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The Political and Social Relevancy of Malcolm X: The Stability of African American Political Attitudes

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Typically, the political and ideological foundations of media-related events hold little significance for the alteration of political attitudes and behavior. But this weak relationship may be attributed to weak stimuli, and the influence of different media events is likely to be dependent upon the strength with which certain political attitudes and beliefs are held. We examine the extent to which a major media event—the film *Malcolm X* and its reinforcement in the media—influences political attitudes among African Americans. We find that individuals who saw the film and received reinforcement from a televised documentary became more racially conscious, more concerned about race relations, and more knowledgeable about Malcolm X the man. When age differences in the perceptions of Malcolm X are considered separately, younger African Americans born after the civil rights movement appear more positively disposed toward him.

The extent to which political attitudes and behavior are influenced by images in the media is an elusive subject. Although mass media events can offer a dynamic framework wherein individuals can confirm certain beliefs, find solutions to problems, and experience environments beyond their own limited range, they are not generally powerful enough to alter previously held attitudes (Alper and Leidy 1969–70; Elliott and Schenck-Hamlin 1979; Glock 1955; Kaid, Towers, and Myers 1981; Leckenby and Surlin 1976; Robinson 1976; Sigelman and Sigelman 1974). Even with the willingness of the media to explore more controversial and provocative political and social themes, recent research has produced little evidence of the capacity of the media to transform political attitudes and behavior. If, as expected, the political and ideological foundations of media-related events are perceived, previously held preferences are reinforced (Katz and Feldman 1962; Patterson and McClure 1976; Sears and Chaffee 1978), setting

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the agenda for what the public takes to be politically important (Feldman and Sigelman 1985; Funkhouser 1973; McCombs and Shaw 1972; Robinson 1976).

Though the minimal influence of various media events may be attributed to a weak stimulus in the presence of which individuals can very simply remain detached and unruffled, the examination of the influence of the media must also consider the durability of political attitudes. Implicit in the literature is the assumption that certain political attitudes and beliefs are loosely held and pliable over a short period of time. However, given that many political beliefs are quite stable and immune to change, even the most politically significant media-related event may not alter core political attitudes. Assessments of the influence of different media events, therefore, should consider the difficulty with which political attitudes move, especially movements that can be detected at the individual level and over a short period of time, the provocative nature of the stimuli, and audience receptivity.

Taking these considerations into account, we examine the impact of a major media event—the movie *Malcolm X* and its related media attention—on the political attitudes of African Americans. Because the movie itself deals directly with many provocative social, racial, and political issues, and has received much positive (and consistent) reinforcement in other media forms, we investigate the extent to which individuals who have been exposed to both sources of information become more informed about Malcolm X, more sensitized to race relations, and more likely to alter feelings of political trust, political efficacy, and racial consciousness. If exposure to *Malcolm X* does influence political attitudes among African Americans, we consider the degree to which such alterations in political beliefs are conditioned by age differences in the acceptance of Malcolm X. This research also provides insight into the current appeal of Malcolm X.

THE STIMULI: *MALCOLM X* AND ITS MEDIA ATTENTION

Based on Alex Haley's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, the film recounts the African American leader's life and the dynamics surrounding his different metamorphoses. Because the complex nature of Malcolm X ranges from a frightening advocate of hatred and violence to a heroic teacher of morality, self-respect, and courage, the ultimate impact of the film among African American viewers depends on which of the many themes will be internalized. What each individual receives from the film and Malcolm X's message is determined by psychological needs which in turn are determined by one's political culture and life experiences. Although it is impossible to predict which of the many themes will be internalized among African Americans, one particularly rousing aspect of the film and its media attention involves Malcolm X's indictment of racist attitudes in American society and governmental complicity in racial injustice.

Assuming that African Americans perceive particular themes and consider them relevant, we were concerned that the magnitude of media attention

surrounding the film might contaminate its message. In the span of one week, there were several potential sources of contamination through media coverage of the movie. Virtually every national magazine contained a cover story on Malcolm X before and after the movie's release, and the major newspapers (both local and national) gave extensive coverage as well. In addition to the print media, exactly one week after the movie's release CBS unexpectedly ran a full scale television documentary on Malcolm X and the events surrounding his assassination. Herein lies the difficulty with trying to measure the extent of the film's influence on beliefs.

In order to control for this, we asked several questions regarding the extent to which individuals paid attention to different accounts of Malcolm X in the media. These items tapped the following sources of information: television, radio, newspaper, magazines, personal discussion with friends, and the CBS documentary. The frequencies of these items indicate that before the movie's release very few individuals had been exposed to Malcolm X in the media. Considering the massive attention devoted to the movie after its release, individuals did see more frequent accounts of Malcolm X in the media, but not nearly as much as one would expect based on the attention. Before the movie's release, only 5% reported seeing anything about Malcolm X on television, 2% on the radio, 3% in a newspaper, and 1% in a magazine.

After the movie's release the percentages do not change substantially in response to the increased media attention to Malcolm X, though a sizable number of our panel participants reported seeing the CBS documentary. Considering that 30% of the second-wave participants saw the film, the documentary might have posed a serious contamination threat.

Contamination from the CBS documentary need not be viewed as a liability, however. To the extent that the film and the documentary present consistent information, each can reinforce the other, depending on which was seen first. The stimulus, then, can be thought of as exposure to Malcolm X by seeing both the film and documentary. The more channels carrying the same message, the greater the probability of acceptance. Repetition should strengthen the effects of the film (Feldman and Sigelman 1985; Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder 1982). Our research of these related media sources indicates that most of the accounts were largely repetitive and therefore mutually reinforcing.¹

¹We performed a content analysis of several national and local media sources to determine the extent of contamination. The content of the various media sources emphasized the life of Malcolm X, his transformations, and assassination; Malcolm X's contribution to the civil rights movement and relationship with Martin Luther King; and the ability of Spike Lee to direct the movie and the problems associated with completing the film. Magazine articles from a period of about five months from October 1992 through February 1993 include one article in *U.S. News and World Report*, five in *Time*, three in *Newsweek*, three in *Ebony*, and four in *Jet*. Newspaper articles include twenty-four in *The New York Times*, twenty-eight in the *Washington Post*, twenty in *USA Today*, eight in *The Houston Post*, and five in *The Houston Chronicle*. Although local and national news agencies reported on *Malcolm X*, the only televised program that focused exclusively on Malcolm X was a CBS documentary hosted by Dan Rather. The tone of the media attention was largely positive and consistent.

A THEORY OF INDIVIDUAL OPINION CHANGE

Considering the various messages in the film and the difficult task of assessing the extent to which individuals comprehend them, we utilize the analytical framework developed by Becker, McCombs, and McLeod (1975) and operationalized by Feldman and Sigelman (1985) in identifying the development of cognitions. Becker, McCombs, and McLeod suggest a clear distinction between cognitions, attitudes, and the agenda-setting function of media effects. This distinction implies that there are different evaluative dimensions by which exposure to new information in the media can influence political attitudes and beliefs. The evaluative dimensions include saliency, cognition, and attitude.

The saliency dimension refers to the extent to which new information increases the importance of a particular issue. New information can serve a consciousness-raising or agenda-setting function, leading viewers to become more concerned about certain issues without changing previously held beliefs or cognitions. Though *Malcolm X* and its related media attention emphasized many important and salient issues of which we had no a priori knowledge, based on Malcolm X's autobiography, we suspected that the movie would deal with certain aspects of racism and the importance of race relations. One agenda-setting role of the movie is the increased concern about racism and the importance of race relations.

The cognitive dimension suggests that the mere exposure to new and often emotion-provoking information does not automatically alter political attitudes or make one its advocate. From this perspective, exposure to new information in the media may simply make one more knowledgeable about certain topics. The cognitive dimension is operationalized as the degree to which African Americans give correct answers to questions concerning Malcolm X's date of birth, date of assassination, Islamic name recognition, religion, and political strategy.

The influence of *Malcolm X* may also be seen in the alteration in attitudes about politics and Malcolm X himself. Attitudinal changes are fundamental revisions in political and social attitudes created by images in the media. From our view, individual political and social attitudes are more difficult to change. Core political attitudes have roots in early political socialization and are sustained by individual belief systems. Therefore, one of our hypotheses suggests that exposure to Malcolm X may alter feelings of political efficacy, political trust, interest in politics, and racial consciousness.

The only negative article we examined appeared in the *New York Times* on November 21, 1992: "Malcolm X's Ruinous Message."

Interestingly, a common feature of these sources was interviews with African American leaders speculating about the potential impact of the film. Such speculation on the possible effects of *Malcolm X* reflected a general agreement that the film would have lasting effects on the African American community, especially among younger African Americans.

We further consider that these evaluative dimensions are not equal in the extent to which they can change. Cognitive changes are certainly easier to register than saliency effects, and saliency effects are expected to be easier to change than attitudinal effects. This hypothesis can be expressed in the following terms:

$$H_0: \text{Cognition} = \text{Saliency} = \text{Attitude} = 0$$

$$H_1: \text{Cognition} > \text{Saliency} > \text{Attitude} = 0$$

RESEARCH DESIGN

To examine the consequences of the intervention of Malcolm X into the daily lives of African Americans, we depart from previous studies by employing an equivalent control group in the second wave to assess the extent of testing effects. This design is identical to Campbell and Stanley's (1963) Separate-Sample Pretest-Posttest design. Pretest observations are recorded on a single group of individuals, who later receive a treatment (the movie and the documentary), after which posttest observations are made. This panel design is very popular, but it does suffer from many threats to internal and external validity.

An additional component of the design is the inclusion of a randomly selected equivalent control group in the second wave to gauge the extent of testing effects. This is necessary since it is possible for respondents in the posttest group to have been conditioned by the pretest instrument. Although this quasi-experimental design attempts to minimize threats to internal validity, it cannot account for all threats to validity, particularly those of selection and mortality.

Both testing effects and selection effects are treated as separate hypotheses working against media effects. Mortality is viewed as an inescapable component of panel studies. A rigorous attempt was made to reinterview all of the first wave respondents; 75% of the first wave respondents allowed complete interviews in the second wave. The second wave sample is not significantly different from the first wave sample with regard to gender, education, income, and age.

MODEL SPECIFICATION

Because it is necessary to control for initial responses from the first panel wave which would lead to correlated errors, we employ simultaneous equations (or instrumental variables) techniques to examine the stability of African American political attitudes. Simultaneous equations purge the dependent variable of the covariation due to the serially dependent disturbance component. This type of control for the initial values of the dependent variable in the first wave may produce biased but consistent estimates (Markus 1979). Two Stage Least Squares (2SLS) is used for the simultaneous estimation. In the first stage of estimation, the lagged endogenous variable is regressed on a series of independent variables (i.e., education, age, ideology, and gender) in order to create an instrument.

The various dependent variables in the model represent the probable effects of the movie. Each set of dependent variables represents an evaluative dimension of opinion change described by Becker, McCombs, and McLeod (1975). *Political Efficacy*, *Political Trust*, and *Racial Consciousness* are intended to tap different aspects of attitudinal change. Because political efficacy and political trust appear to be deep-seated, racial consciousness may be more susceptible to change. Alterations in the importance of race relations identify saliency effects. As a measure of cognitive effects, individuals were quizzed on their knowledge regarding Malcolm X (see appendix for question wording). Additive scales are used to create measures of the dependent variables.

The independent variables included in the model control for such differences in the exposure and acceptance of Malcolm X as age, gender, and education. The impact of the exposure to the media attention surrounding the film and the film itself is represented by the interaction between panel respondents who have seen the movie and panel respondents who have seen the CBS documentary (*Film × Documentary*). We contend that the media attention surrounding the film should strengthen the message of the film.² We estimate the following model for each dependent variable:

$$Y_t = b_0 + b_1 \text{AGE} + b_2 \text{Education} + b_3 (\text{Film} \times \text{Documentary}) \\ + b_4 \text{Gender} + b_5 \text{Film} + b_6 \text{Documentary} + b_7 Y_{t-1} + e$$

where Y_t is the dependent variable as measured in the second wave of the panel survey; AGE is the age in years for each panel participant; *Education* is the number of years in education for each panel participant; *Film* is whether or not a panel participant has seen the movie (1 = saw film and 0 = did not see film); *Documentary* is whether or not panel participant has seen the CBS documentary (1 = saw documentary and 0 = did not see documentary); (*Film × Documentary*) is an interaction term between those who have seen the movie and those who have seen the CBS documentary; *Gender* of the panel respondent is measured as 0 for female and 1 for male; Y_{t-1} represents an instrumental variable measured in the first wave of the panel; and e is the randomly distributed disturbance term.

DATA

The data used in this analysis come from a panel study and a series of randomly drawn samples of the adult African American population in Houston, Texas. In the first wave of the panel survey (November 1–7, 1993), random digit

²Through a series of simultaneous equations and split-sample analyses we examined the separate effects of viewing the film and viewing the CBS documentary on the various dependent variables. Using dummy variables as measures of viewing the film and the documentary, no independent effects of viewing the film or the CBS documentary were found. The only significant influence of viewing the film and the documentary came from combining them interactively.

dialing was used to construct a sample of 500 African American residents. The first-wave interviews averaged 12 to 15 minutes.

We waited approximately one month after the movie's release to conduct the second wave of the panel (January 16–25, 1993). Although we expected the film to produce immediate short-term effects to the extent it had an impact at all, our desire was to allow panel participants an opportunity to see the film, which had been released on November 26, 1992. Although 85% of the respondents in the first wave indicated that they would participate in follow-up surveys, we were able to empanel 75% of the original participants ($N = 375$).

A separate sample survey was simultaneously conducted with the second wave of the panel. This new sample is also a random sample of adult African Americans in Houston, Texas, similar to the first wave of the panel survey. Using the same questions and questionnaire design, a random sample of 250 blacks were surveyed. The completion rate for this survey was 65%.

ANALYSIS

Ruling out the various threats to validity permits an analysis of the extent to which individual attitudes change in response to exposure to information about Malcolm X.³ The two-stage least-squares estimates for each dependent variable are presented in Table 1. *Malcolm X* and its reinforcement in the documentary are quite powerful in altering political attitudes among African Americans. Moreover, the influence is not limited to the cognitive and saliency evaluative dimensions, but extends to the attitudinal dimension as well. Exposure to information about Malcolm X has greater effects on cognition, saliency, and attitude, respectively, which supports our contention that certain political attitudes are quite stable and immune to change.

Among the attitudinal measures, *Political Efficacy* and *Political Trust* appear to reflect more deep-seated attitudes than *Racial Consciousness*. Only *Racial Consciousness* is affected by exposure to Malcolm X. Political efficacy and trust among African Americans have been generally quite low and resistant to change since the mid- to late-1960s (Abramson 1983). Though little is known about how political efficacy and trust change at the individual level, they appear to require more than an indirect message in the exposure to Malcolm X. On the other hand, individuals exposed to the film and the documentary were able to internalize their perceptions of Malcolm X and apply it them to their own personal sense of racial consciousness. Individual levels of racial consciousness are generally moderate, and, as such, African Americans appear willing to update their racial beliefs.

³ An analysis of the potential threats to internal validity through selection and testing effects shows that repeated interviews did not make individuals more than ordinarily aware of Malcolm X nor are there any significant differences between individual respondents who eventually saw the movie and those who did not. The full analysis of the threats to validity can be obtained from the authors.

TABLE 1
TWO-STAGE LEAST-SQUARES ESTIMATES OF ATTITUDE CHANGE

| Independent Variables | Attitudinal | | | Salient Importance of Race Relations | Cognitive Knowledge of Malcolm X |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Political Efficacy | Political Trust | Racial Consciousness | | |
| Age | -.01 (.01) | .01 (.01) | -.02 (.02) | -.03 (.02) | -.05 (.04) |
| Gender (1 = male, 0 = female) | .20 (.24) | -.15 (.23) | .31 (.24) | .15 (.20) | .04 (.17) |
| Education | .02 (.03) | .03 (.03) | .06** (.02) | .02 (.04) | .09** (.03) |
| Saw Film × Saw Documentary | .25 (.16) | -.23 (.18) | .30** (.12) | .36** (.16) | .37** (.17) |
| Saw Film | .05 (.07) | .05 (.07) | .11 (.07) | .06 (.08) | .08 (.09) |
| Saw Documentary | -.26 (.27) | -.25 (.28) | .02 (.04) | .12 (.20) | .03 (.03) |
| Lagged Dependent Variable | .30** (.08) | .34** (.09) | .45** (.10) | .26** (.12) | .20* (.09) |
| Constant | 5.51** (1.01) | 5.63** (1.05) | 3.90** (1.03) | 4.67** (1.12) | 2.69** (1.03) |
| R^2 | .12 | .14 | .26 | .30 | .31 |
| Adjusted R^2 | .09 | .11 | .23 | .26 | .29 |
| SEE | 1.20 | 1.32 | 1.16 | 1.23 | 1.43 |
| N | 375 | 375 | 370 | 375 | 375 |

Note: Values in parentheses are standard errors. ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$.

With regard to saliency effects, individuals who were exposed to the film became more concerned about race relations. Though saliency effects are considerably less difficult to change than attitudinal properties, viewing the film and documentary raised the level of concern about race relations. The influence of exposure to Malcolm X shows up in cognitive effects, where those who have been exposed to both the film and the documentary are more likely to give correct answers about him. Additionally, education has a significant impact on knowledge of Malcolm X. Individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to give correct answers regarding information about Malcolm X.

Based on the direction of the coefficient for gender, men would be likely to become more efficacious and less trusting politically, more racially conscious, more concerned about race relations, and more knowledgeable about Malcolm X than women. It is not surprising that African American men would find Malcolm X more relevant than would African American women, and this difference is essentially inconsequential. Age is also insignificant across the dependent variables. From the first wave to the second wave, it appears likely that younger African Americans would become politically more efficacious and less trusting, more racially conscious, more concerned about race relations, and more informed about Malcolm X. We explore further age differences in the following section.

FINE TUNING THE EFFECTS OF *MALCOLM X*

The previous analysis suggests that the impact of *Malcolm X* and its media attention in determining levels of racial consciousness, the importance of race relations, and knowledge of Malcolm X is constant among African Americans irrespective of age, education, and gender.⁴ We further consider the idea that younger African Americans are more likely to be disposed to an uncritical acceptance of Malcolm X and are thus more likely to alter their political beliefs in response to the film and its media attention. There are several reasons to suspect relevant age differences which are not captured in the previous analysis.

An examination of extraneous dialogue of panel respondents noted by our interviewers indicates that while younger individuals were more receptive to questions about Malcolm X, older individuals were more likely to express hostility toward him. Age differences in the evaluation of Malcolm X are reflected in a *Newsweek* survey of African Americans conducted before the film's release. In this national survey, 84% of the 15- to 24-year-olds, 59% of the 25- to 40-year-olds, and only 33% of the 50-and-over group considered Malcolm X a hero for black America.

It is necessary and useful to examine more carefully what Malcolm X represents to different age groups among African Americans. To younger African Americans, Malcolm X is attractive in part because he was attractive to a younger

⁴We tested for the interaction effects of education and gender with exposure to Malcolm X. The effects of exposure to Malcolm X did not vary significantly by education and gender.

generation when he was alive. To young African American adults, the rediscovery of Malcolm X represents the articulation of their anger, impatience, and discontent with mainstream culture. Identifying with the violence and hatred associated with Malcolm X becomes an expression of their own defiance and as well as their own toughness. Conversely, to older individuals, Malcolm X is not a rediscovery. For African Americans who experienced the civil rights movement, Malcolm X is the violent and revolutionary antithesis to Martin Luther King and his creed of nonviolence and passivity.

We contend that such differences in perceptions of Malcolm X are largely a result of period effects of the civil rights movement, though age differences may also reflect life-cycle changes in which African Americans become more conservative and accommodating as they age. Having lived through racial segregation and the civil rights movement, older African Americans are imbued more with integrationist and assimilationist strategies of nonviolence. Because of their ability to reference a period in their personal lives in which they were treated with deference and their perceptions of change brought on by the civil rights movement, direct observers and participants of the civil rights movement become more accepting of passive and nonaggressive solutions to racial injustice. Younger individuals, who are naturally impatient and less accommodating, are more likely to have problems accepting such passivity. Since the views of Malcolm X among older and younger African Americans go in different directions, this may explain the insignificance of age in the previous analysis.

To examine these period effects in the perceptions of Malcolm X and the effect such differences have with regards to the film, we present a split-sample analysis comprising two separate samples based on suspected age differences in the perceptions of Malcolm X. Sample participants were separated according to their birth year. Individuals born before 1950 (16 years old as of 1966 and 42 years old at the release of the film) are placed in the civil rights period ($N = 196$) and individuals born after 1951 (15 years old as of 1966 and 41 years old at the release of the film) are placed in the current period ($N = 154$). The two-stage least-squares model was run for each group.⁵ The estimates for each group are reported in Table 2.

Beginning with older individuals who lived through the civil rights period in Table 2, no media-related effects are discernible. Though the coefficient is not statistically significant for the interaction of having seen the film and the documentary, the negative sign does indicate that individuals who lived through the civil rights era would perhaps become less racially conscious and consider race relations to be less important than their cohorts who had seen neither the film nor the documentary. Compared to those who had not seen the film and television

⁵ We also tested this relationship by the interaction effects between age and exposure to Malcolm X in the film and the documentary. The substantive conclusions drawn from this analysis are consistent with the analysis in Table 2.

TABLE 2

TWO-STAGE LEAST-SQUARES (2SLS) ESTIMATES OF ATTITUDE CHANGE BY PERIOD EFFECTS

| Independent Variables | Born Before 1954 | | | Born After 1954 | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--|--|-------------------------|--|--|
| | Attitudinal | | Cognitive Knowledge of Malcolm X | Attitudinal | | Cognitive Knowledge of Malcolm X |
| | Racial Consciousness | Salient Importance of Race Relations | | Racial Consciousness | Salient Importance of Race Relations | |
| Gender (1 = male, 0 = female) | .17 (.22) | .19 (.23) | .17 (.23) | .04 (.10) | .08 (.13) | .11 (.12) |
| Education | .01 (.02) | .01 (.03) | .01 (.03) | .11 (.08) | .12 (.09) | .14 (.10) |
| Saw Film × Saw Documentary | -.12 (.11) | -.13 (.11) | .01 (.09) | .17** (.08) | .22** (.11) | .19** (.09) |
| Saw Film | .03 (.10) | .04 (.13) | .04 (.11) | .07 (.10) | .08 (.13) | .10 (.11) |
| Saw Documentary | .10 (.22) | .07 (.18) | .09 (.19) | .11 (.22) | .14 (.18) | .11 (.19) |
| Lagged Dependent Variable | .29** (.13) | .32** (.12) | .24** (.11) | .43** (.13) | .36** (.16) | .26** (.11) |
| Constant | 2.05** (1.02) | 2.10** (1.00) | 2.13** (1.05) | 3.40** (1.22) | 4.56** (1.34) | 2.30** (1.09) |
| R^2 | .16 | .17 | .17 | .34 | .32 | .30 |
| Adjusted R^2 | .15 | .16 | .15 | .30 | .30 | .29 |
| SEE | 1.23 | 1.16 | 1.33 | 1.12 | 1.19 | 1.22 |
| N | 196 | 194 | 196 | 154 | 152 | 154 |

Note: Values in parentheses are standard errors. ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$.

documentary, exposure to Malcolm X would have created more negative reactions among older African Americans.

More importantly, the estimates of this same model for those who had not directly experienced the civil rights movement—and, perhaps, Malcolm X—oppose the findings for older African Americans. As expected, the coefficients for *Media Exposure* indicate that younger African Americans were greatly affected by their exposure to Malcolm X, more so than older African Americans. Younger African Americans who saw the film and the documentary became more racially conscious, more likely to consider race relations important, and better informed about Malcolm X compared to those of the same period who had seen neither. Among this group, there do not seem to be any differences based on education or gender.

DISCUSSION

Research examining the extent to which political attitudes and behavior change in response to media-related events must consider the magnitude of the stimulus, its reinforcement, and the stability of core political beliefs. Whatever power media-related events have to articulate the anger and frustration of African Americans, their ability to influence political attitudes would not be substantial if some political attitudes among African Americans were not somewhat malleable. While political trust and efficacy appear to be set in all age groups, young African Americans appear more receptive to updating their feelings than older African Americans. The treatment of race and African Americans in the media is not nearly as vacuous as the literature suggests, particularly for younger African Americans. Through the internalization of racial images in the media, African Americans develop a greater psychological awareness of their culture and attachment to other African Americans, a greater knowledge of those events, and increased awareness of race relations.

Interest in Malcolm X and alterations in political attitudes among African Americans represent the internalized expression of their anger and frustration. The promotion of Malcolm X becomes essentially “a kind of voodoo doll—something to shake at white people and say, ‘I’m not happy here. I’m not satisfied yet.’”⁶ This form of expression would otherwise require more active and risky behavior. Race-related media events such as the interventions of Malcolm X and, more recently, the reactions to the Rodney King verdict, the Los Angeles riots, the O.J. Simpson verdict, and the Million Man March, help explain why race remains such a salient feature of African American political attitudes. Indeed, the discussion of race within the media should be examined more thoroughly, for it can have potentially polarizing effects not only within the African American community, between older and younger individuals, but also between African American and white communities as they attempt to interact.

⁶ *Washington Post Weekly Edition* (November 23–29) 1992:25.

APPENDIX

SURVEY QUESTIONS

POLITICAL EFFICACY

How much attention do you feel the government pays to what people think when it decides what to do?

Do you think that people in the government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?

People like me don't have any say about what the government does.

Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.

POLITICAL TRUST

How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?

How much of the time do you think black people in this country can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?

How much of the time do you think politicians in Washington consider the position of black people when deciding on legislation?

RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Do you think that black people in this country should take care of themselves and let others do the same, or do you think that black people in this country should see to it that other black people are doing well?

When raising children, which is more important, to encourage them to be independent minded, or to encourage them to think about people of their race?

How likely is it that you would be willing to stop buying products from a store because of the way they treated black people?

IMPORTANCE OF RACE RELATIONS

How concerned are you personally with race relations between blacks and whites?

On any given day, how much of the time do you spend thinking about your relationship to whites?

How strongly do you feel that race relations between blacks and whites should be a priority of government?

KNOWLEDGE OF MALCOLM X

Do you know Malcolm X's Islamic name? If yes, what is it?

Do you know what the X stands for in Malcolm X's name? If yes, what does it mean?

Do you know the date of Malcolm X's assassination? If yes, when was he assassinated?

Would you say that Malcolm X advocated the use of the legal system to help blacks? If no, what did Malcolm advocate?

Do you know Malcolm X's religion? If yes, what is it?

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