

YOUTH SOCIOPOLITICAL DEVELOPMENT: MOVING BEYOND  
MECHANISTIC ACTION AND INEFFECTIVE BLAH

By

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Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Community Research and Action

August, 2010

Nashville, Tennessee

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Drs. Maury Nation and Paul Speer, my committee members, for their guidance and support through the process of conceptualizing and refining this thesis. Without them this project would not have been possible.

I would like to acknowledge, too, Dr. Isaac Prilleltensky, whose work has inspired me and who has volunteered his own time—well outside of his professional responsibilities—in offering me guidance and providing motivating words.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Matthew Diemer, my advisor at Michigan State University in the course of my Masters of Counseling program, for opening my eyes to the world of research and for instilling in me, more than anyone else, the confidence and efficacy to pursue the career that I am pursuing. I am forever grateful for Matt's presence in my life as a role model.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Recent efforts in youth development have sought to engage marginalized young people in the sociopolitical life of their communities. For youth facing multiple, ecological barriers to their positive development, directly engaging with social and political issues may be a means for achieving successful outcomes, both at the individual and community levels. Prilleltensky, in his 2003 commentary on understanding and negotiating oppression, challenged community psychologists with the notion that “Political literacy is sorely lacking from most societies. In the long term, psychopolitical education may be our best instrument of prevention and promotion” (p. 199). Sociopolitical (used interchangeably with “psychopolitical” by Prilleltensky) development offers a novel and promising approach to work with marginalized youth that builds upon the traditional and positive models of youth development (Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

Traditional, curative approaches to youth development are generally reactive in that they wait for problems to manifest prior to intervention. This approach is typified in the Western medical model that moves from problem diagnosis to treatment and tends to view youth development as a process of ameliorating deficits. Alternatively, prevention and promotion approaches seek to identify the antecedents of problems in an effort to create conditions or stimulate

behaviors that preempt problems and promote wellness. The positive-youth-development model operates from a prevention/promotion approach, focusing on developmental assets such as conflict resolution and decision making. Both the traditional and positive approaches often assume the need for outside youth-development experts to situate the problem and guide intervention. As a result, these approaches are often predicated on a faith in service providers to do what is best for the groups with whom they work.

Critical social theories, however, hold that social service systems are often complicit in the oppression of marginalized groups (e.g., McKnight, 1991). Indeed, community psychology, as a discipline, is in some ways a response to the overemphasis on the individual in locating social problems. Initiatives that focus primarily on the development of individual youth may indirectly reinforce the *status quo* by ignoring larger social phenomena. For example, a program that aims to improve career outcomes for low-income, urban youth may focus on job-skills training for youth while ignoring the reality of a lack of local employment opportunities, thus leaving intact the systematically inequitable job market (a full discussion of oppression is beyond the scope of this paper; for a review, see Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996; Young, 2007). Through this lens, marginalized groups must have the power to define their own problems and generate their own solutions if action is to be valid and effective. This process of reflecting and acting on social issues is elaborated below.

## Sociopolitical Development Theory

The capability to identify, critically understand, and take action on sociopolitical issues is a key component of wellness, particularly for oppressed groups (Prilleltensky, 2003). Watts and colleagues (Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003) coined the term *sociopolitical development* (SPD) to refer to one's consciousness of and engagement in action to change inequitable structures. This bipartite definition that includes consciousness and engagement is central to SPD.

Sociopolitical consciousness is reflected in one's recognition of how structural phenomena—e.g., differential access to high-quality education and health care or lack of employment opportunities—impact individual and group wellness and an understanding of how power operates—e.g., how information may be controlled and disseminated by the media and the importance of collective action in addressing unjust systems. There may be various degrees of “quality” of consciousness, and this study conceptualizes sociopolitical consciousness not only as an acknowledgement that power exists and perpetuates inequalities, but also as an understanding of how to take action in the face of power, drawing on community organizing themes of collective action. Furthermore, particular emphasis is put on one's cognitive ability to recognize sources of and remedies to oppression and power imbalance in concrete manifestations in one's local context rather than in the abstract.

Sociopolitical engagement refers to one's participation in activities such as petitioning to influencing public policy, community organizing to address a

neighborhood issue, or public education campaigns to illustrate cases of injustice. This is a behavioral construct, and it may be understood as a subtype of civic engagement that operates at a more political level. Sociopolitical engagement is distinguished from civic engagement to avoid confusion with less political forms of action, allowed, for example, by Putnam's description of civic engagement that includes any activity that "gets people off the living room couch" (cited in Hyman, 2002, p. 197).

SPD theory posits that consciousness and engagement develop in a dialectical manner within an individual, such that one moves from viewing inequity as a consequence of deficits in the capabilities of group members (i.e., a "just world" view) to understanding inequity as a consequence of social power inequalities and taking action to combat it (Watts, et al., 1999). Action and reflection transact to reciprocally facilitate the process of SPD; in other words, the more one critically reflects upon and understands social issues, the more likely she is to take action, and the more one acts, the more likely she is to critically understand social issues. This process may be set in motion and impelled forward via certain precipitants, including family influences (e.g., racial and political socialization during childhood), organizational influences (e.g., participation and experiencing empathic peer relationships in social-change organizations), and developmental tasks such as identity development, meaning making, exposure to moral role-models, and personal experiences with oppression (Griffith, 2002; Kieffer, 1984; Mustakova-Possardt, 1998; Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006; Watts, et al., 1999). Facilitating this SPD

process may be an important activity in which to engage marginalized youth, such that they have the capacity to interpret and change their experiences of oppression, including oppressive “helping” structures. Recent research has shown that low-income minority youth with high levels of both sociopolitical consciousness and engagement may have higher levels of engagement and success in academic and career-related tasks. (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008). Furthermore, this type of development may be vital to equipping citizens with the capacity to take part in participatory forms of governance, such as deliberative democracy (see, for example, Habermas, 1996). This study seeks to add to the understanding of SPD in two ways: (a) by using a quantitative methodology to triangulate previous qualitative findings on the nature of SPD and factors contributing to it; and (b) by introducing a measure of sociopolitical consciousness that specifically addresses the “quality” of consciousness, as normatively presupposed by SPD theoreticians. As the opening quote from Prilleltensky (2003) suggests, SPD may be the best, most sustainable type of prevention and promotion that marginalized groups can pursue and that helpers can facilitate.

### The Relationship between Consciousness and Action

Freire’s (1970) theory of critical consciousness—an analogue of SPD—explains how sociopolitical consciousness and action cooperate to form a praxis capable of effecting social change. Both consciousness and action are necessary for true praxis. Freire labels action unguided by a realistic understanding of

sociopolitical forces “mechanistic action.” He labels consciousness unaccompanied by action “verbalism” or, less euphemistically, “ineffective blah.” These two possible outcomes of engaging with one’s sociopolitical reality, mechanistic action or verbalism, represent incomplete forms of SPD. The potential for incomplete SPD is briefly described below, using the terms *disengaged* SPD and *acritical* SPD to refer to Freire’s verbalism and mechanistic action, respectively. A figural model representing the different combinations of sociopolitical consciousness and engagement is depicted in Figure 1.

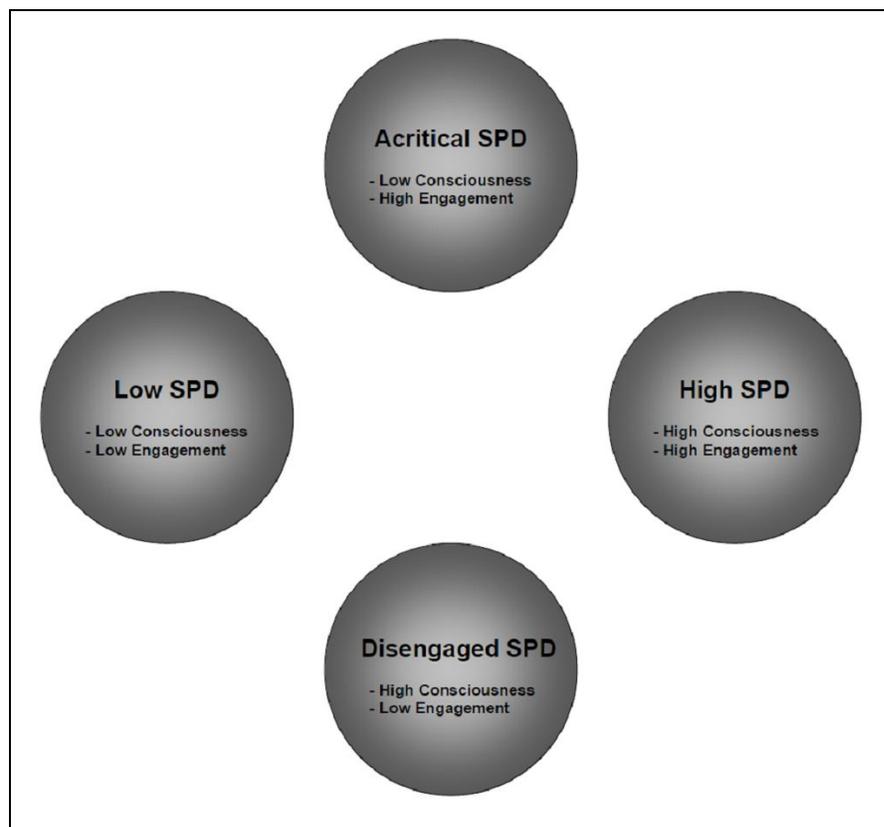


Figure 1.1. Potential combinations of sociopolitical consciousness and engagement

### *Disengaged SPD or ineffective blah*

Some research has challenged SPD theory's assumed connection between sociopolitical consciousness and engagement, in that the former does not necessarily lead to the latter (Conchas, 2001; Fine, 1991; Peterson, Hamme, & Speer, 2002; Speer & Peterson, 2000). Indeed, this is arguably the greatest source of contention in the literature surrounding SPD and critical consciousness. In research with low-income minority youth, findings have pointed to the development of sociopolitical consciousness having no relationship to certain forms of academic and career engagement (Conchas, 2001) or a negative relationship (Fine, 1991), consistent with Ogbu's (1991) theory of oppositional culture. The implication is that an increased sense of injustice may, in fact, not be connected to any behavioral outcomes or, worse, serve to frustrate or disaffect young people.

Speer and Peterson and colleagues (Peterson, et al., 2002; Speer & Peterson, 2000) created a Cognitive Empowerment Scale to measure the cognition capacity of individuals to recognize social power in their communities and understand how to effect social change. This measure is employed by the present study to capture sociopolitical consciousness. Speer and Peterson (2000), however, failed to find a predictive relationship between consciousness and community political engagement in their random sample of approximately 1,000 American adults, further drawing into question the dialectic nature of consciousness and engagement proposed by SPD theory. What if, all things being equal, a heightened sociopolitical consciousness does not necessarily lead

to increased engagement? Partly in response to this problem, Watts and Flanagan (2007) proposed a static model of SPD that more explicitly depicts the nature of the relationship between critical understanding and action, arguing that this link may not be self-evident, but is actually facilitated by (a) the individual's sense of agency and (b) structured opportunities for participation (e.g., through a community organization). This model begins to conceptualize how certain ingredients may merge consciousness and action to create a level high of SPD.

#### *Acritical SPD or mechanistic action*

The converse challenge to SPD is the potential for engagement in the sociopolitical life of one's community to occur absent a critical social analysis. This, in fact, is a common critique of traditional forms of youth civic engagement lodged by advocates of more politicized forms of youth action, such as youth organizing (Ginwright & James, 2002; Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007; Sutton, Kemp, Gutierrez, & Saegert, 2006; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Watts and Flanagan (2007) argue that not all forms of civic engagement build a sense of sociopolitical consciousness. The concerns with SPD, then, are twofold: on the one hand an individual may develop a critical reading of society but fail to take action; on the other hand she may engage in the civic life of her community but fail to develop a critical understanding of social process and social change. The following review of the empirical literature on SPD describes the necessary elements for merging the development of sociopolitical consciousness and action, such that an individual possess a high level of SPD.

## The Process of Sociopolitical Development

A significant body of literature exists that seeks to understand the antecedents of the co-development of consciousness and action. Freire's (1970) conceptualization of critical consciousness was based largely on his experiences and observations with consciousness-raising groups in Latin America, and these experiences led him to propose a theoretical model of SPD consisting of three stages: (a) semi-intransitive or magical consciousness; (b) naïve transitivity; and (c) critical consciousness. He posited that people move through these stages via a dialogical group process in which they come to identify with others who have shared experiences of oppression and learn to attribute problems in living to social sources rather than their personal shortcomings. Freire (1973) did not support his model with empirical evidence but rather with anecdotal accounts of practical experiences; however, his theoretical framework provides the foundation for more recent models of SPD.

Qualitative research methods are generally conducive to exploring intraindividual developmental processes, and most studies that seek to understand how SPD operates rely on such methods, particularly in-depth, semistructured interviewing with key informants (e.g., Griffith, 2002; Kieffer, 1984; Mustakova-Possardt, 1998; Watts, et al., 2003). Researchers in this area have often used the method of identifying individuals who possess a demonstrably high level of SPD to illuminate their developmental experiences. For example, Watts and colleagues (2003) and Griffith (2002) selected activists

of African descent in three U.S. cities while Kieffer (1984) worked with participants in issue-oriented, grassroots social-action organizations.

Kieffer (1984) shows that direct threats to one's self-interest motivate participation in basic civic activities, which subsequently demystifies power and authority structures and allows for a more accurate analysis of their role in creating and perpetuating problems. The implication is that an attribution of problems to social causes jumpstarts the process of SPD. Supportive peer relationships within a community organization serve to enhance this process, and as one's consciousness and participatory skills evolve and sharpen, motivation shifts from primarily self-interested reaction to identification with a collective goal, and personal agency grows. Kieffer's (1984) findings point to the importance of an initial social attribution of problems-in-living in facilitating SPD, combined with a sense of connection to a community group and an increasing sense of personal agency.

Watts and colleagues (2003) and Griffith (2002) corroborate Kieffer's (1984) findings and emphasize one's upbringing as an additional precipitant of SPD. Specifically, they find that for African-American activists, exposure during one's childhood to political discussions, a strong connection to one's racial identity, and a high level of spirituality are important facilitators of the sociopolitical consciousness and action dialectic.

Mustakova-Possardt's (1998) drew from a representative sample of middle-aged Americans and middle-aged Bulgarians to examine how critical consciousness does or does not develop among non-activists. Her results overlap

significantly with the aforementioned studies, showing that participants with advanced levels of critical consciousness tended to have a multitude of empathic relationships, a collective identity as part of an organization, and high levels of personal agency.

In general, these qualitative findings cohere around ideas of (a) membership in an empathic group of peers through which identity may be strengthened, (b) sense of personal agency, and (c) experience with and discussion of social issues. Given this consistency in empirical findings, the field may be at a place where a more structured deductive approach could triangulate findings and further advance SPD theory. Many SPD researchers have introduced their studies with the proclamation that little is known about the processes underlying SPD. Indeed, the research in this area is relatively scarce. One result is that there is no apparent empirical research that examines the differences in SPD for youth versus older adults. Findings suggest that the process is similar across ages.

However, scholars who have devised developmental models of SPD via qualitative methods have come to the same approximate conclusions as to the processes and antecedents involved. Given the relative consistency in qualitative findings on SPD, this topic may be primed for more structured inquiry—including quantitative and mixed methods techniques—to corroborate the validity of these developmental antecedents. In Watts' and colleagues (2003) eponymous article on SPD, they make a clear call for continued empirical work using multiple methods to increase understanding of SPD. In that spirit, the present study

employs quantitative methods to better understand what makes individuals, and youth in particular, simultaneously predisposed to high levels of sociopolitical conscious and engagement—that is, what makes young people more likely to have high SPD.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

The present study draws on several empirically identified antecedents of SPD—one's sense of connection with a community organization, sense of agency, and the capacity and readiness to recognize social roots of problems—to examine how they are related to the different SPD outcomes depicted in Figure 1. It seeks to understand what factors increase the likelihood of an individual both possessing high sociopolitical consciousness *and* having a high level of sociopolitical engagement—that is, high SPD. Some research and theory suggests that this connection may not be forthcoming in that high levels of consciousness about social change processes may not necessarily lead to high levels of engagement or vice-versa. Yet we have many real-life examples of individuals who are both conscious and engaged at high levels. Even if we adhere to the perspective that high consciousness, in general, does not lead to greater engagement, we have still not explained why some people do, in fact, achieve a high level of SPD. What is different about these individuals versus individuals who have low consciousness and engagement or an incomplete combination of the two? What serves to bring consciousness and engagement together? First, the present study hypothesizes that these data will corroborate

the findings of Speer and Peterson (2000), which show that (1) sociopolitical consciousness does not have a predictive relationship with sociopolitical engagement in a random sample of Americans. Further, it is hypothesized that one's affective sense of connectedness with a community organization, her level of psychological empowerment, and the degree to which she is able to attribute community problems to social origins are all positively related to one's level of SPD. More specifically, (2) a higher level of these predictors will increase the likelihood of an individual having high levels of both consciousness and engagement versus low or incomplete levels of both consciousness and engagement. This study is particularly interested in youth, as this group has been the focus of much theoretical discussion of SPD. Thus, it is hypothesized that (3) young people have lower levels of SPD, in general, than their older counterparts.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODS

#### Study Sample

The residents of five medium to large cities in the northeastern, central, and western United States were selected as the target population for the study. Random-digit dialing was used to collect data on a sample of 990 randomly selected community residents. Respondents were predominantly female (61%). In terms of age, 10% of participants were 18-24 years old, 22% 25 to 34 years old, 23% 35 to 44 years old, 18% 45 to 54 years old, 8% 65-74, and 6% 75 years or older. Of the participants, 20% were African American, 1% Asian, 66% White, 6% Latino/a, and 4% reported their ethnicity as "other." Concerning the highest level of education completed for participants, 4% of respondents had completed some high school, 19% had high school diplomas, 27% attended some college, 30% graduated from college, and 20% held graduate degrees. In terms of income, 21% of participants reported an annual family income of less than \$25,000, 45% reported \$25,000 to \$69,999, and 18% reported over \$70,000 (16% refused to report income).

#### Measures

The present study examines the relationship between individuals' sense of community, psychological empowerment, and social attribution and their

sociopolitical development. It also examines the association between age and sociopolitical development. All the multiple-item measures in this study (i.e., all the non-demographic variables), are constructed of items measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = “Strongly Disagree”; 2 = “Somewhat Disagree”; 3 = “Neutral”; 4 = “Somewhat Agree”; 5 = “Strongly Agree”). Only the sociopolitical engagement variable uses a different rating system; items for this construct are measured using a six-point rating system and asks respondents how often they have participated in a given activity in the last year (1 = “Not at all”; 2 = “1 time”; 3 = “2 to 5 times”; 4 = “5 to 10 times”; 5 = “About monthly”; 6 = “About weekly”). All of the variables follow a relatively normal, symmetrical distribution with mean scores between 3.5 and 4 with the exception of sociopolitical engagement, which has a mean score of 1.92. All item measures are included in Appendix A.

### *Sense of community*

Sense of community through community organizations is defined by Hughey, Speer, and Peterson (1999) as a composite of (a) one’s affective bond to her geographic community, (b) one’s sense of connection to one or more community organizations, (c) the degree to which one perceives the organization(s) in which she participates to be influential in the larger community, and (d) the perceived ability of the organization(s) to connect the individual to the larger community. This type of affective connection to a community organization and the organization’s perceived efficacy in effecting change have been described as key facilitators of SPD (Griffith, 2002; Kieffer, 1984; Watts &

Flanagan, 2007; Watts, et al., 2003). The sense of community construct is measured using Hughey, Speer, and Peterson's (1999) 16-item Community Organization Sense of Community Scale ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

### *Psychological empowerment*

Sense of agency is an outgrowth of traditional understandings of empowerment (Riger, 1993). This emotional, or intrapersonal, element of empowerment has been described to include a sense of control over one's life (Rappaport, 1987), self-efficacy, motivation to exert control, and perceived competence (Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz, & Checkoway, 1992). Watts and Flanagan (2007) explicitly asserted sense of agency as a facilitator of consciousness and engagement. Psychological empowerment is measured here using Zimmerman and Zahniser's (1991) eight-item Sociopolitical Control Scale ( $\alpha = .69$ ) that indicates to what degree individuals have a psychological sense of agency in social and political matters.

### *Social attribution*

The variable social attribution assesses to what degree individuals ascribe their problems and the problems of people in their communities to sociopolitical sources versus intrapersonal sources. For example, neighborhood violence may be explained as a function of community impoverishment by someone with a high orientation toward social attribution, whereas someone with low-level social attribution may explain the same phenomenon in terms of characteristics

inherent to individuals who perpetrate violence, e.g., poor moral character. Hunt's (1996) research with southern Californians found that the degree to which people generate self-explanations for their problems tended to increase the likelihood that they justify poverty in terms of intrapersonal deficits; conversely, people who attribute their problems to social phenomena tended to explain poverty in terms of structural causes. For this study, a six-item scale was designed to gauge participants' level of external attribution for social problems ( $\alpha = .46$ ).

### *Age*

Participants' reported age was aggregated into groups representing intervals of 10 years for the purposes of analysis. The following analyses control for both income and education level<sup>1</sup>.

### *Outcome variable*

Sociopolitical development is treated here as a categorical outcome variable representing different possible combinations of sociopolitical consciousness and sociopolitical engagement. Sociopolitical consciousness is a corollary of Speer and Peterson's (2000) cognitive empowerment construct, which includes three dimensions: (a) the understanding that power develops through relationships, (b) an understanding of political functioning, and (c) an

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<sup>1</sup> A second model was fit that included race and ethnicity as predictor variables. These variables were found to be insignificant in predicting the likelihood of assignment to any of the outcome categories, and they did not significantly influence the effect of the predictor variables kept in the final model on the outcome variable. There is some theoretical relevance of race on SPD, but given the lack of added fit to the model and in the interest of parsimony and ease of interpretation of results, these variables were left out of the final model.

understanding of how manipulating ideology is a feature of power. Speer and Peterson's (2000) 17-item Cognitive Empowerment Scale was used to assess this construct ( $\alpha = .75$ ). This construction of sociopolitical consciousness used here is particularly sensitive to people's right understanding of how power works and how to make change in spite of it. Sociopolitical engagement is operationally defined here as the degree to which individuals participate in community activities that build alliances and press for social change, including writing a letter to influence policymakers, having an in-depth, face-to-face conversation about an issue affecting one's community, or attending a meeting to gather information about a neighborhood issue. The measure for sociopolitical engagement is derived from the six-item behavioral empowerment scale ( $\alpha = .77$ ) designed by Speer and Peterson (2000).

Descriptive statistics and a correlation matrix for all of these variables are shown in Table 1. The correlation matrix indicates that each construct is sufficiently unique and that multicollinearity is not a major concern for subsequent analyses<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, there are theoretical reasons to distinguish among the constructs: sociopolitical consciousness and engagement represent sophisticated cognitive and behavioral, respectively, forms of interacting with extant power structures in one's community. Sense of community and psychological empowerment are psychoemotional constructions of one's position vis-à-vis community organizations and processes, and social attribution is a basic ability and propensity for identifying environmental origins of problems in living.

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<sup>2</sup> A variance inflation factors (VIF) test confirms the absence of substantial multicollinearity among predictor variables.

Table 2.1. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix for predictor and outcomevariable measures

	Mean	SD					
Sense of community	3.740	.664					
Psychological empowerment	3.508	.754					
Social attribution	3.523	.658					
Sociopolitical consciousness	3.833	.516					
Sociopolitical engagement	1.922	.839					

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Sense of community	-				
2. Psychological empowerment	.307	-			
3. Social attribution	.110	.103	-		
4. Sociopolitical consciousness	-.110	-.171	.153	-	
5. Sociopolitical engagement	.287	.388	.119	.016	-

Given that the interest of this paper is in SPD, i.e., combinations of sociopolitical consciousness and sociopolitical engagement, and not consciousness and engagement as separate constructs, four different combinatorial categories were created using median splits on these two variables. This technique violates a golden rule of quantitative analysis that avers that continuous data should not be simplified to categorical data due to the resultant loss of nuance. However, the present study sacrifices nuance in exchange for the opportunity to force ideal combinations of consciousness and

engagement. An alternative approach could run separate regression models with sociopolitical consciousness and sociopolitical engagement, respectively, as outcomes; but this still does not shed light on the likelihood of their co-occurrence, which is the primary object of interest to the present study. Thus, after dividing each variable on the median and combining the resultant groups, four categories emerge: (a) below-median consciousness and below-median engagement or “low SPD,” (b) above-median consciousness and below-median engagement or “disengaged SPD,” (c) below-median consciousness and above-median engagement or “acritical SPD,” and (d) above-median consciousness and above-median engagement or “high SPD.”

### Data Analyses

These four categories—low, disengaged, acritical, and high SPD—are used as the outcome variable in a multinomial logistic regression model with the four predictor variables described above. This model allows exploration of the relationship not just between two categorical outcomes (e.g., low SPD and high SPD), but multiple categorical outcomes that have important theoretical implications (Hoffmann, 2004). In this way, one can examine the predictive effects of variables on the likelihood of being in any of the four outcome categories relative to another outcome category. For example, the multinomial logistic regression model allows one to make comparisons between the likelihood of having low SPD versus high SPD given different arrangements of the predictor variables; but, at the same time, one can also make comparisons between the

likelihood of having disengaged SPD versus high SPD. The mean and standard deviations of the predictor variables—sense of community, psychological empowerment, and social attributions—for each outcome category of SPD are shown in Table 2, and detailed descriptive statistics for participant age are given for each outcome category in Table 3.

Table 2.2. Sample means and standard deviations by sociopolitical development outcome category

	Low SPD		Disengaged SPD		Acritical SPD		High SPD	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Sense of community	3.660	.593	3.559	.685	3.898	.677	3.840	.650
Psychological empowerment	3.372	.684	3.129	.780	3.811	.679	3.718	.672
Social attributions	3.385	.616	3.531	.585	3.492	.696	3.684	.694

To take full advantage of the categories it is advantageous to select one of the categories as the comparison group (Hoffmann, 2004). In this model, high SPD is held out as the comparison group, as the theoretical interest is in determining what distinguishes high SPD individuals from individuals with low, disengaged, or acritical SPD.

Table 2.3. Cross-tabulation of sociopolitical development outcome category<sup>3</sup>

	Low SPD	Disengaged SPD	Acritical SPD	High SPD	Total
<i>Age</i>					
18-24	32 33.0	19 19.6	24 24.7	22 22.7	97 100.0
25-34	66 30.1	45 20.6	54 24.7	54 24.7	219 100.0
35-44	52 23.2	55 24.6	59 26.3	58 25.9	224 100.0
45-54	42 23.6	50 28.1	39 21.9	47 26.4	178 100.0
55-64	25 20.0	30 24.0	36 28.8	34 27.2	125 100.0
65-74	17 21.5	22 27.9	18 22.8	22 27.9	79 100.0
75 and over	18 29.5	19 31.2	10 16.4	14 23.0	61 100.0
Total	252 25.6	240 24.4	240 24.4	251 25.5	983 100.0

To restate the hypotheses of this study in operational terms, it is expected that an increase in sense of community, psychological empowerment, and social attribution will make it more likely for an individual to have high SPD versus low, disengaged, or acritical SPD. It is also hypothesized that young adults are more likely to have low, disengaged, and acritical SPD than older adults. Figure 2 shows a figural model representing these hypotheses.

<sup>3</sup> Frequencies and row percentages are reported

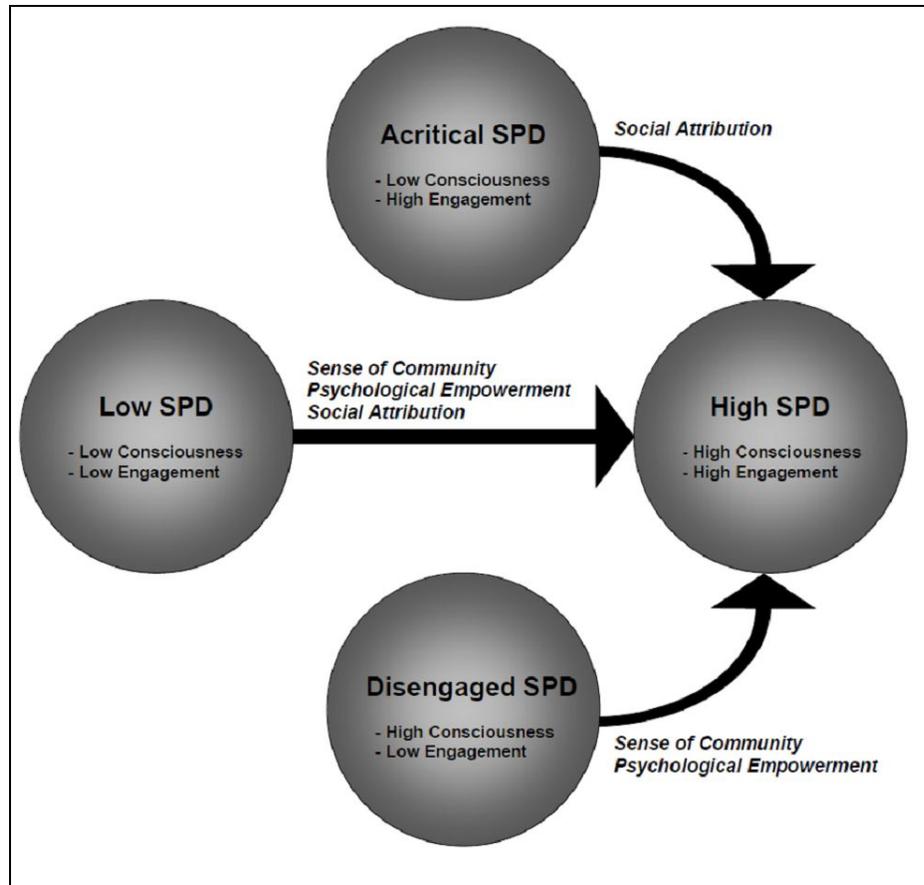


Figure 2.1. Operational model of sociopolitical development

Several tests can be run in statistical software packages to ascertain the appropriateness of the selected outcome categories. For example, it is possible that there is not adequate difference between categories to justify their standing alone, in which case they may be collapsed into fewer categories<sup>4</sup>. Another test can be run to determine the suitability of specific predictor variables to the overall fit of the model; this provides evidence that certain predictor variables should be

<sup>4</sup> The Wald test for combining alternatives tests the null hypothesis that all model coefficients associated with a given pair of category outcomes are zero, i.e., that there is no difference between the categories due to variability in the predictor variables. A test run for this model rejects this null hypothesis.

dropped from the model<sup>5</sup>. Running these tests for the present model suggest that the selected outcome categories and predictor variables are appropriate<sup>6</sup>.

Missing data were dropped via casewise deletion. Only seven cases of the overall 990 were dropped in this fashion, not significantly affecting the results.

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<sup>5</sup> The Wald test for independent variables tests the null hypothesis that all model coefficients associated with a given predictor variable are zero. A test run for this model rejects this null hypothesis for all predictor variables, suggesting that they should be left in the model as they contribute to overall fit.

<sup>6</sup> Another test commonly associated with multinomial logistic regression models is the Hausman test of independence of alternatives, which tests to what degree outcome categories may be influenced by alternative categories not included in the model. Given the use of median splits to generate the four outcome categories in this model, this test is unnecessary. Furthermore, a correlation analysis was conducted among predictor variables to examine the possibility of multicollinearity among these variables; however all correlation coefficients were under an absolute value of .30, suggesting independence. Finally, robust standard errors were calculated for the model to account for heteroskedasticity using the HC3 heteroskedasticity consistent covariate matrix.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

First, a simple regression analysis is modeled to examine the predictive relationship of sociopolitical consciousness on sociopolitical engagement. The results, shown in Table 3.1, corroborate the previous findings of Speer and Peterson (2000) who found no effect of sociopolitical consciousness on sociopolitical engagement. The further justifies the question, what predictive forces, then, can increase the likelihood that these two phenomena co-occur?

Table 3.1. Simple regression of sociopolitical engagement on sociopolitical consciousness

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Outcome variable: Sociopolitical engagement

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<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient</u>	<u>Std Error</u> <sup>7</sup>
Sociopolitical consciousness	0.0252	0.0514

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F-statistic = 0.24, p-value=0.624  
R-squared = 0.000

The main analysis for this study explores the predictive relationship of sense of community, psychological empowerment, and social attributions on different combinatorial outcomes of sociopolitical consciousness and sociopolitical engagement while controlling education and income. The results of

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<sup>7</sup> Robust standard errors are reported and modeled using the HC3 heteroskedasticity consistent covariance matrix

the multinomial logistic regression for the proposed model are presented in terms of relative risk ratios (RRR), which represent the exponentiated beta coefficients from the generalized linear model. Relative risk ratios are a corollary of logistic regression models' odds ratios, but rather than reporting the ratio of the odds of two outcomes across various values of a predictor variable, it presents the ratio of odds of an outcome *relative to a base outcome* across various values of a predictor variable. Interpretations, then, are made in terms similar to odds ratios interpretations, but in the case of relative risk ratios they are made relative to the base outcome category<sup>8</sup>. Interpretations are also provided below in terms of probabilities of assignment to each of the four outcome categories given certain ideal types of predictor variable combinations.

The output from the model for the continuous predictor variables—sense of community, psychological empowerment, social attribution, and age—produce 12 relative risk ratios, six of which are statistically significant, reported relative to the base outcome, i.e., the high SPD category (see Table 3.2). For the sense of community predictor variable, these relative risk ratios suggest that each one-unit increase in sense of community is associated with an expected 27% decrease in the odds of being in the disengaged SPD category relative to the odds of being in the high SPD category, controlling for the effects of psychological empowerment, social attribution, and age (RRR = .733,  $p < .05$ ).

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<sup>8</sup> For a more thorough explanation of relative risk ratios, see the Stata website, <http://www.stata.com>; a discussion specific to relative risk ratio can be found at the URL <http://www.stata.com/statalist/archive/2005-04/msg00678.html>

Table 3.2. Multinomial logistic regression model of sociopolitical development categories<sup>9</sup>

Variable	Low SPD		Disengaged SPD		Acritical SPD	
	RRR <sup>10</sup>	Std Error <sup>11</sup>	RRR	Std Error	RRR	Std Error
Sense of community	0.8853	0.1338	0.7331**	0.1157	1.1299	0.1771
Psychological empowerment	0.4898***	0.0741	0.3690***	0.0578	1.1421	0.1752
Social attributions	0.5153***	0.0794	0.8349	0.1329	0.6120***	0.0892
Age	0.8455***	0.0510	0.9367	0.0538	0.9543	0.0564

Wald chi2 = 141.30, p-value=0.0000

Asterisks indicate statistical significance using a 2-tailed test. \*\*\* indicates significance at the 1% level, \*\* at the 5% level.

For the psychological empowerment predictor variable, it is estimated that a one-unit increase in psychological empowerment is associated with an expected 51% decrease in the odds of being in the low SPD category (RRR = .490,  $p < .01$ ) and a 63% decrease in the odds of being in the disengaged SPD category (RRR = .369,  $p < .01$ ) both relative to the odds of being in the high SPD category, while controlling for the other predictor variables. For the social attribution predictor variable, it is estimated that a one-unit increase in social attribution is associated with an expected 48% decrease in the odds of being in the low SPD category (R = .515,  $p < .01$ ) and a 39% decrease in the odds of being in the acritical SPD

<sup>9</sup> High SPD is the base outcome

<sup>10</sup> RRR = Relative Risk Ratio

<sup>11</sup> Robust standard errors are reported and modeled using the HC3 heteroskedasticity consistent covariance matrix

category ( $R = .612, p < .01$ ) both relative to the odds of being in the high SPD category and controlling for the other predictor variables in the model. Finally, for the age variable, it is predicted that a move up from one 10-year age bracket to the next is associated with a 15% decrease in the odds of being in the low SPD category relative to the odds of being in the high SPD category ( $R = .846, p < .01$ ).

In substantive terms, the results show that as one's sense of community increases, the likelihood of her being in the high SPD category also increases (relative to the disengaged SPD groups). Regarding psychological empowerment, the data show that as it increases so, too, does one's likelihood of being in the high SPD category (relative to the low and disengaged SPD categories). And finally, the results suggest that as social attribution increases, one's likelihood of being in the high SPD category also increases (relative to the low and acritical SPD categories).

Looking at the predicted probabilities of ideal type combinations of predictor variables can provide a more meaningful interpretation of the results of a multinomial logistic regression (versus the interpretation of relative risk ratios). Because predicted probabilities are not calculated in constant terms via the generalized linear model, specific ideal types, or select combinations of predictor variables, are specified here with their concomitant predicted probabilities for each outcome category of SPD. Table 3.3 shows these predicted probabilities given different predictor variable specifications. The "base case" in Table 3.3 represents a theoretical individual who is of mean age and possesses mean scores on the sense of community, psychological empowerment, and social

attribution measures. For this base case, we see that there is relative consistency in predicted probabilities across SPD outcomes; for the average adult, the probability of being in any of the four SPD categories is between 22% and 29%. This makes sense given that the SPD categories were generated using median splits. The next row in Table 3.3 lists the predicted probabilities for an 18-24 year old with mean scores on sense of community, psychological empowerment, and social attribution. Here we can see that simply being a young adult versus an older adult increases the probability of being in the low SPD category by over 13% and decreases the probability of being in the high SPD category by roughly 12%. The remaining ideal types in Table 3.3 present different combinations of the continuous predictor variables for young adults with predicted probabilities for older adults (age 55 to 64) in parentheses for comparison. The “Minimum” and “Maximum” labels refer to the lowest and highest values for each of the predictor variables found in the data. For example “Minimum SOC, mean PE, SA” refers to a theoretical individual who possesses a sense of community score equivalent to the lowest score in the sample and psychological empowerment and social attribution scores equivalent to the mean scores for those variables in the data. For this theoretical individual, we see that her probability of being in the low SPD category is 35% and only 17% for the high SPD group.

Table 3.3. Selected predicted outcome probabilities for sociopolitical development categories<sup>12</sup>

Individual Characteristics	Low SPD	Disengaged SPD	Acritical SPD	High SPD
Base Case <sup>13</sup>	27.1	22.8	23.7	26.5
18-24 year olds	32.6	22.7	22.9	21.9
55-64 year olds	24.0	22.6	24.0	29.4
Minimum SOC <sup>14</sup>	35.4(27.0)	36.7(37.5)	11.7(12.6)	16.5(22.9)
Maximum SOC	31.0(21.2)	15.8(16.5)	28.8(31.3)	24.3(31.1)
Minimum PE	39.6(29.7)	52.7(60.1)	3.3(3.9)	4.5(6.3)
Maximum PE	17.9(11.4)	7.6(7.4)	41.0(41.4)	33.5(39.9)
Minimum SA	54.8(42.8)	11.3(13.4)	26.0(32.3)	7.9(11.5)
Maximum SA	20.5(13.2)	27.6(27.1)	16.8(17.2)	35.1(42.4)
Minimum SOC, PE, and SA	57.4(46.8)	39.9(49.5)	1.7(2.1)	1.0(1.5)
Maximum SOC, PE, and SA	8.6(5.2)	6.0(5.5)	34.6(32.8)	50.6(56.6)

SOC = Sense of community, PE = Psychological empowerment, SA = Social attribution

<sup>12</sup> Percentages are reported

<sup>13</sup> Base case represents a hypothetical individual with mean scores on sense of community, psychological empowerment, social attributions, and age

<sup>14</sup> Predicted probabilities beyond row 2 are all reported for individuals age 18-24 with predicted probabilities for age 55-64 in parentheses; where maximum or minimum values are not reported for sense of community, psychological empowerment, and social attributions, mean values are assumed for those variables

Representing the “best case” and “worst case” scenarios for young adults are the latter two rows in Table 3.3. Here we see that for the theoretical individual who has a minimum score on sense of community, psychological empowerment, and social attribution, there is a 57% probability of being in the low SPD category, a 40% probability of being in the disengaged SPD category, and less than a 2% probability of being in either the acritical SPD or the high SPD category. At the other extreme, a young adult with maximum scores across the three predictor variables has a 7% probability of being in the low SPD category, an 8% probability of being in the disengaged SPD category, a 35% probability of being in the acritical SPD category, and a 51% probability of being in the high SPD category. Thus, we can say that the discrete change in the probability of being in the high SPD group is positive 50% from the worst case to the best case scenario; the discrete change in the probability of being in the disengaged SPD group is negative 32% from the worst case to the best case scenario; the discrete change in the probability of being in the acritical group is positive 33% from the worst case to the best case scenario; and the discrete change of being in the low SPD group is negative 50% from the worst case to the best case scenario.

Figures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 provide graphical representation of these predicted probability scores for varying values of each of the predictor variables. Figure 3.1 represents the changes in predicted probability for each SPD outcome as sense of community increases. We can see that the probability of being in the high SPD group increases most rapidly with sense of community and the

probability of being in the low SPD and disengaged SPD groups gradually decrease. This suggests that as one's sense of community increases, so too does the likelihood of having high-level SPD, all while the likelihood of having low-level SPD and disengaged SPD goes down.

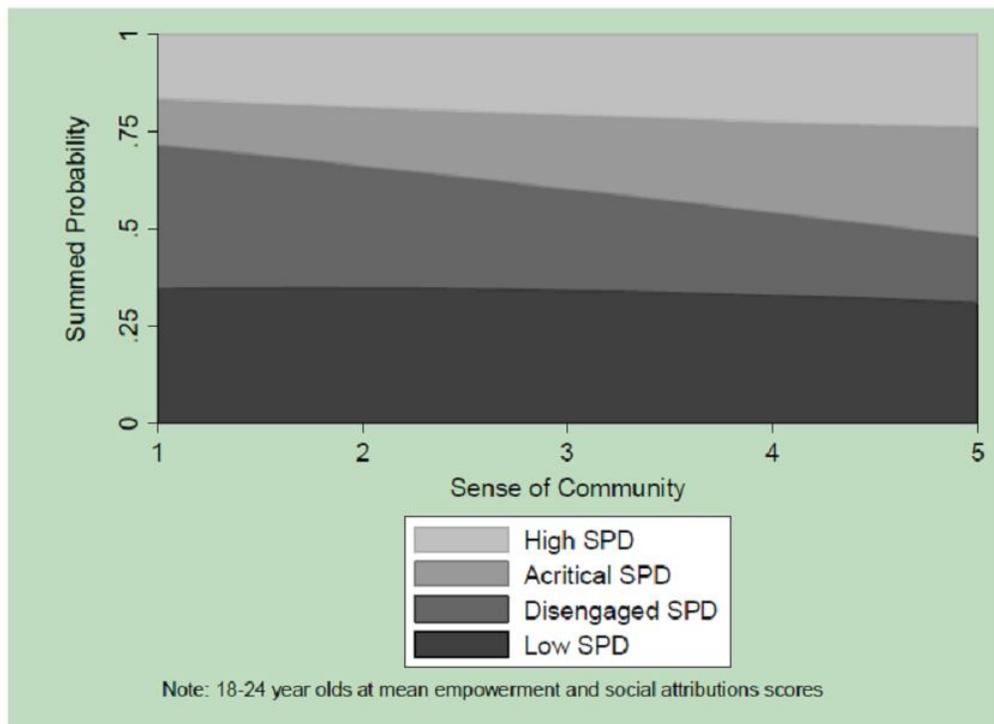


Figure 3.1. Sense of community and predicted probability of SPD outcomes

Figure 3.2 represents the changing predicted probabilities of the SPD outcomes as psychological empowerment increases. It shows that the predicted probability of the acritical group increases most sharply with increased empowerment, and the high SPD category also increases. The remaining two SPD categories see decreases in probability. This implies that as one becomes

more psychologically empowered, one is more likely to have high SPD or acritical SPD and less likely to have low SPD or disengaged SPD.

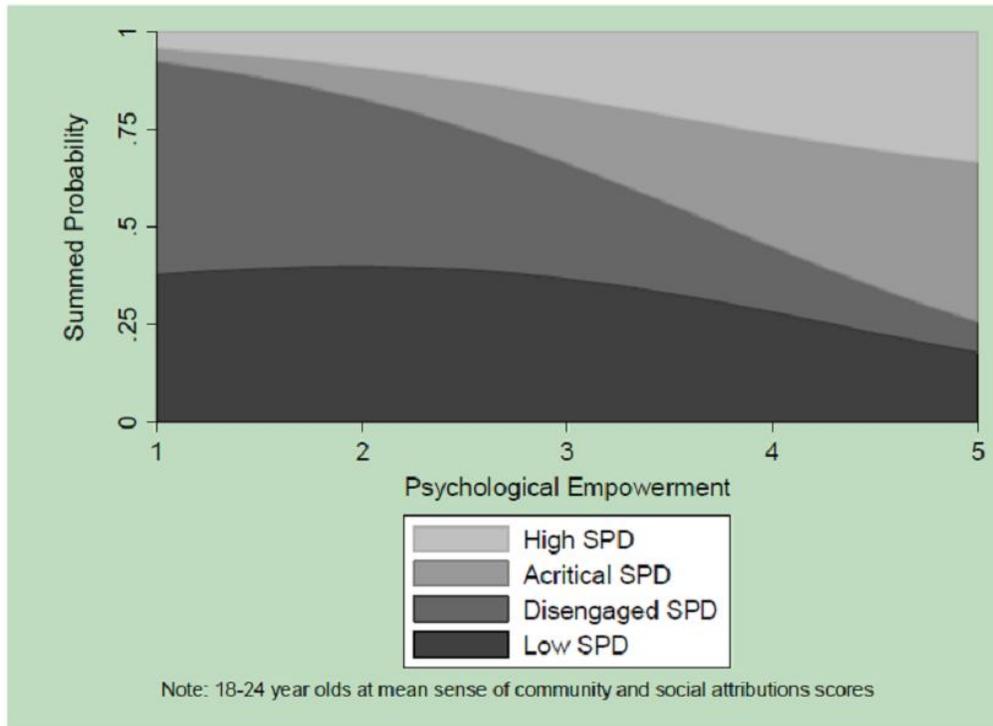


Figure 3.2. Psychological empowerment and predicted probability of SPD outcomes

Finally and similarly, Figure 3.3 shows how changes in social attribution are associated with the predicted probabilities of each SPD outcome. Here we see that as one's propensity to make social attributions increases, the likelihood of her having low SPD goes down, and the likelihood of her having high SPD or disengaged SPD increases.

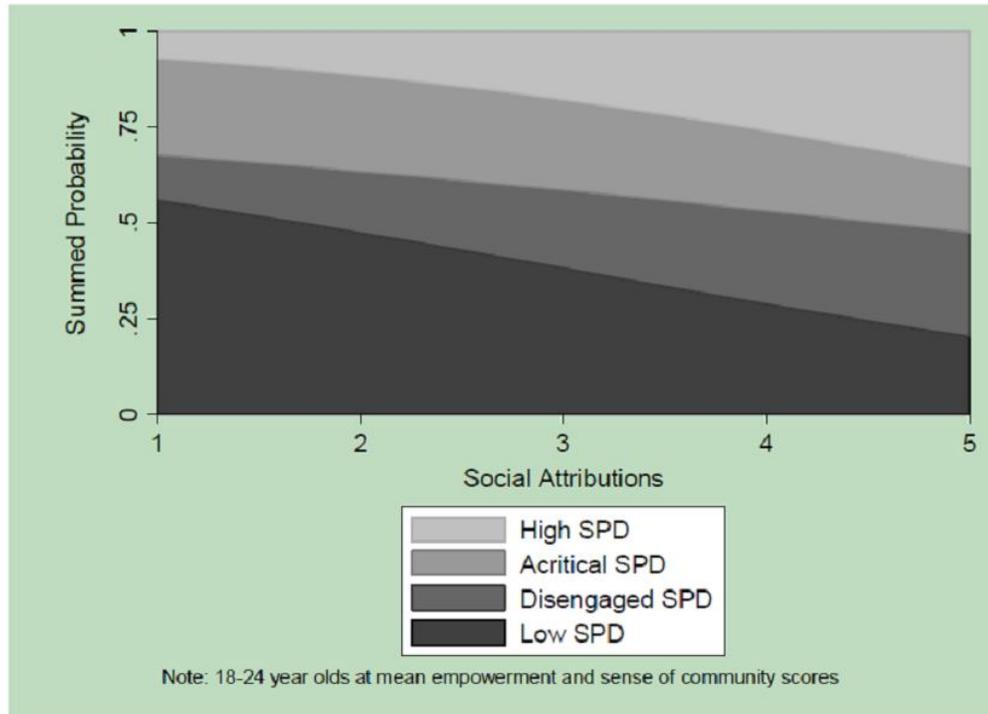


Figure 3.3. Social attributions and predicted probability of SPD outcomes

Because the measures for sense of community, psychological empowerment, and social attribution are constructed of responses from Likert scale items, using the expression “one-unit” change in these predictor variables does not have direct substantive meaning. However, given the manner in which these constructs are determined, they are treated here as interval-level data in that it is assumed, for example, that a change in one’s sense of community score from 1.5 to 2.5 is approximately the same “quantitative” increase in one’s actual sense of community as a change in score from 3.25 to 4.25.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSIONS

These data shed light on factors that contribute to sociopolitical development. Even if one were to accept the supposition that sociopolitical consciousness is unrelated to sociopolitical engagement (Conchas, 2001; Fine, 1991; Speer & Peterson, 2000), the question remains as to what serves to bring these consciousness and action components together. This disconnect between consciousness and action is, in fact, supported in these analyses. However, the multinomial logistic regression model in this study provides evidence that sense of community through community organizations, psychological empowerment, social attribution, and age all have significant associations with SPD. These findings, in general, are consonant with qualitative findings in the SPD literature (e.g., Griffith, 2002; Guessous, 2004; Kieffer, 1984; Mustakova-Possardt, 1998; Watts, et al., 1999; Watts, et al., 2003).

The data show that young adults may have a greater chance of being in the low SPD group than the high SPD group. This difference between younger and older adults is heavily influenced by the engagement component of SPD. It appears that being a younger adult does little to distinguish a person from an older adult in terms of their understanding of power and social change. However, differences in participation are significant between these age groups. This

reflects a common trend in youth civic engagement that depicts young people as less likely to engage in the political process (see Gibson, et al., 2003).

Further, these findings suggest that a higher level of affective connection to one's community by virtue of association with a community organization (i.e., sense of community) increases the likelihood of simultaneously having high consciousness and high engagement. It also increases the probability of having low consciousness and high engagement. The implication may be that for young people who start from a position of low engagement (regardless of level of consciousness), increased sense of community makes it less likely to maintain a position of low engagement and more likely to assume a position of high engagement, particularly a position of high engagement with high consciousness (i.e., high SPD). For young people with an already high level of engagement but low consciousness, sense of community appears to offer little help in improving their chances of having high SPD.

Psychological empowerment shows a similar pattern to sense of community in its association with SPD outcomes. For young people with low engagement, gains in psychological empowerment appear to decrease the likelihood of maintaining that level of low engagement and make it more likely to be in the two high participation groups. However, whereas the high SPD category is the most likely outcome for individuals with the highest sense of community scores, the low consciousness with high engagement group is the most likely outcome for the highest psychological empowerment scorers. This has somewhat problematic implications, in that it may suggest that greater levels of

psychological empowerment have the potential to decrease one's consciousness, even as it increases engagement. This phenomenon may require further investigation. A possible explanation is that young people with already low levels of consciousness are likely to enjoy increased engagement while seeing no increase in consciousness whereas young people with already high levels of consciousness simply add the engagement component while maintaining their consciousness. There is no way, using the multinomial logistic regression model to make conclusive statements about the flow of individuals from one SPD group to another, but logic may suggest that an increased sense of agency does not decrease one's consciousness of power and social change processes. This author is unaware of any literature that suggests that an understanding of power and change can be "unlearned"; however, implied in a greater sense of agency may be a reworking of one's worldview regarding change and justice, and this shift may contribute to the way one reports her level of "consciousness."

Findings on social attribution suggest that one's proclivity to attribute social problems to structural causes generally makes it more likely for her to have high SPD. Specifically, for young people in a state of low SPD, increased social attribution makes it less likely to stay in that state and makes it much more likely to move to a state of high SPD or disengaged SPD. For young people with low engagement and high consciousness (i.e., disengaged SPD), social attribution may have little impact. For low-SPD young people, there seems to be potential for social attribution to increase their likelihood of being in the two high consciousness groups.

It is interesting to consider the effects of these three predictor variables in concert, as well. For while increases in the variables independently seems to have ambiguous consequences on high SPD and incomplete SPD outcomes (whether lacking consciousness or engagement), increases in all three variables strongly suggest that high SPD is the most likely outcome (as shown in Table 6). In practical terms, this suggests that these predictors could be differentially emphasized depending on where young people are in regard to their consciousness and action. For example, if working with youth who are highly aware of sociopolitical forces but prone to disengagement, an emphasis on participating in community organizations and building empowerment may be particularly helpful in achieving complete SPD outcomes.

Overall, these findings support the model shown in Figure 2 and confirm the study hypotheses, with the exception that sense of community does not appear to increase the likelihood of having high versus low SPD. In response to the question, what makes people with high SPD different from people with low and incomplete SPD, the data point to sense of community, psychological empowerment, social attribution, and age all having a significant role.

### Theoretical Implications

In Watts and colleagues (2003) article on SPD theory, they make a call for further research in several areas to advance the theory, namely (a) “continued empirical work that uses multiple methods for furthering our understanding of SPD” and (b) “the SPD of people who, by virtue of their population membership,

derive privilege and benefits from the oppression of others.” To the first point, this study’s use of quantitative methods to triangulate previous qualitative findings related to SPD may contribute to the empirical understanding of the phenomenon.

To the second point, the sample drawn for the present study is representative of various racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. Income was included in the present analyses as a control variable, and it was found to be insignificantly related to SPD outcomes. Further, race was included in an alternative model, with no significant findings related to racial group membership. The putative implications are that race and income have no effect on one’s SPD outcomes— what facilitates people’s consciousness of social power and their engagement in social change is common across racial and socioeconomic groups. However, there is little doubt that SPD is a different phenomenon for people who experience marginalization, exploitation, and cultural imperialism as realities in living. The capacities that result from high SPD could potentially be employed to effect change in favor of different constituencies, both oppressed and oppressors.

### Practical Implications

These conclusions appear to have signification implications for practitioners in the fields of education, community development, and youth development. As there is growing evidence of SPD being a positive predictor of educational achievement and engagement (Neblett, et al., 2006), career

development (Chronister & McWhirter, 2006; Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008), and mental health (Weitz, 1982), a fuller understanding of what contributes to SPD may be fruitful. These findings would suggest, most basically, that increasing young people's sense of community, psychological empowerment, and social attribution (in concert, if possible) is likely to increase their SPD. By offering young people opportunities to be involved in community organizations with social change agendas, a greater degree of affective sense of community may be realized. Camino and Zeldin (2002), for example, offer a range of strategies for engaging youth in the life of their communities through community organizations. Further, increasing young people's sense of agency may be achieved by hands-on experience with engagement activities. Given the complex and sometimes halting nature of action for community change, there may be concern regarding the effects of less than optimal action outcomes on youth participants' sense of agency. For example, if young people are engaged in a social change project that has ambiguous results, what effects on empowerment may be observed? Certain literature suggests that small victories in the realm of community change can serve as sources of personal accomplishment and empowerment (e.g., Weick, 1984), but more inquiry may be necessary to determine the relationship between psychological empowerment and the success of initiatives. Finally, the degree to which young people make social attributions—the most cognitive of the predictor variables examined here—could potentially be raised in the course of this type of community participation, but also through less active pursuits, including reading or having conversations

with peers about social issues. There may be some question as to what degree teachers in the formal education system are in a position to increase young people's level of social attribution, as the Western culture bias toward individualism may disincentivize such learning, at least at the level of formal education institutions. Nonetheless, the findings of this paper suggest that exploring avenues for increasing young people's sense of community, psychological empowerment, and social attribution have the potential to merge consciousness and action.

#### Limitations and conclusions

The data are limited in that there is no representation of people under the age of 18. It would improve the external validity of the findings in terms of making generalizations about young people to have a sample that includes minors. A similar analysis with a representative sample of young people would help expand the applicability of these results to under-18 youth. Further, the data are drawn only from urban areas of the U.S., and thus implications of the findings should be considered in this context.

A shortcoming to this study is that the social attribution index rendered a weak alpha coefficient (.46) and thus is less reliable than the other measures used in the study. A low alpha value is often indicative of lack of unidimensionality of a construct (Schmitt, 1996). The social attribution items were developed for this study to substantively represent the unidimensional cognitive tendency to identify social origins to community-level social problems. It is

possible that a six-item measure is insufficient to capture this item fully. There were significant findings associated with this construct, somewhat mitigating the instrumental concern that low internal consistency may underestimate the relationship between two variables (Schmitt, 1996). Nonetheless, findings associated with the social attribution variable should be interpreted with some caution.

More generally, it is difficult to capture a construct as complex as SPD using quantitative survey research. In this paper, we operationally define SPD to include one's understanding of power and social change and also her level of engagement in political activities. Surely, theorists such as Freire implied a more nuanced phenomenon than this in articulating ideas of critical consciousness and sociopolitical development. However, for the purposes of quantitative examination, an operationalization must be made, with the understanding that it may only capture a fraction of the richness of SPD. That being said, the data do allow one to speculate on the nature of the relationship between consciousness and action, and these two components are inextricably tied to SPD. A better understanding of how these two components can be merged can be a point of departure for future research and action.

SPD, as a theory and prescription for action, is still trying to make a place for itself at the table of community psychology and related disciplines. It offers a unique lens for considering the importance and applicability to marginalized groups of more common concepts such as political knowledge, political socialization, and civic engagement. In a sociopolitical environment replete with

barriers to positive development for young people who experience oppression in its various forms, SPD may be a way to foster a generation of critical agents capable of reshaping their destinies.

## APPENDIX A

### ITEM MEASURES FOR MODEL VARIABLES

#### *Sociopolitical consciousness (17 items):*

1. When there is a problem in this community, I am better able to deal with it on my own. **[R]**
2. Only by working together can people make changes in a community.
3. I can impact community issues only by working in an organized way with other people.
4. To improve my community, it is more effective to work with a group than as an individual.
5. The effectiveness of activists and corporate leaders is really due to the quality
6. The only way I can act to improve the community is by connecting to others.
7. Changing a community almost always results in conflict.
8. Because the interests of the powerful are so different from the interests of communities, conflict is likely in change efforts.
9. When community groups work to improve schools, housing, public safety and the like they should expect conflict.
10. Community groups should not strive for conflict, but they must be ready for conflict.
11. When community groups work to improve things like public health and crime, they should expect conflict.
12. Things happen in my community because those with power reward their friends.
13. The powerful punish their enemies.
14. The powerful control what information gets to the public.
15. Those with community influence keep many issues out of the news.
16. Those with power shape the way people think about community problems.
17. Influential groups shape the way a community interprets local events.

#### *Sociopolitical engagement (6 items):*

Over the last year how often have you engaged in the following?

1. Written a letter or made a telephone call to influence a policy or issue.
2. Attended an event that provided information about community services.
3. Attended a meeting to pressure city or county policy change.
4. Arranged an agenda for a public meeting.
5. Had an in-depth, face-to-face conversation about an issue affecting your community.
6. Attended a meeting to gather information about a neighborhood issue.

#### *Sense of community through a community organization (16 items):*

1. I would really rather live in a different town. [city name] is just not the place for me. **[R]**
2. [city name] is a good place for me to live.
3. Living in [city name] gives me a sense of community.
4. If I were in trouble I could count on people in [organization name] to help.
5. I trust the leaders of [organization name] to do what is best for me.
6. Most members of [organization name] forget the meaning of brotherhood when they get out of the meetings. **[R]**
7. People in [organization name] have no say about what goes on in the organization. **[R]**
8. My goals for [organization name] are pretty much the same as everybody else's.
9. No one in [organization name] responds to what I think is important. **[R]**
10. Everyone in [organization name] is pushing in different directions. **[R]**
11. [organization name] gets overlooked in [city name]. **[R]**
12. [organization name] gets very little done in this community. **[R]**
13. [organization name] has had a part in solving at least one problem in [city name].
14. Being in [organization name] allows me to be around important people.
15. Membership in [organization name] allows me to be a part of other groups in [city name].
16. Because of [organization name] I am connected to other groups in [city name].

*Psychological empowerment (8 items):*

1. I am often a leader in groups.
2. I would prefer to be a leader rather than a follower.
3. I find it very hard to talk in front of a group. **[R]**
4. I can usually organize people to get things done.
5. I enjoy political participation because I want to have as much say in running government as anyone else.
6. It hardly makes any difference who I vote for because whoever gets elected doesn't listen to people like me. **[R]**
7. People like me are generally well qualified to participate in the political activity and decision making in our country.
8. Most public officials wouldn't listen to me no matter what I did. **[R]**

*Social attribution (6 items):*

1. Preventing social problems requires that we change people, not communities. **[R]**
2. The only way to really prevent community problems is to improve things like housing and employment.
3. Social problems are most effectively addressed by changing community living conditions.
4. Drugs, crime and violence are symptoms of impoverished community conditions, not just individual choices.

5. People are poor mainly because of their bad habits. **[R]**
6. People who experience homelessness, crime, and unemployment generally have themselves to blame. **[R]**

**[R]** = Reverse coded

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