thesis number 1 as a viable option, however, and believe our data can shed some light on its validity.

It is quite possible that black children's greater political cynicism is explained by a number of theses, rather than just one. The political education thesis might be valid if we include in our definition of political education, the "hidden curriculum" ; that is to say, the implicit values teachers convey to students by their structuring of the curriculum and their behavior toward students. We hypothesize that

> (4) blacks will view teachers as being less interested in their ideas, less open to their ideas and problems, less fair, as giving them less opportunity for self-direction and working with others than whites will perceive their teacher.

Abramson notes that the main problem with the political reality thesis as an explanation for greater political cynicism among black children, is

that children, unlike adults, have little opportunity to engage in reality testing with their political environment, nor do they have much political knowledge. Thus he concludes that even if we accept as factual that blacks are deprived of political power and have reason to distrust political leaders, we cannot assume that black children know these facts. The research on the degree to which the political attitudes of black adults are transmitted to black children is contradictory. Dennis (1969) found black children no more likely than white children to share their parent's evaluations of the trustworthiness of government officials. Niemi's (1972) analysis shows blacks to be more likely than whites to share their parents' level of political cynicism. We suggest it is possible that the contradictory findings may be a function of the median socioeconomic class of each sample. It seems reasonable to us that the usual positive relationship between class and political trust might work in the opposite way for black children if the political reality thesis is correct. This is because black children of higher class may have higher self-esteem, but they would also have greater political knowledge and historical knowledge of the way that blacks have been treated in this country.[3] In addition, they are more likely to have parents who communicate this to them. Therefore, we hypothesize that

> (5) black children of higher social class will be more cynical than black children of lower social class.

Parents are another authority whose behavior toward their children might affect their childrens' political cynicism. If parents show support of and concern for their child's school work (which includes reading to them when they were younger), this may indirectly affect political cynicism by affecting self-esteem, and/or directly affect political cynicism because the child may generalize from the concern and support of parental authority and assume that political authorities are also concerned and supportive. Hence, we hypothesize that

> (6) parents who show more support of and concern for their child's school work will have children with less political cynicism than those parents who are less suportive of

their child's school work.

We add one caveat, however. If the validity of the political reality thesis as an explanation for black children's political cynicism depen on adults conveying to black children information on their lower status in society, than it would not be unreasonable to assume that black children who are close to their parents and receive encouragement to do well in school, are also receiving information about the nature of white society. If the information is accurate, it should be largely negative. Hence, we hypothesize that

> (7) black children whose parents are supportive of their school work will be more politically cynical than black children whose parents are less supportive of their school work.

FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the average perception of teacher behavior toward students broken down by race and sex. These data indicate two important principles. First, girls see their teacher as being more open to their ideas and problems, more interested in their ideas, fairer to them, and as giving them more opportunity for self-directed work and to work with others then boys do. All of these differences are statically significant. Second, and more important for this paper, black students see their teacher as being less open to their ideas and problems, less interested in their ideas, and less fair than whites do. The first and last perceptions are statistically significant. There is no significant difference between blacks and whites in terms of whether they perceive their teacher as giving them the opportunity for self-direction and to work with others.

These data suggest there is some validity to the political education thesis that Abramson (1977)rejects. That is to say, black and white children see themselves as being taught in a different manner: blacks with less teacher openness to their ideas and problems, and less fairness than whites. This is what we call the "hidden curriculum." These data also support our fourth hypothesis that black students will perceive teachers as treating them in a less "democratic" way than whites will.

Table 2 shows the average cynicism of the students in our sample broken down by sex and race. These data indicate no difference between boys and girls which is not surprising since there is no literature to support such a difference. More importantly, our third hypothesis can be accepted: Black children are significantly more cynical than white children.

Table 3 shows the zero order correlations between political cynicism and teacher behavior towards students for the entire sample, for boys and girls, and for blacks and whites. These data indicate that, before controlling for other factors, all students have a reduction in cynicism when their teacher treats them fairly and "democratically." When we break this down into groups of boys and girls, blacks and whites, we see that the same negative relationship exists between each group and each teacher behavior variable. The teacher behavior variable which produces the greatest reduction in political cynicism is teacher fairness, followed by openness to student's ideas and problems, and interest in a student's ideas. The least important variables are the opportunity for self-direction and working with others.

These data also indicate that girls experience a greater reduction in cynicism than boys when their teacher treats them fairly and "democratically." In addition, whites have a greater reduction in political cynicism than blacks when teachers treat them fairly and "democratically," although both races are influenced. This suggests that black political cynicism, because it is more rooted in political reality than white political cynicism, is less amenable to change by a peripheral authority.

Table 4 is a breakdown of political cynicism by parents' education, student's sex, and student's race. It shows that the influence on class is exactly the opposite for whites as it is for blacks. Blacks are more cynical at the highest parental educational level and at the lowest (partially confirming hypothesis 5); whites show a positive linear relationship. In addition, at each parental educational level, there is a race difference in terms of which sex is more cynical. For blacks, females are more cynical except at the highest educational level. For whites, males are always more cynical than

females at every parental educational level.

Table 5 shows three complete equations: the first for the entire sample, the second for blacks, and the third for whites. For each group, the first column contains the unstandardized partial correlation coefficient (b) for the equation, with the standard error of the b coefficient in parentheses. If the standard error is larger than the b coefficient than we cannot have any confidence in the direction of the sign of the coefficient. The second column for each group contains the standardized regression coefficient (Beta) which represents the standard deviation of the independent variable divided by the standard deviation of the dependent varible, multiplied by the unstandardized b coefficient. Those coefficients which have one star are significant at .01 or better using the F ratio, and those with two stars are significant at .05 or better.

The equation for the entire sample indicates that blacks are more politically cynical than whites and the higher a student's parents' educational level, the less politically cynical they are (confirming hypothesis 2). The interaction effect between parents' education and black race (a dummy variable) shows no relationship for blacks because as we saw in Table 4, it is a curvilinear relationship. Hence the main effect: parental educational level (with a negative influence on political cynicism) applies only to whites. This is also true of parental support of, and concern for, schoolwork. The main effect variable indicates that for whites parental support for school work reduces political cynicism, while the interaction effect between parental support and black race indicates that for blacks, parental support has no effect. Only two of the teacher behavior variables significantly reduce political cynicism in students: the teacher's openness to student ideas and problems, and a teacher's fairness. This equation then supports all of the hypotheses suggested above, and it explains 13 percent of the variance in political cynicism.

The next two equations are for blacks and whites separately. They confirm the student background relationships shown in Table 3.

equation for both parental education and parental support for school work.

The teacher behavior variables which reduced cynicism for the entire sample remain statistically significant for whites. For blacks, however, the only teacher behavior variable which is significant is a teacher's fairness. The black equation only explains 4 percent of the variance in black political cynicism whereas the white equation explains 14 percent of the variance in white political cynicism.

Summary and Conclusion

The research data presented in this paper supports the seven hypotheses outlined at the beginning. Black children are more cynical than white children. They also perceive themselves as being treated less fairly and less "democratically" than whites do. Thus we find support for Abramson's (1977) political education thesis. We also find that teachers who treat their students in a fair and "democratic" manner will reduce their political cynicism. The effect is stronger for whites than for blacks, but it does exist for blacks.

We also find that blacks and whites have opposite patterns with regard to the relationship between their background variables and political cynicism. There is a curvilinear relationship between a black student's parents' educational level and their political cynicism. For whites, it is positive linear relationship. This suggests the political reality thesis Abramson (1977) offers is also at least partially correct. That thesis was predicated on the assumption that black children had knowledge of the political reality of the being black in this country. The research indicates that the political knowledge of children is greater, the higher their social class. Thus black children are more cynical at low levels of social class because they are more likely to be treated less well than other students. They have high levels of cynicism when they are of high social class because they are more likely to be aware of the low status of blacks in our society. greater if they are close to their child and concerned with his or her schoolwork.

Table 1

Mean Perception of Teacher Behavior

Toward Student by Sex and Race

	Race			Sex		
		Blacks	Whites		Girls	Boys
	t	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	t	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$
Openness to Students	-2.45**	22.6	23.7	-2.03**	23.8	23.0
Interested in Student Ideas	-1.69	13.7	14.1	-3.52*	14.3	13.7
Fairness	-6.61*	20.8	23.3	-3.38*	23.3	22.2
Opportunity to Work with Others	1.05	13.1	12.8	-2.86*	13.8	12.7
Opportunity for Self-Direction	-.51	12.8	12.9	-2.11**	13.1	12.7

* t-test significant at .01 or better.

** t-test significant at .05 or better.

Table 2

Mean Cynicism by Sex, Race

	Race		Sex	
	Blacks	Whites	Girls	Boys
$\bar{X}$	15.5	14.1	14.6	14.4
N	398	1167	751	802
T	5.91*		1.07*	

*Significant at .0001

Table 3

Zero Order Correlations Between Cynicism
and Teacher Behavior Toward Students

	Cynicism				
	All	Boys	Girls	Blacks	Whites
Openness to Students	-.28	-.24	-.31	-.17	-.29
Interested in Student Ideas	-.23	-.18	-.28	-.15	-.25
Fairness	-.30	-.24	-.37	-.19	-.31
Opportunity to Work With Others	-.15	-.11	-.19	-.10	-.17
Opportunity for Self-Direction	-.19	-.16	-.23	-.11	-.21

Table 4

Cynicism by Parents' Education, Race and Sex

Parents Education	Low				Medium				High			
Sex	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
Race	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
$\bar{X}$	15.1	15.6	14.9	15.8	14.5	15.0	14.0	15.3	13.5	16.1	13:3	15.6
N	155	77	141	54	237	86	216	82	209	38	201	57

Table 5

The Influence of Teacher Behavior on a Student's Political Cynicism

	All		Blacks		Whites	
Student Background Variables	b	Beta	b	Beta	b	Beta
Male Sex	.003	.0	-.055	-.01	-.329	.0
	(.198)		(.393)		(.231)	
Black Race	-2.32	-.26*				
	(1.08)					
Parents' Education	-.337	-.15*	-.007	0	-.343	-.15*
	(.068)		(.112)		(.068)	
Parents' Education x Black Race	.323	.22*				
	(.132)					
Parental Support of School Work	-.039	-.05*	.011	.02	-.038	-.05**
	(.023)		(.038)		(.023)	
Parental Support x Black Race	.058	.14**				
	(.042)					
r^2	.06		.00		.05	
Teacher Behavior Variables						
Openness to Students	-.071	-.13*	-.034	-.07	-.078	-.15*
	(.029)		(.054)		(.035)	
Interested in Student Ideas	-.025	-.02	-.038	-.04	-.014	-.01
	(.043)		(.081)		(.051)	
Opportunity for Self-Direction	.034	.03	.034	.03	.033	.03
	(.052)		(.101)		(.060)	
Opportunity to Work with Others	-.010	-.01	-.040	-.04	-.000	0
	(.039)		(.078)		(.045)	
Fairness to Students	-.111	-.18*	-.073	-.12**	-.129	-.21*
	(.022)		(.043)		(.026)	
Constant	21.456		18.20		21.80	
r^2	.13		.04		.14	
N	1593		398		1167	

* Significant F ratio at .01 or better.

*ficant F ratio at .05 or better.

Footnotes

1. The reliability of this scale using Cronbachs' alpha coefficient is .53.

2. "Democratic" is interpreted here as showing interest in a student's ideas, being open to a student's ideas and problems, giving them the opportunity to do self-directed work, and to work with others.

3. Ehman (1969) finds that supportive environments and open discussions decrease cynicism in whites, but increase it in blacks. This may be a function of what is discussed in the open discussions. If blacks are educated as to their political status, then it would be reasonable that they become more cynical.

APPENDIX 1

Student Attitude and Opinion Scales

Teacher Interest in Student Ideas

1. Our teacher respects our opinions and encourages us to express them.
2. Does your teacher let you express an opinion different from hers?
3. How often does your teacher let you explore your ideas and try out new ways of doing things?
4. My teacher is interested in my ideas.
5. My teacher gives me things to do that really make me think rather than things just to copy or look at.

Reliability = .64 (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) (Code: Never=1, Always=5)

Opportunity for Self Direction

1. How often does your teacher let you ask questions?
2. How often does your teacher let you explore your ideas and try out new ways of doing things?
3. How often does your teacher let you choose an assignment which is interesting to you?
4. How often do you have time during which you can move about in your classroom?
5. Does your teacher have you help each other in class?

Reliability = .56 (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) (Code: Never=1, Always=5)

2 Coding for this question was reversed.

APPENDIX 1 (Continued)

Teacher Fairness

1. Does your teacher try to settle things by hearing both sides?
2. Is your teacher fair to you in her enforcement of the school rules?
3. Do you understand the reasons for any punishment you may receive from your teacher?
4. My teacher always gives into the wishes of the same group.[2]
5. My teacher has "pets" or favorites who can get away with things that I cannot.[2]
6. Do your principal and teachers run this school in a way that is fair?
7. My teacher grades me fairly.
8. If I get a grade on an assignment or my report card that I think is not fair, I can talk with the teacher about it and she will listen carefully.

Reliability = .70 (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) (Code: Never=1, Always=5)

Teacher Openness

1. Our teacher respects our opinions and encourages us to express them.
2. How often does your teacher let you ask questions?
3. Does your teacher let you express an opinion different from hers?
4. How often does your teacher let you explore your ideas and try out new ways of doing thins?
5. When something at home or school upsets you, do you know that your teacher will listen to your problem and help you?
6. How often do you get a chance to help decide what you will do in class?
7. How often does your teacher let you choose an assignment which is interesting to you?
8. Does your teacher give you a chance to ask questions when you need help?
9. If I don't like something the teacher tells us to do, I can tell her my feelings and she won't be upset.

[2] Coding for this question was reversed.

APPENDIX 1 (Continued)

10. If I get a grade on an assignment or my report card that I think is not fair, I can talk with the teacher about it and she will listen carefully.

Reliability = .74 (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) (Code: Never=1, Always=5)

Opportunity to Work With Others

1. Are there times when your teacher lets you work in small groups?
2. How often do different students get to be class or group leaders?
3. Does your teacher let you talk quietly in small groups?
4. How often do you have time during which you can move about in your classroom?
5. Does your teacher have you help each other in class?

Reliability = .53 (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) (Code: Never=1, Always=5)

Appendix 2

Correlation Matrix for

Teacher Behavior Variables

	X_1 Openness	X_2 Fairness	X_3 Interest	X_4 Work Opportunity
	r	r	r	r
Openness to Students (X_1)				
Fairness (X_2)	.68			
Interested in Student Ideas (X_3)	.79	.54		
Opportunity to Work with Others (X_4)	.54	.43	.49	
Opportunity for Self-Direction (X_5)	.77	.48	.66	.71

Appendix 3

Variable Means and Standard Deviations

	All			Blacks			Whites		
Student Background Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
Sex[a]	1610	.52	.50	403	.51	.50	1182	.52	.50
Race[b]	1598	.26	.44	408			1190		
Parent's Education	1626	6.2	1.7	408	5.8	1.8	1190	6.3	1.7
Parents' Support	1540	21.9	5.3	385	21.1	5.6	1127	22.1	5.1
Teacher Behavior Variables									
Openness to Students	1510	23.4	7.4	374	22.6	7.1	1111	23.7	7.5
Interested in Student Ideas	1554	14.0	3.8	389	13.7	3.8	1139	14.1	3.8
Fairness	1499	22.7	6.4	363	20.8	6.1	1111	23.3	6.3
Opportunity to Work with Others	1583	12.9	3.8	391	13.1	3.5	1164	12.8	3.7
Opportunity for Self-Direction	1578	12.9	3.6	387	12.8	3.5	1165	12.9	3.7
Student Attitude									
Cynicism	1593	14.5	3.9	398	15.5	3.6	1167	14.1	4.0

[a]Dummy variable: 1 = male, 0 = female

[b]Dummy variable: 1 = black, 0 = white

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