Political Science 146 – Public Opinion and Mass Media: Attitude Stability and Non-Attitudes

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USA! USA!
They get you young
Benevolent Leader

- Idealization of leaders – namely the president

  ▶ Compared to "most men" the president is often viewed as more honest, knowledgeable, and works harder.

  ▶ One study showed, over 90% of elementary school kids said the president is the "best person in the world" or "a good person.

  ▶ Children's descriptions: the president "gives us freedom; does good work; makes parks and swings; pays working people like banks; has the right to stop bad things before they start."
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School Rituals

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  - Pledge of allegiance
  - Singing patriotic songs: "This land is my land, this land is your land"
  - Children learn to follow rules, and obey authority figures
  - Teachers don't inculcate specific policy/political views, though
  - High school civics classes help improve political knowledge
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U.S. Territorial Expansion
Age, Class, Ethnic, Racial Differences

- Older children less likely than younger children to view leaders in an “idealized way”

- Older children more likely to view personal characteristics of president (e.g., honesty) more negatively

- Class: Survey of children in Appalachia – views of politics/presidents much more negative, leading to malevolent leader imagery

- Black children, relative to white children, were less likely to idealize images of president. Becomes much more pronounced as child ages

- But, we don’t know if this changed, reversed, for Obama

- White children have higher levels of political trust and efficacy than black school children

- In 2003/4, one study showed that white students have more trust in gov’t and political efficacy than do; black, Latino, and Native American children
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Political Reality Explanation

- Why do we see these differences?

  - Political attitudes respond to actual political events and phenomena.
  - Racial and ethnic minorities, in general, have less power than whites in the political system, less reason to believe that political leaders will respond to them.
  - Past ethnic and racial discrimination at the hands of government (school segregation, police violence, voter disenfranchisement) has generated mistrust among affected groups.
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Japanese Internment Camp: Manzanar, CA
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- Parents are the key source of these political attitudes, although with immigrant families sometimes the process is reversed for some attitudes.
- Process is both cognitive (thinking) and affective (emotion), non-political and political.
- In short, child begins to develop a “world view”
Examples of Parent-Child Political Transmission

Figure 1. Marginal Effect of Maternal Ideology on Offspring Ideology by Maternal Parenting Style
Examples of Parent-Child Political Transmission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family Politicization</th>
<th>Parent’s Stability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>.06</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>.57</td>
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<td>Evaluation of Business vs. Labor</td>
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<td>.60</td>
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<tr>
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### Table 2

**Contemporaneous Parent-Child Correspondence Over Time**

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<th>Year (Average Age: Parent &amp; Child)</th>
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