

The Development of Trust African Americans and the U.S. Government

Liku Madoshi

Dr. Ricky Green, Faculty Mentor



ABSTRACT

This researcher explores the development of trust within the African American population and between the African American population and the government. Historically, African Americans have experienced inequality and maltreatment in society from state and federal governments. A lack of trust in the government has resulted from these experiences. Through the analysis of selected events instrumental to African American history this researcher has developed a theoretical study to look at increasing and decreasing levels of trust by African Americans toward the government.

INTRODUCTION

Political trust is developed and strengthened through four components: mutually-serving goals, proven loyalty and consistency, risk, and communication (McEvily, Perrone, and Zaheer 2003). Trust within the African American population becomes stronger or weaker as its components develop through historical experience. African Americans share historical experiences of resistance and achievement which have played a major role in shaping their understanding of trust and society as a whole (Nunnally 2012).

As the population sought methods to assist them in overcoming negative experiences and adapting to society, trust among African American people grew stronger. Increasing involvement with politics was one method that produced times of political victories and increased trust among the African American population, and also between the African American population and the government. Some of these victories included receiving the complete chance to vote prohibiting any type of voter discrimination in 1965 and the election of the first African American United States President in 2008. These victories came as a result of the continuous pursuit of the goal for equality, which politically empowered the population. However, patterns of broken promises made by the government, marginalization, and limitations placed on equal opportunities for advancement have impacted the amount of trust the African American population has in the government.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*, Robin Kelley (1996) considers the inner-city and working class African American population from the height of segregation in the mid-twentieth century to the more recent times of Gangsta Rap and the development of Hip Hop in the early 1990s. Kelley (1996) illustrates the various experiences of African American oppression through job discrimination, trouble with public transportation, labels of inferiority, police brutality and an overall lack of equality as a result of domination from the government and European American people. Kelley (1996) studies the different forms of resistance African Americans used to escape the ridicule and humiliation of oppression, and points out the infrapolitics between the African American population and the European American society by whom they were being oppressed. Infrapolitics concerns the politics of oppressed groups that occur outside of the mainstream (Kelley 1996). For example, in *Race Rebels* Kelley (1996) reflects on his McDonald's work experience and how he and his African American coworkers found ways to compensate for the mistreatment they received by taking their time when mopping floors to speak with their friends and altering their uniforms by adding adjustments and accessories. Oppressed groups have developed alternative ways of understanding and viewing politics, which is why Kelley (1996) intentionally examines the African American population. This particular population has formed different understandings and methods of developing political values and attitudes as a result of their historical experiences in an imbalanced society. In his attempt to understand the infrapolitics of African Americans, the author takes an economic and cultural perspective in viewing the population.

Kelley's (1996) economic perspective investigates the working-class portion of the African American population. Due to the discrimination occurring among African Americans, it was historically very unlikely for men or women to find a job decent enough to provide for themselves and their families. Unfortunately, the ones who were able to find "good jobs" were never paid as much as their European American counterparts. The requirement of wearing a uniform made working conditions even worse for African Americans. Despite the fact they were being paid for their labor, the uniform symbolized ownership, and that someone without a uniform had power over those who wore a uniform. It symbolized times when enslaved people were property of slave masters and not free, individual, hard-working men and women. The uniform was a virtual form of reliving experiences the population had already escaped (Kelley 1996).

Along with a working-class perspective, Kelley (1996) uses a cultural lens in an attempt to understand the population. Kelley (1996) argues that because of the capitalist system's set up, working class African Americans had less access to resources in society. The wealthier a person or group, the easier it was to obtain status and power. African Americans lacked adequate resources that

would increase their wealth, so as a population they had to empower themselves alternatively through culture and Kelley (1996) attempts to understand this cultural development.

Unlike European Americans, African Americans lacked governing institutions sufficient enough to empower themselves. Kelley (1996) argues that difficulty lies in the attempt for the population to develop and advance because of the middle and upper classes weighing them down. Kelley (1996) argues that to understand African Americans as a political population, you first have to understand them as a culture. Maintaining ignorance among European Americans regarding African American culture serves as a form of resistance and thereby empowers the African American population.

Resistance was a response to the oppression experienced by African Americans and this response came in multiple forms (Kelley 1996). One of these forms was regaining the humanity that was lost with the dehumanization of oppression. Dealing with the hardship of discrimination, African Americans were determined to find their own ways to enjoy life and take advantage of depressing situations (Kelley 1996). Church was a way of bringing the community together outside of work through faith, communication, and shared experiences. African Americans turned segregation into congregation as part of their separation from European American society. Resistance was also expressed through desired clothing worn by African American men and women which allowed them to establish a personal identity outside of the workplace. Kelley (1996) also takes a look at Malcolm X and his methods of resistance, which partially came from his being a “hustler” as a young man. Malcolm X pimped and sold drugs in pursuit of individual success since most jobs available to African American men were low-paying and subservient labor. More recently, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, music was also a form of resistance with artists like Ice Cube and Ice T using the art to directly express their feelings about government, law enforcement, politics, and the conditions of the African American community through explicit lyrics (Kelley 1996).

Kelley (1996) argues that the stronger resistance became within the community, the stronger the community grew and the more the community lacked trust in the government and society as a whole. Segregation from European American society strengthened resistance because it strengthened trust within the African American population. Nonetheless, “African Americans wanted more space for themselves, they wanted to receive equitable treatment, they wanted to be personally treated with respect and dignity... and above all, they wanted to exercise power over institutions that controlled them or on which they were dependent” (Kelley 1996, 75). Resistance was a response to the lack of equality encountered by African Americans on a daily basis. Kelley (1996) discusses how African Americans found “creative ways to resist and survive in the South” (77). From the African American population’s perspective, the motives and intentions

of European Americans crippled any chance for advancement in society from limiting transportation, employment and black housing opportunities.

A majority of the time, the way a person or group votes reflects their political views or the political views closest to their own. Considering Democrats and Republicans are the two major parties in the United States, this research investigates why African Americans tend to favor one party over the other. A large number of African Americans tend to have more support for Democratic candidates despite having some views and attitudes consistent with those of Republicans. Democrats have a liberal philosophy that promotes collectivity and argues citizens should share economic burdens. Democrats also believe in a strong government that takes care of the citizens. Unlike Democrats, Republicans believe that it is the duty of the citizens to run the government. The conservative philosophy of the Republican Party promotes individuality and believes that individuals determine their own destiny. Whether or not someone sides with one party over the other highly depends on income and political views. A reason most African Americans associate themselves with Liberals is because the Democratic Party is historically involved with progressive causes such as welfare and equality which are perceived to be of more central importance to African Americans (Wallace et al. 2009). Historically, unity has been an aspect of African American culture that prioritizes the community. With this prioritization, one can make the connection the African American population has with the Democratic Party which values diversity among equality, and most importantly working together for the welfare of the community or the benefit of the collective.

Focusing on the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Bush v. Gore*, 531 U.S. 98 (2000), Avery (2007) examines racial differences among African Americans and European Americans in political trust. In the case concerning the two presidential candidates, after overturning the Florida Supreme Court's order of manual recounts in some Florida counties, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the "recount was not treating all ballots equally, hence in violation of the constitution's equal protection and due process guarantees" (Avery 2007, 330). Most of the recounts had taken place in communities that were predominantly African American (Avery 2007). Bush won the election and according to Avery (2007, 330) the case also provides "excellent context for investigating inter-racial differences in political trust."

Avery (2007) argues that political mistrust among African Americans indicates a more foundational dissatisfaction with the European American political system. Further, that dissatisfaction is a major component of unhappiness with the continued racial discrimination and racial inequality in political and economic power. With the understanding of the African American struggle throughout history, one can comprehend why there was so much discontent and mistrust with the outcome of cases like *Bush v. Gore*, 531 U.S. 98 (2000). African

Americans will continue to build levels of mistrust with the government until there is change significant enough to take away from that mistrust (Avery 2007). Unfortunately, even when significant change is in place, the level of mistrust will not decrease as quickly as change occurs. The election of the United States' first African American President, Barack H. Obama, may or may not be a short-term political factor – depending on the critique of his two terms – that gives hope to the African American community until they once again realize which population is dominant.

In *African American Politics*, King (2010) scrutinizes the components from which African American voting behavior is developed. The author initially defines political behavior as “the study of the rational actions and decisions of individuals and/or groups to determine their beliefs and opinions about a variety of personal and public policy issue items...as well as the role of the government in responding to or resolving such issues” (King 2010, 43). According to King (2010), African American political behavior was never correctly and thoroughly documented because their right to vote has always been manipulated by the systems of segregation, racism, and Jim Crowism. Despite a distorted right to vote among African Americans, there have been political leaders such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Mary McLeod who have pushed the European American political system for equality, freedom, and liberty. Fortunately, now that the African American population has a solid, equal right to vote, it is not as complex to investigate the underlying foundation of their political behavior.

Quoting Dr. Hanes Walton Jr., King (2010, 45) defines African American political behavior as the “sum total of a variety of factors and influences that shape the community’s political perceptions and realities”. This idea includes systems of separation, economic policies, and living conditions. According to Walton (2010), this definition can be applied in understanding the political behavior of all groups in the United States. Further it can be applied to societal issues such as public education and healthcare that impact the African American community the same way they impact the European American community. Certain issues will positively or negatively impact each community because each community has a distinct culture and set of collective experiences. While Walton’s definition for political behavior can be applied to different groups, he is mistaken in believing that both the European American and African American communities are impacted in the same way (King 2010).

King (2010) later defines African American political behavior as African American collective thought and decision-making related to politics and public policy and claims group consciousness, linked fate, and black utility as three main indicators of African American political behavior. She argues that African Americans have higher levels of political activity compared to other

disadvantaged groups because of the population's self-awareness in being a discriminated and disadvantaged group in society. To completely understand the political behavior, one must understand the political culture of African Americans. Political culture is made up of the attitudes and beliefs that form the collective political experiences and thoughts of African Americans in America. The population's collective experience makes up the values of the culture, and most importantly, their level of trust in the politics and government of a European American society. After 1965, there has been an increase in the number of African American elected officials, voters, and a greater effort from political leaders to reach out to the African American community to get the people to vote. The election of President Obama further indicates the African American population along with the government is progressing in their attempt at transformative change (King 2010).

Lawson (2003) describes the Black Power Movement of the 1960s as the end of the Civil Rights era. According to Lawson (2003, 230), the existence of spontaneous protests "suggested that a shift was taking place away from the traditional civil rights goal of equal access and toward demands for a redistribution of economic and political power." Before the Black Power Movement, nonviolence had become a standard in African American social protest. The methods of civil disobedience promoted by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others have proven to be ineffective (Lawson 2003). The nonviolent sit-ins, praying, and singing by protesters left them subject to police brutality, attacks with fire hoses, incarceration, and fines. The acts of civil disobedience were subsequently replaced with anger and rioting, two strategies that became most prevalent following Dr. King's assassination.

According to Ongiri (2010), civil disobedience and community were considered core values of the Civil Rights Movement kept alive by Dr. King. These same core values were pronounced dead after Dr. King's assassination, which caused an uproar of anger from the African American community. Ongiri (2010) argues that the death of a major African American leader such as Dr. King was a large trigger for the Black Power Movement. What arose was a combination of disorder, violence and chaos; that combination was a struggle of power from the population. The movement was also being referred to as the "Post Civil Rights Era", and the phrase "Black Power" symbolized methods and forms of action from the community (Ongiri 2010). Power was now desired instead of equality with European Americans.

The Black Panther Party founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in 1966 gained recognition for their involvement in the Black Power Movement. According to Muse (1968), the Black Panther symbolized an all-negro political movement for power. Before his death, Dr. King did not support the idea of using violence in the Black Power Movement; he thought using the term Black

Power to be an unfortunate concept. Dr. King's philosophy on Black Power was that power should not be exclusively sought out for black people but shared with European Americans instead. "Black Power" was a concept intended to promote self-reliance in the Negro (Muse 1968). Further, those who created the term meant it as a way to stimulate and encourage learning about African American history and culture, and the development of pride in *négritude* (the self-affirmation of black people). The Black Power Movement also featured the involvement of African American youth. For a variety of causes ranging from free speech to dormitory conditions, young African Americans took part in the riots and demonstrations. The number of riots reached a peak in 1966; in that year, riots were reported in over 113 cities nationwide. Poverty, frustration, and helplessness found within the population were contributing factors to the riots and the Black Power Movement as a whole (Muse 1968).

METHODS

This researcher looked at how African American trust in the government and how political trust within the African American population has developed over a course of events essential to African American history in the last 50 years. According to McEvily, Perrone, and Zaheer (2003) trust is made up of four components: communication, proven loyalty and consistency, risk, and mutually serving goals. Culture is drawn from generalizations of people and a sufficient understanding of culture is necessary to understand the development of trust. After gaining some understanding of the African American population's culture, this researcher looked at the development of trust's components through a number of selected events: the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Nationalist Movement, early Hip Hop and Gangster Rap, and the first election of Barack Obama.

While researching *trust* to build this theoretical model the following are the definitions that best allowed this researcher to look at how trust develops over the course of an event. This researcher looked at McEvily, Perrone, and Zaheer's (2003) four components of trust in each of the selected events, emphasizing the most prominent component of each event. For the purpose of this theoretical study, *communication* is the expression of the population's attitude toward the government. People express *satisfaction and dissatisfaction* through verbal and nonverbal methods. Verbal methods include speech, slogans, and music. Nonverbal methods include sit-ins and peaceful boycotts. Proven loyalty and consistency are demonstrated through what this researcher perceived as continuous dedication and support toward the greater good of the African American population. *Risk* is the willingness to expose oneself to the possibilities of negative consequences in pursuit of the greater good for the population. For example, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. accepted risk as he led his community despite the threats that came his way as a leader of the Civil Rights Movement.

Mutually-serving goals and intentions are the collective interests and aspirations of the African American population. For example, Barack Obama's goal to be the first African American president matched the population's goal to elect the first African American president; therefore, African Americans showed their support by voting for him, and Obama and the voting public shared this mutually-serving goal.

In the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement, the prominent component of trust is proven loyalty and consistency. Both events require this component from the population to keep the movements alive and effective. Communication is the most prominent component of trust when looking at early Hip Hop and Gangster Rap during the 1990s. This form of music is explicit and aggressive in words. It communicated to the government and law enforcement the frustration and distrust felt by the African American population. The population used this form of music as a voice. President Obama could also be considered the voice of the population by some. Looking at the first election of President Obama, mutually-serving goals and intentions of the population is the most prominent component of trust.

Limitations in researching and understanding the development of trust in African American political behavior include events and information that may have been historically distorted. It is also possible that those who do not vote have strong distrust in the government of European American politics and thus take action by staying inactive. It may be that the reported percentage of African Americans who do not vote illustrates their distrust in the government in general, also demonstrated by their inactivity.

ANALYSIS

Trust within the African American population is developed and strengthened through four components: mutually-serving goals, proven loyalty and consistency, risk, and communication (McEvily, Perrone, and Zaheer 2003). The development of trust within the African American population is critical and influential when it comes to mainstream politics. Studying the subject of political trust within the African American population requires an examination of how trust can be developed and the population's culture and history. Trust within the African American population becomes stronger as its components develop through particular events instrumental to African American history; the amount of trust the population has in the government is influenced by their historical experiences. According to Kelley (1996) culture is derived from shared experience and one of the best ways to look at African American political behavior is through a cultural lens. Being a marginalized population, African Americans attempt to empower themselves through cultural development – emphasizing and practicing their

cultural values and traditions – because they lack the governing institutions that would enable them to do so (Kelley 1996).

Attempting to overcome institutional racism and discrimination has positively influenced the level of trust of the African American population in other people and in the government (Nunnally 2012). People are less interested in voting for representatives who are related to the maltreatment they receive (Wallace et al. 2009). As an oppressed group, African Americans looked to break down discrimination laws and practices to advance in society. African Americans are capable of building culturally-based institutions such as churches but because of the political system's structure, they are unable to develop governing institutions. Governing institutions come with an influence over public policy, which is an advantage for European Americans. This influence comes from the resources and decision-making power that enables the implementation of policy and the power to take political action. Governing institutions also serve as mediators among the population. African Americans lack this assistance from a mediator so instead they are required to communicate and consult among themselves, which in turn strengthens the population (Kelley 1996). The lack of a governing institution in this case is an advantage to the African American population because it helps strengthen their understanding of trust (King 2010). The absence of a governing institution also makes it necessary for people to work closer with one another, further strengthening the components of trust within the population: proven loyalty and consistency, communication, mutually-serving goals, and risk.

Proven loyalty and consistency within a group, in addition to having the capacity to trust others, are major components in developing trust. Communication is essential and must be open at all times. Further, a person's intentions, actions or mission must be mutually-serving rather than self-serving. Mutually-serving goals illustrate unity within the collective. Self-serving goals would indicate one has his or her own agenda and goals rather than working with the population to achieve the population's goals. Risk is an important component in developing trust (McEvily, Perrone, and Zaheer 2003). To gain trust from a group, one must be willing to constantly take risks for the well-being of the collective, thus proving loyalty and consistency to the group. It is more likely for a person to be trusted by a group if she or he has shared experiences within the collective.

For those considered outsiders of the collective, gaining the population's trust may be difficult or may never occur at all. For the government, gaining trust from the African American population is not as much a concern as it is for African Americans to trust the U.S. government. From the marginalized population's point of view, the politics and intentions of the government are rarely in their favor (Kelley 1996). According to Avery (2007), the population lacks a great amount of trust in the predominantly European American government when it comes to politics. Avery (2007) argues that political trust results from factors

such as “evaluations of the president, Congress, and the policy outputs and outcomes (i.e., the health of the national economy) they produce” and that “there is reason to expect political mistrust among African Americans it is at least partly a function of their unhappiness with racial inequality and discrimination in the political and social system” (328). The African American population’s concept of trust is also deeply entrenched within their understanding of life in the U.S. and their culture. Considering the struggle of their history, the development of trust is crucial to the population’s stability (King 2010).

Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement had great potential for increasing the amount of trust African Americans had in the government. The movement featured a series of events and cases during the 1950s and 1960s tackling segregation and inequality for African Americans in areas concerning freedom of speech, discrimination and livelihood, voting, and education (LBJ Library Archives Staff n.d.). The goal of this movement was for African Americans to obtain equality in society. If the Civil Rights Movement was effective enough to produce that equality it would mean a number of things for African Americans. They would have fair opportunities to live and thrive in society without the interference of government that brought upon segregation and institutionalized racism. Yes, there would still be obstacles and yes, the adjustment would take time but the fact that the government is helping instead of hindering or prohibiting African American people would make them more trustworthy. As a component of trust, proven loyalty and consistency were essential among members of the African American population and between the population and the government.

In order to effectively work together, people have to trust one another. African Americans participating, planning, executing and overall supporting the Civil Rights Movement in the name of equality proved they were of the same goal. Influential leaders of the Civil Rights Movement include Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Jesse Jackson, John F. Kennedy and Rosa Parks among other notable figures. Jesse Jackson alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. worked through speech and civil disobedience to gain equal rights for African Americans through employment. Rosa Parks was among other African Americans who experienced segregation in public places and sparked movements aimed toward dismantling the system of segregation in the south (Hartford n.d.). Most African Americans used nonviolent approaches to achieve positive change for the population and were consistent in using different methods which showed their efforts would not be exhausted. If sit-ins were ineffective at the time and place, protests and marches would be an alternative, further illustrating that the population as a whole was pushing to see a change in the system. Collectively, attempting a variety of methods showed the government that African Americans had options when it came to civil disobedience. Loyalty and consistency from African Americans

were impactful enough to draw the attention of government officials such as President John F. Kennedy and President Lyndon B. Johnson. Following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as the 36th U.S. president. As a representative of the government, Johnson showed his support by simply listening to the African American people and going as far as passing legislation to help the cause. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which included provisions protecting voting rights guaranteeing access to public accommodations, and withholding federal funds from programs administered in a discriminating fashion. Johnson also contributed to the fight for equality by helping pass laws that would help end segregation in schools, jobs, restaurants, theaters, and other public vicinities of everyday life (LBJ Library Archives Staff n.d.). Here the government is proving their loyalty through consistent support of the Civil Rights Movement. The goal of this movement was to obtain equality. With the support and commitment of political figures ranked as high as president, obtaining this goal would be a trusted collaborative effort. Further, it means that the government along with the African American population is striving to obtain that equality, and with the same goal in mind there is more trust in the government.

Although it was a long and tenuous process, these small efforts were enough to produce improvements and more equality. Efforts between the government and the social movement of African Americans, proved loyalty and consistency towards attaining the mutual goal of justice and equality were successful. The 1965 Voting Rights Act was written into legislation during this time following the Civil Rights Act of 1957, 1960, and 1964 along with the 24th Amendment (LBJ Library Archives Staff n.d.).

Black Power Movement

Like the Civil Rights Movements, proven loyalty and consistency was the prominent factor among African Americans in the Black Nationalist Movement of the 1960's. Further, the goal of this particular movement was to obtain power for African American people. The Civil Rights Movement was not progressing quickly enough for some African Americans. After the assassination of Dr. King, the Black Nationalist Movement emerged as an alternative for those who wished to express their distrust in the government in a manner more extreme than what was common during the Civil Rights Movement. Unfortunately, the assassination of Dr. King sparked the Black Nationalist Movement's separation from the idea of equality in society. The assassination of an African American leader negatively impacted whatever trust was being built between African Americans and the government during the Civil Rights Movement. This was now a time of radical change that reached its peak in the middle of the 1960s and illustrated distrust in the government. Government distrust is a value of African American culture (Kelley 1996). Government distrust has brought African Americans closer

together. Being dehumanized and considered inferior leads African Americans to work together to make lives for themselves and fight for what is right. Government distrust is an aspect of African American culture that brings value to determination and goals in life. The population's strong distrust of government and authority stems from the inequalities experienced by African American people dating back to periods of enslavement (King 2010). With leaders like Malcolm X and groups like the Black Panther Party, there were a large number of African American people who followed the Black Nationalist Movement in favor of power instead of equality. This movement left behind methods of civil disobedience and took on more radical forms compared to sit-ins and protests.

The diminishing trust in the government was illustrated by the riots and radical protests that would emerge due to unrest. Increasing numbers of African Americans participated in the Black Nationalist Movement. This increase meant that black power was being favored over dreams of societal equality that might as well have been assassinated alongside Dr. King. Increased participation by African Americans especially the youth, showed even more consistency and loyalty from the population. More importantly, it strengthened the population when it came to depending on themselves and each other. Power for African American people was the main goal of the Black Nationalist Movement; attaining this goal would serve the African American population regardless of whether members of the population supported or opposed the movement. Proven loyalty and consistency strengthened trust among the African American population and also promoted unity giving them a better opportunity to organize and execute effectively. Unity promoted effective communication and understanding among the population. Further, it created stronger ties within the population and bonded those involved in the Black Nationalist Movement increasing trust among the African American population and moving away from the government.

Hip Hop & Gangsta Rap

In more recent times, during the 1990s, Hip Hop and Gangster Rap music generated an uproar in African American communities (Kelley 1996).

Communication from African Americans to the government and communication among African Americans was the most prominent element of trust surrounding this era of music. Gangsta Rap is an element of Hip Hop music born out of South Central Los Angeles that thrived following the riots of the Rodney King beating. Kelley (1996) argues that lyrics were misinterpreted as advocating gang violence and criminality. He makes sure to state that gangsta rap did not celebrate gang violence and that lyrics connote the playful use of language. Nonetheless, African American people were outraged and some voiced that outrage through music. Rappers such as Ice T and Ice Cube (member of rap group N.W.A. (Niggas With Attitude)) produced music with lyrics explicitly stating how upset these artists were with the government and authority. For example, in N.W.A.'s song

“Fuck tha Police”, rapper Ice Cube says, “*Fuck the police comin straight from the underground/A young nigga got it bad cause I’m brown/And not the other color so police think/they have the authority to kill a minority*” (Fuck Tha Police Lyrics n.d.). Many African American communities were experiencing maltreatment and police brutality rappers talked about (Kelley 1996). Hip Hop and Gangster Rap were capable of communicating these brutal experiences of injustice through means that would reach the masses.

Through music videos and radio, people – more importantly, the government – could hear and see the frustration depicted by rappers. Lyrics not only explained what was happening in African American communities they also went after “law enforcement agencies, their denial of unfettered access to public space, and the media’s complicity in equating black youth with criminals” (Kelley 1996, 185). Aggressive lyrics were enough to communicate how unhappy African Americans were with the government and how far away they were from trusting the government with the well-being of their lives. Clearly, these experiences were significant enough for artists to make them the main content of their music and present those experiences to a mass audience. It was another voice for the African-American population. Through this music and the voice of these rappers, a lack of trust was communicated from the African American population to the government.

Distrust was also communicated among the population. The messages in Gangsta Rap music communicated a shared experience among African American people; what was happening in their communities or what could happen. The more the music spread the more African American people talked about their experiences which eventually lead to formulation of popular opinion. With similar opinions and perspectives comes similar distrust towards the government.

First African American President

In August of 2006, Barack Obama gave a speech at the University of Nairobi in Kenya about honest government and said, “*If the people cannot trust their government to do the job for which it exists – to protect them and to promote their common welfare – all else is lost.*” (Obama, 2006). Barack Obama is the first president of African descent in United States history. After undergoing enslavement, segregation, and institutionalized racism, Obama’s election could be considered one of the proudest achievements for African American people. Mutually-serving goals and intentions among African Americans and between the African American population and the government is the most prominent component of trust during Obama’s first presidential election. For the United States, President Obama stands for change and progression. For many African American people, President Obama symbolizes change for the better of the population in terms of employment, education, and overall quality of African American life.

Obama's 2008 presidential campaign heavily featured the words "hope" and "change". As the first president of African American descent, Obama could be that change American citizens have been waiting to see. Given the history of slavery and segregation, the United States has a slight racist image. Electing an African American man as president helps get rid of the image and establish an image of real change and hope from society. Simultaneously, Obama brings change for the African American population as they also make history with one of their own in the highest political office. Further, this change brings hope for continued change among the African American population. By voting and supporting Obama, the population communicated to the government that serious efforts are still being put forth to obtain equality and power in society by voting for Obama. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), voter turnout increased by 5 million in the 2008 presidential election. This major increase included 2 million African American citizens varying in age (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). The 2008 presidential election is the first time we see a difference (2.6%) between African American voters and all citizens where African Americans out voted the other citizens (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). These statistics are an indication that increased trust in the government could be more likely with a representative of the African American population running for office. It was believed that African Americans would be better represented with a leader who shared the same historical experience and struggle as the African American population (Nunnally 2012). Here the mutual goal is change. As a representative of the government Obama worked to be elected as president to bring about this change and American citizens supported him in his efforts by voting and campaigning. As a result Obama was elected as president and faces the challenge of meeting these goals not only for himself and the African Americans who supported him but the rest of the American citizens who supported him.

Voting for Obama shows African American support for the federal government. Although there was a significant increase in the number of African Americans who voted, there was still a portion that failed to cast their votes. Staying loyal to this mutually-serving goal for so long demonstrates a stronger sense of trust among the population. Further, the African American population is trusting President Obama to bring about positive changes for the future. Based on this component of trust and voter statistics, the election of President Obama brought about an increase in trust in the government from African Americans.

CONCLUSION

The selected events show how trust develops and how it is capable of increasing or decreasing. The goal of the Civil Rights Movement was to move African Americans toward assimilation and equality. The Civil Rights Movement advocated trusting and working with the government. Unfortunately, the efforts

of the Civil Rights Movement were exhausted and ceased after the assassination of Dr. King. This assassination sparked the Black Nationalist Movement, in which African Americans advocated for black power and separation. There was strong distrust during this time and, also during the rise of Gangsta Rap. With the election of President Obama and during his first term in office trust increased and so did African American voter turnout (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). How Obama's presidency will influence future African American trust in the government has yet to be determined. Future research could consider how the performance of the first African American head of state may change the views of African American voters when it comes to the government.

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