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American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 26, No. 2 (May, 1982), 240-264.

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American Journal of Political Science is currently published by Midwest Political Science Association.

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*Diffuse Political Support and Antisystem Political Behavior: A Comparative Analysis**

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Diffuse political support is an important concept in political science because of its theoretical relevance for the stability of political systems. Such macro significance is predicated on the assumption that, at the micro level, diffuse support for the political system has behavioral consequences. This research undertakes a cross-national comparison of the relationship between measures of antisystem political behavior and two indicators of diffuse political support, (1) the well-known Trust in Government index and (2) a Political Support-Alienation scale. The Trust in Government index is found to suffer from low reliability and to bear no relationship to measures of antisystem behavior in probability samples of adults from New York City and urban Costa Rica and a purposive sample of middle-class residents of Guadalajara, Mexico. By contrast, the Political Support-Alienation scale shows consistent association of moderate magnitude with antisystem behavior across all three samples. The behavioral relevance of diffuse political support thus depends on how that concept is defined operationally.

Sudden outbreaks of aggressive antisystem behavior characterize political life in many less developed countries, often belying predictions of experts. Although regime change resulting from civil strife has been rare in the recent history of industrialized countries, the United States and many European countries hardly have been immune to aggressive political protest, having experienced a dramatic and unexpected surge and decline of politically aggressive behavior during the mid-1960s to mid-1970s. In the developing world, sudden regime changes are frequently preceded by mass protest and/or periods of guerrilla warfare.

Explanation (and anticipation) of change in the incidence of aggressive political behavior requires attention to a variety of variables at both the macro and micro levels of analysis. (Recent reviews of macro and micro determinants are Zimmerman, 1980, and Muller, 1980, respectively.) Certainly it is quite plausible to suppose that one important explanatory factor is the distribution of diffuse support and alienation (legitimacy sentiment) among members of the polity. An attitude of negative affect for the political system, especially if it falls in an extreme range, provides obvious motivational incentive for participation in various kinds of antisystem behavior. But since apathy also is a plausible response to neg-

* This research is supported in part by the National Science Foundation, award SOC77-00187. We are grateful to Paul R. Abramson for his careful reading of this paper and his helpful suggestions.

ative system affect, the question of the behavioral consequences of diffuse political support-alienation is a matter of some controversy.

We share the opinion of Wahlke (1979, p. 28) that "unless there is some link between the basic political support attitudes in question and the general behavior variables of real interest to political science, research on the subject is likely to be uninteresting or trivial"; but his and Wright's (1976) conclusion that extant research has failed to find behavioral linkages is derived from analysis of an inadequate measure of diffuse political support, the well-known Trust in Government (or Cynicism) index (Robinson, Rusk, and Head, 1968, pp. 626-647). Our previous research (Muller and Jukam, 1977; Muller, 1979) has led us to believe that there indeed is a relationship between diffuse political support and important political science behavior variables, namely, antisystem political behavior, and in this paper we report comparative data from three countries that provide further evidence in favor of that assertion.

Defining Diffuse Support

As conceptualized by Easton (1975), diffuse support for political authorities and/or the regime typically can take the form of trust, defined (following Gamson, 1968) as a feeling that the system can be counted on to provide equitable outcomes, or it can take the form of legitimacy, defined as a person's conviction that the system conforms to his/her moral or ethical principles about what is right in the political sphere. Other terminology in this vein is "system affect," used by Almond and Verba (1965, p. 63) to refer to "generalized attitudes toward the system as a whole," and the "alienation/allegiance" continuum, described by Citrin, McClosky, Shanks, and Sniderman (1975, p. 3): "At the far end of the continuum, the politically alienated feel themselves outsiders, gripped in an alien political order; they would welcome fundamental changes in the ongoing regime. By contrast, the politically allegiant feel themselves an integral part of the political system; they belong to it psychologically as well as legally." Common to these definitions is a conception of diffuse support-alienation (under whatever name) as a kind of affect that is different from short-run evaluations of individual incumbents and their policies. Easton (1975, p. 444) sees diffuse support as referring primarily to "evaluations of what an object is or represents—to the general meaning it has for a person—not of what it does." Citrin and associates (1975, p. 4) emphasize that alienation/allegiance "must be distinguished from responses based on fleeting dissatisfactions or short-run shifts of mood."

There exists, of course, a rich tradition of research on the general topic of alienation in the sociological literature (for reviews see, *inter alia*, Ludz, 1973, and Seeman, 1975). However, our concern here is limited only to political support and alienation, and within that subset, we

shall focus specifically on comparison of the behavioral relevance of two indicators of diffuse political support, the most commonly used measure of that concept, the Trust in Government index, and an alternative measure, a Political Support-Alienation scale.

Trust in Government

A drawback to the Trust in Government index is the referent of the items: "the government," "the government in Washington," "the people in government," "the people running the government." These stimuli (especially those containing the word "people") probably evoke from some respondents just the kind of short-run responses to incumbent politicians that theorists of diffuse support agree represent an undesirable contamination. For example, Citrin (1974) argues that the Trust in Government index is primarily a measure of evaluation of incumbent performance instead of the political system, his evidence deriving from data which show that individuals can express a sense of pride in their political system while at the same time exhibiting very low trust in government. Easton's (1975, p. 450) consideration of the Trust in Government index leads him to conclude that "such items may simply be picking up evaluations of the general performance of various incumbents, who are vaguely called to mind by the collective term 'politicians' or 'the government.'"

Miller (1974a, 1974b) initially argued that low Trust in Government scores were indicative of a loss of confidence in the political system. This view was shared by Wright (1976). Miller (1979, p. 46) has since modified his position, acknowledging that the trust items measure sentiment focused on political authorities and consequently relabeling the index Trust in Authorities, but he still maintains that "political distrust of the government is rooted in attitudes that are more generic than evaluations of incumbents."

Aside from the question of what the Trust in Government index actually measures, one may ask: How well does the index measure whatever it is that is being measured? This question has been investigated by Lodge and Tursky (1979), using psychophysically valid magnitude scales of opinion intensity. They find that each discrete response option for any given trust item encompasses a broad range of opinion intensity. An example is response to the item inquiring how much of the time a respondent thinks that he/she can trust the government in Washington to do what is right. The Lodge and Tursky (1979, p. 56) results show that respondents who give "the least trusting response offered (*only some of the time*) range from those who are neutral to those who express strong distrust." This problem of extremely broad, crude response categories makes it difficult to assign any precise meaning to change over time in the distribution of response to the trust items.

Table 1 shows change over a sixteen-year period in the proportion of Americans choosing the most negative response to the trust items. Looking at the trend from 1964 to 1970 one sees that all but the "crooked" item registered substantial increase. The proportion giving the most negative response to the two items referring to government in general doubled (in the case of the "trust" item) or nearly doubled (the "big interests" item). Then, between 1970 and 1972, the proportion of negative respondents stabilized. Miller, who interpreted the Trust in Government index as "a simple barometer of satisfaction with the political system," not surprisingly sounded a note of alarm (1974a, p. 971):

What happens if the policies of the administration elected in 1972 continue to bring no reduction in dissatisfaction? Likewise, what happens if present policy is maintained in the future? The trends in the data suggest the trust of the government would continue to decline, increasing the difficulty for leaders to make binding political decisions, as well as raising the probability of the occurrence of radical political change.

One kind of radical political change that Miller envisioned was a breakdown in the normal means of conflict management and a concomitant "bursting forth" of extra-legal behavior.

Fueled by the Watergate revelations of 1973-1974, the proportion of Americans giving the most negative response to these items spurted to new highs between 1972 and 1974, with almost two-thirds of the American public registering a negative evaluation of the government in general. If the Trust in Government items were related to antisystem political behavior, one should have seen an increase in the incidence of extralegal political protest and violence, with rebellious blacks and students swelling their ranks from the vast pool of disaffected Americans. Ironically, of course, just the opposite occurred: not only did protest and violence fail to increase, it actually underwent a substantial decline in the period 1970-1974.

There are at least two competing hypotheses to account for the countervailing trends in trust in government and antisystem (in the sense of being extralegal) political behavior. One is substantive; the other is methodological. The substantive hypothesis assumes that the trust in government items do constitute a satisfactory "barometer" of affect for the political system. It explains the countervailing trends by rejecting the notion that disaffection with the political system bears a causal relationship to extralegal political protest and violence. Reflecting upon the trends discussed here, Wright (1976, pp. 199-200) concludes that, since "the protestors and dissenters were a numerically insignificant minority, whereas political alienation characterized half or more of the adult population . . . it would take a monumental leap of theoretical faith to assert that alienation was the *cause* of these various political disturbances. A

TABLE 1

Most Negative Response (in percent) to Trust in Government Items: 1964-1980

	1964	1966 ^a	1968	1970	1972	1974	1976	1978	1980
People in government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes:	46.3	—	57.4	68.7	65.8	73.8	73.8	76.7	77.9
Can trust the government in Washington to do what is right only some of the time:	22.0	31.0	37.0	44.2	44.9	61.1	63.4	67.3	72.6
The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves:	29.0	34.0	39.2	49.6	53.3	65.6	66.3	65.5	69.5
Quite a few of the people running the government don't seem to know what they're doing:	27.4	—	36.1	44.1	39.9	45.3	49.1	50.1	61.7
Quite a few of the people running the government are a little crooked:	28.0	—	24.8	31.0	35.8	44.8	41.3	38.8	46.3
(N =) ^b	(4,658)	(1,291)	(1,557)	(1,514)	(2,279)	(2,623)	(2,861)	(2,304)	(1,614)

Source: National Election Studies by Survey Research Center, University of Michigan.

^a Only two items were included in the 1966 election study interview schedule.

^b The sample size for each of the years applies to all five items. The 1964 N is weighted.

more likely possibility . . . is that increasing alienation was the *effect*." However, apart from lacking theoretical justification, Wright's daring reversal of direction of causality is not supported by the trend in response to the Trust in Government items, since the high level of negative evaluation (we purposefully avoid the term "alienation") reached in 1974 held steady through 1976 and then increased to record highs in 1980, instead of declining, as would have been expected if response to these items were somehow a consequence of protest and violence.

In fact, although it obviously requires a considerable leap of faith to assert that the kind of sentiment measured by the Trust in Government items was causally related to the civil disturbances of the late 1960s and very early 1970s, it seems to us, on theoretical grounds, that no leap of faith is necessary to assert that alienation from the political system is a cause of antisystem political behavior; for, by the most pedestrian logic, it seems clear that alienation, in the sense of negative sentiment at the far end of the continuum described by Citrin and associates, provides a source of normative justification for participation in extralegal protest and violence. Hence it seems plausible to evoke a methodological hypothesis for the purpose of explaining the countervailing trends: namely, that the Trust in Government items are, on at least two accounts, deficient indicators of the kind of diffuse political affect that does provide motivation for antisystem behavior.

First, of course, is the question of the referent of the items. In a democratic political system like that of the United States, electoral institutions provide opportunities for citizens peacefully to effect change in personnel or policies that they dislike. Therefore, disaffection with an incumbent administration is unlikely to be a source of normative justification for antisystem behavior; and it follows that if the Trust in Government items are focused principally on the incumbent administration they are unlikely to afford much motivation incentive for antisystem behavior.

In addition to the referent of the items, Citrin (1974, p. 975) suggested a second deficiency, the fact that:

the cynical responses to the CPS political trust items are hardly extreme. To believe that the government wastes 'a lot' of money, can be trusted to 'do what is right only some of the time,' and includes 'quite a few' people who are 'crooked' or 'don't know what they're doing' need not bespeak a deep-seated hostility toward the political system at the regime or community levels.

It is just this kind of deficiency—failure to tap extremely negative sentiment—that the research by Lodge and Tursky confirms. If antisystem political behavior is motivated, at least in part, only by affect located at the far negative end of the allegiance-alienation continuum, the Trust in Government items will be insensitive to its presence; therefore, they

could not be used as a barometer of change in the amount of such alienation.

Support for the Political System

We need to develop a gauge of diffuse political support that meets two principal specifications. First, such a measure must focus unambiguously on the political system or political institutions. Whether the general public can (or does) make a distinction between the political system and an incumbent administration is a subsidiary question. The critical prior issue is the question of whether or not one's measuring instrument itself at least provides the opportunity for a person to record sentiment about the political system. Second, such a measure must be able to capture a fine discrimination of response intensity along the full continuum from very strong positive affect (support) to very strong negative affect (alienation). Whether this goal is best accomplished by following the summative model of attitude scaling (or some variant thereof) popular in social and clinical psychology or by using psychophysically based magnitude estimation techniques is also a subsidiary question. The essential point is to avoid the use of items limited to only a few crude categories of response.

Our proposed indicator of diffuse political support was designed to meet the above specifications. Labeled Political Support-Alienation, this scale is intended to measure what Easton calls the "legitimacy" dimension of the diffuse support concept: that is, to evaluate how well the political system and political institutions conform to a person's general sense of what is right and proper and how well the system and institutions uphold basic political values of importance to citizens. An earlier version of the Political Support-Alienation scale was analyzed extensively with data from a survey of over 2,500 residents of selected communities in the Federal Republic of Germany (Muller and Jukam, 1977; Muller, 1979). The West German results showed that the Political Support-Alienation scale attained a satisfactory level of reliability ($\alpha = .82$) and also correlated well ($r = .50$) with a measure of involvement in aggressive political action (participation in a wildcat strike; refusal to pay rent or taxes; seizure of factories, offices, and other buildings; participation in fights with police or other demonstrators; participation with a group that wanted to dislodge the government by violent means). Also, when entered into a regression equation with a Political Trust-Distrust variable analogous to the Trust in Government index, the Political Support-Alienation scale remained a robust predictor of participation in aggressive political behavior, whereas the Political Trust-Distrust variable was estimated to have no direct effect.

The Political Support-Alienation scale used in the West German study contained two minor defects which we sought to correct in our

present version. One item from the German instrument read (in English translation): "Looking back, the leading politicians in the Federal Republic have always had good intentions." This item was intended to focus on political authorities in general, instead of the incumbent administration. However, like the "trust government in Washington" item of the Trust in Government index, the explicit referent of the "leading politicians" item leaves open the possibility that some individuals will respond with an evaluation strongly colored by their feelings about current incumbents. Therefore, the leading politicians item has been deleted from the present measure.¹

Second, the agree-disagree response format used by the earlier Political Support-Alienation scale can be quite susceptible to response set. Preferable is a format which more directly elicits magnitude ratings. Therefore, in the present version we chose to assess intensity of affect by having respondents give magnitude ratings using a card with the following response continuum printed on it:

NONE AT ALL						A GREAT DEAL
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The Political Support-Alienation items were included in a survey for Muller and Jukam carried out by Response Analysis Corporation of Princeton, New Jersey. Personal interviews were conducted during spring and summer of 1978, with a probability sample of 778 adults residing in the five boroughs of New York City. Three rotated forms of the interview schedule were used and were made available in both English and Spanish. Also, a random sample of 240 undergraduate and graduate students and faculty from the liberal arts college at Columbia University and New York University completed a self-administered version of the same questionnaire in May and June 1978.²

¹ Also deleted is an item in the German version that reads: "Considering everything, the police in the Federal Republic deserve great respect." The police in West Germany are part of the federal legal system, but in the United States, of course, they are part of local legal systems and, therefore, not an appropriate component of a measure of support for the national political system. In Mexico, police forces exist on both federal and local levels, while in Costa Rica the organization of the police into a national force is a recent phenomenon.

² In drawing the New York City sample, a multistage procedure was employed with strict probability methods applied at each stage of sample selection. One hundred block locations were chosen from the five boroughs of New York City by a systematic random sample of blocks selected with probability proportionate to the number of year-round housing units. Selected blocks were required to have at least twenty-five housing units. Blocks having fewer than twenty-five units were combined with the next selected block or blocks until a total of twenty-five or more was reached. Then, specific housing units were randomly selected in each block prior to interviewer contact with the block. The interviewers thus had no choice in the selection of the households for the survey. Interviewers assigned

The results of a reliability analysis performed for respondents with scores on the entire set of items across each sample from New York City are presented in the first four columns of Table 2. The item-scale correlations vary somewhat from item to item; however, the essence of the measurement model used (the linear or summative model), as Nunnally (1967, p. 74) has observed, "is that it does not take individual items very seriously. It recognizes that the individual item has considerable specificity and measurement error." This model (also called the domain-sampling model) is based on an extensive theory of measurement error whose central assumption is that a random sample of items from a hypothetical domain can, if sufficiently reliable, average out measurement error of individual items when they are combined. For basic research a reliability on the order of .80 is desirable, while for practical applications (in which decisions are made about specific persons with respect to their test scores), a higher standard (.90-.95) must be met.

Our eight-item Political Support-Alienation scale shows good reliability (α) in both New York City samples. Item H ("values differ") correlates least well with the other items in both instances. However, it does not detract from overall scale reliability in the general public sam-

to the survey received a detailed map of the sample block(s) and specific housing units to contact. Interviewer assignments were fifteen housing units per location. At each household, determination of the interviewee was made by random selection from a list of eligible members residing at that household.

In New York City a low response pattern is commonly observed in survey research. People living in New York City, similar to residents of most large metropolitan areas, are wary about opening their doors to strangers. In addition, many housing units in New York City are controlled-access buildings. Consequently, initial completion rates on this project were low. To compensate for this, a supplemental sample was drawn and a reassignment made in order to obtain higher completion rates. Persistent efforts were made throughout the field phase of the study to find the designated respondents at home and to urge cooperation from those persons reluctant to participate. Interviewers were instructed to make an original visit, and, if necessary, up to three call-backs in an effort to obtain the completed interview at each sample household.

Altogether, 2,928 households were selected in the New York City sample; 90 vacant units were then excluded, as were 413 housing units where the selected respondent was not eligible because of age. Of the remaining 2,425 households, eligibility was indeterminate for 928 households. Of the remaining 1,497 known eligible households, personal interviews were completed with 778 respondents.

The sampling frame for the university milieu consisted of current lists of student enrollment and faculty appointment at New York University and Columbia University. Two hundred undergraduate and graduate liberal arts students were sampled randomly from New York University and two hundred were sampled randomly from Columbia University; one hundred liberal arts professors also were sampled from each of the two universities. Completed questionnaires were received from 93 students and 23 faculty members at New York University and from 114 students and 14 faculty members at Columbia University.

TABLE 2

Reliability of Political Support-Alienation: New York City and Latin American Samples

Items	NYC: General Public (N = 618)		NYC: University (N = 215)		Costa Rica: Urban (N = 172)		Mexico: Guadajajara (N = 160)	
	Item-Scale Correlation ^a	Alpha if Deleted	Item-Scale Correlation ^a	Alpha if Deleted	Item-Scale Correlation ^a	Alpha if Deleted	Item-Scale Correlation ^a	Alpha if Deleted
A. To what extent do you have respect for the political institutions in [COUNTRY]?	.61	.84	.72	.88	.50	.82	—	—
B. To what extent do you think that the courts in [COUNTRY] guarantee a fair trial?	.68	.83	.64	.89	.51	.82	—	—
C. To what extent do you feel that the basic rights of citizens are well protected by our political system?	.71	.83	.67	.89	.64	.79	.67	.89
D. To what extent are you proud to live under our political system?	.68	.84	.81	.87	.55	.81	.71	.88
E. To what extent do you feel our system of government is the best possible system?	.65	.84	.71	.88	.67	.79	.82	.85
F. To what extent do you feel you should support our system of government?	.66	.84	.79	.88	.69	.79	.74	.87
G. To what extent do you feel you and your friends are well-represented in our political system?	.57	.85	.69	.88	.50	.82	.77	.87
H. To what extent do you feel that your own political values differ from those of our political system?	.36	.87	.45	.91	—	—	—	—
overall standardized item alpha:	.87		.90		.83		.89	
mean inter-item correlation (r):	.45		.53		.41		.63	

Source: 1978 New York City Survey by Response Analysis; 1978 Survey by Universidad de Costa Rica; 1979 Survey by University of Arizona Guadajajara Summer Program.

^aThe item-scale correlation is the correlation between the item and an additive scale built from all other items.

ple, and it reduces scale reliability by an insignificant fraction in the university sample.³

In order to further investigate the replicability of the Political Support-Alienation scale from a cross-national perspective, Seligson (forthcoming) arranged to have Political Support-Alienation items included in a 1978 survey of a purposive sample of blue-collar workers employed in factories (established under the Mexican Border Industrialization Program) in the cities of Mexicali, Nogales, Agua Prieta, Ciudad Juarez, Ciudad Acuña, and San Luis Río Colorado. Apparently because respondents were unfamiliar with the use of the seven-point response format, the first item in the series ("respect for political institutions") proved to be comparatively unreliable. The last item in the series ("values differ") was not administered because of its superfluity for reliability and relatively low item-scale correlation in the New York City data. A scale based on items B through G showed good reliability ($\alpha = .83$) across the Mexican working-class sample.

The first seven Political Support-Alienation items (A through G) also were included in a survey planned by Seligson and carried out in 1978 by Professor Miguel Gómez of the Universidad de Costa Rica. Personal interviews were conducted with a probability sample of 201 residents of metropolitan San José, the capital of Costa Rica, and the major urban provincial capitals. In design (a representative cross section of urban residents), the Costa Rican sample is quite similar to the New York City sample.⁴ An additional comparison is available from another Mexi-

³ The "values differ" item is the only one in the series worded so that a pro-system response is at the low end of the scale. This reversal may well have confused some respondents. Also, the item may be inherently more difficult than the others to understand, since it requires a person to make a comparison with the system in regard to the quite broad and abstract concept of "values." Of course it also is possible that a response set is operating across the pro-worded items; if this were the case, reliability as determined by coefficient alpha could be high, even though many responses were invalid (in this instance, con sentiment misrepresented as pro sentiment). However, the format of the response options—to what extent does a respondent feel one way or the other, pro or con—makes response set much less likely than other formats (e.g., agree-disagree). For assessing the potential usefulness of the indicator we do not just rely on reliability (there is no infallible measure, since even "test-retest" reliability can be contaminated by "true" change), but look, additionally, at how the scale performs in relation to other variables.

⁴ The urban Costa Rica sample was drawn from a sample frame prepared by Professor Gómez, already used and refined in six national probability samples as well as several smaller studies. In the present investigation, in order to retain comparability with the urban sample of New York, only two of the four strata in the sample frame were used, the metropolitan area of San José and the urban areas of provincial capitals of Alajuela, Cartago, and Heredia. Eliminated were the two rural strata. Each stratum was in turn stratified according to an index of socioeconomic status, based upon housing characteristics and ownership of electrical artifacts as reported in the 1973 national census. Primary sampling units

can survey, conducted in Guadalajara during July and August 1979. This purposive sample, with a total N of 169, was drawn from six middle-class sections of Guadalajara. Planned by Seligson and John A. Booth, the study was conducted with the institutional support of the University of Arizona Guadalajara Summer Program. In the Guadalajara survey a ten-point response format was used in place of the seven-point format, and, because of space limitation, only items C through G were administered.

The reliability analysis for the Urban Costa Rica and Guadalajara samples is also given in Table 2. The Political Support-Alienation scale shows satisfactory reliability in the Costa Rican sample and achieves an even higher level of reliability in the Mexican sample.

These surveys also included the five Trust in Government items, administered according to the same format used in the National Election Studies carried out by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan.³ For a reliability analysis, we dichotomized them following the procedure of Miller (1974, p. 953), with the most negative response (see Table 1) scored as "1" and the other categories scored "0."

In the New York City general public survey, only a subsample consisting of 372 respondents received the Trust in Government items. Among the 284 general public respondents who could be scored on all items, Table 3 shows that the reliability coefficient is .70, while in the university sample it is even lower, reaching a level of only .66. These are low, though not unacceptable (according to customary practice in basic research), levels of reliability. Interestingly, respondents from academia appeared to have more trouble with these items than did the general public.

From Table 3 one also sees that the Trust in Government items have similarly low reliability in two of the Latin American samples. If we designate values less than .6 as unacceptably low reliability, the Costa Rican sample approaches this level. The Guadalajara sample shows a somewhat higher reliability—but still in the .6–.7 range. Also, the blue-collar Mexican border-cities analyzed by Seligson (forthcoming) showed a reliability coefficient in the .6–.7 range (.63).

were then selected at random using the PPS method. Within each unit all dwellings were visited, and a list of all residents eighteen years and over was prepared. The final selection of respondents was then drawn at random from these lists.

³ Since 1974 the SRC has made a minor change in the wording of the last two items in the series. The "smart" item was revised by deleting "who usually know what they are doing" from the first part of the item, while the "crooked" item was revised by inserting the words "a little" before the first use of "crooked" and deleting "crooked" after "not very many are." We have used the original format to retain compatibility with the earlier SRC work as well as with some of our own studies. These changes do not appear to have increased the reliability of the SRC data.

TABLE 3
Reliability of Trust in Government: New York City and Latin American Samples

Items	NYC: General Public (N = 284)		NYC: University (N = 195)		Costa Rica: Urban (N = 174)		Mexico: Guadalaajara (N = 146)	
	Item-Scale Correlation*	Alpha if Deleted	Item-Scale Correlation*	Alpha if Deleted	Item-Scale Correlation*	Alpha if Deleted	Item-Scale Correlation*	Alpha if Deleted
Do you think that people in government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't you think they waste very much of it?	.48	.64	.42	.59	.39	.55	.39	.62
How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in [CAPITOL] to do what is right—about all of the time, most of the time, or only some of the time?	.49	.63	.47	.57	.33	.58	.54	.55
Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?	.45	.65	.42	.60	.45	.52	.47	.59
Do you feel that almost all of the people running the government are smart people who usually know what they are doing, or do you think that quite a few of them don't seem to know what they are doing?	.35	.69	.33	.64	.34	.58	.31	.66
Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are a little crooked, not very many are crooked, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked at all?	.50	.63	.40	.60	.35	.58	.38	.63
overall standardized item alpha:	.70		.66		.62			.67
mean inter-item correlation (r):	.32		.28		.24			.29

Source: 1978 New York City Survey by Response Analysis; 1978 Survey by Universidad de Costa Rica; 1979 Survey by University of Arizona Guadalaajara Summer Program.

* The item-scale correlation is the correlation between the item and an additive scale built from all other items.

These results are comparable to those for the U.S. National Election Studies in the 1970s. For example, the reliability coefficient for the Trust in Government items in the 1976 U.S. national sample is .68; among respondents to the 1972-74-76 National Election Study panel, the reliability coefficient is .73, .70, and .67, respectively.⁶

The relatively poor reliability of the Trust in Government items does not necessarily mean that their content is deficient; rather, it may be due to the limited categories of response that are offered. If respondents were given a seven-point scale to register intensity of opinion, the inter-item correlations for the Trust in Government set might well be increased, thus boosting reliability. Therefore, it would be wrong to conclude that the Trust in Government items are inherently poor. But for whatever reason, the Trust in Government indicator of diffuse political support consistently shows a substantial difference in scale reliability when compared with the Political Support-Alienation variable.

Antisystem Political Behavior

For our New York City sample we measured antisystem political behavior with an Aggressive Political Participation scale developed in the West German study. This is a discriminating quantitative variable that takes into account actual performance of an aggressive action, weighted by intention to perform it in the future. The behaviors included in the scale were participation in: (1) fights with police or other demonstrators, (2) a wildcat or unofficial strike, (3) a group which refused to pay taxes, (4) taking over factories, offices, or other buildings, (5) a group which wanted to overthrow the government by violent means. The survey was administered by the Response Analysis Corporation, which has particular expertise in conducting interviews on highly sensitive topics (e.g., drug use, violence in the home). Because participation in aggressive political behavior is just such a topic, care was taken to present the questions in a nonthreatening manner and to assure anonymity.⁷

The Costa Rican interview schedule did not include the sensitive questions about personal participation in aggressive political activity. In-

⁶ The fit of the Trust in Government items to the Guttman or cumulative scaling model also is uniformly weak for the National Election Study panel respondents. For 817 respondents who could be scored on each item in 1972, 1974, and 1976, the Coefficient of Reproducibility is, respectively, .81, .84, and .82, while the Coefficient of Scalability is, respectively, .53, .56, and .49.

⁷ The questions about actual participation in aggressive behavior were part of an extensive battery of questions that focused on many legal, ordinary kinds of political behavior as well. Also, responses to the questions about actual participation were placed in an envelope that was sealed by the interviewer in the presence of the respondent. For exact details on the procedure followed to construct the Aggressive Political Participation measure see Mulder (1979, pp. 37-68).

stead, respondents were asked only to state the degree to which, on a scale of 1–10, they approved or disapproved of citizens taking part in aggressive political behavior. The Costa Rican antisystem political behavior measure included seven aggressive actions: a summated scale called Approval of Aggressive Participation was constructed from responses to them.⁸

The results of a partial correlation analysis of relationships between the two indicators of diffuse political support and the antisystem behavior measures are presented in Figure 1. The results are remarkably similar across the three samples. Despite the presence of fairly strong intercorrelation between the diffuse support indicators, their relationship with aggressive behavior differs substantially. Political Support-Alienation shows a much stronger bivariate correlation with the scale of aggressive political participation than does Trust in Government in the New York City samples. Among urban Costa Ricans not even a statistically significant bivariate correlation between Approval of Aggressive Participation and Trust in Government obtains. In the New York City samples, controlling for the Political Support-Alienation variable reduces the correlation between Aggressive Political Participation and Trust in Government to zero. By contrast, the association between Aggressive Political Participation and Political Support-Alienation, controlling for Trust in Government, is virtually unaffected.

This correlational evidence suggests that the Trust in Government variable does not have the potential to be a useful leading indicator of surge and decline in aggressive antisystem political behavior. In order to take a closer look at the relationship between aggressive antisystem political behavior and the diffuse support indicators, we plotted mean Aggressive Political Participation by levels of Trust in Government and by the Political Support-Alienation scale, divided into sixths.

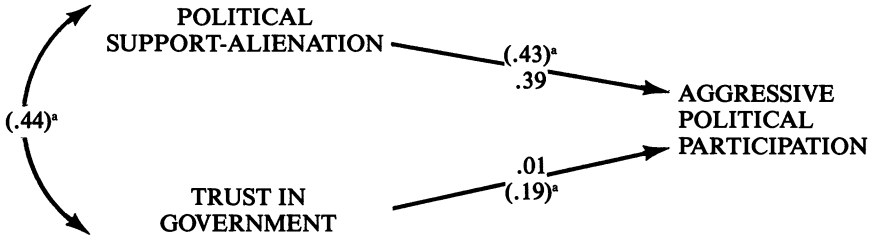
The Aggressive Political Participation scale is standardized to have a mean of 10 and a standard deviation of 10. Scores that fall within one standard deviation above or below the mean (0–20) represent inactivity combined with varying degrees of positive intention to participate in one or more of the aggressive behaviors (principally civil disobedience).

The vast majority (90.7 percent) of New York City general public respondents is located in the 0–20 range of Aggressive Political Participation and a substantial majority (75.3 percent) of university respondents also scores in this range. Scores greater than one standard deviation

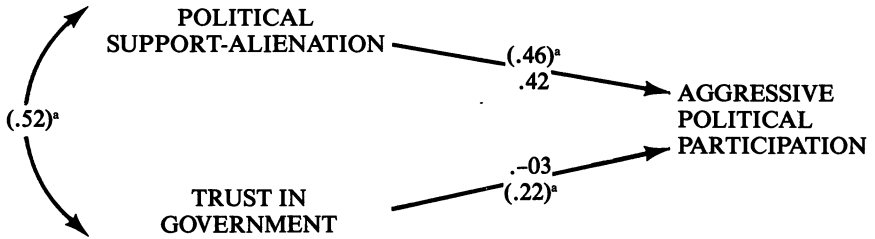
⁸ In addition to the behaviors included in the actual aggressive participation measure used in the New York City study, the Costa Rican Approval of Aggressive Participation variable contains the behavior “people participating in a group which refuses to pay water bills” and the behavior “people participating in damaging buildings, vehicles, or other property.”

FIGURE 1

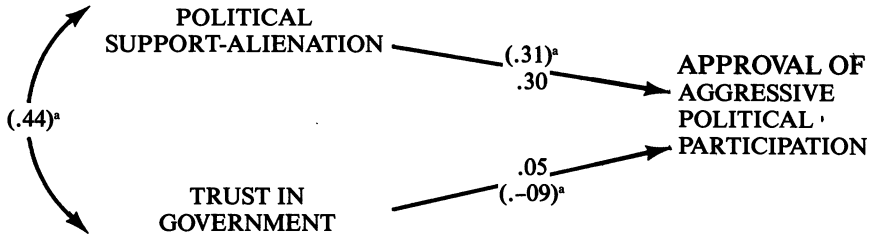
Relationships between Indicators of Diffuse Political Support and Aggressive Behavior Variables



A. NEW YORK CITY GENERAL PUBLIC (N = 278)



B. NEW YORK CITY UNIVERSITY SAMPLE (N = 195)



C. URBAN COSTA RICA (N = 172)

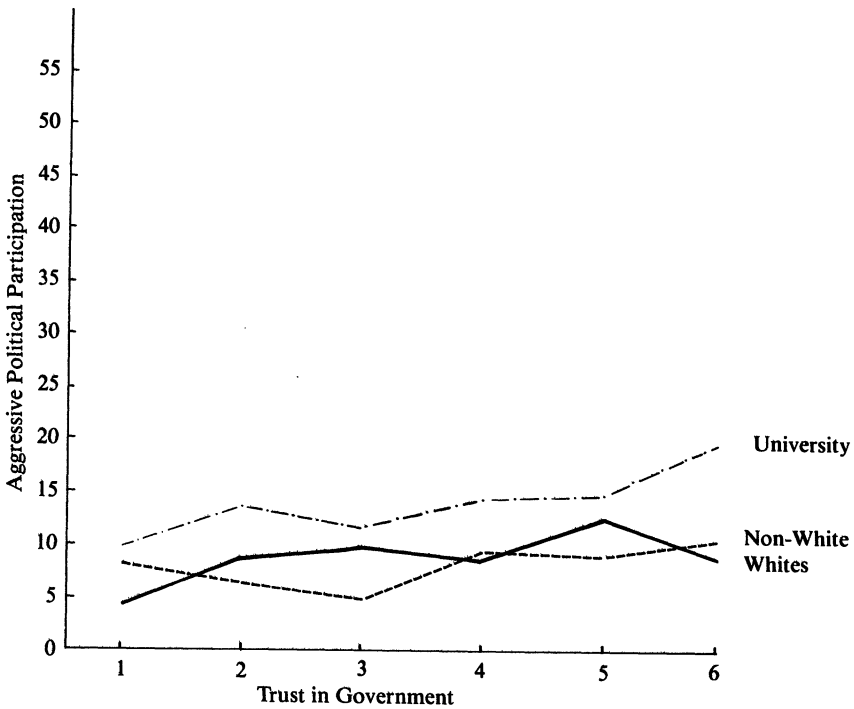
Source: 1978 New York City Survey by Response Analysis and 1978 Survey by Universidad de Costa Rica.

^a Zero-order correlation.

above the mean represent varying degrees of actual participation and positive intention to again participate in one or more of the aggressive behaviors.

From Figure 2 we see that, no matter how negative their Trust in Government, neither whites nor nonwhites in the New York City general public have a mean Aggressive Political Participation score that falls in the actual behavior range. Both groups are generally on the low side of inactivity, meaning that there is not even very much *potential* (in the sense of positive intention) for aggressive behavior, regardless of how negative one's political trust becomes. Indeed, going from the second-most negative level (5) to the most negative level (6) of Trust in Government, whites actually show a downturn in mean Aggressive Political Participation. In the university sample, as in the general public, mean

FIGURE 2
 Mean Aggressive Political Participation by Trust in Government:
 New York City Samples



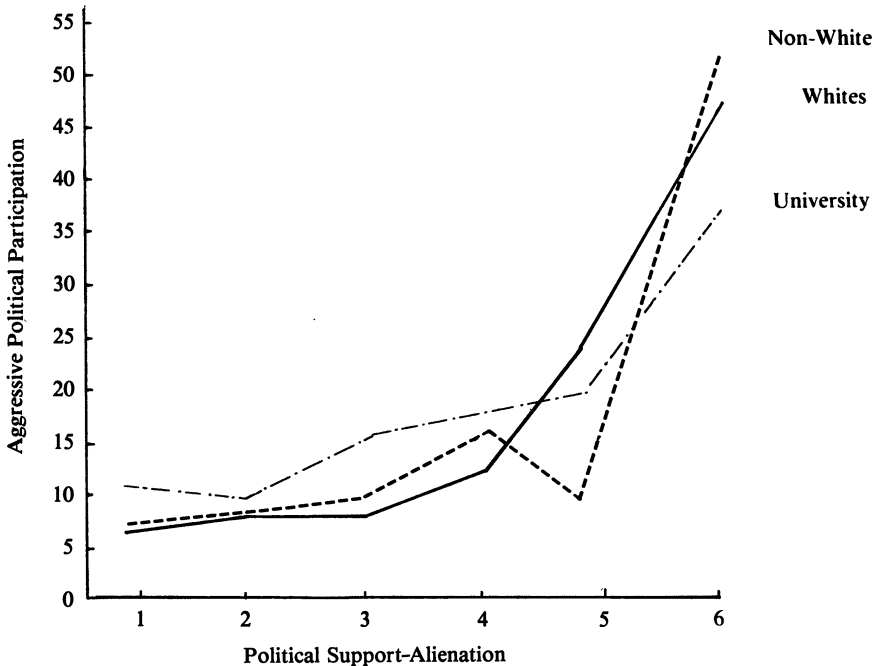
Source: 1978 New York City Survey by Response Analysis

Aggressive Political Participation never rises out of the 0-20 range. Therefore, the proportion of respondents in even the most negative level of Trust in Government has little import for the incidence of aggressive political behavior, since we have no reason to expect anything other than inactivity from them.

As expected from the results of our correlation analysis, quite a different picture emerges when mean Aggressive Political Participation is plotted against levels of the Political Support-Alienation scale. Figure 3 shows that very alienated nonwhites, as well as whites, display extreme mean Aggressive Political Participation. Moreover, the mean score of very alienated university respondents comes quite close to the extreme range of the Aggressive Political Participation scale. Obviously, the proportion of respondents who score in the most negative sixth of Political Sup-

FIGURE 3

Mean Aggressive Political Participation by Political Support-Alienation (in sixths): New York City Samples.



Source: 1978 New York City Political Support-Alienation Survey by Response Analysis

port-Alienation are strongly inclined toward aggressive political participation.

In sum, the available evidence is cross-nationally consistent in showing the Political Support-Alienation indicator of diffuse support to be a far stronger correlate of aggressive political participation than the Trust in Government indicator. The relationship thus can be said to have external validity in the sense of being generalizable across different populations. Another criterion of external validity entails the generalizability of the relationship to other measures of antisystem political behavior. The data from Guadalajara, Mexico, allows us to investigate this aspect of external validity.

Antisystem Political "Nonbehavior"

In Mexico, an infrequently applied election law makes abstention from voting in national elections punishable by a fine, a prison term of up to six months, and the loss of one's political rights for up to a year. The fact that abstention is technically illegal brings the "nonbehavior" of not voting under the rubric of antisystem political behavior. The important question is: will the differences in strength of association between aggressive participation and the diffuse support indicators extend to a very different measure of antisystem behavior—the case of electoral abstention in Mexico?

Seligson (forthcoming) has pointed out that "Mexican political leaders repeatedly make reference to the 'problem of abstentionism' and, in recent years have waged vigorous campaigns against it. There is little question that elites view growing abstention from the vote as a clear sign that support for the Mexican system of government is declining." Were Mexican political elites to attend to the results from Seligson's survey of border cities (see Seligson, forthcoming, Table 4), using only the Trust in Government index as an indicator of diffuse political support, they would find their political intuition challenged, for Trust in Government bears no statistically significant relationship to nonvoting. By contrast, the political intuition of these elites is strikingly confirmed when voting behavior is cross-tabulated by the Political Support-Alienation indicator of diffuse support. The relationship is statistically significant and substantial. Of the 6 percent of Mexican workers in the most negative sixth of Political Support-Alienation, only one-third voted in the 1976 presidential election, and those in the second-most negative sixth (14 percent of the total) split roughly half and half into voters and nonvoters. By contrast, slightly over four-fifths of those in the two most positive sixths of Political Support-Alienation (33 percent of the total) voted in the 1976 presidential election.

Turning now to the Guadalajara sample, Table 4 shows the cross-

tabulation of presidential voting and the two diffuse political support indicators.⁹ The absence of a statistically significant relationship between electoral participation and the Trust in Government index replicates the finding from the border cities survey. Three-quarters of very trustful Guadalajara respondents vote—but so do fully two-thirds of very cynical Guadalajara respondents.

The statistically significant relationship between electoral participation and the Political Support-Alienation scale also replicates the findings from the border cities survey. All very supportive Guadalajarans vote, in contrast to only 56 percent of the very alienated. The relationship is somewhat ragged, however, since the significant contrasts are level 1 with 2 and 3 and levels 2 and 3 with 4, 5, and 6. If the results of the two nonprobability purposive Mexican samples are generalizable, it appears

⁹ In the Guadalajara sample the ten-category Political Support-Alienation items were scored positive-to-negative, from 0 to 9. The five-item summated Political Support-Alienation measure thus ranges from 0 to 45. It was collapsed into sixths as follows: 0-7 = 1; 8-16 = 2; 17-23 = 3; 24-29 = 4; 30-37 = 5; 38-45 = 6.

TABLE 4

Relationship between Indicators of Diffuse Political Support and Voting:
Guadalajara Sample

Presidential Voting	Trust in Government					Very Cynical 6	(N=)
	Very Trustful 1	2	3	4	5		
Voted	76.9	84.6	69.2	64.0	63.6	65.0	(87)
Did not vote	<u>23.1</u>	<u>15.4</u>	<u>30.8</u>	<u>36.0</u>	<u>36.4</u>	<u>35.0</u>	(41)
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
(N=)	(13)	(13)	(13)	(25)	(44)	(20)	(128)
	$\chi^2 = 2.78$			$p = .73$			
Presidential Voting	Political Support-Alienation					Very Alienated 6	(N=)
	Very Supportive 1	2	3	4	5		
Voted	100.0	67.6	70.0	55.2	56.5	55.6	(93)
Did not vote	<u>0</u>	<u>32.4</u>	<u>30.1</u>	<u>44.8</u>	<u>43.5</u>	<u>44.4</u>	(49)
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
(N=)	(15)	(37)	(20)	(29)	(23)	(18)	(142)
	$\chi^2 = 11.13$		$p < .05$		$\text{Tau}_c = -.24$		

Source: 1979 Survey by University of Arizona Guadalajara Summer Program.

that social class interacts with alienation from the Mexican political system in influencing electoral participation. Among middle-class persons, abstention is appreciable as soon as the negative side of the support-to-alienation continuum is reached, but it never becomes substantial. Working-class Mexicans, by contrast, only show very substantial abstentionism if they score in the most negative sixth of the support-to-alienation continuum (see Seligson, forthcoming, Table 4).

The findings from a single purposive survey could be dismissed as a chance occurrence or as not generalizable to any broad population. But the fact that two purposive surveys of Mexicans from different regions and social classes produce such similar results provides more persuasive testimony for the cross-measurement generalizability of the Political Support-Alienation scale as an important correlate of antisystem political behavior (or nonbehavior).

Distribution of Indicators of Diffuse Political Support

Table 5 shows the distribution of scores on the Trust in Government and Political Support-Alienation (in sixths) variables for the New York City general public sample (partitioned by color) and university sample and the urban Costa Rica sample.¹⁰ The following comparisons are noteworthy:

1. In the New York City general public sample, nonwhites are slightly more likely than whites to score at the negative end (levels 4-6) of the Trust in Government and Political Support-Alienation measures.
2. The New York City samples differ very little in the proportion scoring at the most negative level of Trust in Government; the urban Costa Rica sample, however, shows markedly less very negative Trust in Government than the New York City samples.
3. In all three samples there is far more very negative (cynical) Trust in Government than very negative (alienated) Political Support-Alienation.
4. Most importantly, in all three samples only miniscule proportions score in the most negative sixth of Political Support-Alienation.

In 1972 Miller (1974, p. 991) found that 36.8 percent of Americans were low (levels 5 and 6) on Trust in Government. We find in 1978 that

¹⁰ In the New York City and Costa Rican samples the seven-category Political Support-Alienation items were scored, positive-to-negative, from 0 to 6. The eight-item summated Political Support-Alienation measure ranges from 0 to 48 in the New York City samples. It was collapsed into sixths as follows: 0-8 = 1; 9-16 = 2; 17-24 = 3; 25-32 = 4; 33-40 = 5; 41-48 = 6. The seven-item summated Political Support-Alienation measure ranges from 0 to 42 in the Costa Rican sample. It was collapsed into sixths as follows: 1-7 = 1; 8-14 = 2; 15-21 = 3; 22-28 = 4; 29-35 = 5; 36-42 = 6.

TABLE 5

Distribution of Trust in Government and Political Support-Alienation: New York City and Costa Rica Samples

	NYC: General Public		NYC: University		Costa Rica: Urban	
	Nonwhite	White	University	University	Urban	Urban
Trust in Government						
Very cynical: 6	13.8	19.6	15.1	6.3		
5	30.2	25.2	21.4	14.9		
4	19.0	13.5	21.4	16.1		
3	13.8	17.8	16.1	20.1		
2	13.8	10.4	14.6	27.0		
Very Trustful: 1	9.5	13.5	11.5	15.5		
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%		
(N =)	(116)	(163)	(192)	(174)		
Political Support-Alienation						
Very Alienated: 6	0.5	0.8	3.4	1.2		
5	1.6	2.3	8.0	1.2		
4	9.4	4.9	18.1	5.2		
3	24.8	19.7	25.3	11.6		
2	34.2	33.9	30.4	37.8		
Very Supportive: 1	29.4	38.3	14.8	43.0		
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%		
(N =)	(371)	(386)	(237)	(172)		

Source: 1978 New York City Survey by Response Analysis and 1978 Survey by Universidad de Costa Rica.

50.4 percent of nonwhites and 38 percent of white residents of New York City are low on Trust in Government. But our results indicate that numbers such as these have little, if any, behavioral relevance. What matters is the distribution of diffuse support as we measure it with the Political Support-Alienation scale. In 1978 there was little low (levels 5 and 6) system support among the New York City general public, regardless of the color of a New Yorker's skin, and there was even little low system support among liberal arts students and faculty at Columbia as well as NYU. Among all these groups there was only a faint trace, barely perceptible in the general public—brown, black, or white—of the kind of very low diffuse support that carries with it a potential for highly aggressive political behavior. Urban Costa Rica registered even less very low or low diffuse support. Thus, our data indicate that, as of 1978, New York City and urban Costa Rica were fallow ground for the mobilization by dissident groups of mass-based political violence or civil disobedience.

Conclusion

Our data are static. We do not presume that system support is impervious to change—though the causal dynamics involved probably are quite complex (see Muller and Williams, 1980). Therefore, a finding for 1978 is just that; the distribution of system support in New York City or urban Costa Rica could change. Were change to occur, and were it to be in a negative direction, we would expect that such change would presage an increase in the incidence of aggressive political participation.

To be sure, we have no idea of the length of the causal lag period that is involved—nor, really, do we have any idea of exactly (or nearly) how much aggressive political participation might follow upon the heels of a given amount of decline in system support. Other explanatory variables would have to be taken into account in addition to monitoring the distribution of scores on the Political Support-Alienation scale. Even then, precise predictions probably could not be made because of the inevitable role that situational factors play in determining the timing of political behavior, aggressive or otherwise. We recognize, therefore, that the Political Support-Alienation scale can be at best only a very crude “leading indicator” of change in antisystem political behavior. However, we believe that if longitudinal data on this and other relevant variables were collected we would have a potentially reliable tool for forecasting system stability which would provide a more scientific basis for the widely used “risk assessments” currently so popular in international business.

Our measure focuses unambiguously on the political system; it provides a finely discriminating response continuum from poles of very positive to very negative affect; it shows, cross-culturally, good scale reliability; and it appears to fulfill at least the necessary condition of behavioral

relevance, since individuals who register very low scores on the scale also report much higher than average levels of antisystem behavior. For all of these reasons we believe that the Political Support-Alienation scale recommends itself as the best currently available means for measuring the concept of diffuse political support.¹¹

The Political Support-Alienation scale gives an objective reading of public sentiment about the political system which can be used to complement the intuition of politicians and journalists. Such is its applied value. The measure also should prove useful in basic, cross-national research on causes and consequences of diffuse political support, one of the more important properties of political systems.

Manuscript submitted 10 October 1980

Final manuscript received 1 June 1981

¹¹ For general use we recommend a six-item Political Support-Alienation measure, deleting item H, "values differ," and item G, "well-represented." The former may be difficult for some respondents to understand, while the latter may be subject to interpretation in the context of the partisan cast of the incumbent administration.

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